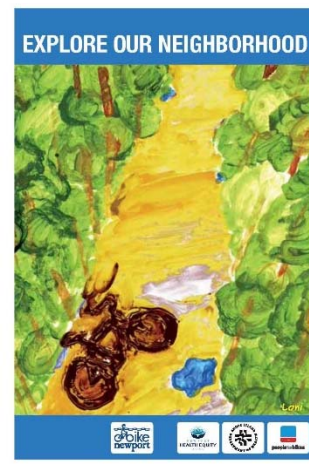




Miantonomi Memorial Park

INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Newport, Rhode Island
2019



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MIANTONOMI MEMORIAL PARK
Newport, RI

INTERPRETIVE PLAN

prepared for the

City of Newport, Department of Parks, Grounds and Forestry
280 Spring Street
Newport, RI 02841

and the

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
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2019

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...and the many users of Miantonomi Park, past, present, and future.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the City of Newport received a grant from the U. S. World War I Centennial Commission, the American Legion Newport Post 7, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, and private donors to replace a set of bronze plaques that had been stolen from the face of one of the city's most treasured historic resources, the Miantonomi Park tower.

Constructed in 1929, the 74-foot stone structure honors the 56 men from Newport who had lost their lives fighting in the Great War. Yet it symbolizes so

much more. The tower sits at the highest point on Aquidneck Island and was the seat of the famed Narragansett sachem, Miantonomi. Early European settlers placed a beacon at the summit and military troops fortified the hill during the American Revolution. It served as a 19th century gentleman's farm, and in the 1920s, became a public park. Today, the property lies at the heart of Newport's North End neighborhood and at nearly 30 acres, is the largest public open space in the city.



The Miantonomi Park tower, completed in 1929, sits at the highest point on Aquidneck Island and is one of Newport's most treasured historic resources. (Historic postcard courtesy of the Newport Historical Society collection)

Re-dedication of the tower plaques prompted the city to imagine other ways the park could be used to interpret Newport's history. The property's military history was well known, but other subjects including Native American history, landscape architecture, geology, plant, bird and animal life had not been fully explored, and thus much of Newport's story, and in particular that of the North End, had been left untold. Opportunities to uncover and share this story seemed to abound, yet Newport needed guidance in telling the story. The Miantonomi Park Interpretive Plan is a response to this need.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the plan was to provide an assessment of the significant resources and stories of the park and to determine the best ways to communicate those stories to the public. Objectives included documenting the natural, cultural and social history of the park; assessing the existing park landscape and identifying extant historic resources; making recommendations for interpretive themes based on this history and assessment; suggesting methods for doing so.

Planning Method

The consultant hired by the city to complete the plan took a four-pronged approach:

- **Stakeholder Outreach.** With city staff, the consultant developed a list of park stakeholders, or individuals representing agencies, organizations, and institutions that use the park today and might use the park in the future. The consultant then interviewed as many of these individuals as possible

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within the scope of work and budget for the project and collected information about current and future interests and interpretation needs.

- **Historical Research.** Concurrent with the outreach, the consultant reviewed historical materials pertaining to park history including written histories of Aquidneck and Newport, historic maps, photos and drawings, minutes of the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission, newspaper articles and more, and from this review, compiled a brief narrative history of the park.
- **Park Landscape Assessment.** The consultant toured the landscape with city and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission staff, noting existing conditions and extant natural and historic features to be included in future interpretation efforts.
- **Interpretation Recommendations.** Based on the outreach, research and assessment, the consultant developed a set of themes and recommended methods of interpreting these themes to the public.



Staff from the City of Newport and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission toured the park landscape as part of the assessment phase of the project.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Miantonomi Park has served as a public recreation spot in the north end of Newport for less than 100 years, yet human interaction with the park land spans many centuries. Its land first provided a place of Native American settlement, and later offered a refuge for religious outcasts, a protected location for militia, and a fertile area for working farms. The following narrative summarizes this interaction for the purposes of more fully understanding the park's history and role in the development of Newport and Aquidneck Island, and to help define interpretive themes.¹

Narragansett Lands: Before 1630

The first known inhabitants of the area that would become Miantonomi Park were Native Americans, members of the Narragansett tribe who populated coastal Rhode Island for thousands of years prior to European exploration and settlement. While charting the Atlantic Coast of North America in the 1530s, Italian explorer Giovanni Verrazano observed Native settlements, noting that Conanicut Island appeared to be the hub of Narragansett activity during the summer months, where Natives farmed and gathered food from the sea.²

