

New Bedford Architecture: A Walking Tour

County Street



Presented by
The New Bedford
Preservation Society, Inc.



2. William Rotch Rodman Mansion

When the town of New Bedford was incorporated in 1787 by its Quaker founders, County Street was already a principal thoroughfare. Originally an Indian trail, the road as it was laid out in 1717 reached from the Slocum River at Russell's Mills in South Dartmouth northerly as far as Plymouth. Still called County Road in 1800, its position at the crest of the hill overlooking New Bedford harbor began to attract the attention of an increasingly wealthy class of whaling merchants. These men were beginning to desire more stately homes with more interior space and land for the gardens they all coveted but were denied by the narrow confines of Old Bedford Village. County Street then became the site of many fine residences, grandly suited to both the entertainment and gentlemanly pursuits these men felt defined their position in the community.

The town had grown since the economically difficult days of the American Revolution. New Bedford, freed of the trade problems created by the War of 1812, found its well-protected deep harbor the home of an ever growing number of whaling vessels. As Herman Melville suggests in the first chapter of *Moby Dick*, Nantucket may have been the romantic home of whaling, but New Bedford made whaling an industry. The sea captains of New Bedford became investors in international trade and soon the grand residences of County Street became their legacy.

The first stop on this walking tour is the corner of County and Madison Streets in front of the **Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum** at 396 County Street.



1. Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum

1. The most outstanding example of the elaborate gardens for which New Bedford was known exists next to the house built for **William Rotch, Jr.**, in 1834. The house was one of the first projects of a young carpenter named Richard Upjohn, only recently arrived in the city from his home in England and soon to become one of America's foremost architects. Owned over the years by only three families, this house bears the reputation of being one of the most beautifully preserved homes in New Bedford. Built in 1833 of brick which was then covered with clapboards, it still retains its grounds, greenhouses, and carriage house, as well as its Knot Garden, a design attributed

to William Rotch Jr.'s son-in-law, James Arnold. The fine proportions of this Classical Revival residence have been altered only by the addition of a belvedere and dormers on the roof. It stands as supreme witness to the enormous success of the whaling merchants of New Bedford in the golden age of whaling between the War of 1812 and the Civil War. An entry in Charles Francis Adams's diary recalls his visit to this city with his father, ex-president John Quincy Adams; "We were taken to see the street which has lately risen like magic and which presents more noble-looking mansions than any other in the country. The William Rotch, Jr., mansion is one of the finest where noble trees and over-reaching broad lawns lead to a charming garden."

William Rotch, Jr., the patron of this luxurious atmosphere was one of those successful Nantucket ship owners who moved to New Bedford shortly after the American Revolution. It was his family, principally his uncle, Francis Rotch, who owned a large interest in the ship Dartmouth of Boston Tea Party fame, and soon after peace was signed (1783) it was William Rotch, Jr.'s ship, the *Bedford*, which became first to fly the flag of the United States in an English port under peacetime conditions. Thus, in ships owned by this New Bedford family, one finds decisive connections with both the beginning and the end of the American War of Independence.



2. William Rotch Rodman Mansion

2. Proceed south along County Street to the **William Rotch Rodman Mansion** at number 388. It was designed by Providence architect Russell Warren in 1833-1836. In this building the architect has considerably softened the harshness of his previous Greek Revival project, the Joseph Grinnell Mansion located across the street (see number 7). The granite sheathing here has been left rough on the flanks but is smoother on the facade, consistent with the use of the more decorative Corinthian order. The dignity and grandeur of what was reputed to be one of the most expensive homes built in America in the 1830's still remains. In the 1850's, this house was the home of New Bedford's first mayor, Abraham H. Howland. It has served many institutional uses in more modern times and has recently been restored by private investors.

3. Directly south is the **Captain Cornelius Howland** House at 380 County Street. Howland, master of the ship Lafayette, among others, built this house in 1841-45. The Greek Revival detailing on its Federal style five-window facade is simple here in comparison with its loftier neighbors, but it serves to remind us of the conservative norm of most early nineteenth century architecture.

