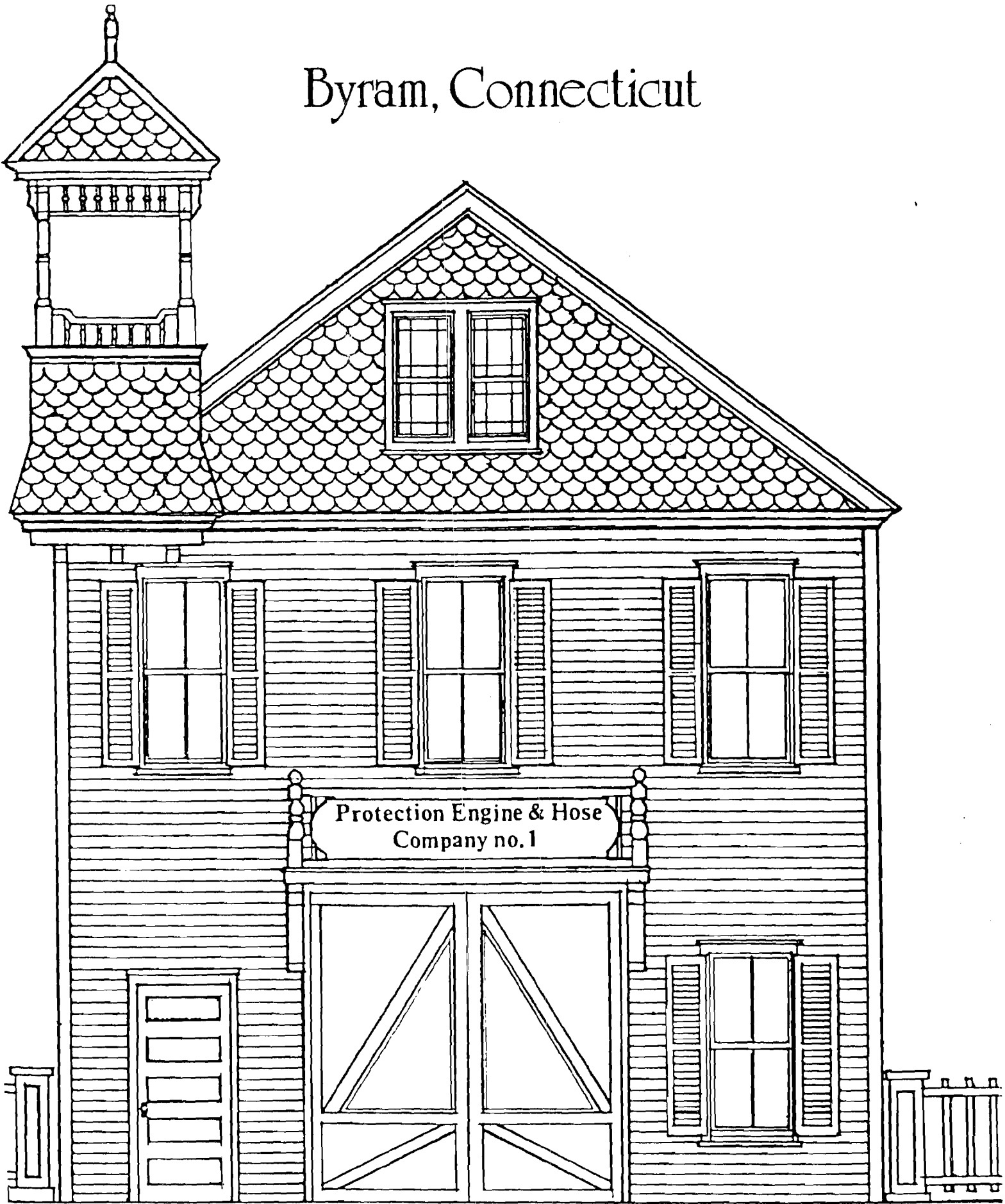
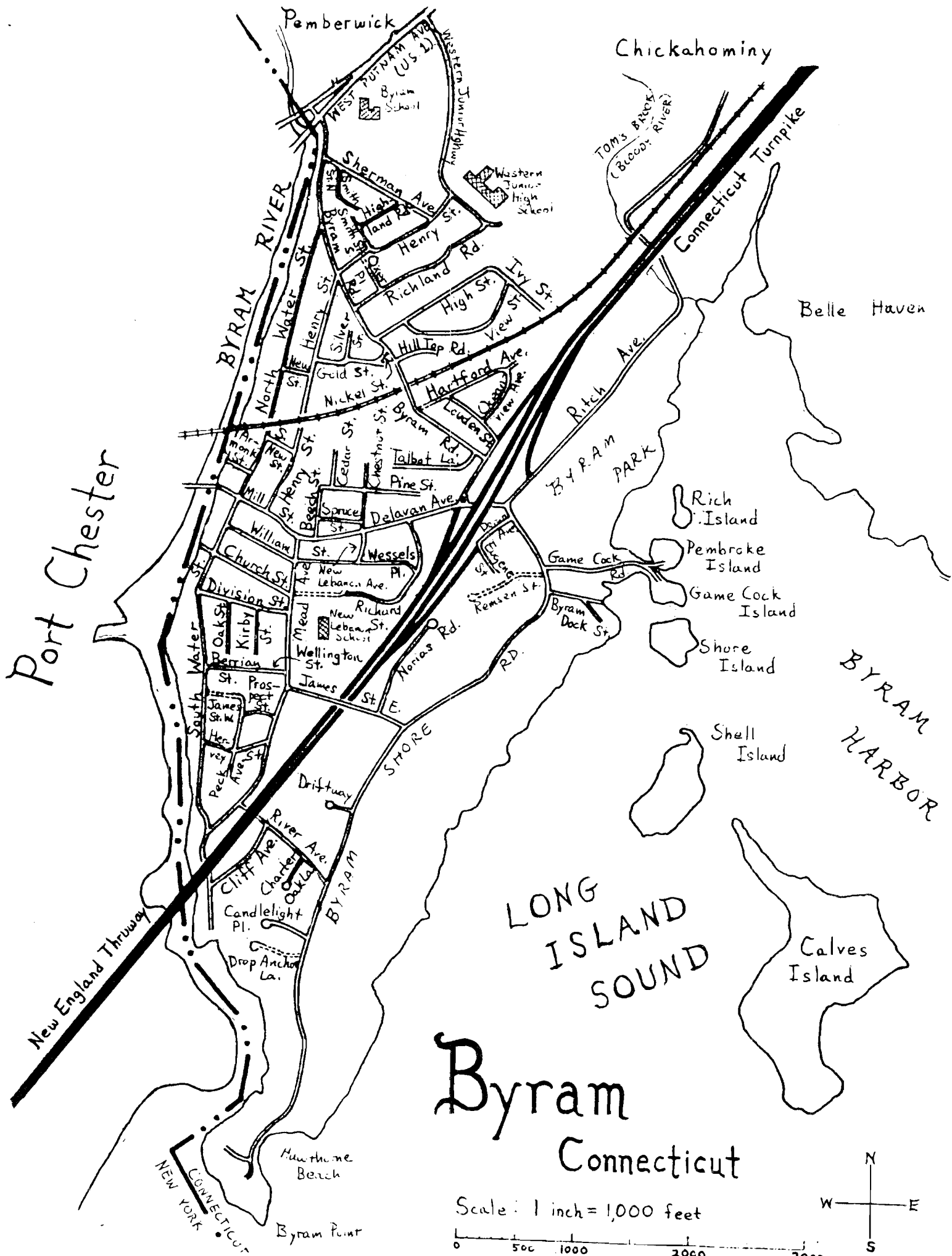


