

Late Victorian Era (1865-1910)

Following the Civil War the textile industry flourished in Rhode Island. Warren, once glorious in her ship-building and whaling days, gradually became a mill town. In 1875 Warren was the fourth most densely developed town in Rhode Island with 678.8 persons to each square mile (Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket led in density). The Warren Manufacturing Company complex was one of the largest in Rhode Island.⁵ "Warren goods" included sheetings, shirtings, and jaconets and were known throughout the country for good quality.

Social conditions, however, did not reflect a great improvement as the average daily wage for women under the age of 15 in Warren was 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ cents, the lowest in Rhode Island; the average daily wage for men under the age of 15 was 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents per day; and one hundred ninety-eight children under the age of 15 were employed as operators in the cotton mills.

Mills and mill housing comprised the focus of building in this textile era. Just before the Civil War, Captain Charles R. Cutler opened the firm of Childs and Cutler in a small wooden building on Child Street to produce cotton rope for the southern market. By 1869 this firm was incorporated into the Cutler Manufacturing Company and built the large north mill with corbelled brick cornices and reduced tower that we see today. The "new mill" to the south was built in 1881.

Other industries included the Inman Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1866 for the manufacture of cotton braid, which occupied the "Old Handkerchief Factory" still standing on the corner of Main and Broad Streets, and the "Parker Mill," constructed in 1879 on Metacom Avenue. Seymour Brothers conducted a busy coal, wood, and grain business on Water Street between Church and Washington Streets, and the "Old Dye House," still standing at 325 Water Street, was built around 1870 and later used for the Warren oyster business.

Starting about 1880, Boston merchants brought southern oysters up the Warren River to be opened. Warren men then began to grow and market oysters themselves. "Stubbs Wharf" between Broad and Washington Streets was the nucleus of the present-day shell-fish industry. Two former oyster shacks, constructed around 1880, are still standing

