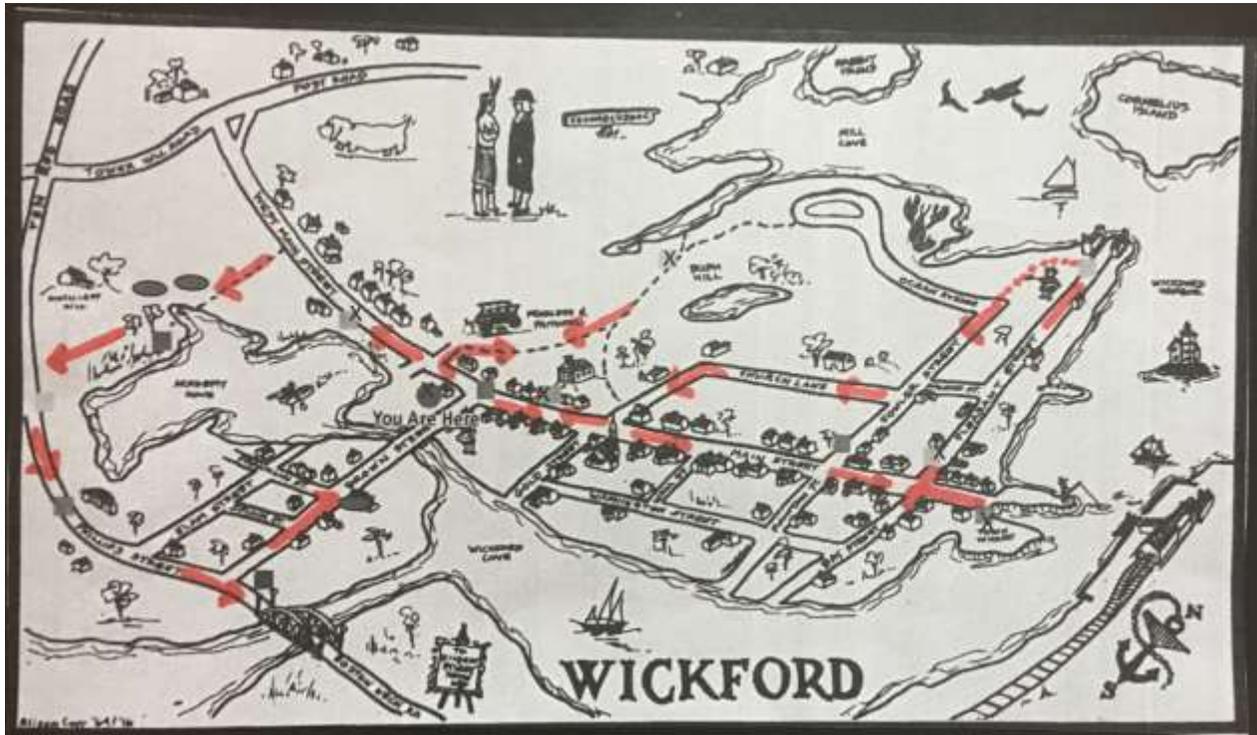


Wickford Walk

Take a stroll around Wickford and visit key historic houses and buildings as well as special HistWick markers which explain various aspects of our history.



1. Start at Updike Park (corner of Brown Street and Main/West Main Streets) and see the HistWick Marker (# 1) which tells you about the special historical markers which have been placed around the village and are included in this tour.
2. Turn down Main Street and walk towards the harbor, noting first the Gregory Building on the Corner (# 2). Continue down Main Street and follow this almost to the end. (#s 3-8)
3. Make a short detour right onto Bay Street (# 9).
4. Return to Main Street and follow it to the end (# 10).
5. Go back up Main Street one block, turning right onto Pleasant Street, following it to the end (#s 11-14) *Note: The HistWick marker at the end (# 14) is not yet in place so you may want to turn left on Friend Street.*
6. Cut through the path just before the end of Pleasant Street and turn left, following Fowler Street to Church Street (#s 15-16).
7. Make right onto Church Street and follow it back to Main Street (#s 17-18).
8. Return to West Main Street and cross over to see the marker overlooking Academy Cove (# 24).
9. Continue west and take the path on the left which heads to the library. It is by the crosswalk. Walk across a bridge, enjoying the view back towards the town, and up a short hill. Take the white path on the left just before you get to the library building to find the Academy Cove Marker (# 25). If you are interested, walk a little further down you will see a “rain garden” and a marker which talks about that.
10. Return to the front of the library building and go left, heading over to Ten Rod Road where you will find the next two HistWick markers (#s 26-27).
11. Head back to town and check out the Hussey Bridge marker (# 28).
12. Then return to Brown Street and head back to Updike Park (#s 29-33).

