



# Borough of Fenwick Historic District

Report of the Borough of Fenwick Historic District Study Committee



# Fenwick Historic District Study Committee

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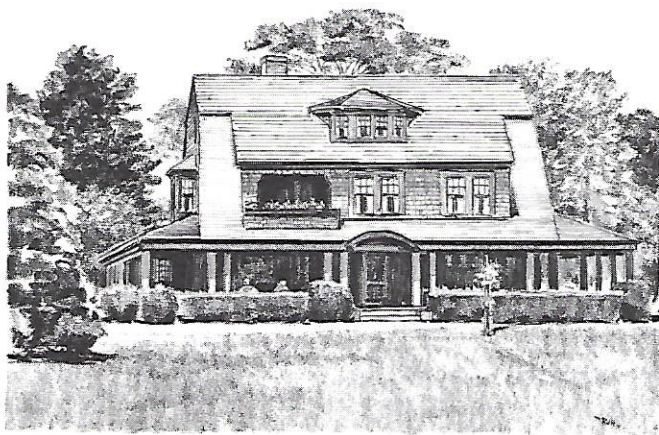
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### *Lynde Point Lighthouse*

Within the Borough of Fenwick are two historic lighthouses . . . the Lynde Point Light and the Saybrook Breakwater Light . . . also known as the Inner and Outer Lighthouses. The former is the oldest having been constructed in 1837. It replaced an even older wooden structure that was first lighted in 1803. Until 1879 both lighthouses used whale oil for illumination. Then kerosene and later wet batteries were finally replaced by electricity. Today a 500-watt bulb in the Inner Light and a 250 watt bulb in the Outer Light are visible over 13 miles away thanks to complex French prisms. Both lighthouses are now operated by the U. S. Coast Guard. (Not within proposed Historic District. Owned by Federal Government.)





*Edith Brainard Davis Cottage*

In 1968 the Connecticut Commission on the Arts noted that this cottage is "the outstanding example of shingle architecture in the State of Connecticut." It was designed and built by Saybrook master-carpenter George Sheffield in 1913 for Mr. and Mrs. J. H. K. Davis of Hartford. Mr. Davis was an officer with The Case, Lockwood and Brainard Company, Printers. Mrs. Davis is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leverett Brainard and a niece of Morgan Gardner Bulkeley. Now over ninety years of age, Mrs. Davis continues to occupy this cottage every summer.

## INTRODUCTION

The 1958 Revision to the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut established the means by which local citizens, working through their own municipalities, could form Historic Districts. Since then one or more such Districts have been created in over 32 Connecticut towns by diligent and responsible townsmen who wished to control more effectively the changes that either do or do not take place within their communities. This type of grass roots citizen concern is essential if the architectural treasures of past eras in this venerable State of Connecticut are to be preserved for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

An Historic District is simply a definable area within a municipality which, having met certain requirements as set forth by the Connecticut Statutes, is of sufficient historical significance to merit its preservation. Within this area the municipality is permitted to regulate the modification or construction of structures in accordance with the Historic District Ordinance. The Ordinance is concerned primarily with the preservation of the aesthetic charm and appeal of the designated area.

The concept of an Historic District is meant to supplement existing zoning laws and regulations. The Historic District is in no way intended to change or override zoning patterns and Building Code requirements relating to public safety and welfare. Zoning is primarily concerned with the quantitative and locational aspects of various land uses. The Historic District Ordinance is actually a form of aesthetic zoning which is aimed at the outward visual quality of established land uses. This is the only means currently available to a municipality by which it may effectively maintain design excellence and plan for well balanced,

coherent growth. Thus an Historic District is a mechanism with which local residents can take positive steps to create guidelines for saving their own neighborhoods within their own townships from the ravages of selfish, tasteless or thoughtless development.

We are all familiar with the hazards of air, water and waste pollution. Visual pollution is equally unwholesome and destructive to the human spirit. Here, in the beautiful and historic Borough of Fenwick, we are all constantly refreshed and uplifted by the unique natural and architectural charms of our surroundings. What can we do to preserve the 19th century character of this old Victorian summer resort so that others, in years to come, may be as fortunate as we?

The following report of the Borough's Historic District Study Committee attempts to show how Fenwick could benefit from becoming an Historic District. The report is not final and is designed to elicit response and suggestions. The misgivings or concerns of all Borough residents must be fully aired and discussed so that corrective action can be taken. The purpose and intent of an Historic District must be fully understood and approved by at least 75% of the property owners. If Fenwick's residents finally do vote to protect the Borough with Historic District status, their decision must be a source of satisfaction and achievement to the entire community.

## Procedure for Establishing an Historic District

The following copy from the General Statutes details the procedures required of a municipality prior to establishment of an historic district or districts.



# GENERAL STATUTES OF CONNECTICUT

Revision of 1958

MUNICIPALITIES

CHAPTER 97 - GENERAL PROVISIONS

*Sec. 7-147a. Historic Districts Authorized.* Any municipality may, by vote of its legislative body and in conformance with the standards and criteria formulated by the Connecticut historical commission, establish within its confines an historic district or districts to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of buildings, places and districts of historic interest by the maintenance of such as landmarks in the history of architecture, of the municipality, of the state or of the nation, and through the development of appropriate settings for such buildings, places and districts. The legislative body of any municipality may make appropriations for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 1; February, 1965, P.A. 221, S. 2.)

*Sec. 7-147b. Preliminary Steps.* Prior to the establishment of an historic district or districts, the following steps shall be taken:

(a) The legislative body shall appoint an historic district study committee for the purpose of making an investigation of a proposed historic district. Each historic district study committee established under the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, shall consist of five members who shall be electors of the municipality holding no salaried municipal office.

(b) The historic district study committee shall investigate and report on the historic significance of the buildings, structures, features, places or surroundings to be included in a proposed historic district or districts and designate the area to be included therein.

(c) The historic district study committee shall transmit copies of its report to the Connecticut historical commission, the planning commission and zoning commission of the municipality, if any, and, in the absence of such a planning commission or zoning commission, to the selectman or to the warden and burgesses, or to the chief executive officer of the municipality for their consideration and recommendations, and each such body or individual shall give his recommendations to the historic district study committee within ninety days from the date of receipt of such report. In addition to such other recommendations as it may make, the Connecticut historical commission may comment upon and may recommend either approval, disapproval, modification, alteration or rejection of the boundaries of each proposed district. Such recommendations shall be read in full at the public hearing to be held by the historic district study committee as hereinafter specified. Failure to make recommendations within ninety days after the date of such receipt shall be taken as approval of the report of the historic district study committee.