Narragansett settlement extended to Aquidneck Island where the tribal head, or sachem, possessed the right to distribute land.³ Led by the Sachem Canonicus and his nephew, Miantonomi, the tribe remained in this area into the early 17th century.⁴ According to the Narragansett Indian Tribe, members typically maintained both a winter and summer home. The winter home would be called a long house in which up to 20 families would live during the cold winter months. During the summer, the tribe would move to the shore and construct wigwams or “wetus,” temporary shelters made of bark on the outside and woven mats on the inside. They traveled via water in large canoes, hand-dugout from trees, capable of transporting up to forty men.⁵ No archeological evidence of Narragansett inhabitation has been discovered to date in Miantonomi Park, however local tradition holds that Aquidneck Island was the seat of power of Miantonomi.⁶

Dissenting Puritans: 1630 – 1660

Europeans migrated south from Massachusetts beginning in the 1630s, led by the banished Puritan minister Roger Williams. Accompanied by his wife, Mary Barnard, Williams had sailed to America from England in 1630 on the ship “Lyon,” landing at Boston on February 9, 1631. He first served as an assistant in a church in Salem, Massachusetts, and spent two years in Plymouth where he met and befriended Canonicus. His ease with the Natives, facility with their language, and respect for their ownership of land upset the authorities in Massachusetts Bay, and in 1636, Williams fled south to avoid arrest and deportation to England. He settled on the banks of the Moshassuck River and received, as a gift from Canonicus, all of the neck of land between the Pawtucket and Moshassuck River. He named it Providence, established a plantation, and founded what became a religiously tolerant colony. He wrote

¹Resources for the narrative included books, maps, plans, and reports, included in the bibliography section of the plan.

² Rhode Island College Archaeology Program, “Small Archaeology Project No. 20”

³ Philbrick, Nathaniel, *Mayflower*, 170

⁴ Historical sources refer to Miantonomi as the “marshal” and “right-hand-man” of Canonicus. The name was referred to interchangeably as Wonnumentonomey, Wanemetonomy, Miantonomi, Tomany (or Tomony), and several others with varied spellings.

⁵ <http://narragansettindiannation.org/history/>

⁶ National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Miantonomi Park

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of this gift, “here was an act of kindness, which even at the present day demands a requital from the whites towards the remains of the Indian tribes.”⁷

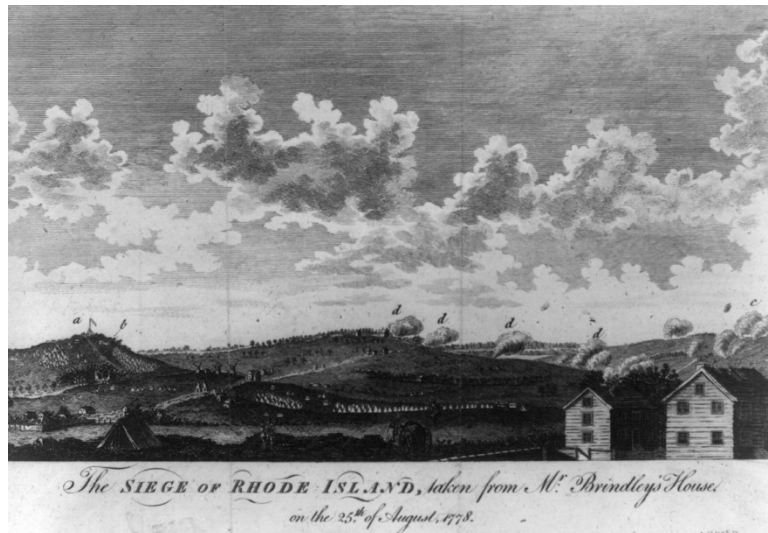
In 1638, Massachusetts residents John Clarke and William Coddington followed Williams to Providence, having been ordered to leave because of dissenting religious beliefs. Williams helped the men secure a deed from Canonicus to Aquidneck Island, settling first at the northern end (today’s Portsmouth). The following year, Coddington moved southward and founded Newport, and in 1640, the two settlements were united under common rule. Three years later, Roger Williams secured a charter from England, giving the new colony a legal basis for existence, and the following year the Court of Election ordered that Aquidneck be known as the Isle of Rhodes, or Rhode Island.

Concurrent with the formation this new colony was the impending demise of Miantonomi. Because he admired the preaching of Roger Williams, tribal members suspected Miantonomi of disloyalty and sympathy towards the English. In 1643 he was captured by the Mohegans, tried, and executed. Three years later, Miantonomi’s Uncle Conanicus died. Williams remembered him as a “wise and peaceable prince.”⁸ Despite the loss of these Narragansett leaders, the association between them and Aquidneck Island had been cemented, as Newporters would continue to refer to the central high point as Miantonomi Hill.