Note: Parking lots are at Wilson Park, behind the Rite Aid, and at end of Main Street. Street parking is also available.



STOP #1 Updike Park - HistWick Markers

HistWick proudly announced the unveiling of historical markers in Wickford in 2018.

The first five markers memorialize:

- Ship building in Academy Cove
- Bush Hill's early Narragansett settlement
- Main Street's grand houses
- Updike house on Pleasant Street
- Rail/steamship era, the "Gateway to Newport"

Additional markers are planned. This "guide marker" contains a map and "walk" information.



STOP #2 The Gregory Building c.1891

1 Main Street

This building is a monument to William Gregory's urban ambitions for Wickford. Designed by W. C. Sawtelle of Providence in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, it was meant to be part of planned, but never-built, buildings on either side.

The 3-story building of brick, stone, and terra cotta has interior iron supports. The post office occupied the first floor from 1893 to 1943 and Wickford's first high school classes met on the third floor.

Notice the sharply cut vertical brick pilasters and the Romanesque arch of the doorways. Also note the plaque to the right of the large front window showing the high water mark of the 1938 hurricane.



STOP #3 Main Street, The Grand Highway - 1770's to 1836

Most of Wickford Village's grand homes, seen here stretching up and down the "Grand Highway", (now Main and West Main Streets) and Main Street (now Pleasant and Bay Streets), are the result of an era of maritime and trading center growth.

Local builders constructed these fine homes for ship's captains and owners, bankers and merchants.

See the HistWick marker for more information.



STOP #4 Saint Paul's Church c.1847

55 Main Street

This simple, white clapboard, Lombard-Romanesque style church is evidence of Wickford's continuing prosperity in the mid-19th century. This ambitious church was designed by one of Rhode Island's most gifted architects, Thomas A. Teft. The church was erected for the congregation of the Old Narragansett Church (Stop #17). Part of the charm of the church is its small size, scaled down to fit with the street and set close to the sidewalk like the adjacent houses. Notice the tower with bell turret, an 1872 Gothic addition.

By all means, if there are no services going on, enter and see the beautiful stained glass windows. Visitors are encouraged.



STOP #5 Bullock-Thomas House c.1825

56 Main Street

This monumental 2 1/2 story late Federal style house was built for Jabez Bullock's first wife. The main structure of the dwelling has an Ionic columned portico centered on a 5-bay facade. The Main Street Association (a forerunner of today's HistWick) organized here in 1932 for the preservation of Wickford's architecture. Notice the hip roof with balustrade.



STOP #6 Wickford House (Alexander Huling House) c.1769

68 Main Street

This large, mid-18th century house is one of the most famous of the former taverns in Wickford. It received great notoriety from 1882 through 1920 when Mother Prentice ran a restaurant here. "Mother Prentice's" was famous among traveling performers.

Note the Federal style doorway (this 1962-1964 addition is from the destroyed Governor Reynolds' house) that replaced the 1888 Victorian door hood of Mother Prentice's.



STOP #7 Captain Richard Barney House c.1809

115 Main Street

This 2 1/2 story central chimney Federal style house with a fanlight and pediment doorways is of the type of house built in Rhode Island during this period.

This house has some more unusual decorative enrichments. Note the rope-like wooden molding on the doorway which is symbolic of the homeowner's mariner trade.



STOP #8 Charles Stafford House c.1895

125 Main Street

This home was constructed in 1895 for blacksmith, businessman and North Kingstown Town Treasurer Charles Stafford. His eldest daughter Mary assumed her father's position. Overall, the business of the community was run out of this grand home for 53 years.

Mary's sister, Miss Nellie Stafford, a dressmaker who had a shop in the village and later in East Greenwich, lived in the house along with her sister Mary, for 57 years until her own death in 1951. The home, to this day, is still known by old-timers in town as Miss Nellie's house.



STOP #9 The Old Yellow (Chase-Thomas House) c.1735

6 Bay Street

This central chimney house is the oldest standing home in the village. In former years, the owners regularly gave the house a coat of yellow white-wash, hence the name Old Yellow. Notice the simplicity of design and lack of ornamentation.