4. Turn the corner and look down Russell Street to the marvelous Greek Revival residence on the right at number 66. This is the **William Tallman Russell** House, built in 1819, the year of Russell's marriage to Sylvia Grinnell. Russell was a whaling merchant with offices at Retch's Square at the foot of Rodman Street in the 1830's. Originally a smaller Federal style residence, a columned porch and an enlarged third floor were added in a later remodeling along with Greek Revival interior detailing found throughout. The transitional nature of the building is evident in the flared window lintels, a Federal style feature. When built, it was the only home on the block and lent its owner's name to the street.

5. At 70 Russell Street is a large Stick style house with asymmetrically placed gables. It was built in 1889 in the name of **Eliza Penniman York** after the purchase of the lot from Samuel C. Hart. Her father was Captain Joseph H. Cornell who once commanded the whaling bark Eliza. He was a prominent citizen of the city and later served in the Massachusetts State Legislature. In 1889, Eliza's husband, George A York, retired after twelve years of government service and founded a successful insurance and investment business in New Bedford. The Yorks lived here until 1923 when they moved to a home on Hawthorn Street. Characteristic of the Stick style are the exposed timbers which not only appear in the eastern gable, but overlie the first floor windows and underline the second floor. While these are not structural timbers themselves, they make reference to structural framing and therefore focus the viewer's attention upon structure and away from pure ornament.

6. At the corner of County and Russell Streets is the tall and boxy **Joshua Richmond** House, built for him in 1881 and added to in later years. Only the irregular plan of the late Victorian house remains today to give an indication of its original style. The original hipped roof has been altered by the addition of a third story and belvedere. However, the decorative mouldings at the front and rear roof lines of the original house, the pairs of tall thin windows, the flared shingled window hoods, and the variety of shingle shapes on the second level (contrasting with the scored wood imitation stone on the first) still betray the aesthetic of the popular Queen Anne style of the 1880's embellished with many Eastlake details. Richmond describes himself in the City Directory of 1883 as a merchant tailor doing business at 31 North Water Street.

7. One of the most historically significant homes in New Bedford is found directly across the Street The **Hon. Joseph Grinnell** Mansion stands at 379 County. Grinnell was one of the most astute men in New Bedford's history. Born in this city, he moved to New York in 1810 and founded Fish, Grinnell and Company with his cousin, Captain Preserved Fish. This trading company prospered and Grinnell returned to New Bedford in 1825. This home was

built for him in 1830 by architect Russell Warren. New Bedford possesses many excellent examples of this architect's work largely due to Grinnell's patronage. The house is characteristic of both the growing love for the archaeologically correct classical orders in the young American nation and the growing wealth of New Bedford citizens. The simplicity of the building in its square shape, its symmetrical plan and simple proportions hark back to the earlier Federal period. Yet the Doric columns (destroyed once by fire and recently restored) place it squarely among the Classical Revival buildings of Warren and others whose work so appropriately characterizes the ideals of the American democracy after the Revolutionary War. The third floor was added by a later Grinnell heir. The outer sheathing, a rusticated granite, is a severity consistent with the Doric Order of the porch. It was cut from the same Quincy quarry as Boston's Bunker Hill Monument.

Joseph Grinnell was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1843, and in that year, ex-president John Quincy Adams visited New Bedford and stayed at this home. It was during his government service in 1846 that Grinnell was instrumental in locating in New Bedford the city's first cotton cloth manufacturing complex, the Wamsutta Mill. In that same year, Grinnell's adopted daughter married the poet and publisher of the Home Journal, Nathaniel Parker Willis. A friend of Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell, Willis accompanied Joseph Grinnell on many of his trips to the Caribbean, the West and to Europe. Of New Bedford, Willis once wrote (1851); "There is a strong tincture of Quaker precision and simplicity in the manners of the wealthy class in New Bedford, and," he pointed out further, " ... among the nautical class, it mixes up very curiously with the tarpaulin carelessness and ease." He then predicted that this fine and unique balance would probably disappear when the railroad to Boston was completed, placing that urbane culture only two hours away. However, a certain Quaker precision and simplicity still lives in this austere residence. Later used as a school, the house suffered damage and was encroached upon by auxiliary buildings, but in recent years has been converted to congregate housing use and beautifully restored.

