

RHODE ISLAND
STATE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
AWARDS



1994



**RHODE ISLAND
PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**

Introduction

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission's annual State Historic Preservation Awards honor individuals, organizations, and projects for their contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's historic resources.

The Commission has named two awards in tribute to individuals who exemplify Rhode Islanders' commitment to historic preservation. They are the highest honors which the Commission bestows.

Antoinette F. Downing, in the twenty-six years she has served in the volunteer position of Commission Chairman, has contributed her time, her knowledge, and, most importantly, her vision to shape Rhode Island's state historic preservation program. At the same time, she has generously lent her counsel and support to numerous organizations and projects throughout the state. In her honor, the Commission created the Antoinette F. Downing Award for Volunteer Service to Preservation.

Frederick C. Williamson was appointed State Historic Preservation Officer in 1969. Today, he is the dean of SHPOs, having served longer than any other in the nation. His professional expertise in government relations and his skill in promoting effective state and local government partnerships are invaluable in advancing historic preservation in Rhode Island. In his honor, the Commission established the Frederick C. Williamson Award for Professional Leadership in Preservation.

We salute all the recipients of the 1994 Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Awards.

Antoinette F. Downing Volunteer Service Award



Ruth Lebeck

Volunteer preservationist and fund-raiser Ruth Bailey Lebeck has led the Historical Society of Smithfield's restoration of the 1713 Smith-Appleby House, one of Rhode Island's finest early houses.

Ruth's commitment to preservation grew out of family efforts in the early 1930s to restore the Waite-Appleby, Mandy Ballou, and "Bean" Farms. After graduation from Rhode Island College and marriage, Ruth moved west in 1939. She returned in 1954 to teach school and to renew hometown ties.

Her friendship with Maria Appleby, the last family member to occupy the Smith-Appleby House, led to a twenty-year mission to preserve this historic dwelling. After Maria's death in 1959 and the house's abandonment in 1972, Ruth initiated the Historical Society of Smithfield's acquisition of the property. She helped to secure an interest-free mortgage and Champlin Foundation support. By 1985, the society paid off the mortgage, aided by a \$20,000 family gift.

She served as the Society's Ways & Means Chair and Restoration Chair from 1972 to 1992, and as President from 1981 to 1985. In 1992 she became Curator of Smith-Appleby House, cataloguing and photographing all of its contents.

Ruth has drawn many local residents into the endeavor to save the Smith-Appleby House. Her willingness to undertake any project is legendary. Her knowledge, energy, and diplomacy continue to inspire and guide preservation efforts in Smithfield.

Frederick C. Williamson Professional Leadership Award



Albert T. Klyberg

Public historian, advocate, and storyteller, Albert T. Klyberg has tirelessly pursued a twenty-five year mission to make Rhode Island's history come alive.

Since 1969, as Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Al has worked to expand and broaden the Society's collections, especially in the area of twentieth-century history. He initiated publication of General Nathanael Greene's correspondence and plans to publish Oliver Hazard Perry's letters. He has supervised the Society's restoration of the 1786 John Brown House and adaptation of the ca. 1825 Aldrich House for a museum and offices.

In 1968, Al became a charter member of the RIHPC, and now serves on the Rhode Island National Register Review Board. His expertise has been indispensable to the publication of the Commission's historical preservation survey reports.

Al has advocated increased state funding for history and preservation programs, and co-chaired committees which successfully campaigned for passage of the 1985 and 1989 Heritage Bond Issues.

As a teacher of museum studies and history at the University of Rhode Island, Providence College, and Rhode Island College, he has inspired students to appreciate and preserve our state's heritage.

Today, he leads a coalition of organizations in the development of a Rhode Island Heritage Center. Its realization will fulfill Klyberg's dream to tell the story of Rhode Island's multi-culturalism.