(d) The historic district study committee shall hold a public hearing on the establishment of a proposed historic district or districts not less than one hundred twenty days nor more than one hundred fifty days after the transmission of its report as provided in subsection (c) of this section.

(e) Notice of the time and place of such hearing shall be given as follows: (1) Written notice, postage prepaid, shall be given to the owners of record of all real property to be included in the proposed historic district or districts, as they appear on the last-completed grand list, at the addresses shown thereon, at least twenty days before the time set for such hearing, together with a copy of the report of the historic district study committee or a fair and accurate synopsis of such report, a copy of all recommendations made under subsection (c) of this section, a map showing the boundaries of the area to be included in the proposed district, and a copy of the proposed ordinance; and (2) by publication of such notice in the form of a legal advertisement appearing in a newspaper having a substantial circulation in the municipality at least twice, at intervals of not less than five days, the first not more than twenty days nor less than ten days, and the last not less than two days before such hearing.

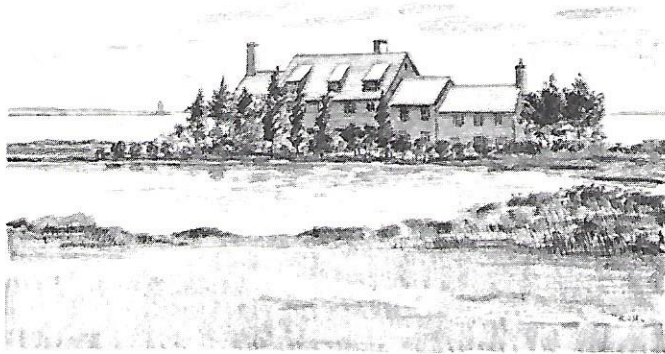
(f) The historic district study committee shall submit a final report to the legislative body of the municipality within sixty days after the public hearing. The report of the committee shall contain the following: (1) A complete description of the area to be included within the proposed historic district or districts, including the total number of buildings therein listed according to their known or estimated ages; (2) a map showing the exact boundaries of the area to be included within the proposed historic district or districts; (3) a proposed ordinance designed to implement the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive; (4) a copy of the report and recommendations of the historical commission; (5) such other matters as the committee may deem necessary and advisable.

(g) The legislative body after reviewing the report of the historic district study committee shall cause ballots to be taken of the owners of record of all real property to be included in the proposed district on the question of the adoption of an historic district ordinance and, if seventy-five per cent of all such owners voting thereon vote affirmatively by such ballots, shall take one of the following steps: (1) Reject the report of the committee, stating its reasons therefor; (2) accept the report of the committee and enact an ordinance, to carry out the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive; (3) return the report to the historic district study committee with such amendments and revisions thereto as it may deem advisable, for consideration by the committee and a further report to the legislative body within ninety days of such return.

(h) The historic district commission established under section 7-147c may from time to time, by following the procedure set out in subsections (b) to (f), inclusive, of this section, suggest proposed amendments to any ordinance adopted hereunder or suggest additional ordinances to be adopted hereunder. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 2; 1963, P.A. 600, S. 1.)

*Sec. 7-147c. Historic District Commission.* Once an historic district has been established in a municipality, the historic district study committee shall cease to exist and





### *Hepburn Cottage*

In 1912 the Hepburn family of Hartford purchased a large shingled cottage that stood on this location. It was destroyed by the Great Hurricane of 1938 that wreaked such havoc on Connecticut's shoreline. Immediately afterward it was replaced by this whitewashed brick year-round home. Various members of the Hepburn family have been and are prominent in public life. Dr. Thomas Hepburn was a pioneer urologist and medical reformer. His wife, Katharine Houghton Hepburn, championed woman suffrage and planned parenthood. Their daughter, Katharine Hepburn, is one of the most admired film actresses in America and has been awarded the coveted "Oscar" three times . . . a national record.

thereafter an historic district commission shall perform all the functions of the historic district study committee relative to establishing new districts and otherwise administering the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive. The historic district commission established under the provisions of said sections shall consist of five members, who shall be electors of such municipality holding no salaried municipal office and whose terms of office and method of appointment shall be fixed by ordinance. The appointments to membership in the commission shall be so arranged that the term of at least one member shall expire each year, and their successors shall be appointed in like manner for terms of five years. The commission shall elect annually a chairman, a vice-chairman and a clerk from its own number. Ordinances adopted hereunder may provide for the appointment in like manner of alternate members not exceeding in number the principal members. In case of inability to act, because of absence, sickness or self-interest, on the part of a member of the commission, his place shall be taken by an alternate member designated by the chairman. All members shall serve without compensation. The commission shall adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with the provisions of said sections and may, subject to appropriation, employ clerical and technical assistance or consultants and may accept money gifts and expend the same for such purposes. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 3.)

*Sec. 7-147d. Certificate Of Appropriateness.* No building or structure shall be erected, altered, restored, moved or demolished within an historic district until after an application for a certificate of appropriateness as to exterior architectural features has been submitted to the commission and approved by said commission. For the purposes of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, "exterior architectural features" shall include such portion of the exterior of a structure as is open to view from a public street, way or place. The style, material, size and location of outdoor advertising signs and bill posters within an historic district shall also be under the control of such commission. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to extend to the color of paint used on the exterior of any building or structure. (b) No area within an historic district shall be used for industrial, commercial, business, home industry or occupation parking whether or not such area is zoned for such use, until after an application for a certificate of appropriateness as to parking has been submitted to the commission and approved by said commission. The provisions of this section shall apply to the enlargement or alteration of any such parking area in existence on the effective date of this act.