8. Continuing north along the west side of County Street, the **Cornelius Grinnell, Jr.**, House comes into view at the southwest corner of Hawthorn Street. Though its original exterior has largely been masked by modern siding and its front porch has undergone change, it remains a good example of the vernacular Greek Revival style popular in the early 1800's. Built in 1828, it was once reflected by an almost identical home across Hawthorn Street, the William Swain House. Both Grinnell and Swain were sons-in-law of Gilbert Russell, who presented his daughters with the land for their homes. The Swain house burned in 1928 but the estate still formed the nucleus of the Swain Free School, a private school founded by the family in 1878 which later became the Swain School of Art. Its original purpose was, according to its first trustees, to " ... furnish opportunities for culture to those who either had or wished to have the sentiment and idea of culture."

9. One Hawthorn Street building remains from the **Swain School of Art**. This is the fine Neo-Georgian "Studio" building at the northwest corner of Hawthorn and County designed by the New Bedford architect Nathaniel Cannon Smith in 1915. Its recessed entry bay, large Georgian doorway framed by Doric columns and other eighteenth century Georgian features mark a building which, perhaps because of its small size, is one of the finest

exercises in Neo-Georgian design in the city. Smith was born and educated in New Bedford but studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris before returning to establish his architectural practice here. In 1895, his office was located in the Rodman Candleworks on Water Street. This studio was designed for the school where Smith also served as an instructor. The Swain School gave up this property when it merged with the College of Visual and Performing Arts of Southeastern Massachusetts University in 1988. The studio is now incorporated into the Kennedy-Donovan School.

10. The **Mary Howland** House (399 County Street) and its neighbor to the north were both built shortly after the initial owners purchased the lots from the heirs of William R Rotch in 1850. The entire block was once the estate of Gilbert Russell, son of the founder of the city Joseph Russell. The Howland House was built in 1855 for Mary Howland, probably as an investment. It was purchased in 1856 by the merchant mariner Caleb B Anthony, Jr., whose family lived here for many years. It was originally sheathed in smooth boarded "shiplap" siding and was shingled only in recent years.

11. The brick **Barton Ricketson** House (401 County Street) differs only in fabric from the Howland House. Both Italianate dwellings exhibit a two story, square plan with a belvedere and a central peak in the roof line of each side of the square. The varied treatment of the carpenter details of the porches and eave brackets attempt to break the monotony of formula, yet it is evident that these two houses may have been built by the same architect/builder. Ricketson was a merchant and whaling agent who kept his counting room here at his home.

12. The house which once commanded this whole block stands at the head of Walnut Street at 405 County Street. It is perhaps the most spectacular of the County Street residences. A fine Federal style home owned by **Gilbert Russell** stood on this site in about 1805. However, that house disappeared as the result of thorough re-modeling by Dr. Edward Abbe, its owner from 1868 to 1897. The result combines Italianate paired brackets with the dramatic profile of a French mansard roof with an oriental upsweep topping a porch with decorative peaked arches. It is magnificently energetic in its details and must have been a great delight to Victorians to whom the adage "more is not enough" is certainly confirmed here. It recently housed a religious order, the Sisters of the Resurrection, which conducted a school here, but is now privately owned.

13. Just off County on Clinton Street is a group of houses of unusual quality and coherency. The six homes on **Clinton Place**, grouped as they are in a tight European appearing close, were all designed in 1898 by architect Nathaniel Cannon Smith. He was commissioned for this design by the physician Edward Abbe, Jr., who developed this portion of his father's estate for investment purposes. These houses are all versions of the Shingle style or, as it was known at the time, the Modern Colonial style. The gambrel roof evokes the Colonial period of American history while the occasional Palladian window insinuates Renaissance forms into this popular turn-of-the-century style.

