

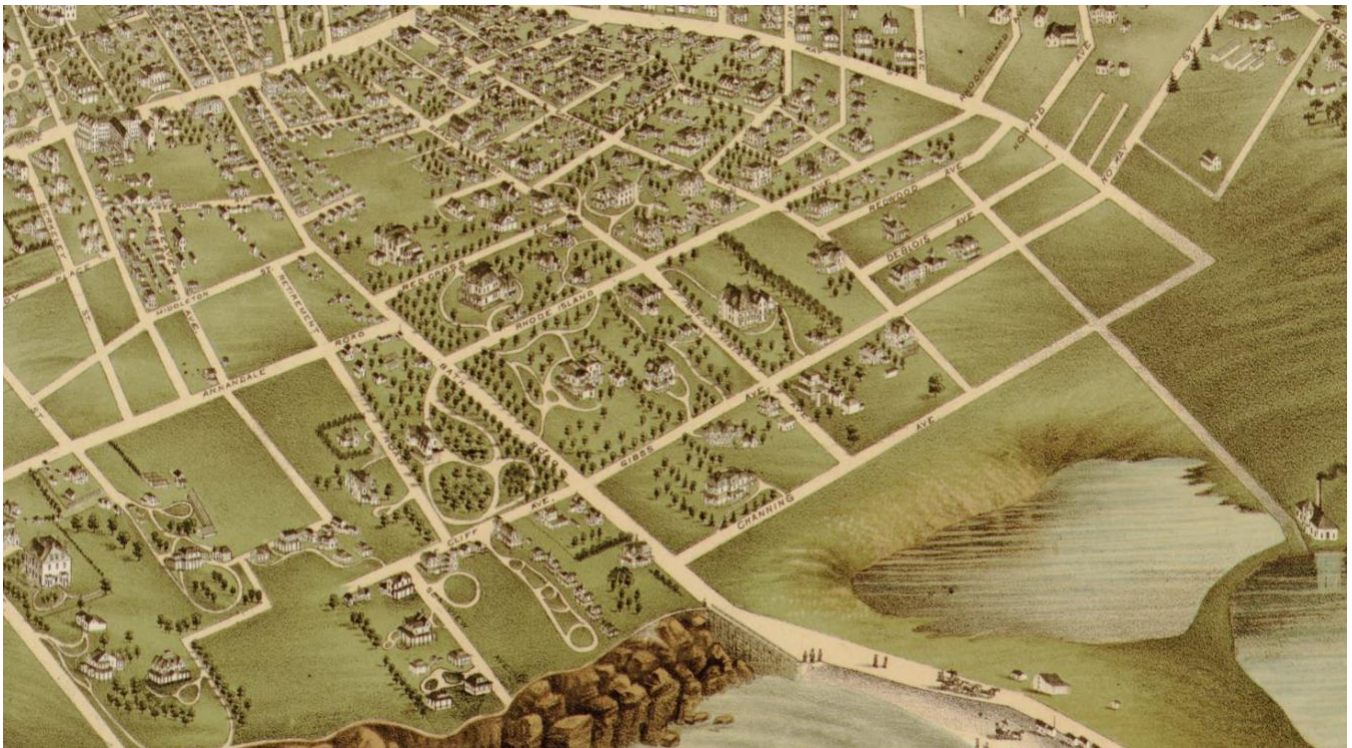


# **Top of the Hill Newsletter**

## **Winter 2024**

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**Top of the Hill ~1878**

**Watch the wonderful Architectural History Video Lecture  
McKim, Mead and White  
In the Catherine Kay Neighborhood  
And  
Read about the special history of the neighborhood in the Newport Spotlight**

**On the "About" Page  
<https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/about>**

## President's Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Happy 2024 everyone – may it be a wonderful year for all!