*Sec. 7-147e. Application for Certificate. Hearing. Approval.* (a) The historic district commission shall hold a public hearing upon such application for a certificate of appropriateness as to exterior architectural features, or as to parking. Notice of the time and place of such hearing shall be given by publication in the form of a legal advertisement appearing in a newspaper having a substantial circulation in the municipality at least seven days before such hearing. Within not more than one hundred twenty days after the filing of an application as required by section (7-147d) 1 of this act, the commission shall pass upon such application and shall give written notice of its decision to the applicant. Evidence of approval, as referred to in section (7-147d) 1 of this act, shall be by certificate of appropriateness issued by the commission. Failure of the commission to act within said one hundred twenty days shall constitute approval and no other evidence of approval shall be needed. The commission shall keep a record of all applications for certificates of appropriateness and of all the doings under sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive. (b) In its deliberations under sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, the commission shall not consider interior arrangement or use and shall take no action under said sections except for the purpose of preventing the erection, reconstruction, restoration, alteration or razing of buildings or parking in any area in the historic district obviously incongruous with the historic aspects of the district.

*Sec. 7-147f. Considerations in determining appropriateness.* If the commission determines that the proposed erection, construction, restoration, alteration, (or) razing or parking will be appropriate, it shall issue a certificate of appropriateness. In passing upon appropriateness as to exterior architectural features the commission shall consider, in addition to any other pertinent factors, the historical and architectural value and significance, architectural style, general design, arrangement, texture and material of the architectural features involved and the relationship thereof to the exterior architectural style and pertinent features of other structures in the immediate neighborhood. In passing upon appropriateness as to parking, the commission shall take into consideration the size of such parking area, the visibility of cars parked therein, the closeness of such area to adjacent buildings and other similar factors. A certificate of appropriateness may be refused for any building or structure, the erection, reconstruction, restoration, alteration or razing of which, or any parking, in the opinion of the commission, would be detrimental to the interest of the historic district.



*Sec. 7-147g. Variations, permissible when.* Where, by reason of topographical conditions, district borderline situations, immediately adjoining existing developments or because of other unusual circumstances, the strict application of any provision of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, would result in exceptional practical difficulty or undue hardship upon the owner of any specific property, the commission in passing upon applications shall have power to vary or modify strict adherence to said sections or to interpret the meaning of said sections so as to relieve such difficulty or hardship; provided such variance, modification or interpretation shall remain in harmony with the general purpose and intent of said sections so that the general character of the district shall be conserved and substantial justice done. In granting variations, the commission may impose such reasonable and additional stipulations and conditions as will, in its judgment, better fulfill the purposes of said section. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 9.)

*Sec. 7-147h. Action by commission to prevent illegal acts.* If any action or ruling taken by the commission pursuant to the provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, or of any bylaw or ordinance adopted thereunder has been violated, the commission may, in addition to other remedies, institute an action or proceeding to prevent such unlawful erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration, razing, maintenance or use or parking or to restrain, correct or abate such violation or to prevent the occupancy of such building, structure or land, or to prevent any illegal act, conduct, business or use in or about such premises. Regulations and orders of the commission issued pursuant to said sections, or to any bylaw or ordinance adopted thereunder, shall be enforced by the zoning enforcement official or building inspector or by such other person as may be designated by vote of the legislative body, who may be authorized to inspect and examine any building, structure, place or premises and to require in writing the remedying of any condition found to exist therein or thereon in violation of any provision of the regulations or orders made under the authority of said sections or of any bylaw or ordinance adopted thereunder. The owner or agent of any building or premises where a violation of any provision of said sections or of any bylaw or ordinance adopted thereunder has been committed or exists, or the lessee or tenant of an entire building or entire premises where such violation has been committed or exists, or the owner, agent, lessee or tenant of any part of the building or premises in which such violation has been committed or exists, or the agent, architect, builder, contractor, or any other person who commits, takes part or assists in any such violation or who maintains any building or premises in which any such violation exists, shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than one hundred dollars for each day that such violation continues; but, if the offense is wilful, the person convicted thereof shall be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than two hundred fifty dollars for each day that such violation continues, and the circuit court wherein such violation continues or exists shall have jurisdiction of all such offenses, subject to appeal as in other cases. Each day that a violation continues to exist shall constitute a separate offense.

*Sec. 7-147i. Appeals.* Any person or persons severally or jointly aggrieved by any decision of the historic district commission or of any officer thereof may, within fifteen days from the date when such decision was rendered, take an appeal to the court of common pleas of the county in which such municipality is located, which appeal shall be made returnable to such court in the same manner as that prescribed for civil actions brought to such court. Notice of such appeal shall be given by leaving a true and attested copy thereof in the hands of or at the usual place of abode of the chairman or clerk of the commission within twelve days before the return day to which such appeal has been taken. Procedure upon such appeal shall be the same as that defined in section 8-8. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 11.)

*Sec. 7-147j. Exempted acts.* Nothing in sections 7-147a to 7-147k, inclusive, shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance or repair of any exterior feature in the historic district which does not involve a change of design thereof; nor to prevent the construction, reconstruction, alteration or demolition of any such feature which the building inspector or a similar agent certifies is required by the public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition; nor to prevent the construction, reconstruction, alteration or demolition of any such feature under a permit issued by a building inspector or similar agent prior to the effective date of establishment of such district. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 6; 1963, P.A. 600, S. 3.)

*Sec. 7-147k. Prior districts unaffected.* The provisions of sections 7-147a to 7-147j, inclusive, shall in no way impair the validity of any historic district previously established under any special act. (1961, P.A. 430, S. 12.)

*Sec. 7-147l. Method of balloting. Eligibility to vote.* (a) Any ballot or balloting required under the provisions of section 7-147b shall be taken in writing by mail, or by use of voting machines at a special election warned and held for such purpose. Such warning shall be by written notice mailed to each person eligible to vote in such election at least fifteen days in advance thereof and by publication in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality seven days before the election. Any person eligible to vote in any such election shall be given an opportunity to vote by absentee ballot under the usual requirements for voting in such manner. When voting is by written ballot, the ballots shall be sent by first class mail to those persons eligible to vote not later than seven days before they must be returned. The ballots shall be returned to the town clerk. (b) In any balloting required under the provisions of said section, each owner of real property within the district of the age of eighteen years or more who is liable or whose predecessors in title were liable to the town for taxes assessed against him or them, as the case may be, on an assessment of not less than one thousand dollars on the last-completed grand list of the town on real property within the district, or who would be so liable if not entitled to an exemption under subdivision (17), (20), (23), (24), (26), or (27), of section 12-81, may vote, provided he is the record owner of the property fourteen days before the ballots must be returned. A joint owner of any freehold interest in any land shall have a vote equal to the fraction of his ownership in said interest.