Byram, Connecticut



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in grateful acknowledgement of the
importance of their gift to all the
people of our community.



Port Chester

Chickahominy

Belle Haven

BYRAM HARBOR

LONG ISLAND SOUND

Byram Connecticut

Scale: 1 inch = 1,000 feet

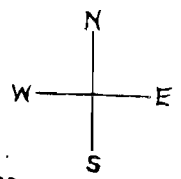
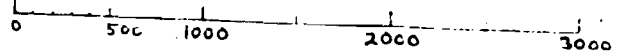


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PREFACE

The Historic Resources Inventory of Byram was funded by the Greenwich Community Development Program through a grant from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The opinions and contents herein are the responsibility of the consultants, Renee Kahn Associates, and do not necessarily represent the opinions or position of the Town of Greenwich, the Greenwich Community Development Program, or the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The data reflects the information available to the consultants at the time of the study, and is subject to revision as new sources appear.

We would like to express our thanks to the many people whose assistance and knowledge made this project possible. Credit for the initiation of this study goes to Nancy C. Brown, Director of the Greenwich Community Development Program. Especially helpful was Alice Dutton, who provided historical information and rare, old photographs. Also assisting us with photographic information were Tad Taylor, June Curley, Yvonne Marchfelder, and John Carrott. Other historic information was provided by George Frey, Nancy Reynolds, and the many Byram residents who volunteered information on their community, neighborhoods, and homes.

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Greenwich Library, the Port Chester Library, and the entire staff of the Greenwich Community Development Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee Kahn Associates

Steven Hirschberg
Renee Kahn
Nils Kerschus

THE HISTORY OF BYRAM

Location

Byram is an unincorporated village in the Town of Greenwich, Connecticut. It comprises the triangular peninsula at the extreme southwestern corner of the town, and as such, is the southernmost point of the mainland of Connecticut. The area, which consists of over 740 acres - (or more than one square mile), is bounded on the southeast by Long Island Sound and on the west by the Byram River. The northern boundary is not so well defined, since the area remained thickly wooded until the 1960's. The traditional boundary seems to have been Tom's Brook (also known as Bloody River because of the slaughterhouse operated by Leander Mead) which today runs through the town dump. The election district is bounded by an imaginary line running to the southwest of the brook, from the Post Road entrance of Byram School to the railroad bridge at Ritch Avenue. In addition, there are six off-shore islands in Long Island Sound that are usually included as part of Byram. Moving in a northeasterly direction they are: Calves Island, Shell Island, Shore (Gaertner's) Island, Game Cock Island, Farwell's (Pembroke) Island, and Ritch (Gardner's or Nissen's) Island.

Byram's neighbors include the Village of Port Chester, New York, located across Byram River to the west, Chickahominy, located to the northeast between the Post Road and the railroad, and Pemberwick which is located to the north, above the Post Road. Pemberwick has close historical and social connections with Byram and has often been considered its northern extension. This study, however, will cover Byram below the Post Road.

Rural Byram: Pre-history to 1851

Byram was once a part of the primeval North American wilderness. Its natural features are still evident, if perhaps diminished and less varied than they once were.

Byram's hilly topography ranges from numerous rocky reefs visible at low tide to boulders capping its higher hills at 110 feet above sea level. It was not originally interrupted by six-lane highways or infilled for various other uses as it is today. There were swamps, ponds, and streams of seasonal or perennial nature. The vegetative cover was mostly a virgin forest of oak, chestnut, and hickory in the drier areas, with maple, ash and beech in moister locations. The most remarkable difference between today and then was the variety of wildlife, especially the presence of large predators: cougars, wolves, bears and, of course, man himself.¹

The Indians who lived in the vicinity of Byram were of the Miossehassaky tribe, one of the Siwanoy, a branch of the Mohegan Indians. These tribes were preceded by a more seafaring group known as the Coastal Indians, who were wiped out by smallpox epidemics contracted from European traders in the early 1600's, prior to actual settlement. The Indians apparantly used Byram as part of their hunting ground. The nearest Indian village was across the harbor from Byram Point on Manursing Island in Rye.²

The advent of the European settlement in the area began with trading posts on the Byram River. This is supposedly how Byram got its name: the Indians would "buy rum" from the traders in exchange for goods. Another theory states that there was an early family by the name of Byram in the area. Needless to say, the "buy rum" tradition is more popular.