14. At the corner of Clinton and County Streets is the imposing **Benjamin Cummings** House at 411 County. Benjamin Cummings moved to County

Street in 1855 after getting his financial start in South Dartmouth. He, like so many of his contemporaries, invested his profits in whaling and grew wealthy. In 1854, the bark Benjamin Cummings was launched from New Bedford bearing as its figurehead a full length portrait of its proud namesake. This whaling vessel was built by John Mashow, a ship builder of African-American descent, partner in the firm of Matthews, Mashow & Co. Benjamin Cummings' home was built in 1854 by a local investor, Lehman Ashmead. The architect, as in so many cases in this period, is unknown. It follows the Italianate style marked by paired brackets under the roof lines, sets of round-topped windows, and a shallow Mansard roof typical of the period.

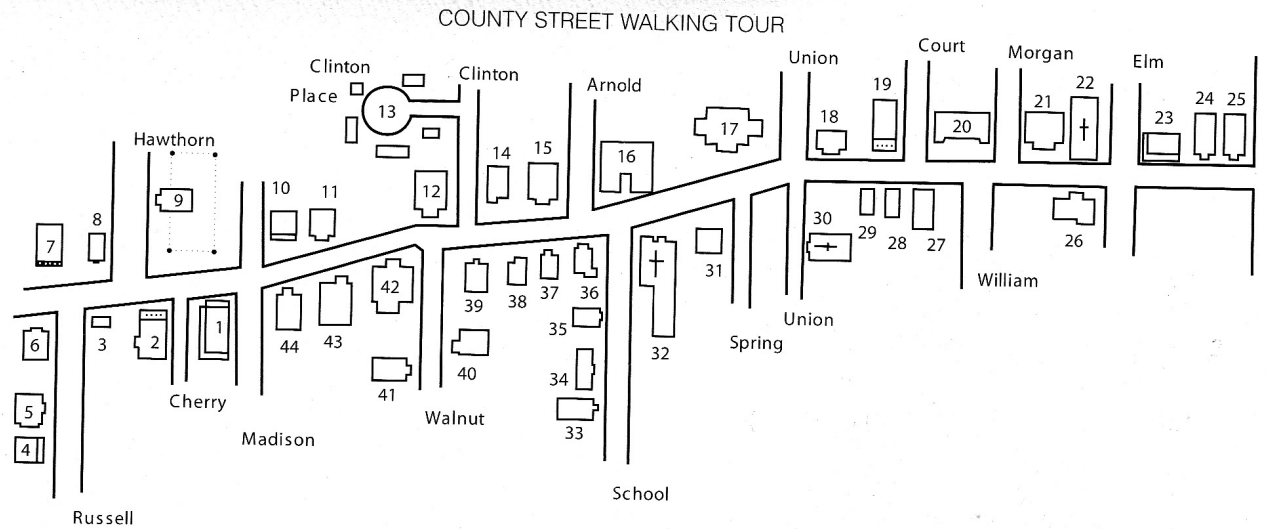


15. Marcia Parker House

15. At Cummings death, the lot next north at 413 County Street passed to **Marcia Parker**, the widow of Ward Parker, a whaling and coasting captain turned banker. A many-faceted Queen Anne residence was built here for Mrs. Parker between 1889 and 1892. Covered with details of decorative carpentry and leaded glass, its silhouette, bristling with faceted dormers, towers and gables, changes dramatically as one passes. The asymmetrical variety is a hallmark of the style.

16. At the corner of County and Arnold Streets are the **Roosevelt Apartments** built in 1926 for the Arnold Realty Corporation (Clara Morgan Rotch, Anna Rotch Stone and Mary Rodman Rotch, three heirs of William J. Rotch. See number 17). The entry bay is marked by tall, thin columns and other Adamesque details of the Federal period. It is typical of structures in the early years of this century which attempt to accommodate early American detailing to projects far larger in scale than their models. This is typical of the so-called American Renaissance in which patriotism, inspired by the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, resulted in buildings eliciting an American Colonial reference.