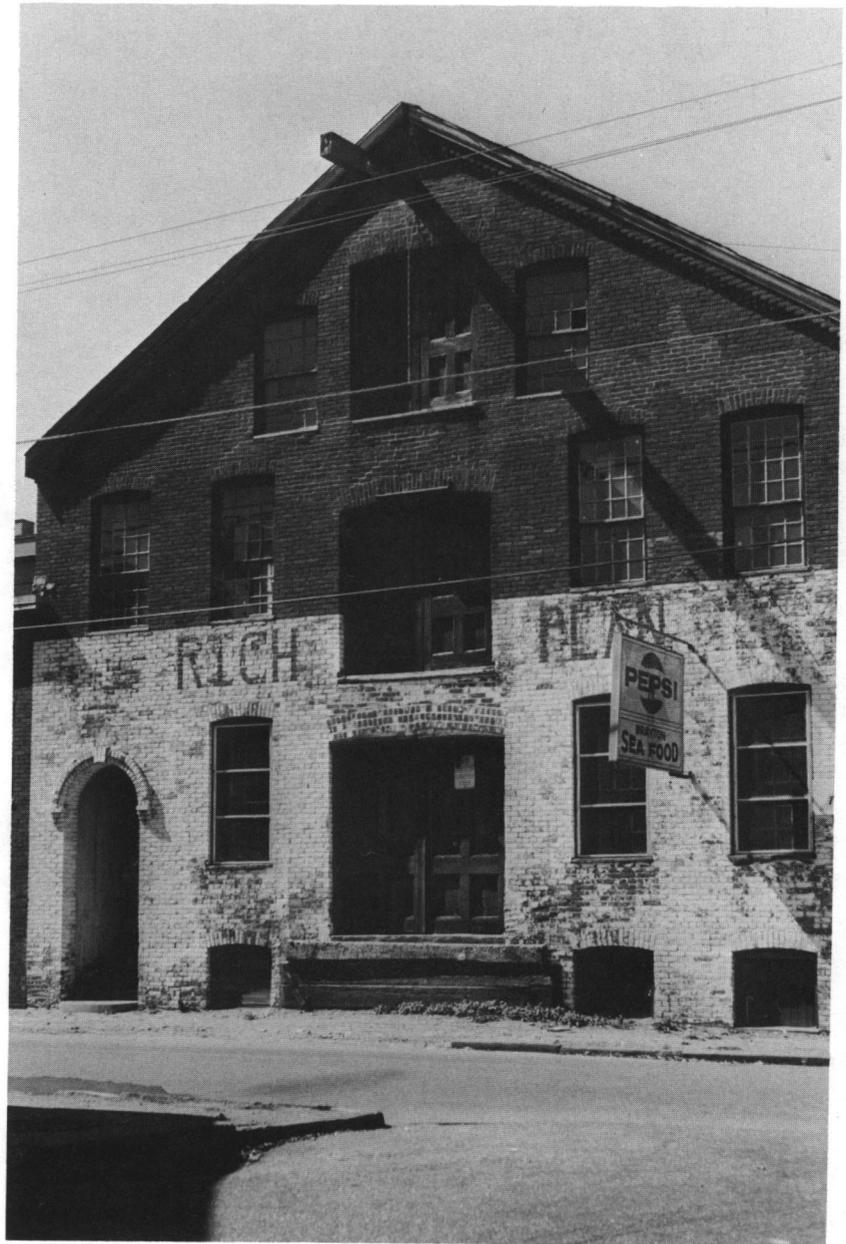
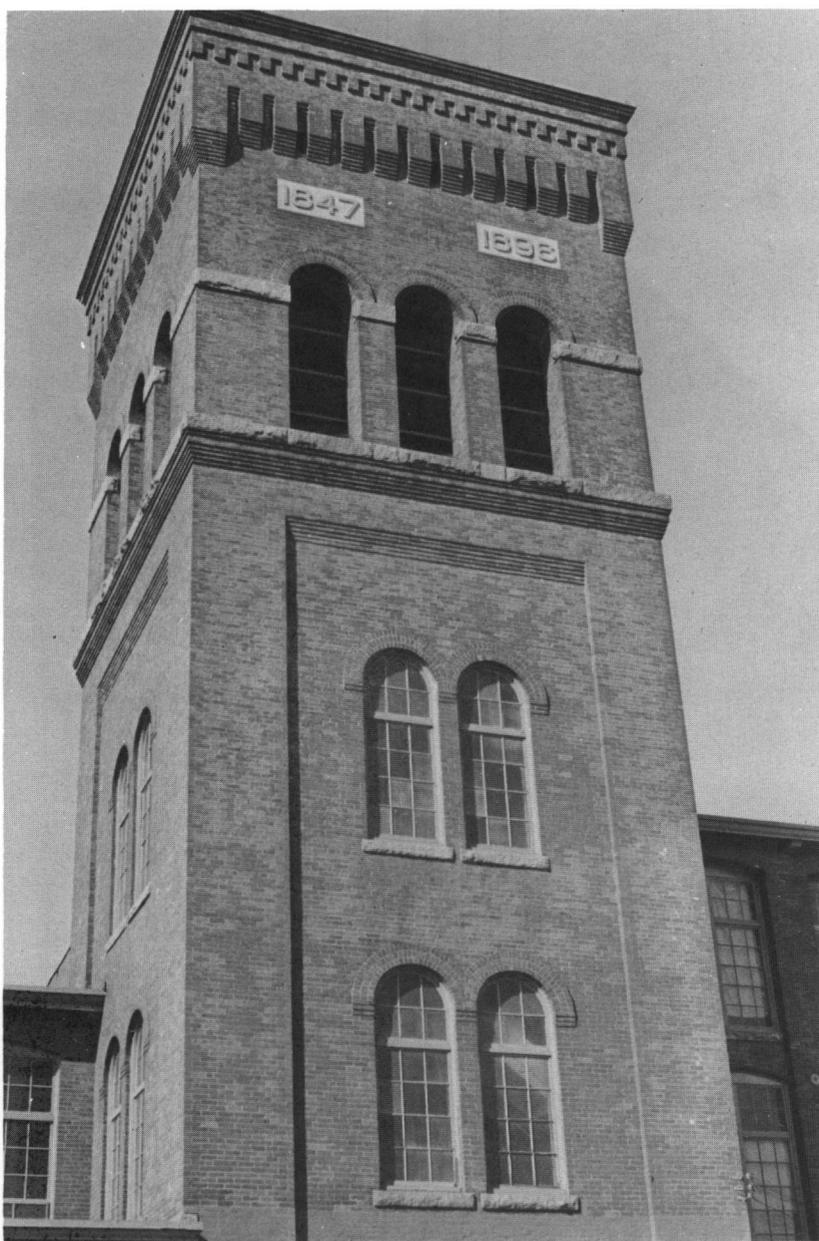


Fig. 26: Old Dye House (c. 1870), 325 Water Street



today: the Tallman Yacht Company's building on Caleb Carr's old wharf on Washington Street and the Wharf Tavern at the foot of Miller Street on Barton's Wharf.