The earliest settler mentioned in the Byram area is Thomas Lyon, Sr. (1621-1690). His name first appears in town records with the town granting to him and his attorney, John Banks, 300 acres in lower Byram Neck in 1676, and 60 acres to the north of the Post Road and to the east of Byram River.³ Local family tradition claims that King Charles I of England granted 60 acres to Lyon in 1640.⁴ In any case Thomas Lyon (Sr. or Jr.) built the saltbox house that is still standing today sometime between 1640 and 1700. It is possible, therefore, that this structure is the oldest remaining house in Greenwich. The house originally stood on the north side of the Post Road along with its barns and other out-buildings. In 1927 it was moved as a result of the widening of the Post Road.

Unfortunately, it is obscured by shrubbery in its new location, on the south side of the highway, against Byram Hill.



The Lyon Homestead



Scalloped Shingles

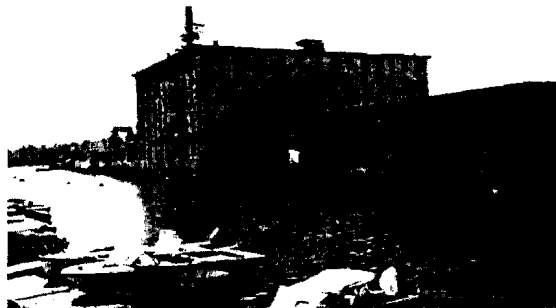
The house is an example of how the saltbox style evolved. The main 2½ story structure was enlarged by the addition of a 1 story section to the rear and both were incorporated under the common rear slope of the roof. Other features include the massive chimney, an interior winding staircase and reproductions of the original scalloped cypress shingles covering the house.

When Thomas Lyon, Sr. died, he was buried in the family cemetery at the corner of Byram Shore Road and Byram Dock Street. In those days it marked the southern terminus of Byram Road, which begins opposite the Lyon Homestead. Byram Road is the oldest road in Byram, with the excption of the Post Road. Until urban development commenced in the 1850's, it was the only thoroughfare in the area. In 1837 there were approximately ten houses along the road - today, only three survive: the Lyon house; #170 on the corner of Nickel Street, which is a small 2½ story white clapboarded house with low ceilings and small windows; and #225, a vernacular cottage near the railroad tracks. The Mead Homestead

across from the cemetery was demolished long ago. This family is the second oldest family historically associated with Byram, and their land was the first to undergo urbanization.

The Voorhis Homestead, located on Ritch Avenue near the turnpike bridge, was also built in the early 1800's. Situated at the traditional boundary between Byram and Greenwich (or more specifically, Belle Haven), this homestead was reached by another road, which ran to the southwest of Tom's Brook .

The Industrial Revolution foreshadowed the imminent urbanization of Byram. In 1840 William and Thomas Ritch commenced quarrying operations on Byram Shore on the present site of Byram Park. More important than this development was the establishment of the Eagle Foundry by William Abendroth and Philip Rollhaus. This industrial concern, located directly across the Byram River, in Port Chester, manufactured stoves, furnaces and cooking utensils. The construction of the railroad in 1847 signalled real urban growth for Port Chester. This, in turn, made the empty land on the Connecticut side of the river ripe for development.



Byram's Early Urban Growth, 1851-1876

Byram's first real estate developer was William Provost of Rye. In June of 1851 Provost purchased the "River lot" from Jonas Mead for \$1,409.37½. The property contained a little over five acres. In April of the next year he purchased the "Millfield", located between the River lot and the railroad - this totaled eight acres and cost \$2,518.⁵ Provost called his subdivision "East Port Chester" and divided the land into about 70 lots - most of them measuring 50 by 100 feet. A typical deed for one of these lots states that "the Grantee shall not erect a dwelling house on the premises of less value than six hundred dollars and also that no slaughterhouse, boneboiling establishment or other nuisance shall ever be erected or allowed on the premises".⁶ This restrictive clause prevented the area from becoming a shanty town with glue factories and other disagreeable land uses.

The streets of this subdivision were laid out in the familiar grid pattern common to urban areas. The original streets were: Water Street, Church Street (named after the now demolished Presbyterian Church of Port Chester), William Street, Mill Street, Armonk Street and Cherry Street (Henry Street). Highland Street which today intersects Abendroth Avenue was originally called Church Street after the Presbyterian Church in Port Chester. A drawbridge across the river continued the street to the Connecticut side. In 1857 this bridge was removed and another was built from Mill Street in Byram extending through the Abendroth property to North Main Street in Port Chester. This enabled Mill Street, (named after the old tidal mill), to become a more effective thoroughfare. At about the same time an eastward extension of Mill Street, first called the East Port Chester Road and eventually Delavan Avenue, was being built through Jonas Mead's land to Byram Road at the Ritch quarry. Water Street was the second most important street, and paralleled the river. The southern end, and much of its subsequent extension, is sometimes literally "Water Street". Since it lies only two feet above the mean high tide it is therefore subject to flooding from storm tides. William Street might have been named after Provost himself and Armonk (Street) was the Indian name for the Byram River.

The second subdivision in Byram came about in 1863 when the estate of Thomas M. Lyon sold off a portion of his property: 120 lots each averaging 50 feet in width. This development was known as "Lyonsville". The subdivision consisted of Water Street from the railroad north to Byram Road, with Henry Street parallel to it on the ridge above. South New and New Streets were the cross streets, each climbing steep hills.

Mead Avenue was laid out in 1868 by Henry Kelly, who had acquired a large tract of land known as "Clifton", extending from the river to the Sound. In order to reach his property, he had to build a road from the East Port Chester Road (Delavan Avenue) south through lands owned by Jonas Mead and James Peck who were both monetarily compensated for the "damages" to their land.⁷ This property was not further developed until the 1880's.

Architecture: Revivals to Vernacular

Houses built during this period in Byram tended to follow the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Although the Greek Revival period of popularity is generally placed between 1815 and 1840, the style seems to have lingered to the Civil War in Byram and its neighboring communities. Typical Greek Revival houses have low pitched, pedimented or partially pedimented gables facing the street. The entrances often have transoms and sidelights, and there is frequently a horizontal attic window. Another characteristic treatment is the use of a classical columned or pilastered porch. Most of Byram's Greek Revival houses have been extensively altered with the best examples remaining on 11 Henry Street and 41 South Water Street.