## Description and Boundaries of Proposed Historic District

The Historic District Study Committee of the Borough of Fenwick proposes that the entire Borough of Fenwick (with the exception of a small portion of the Borough located north west of Maple Avenue) be designated an Historic District. This Borough within the Town of Old Saybrook is surrounded on three sides by water. To the south is Long Island Sound, to the east is the Connecticut River, and to the north is the South Cove. The Borough's west boundary is the residential community of Fenwood which is also part of Old Saybrook (see map on p. 6-7).

The Borough of Fenwick encompasses 225 acres of land, 146 acres of which are park. Within the park is a 59-acre golf course and four tennis courts that are open to the public for a fee. The park and golf course are managed by the Fenwick Park Commission which was established on April 8, 1943.

As part of the Town of Old Saybrook, the Borough also belongs to the Connecticut River Gateway Compact. This compact is composed of eight contiguous towns that are located on both sides of the river, including Old Saybrook and Old Lyme at the river's mouth and going up-river as far as and including Haddam and East Haddam. The purpose of the Gateway Compact is to preserve the natural and historic resources of this area.

Because Fenwick's zoning regulations preclude any commercial establishments within the Borough, practically the entire Borough is used for residential and recreational purposes. The only exceptions are areas covered by the Gateway Compact, legally protected wetlands, and property owned by the Federal Government (approximately once acre) on which the Lynde Point Inner Light and the lighthouse keeper's home are located. It is from here also that the Saybrook Breakwater Outer Light is operated. The U. S. Coast Guard is presently in charge of these lighthouses.

## Historical Significance of Proposed Historic District

In 1635 the English Colony of Saybrook was established on the west bank of the mouth of the Connecticut River. The proprietors of this Colony were Puritan "lords and gentlemen" who, under English law, were granted the right to occupy this land by the Warwick Patent issued to them by the powerful Robert Rich, Second Earl of Warwick. The agents of these noble patentees immediately constructed a fort on the Neck (now Saybrook Point) for protection against the Indians. The area that is now the Borough of Fenwick was called the Western Neck because of its location west of the Neck. The Western Neck was owned personally by Colonel George Fenwick, the only one of the Warwick patentees ever to actually live in Saybrook. Colonel Fenwick followed John Winthrop Jr. as governor of the Saybrook Colony in 1639. Five years later Fenwick sold Fort Saybrook as well as other "appurtenances", including the Warwick Patent and the Saybrook Seal, to the Connecticut Colony, which had been established up-river by fellow Puritans. Connecticut originally consisted only of Hartford, Windsor and Wethersfield. After 1644 the Saybrook Colony ceased to be an independent political entity and became a vital part of Connecticut.

In 1675 the Western Neck was purchased from George Fenwick's heirs by Simon Lynde and thereafter was named Lynde's Neck. Lynde's Neck was used as a large farm and, over the years, was owned by various descendants of the Lynde family. The Lyndes also owned all the fishing rights contiguous to the Neck. They had a number of fishing piers extending out into the Sound, the river and the cove