It was owned by freed slaves, Jim and Christina Chase and their descendants from around 1885 to 1966. Jim Chase was a Civil War Veteran and respected member of the local G.A.R. chapter. While in the employ of coal dealer, T. S. Baker, Chase purchased "Old Yellow" from his boss and moved in with his family. Eventually, Jim Chase came up with the novel idea of growing, drying, and packaging yeast in the basement of the big house for resale to area bakers and brewers.



STOP #10 Wickford, Gateway to Newport - 1870 to 1920s

Several events brought Wickford's maritime period to an end in the mid 1800's. The Village declined until the 1870s when the Newport & Wickford Railway & Steamship Line, came to the Village. The new train left Wickford Junction on a regular basis, making the short run down to Poplar Point, with stops in Belleville and Wickford. At Poplar Point a luxurious steam ferry set sail directly to Jamestown and then Newport.

This railroad brought new money, jobs and visitors to the Village. **See the HistWick marker for more information.**



STOP #11 Updike - Founding of Wickford

Captain Lodowick Updike (1646-1736) was the first to envision a commercially profitable seaport and shipbuilding town on the site of present-day Wickford Village. In 1709 Updike planned roadways and platted out his future seaport town in the style of colonial Boston, initially calling it "Updike's New Town", but it gradually became known as Wickford. This grand Georgian Colonial style home at 19 Pleasant Street, built sometime before 1745 for one of Updike's descendants.

See the HistWick marker for more information.



STOP #12 Straight-Reynolds House Built c.1880

26 Pleasant Street

Architectural Style: Victorian, Second Empire

This impressive home was built in 1880 by local merchant Stephen R. Straight who ran a large variety store in the Gregory Building during the last quarter of the 1800's. The house was then purchased by Joseph G. Reynolds Sr., who had just retired from the jewelry business in Providence and returned here to the village of his birth.

Reynolds son, Joseph Jr. was noted for his artistic abilities. Upon graduation from the fledgling RI School of Design, he continued his studies of medieval stained glass in England and Europe. By 1920 Joseph Reynolds Jr. had opened his own stained glass studio in Boston. His works of art can be seen all over America and Europe as well as St. Paul's Church (stop #13) and this fine home right here in Wickford.



STOP #13 Captain Beriah H. Gardiner House c.1870

39 Pleasant Street

This house was constructed for retiring sea captain Beriah H. Gardiner in 1870. Beriah moved in with his second wife Maria and two adult daughters Harriet and Anna. By 1880, the house had been expanded to include the small el to the south.

At one time it was owned by Nils Thor Granlund a Broadway show producer, radio industry pioneer, a publicist for Marcus Loew who formed Loews Theatres and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). He was a "mover and shaker" in the rapidly expanding entertainment industry. When he moved on to Hollywood he was credited as being the inventor of the "movie trailer".



STOP #14 Pleasant Street/Oyster Industry



STOP #15 Black Mariners

19 Fowler Street

This home is said to be the oldest home in Rhode Island built specifically for a black family. Domini Smith was one of many black and mixed-race men who worked on sailing vessels out of Wickford Harbor from the 1700s through the 1860s.

Domini Smith originally learned his seafaring trade as a "slave for hire", meaning his owner rented him out to ship owners in the agricultural off-season. For people of color, "at sea" was the one place where race truly did not matter.



STOP #16 Lauriston Hall Esq. House c. 1847

25 Fowler Street

The core of this home was constructed in 1847 for lawyer and world traveler Lauriston Hall.

At one point it was owned by Henry Girard, a giant of a man, who was a portable sawmill operator and lumber merchant in town. One of the many stories in the historic record involving Henry occurred in Providence when he and his brother, also a massive man, were pulled over by a local police officer for driving their Model T Ford the wrong way up a one way street. The imposing Girard boys rose up out of the Model T looked the officer square in the eye and then proceeded to pick up their car and turn it around facing the other direction. Henry spat out “How’s that officer!” and drove off, leaving the Providence patrolman scratching his head in wonderment.



STOP #17 Old Narragansett/St. Paul’s Church c.1707

62 Church Lane

The oldest standing Anglican Church building in Rhode Island is one of the earliest reflections of English Classical design in the colonies. Erected to serve Narragansett, it was moved to Wickford in 1800.