11 Henry Street



41 South Water Street

The Italianate style is easier to distinguish. Its primary feature is a very low pitched roof with wide eaves and ornamental brackets underneath. Large houses can be quite grand with towers and balconies, but Byram's houses are small and therefore simpler. One can distinguish two variants of this style as it was interpreted in Byram. The most common, hip-roofed version is best exemplified by 4 Armonk Street. Less common was the low-pitched gable roof with brackets and entablature windows, a good example of which is 37 South Water Street.



4 Armonk Street



37 South Water Street

The French Second Empire style (1865-1875) was also very popular in surrounding communities but few examples were built in Byram. This style was characterized by a roof with two slopes to all four sides, the lower one being much steeper than the other. "Breezy Hill", the main residence of the Berrian homestead on South Water Street, was built in this style, but it unfortunately burned down in 1913. Although "Mansard Mania" swept the nation in the years following the Civil War, the fad never seemed to take hold in Byram. A variant of this style can be found in an attractive multi-family dwelling at 141-143 North Water Street. This house, termed a "Halifax Mansard", exhibits a steeply sloped roof at the front

elevation, while the rear elevation reveals only a slight slope. The only true example, however, of the French Second Empire is situated on Byram Dock Street.



141-143 North Water Street



Byram Dock Street

Another style which enjoyed little popularity was the Gothic Revival style. It was characterized by sharply pointed gables and tall slender windows creating an overall vertical effect. Its only real representative today is the former St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Gothic influence is also noticed in 119 North Water Street, an example of a "Downing Cottage".



119 North Water Street



"A Symmetrical Bracketed Cottage" from A.J. Downing's The Architecture of Country Houses, 1850.

Many houses, of course, never fit any particular style. Some were very plain from their inception; others have been stripped of their distinctive features through remodelling - and still others have a unique style all their own. These houses are collectively termed "vernacular". They can be very plain or very distinctive. An example of the latter is the "double house" at 14-16 William Street. Among the interesting details are the small polygonal dormers and the wood siding shaped to resemble cut stone.

The Social and Economic Base

The population of this newly urbanized community was predominately of Yankee stock. The 1867 map, for example, shows 63 dwellings; about two thirds of the names are of Yankee (i.e. English) derivation with surnames such as Grigg, Ritch, Hubbard and Weed. The remaining surnames are equally split between German names, such as Schupp and Rodemaker, and Irish names such as Sullivan and Murray. The German influence was increasing steadily. One indication was the first church built in Byram, St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church, built in 1866 on the corner of Water and William Streets. The land for this church plus part of the cost of its construction was donated by William Abendroth and Philip Rollhaus, both of German origin. Their stove foundry in Port Chester was undoubtedly the main reason for the large numbers of German immigrants in this area. Another source of employment was the Mertz Woodworking Mill, also founded by Germans in 1872 on the Port Chester side of the river.

By the time the 1876 Centennial was celebrated, Byram had grown into a thriving community of roughly 500 residents. The East Port Chester School district was formed in 1856 with 94 children - just five years after Provost began selling his lots.⁸ Several grocery stores appeared on Mill Street during this time: Wessel's, Kiley's and Wiegand's, but the majority of commercial and industrial activity was still located in Port Chester. Outside the village, development was also occurring. In 1870 Sylvester Hill and John Voorhis began quarrying operations on their properties which were located to the east of Ritch's quarry.

The road between Byram Road and the Voorhis Homestead was opened up at about the same time, and is known today as Ritch Avenue.

An Expanding Community, 1876-1900

Following the depression years of the 1870's, the Centennial marked the start of a new period of rapid growth. The first subdivision of this era was that of John Brooks who divided his property south of Breezy Hill in 1878. These lots varied in size from the common 1/8 acre lots (50' by 100') to 1/2 acre lots. The streets that he opened up were River Street (ultimately changed to South Water Street), Hervey Street, James Street and Peck Avenue. The last two were probably named after James Peck, the former owner of the property.

✓ In 1879 Andrew Merritt and William Talbot agreed to build a private road or "driftway" on the borderline of their properties on Byram Road. Each owner gave up a strip of adjacent land 10 feet by 700 feet to create the 20 foot wide "Pleasant Avenue" which was soon changed to Talbot Lane, as it is known today.⁹ Both sold off their land piecemeal - lot by ✓ lot over the years so there was never any subdivision in the usual sense of the word.

The last two decades of the 19th century in Byram were marked by the extensive influence of two men: Milo Mead and William Tingue. In 1879, Jonas Mead died and his 142 acre farm was divided between his sons Mark and Milo. Mark acquired the shorefront property and Milo received the inland property including the homestead. In 1885 Milo subdivided part of his land into "Meadville" - a 46 lot division with lots averaging 1/8 of an acre, obviously intended for the buyer of modest income. Over subsequent years Milo would become known for selling reasonably priced lots, but "Meadville" was destined to become a phantom real estate development. It was never fully developed except for the building of two streets: Atlantic Avenue (soon changed to James Street, of which it was a logical extension) and Tingue Street.

In 1880 Milo subdivided his land adjacent to "East Port Chester" into 79 lots and called it "New Lebanon". His fascination with this name was said to stem from his feeling that the

cedar trees of Cliff Avenue (not his land, incidentally) reminded him of the Cedars of Lebanon in the Bible. It is evident that Milo was a religious man, not uncommon for a rural Yankee of those days. Mead was not content with merely naming subdivisions, and tried, unsuccessfully, to change the name of the entire community to New Lebanon. Milo's subdivision, "New Lebanon", was basically an extension of East Port Chester. William Street and Church Street were extended to Mead Avenue and Division Street was opened up, together with its subordinate dead end streets, Oak and Cedar, (later changed to Kirby Street). Milo also subdivided land on the eastern side of Mead Avenue into 12 lots, and in 1892 he subdivided more land on the southern side of Delavan Avenue into 18 lots.