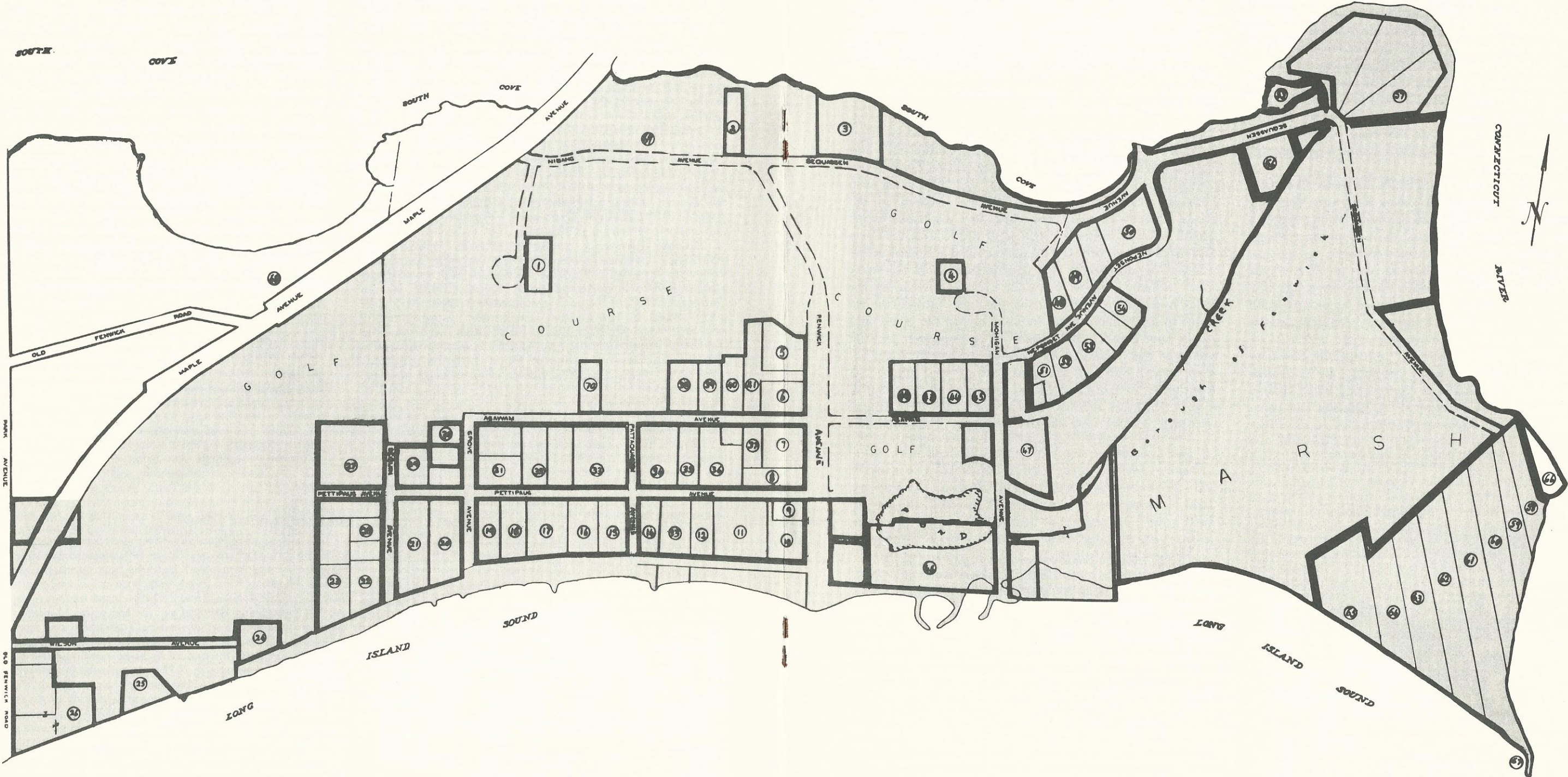


### *Rockwell Staniford Cottage*

Like a number of Fenwick's larger waterfront homes, this imposing cottage which was built in 1899 replaced two much more modest structures which had been built during the previous decade. The latter were simply picked up and moved to other locations within the community! The architect for this cottage was W. E. Becker of Hartford and the owner was Morgan Gardner Bulkeley, one of Connecticut's wealthiest and most prominent citizens. Mr. Bulkeley followed his father, Eliphalet Bulkeley, founder of the Aetna Life Insurance Company, as president of the company in 1879 and continued in that capacity until his death in 1922. In 1880 Bulkeley became mayor of the City of Hartford, then went on to become governor of the state and a U. S. Senator. A man of his times, Bulkeley's exploits as chief of the Republican Party of Connecticut have become political legends. In 1899 he put through the necessary legislation that changed the original Fenwick summer colony into the unique Borough of Fenwick. Today this cottage is owned by Bulkeley's granddaughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Rockwell Staniford.



# Borough of Fenwick Historic District





which they rented to local fishermen. Until the middle of the 19th century, huge quantities of fish, especially shad, were caught from these shores.

In 1802 the U. S. Government purchased land from William Lynde in order to build a wooden lighthouse at the entrance of the river. The present Inner Lighthouse replaced this structure on the same location in 1838. The Outer Lighthouse at the end of the breakwater went into service in 1886.

In 1871 the New Saybrook Company, financed largely by the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company of Hartford, purchased Lynde's Neck and transformed the area into an elegant Victorian summer resort called Fenwick. This resort, now over 100 years old, was typical of many similar watering places that were being created along the eastern seaboard of the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Fenwick is unique, however, in that the community and most of its charming residences still exist, intact and *in toto*, and still look much as they did during the Victorian era.

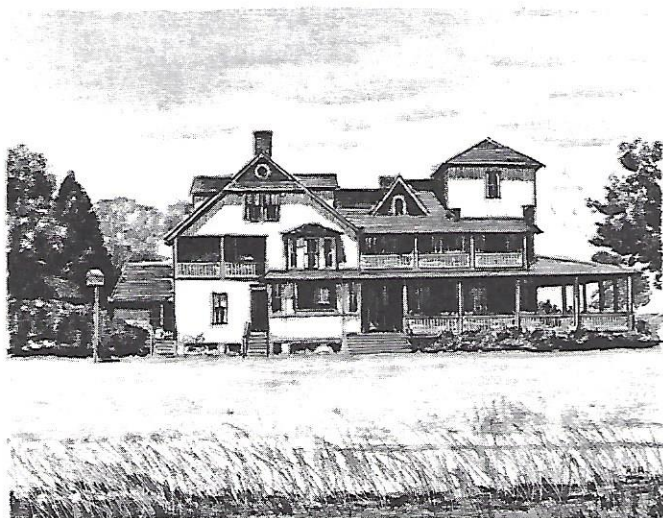
Back in 1871 the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company also financed the Connecticut Valley Railroad. The railroad extended from Hartford to Saybrook Point. Fenwick Hall, a large hotel that dominated the new summer colony of Fenwick and the new railroad were both opened the same day — July 31st. The following year, in 1872, a spur of the railroad was built across the South Cove to the new summer resort and Fenwick even boasted its own railroad station. Today this railroad bridge has been replaced by the modern automobile causeway.

After Fenwick Hall was officially opened, the New Saybrook Company sold off many building lots on which summer cottages began to be constructed. Most cottage owners, however, took their meals at Fenwick Hall. Unfortunately, the New Saybrook Company began to suffer

from severe financial troubles almost immediately and in 1876 was taken over by the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company. Eleven years later the insurance company itself failed.

In 1889 Fenwick Hall was purchased at auction by Edward Stokes, proprietor of the Hoffman House in New York City. Stokes had achieved notoriety as the murderer of the gambler and railroad speculator "Jubilee Jim" Fisk, during a fight over the affections of a young woman. He was saved from punishment, however, because of his close friendship with various important Tammany Hall politicians. For the next few years Fenwick Hall served as a favorite watering place for flamboyant New York politicians and their cronies, some of whom were leading lights in the theatrical world. Best known were Boss Croker and matinee idol Richard Mansfield.

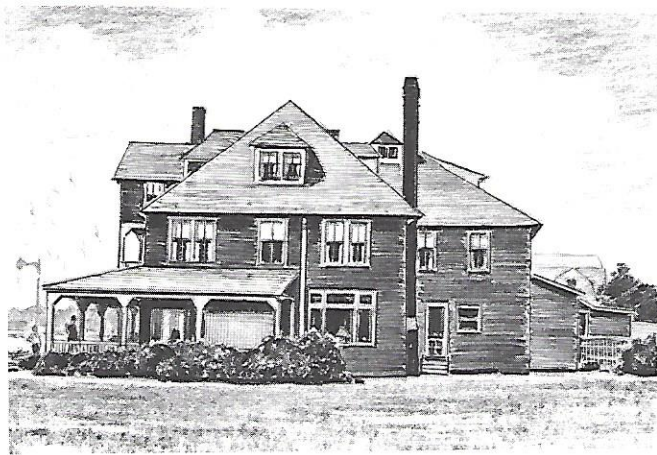
By this time most of Fenwick's gingerbread cottages were owned and occupied by very proper businessmen and their families from Hartford and Middletown. Quite a few cottagers were Episcopal clergymen, and there were even Bishops! Naturally, these folk were not pleased by the revels at Fenwick Hall, nor were they displeased when Stokes became embroiled in a legal battle with the town fathers of Old Saybrook. This concerned the upkeep of the wooden carriage bridge that used to cross from Saybrook Point to Folly Point at Fenwick. Each party insisted the other must maintain it. During the fight Stokes lost interest in his summer hotel, refused to pay his taxes, and finally kept Fenwick Hall closed all one summer. In 1894 the place was purchased by Morgan Gardner Bulkeley for back taxes. Bulkeley was president of the Aetna Life Insurance Company and former governor of the State of Connecticut. He and his sister, Mrs. Leverett Brainard, and their families were summer residents of Fenwick and