17. The **James Arnold** House at the corner of Union Street was built in 1821 by the housewnght Dudley Davenport for Arnold, a native of Providence who became one of New Bedford's leading citizens. This Federal



style building has undergone many changes since its construction. Arnold is less well known for his choice of architecture than for his love of botanical beauty. He and his wife travelled to Europe many times seeking interesting trees and other plantings which would enrich their surroundings. He welcomed the citizens of New Bedford to visit his extensive gardens, and they became a point of civic pride. When Herman Melville came to New Bedford in 1857, he made a point of touring these gardens, though he was only here for an afternoon visit. Upon James Arnold's death, his \$100,000 bequest to Harvard earmarked for botanical research, formed the cornerstone for one of Boston's finest gardens, the Arnold Arboretum. Arnold's original four-square home was "modernized" by his nephew, William J. Rotch, who inherited the property in 1869. He added the Mansard third story in the 1870's, perhaps to accommodate his large family. The dependencies on either side were added when the building became the property of the Wamsutta Club in 1919. The visitor may be interested to learn that this sedate private club was initially founded in 1866 to introduce the modern game of baseball to the aristocratic youth of the city.

18. Across Union Street to the north is the **Jireh Perry** House at 435 County Street. It is typical of the architecturally conservative 1830's. Its five-window Federal style facade is adorned with well-proportioned Greek Revival elements such as the Doric columns of the porch and the Greek Key motif above the doorway. Jireh Perry was a merchant who moved into this brick structure in 1838. The house remained in his family until it was sold to the Wamsutta Club in the 1890's. Enlarged to the rear since, it now houses a Masonic temple.

19. To the right of the Perry house is the **Bristol County Superior Court** at 441 County Street. Its unfluted Roman columns and tower fashioned after those of Christopher Wren and his many American imitators are features which identify this structure with the transitional taste of 1828. It was completed in 1831. The court has been the site of many trials of the past including that of Lizzie Borden. Daniel Webster argued a case here in 1843.

20. Across Court Street to the north and commanding the view down William Street to the waterfront below, is the building which was constructed in 1909 as the **New Bedford High School**. It replaced the large Greek Revival mansion of Charles W. Morgan, one of New Bedford's best known Quaker whaling merchants whose namesake ship now lies at anchor at the Mystic, Connecticut, Seaport Museum. This County Street location is also the original site of the farm house of Joseph Russell, New Bedford's founder. The Beaux-Arts Classical High School is of yellow brick with contrasting limestone trim. The center projecting element, much like a Roman temple with Ionic columns, rises above triple arches. It is balanced by slightly projecting corner pavilions which are framed in paired pilasters. The building was designed by the Boston firm of Clough and Wardner after two designs by Samuel C. Hunt, a local architect, were variously accepted then rejected amid political squabbles between rival city politicians,



21. Loum Snow House

21. North of the High School, across Morgan Street, is the impressive Italianate home of the wholesale dry goods merchant and whaling agent **Loum Snow**, built for him in 1852. The Renaissance loggia above the entrance is an elaborate feature rarely found in Italianate buildings in New Bedford. More typical of the style are the paired brackets under the peaked roof lines of all four sides of the house. The pairs of rounded windows, projecting hoods above the windows, and the full dentil course between bracketed pairs and under the window hoods create a rich texture of ornament found only in the best examples of this style.



22. Trinity Methodist Church

22. The **Trinity Methodist Church** has dominated the southwest corner of County and Elm Streets since its construction in 1858. It is a good example in brick of the Gothic Revival style, with its pointed openings and decorative Gothic tracery in windows and panels of the tower. The church was remodeled and expanded in 1924 when the congregation, then known as the County Street Methodist Church, was joined by two others to form the Trinity Church.



23. Captain Steven N. Potter House

23. Across Elm Street at 479 County Street is the home built for master mariner **Captain Steven N. Potter** in 1843. This house presents a somewhat deceptive appearance, for its core is a fine Greek Revival home with transitional features such as the five-window facade and six-over-six fenestration. However, it has had many Neo-Georgian details added to it which at first glance seem so appropriate as to be original. The porch with Roman composite capitals would never be found on a house of the 1840's, nor would the broken pediment of the center dormer with its Georgian windows. The dormer and the octagonal belvedere are also flanked by pilasters of Neo-Georgian form. These additions may have been added around 1900 by a later owner, John Duff, an important financial figure in the city. All in all, this house with its additions is a remarkable example of the tenacity of Classical features in the American building tradition.