William Tingue, a well-known businessman of the Port Chester area, owned the Hawthorne Woolen Mills in Glenville. He was as much enamored of "Hawthorne" as Milo Mead was of "New Lebanon". In 1879 Tingue leased 24 acres on the end of Byram Point from Marinus Willett. This precipitated the resort establishment of "Hawthorne Beach" which was the local bathing beach of its day.

In 1883 Tingue bought the "Clifton" property and sold 23 shorefront acres to Charles Mallory who had the property divided into three estates for himself and his two sons. Tingue subdivided the river section of "Clifton" in 1885, calling it "Cedar Cliff": it was comprised of Cliff Avenue (named for the fifty foot high precipice over the river), River Avenue (also called Hawthorne Avenue), and the southern end of Mead Avenue. The interior lots ranged in size from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. Most of these were soon subdivided by their buyers, people of modest means. Apparently realizing this, Tingue sold off the riverside portion in lots of 50 foot frontage in his amended subdivision map in 1889. The riverside portion of Cliff Avenue and River Avenue were eventually changed to South Water Street.

Tingue bought a considerable amount of land from Mark Mead. In 1886 he purchased about 35 shorefront acres which he sold off quickly. Eventually the Milbank, Teagle, and Hirschhorn estates evolved from the further buying and selling of this land. In this same year a new road was built along the boundary line of Tingue's land and that of Milo Mead.

This street was called "Sound View Avenue" and, together with the older streets it connected, it eventually became known as Byram Shore Road.

Tingue also bought eleven inland acres from Mark Mead in 1889. Calling his subdivision "Meadlawn", he divided the land into 66 1/8 acre lots. In naming the new streets, he adhered to a specific "theme", in this case trees; the streets were Beech, Spruce, Pine, Cedar and Chestnut.

There were a number of smaller subdivisions of land during this era. In 1886 Daniel Lyon died and his heirs quickly divided his desirable shorefront property. Seth Mead divided his land north of the railroad in 1890 into 26 lots, average 1/8 acre in size. As in Tingue's Meadlawn, this subdivision had streets named according to a theme, in this case minerals: Gold, Silver and Nickel. In 1894 Caroline Lyon Smith divided her land into 1/8 acre lots near the northern terminus of Byram Road. The new streets here were Smith Street and Sherman Avenue, both named after her deceased husband. Except for several lots on Byram Road, this subdivision was undeveloped until the 1920's, the extremely steep hill having perhaps discouraged earlier development.

Architecture: The Flamboyant Age

During this period architectural styles popular before the Centennial began to lose favor. The true hallmark of this era's residential construction is the Queen Anne style. This is true especially in Byram where other styles never approached its popularity. The characteristic Queen Anne house exhibits a picturesque, asymmetrical massing of shapes, and a variety of textures. The more fanciful houses have a proliferation of gables, turrets, and porches. The texture can also be treated extravagantly with clapboards and ornamental shingles. Also in evidence was ornamental woodwork in gable peaks and on the porches. Unfortunately, these distinguishing characteristics are prime targets for removal or concealment in the "modernization" of old houses. Structures frequently acquired successive coverings of asphalt, asbestos and aluminum siding.

There are still some Queen Anne houses in Byram that retain their original appearance. Examples are 30 Mead Avenue, notable for its shingle work and 53 Mead Avenue which has interesting porch and gable peak ornamentation. The larger Queen Anne houses have suffered more than the modest ones.



30 Mead Avenue



53 Mead Avenue

The Teagle house on Byram Shore Road was recently demolished, a victim of "modern taste". Originally the residence of William Tingue, it was a large, sprawling structure with many towers and a full-length verandah. The Henry Mallory house, also on Byram Shore Road, is still in existence, although it is somewhat altered. It is an example of a "Shingle Style" variant of the Queen Anne, which emphasized the use of wooden shingles and "natural" materials.¹⁰

Diversity in Social and Economic Growth

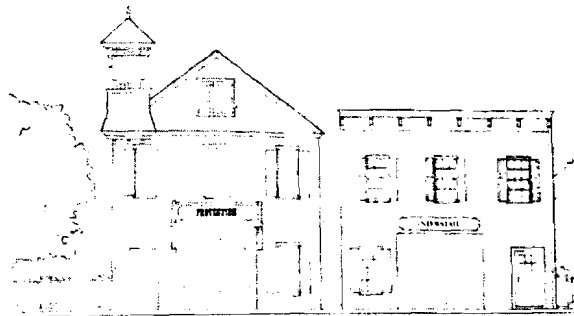
At the turn of the century, Byram had grown into an increasingly multi-ethnic community. The two largest groups then were the Yankees and the Germans, each with about 140 families. The Slovaks and Scandinavians (mostly Danish and some Swedish) both

had about 40 families as did the earlier arrivals, the Irish. The smaller groups included the Italians with fifteen families and the Poles with ten. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church was formed as a mission of St. Mary's in Greenwich to minister to the Catholics of this heterogeneous community. The church was built in 1890 on Henry Street and became a parish in 1900.

Community facilities continued to be introduced to make the area more 'self-reliant'. Milo Mead's affection for the name "New Lebanon" is evident in his dealings with the firemen and the school district. Fire protection was first organized in 1891. The members adopted the name "New Lebanon Engine and Hose Company #1" in 1892 when Milo indicated that he would donate property for a fire house. This agreement did not last very long, due to an apparent disagreement between the parties. The members changed the name to "Protection Engine and Hose Company #1", and the Town of Greenwich built a firehouse for them on Mill Street in 1893. This firehouse originally had a sixty-foot high tower, a spindled corner turret, and decorative shingles in the Queen Anne style. This building later housed the Byram Library and now sits vacant.



Byram Branch Library



Protection E.&H.Co.#1: C.1893

Milo finally did get something named "New Lebanon" when he donated land for a new school building. New Lebanon school was finished in 1894 and was on the site of the present Byram Shubert Library. William Tingue was also boosting his name for the community, "Hawthorne". He succeeded in getting the post office named Hawthorne even though it was only a branch of Port Chester's Post Office. At the turn of the century then, Byram was known by three different names - none of them "Byram". The most common, of course, was East Port Chester because the association with the neighboring New York community was still very strong.