Beacon and Fort: 1660 – 1800

In the late 17th century and throughout the 1700s the hill served as a point of prospect and security for military operations. As early as 1667, it held a beacon, which, when fired, “directed to rest of the beacons in the colony to be forthwith fired throughout the whole colony.”⁹ By the mid-1700s prominent Newport merchant and shipbuilder Godfrey Malbone owned the land encompassing Miantonomi Hill and he continued to maintain the beacon atop the high point.¹⁰

During the Revolutionary War, a newly-constructed beacon gave the country “an alarm in case of invasion,” and around the same time, Colonial troops built a fortification on the hill. In 1778, British forces took control of Aquidneck in the Siege of Rhode Island, further strengthened the fort and constructed a redoubt on the north side of the hill.¹¹ In



The siege of Rhode Island, taken from Mr. Brindley's house on the 25th of August 1778, created in 1779 and published in The Gentleman's Magazine, February 1779.

⁷ Allen, William, An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary, 220

⁸ Allen, 221

⁹ National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Miantonomi Park

¹⁰ The 1850 Walling map of Newport refers to the land adjacent to Miantonomi Hill as the “Malbone Garden”

¹¹ NR, Miantonomi Park.

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1796, the Secretary of War reported to Congress that a “citadel for protection of the inhabitants” had been erected on the hill, a structure that would provide distant views of approaching forces in future insurgencies, namely the War of 1812. The citadel remained until 1817, when it was dismantled by the American military. Malbone and his descendants owned the hill and surrounding property until 1797, when they deeded nearly 630 acres to William Rotch, a whaling merchant from New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Working Farm: 1800 – 1919

Rotch may have purchased the Miantonomi Hill property as a country estate, but he leased the property to David Buffum, a Quaker preacher, who operated a working farm known as the “Tamani Hill Farm.” In 1832, Rotch’s son deeded the property to Buffum’s son, who two years later sold 60 acres of the farm to Rowland Hazard. Hazard maintained a lookout at the hill summit, providing him with a 360-degree view. In 1850, popular history writer Benson Lossing produced A Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, in which he described the property:



A view of “Tonomy Hill” as depicted in Lossing’s 1850 book shows a treeless landscape with exposed rock ledge.

About a mile and a half northward of Newport rises a bold, rocky eminence, called “Tonomy Hill”... said to be the highest land upon the island, except Quaker Hill, toward the northern end. On its southern slope is the mansion of Mr. Hazzard, where families from a distance have a pleasant home during the warm season, while the younger fashionables are sporting at the Ocean House on the shore. On the top of the hill Mr. Hazzard has erected an observatory, seventy feet high, over a cellar which was dug by the Indians, and in which is a living spring of water. The hill is two hundred and seventy feet above the bay, and the top of the observatory commands one of the most beautiful panoramic views in the world. Stretching away northward was seen Narraganset Bay, broken by islands and pierced by headlands, and at its remote extremity the spires of Providence were glittering in the sun. On its western shore were glimpses of Warwick, Greenwich, and Wickford, and on the east were seen Warren and Bristol, and the top of Mount Hope, the throne of King Philip. On the south and west were the city and harbor of Newport, the island of Canonicut with its ruined fort, and the smaller islands in the harbor, with the remains of fortifications. Beyond the city, looking oceanward with a spy-glass over the ramparts of Fort Adams, was seen the dim outline of Block Island, like a mist lying upon the waters. There rolled the dark and boundless Atlantic, with no limit but the blue horizon, no object but a few sails. Turning the glass a little more eastward, there was a faint apparition of Gayhead, on Martha’s Vineyard, and of some of the islands in Buzzard’s Bay. The cultivated fields of more than one half of Rhode Island, upon which I stood, were spread out like a map around me, rich in Nature’s bounties and

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*historical associations. From our lofty observatory, let us take a field survey with the open chronicle before us.*¹²

Between 1877 and 1921, the farm and portions thereof passed from Hazard to his business partner Philip Caswell (60 acres in 1877) and then from Caswell's heirs to Anson Stokes (26 acres in 1881), a Guided Age banker, real estate developer and merchant. In 1881, Stokes began a 25-year relationship with the Olmsted landscape architecture firm to assess the property's potential as a private estate. Stokes worked with Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. from 1881 until 1891, and the Olmsted Brothers continued this engagement by photographing the view and preparing sketches and plans as late as 1916. No evidence of implementation of this assessment is known to exist.¹³



Job # 00640, A. P. Stokes, Miantonomi Hill, Photo 5. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Parkland: 1919 - 1990

Stokes's wife, Helen, inherited the property after his passing in 1913. Around the same time, the Newport Improvement Association had commissioned Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., landscape architect, to prepare a report and plan for making overall improvements to the city.¹⁴ Olmsted urged the city to acquire the Stokes's property for a park, describing the assets of Miantonomi Hill as follows:

¹² Lossing, Benson, *A Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, 38

¹³ Olmsted Research On Line, Project #00640, <http://ww3.rediscov.com/Olmsted/>;
https://www.flickr.com/photos/olmsted_archives/sets/72157646688075996/

¹⁴ The Newport Improvement Association was incorporated in Rhode Island in 1912, for the purposes of "the securing and the enforcement of such municipal and state action as shall appear for the best interests of

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It is a beautiful, wooded hill, easily accessible from every part of the city, affording woodland and meadow scenery of a charming quality. It is the highest land in Newport, affording opportunity for broad and impressive views over the surrounding country to the north and east, over the city, the harbor, and the open ocean to the southward, and over Narragansett Bay, with Conanicut, Prudence and other islands, to the west and north. Furthermore, on this hilltop was once a fort, which lends added interest and value to the hill as a public holding. For it may be accepted as a good general park policy to preserve as far as possible for the use and enjoyment of the people such landscape features as are of unusual geological or historical interest. I believe this hill should be acquired by the City before the woods are cut, the ruins of the fort destroyed, or other injury wrought to its value as a rural park.¹⁵

In preparation for acquisition of the Stokes's property in 1921, the city established the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission (MMPC) which then created a sub-committee on a Newport War Memorial. One of the first recorded votes of the sub-committee enlisted the services of architect Clipston Sturgis to design the memorial.¹⁶ Mrs. Stokes suggested that Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. be hired to collaborate with Sturgis and the sub-committee voted accordingly. The Stokes family weighed in on the program for the memorial, requesting that fencing take the form of a stone wall; that distinct gateposts be erected; that parking be provided at the entrance; and that the city care for the park and memorial in perpetuity.¹⁷ Sturgis designed gateposts and a perimeter wall, and also prepared several versions of a memorial tower between 1919 and 1926, none of which met the expectations of the MMPC. Olmsted prepared one plan in January of 1921 which accompanied a report to the MMPC. (Refer to the pull-out page for an image of this plan.) The drawing showed a main gated park entrance at Coddington Avenue (today's Girard Avenue), and a drive leading from this entrance to a second gated entrance and veering eastward, exiting at Hillside Avenue. Olmsted also included parking space to the east of the entry drive, as well as playing fields and a small children's playground in a regraded lawn area along Hillside Avenue. It is not clear how much of this plan was implemented, but following the city's official purchase of the 37-acre property for \$13,850.00, the MMPC organized a largely volunteer effort to upgrade the parkland. This included trimming trees, removing dead wood, draining paths, clearing underbrush, installing a pump for drinking water, building benches, establishing a subgrade for a roadway, and consulting with the garden club on choices of flowers.¹⁸ The city dedicated the park on Armistice Day, 1923.

In 1927 the MMPC terminated Sturgis's contract and hired the New York-based architecture firm of McKim, Mead and White (MMW) to design the memorial tower. Within a year, MMW had produced an acceptable design. Drawing inspiration from the circular watchtowers or beacons of fieldstone found along the coasts of the Old World, MMW created a 78' 6" high tower, with an arcaded terrace at the base and a lantern at the crown, reminiscent of the Pharos, lighthouse at Alexandria, Egypt.¹⁹ Due to

Newport," including safeguarding against undesirable developments; preserving the natural beauty of the city; laying out of roads. Newport Improvement Society Charter, By-Laws, Rules, Officers Members, 1912.

¹⁵ Olmsted, F. L., Jr., "Proposed Improvements for Newport," 26

¹⁶ Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission (MMPC) meeting minutes, 1919

¹⁷ MMPC, 1920

¹⁸ MMPC meeting minutes, 1922

¹⁹ NR Nomination, Miantonomi Park. The Old Stone Mill, erected in the 1700s and located in Newport's Touro Park, also may have influenced the design.

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funding constraints, the commission eliminated the lantern at the top of the tower; funds donated for this purpose were folded into the tower construction budget. However, two bronze tablets honoring the 56 servicemen from Newport who were killed in World War I were mounted on the tower, and a field stone walkway surrounding the base installed for visitor access. The MMPC raised a total \$37,600 for the construction, which was completed in 1929 and celebrated with a formal dedication in August.