On North Water Street a spectacular fire in 1895 destroyed all three of the Warren Manufacturing Company's buildings built in 1847, 1860, and 1872. These five-story buildings, containing a total of 58,000 spindles, totally dominated the north end of Warren. Only the handsome Italianate stair tower survived. It rises today from the middle of the new mill complex which was rebuilt in 1896 and enlarged in 1902 and 1907.

Mill houses built by the Warren Manufacturing Company for its workers can be seen today all along North Main, Westminster, Sisson, Company, Brown, Park, and Nobert Streets. Essentially the same rectangular shape, these "mill houses" are of interest for their variations accomplished through the use of single or double gable roofs; mixed wall covers including clapboards, staggered butt shingles, and "fish-scale" shingles; and ornamental porches. An 1878 plat in Warren Town Hall shows ten of these duplex workers' homes built on the site of the old Wheaton ropewalk, now Warren Avenue. Very little open land remained for development in the waterfront section (see map Plate G).

By 1850, immigrants accounted for one-half of Rhode Island's population increase and by the Civil War made up one-fifth of the total population. From 1865 to 1875 the foreign population in Rhode Island increased by 80.41% to equal 27.73% or over one-fourth of the population by 1875. This influx of Irish, French Canadian, and European workers swelled the labor pool and changed both the social and political fabric of the Rhode Island cities and towns.

In Warren, the population which had peaked at 3,103 in 1850 steadily declined until 1870. From 1870 to 1875 nearly 1,000 persons were added to the town's population. Irish-born families constituted 50% and French Canadian families 25% of this influx seeking employment in the mills and the nearby Barrington brick-yards.

The community's Roman Catholic churches established in this period are still strong social and political factors in Warren. St. Mary's Church was constructed as early as 1851 to unite the Irish Catholics of Bristol and Warren. The original plain wooden structure burned in 1881. A new, larger