It's amazing to see time flying by so quickly. I hope that everyone who attended the holiday party had a terrific time. Our Events Co-Chairs, Susan Kelleher and Claire O'Donnelly did an outstanding job. They arranged for the Acapella Groups from Salve who provided for a lovely holiday spirit with live choral music in a festive setting with delicious appetizers and desserts. Not unexpectedly, we filled the house to capacity - our largest gathering in memory. Thank you again Claire and Susan and everyone who helped set up / clean up and make the evening special – so appreciate your efforts!

Now, as the temperatures warm, new events are being planned and posted to the website – all of which will be promoted. Of course, we would love suggestions. Please share those event ideas or perhaps think about joining the Events Committee. We are kicking off the new calendar year with several general events in March and have already had a few group events including another fabulous wine tasting event generously hosted by Sandy and Maureen Neville.

Joining a TOH Group (Groups is a drop-down page under Members) offers many additional social opportunities based on one's more specific interests, so please take a minute to scroll through the twenty-one groups. There's something for everyone. The groups are run by the respective members so any individual may take the initiative and suggest an activity.

It's now been one year since we launched the new website, so if you haven't yet done so, please take a moment to create your website account on the Members Page. Everyone should have one or share one with their spouse. One needs a website account to join a group and register for many of the general events. This protects the privacy of our members and has many other benefits. Please see the last three newsletters (Spring, Summer, Fall 2023) for website tips if you would like to learn more or refresh your memory of the website's capabilities and benefits. Of course, if you have questions, please email us at: [tohnewport@gmail.com](mailto:tohnewport@gmail.com)

There is still a bit of confusion between our Top of the Hill Association and the Top of the Hill group on Nextdoor. Please remember that Nextdoor is a social networking service app – and has nothing to do with our neighborhood association. Indeed, it can be confusing to see very similar emails, but please note that emails from our TOH Association appear as “Newport's Top of the Hill Association”, whereas emails from Nextdoor appear as “Your Top of the Hill neighbors”. It may be helpful to bookmark our website home page if you like: <https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/>

Our new TOH Member Directory was distributed in December. If you missed seeing the email, you may also find the file in the Association Materials Group. We will update and distribute the file at the end of each year. We have just over 200 members at present and have ambitions to grow that number beyond 275 this year, so please invite your neighborhood friends to join. I have added a letter of introduction to our website home page (link above) which may be printed and handed to any neighbor you would like to see join the association. Perhaps pen an inviting little note on top of the letter and drop it off at a TOH neighbor's home who is not listed in the Member Directory?

Additionally, Susan McCoy, our Welcome Chair, will kindly swing by the home of any new resident to welcome them to the neighborhood. Simply give her a ring at 401.862.4464 and let her know the address. It will be easy to reach our membership goal with a little participation from everyone in this wonderful neighborhood and help ensure new and long-term residents have additional opportunities to take part in the community.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, but please know that it may be the last as one may much more easily post the same content directly to the new website. If you would like to see the newsletter continue, please let us know and consider occasionally supporting the effort with some new content and/or publishing assistance. "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."  
Elizabeth Andrews

Again, may 2024 be a wonderful year filled with good health and happiness for all. I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events.

Be well and Happy St Patrick's Day!  
Laurie Love

### Community Corner by Harry Elkin Spring Community Forum

Right now, we are pointing to a mid-May date for our Spring Community Forum. Prior to that, I'll be conversing with Charlie Holder, our 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward City Councilor, for his input on current topics and issues he feels we should be aware of.

As always, in preparation, I'll be sending something out to you all requesting your input. So keep this in mind as issues that may be of interest to you come up over the next month.

### Councilor's Corner by Second Ward Councilman Charlie Holder

Greeting's Top of the Hill members and to everyone reading the newsletter. Now that the holidays are behind us things at City Hall have begun to ramp up. We have so many issues facing us as a city as well as a Council that it can seem like a chase scene out of Fast and Furious! Most of the items we are facing are all financially impactful. We are facing infrastructure situations that will need our attention right away, the top two in my opinion are the Easton's Beach project and the fixing of Cliff Walk.