#### *F. Kelso Davis Cottage*

A typically Victorian summer home, the original portion of this cottage was built soon after 1871 when the summer community of Fenwick was developed by the New Saybrook Company. Six years later the cottage was purchased and moved to its present waterfront location by Mr. and Mrs. Leverett Brainard of Hartford. Mr. Brainard was one of the first investors in the New Saybrook Company. The cottage was gradually and pragmatically enlarged by a local Saybrook carpenter to accommodate the expanding Brainard family which eventually included 10 children and a grandmother. Mr. Brainard was one of Hartford's most prominent businessmen and, for many years, served as Mayor of the city as well as in the State Legislature. Mrs. Brainard was the sister of Morgan Gardner Bulkeley, President of the Aetna Life Insurance Company and Connecticut's most powerful political leader. Today the cottage is owned by the Brainard's grandson, F. Kelso Davis.





### *Olcott Smith Cottage*

This commodious summer cottage was built on Fenwick's waterfront in the early 1880's. The owner was Dr. Joseph Alsop of Middletown, a leading physician and a Democratic politician who was often at odds with his Republican Fenwick neighbor, Morgan Gardner Bulkeley. Newspaper columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop are his grandsons. The cottage has changed hands several times. One of its owners was pioneer construction engineer Paul Starrett whose company, Starrett Brothers, built the fabulous Empire State Building as well as the elegant Lincoln Memorial. Two presidents of Hartford's Aetna Life and Casualty have also lived here: Morgan Bulkeley Brainard and the present owner, Olcott Smith, and their families.

were vitally interested in the community's future. When Bulkeley persuaded the State Legislature to create a borough form of government for Fenwick in 1889, the Bulkeley-Brainard families took over the leadership of the community.

The new Borough of Fenwick was granted the right to have its own governing body. This consists of a warden and six burgesses who appoint and employ a year-round Borough superintendent. The Borough also enjoys zoning and taxing powers of its own. Borough property owners pay regular taxes to the Town of Old Saybrook. Fenwick's zoning regulations, however, do not have the power to control the architectural character and external appearance of local residences and other buildings. An Historic District would be the most effective mechanism to insure such control. This mechanism will become even more important as Fenwick inevitably evolves from what was once chiefly a summer resort into a year-round community.

In 1916 the railroad spur from Saybrook Point to Fenwick was discontinued and an automobile causeway was built in its place. The following year both Fenwick Hall and the Fenwick Yacht Club (a sizable structure built on Folly Point in 1900) burned to the ground. Today there is no public hostelry within the Borough.

On September 17, 1942, the Fenwick Hall Company (created by the Bulkeley family) and Morgan and Newton Brainard deeded to the Borough a large amount of property (146 acres) to be designated as parkland. This included most of the present golf course. The Fenwick Golf Course is a major recreational asset for Borough and Town residents and others. The park's open spaces, wetlands, bird and marine life are equally prized.

Over the years, numerous summer residents of Fenwick have been outstanding leaders in the world of business, politics, religion and the arts. Probably the best known today is the film star, Katharine Hepburn. For further details concerning the history of Fenwick see *The Fenwick Story* written by Marion Hepburn Grant and published by the Connecticut Historical Society in 1974.

## Analysis and Inventory of Sites and Structures

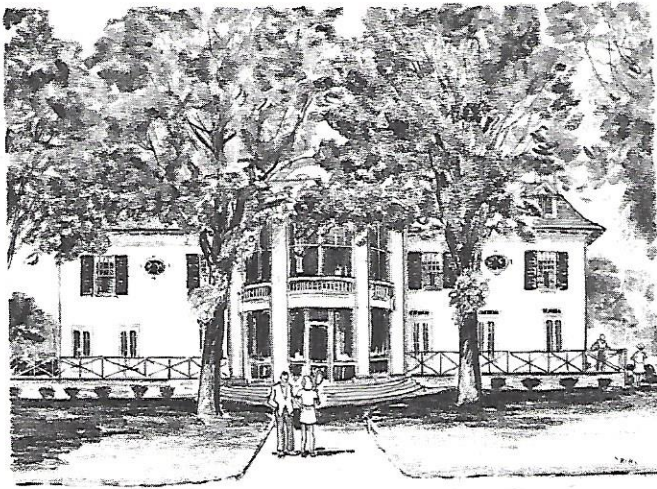
Of the 67 cottages that comprise the residences of the Borough of Fenwick most are described as Carpenter, Stick, or Seaside Shingle Gothic. Although the great majority are shingled, some are painted clapboards chiefly Victorian in design. There are only six structures of modern design. One cottage is a remodeled 18th century farmhouse.

In 1968 the Connecticut Commission on the Arts initiated a special project called *300 Years of Connecticut Architecture*. Beginning with a town-by-town survey of notable Connecticut structures ranging from Colonial times to the present, the directors of the survey collected an archive of over 1,000 photographic plates. Two hundred and twenty-eight of these photographs were selected as particularly significant, developed into an attractive mobile exhibit, and are now being shown by the commission throughout the state. Number 63 in the section on *Houses* is the Fenwick cottage of Edith Brainard Davis. In the opinion of the commission, this shingled summer home is "the outstanding example of shingle architecture in the State of Connecticut." Actually a number of other Fenwick cottages are equally significant. Most important, however, is the fact that shingled cottages, once so common in stylish summer resorts of the Victorian era, still exist at Fenwick, not just as isolated examples of a bygone period of architectural history, but as parts of a total community.

Another notable shingled structure in Fenwick is the Borough's chapel, St. Mary's-by-the-Sea. The Historic American Buildings Survey, a project of the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior, is now engaged in a photo-data documentation of significant architectural structures throughout the country. The Old Saybrook Historical Society has submitted a formal request that photographs of Fenwick's chapel be included by the survey.

As far as the Borough of Fenwick is concerned, the chief usefulness of an historic district status would be increased political power that could be employed to protect the architectural integrity and charm of this historic community. This is becoming increasingly important today as more and more Fenwick summer cottages are being remodeled or replaced by year-round residences.