Tower dedication took place in August of 1929. (Collection of the Newport Historical Society)

In 1935, Elizabeth H. Burckes of Weston, Massachusetts, working through her landscape design firm, Little Gardens, prepared a plan for the park grounds.²⁰ A native of Waltham, Burckes produced the plan not long after her graduation from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (refer to the pull-out drawing for an image of this plan). In contrast to Olmsted, Burckes eliminated vehicular ways from the park, including the exit onto Hillside Avenue, and instead introduced a series of meandering walking paths in and around the park edges. She also called out many plants (either existing or proposed) and proposed two tree-rimmed “open fields” along the eastern edge, along with defined “play areas,” and a picnic grove. Parking was provided in a rectangular lot at the southernmost end of the park. As with the Olmsted plan, it is not clear today how much of Burckes’s plan was implemented, although several features of the park layout reflect her design.

Following World War II, Miantonomi Park became a popular spot for family gatherings, with the picnic grove fireplaces regularly stocked with wood, and the tower open every weekend for public enjoyment of the view.²¹ The park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969.

Late-20th century changes to Newport’s urban fabric led to the isolation of Miantonomi Park from the rest of the city. Urban renewal of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the alteration of roads, including the widening of Route 238 and creation of an exit ramp connecting to the newly constructed Admiral Kalbfus Boulevard. These modifications, along with the transfer of land through deeds and leases along the north and east edges to the Newport Housing Authority and the Catholic Order of the Sisters of Mercy, reduced the overall park size from 37 acres to approximately 30. In 1978, vandals stole the bronze tablets from the tower, further compromising the park’s condition. The MPPC installed a spot-lit flag on top of the tower, intended to take the place of a beacon, and this may have caused structural cracking in the tower walls.

²⁰ Elizabeth Burckes Bonney died in 2018 at the age of 103. Her plan for Miantonomi Memorial Park is one of the only of her designs known to exist.

²¹ Miantonomi Park caretaker notes.

Revival: 1990 - Present

Efforts on the part of the city and MMPC beginning in the 1990s have brightened Miantonomi Park's future. In 1990, the MMPC completed a master plan which identified many needed improvements. In 2005, the Aquidneck Land Trust secured a conservation easement for the park from the city, and in conjunction with this commissioned a management plan. This document included recommendations for scenic and historic resource protection, recreational and educational uses, and wildlife habitat conservation. In 2006 the trust secured a second easement and completed a management plan for the adjacent Sunset Hill and in 2017 the Newport Open Space Partnership commissioned an open space plan for the city. Formally adopted by the Newport City Council, the plan included many recommendations for improvements to and expanded programming in Miantonomi Park.

On September 27, 2017, the U. S. WW I Centennial Commission named the tower an official U. S. WWI Centennial Memorial and awarded a grant to pay for the replacement of the plaques. Additional funding was provided by the American Legion Newport Post 7, the RIHPHC, and private donors, and reinstallation took place in 2018. At the same time the Newport Open Space Partnership recognized the importance of Miantonomi Park to the northern part of the city, stating on its website,



Miantonomi Park plays a critical role in northern Newport from many perspectives – offering key recreation, gathering space and passive enjoyment, wildlife habitat, and tree canopy in a densely populated neighborhood. Named after Chief Miantonomi of the Narragansett Indians and home to Newport's only official WWI Centennial Memorial, the park has a rich history.²²

The bronze plaques commemorating those servicemen who had lost their lives in WWI were replaced in 2018 through grants from the U. S. WWI Centennial Commission, the American Legion Newport Post 7, and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, augmented by support from private donors. (Source: Newport Daily News)

The Open Space Partnership has committed to maintaining and upgrading the Miantonomi Park landscape, and intends to continue their efforts so that public appreciation and enjoyment of the park and its historical significance continues well into the future.

²² www.newportopenspace.org/

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THE PARK TODAY

As noted in the previous section of the plan, Miantonomi Park has long been an Aquidneck Island focal point, serving as refuge and lookout for the Narragansetts, a military stronghold for Colonial and British troops, and a setting for commemoration of the Great War. Today, it is Newport's largest public open space, providing an outdoor recreation hub for the thousands of residents of the city's North End. In addition to the long views enjoyed from its high point, the park's varied natural and built features attract users, young and old. The following section details the existing conditions of the park, and identifies extant historic and cultural features to be highlighted in the interpretation plan.



The long views from the summit of the park have drawn humans for centuries and continue to be an attraction to this day.