24. The next two houses have not been so fortunate. The house at 483 County Street was built in 1845 for **Reverend Moses Howe** of the Bethel Church. It has lost many of its original Greek Revival and Italianate features under an unfortunate masking of modern siding. Howe never lived here and no doubt kept the house for rental. A resident in the 1860's and '70's was the sea captain Edward C. Coggeshall.

25. Immediately to the north, the house built in 1847 for another dry goods merchant, **Nathan Chase**, is a wide Greek Revival with handsome Tower of the Winds columns on the entry porch. Chase and his partner James Hammet originally purchased the land from David K. Brown in 1845, but Chase bought his partner's share in 1847. Other Greek Revival features may be masked by modern siding, such as the corner boards whose projecting profile can be determined under the stepped-out siding at the corners.

The next house on this walking tour lies in the direction from which you have come, back toward Elm Street.

26. On the southeast corner of Elm and County Streets is the Greek Revival home of the merchant **Pardon Tillinghast** at 474 County Street. The house was built after Tillinghast purchased the land from Manasseh Kempton in 1839. The Greek key elements in the corner pilasters and on the pilasters flanked by the Ionic columns of the porch give evidence of careful adherence to pattern book designs by the unknown local builder. These Greek Revival features are applied here to a five-window Georgian design with six-over-six panes in the windows, a mixture of Federal style and Greek Revival features which is common in this period. Tillinghast owned shares in many whaling ventures and was one of the original directors of the Wamsutta Mill and the Mechanics National Bank, as well as the New Bedford Institution for Savings.

27. Modern business blocks have replaced many similar homes on County Street, and one must continue north to 448 County Street and the attractive Queen Anne home of **Samuel Ivers** which was built in 1879. He was an oil merchant and, in 1887, the treasurer of the Clark's Cove Guano Company. The variety of pediments and window shapes in the dormers of the mansard roof are only a few features of this most picturesque style. Corner towers and porches with medieval capitals also give added texture to this house.

28. Adjacent to the south is the 1839 residence constructed for **Stephen Taber**, "gentleman" (so reads the deed). It has received many unfortunate alterations in recent years, but the fundamental Greek Revival nature of the house is still evident in the Doric columns which support a redesigned porch. Taber lists no occupation for himself in city directories, but his name appears often as part owner of many New Bedford whaling ships.

29. The last house of this set was designed for **Joseph R. Shiverick** in 1833. The square boxy appearance is emphasized by the blocky monitor at the third level. Such a feature is often found on buildings from this period in Providence, Rhode Island, and may betray an architectural relationship to that city. Other New Bedford family and mercantile connections with Rhode Island were well established by the time this house was built. The tall chimneys are Federal style features, though the Doric columns of the porch and canonical Doric frieze of alternating triglyphs and metopes suggest the dominance of a Greek Revival pattern book. Shiverick was the secretary of the Mechanics Insurance Company in 1845 and once served as an overseer of the House of Correction. In 1838 he was one of four town assessors.

30. At the corner of County and Union Street is the tall Early Gothic Revival **First Unitarian Church** facing onto Union Street. It was constructed between 1836 and 1838 after the building committee engaged Russell Warren to submit designs. The original plans for the building are now in the collection of the Whaling Museum. Warren was at the time, and only for that year, the partner of the New York architect Alexander Jackson Davis. Though the building plans bear the signature of Warren, it must be noted that he never designed another building in this Norman Gothic style and that several of Davis' other structures of that decade are stylistic mates of this building. The local masons William and Seth Ingalls carried out the stonework. The tall crenellated tower and massive appearance of the fortress-like walls are dominant features of this building. In 1896 the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns constructed the Parish House, an addition to the rear. At the same time a beautiful mosaic composition by Tiffany and Company was added to the rear interior wall of the chancel.

31. Across County Street from the James Arnold House is the **Samuel Rodman, Jr.**, House at 92 Spring Street. Rodman's father, Samuel, Sr., established himself in Nantucket and moved to New Bedford in 1798. A manufacturer of spermacetti candles, his candleworks still stands today at the foot of William Street. Samuel Rodman, Jr., followed in his father's footsteps and was able to move into this house in 1828. It is almost square in plan and constructed of solid but randomly laid granite. This irregularly patterned surface is covered with cement and according to an account of the early 1900's originally painted a light "Quaker" brown. This is the color to which it has been recently restored. The Rodman family was active in the Society of Friends and were decidedly anti-slavery and pro-temperance. The sound moral footing upon which these Quakers stood is reflected in the solid, plain and altogether monumental mass of this stately Federal style home.