### *LaMay Cottage*

This summer mansion was constructed around 1885. It replaced a much smaller home that had been built in 1871. The owners, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gallaudet Erwin, spent the summer months here but resided during the rest of the year in Hartford, New York City and Savannah, Georgia. Mr. Erwin was a railroad tycoon. After his death in 1902, the Erwin family gradually lost interest in Fenwick. Finally, after the local hotel, Fenwick Hall, burned to the ground in 1917, the old Erwin place was turned into an exclusive public hostelry. It was known first as the Riversea Club, then as the Riversea Inn. In 1957 the Riversea was purchased by the Fenwick community and refurbished as a private home. It is now the year-round residence of Mr. and Mrs. Richard LaMay.

## Inventory of Sites and Structures

Map No.	Present Owner	Date or Period	Style	Use
1	D. Scoufopoulos	1955	Shingle	Res.
2	J. Soper	c. 1911	Shingle	Res.
3	E. C. Gengras	1928	White clapboard	Res.
4	T. Stokes	c. 1881	Shingle	Res.
5	E. Dickinson	c. 1880	White clapboard	Res.
6	R. LaMay	1885	White clapboard Southern Colonial	Res.
7	S. Jones	c. 1871-72	White clapboard	Res.
8	C. Millard	c. 1871-72	Shingle	Res.
9	D. Wright	1887	Shingle	Res.
10	F. K. Davis	c. 1871-72	Gray clapboard	Res.
11	R. Staniford	1900	Shingle	Res.
12	F. Chapman	1880	Shingle	Res.
13	O. Jensen	1905	Shingle	Res.
14	R. Wilson	1910	Shingle	Res.
15	R. Van Itallie	c. 1880	Shingle	Res.
16	T. Chadwick	c. 1880	Shingle	Res.
17	L. Smith	c. 1880	Shingle	Res.
18	E. Grant	c. 1871-72	Shingle	Res.
19	P. Brainard	c. 1878	Shingle	Res.
20	S. Little	c. 1882	Shingle	Res.

Map No.	Present Owner	Date or Period	Style	Use
21	K. Marvin	1968	Whitewashed Brick Ranch	Res.
22	L. Keeney	c. 1882	Shingle	Res.
23	W. Walton	1974	Cedar siding	Res.
24	G. Cheney	1889	Shingle	Res.
25	E. Little	1931	Shingle	Res.
26	A. Godbout	1903	Shingle	Res.
27	M. Bartlett	c. 1884	Shingle and red clapboard	Res.
28	J. Bradin	1912	Shingle	Res.
29	P. Bulkeley	1937	Shingle	Res.
30	H. Robinson	c. 1885	Shingle	Res.
31	E. McDowell	1884	Shingle	Res.
32	N. Wright	1955	Shingle	Res.
33	R. Reigeluth	1953	Shingle	Res.
34	R. Bulkeley	1881	Shingle	Res.
35	W. Freeman	1886	Shingle	Res.
36	E. Davis	1913	Shingle	Res.
37	Stanford-Work	1945	Shingle	Res.
38	Parsons-Gengras	1945	Red wood siding	Res.
39	W. Gengras	1947	Gray clapboard	Res.
40	E. Hellinger	1946	White clapboard	Res.
41	P. Pierson	1944	White clapboard	Res.



Map No.	Present Owner	Date or Period	Style	Use
42	J. Huntington	1890	Shingle	Res.
43	C. Spencer	1957	Gray wood ranch	Res.
44	E. Francis	1885	Shingle	Res.
45	J. Davis	1972	Shingle and brick	Res.
46	K. Hepburn	1939	Whitewashed brick	Res.
47	L. Van Itallie	1949	White shingle and brick	Res.
48	G. Frederickson	1920	Shingle	Res.
49	W. Morrin	1789	White clapboard colonial	Res.
50	W. Phillips	1921	Shingle	Res.
51	D. Lewis	1896	Shingle	Res.
52	Lewis-Farnham	1895	Shingle	Res.
53		1912	Shingle and wood siding	Res.
54	D. Moore	1954	Shingle	Res.
55	W. Wightman	1910	Shingle, former houseboat	Res.
56	R. Potter	1917	White clapboard	Res.
57	C. Brainard	1967	Cedar siding	Res.
58	W. Field	1925	Shingle and wood siding	Res.

Map No.	Present Owner	Date or Period	Style	Use
59	G. Warner	1914	Shingle	Res.
60	M. Radom	1895	Shingle and wood siding	Res.
61	G. Longtin	1968	Shingle	Res.
62	W. Jarvis	1898	Shingle	Res.
63	Mathewson-Patterson	1900	Shingle	Res.
64	Essex Beach Club	1900	Shingle	Res.
65	W. Webster	1918	White wood siding	Res.
66	*Inner Lighthouse	1838	Whitewashed granite	Res. and Official
67	*Outer Lighthouse	1886	Whitewashed iron	Official
68	Borough Office			Official
69	Wilson Garage	1910	Shingle	Res.
70	St. Mary's-by-the-Sea (See Map No. 4)	1883	Shingle	Church

\*Not within proposed Historic District.  
Owned by the Federal Government.



### *Theodore Van Itallie Cottage*

Now owned by Dr. and Mrs. Theodore Van Itallie of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, this elegant waterfront summer cottage was originally the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Francis Goodwin and their eight children. It was built around 1880 and was designed by Mr. Goodwin himself who excelled as an amateur architect. As Hartford's pioneer Park Commissioner, he also promoted the establishment and design of that city's unique and extensive system of parks. In the early days, Francis Goodwin, a first cousin of financier J. Pierpont Morgan, was Fenwick's leading citizen.



# PROPOSED ORDINANCE

## Creating an Historic District

*to be adopted by the Board of Warden and Burgesses  
of the Borough of Fenwick*

### BE IT ORDAINED:

Section 1. Purpose. To promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of buildings, places and a district of historic interest by the maintenance of such as landmarks in the history of architecture, of the Borough of Fenwick, of the State of Connecticut or of the Nation, and through the development of appropriate settings for such buildings, places and district there is established an historic district in the Borough of Fenwick to be known as the Fenwick Historic District.