Fig. 27: Tower-Warren Mfg. Co. (1872), North Water Street

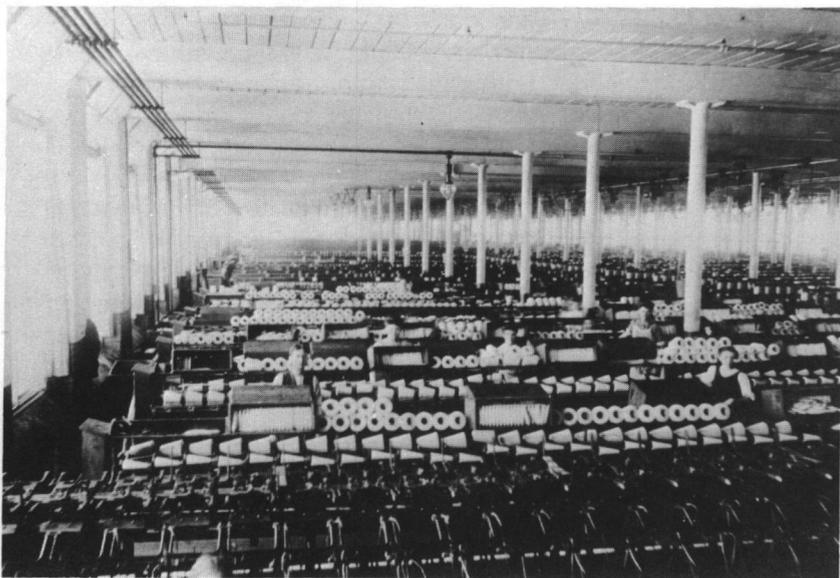


Fig. 28: Interior Warren Manufacturing Co., c. 1900



Fig. 30: Mill House (c. 1850), Company Street



Fig. 29: Mill Houses (c. 1860), Sisson Street



Fig. 31: Mill House (c. 1878), Warren Avenue

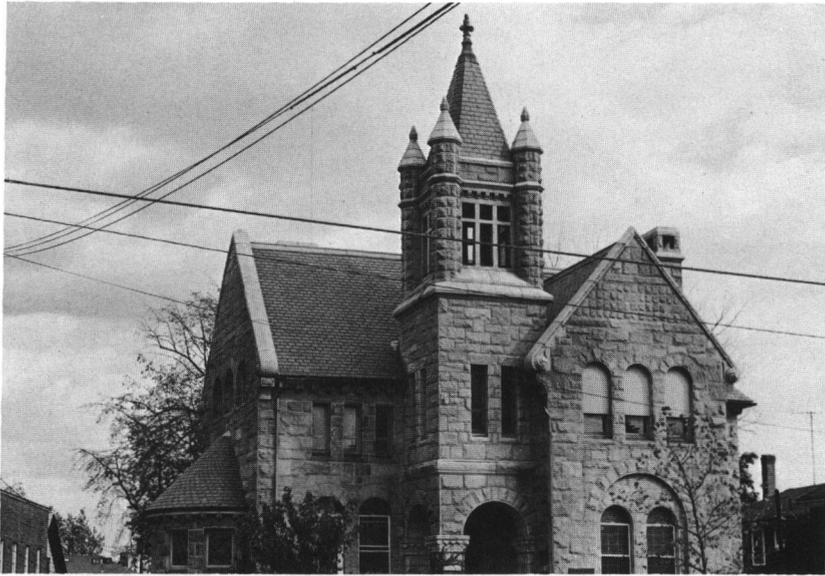


Fig. 32: George Hail Free Library (1887-1888), Main Street



Fig. 33: Joyce Street School (1903), Joyce Street

Late-Victorian Stick Style Edifice was erected in 1883 on the corner of Main and Luther Street and St. Mary's Institute was constructed in 1894 on the site of the "Old Ark." Both these structures have now been replaced by the modern St. Mary's of the Bay, designed in 1972 by architect William M. O'Rourke. In 1881, St. Jean Baptiste, a Late Victorian parish church with gothic detailing, was built on North Main Street in the heart of the French community. Nobert Street takes its name from the first pastor, the Reverend E. E. Nobert, who organized St. John's Parish in 1877. Fire partially destroyed St. Jean Baptiste in 1891 resulting in the remodelling of the original entrance. Plans are now underway to enlarge and modernize this historic church. Other strong community churches in Warren include St. Casimir's Church, incorporated in 1908 for Polish families. The Late-Victorian church edifice on Child Street was constructed in 1909, burned in May, 1913, and subsequently rebuilt. St. Alexander's Church (c. 1920) on North Main Street, a Late-Victorian eclectic style building with a campanile was constructed to serve the needs of the Italian Community.

Civic development in Warren slowed somewhat until a surge at the turn of the century generated by textile wealth produced a new town hall and Warren's first public library. On Main Street, two sharply contrasting public buildings illustrate the revivals of the Late Victorian period. Both the George Hail Free Library (1888-1889) and Warren Town Hall (1890-1894) were designed by William R. Walker & Son of Providence.

In 1871, an association for a free reading-room and library was formed, opening in Pashal Allen's store on the northeast corner of Main and Market Streets. By 1877 the corporate name became the Warren Public Library and raised funds and received enough bequests to build a new library in 1888. The widow of George Hail, a Warren native who made a fortune in the Eagle Screw Company (later the American Screw Company) of Providence, was the chief benefactress. The George Hail Free Library relates stylistically to the Romanesque Revival made popular throughout America by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson, and is very similar to the old Woonsocket Court House (1896) although smaller in scale.

North of the Library, the Warren Town Hall, built from 1890-1894, is a handsome example of Late Victorian eclectic architecture which combines an Italian Renaissance tower on a Federal hip-roofed structure

with Italianate compound windows, Colonial Revival detailing, and irregular placement of windows that exhibit the influence of "modern" architecture. The windows indicate the division of space within, floor levels, and the stair case, following the concept introduced in the late 1890's that "form must follow function." The tower, originally 125 feet high with an open colonnade, has been reduced in size with removal of the whole open section after damage incurred in the 1938 hurricane.

Two other turn-of-the-century Late Victorian buildings of note are the Industrial National Bank on the corner of Main and Market Streets, a fine Neo-Classic revival structure built in 1906, and the Joyce Street School, a Colonial Revival style building built in 1903.

By 1900, Warren had become essentially a solid manufacturing community not distinguished by great wealth or prosperous merchant families. Consequently, very few large "Queen Anne" cottages or Colonial Revival mansions popular in the domestic building of this Late Victorian era are found in the densely built up central part of Warren. The Colonial Revival period, which utilized details based on eighteenth-century Georgian types, is represented by the Dora Swift House (1902) built at 14 Washington Street, with a hip roof, formal central-hall plan, elaborate woodwork, and Adamesque details. Other Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses are found on South Main Street and in Touisset where land was available.