The 2 1/2 story building with gabled roof is based on the traditional Puritan New England Meeting House. The interior has an exposed frame and a plastered, barrel-vaulted ceiling. Notice the double doorway flanked by plain pilasters with an arched broken pediment above. The old gravestones in the tiny church yard also merit attention



STOP #18 Daniel Weeden House c.1792

38 Church Street

This quaint little home has one of the most mysterious pasts of all of Wickford’s historic structures.

Real estate records indicate that the lot was purchased in 1805 by cordwainer (a shoemaker and leather worker) Daniel Weeden who already owned a home. Architectural details suggest that the building was not originally constructed as a house. It may have originally been the shoemaker shop that Daniel Weeden shared with his son Christopher.

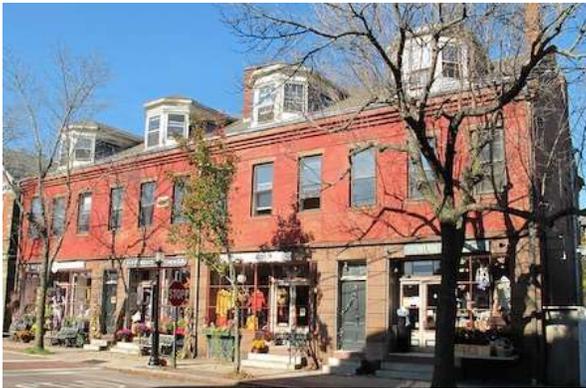
By 1809 the building was owned by Captain Samuel Gould and his wife Sarah Ann (Campbell) Gould who may have been the persons responsible for turning this building into a gambrel-roofed home.



STOP #19 First Baptist Church c.1816 & 1835

34-40 Main Street

This impressive Greek Revival church is sited on a rise set back from Main Street. Constructed of wood, its simple forms and splendid portico exemplify the adaption of a Greek Revival style to a provincial setting. Notice the paneled pilasters and detailing of the belfry, which has attracted much attention as an early “country cousin” version of a more formal architectural style.



STOP #20 Avis Block c.1850-1851

1-11 West Main Street

On New Year’s Eve, 1850, seven buildings were totally destroyed at the most compact part of the village. This 2 1/2 story brick commercial block, the “Brick Block” as it was called back then, was built for Mrs. Avis Brown, one of the village’s most prominent business persons in the mid-19th century, on the site.

This is an outstanding example of small-scale mid-19th century commercial architecture. Separating the shop fronts from the upper floors are rusticated brownstone piers. Note the four bay window dormers on the gabled roof.



STOP #21 Women’s History

For the most part, women’s roles in the 18th and 19th centuries were centered on home, hearth, and child-rearing. In villages like Wickford though, things were different. The majority of able-bodied men was either off at sea or involved in the construction of sailing vessels, allowing women the opportunity to be more than just a wife and mother. It was a simple matter of practicality: with most Wickford men involved in maritime related trades, women stepped into societal roles that would not be tolerated in the majority of communities.



STOP #22 Wickford National Bank c.1871

13 West Main Street

This 2-story Italianate building has a rusticated stone first floor façade and a brick and stone quoining façade on the second.

This is one of the finest, small-scale business blocks in the state of Rhode Island.

Note the modillion cornice that outlines the eaves.



STOP #23 Narragansett– The People of the Small Point

Human settlement of the area that we now call Wickford Village began some 30,000 years ago during the post-ice age or Paleolithic period with Indigenous people living a “hunter-gatherer” lifestyle.

At some point in time, as the climate warmed, the Narragansett, settled into a more permanent style of living in large semi-permanent coastal villages surrounded by extensive fields which they cleared for cultivation.

See the HistWick marker for more information.



STOP #24 Wickford as a Maritime Center - Early 1700s to 1860s

Since Colonial times, land based travel around coastal Rhode Island was grueling and slow. Hence, between the early 1700s to the early 1860s, Wickford developed into an important and thriving maritime center. Hundreds of sailing vessels from small dories and catboats to substantial brigs, schooners and sloops were crafted at five separate shipyards by numerous craftsmen and tradesmen.