Section 2. Boundaries. The District is bounded and described as follows:

NORTHERLY: By the South Cove;  
NORTHWESTERLY: By the southeasterly line of Maple Avenue;  
WESTERLY: By the westerly line of the Borough of Fenwick;  
SOUTHERLY: By Long Island Sound; and  
EASTERLY: By the Connecticut River. (Excepting one acre more or less on SW corner owned by Federal Government.)

Section 3. Historic District Commission. An Historic District Commission is hereby established and shall consist of five (5) members and of three (3) members, all of whom shall be electors of the Borough holding no salaried Borough office. They shall be appointed by the Board of Warden and Burgesses. Initially the members shall be appointed in such manner that one member is appointed for a term expiring on July 1 of each of the following years: 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980, and the alternate members shall be appointed in such a manner that one alternate member is appointed for a term expiring on July 1 of each of the following years: 1976, 1977 and 1978. Thereafter the Board of Warden and Burgesses shall appoint annually one member for a five-year term expiring July 1 and one alternate member for a three-year term expiring July 1. The Commission shall elect annually a chairman, a vice chairman and a clerk from its own number. In the case of inability to act because of absence, sickness or self-interest on the part of a member, that member's place shall be taken by an alternate member designated by the chairman. All members and alternate members shall serve without compensation. The Board of Warden and Burgesses shall make appointments to fill vacancies for the unexpired terms thereof.

Section 4. Powers, etc. of Commission. The Historic Commission shall have such powers, perform such functions and be subject to such limitations as shall from time to time be provided by the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. The Commission shall adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with the provisions of said Statutes and may, subject to appropriation, employ clerical and technical assistance or consultants and may accept money gifts and expend the same for such purposes.

Section 5. Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect on \_\_\_\_\_, 1975.



# Proposed Historic District

## Questions and Answers

*What would be the basic purpose of an Historic District Commission in Fenwick?*

To preserve the architectural integrity and character of the houses within the community.

*Can the same purpose be achieved by changing the Zoning Regulations?*

No. Our Zoning Regulations pertain to use and lot size, building size and placement of the building on a lot. Zoning regulations do not relate to architectural style.

*How will an Historic District Commission control the appearance of Fenwick?*

The Commission will pass on the appropriateness from an architectural point of view of the exterior of any new building and exterior changes to be made to any present building.

*Will the Historic District Commission control the use of building materials?*

This is one of the considerations it will take into account.

*What if a resident wants to alter the interior of his house?*

Any change can be made to the interior without approval of the Commission.

*What about house color?*

The Commission will have no control over the paint color of a house.

*Must all new structures and new additions be "shingled Gothic" in design?*

Not necessarily. Any proposal must be aesthetically in keeping with the character of the District and the architectural style of other buildings in the immediate neighborhood.

*Will there be limits placed upon the building of houses on lots already having one house on them so that the community will maintain our feeling for open space?*

No. An Historic District Commission cannot control the number of houses which can be built. This must be done through present or amended Zoning Regulations.

*What publicity is attached to becoming an Historic District, and will this attract tourists?*

The location of Historic Districts is sometimes put on State maps, but the Study Committee does not feel that becoming an Historic District will focus any increase in attention on Fenwick.

*If we do become an Historic District and subsequently regret our decision, may we change our status?*

Yes. The ordinance creating the District can be repealed in the same manner as any other ordinance.

*Who is on the Historic District Commission if and when it is created?*

Five Fenwick electors would be appointed by the Warden and Burgesses to serve five-year terms. One new member would go on each year to replace one departing member so that the membership of the Commission would change. Three alternates would be appointed for three-year terms.

*Would residents have anything to say about how the Commission is discharging its responsibilities?*

Each application to the Commission requires a public hearing and notice of such a hearing. Any resident may attend these hearings and express his feelings.

*Who votes on whether Fenwick becomes an Historic District?*

All adult property owners in the Borough of Fenwick are eligible to vote. If two or more persons are joint owners of a piece of property, they vote in proportion to their share of ownership. No individual may have more than one full vote. The Burgesses must vote on the final adoption of the District.

*What percent of affirmative votes is required to create an Historic District?*

At least 75 percent of the property owners. Then the Burgesses of the Borough will vote on the final adoption of the District.

*Will the status of an Historic District increase property taxes?*

No. Property assessments for tax purposes are done on an individual basis and are not affected by the existence of an Historic District.

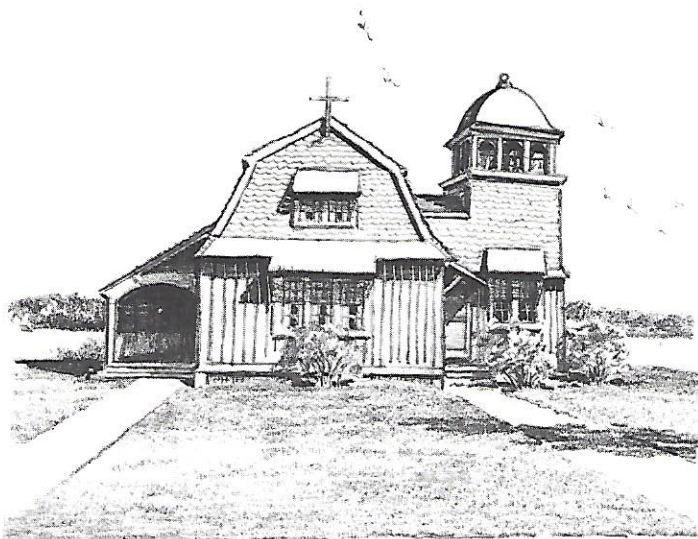
*Will the State or Town have any control over the Historic District?*

The Borough of Fenwick has total control and outside governmental agencies will not be involved.

*Is there a right of appeal from a decision of the Commission?*

Yes. To the Court of Common Pleas for Middlesex County.





### *Fenwick Chapel*

As in an old New England village, this gambrel-roofed chapel is the nucleus of the Borough of Fenwick. The oldest portion was designed and built around 1883 by Fenwick summer resident Francis Goodwin. It originally stood just behind Mr. Goodwin's cottage. By 1886 the tiny chapel had become too small for the growing summer community. So it was moved to its present location and a new wing and bell tower added. Services are held every Sunday during the summer months and numerous christenings and weddings of young Fenwickites have taken place here. The interior of the chapel is adorned by the famous wood carver, John Gregory Wiggins.