Just east of Touisset Road on Calder Drive is the William Emery House built in 1907. This spacious Queen Anne, gambrel roof, stone and shingle "cottage" has distinctive interior wall murals. Four other gambrel-roof "cottages" built on Stonegate Road date from this era and typify the building form popular with Pawtucket, Attleboro, and Providence summer colonists. All have a sweeping panoramic view of Mount Hope Bay and Fall River.

Touisset Point development dates from 1901 with platting of the old Coggeshall Farm into lots 50 feet wide by 100 feet deep. For a decade construction of small one and two story wooden summer houses was sporadic until organization of the Touisset Point Tennis Club in 1919 sparked a building boom. "Minnie" Coggeshall's dance hall was moved and remodelled into the present Touisset Point Community Club hall. Today, this popular section is densely built up, lots are at a premium, and conversion of summer cottages to year-round use is common.

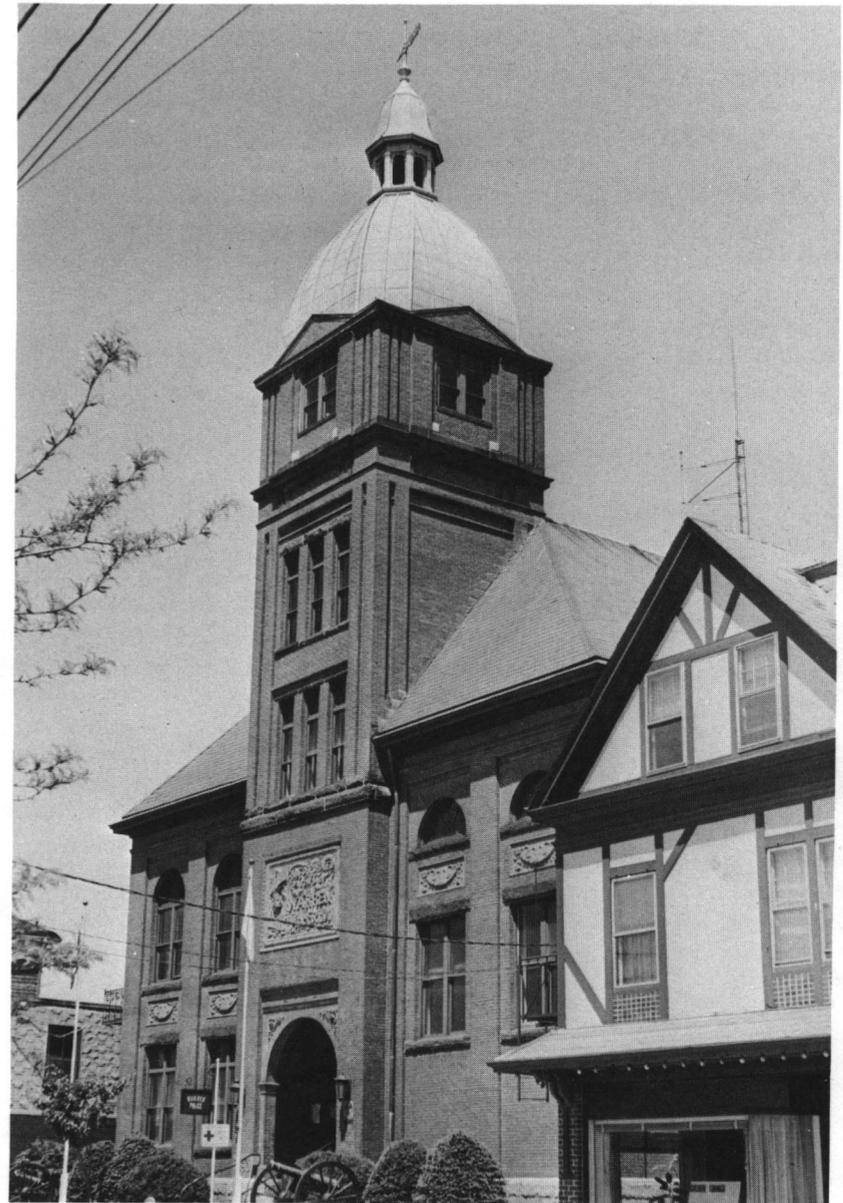


Fig. 34: Warren Town Hall (1890-1894, 1938), Main Street



MAIN STREET SOUTH FROM CHURCH STREET, WARREN, R. I.

Fig. 35: 1903 View of Main Street, postcard