You are overlooking Academy Cove, along the shore of which sat a major shipyard. **See the HistWick marker for more information.**



STOP #25 Academy Cove

Formerly West Cove, this, one of the inner-most coves of Wickford Harbor, became known as Academy Cove sometime around 1800, when the Washington Academy was constructed on the high knoll along the cove’s western edge

During that same time frame, the northern shore of Academy Cove was home to one of Wickford’s five shipyards and later, along its western shore, an extraordinary agricultural venture was undertaken. **Learn more about all this at the Academy Cove marker.**

If you are interested, walk a little further down you will see a “rain garden” and a marker which talks about that.



STOP #26 Washington Academy

. Washington Academy, once the second oldest institution of higher learning in the state, eclipsed only by Brown University, had been founded in 1800 by educationally minded wealthy landowners and merchants in both Wickford and Newport and was focused on training young men for careers as teachers, land surveyors, or celestial navigators; all skill sets in high demand at the onset of the 19th century.



STOP #27 Ten Rod Road, a Livestock Driver's Turnpike

From the late 1600s through 1727, this parcel and the surrounding land was the property of the Updike family, and part of the approximately 27 square mile plantation known as Cocumscussoc. Although there is scant historical information detailing the construction and operation of this livestock drover's turnpike, we know the Ten Rod Road (named for its ten rod width - 165 feet) was used as pasturage during the livestock's journey from farm to village.



STOP #28 Clarence Hussey & the Hussey Bridge

Young Clarence Hussey was a hot shot engineer, straight out of MIT, when he was hired on by RI as its first state bridge engineer. He was given a tiny office in the basement of the Capitol building and virtual carte blanche to get the state's bridges up to snuff. By 1925, when Hussey's priority list brought him to the rapidly deteriorating Hamilton Bridge in little Wickford, he had already gone a long way towards that goal. Sadly though, this was to be Hussey's final bridge, just prior to its completion, Hussey died at the age of 42 years old. His obituary noted that he was known across America as a premier designer of bridges. Learn more about this bridge, one of Wickford's signature landmarks, and its designer at the Hussey marker.



STOP #29 Gregory Mill c.1865

1 Brown Street

This brick industrial style building was built by the American Bobbin Company and housed Wickford's only successful mill. The Gregory Mill was a late 19th century manufacturing enterprise which produced cotton and worsted wool fabric for men's suits. A mansard tower, now gone, once topped the projecting block on the south face of the building. Notice the striking brick dentils along the cornice.



STOP #30 Second Jabez Bullock House c. 1839

30 Brown Street

This Greek Revival house set behind a delicate wooden fence was built for Jabez Bullock's second wife, who didn't want to live in her predecessor's larger house at 56 Main Street. The severe, classical styling of this house has paneled corner pilasters and a wide-board, end-gabled pediment. Notice the portico entranceway with doric fluted columns.



STOP #31 The Narragansett Rune Stone

Some believe that this enigma in stone is a record of a visit to Narragansett Bay by the Vikings or other Norsemen, or Icelandic explorers/trappers, still others a voyage by the Knights Templar. Some believe it was more likely rendered by immigrants to our area, out of national pride, in the 19th-20th centuries. Although no one can say with complete certainty exactly by whom or when these intriguing Runic symbols were carved into this stone, it is safe to say, as quoted from Professor Henrik Williams of Uppsala University in Sweden, the rune stone is “of considerable cultural significance to Rhode Island and New England, not the least because of the controversy, mystery, and even intrigue connected with it.”

Learn more about this fascinating bit of RI history at the Rune Stone marker

There is also a rumor that noted local historian Tim Cranston had a hand in carving the rune stone in his youth as part of an apprenticeship in things arcane and interesting.



STOP #32 William Gregory House (The Sunflower House) 38 Brown Street c.1883

This cross-gabled Queen Anne style house with its rich array of decorative motifs was built by William Gregory, the 19th century tycoon who went on to become the governor of Rhode Island in 1900.

This 2 1/2 story house was built with a 3 story turret to view the owner’s business interests: the Gregory Mill to the south, the harbor to the east, and the Gregory office building to the north. Notice the carved sunflower plaque on the north side of the house.



STOP #33 Former Wickford Public Library c.1898 55 Brown Street

This richly detailed civic building was designed in the form of a temple. The library was built as a gift to the village by merchant C. Allen Chadsey and designed by architect F.J. Sawtelle of Providence. At the 1899 dedication of the library, the structure was described as “altogether one of the most striking and complete edifices of its character in the state.”

Notice the classical temple features: the free-standing 2-story columns, proportional pediment, and leading stairs.