I realize for many longtime Newporter's the beach has become an almost sacred place. Many family memories have been created and shared here. While no one likes major changes or losing a treasure like the carousel, it is important to keep in perspective the ever-changing landscape we face on an environmental level. I feel the most important aspect of the beach that needs to be addressed is the saving and protecting of Easton's Pond, a major source of Newport's drinking water. Any penetration of the pond by seawater will prove to be catastrophic to our water supply. I'd like to see a focus on protecting the pond as well as Memorial Boulevard from any further and possibly irreparable damage.

Cliff Walk is the most visited attraction in all of Rhode Island. We have been urging our leaders in the state house to help us with funds to repair the collapsed portions of the walk. So far, we have been told we are getting \$8M to help those efforts. However, we still need around \$6M to cover the rest.

For us to be less reliant on state funding, we will be looking at ways to create revenue on our own. Possible avenues to consider are event ticket fees, increased hotel taxes and higher cruise ship passenger fees. While some of these fees will help, what would be most impactful for us is to convince the state to allow us to keep our hotel and meal taxes here in Newport rather than share them with other municipalities. Having our own lobbyists working with our state representatives would be a good first step.

The annual St. Patrick's Day Parade is fast approaching and is considered an unofficial count down to the Spring/Summer season. I encourage all my constituents to come out and support our community. But, while doing so, please be sure to be safe, courteous, and considerate of others.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. I can be reached at [cmholder69@gmail.com](mailto:cmholder69@gmail.com) or at (401) 480-9079.

Thank you,  
Charlie Holder  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Councilor

### Historian's Corner by Mike Margonis **Eastbourne Lodge on Rhode Island Avenue**

Edwin Sheldon Whitehouse and his wife Mary lived at Eastbourne Lodge on Rhode Island Avenue during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The house itself is a Tudor Revival style home-built c.1892 by Edwin's father William. Both Edwin and Mary came from prominent families with powerful political ties. In the 1920's Edwin would become charge d'affaires at the American Embassy in Paris as well as the U.S. Minister to Guatemala and Colombia. The couple were important social figures in New York City as well as here in Newport.



*Eastbourne Lodge c.1892*

One of the most famous social events the couple would attend in Newport was the Tiffany Ball in 1957. The ball was held at Marble House which was then privately owned by Frederick Prince, an investment banker and financier. The ball was thrown by the Preservation Society of Newport to raise funds for some 400 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Newport County. This ball became arguably the greatest party in Newport during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The 1,200 guests included Katherine Warren who led the Preservation Society, Mrs. Louis S. Bruguere, “Queen of the Old Guard” and one of the last surviving members of Mrs. Astor’s 400, Senator John F. Kennedy and his wife Jackie, as well as the Whitehouse’s. In all, an estimated \$20 million dollars’ worth of jewelry was worn by guests that evening, but one piece stood out above the rest. Mrs. Whitehouse was given the honor of wearing the 128 carat Tiffany Yellow Diamond worth \$600,000 (\$30 million today). Mrs. Whitehouse was the first person to ever wear the diamond. In fact, the diamond has only been worn by four women including Audrey Hepburn for photographs to promote the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, Lady Gaga, and Beyoncé. The diamond is currently on display and Tiffany’s flagship store on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The ball itself helped raise over \$30,000 for the Preservation Society.



*Mrs. Edwin Sheldon Whitehouse wearing the Tiffany Yellow Diamond*



*Senator Kennedy and his wife Jackie*

Edwin Whitehouse would continue to live at Eastbourne Lodge until his death in 1965, he passed away at Newport Hospital. Although the family no longer owns the historic home the family still has deep connections to Newport. Edwin's grandson, Sheldon Whitehouse is currently our Junior Senator representing Rhode Island. He has a home on Carroll Avenue and is a member, somewhat controversially, of Bailey's Beach Club. Today the Eastbourne Lodge Estate has been subdivided but the main historic home still remains.

Every house has a story...