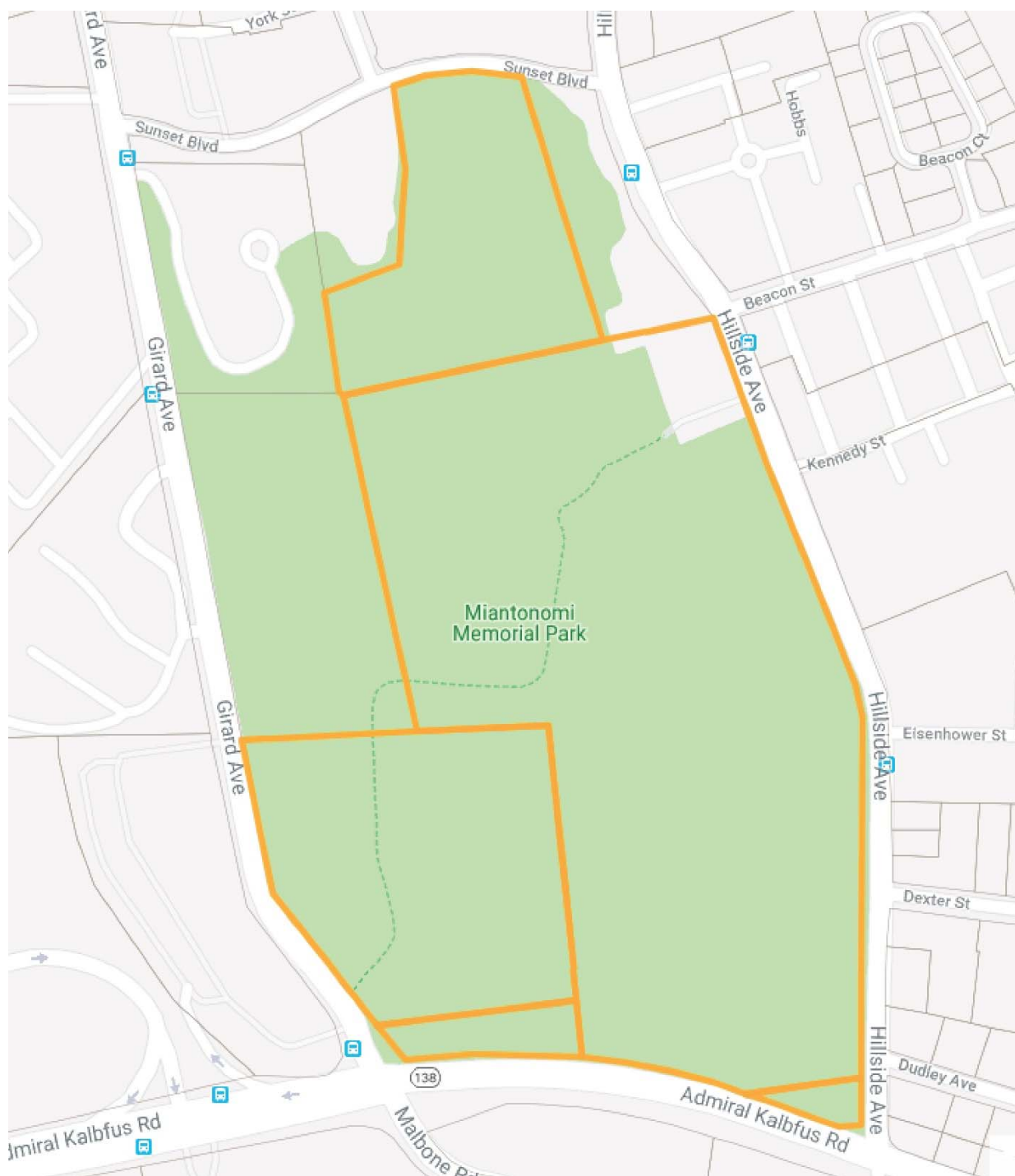
Setting

The 30-acre park lies in the heart of the North End, approximately one-half mile to the east and south of Narragansett Bay and the U. S. Naval Station and just west of the Middletown line. Commercial development abuts the park's south and southwest sides, yet the property lies largely among single and multi-family housing, with the city's only elementary school, Claiborne Pell, within one block to the east. Four city streets, Hillside Avenue, Girard Avenue, Sunset Boulevard and Admiral Kalbfus Road wrap around the east, west, north and south sides (respectively), and stone walls and chain link fencing stand along the park boundary, further defining its limits. The Housing Authority of Newport occupies the park's northeast and northwest corners and the Florence Gray Center stands across Sunset Boulevard to the north. In recent years, Bike Newport has placed a "bike barn" and pump track near the northwest corner (on Housing Authority land), and plans are afoot to expand this operation to include additional barns.



Single and multi-family housing surrounds much of the park, making it an important open space in the north end neighborhood of Newport.

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The park includes five parcels (outlined in orange) totaling 30 acres surrounded by Girard Avenue (west), Sunset Boulevard (north), Hillside Avenue (east) and Admiral Kalbfus Road (south). Single and multi-family housing lines the east side and portions of the north and west sides. The Housing Authority of Newport maintains land along the northeast and northwest sides, and the Claiborne Pell Elementary School lies to the east along Dexter Street.