Historic Preservation Award



Nicholas Brown, John Carter Brown, Angela Brown Fischer

Members of the Brown family have held positions of leadership in many spheres of Rhode Island life, including historic preservation. John Nicholas Brown was a founder of the Heritage Trust of Rhode Island and the Providence Preservation Society. Carrying on the family tradition, his children have committed their personal energies and family resources to preserving a variety of properties, culminating with their childhood home, the 1791 Nightingale-Brown House.

Nicholas Brown, John Carter Brown, and Angela Brown Fischer have overseen several preservation undertakings, including the rescue of the Daniel Smith House (ca. 1780) from demolition and its move to 362 Benefit Street, and the securing of protective covenants for "Harbor Court," the family summer home in Newport, before its transfer to the New York Yacht Club.

Their efforts climaxed with the complex restoration and reconstruction of the Nightingale-Brown House at 357 Benefit Street in Providence for reuse as the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization. When severe problems required drastic solutions, Nicholas Brown committed a significant portion of his personal inheritance toward the project's completion and remained the key decision maker through the long process. Completed in 1993 with "no corners cut, no expense spared," this National Historic Landmark stands ready for at least another two hundred years.

Historic Preservation Award



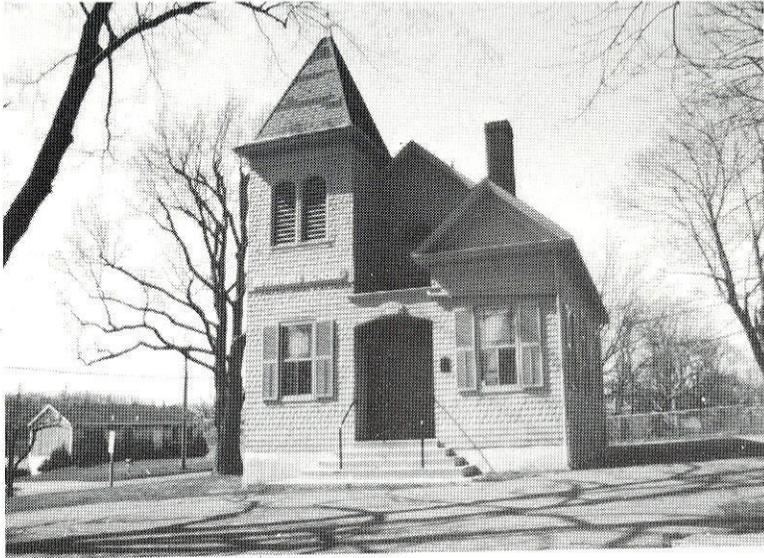
Memorial and Library Association of Westerly

The Westerly Public Library building embodies the high value which its community places on learning, the arts, and local history. For one hundred years, it has been the heart of the town, thanks to the responsible and farsighted stewardship of the Memorial and Library Association of Westerly.

The 1894 building, erected to serve as both library and Civil War memorial, was the inspiration of local industrialist Stephen Wilcox, who donated land and money for the project. Designed by Longstaff & Hurd of Bridgeport, Connecticut, this handsome Richardsonian Romanesque structure was planned to provide space for stacks and a reading room, a gymnasium, collections, and meeting rooms. Additions in 1902 and 1928 accommodated additional stacks, a gallery, a children's room, and a museum.

The new Centennial Addition exemplifies the continued thoughtful stewardship of the Library Association. Designed by Westerly native Charles J. Koulbanis, who fondly remembers hours spent as a boy in the old children's reading room, it shows a fine understanding of the building's place, purpose, and architectural style. Exterior design, materials, and interior spaces are carefully organized to complement the original structure. Standing on a foundation built from the last Westerly red granite to be quarried in the area, the Centennial Addition admirably prepares the Westerly Public Library to begin its second century of community service.

Historic Preservation Award



Witherbee School

The Witherbee School's meticulous restoration and use for heritage education represents a model community preservation effort.

Built in 1907 to serve School District #2, Bailey's Brook Valley, this Queen Anne structure replaced an 1892 school destroyed by fire. For many years one instructor taught all subjects to as many as fifty-four pupils aged seven to sixteen.