The quarries reached their zenith during this period. There were at least seven separate quarries in operation most of them along the northern stretch of Byram Shore. Although many local churches are said to have been built from rock from these quarries, most of it was shipped out of town. The stone was supposed to have been used on the construction of the Statue of Liberty, and several office buildings in New York City. The most popular recollection is that the foundation for the Brooklyn Bridge, finished in 1883, was built from "Byram Bluestone", as the local stone was commercially known.

The Zenith of Byram's Development 1900-1925

This period was one of continuous growth made possible by a healthy financial climate and abundant cheap labor during the peak of immigration into the country. In Byram there were a number of extensions and resubdivisions, as well as several large new real estate ventures. In 1905 Milo Mead opened up "Meadlawn Extension" which extended Pine Street. The northern-most lots of the old "Lyonsville" subdivision were redivided along the river by Maurice Dillon in 1905 and at North Water Street's intersection with Byram Road in 1909 by Daniel Fuhr.

Milo Mead sold seven acres between Tingue Street, Delavan Avenue, and Byram Shore Road in 1906 to Nathan McKinney who subdivided the area into ½ acre lots. The turnpike took most of this property and six houses on the corner of Tingue Street and Delavan Avenue are the only remnants of this particular venture.

Charles Lounsbury and Fred Ponty of Port Chester were partners in several real estate developments in this area. In 1908 they laid out Overlook Park consisting of about thirty lots, 1/8 of an acre in average size. The streets opened up were Wessels Place, named after the influential Wessels family, and Richard Street. Wessels Place is located on a rock ledge which requires a steep climb in either direction. Most residents still use Overlook Park as their address.

Lounsbury and Ponty opened up "Cherry Hill Park" in 1911 as a subdivision of the former William Ritch farm on Byram Road. There were 52 lots averaging 1/8 acre. The streets opened up were Richland Road, probably named after Ritch, and Oxer Place - named after Esther Oxer, his daughter, who owned the Ritch Homestead and the northern half of the farm. At about the same time, Greenwich developer Timothy Loughlin opened up "Byram Crest Park" to the immediate south of Cherry Hill Park, and laid out 98 lots of 1/8 acre size. The streets opened up were High Street, View Street and Ivy Street.

In 1913 a fire destroyed the main Berrian house at Breezy Hill. The partial subdivision of this property resulted in the opening up of Berrian Street in 1914. In the same year a portion of the old Brooks subdivision was redivided by local builder Stephan Stephansen into 16 lots on Hervey Street, Mead Avenue and the newly constructed Prospect Street. The last subdivision of this period was Highland Park which divided up the Oxer property in 1919. The streets constructed here were Highland Road, Smith Street and Sherman Avenue, both originating in the old Smith subdivision of 1894.

Architecture: A Proliferation of Styles

The architecture of this period shows a decline in the final "Victorian" style, the Queen Anne, and the ascendance of the Colonial Revival and other eclectic styles. The Queen Anne style lingered in Byram almost to the First World War. These houses often had a variety of classical details showing the transition to the Colonial Revival style. Examples of late Queen Anne houses are the turreted dwelling at 7 Tingue Street and a similar house

at 349 Delavan Avenue. The house next door at #351 shows the prevailing neo-classical influence in the pillared porch posts.



7 Tingue Street



349 & 351 Delavan Avenue

The Colonial Revival evolved from the Queen Anne style which had taken on more classical influence following the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. This "white city" of classical temples signaled a desire to simplify the Victorian emphasis on excess. While some did look very much like 18th century Georgian houses, most exhibited the Queen Anne legacy of assymetrical massing of shapes, with the addition of classical details. Many Colonial Revival houses had hip or gambrel roofs. Examples of hipped roof Colonial Revival houses are noted on Wessels Place and 125, 129, 131, and 135 Byram Road. An example of a gambrel roofed dwelling is 9 Oxer Place. The "Anchorage," on Byram Park property, is an example of Colonial Revival mansion.

The Neo-Renaissance style became rather popular during this period. The Neo-Renaissance is most common in commercial blocks, tenement houses, and row houses. In many cases the structures are built adjacent to one another, which leaves only the front elevation visible. The best row of commercial buildings in Byram is at 251-261 Mill Street and includes two brick buildings with typical Neo-Renaissance detail.

The Bungalow style is a heterogeneous one combining elements of Oriental, Swiss, and Shingle style architecture. It was developed in Southeast Asia by Europeans adapting to the climate by building one story dwellings with wide porches, low-pitched roofs, and materials suggesting a "natural" look. The style was very popular in the years before and after World War I. Examples of it in Byram are at 2 and 8 High Street and 134 Mead Avenue. On 41 Richland Road there is a variant of the bungalow which can be termed "Swiss Chalet." This house has the same sweeping roofline of the bungalow, but here the second floor with its projecting balcony is more prominent.

Byram has a number of houses which can be classified as "Mediterranean Villas." The most prominent example is the Shubert mansion at Hawthorne Beach. The notable features of this house are the low-pitched, tiled roof and the projecting, arcaded, two story loggia.

No survey of the structures of Byram built before 1925 would be complete without mentioning three fairly recently demolished mansions. The Clifford Mallory house and the Milbank house, together with the Teagle residence previously mentioned were the three most spectacular mansions on Byram Shore.



Milbank House (demolished)



The Teagle Estate
(main house demolished)

The Clifford Mallory house was built just after the turn of the century in the Queen Anne style. It was a large, cut stone and slate shingled structure with a high, rounded tower. The Milbank house was built in 1901 by the Mertz company, a local firm responsible for a great many high quality residential and civic structures. It had a large red tiled tower that was designated on navigational charts as a landmark. It is worth noting that many of this country's most elaborate buildings were built during this era due to a combination of abundant and inexpensive labor and materials, and craftsmanship of a high order, ingredients which are in short supply today. This makes the loss of these structures even more regrettable.