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Topography, Geology, Views

The park is roughly rectangular in shape, longer from north to south than it is east to west. The topography ranges from nearly level along the eastern edge to extremely steep near the center. Moving westward from Highland Avenue, the grade rolls gently upward until it meets a longitudinal ridge extending through the center of the park. The highpoint at elevation 155 stands at the summit of this ridge in the geographic center of the park and holds an earthen terrace topped by the World War I tower. To the north of this highpoint, also along the ridge, are several manmade depressions (now vernal pools) and the remnants of the 18th century military redoubt. Moving west from the ridge, the land descends steeply to a gently rolling plain along Girard Avenue. Moderately steep grades descend from the ridge high points northward and southward.



Topography within the park varies from relatively flat (along the east side) to steep (at the center). A longitudinal ridge extends north to south through the center and atop this ridge is the highpoint at elevation 155.

Geology and views correspond to this varied topography. Deeper, tillable soils cover the lower elevations along the east and west edges, and accumulations of large puddingstone boulders lie along the ridge, most prevalently at the highest elevations. Long views from the top of the ridge were once possible before becoming obstructed by forests growing below. Shorter views are possible across the gently sloping areas along the east and west edges and down the network of paths traversing the park (discussed below).

Plant Communities

Three principal plant communities cover the park, lawn, woodland meadow, and unmanaged woodlands. Lawn covers approximately six acres along the east side, providing area for games, gatherings, picnics and other passive recreation activities. The city has planted several species of shade and evergreen trees throughout the lawn, including a cluster of dawn redwood trees near the south end. Along the west side is a four-acre wooded meadow, maintained as such to support bird and other wildlife habitat. Mature shade trees are sparsely planted throughout and at ground level are meadow grasses and other herbaceous perennials. Unmanaged woodlands cover the remainder of the park. Naturalized English oak, interspersed with white birch and European beech, dominate and many of these trees are in decline. At the understory level are many invasive species including, devil's walking stick, burning bush, and English ivy. At the park summit, a grassy lawn in the form of an apron, extends southward from the tower, providing a spot for public gathering and viewing.

Circulation

The city does not provide parking space on the grounds, so visitors must park in parallel spaces along Hillside or Sunset Avenues. The city transit system provides bus service to Hillside Avenue, and visitors may stop at any of the three stops (two northbound, one southbound) along Hillside Avenue to access the park. A concrete sidewalk lines the full length of the eastern and northern edges, providing



A footpath leads around the base of the summit and passes by deposits of puddingstone.



Stone slab steps, built in the puddingstone, allow hikers shorter access to the summit.

additional access. Two historic park entrances remain, each marked with a pair of fieldstone piers. The southeast entrance off Hillside Avenue is intact with both piers standing and in good condition. At the southwest entrance off Girard Avenue one pier is missing, and the remaining pier has partially collapsed.

Service vehicles only are permitted inside the park to access the tower. They follow a gravel-covered road from the southeast corner westward, turning northward, where the road surface turns to dirt and turf as it ascends to the ridge summit. Pedestrians may also follow this road or they may take one of the several trails leading through the park to the summit. Informal trailheads are located at the southwest and northeast corners, and from either location, hikers can reach the highpoint and/or travel through to the opposite side of the park. On the northern end of the ridge, the trail passes the vernal pools and historic redoubt and loops the summit, taking hikers along formations of puddingstone. At the southeast end, users of the park playground and picnic area can reach these amenities via a concrete sidewalk leading from Hillside Avenue into the park.

Landscape Details

Much of the focus in Miantonomi Park has been on the WWI tower because of its elegant design, historical importance, and location atop Newport's highest point. But in addition to this and the natural features and circulation systems discussed above, the park contains several other details that add to the appeal of its landscape and illuminate the story behind it. Along the eastern edge, the picnic area contains benches and barbecue grills under a large bosc of shade trees. To the west of this area is a field stone comfort station, with separate facilities for women and men, a volleyball net, and a modern children's playground structure. Scattered through the woodlands below the summit are remnants of benches and fences, and a commemorative puddingstone boulder holding a bronze plaque sits on the slope above the southwest entrance. Nearer the summit, sets of stone steps lead from the terrace loop path up to the base of the tower.

To the north of the tower lie the redoubt and former ammunition bunkers (now vernal pools). The tower remains the park focal point, allowing spectacular 360-degree views from its top tier.

EXTANT HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Today's park retains many features that reflect human interaction with the land from the time of occupation by the Narragansetts to the present. These extant historic and cultural resources appear below, organized according the historical periods defined in the park history section of this report, and highlighted with bold lettering.