### **Take the Gilded Age Quiz by The Preservation Society**

#### **How well do you know Season One of HBO's The Gilded Age?**

Can you tell the difference between old money and new? Which plotlines are based on fact versus fiction? Test your knowledge with The Preservation Society's quiz – an in-depth look at your favorite storylines and the real people who inspired them.

<https://www.newportmansions.org/gilded-age/episode-deep-dive/#quiz>

## Newport Fun Facts

### City of Firsts – Newport by Year

1657: Newport operated the first ferry service in the nation

1673: the White Horse Tavern is built, the oldest tavern building in continuous use in the United States

1687: Newport was the first city to pass a traffic ordinance

1699: The Quaker Meeting House is built, Rhode Island's oldest house of worship

1716: Schoolhouse in Portsmouth is built, and today is the oldest schoolhouse in the United States

Newport has the oldest military unit in continuous service under its original charter from 1741

1745: The Redwood Library & Athenaeum is established, the oldest circulating library in continuous use in the United States

1750: Newport was the site of the first duplex house, located at 57 Farewell Street

1758: The Newport Mercury was founded, the oldest newspaper in continuous operation in the United States

1759: Touro Synagogue built in Newport, the oldest in synagogue the western hemisphere

1774: Newport hosted the first circus in the country

May 4, 1776: Newport, the colonial capital of Rhode Island, was the first of the thirteen colonies to declare its independence from England

1781: Newport held the first notable celebration of George Washington's birthday, hosted by Count De Rochambeau of France

1803: The first gas-illuminated streetlights in United States were lit on Newport's Pelham Street

1819: BankNewport founded, the oldest mutual savings bank in the United States

1854: The first New York Yacht Club Regatta, the oldest sailing regatta in the country

1857-1911: Ida Lewis, the first female lighthouse keeper, operated the Lime Rock Light. Her many saves were legendary and she was visited by President Ulysses S. Grant and Vice-President Schuyler Colfax

1866: Newport was the site of the first public roller skating rink in the United States, housed inside a see-and-be-seen resort hotel, the Atlantic House

1866: Newport had the first photograph taken by electric light

1881: Newport was home to the first National Lawn Tennis Championships

1886: Newport was home to the first International Polo Match

1884: Newport is home to the oldest US Naval War College

1895: Newport hosted golf's first Amateur Championship at Newport Country Club

1895: Newport hosted golf's first US Open at Newport Country Club

1895: Newport was home to the first auto race



1904: Newport was the site of the first automobile arrest in the country when the offender was charged with driving 15 miles per hour

1930 – 1983: The prestigious America’s Cup, the oldest trophy in international sport, was raced in the waters off Newport

1975: The Cliff Walk became the first designated National Recreation Trail in New England

1995 and 1996: Newport hosted the first two years of the ESPN X-Games

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*Source: What’s Up Newp Article by Ryan Belmore*

*This story was originally published on September 30, 2015; it has been republished due to popularity. [Discover Newport’s Fact Sheet](#) provided much information and inspiration for this article.*

## Committee Opportunities

As always, we invite and encourage help on all our committees. If you would like to get involved or learn more, please connect with the respective Committee Chair(s) noted below via the Members Chat on the website or at: [tohnewport@gmail.com](mailto:tohnewport@gmail.com)

We are relying on our members to please volunteer their time and talents to lead and keep the association strong and vibrant. If you’ve never been on the Board or a committee member, please think about it. We are always looking for future talent...and it’s a great group!

### **Committee Chairs:**

Community – Harry Elkin

Events – Susan Kelleher & Claire O’Donnelly (Co-Chairs)

Membership – Anne Marie Biernacki-Smith

Welcome – Susan McCoy

Beautification – Wayne Glazier

Website/Communications – Laurie Love

Photo Gallery

December 3, 2023: Holiday Party at the Edward King House



December 3, 2023: Holiday Party at the Edward King House (continued)



February 9, 2024: Wine Tasting Group Event at the home of Maureen & Sandy Neville