Byram's Ethnic Diversity

The ethnic base of Byram expanded and diversified greatly during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The most active groups were the Germans, the Slovaks, and the Danes. By 1920 the directory shows about 190 German families in Byram. Although they lived in most areas of the village, there were concentrations on William Street near the German Church and the area to the south of James Street, focusing on the Cedar Cliff subdivision, "Dutchtown." The Germans had several places for social gatherings-among them, Schnautz's Hall on the corner of William and South Water Streets, Doll's Germania Hall on Mill Street (the distinctive centerpiece of Byram's architecturally best commercial row), and the now demolished New Lebanon Hall located across the street. Some of the German societies of that era were the Germania Benevolent Society, the East Port Chester Maennerchor, and the Deutsche Unterhaltung.

The Slovak population increased rapidly after 1900. Most of Byram's Slovaks were Lutherans and they organized St. Paul's Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1902. In the following year Milo Mead donated two lots on Delavan Avenue and also donated the stone for the foundation on the condition that "New Lebanon" be included on the cornerstone. The Sokol Lodge #7, a gymnastic organization, was organized in 1898 in Port Chester and soon

was located on Mill Street in Byram. The Sokol Wreath #5, an auxiliary to the lodge, was founded in 1901. The Sokol Lodge has over 300 members today and is one of the most active ethnic organizations in the area. By 1920 the Slovaks had increased to about 150 families with concentrations on North Water Street, lower Henry Street, and the Division Street area.

In 1900 St. Peter's Danish Evangelical Church was built on Division Street on land donated by Milo Mead (the church had been organized thirty years before). In 1906 the Danes laid the cornerstone for their clubhouse on Delavan Avenue on land also donated by Mead. In appreciation for his philanthropy the Danish Club commissioned Carla Christensen, well-known Danish artist in Copenhagen, to fashion a bronze relief of Milo Mead from a photograph. Included was the inscription "The Sage of New Lebanon." Milo died later on in the same year.¹¹ By 1920 there were about 75 families of Scandinavian origin in Byram; most of these were Danish, but there were also some Swedes and Norwegians. The Norwegians had their own society "Eidsvold" which was organized in 1906. The largest concentration of Scandinavians was ironically in "Dutchtown."

Other ethnic groups in Byram had clubs and churches in neighboring communities where they were more numerous. In 1920 the Poles numbered about 60 families. They first arrived in large numbers in Glenville to work in the woolen mills, after which many settled in the Brooksville section of Port Chester where they founded a church and social club. The Italians had about 25 families in Byram at this time. There were about twice this number in Pemberwick, and many more in Chickahominy and Port Chester. During the 1920's about twenty families of Finnish origin settled in Byram and Pemberwick. Many of them were in the construction trades and they formed a cooperative society.

The remainder of the population in 1920 was divided between the Yankee element and the Irish. It is more difficult to ascertain the numbers of these groups since many Irish have English sounding names. It is clear, however, that the Yankee element, including Scotch and English immigrants, has always outnumbered the Irish in Byram. Rough estimates in 1920

give the Yankee group 170 to 50 Irish families. Most of the Yankee group maintained close ties with Port Chester. They attended the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches there. The Episcopalians attended either the Port Chester church or St. John's Chapel in Pemberwick.

Economic Prosperity

The years following the turn of the century have been noted for the rapid growth in population, building construction, and industry. The Byram side of the river became industrialized in the vicinity of South Water Street's intersection with Division Street. Some of these industrial concerns were: the New Lebanon Iron Foundry founded by Joseph Taylor, the Hawthorne Brass Foundry founded by John Weug, and Luder's Marine Construction. The Mertz Woodworking Mill moved its operations to Byram in 1904 when the concrete buildings still standing today were built on South Water Street.

Other industries in existence were sail-making, carriage making, oystering and fishing . One of Byram's original industries, the granite quarry, folded during this era. The quarries had declined in importance because of the shift from stone to concrete in the building industry.

In some ways the 1920's were the zenith of Byram's development. Photographs of the business district in this period show attractive streetscapes with large shade trees and handsomely detailed structures, many of which still exist on Mill Street. Among the merchants and their establishments in those days were Wagner's Bakery, Cuneo's Confections, Wiegand's Bottlers, Betz's Brewer Agents, Koshina's Meat Market, and Stetz's Grocery. The trolley cars ran on tracks through Mill Street, Delavan and Ritch Avenues.



Although Hawthorne Beach was no longer open to the public, the community was more than compensated by the purchase of the old Ritch quarry by the Town of Greenwich in 1920. This property became Byram Park. The increase in population was reflected in the overcrowding of the schools. In 1925 a new Byram School was built on the hilltop marking the northwestern corner of Byram proper. Its district comprised Byram, north of the railroad, and Byram's northern extension, Pemberwick.

An Outlook of Uncertainty

Byram grew steadily throughout the 1920's. This growth slowed down temporarily during the Depression, and the war years, as was common everywhere in the country. The post-war era started a new period of physical growth and an accompanying growth of community self-esteem. In 1947 the people finally decided to name the community "Byram", reverting to the original name after almost a hundred years of historically interesting, but inappropriate names. East Port Chester would continue as the Fire Department's name, New Lebanon would live on in the elementary school, and Hawthorne would still be the name of the private beach on Byram Shore.

Unfortunately, Byram's strength as a community would not continue to improve for much longer due to forces outside of the community. The coming of the Connecticut Turnpike in the 1950's completely erased several neighborhoods and absorbed vacant land which could have been developed to provide homes for Byram's middle class. Many had to leave the community in order to obtain reasonably priced building sites.

In spite of all its credentials as a thriving community, Byram never did attain the respectability and status of acquiring its own post office. Officials in Port Chester and Greenwich continually refused to admit that Byram deserved a post office. In recent years the social and monetary advantages of a Greenwich address have increased dramatically. A few years ago a number of residents in the new condominium development, "Greenwich Hills", in Pemberwick complained about their mail going through Port Chester and not having a Greenwich address. A poll was then taken to decide whether residents of Byram

and those of Pemberwick (with a Byram address) desired a Byram address with mail going through Port Chester or a Greenwich address with mail going through Greenwich. The results showed that a majority of those responding preferred Greenwich delivery.¹³ Today, as a result there is no Byram in the legal sense. The question is: can it survive spiralling real estate prices and the encroachment of office buildings, condominiums, and commuter traffic? Perhaps it is ironic that this study has come at a time when some people say there is no Byram. In fact, there is still a Byram, but whether it survives much longer as a recognizable community depends on many variables, the most important being the residents themselves.