After the town closed the school in 1988, the Middletown Historical Society secured a ninety-nine-year lease. Charles Roberts, former town administrator; Norman Hall, ex-president of the Middletown Historical Society; and Stanley Grossman, current president, led the movement to acquire and restore the property.

Society members organized the restoration, and local tradesmen donated labor and materials for electrical work, painting, and plumbing. Historic photographs served as the source for replication of exterior shutters and signage. New doors and coat hooks were copied from surviving originals. Volunteers repaired chalk boards, desks, and chairs, and spent over 1000 hours refinishing chestnut wainscotting.

Today Witherbee School is used to teach local history. Its educational program, "Those Dear Old Golden Rule Days," provides fourth graders with a perspective of everyday life during the early 1900s. This adventure into the past not only communicates facts, but stimulates children toward further historical discovery.

Historic Preservation Award



West End Preservation Apartments

The Women's Development Corporation (WDC) has established itself as a leader in the design, development, and management of housing for low-income families with children and groups with special needs. It skillfully combines creative financing with the talents of architects and contractors to produce affordable housing which is safe, permanent, and responsively designed. Now in its fifteenth year, the WDC has developed over 450 units of housing, many of which it manages through its property development affiliate.

Despite the diversity of project types and client groups, three principles in the WDC's program have remained constant: to serve those at the edge of homelessness; to actively promote client participation in the design of housing that suits their needs; and to restore historic properties where possible and construct new buildings that complement the architectural fabric of surrounding neighborhoods.

The West End Preservation Apartments project epitomizes this successful formula. The Women's Opportunity Realty Corporation, a WDC subsidiary, acquired nine houses in the Bridgham-Arch-Wilson Streets Historic District. Four were abandoned and severely dilapidated. It restored these historic residences and created 23 apartments. The enterprise rescued a significant portion of the historic district from the wrecker's ball, and increased housing opportunities for low-income neighborhood residents.

Historic Preservation Award



The Army-Navy YMCA

The rehabilitation of the former Army-Navy YMCA on Washington Square in Newport has provided much-needed shelter and housing for homeless and low-income residents, while also preserving a building which represents the military's long presence in, and influence on, the city.

The Army-Navy YMCA was constructed in 1911 specifically to accommodate military personnel. The building housed lounges, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, and over 140 single boarding rooms. Millions of U.S. servicemen stationed in Newport between 1911 and 1971 took advantage of these facilities, frequently filling the building to capacity.

Following cutbacks at local military installations in the early 1970s, the YMCA terminated its operations. For a number of years thereafter the building was used as a rooming house and homeless shelter and gradually fell into disrepair. Between 1987 and 1990, the Church Community Housing Corporation and Community Development Training Institute ingeniously assembled a package of loans, grants, and tax credits and converted the structure to low-income housing, an emergency shelter, and social service agency offices.

The successful rehabilitation of the Army-Navy YMCA demonstrates how the preservation and reuse of a historic structure can improve provisions for vital community services while eliminating blight and revitalizing a conspicuous element of the urban fabric.

Historic Preservation Award



ELMWOOD FOUNDATION

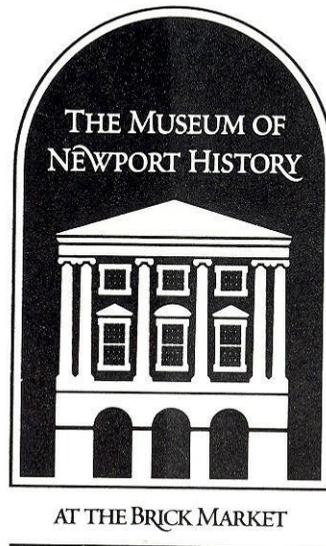
Elmwood Foundation for
Architectural and Historical Preservation

At the root of the Elmwood Foundation's many impressive achievements is a simple premise: that the preservation and rehabilitation of a neighborhood's historic building stock can serve as the basis for creating a stable, attractive, and livable community.