32. Samuel Rodman, Jr.'s son, Civil War Captain Thomas Rotch Rodman, converted to the Episcopal faith and served on the vestry of the new **Grace Church**, located just south of his home in what was once the Rodman gar-

den. Gifts of land and money from Ellen Rodman Hathaway and Susan Ellen Rodman, sisters of Thomas, enabled this solid Gothic church to be built in 1881. Its Gothic features reflect the popularity of medieval architecture, many forms of which were revived in the nineteenth century. The massing elements of granite and brown freestone grouped around the tall single tower give it a silhouette evocative of medieval Europe. The church hall to the rear was added in 1889-90 in an appropriate medieval style, though in this instance reflecting a more domestic appearance. The tall gables, dormers and steep roof are elements of English medieval dwellings of the fifteenth century. A devastating fire in 1987 nearly destroyed the church sanctuary, but successful restoration efforts have brought the interior back very close to its original appearance.



32. Grace Church Hall

33. On School Street across from Grace Church Hall are three representative examples of vernacular architecture of the last half of the nineteenth century. At 128 School Street is the second house built for **Tilson Bourne Denham**. In 1883, Denham purchased the property (which included the home at the corner of School and Seventh Streets, the 1807 Captain John H. Congdon House) and had this house constructed. Denham, however, continued to live on Union Street and kept this house only as an investment.

34. The **Maria Whitman Bryant** House stands at 130 School Street. This 1857 Italianate home displays twin rounded windows in the peaked gable of the roof and Italianate detailing around the doors and windows. Otherwise, it provides a rather conservative five-window Federal style facade. Mrs. Bryant built this home the year after the death of her husband, City Treasurer Frederick Bryant. Another family, the descendants of George F. Kingman, owned the house from 1892 until the 1960's.

35. Adjacent is another Italianate residence built for **Sylvanus G. Nye** on land purchased from George and Ivory Bartlett, Jr., in 1857. Nye was a commission merchant for "groceries and provisions," as were the Bartletts. The brackets under the roof line and those supporting the canopy of the entry are Italianate features. The form of the house, with its gable end oriented to the street, indicates a vernacular fidelity to Greek Revival forms even in

midcentury when other styles had long since supplanted the Greek.

Return to County Street and turn south again. At one time the stone house at the center of the next block commanded the entire space between School and Walnut Streets, but gave way to an encroaching neighborhood when its original owner moved to Roxbury in 1856 and sold the two lots immediately to the north. These lots were soon inherited by two brothers who proceeded to build strikingly different houses.



36. Ivory Bartlett House

36. At the corner of School Street at 416 County stands the red clapboard **Ivory Bartlett, Jr.**, House, a marvelous exercise in Victorian variety. The pendant brackets hanging from the eaves and the tall Italianate tower to the rear present an ever-changing outline to the viewer. The detailing of the street facade roof line with its large elliptical arch in the center as well as the tower appear to have been adopted freely from an elevation of a much more grand design by Calvert Vaux, published in his Influential book *Villas and Cottages* in 1857, the same year as the construction of this house.

37. The **George Bartlett** House next south presents a dramatic contrast. With its Doric pilasters across the front, appears to be a late example of the Greek Revival style most popular almost thirty years earlier. The identical window design of both Bartlett houses, however, indicates they were built at the same time, probably by the same builder. Such conscious contrast is a hallmark of this Victorian period. The Bartlett brothers were whaling agents and owned Ivory Bartlett and Sons, a major outfitter of ships. Among the contracts awarded this company was the agreement to completely outfit the Stone Fleet, a flotilla of aged whaling ships which sailed to the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, in the Civil War in an attempt to blockade the port with sunken hulks. One of the later owners of the George Bartlett House was the whaling captain Humphrey Seabury who purchased it in 1868.