Byram's Unique Image

Byram is unique in a comparison with the other communities in Greenwich. It more closely approximates the appearance and structure of a separate, multi-functional village - the kind of community that is common outside of the metropolitan sprawl. By multi-functional, it is meant that Byram has varied uses of land that tend to make it more self-reliant. There is a well defined business district, an industrial area along the river, working class neighborhoods, middle class areas and finally a very wealthy section along the shore.

Byram also has a special character that is evident in its physical and social makeup. Its street system is both unique and practical: Mill Street and its extensions of Delavan and Ritch Avenues serve as Byram's "Main Street", bisecting the community and providing access to neighboring areas. Water Street (North and South) parallels the river and intersects Mill Street at its busiest corner while Byram Road and Byram Shore Road provide a semi-circumferential access way to serve the outer reaches of the community. The side streets are, on the other hand, the result of small and irregularly shaped subdivisions which result in many dead end and interconnecting streets, difficult to navigate, but allowing for an interesting streetscape. The end result is a pleasant compromise between the practical but standard grid system, and the interesting but frustrating maze.

Byram's unique image is also a result of its architecture, although most structures would be deemed rather ordinary when considered individually. Since there were many builders of varied tastes, a very comfortable mix of both ordinary and distinctive structures serve as local landmarks.

Finally, the residents of Byram are themselves unique. Byram is by far the most ethnically complex of Greenwich's communities. Such human connections with foreign places and cultures is an added plus to any community. Byram residents tend to be more stable in their place of residence. According to the 1970 census, out of all of Greenwich's communities, Byram had the highest percentage of residents living in the same house for over 20 years, (33.1%).¹⁴ As a result, it is not unusual to frequently hear of local 'scandals' which may have occurred twenty years ago.

While it may be, in the future, that Byram will become merely a "part" of Greenwich, it is still a real community trying to survive in the increasing facelessness of suburbia. It has a heritage that is strongly appreciated by its residents who steadfastly maintain that they are from Byram, and nowhere else!

Recommendations for Further Study: Byram, Conn.

Byram, like many of Connecticut's smaller communities, has been fortunate to have retained a well-defined sense of the past. While successive waves of home remodellers have eliminated patterned shingles and decorative porches, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century streetscapes are basically intact. No high rise office buildings, or suburban shopping centers intrude upon the pre World War II atmosphere which pervades the community.

In reviewing our data on over five hundred structures, we would like to recommend the following three areas for further study.

I. An Interstate Historic District: Factories and Worker Housing

Historically speaking, much of Byram was developed to provide housing for the men and women who were employed in the mills and factories of nearby Port Chester, N.Y. There are heavy concentrations of modest, late 19th c. dwellings along North and South Water Street, Henry, William and Church Streets, as well as on Mead Avenue. From them it was but a short walk across the Byram River Bridge to one's job in Port Chester. A number of dwellings retain iron newel post caps and fences which were brought home from the Abendroth Foundry on the other side of the river.

We would like to suggest consideration of an Interstate Historic District, one which would combine the residential areas of Byram with their "Bread & Butter" industrial structures in Port Chester, N.Y. This might be treated as a 'Thematic,' or a 'Multiple Resources' Historic District. A final determination cannot be made until Port Chester completes its Historic Resources Inventory, scheduled for the summer of 1979.

II. The Shorefront Estates: Carriage Houses and Other Remodelled Structures

The potential exists for a second, quite different Historic District along the shore.

Many of the lavish, turn of the century mansions have been demolished and replaced by simpler structures of contemporary design. However, the carriage houses and other auxiliary structures of these estates, more suited in scale to present day life - styles, have survived and provide a tantalizing glimpse of a bygone era. These late nineteenth to early twentieth century structures could be grouped together to form a Thematic or Multiple Resource Historic District of considerable interest.

An alternative, expanded approach would be to propose the entire Byram Shore area (or portions thereof), and would include all of the more significant structures, including the remaining large mansions. Byram Cemetery, which dates back to the 1690's, and Byram Park, the site of the old stone quarries, could also be included.

III. Main Street Historic District

Still another potential Historic District is the Mill Street area, Byram's three block "Main Street." While there have been storefront alterations, the basic structures have remained intact. Anchored to the east by three, large turn of the century commercial buildings, the row terminates at the iron bridge leading into Port Chester, N.Y. Architectural styles vary from Italianate to Art Deco, and include various other early twentieth century eclectic styles.

Notes

1. The Mianus River Gorge Conservation Committee of the National Conservancy: Flora and Fauna of the Mianus River Gorge and Botanical Preserve, Bedford, N.Y., 1927., p. 31.
2. Charles W. Baird, History of Rye 1660-1870. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co., 1871, p. 194.
3. Town of Greenwich, Early Records 1640-1754, p.30.
4. Greenwich (Conn.) Time 15 August 1951, p.1.
5. Town of Greenwich, Land Records, Book 28, p. 40, 139.
6. Ibid., Book 29, p. 50.
7. Ibid., Book 34, p. 581.
8. Spencer P. Mead, Ye Historie of ye towne of Greenwich, New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1911, p. 245.
9. Town of Greenwich, Land Records, Book 48, p. 83.
10. This house, designed by Arthur Rich, is described on p. 103 of Vincent J. Scully Jr.'s The Shingle Style-Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1955.
11. Greenwich (Conn.) News. 8 January 1909, p. 1.
12. Greenwich (Conn.) Graphic. 2 June 1906, p. 1.
13. Greenwich (Conn.) Time. 2 July 1976, p. 10.
14. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population of Housing Census Tracts: Stamford, Conn. SMSA, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1972.

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