For twenty years the Foundation's program has been devoted to this aim. Through education about history, architecture, and historic preservation principles, it builds neighborhood pride, acquaints people outside the area with Elmwood's appeal, and provides homeowners and prospective homeowners with the motivation and know-how to undertake restoration projects. Through its dynamic involvement in political and government affairs, it has forged productive working relationships with elected officials and agencies and has secured public services, legislation, and funding to further preservation and revitalization in Elmwood. Through entrepreneurship, it has made substantial progress toward realizing its objectives by actively soliciting buyers for properties, including abandoned buildings, and helping to arrange financing for purchasers.

These elements combine to form a solid plan for neighborhood renewal. The Elmwood Foundation has helped to stop the decline of a neighborhood beset by absentee ownership, decay, and crime, and fostered the evolution of a vibrant multi-cultural community noted as much for its close-knit network of congenial and supportive neighbors as it is for its handsome and affordable housing.

Historic Preservation Award



The Museum of Newport History at The Brick Market

Recently installed in one of Newport's most important early landmarks, the Museum of Newport History at the Brick Market presents a long-needed overview of the city's development. It provides visitors and local residents alike with a broad context in which to better understand individual historic buildings and sites.

The museum's creators have successfully synthesized four centuries of the city's growth. Combining historic photographs and artifacts with the latest computer and audio-visual technology, they have produced a series of engaging exhibits which depict Newport's evolution as a seaport, commercial center, and summer resort.

Museum visitors can hear contemporary accounts of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams and of Revolutionary patriots; take an historic video ride on an omnibus down Bellevue Avenue; listen to the voices of long-time residents describing life in the early twentieth century; and consult an interactive computer to learn about individual historic properties. The children's education program offers a valuable new teaching resource for elementary schools.

The museum was realized through the cooperative effort of the Newport Historical Society, which developed and operates the museum; the Brick Market Foundation, Inc., which undertook this landmark's restoration; and the City of Newport, which owns the structure. All are to be saluted for enhancing our understanding and appreciation of the "City By The Sea".

RI Alliance of Historic District Commissions Annual Honor Award



Patrick G. Kirby II

The Rhode Island Alliance of Historic District Commissions presents its first annual honor award to Patrick G. Kirby II, founding member and first President, for his generous, learned and resourceful contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's historic resources, and especially for his outstanding leadership in the advancement of historic district zoning in the City of Newport and throughout the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Patrick was a member and former chairman of the Newport Historic District Commission and a member of the Hill Association. He also served on the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council.

Project Design and Construction Credits

John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization

Architects: Irving B. Haynes & Associates

General Contractor: E. W. Burman & Co.

Structural Engineer: The Yoder Group

Westerly Public Library Centennial Addition

Architects: Koulbanis Brandreth Associates

General Contractor: H. V. Collins Co.

West End Preservation Apartments

Architect: Nancy Santagata

Contractor: Calcagni & Sons

Army-Navy YMCA

Architects: The Newport Collaborative

General Contractor: Stone Building Company

Museum of Newport History at The Brick Market

Museum of Newport History

Exhibit Design Team: Stuart Parnes, Exhibit Designer,

Daniel Snyder, Newport Historical Society

M. Joan Youngken, Newport Historical Society

Exhibit Fabrication and Installation: Michael DiMatteo Construction & Woodworking

Brick Market Restoration

Architects: Irving B. Haynes & Associates

Construction Manager: Paquette Design & Construction Management, Inc.

Photography Credits: Ruth Lebeck: Lebeck Family; Albert T. Klyberg: RI Historical Society; Nicholas, John Carter and Angela Fischer Brown: M. Isabelle Taft; Westerly Public Library: Charles J. Koulbanis; Witherbee School: Middletown Historical Society; West End Preservation Apartments: RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation; Army-Navy YMCA: Horsman & Usher Photography; Patrick G. Kirby: Tina Regan.