38. The Gothic style home which once commanded this whole block was built for the whaling merchant **Samuel W. Rodman** between 1841 and 1845. It appeared at the same time or shortly after A.J. Davis' more famous

Rotch Gothic Cottage on Irving Street and just after the Early Gothic Revival Unitarian Church nearby. The harsh stone sheathing of the Rodman House was softened somewhat by the tall pointed roof and verge board decoration (now removed). The rough exterior of this building is quite consistent with the reserve of its Quaker first resident, and may represent an attempt by Rodman to "stiffen" the inherent informality of the Gothic Cottage style.

39. The house built in 1895 on the site of the Rodman gardens at 408 County Street was built for **Elizabeth K. and William H. Wood**. Its architect was Nathaniel Cannon Smith. The typical Smith house is a static and formal cube graced with delicate Neo-Georgian decoration as found here. Wood was a partner in the firm of John A. Wood Company, sellers of "produce and provisions," as were his neighbors, the Bartletts.

40. Just around the corner at 261 Walnut Street is the home designed in 1895 by the Providence architect H.K. Hilton for **Charles E. Davis**, a contractor. The large round porch acts as a base for the single tall gable decorated with elaborate scrollwork. Such renaissance scrollwork appears often in so-called American Renaissance period designs. In the first half of the twentieth century this was the home of William J. Kerwin, superintendent of the Beacon Manufacturing Company.

41 Across Walnut Street at number 258 is a house built for Nathaniel B. Kerr around 1909. He purchased property, which included this lot and the house just to the east facing Seventh Street, in 1909. He probably built this home immediately for his son, **Louis R. Kerr**, who took title to the land "with buildings thereon" in 1911. At that time the son was the assistant treasurer of the Butler Mill. The windows are all inset with diamond panes of the Neo-Georgian style, but the flared gable frames in the roof and projecting beam ends of the entry pergola hint at the Arts and Crafts movement of the turn of the century.

42. The house at 404 County Street was built by **J. Arthur Beauvais** after he purchased the site in 1883. Its shingle-above-brick fabric, the strongly projecting gables, the tower set into the angle of the northwest corner and the decorative use of shingles and moulded brick string course above the first floor windows reflect the best qualities of the Queen Anne style. The architect is unknown, but because its design is unique in the city, one suspects an out-of-town builder may have been called in for this project. Beauvais was born in South Dartmouth in 1824 and came to New Bedford as a bookkeeper employed by his uncle, Barton Ricketson (see number 11). He rose to become a director of many of New Bedford's industries. He was a founder and president of The Citizen's National Bank and of the Weeden Manufacturing Company, makers of children's toys, in the 1880's.

43. The Gothic trefoil decoration of the porch of the 1882 **Thomas H. Knowles** House at 402 County Street is compounded by the dramatic use of stick work, carpenter details, stained glass windows and other Victorian Gothic features inspired by the Middle Ages. Knowles was a whaling agent and merchant associated with his brother John P Knowles, Jr., in Thomas K. Knowles and Company. For a time he was also treasurer of the New Bedford Tanning Company.



44. Andrew Gerrish, Jr. House

44. The Queen Anne residence next south is the **Andrew Gerrish, Jr.**, House at 398 County Street. The steep pitched roof, hooded dormers, and complex profile reveals its allegiance to an American brand of the medieval picturesque also seen in the Marcia Parker House (number 15). This style became a favorite among builders of the 1880's. However, it was far earlier, in 1825, that Gerrish built his home originally as a south-facing Federal style structure. It was reoriented and completely redesigned in 1881 by Attorney and Mrs. Wendell H. Cobb. Little of the original structure remains today, save some structural details. The resultant Queen Anne residence is one of the most spectacular examples of its style in the city. In 1888, it passed into the hands of two Sisters, Carrie O. and Sara E. Seabury, daughters of whaling agent Otis Seabury. Their heirs owned the house well into the 1930's.

This Tour of County Street covers the most sought after addresses of nineteenth century New Bedford. The area just to the west, anchored by Hawthorn Street on the south and Union Street on the north was the natural extension of the County Street neighborhood. A walking tour of this area, West of County, begins at the point where you now stand, the intersection of County and Madison Streets.

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Photographs: **Mark Mattos and Thomas W. Puryear**

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