Narragansett Lands and Dissenting Puritans: Before 1660

While no documentation is known to exist of natural and/or cultural features from this time, tradition holds that the **sachem Miantonomi** held forth atop the high point. The natural geological features, including the **puddingstone boulders**, may have provided both a place of refuge and prospect, as **views** of the Narragansett tribe's holdings, including Aquidneck and nearby Canonicut Island would have been possible from the summit. The passing of land from Miantonomi to William Coddington represented a shift in the Narragansetts' association with the place, however Coddington and those who followed continued to refer to the high point as Miantonomi Hill.



The 360-degree views possible from the summit in the park made it a prime spot for the Narragansetts to maintain a place of refuge and prospect.

Beacon and Fort: 1660-1800

During this period, the hill became a sentry point and military stronghold, supporting its first beacon as early at 1667. Colonial troops are believed to have constructed a fort, and in 1778, British troops controlling Aquidneck Island during the Siege of Rhode Island strengthened the fort and built the accompanying **redoubt**. Today, remains of this earthen structure are visible to the north of the summit, as are several adjacent depressions that may have served as **ammunition bunkers**.

Working Farm: 1800-1919

Historic maps of Newport show the land surrounding Miantonomi Hill first being divided among several landowners, including Godfrey Malbone, William Rotch and lessee David Buffum, Rowland Hazard and Philip Caswell, each of whom likely maintained some type of **farming** operations in the tillable portions of the park area. When Anson Stokes took ownership in 1881, he hired the Olmsted firm to assess the property's suitability to be sold as a private estate. Olmsted's sons focused on identifying existing and potential **views**.

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A bronze plaque was placed on an existing puddingstone boulder near the southwest entrance to commemorate the Great War.



Today, Miantonomi Park is a recreation hub, with a bike barn, pump track, playground, picnic area and open lawn. It is also home to many species of wildlife.

Parkland: 1919-1990

Many of the historic features that remain in the park today date to this period when the park was established, the **tower** was built, and the landscape was upgraded to include amenities such as **perimeter walls, formal entrances, benches and steps, the commemorative WWI plaques, the comfort station, and later in the century, modern picnic and playground equipment.** This period also reflects the growth of Newport's **North End** into a thriving residential community.

Revival: 1990-Today

Over the last thirty years, Miantonomi Park has experienced decline, and more recently, revival. Decline is marked by the **waning of the forested areas**, where naturalized English oak, birch and European beech are dying from disease and the ill effects of climate change. **Invasive understory species** have infiltrated, further impacting the forest's health. At the same time, these changes have provided **habitat** for species of wildlife that thrive on forest decay. Development of housing, social service and educational institutions, along with new recreation facilities and programs, symbolize the park as it is today, serving as "**third place**" within Newport's North End neighborhood.

STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS & INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The following section of the plan summarizes the existing and desired future interpretation interests of the many agencies and organizations that use Miantonomi Park. These interests emerged from interviews, conducted in person and over the telephone with individual stakeholders who represent these entities.²³ Together with the park history and existing conditions, these interests provide a foundation for the plan recommendations. Stakeholder organizations interviewed include the following:

- Aquidneck Island Land Trust
- Newport Open Space Partnership
- Naval War College (Hattendorf Historical Center)
- Newport Historical Society (Miantonomi Park collection)
- Newport Health Equity Zone
- Bike Newport

The interests of these stakeholders fall into four general thematic categories, natural history, cultural history, health and wellness, and the visual and performing arts, as follows.

Natural History

The **Aquidneck Island Land Trust (AILT)**, a conservation and stewardship organization that has worked over the past 30 years to secure 2,600 acres (11% of total land) across Aquidneck, secured two conservation easements from the city in 2005 and 2006 for land within the park. The easements were designed to maintain and encourage public use of the park for recreation but also to learn about the natural history. In particular, the AILT identified the mature deciduous forest covering the western two-thirds of parkland, the largest tract of its kind on Aquidneck, as a focus area for education and interpretive programming related to natural history.

The **Newport Open Space Partnership (NOSP)**, a collaboration between the City of Newport, Newport Tree and Open Space Commission, Aquidneck Island Land Trust, Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, and Newport Tree Society, produced the *Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan* for the city in 2017, which included recommendations for interpretative efforts in Miantonomi Park relating to natural history. The NOSP plan, along with the intent of the AILT easements, illuminated the array of natural history-related features that offer subject areas for interpretation:



Puddingstone, a cobble and pebble conglomerate, appears throughout the higher elevations of the park.

²³ In addition to the entities and individuals listed, multiple attempts were made by e-mail and phone to interview stakeholders from the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Housing Authority of Newport, Claiborne Pell Elementary School. While these connections were not successful, the city should include representatives of these organizations and agencies in future interpretive planning efforts.

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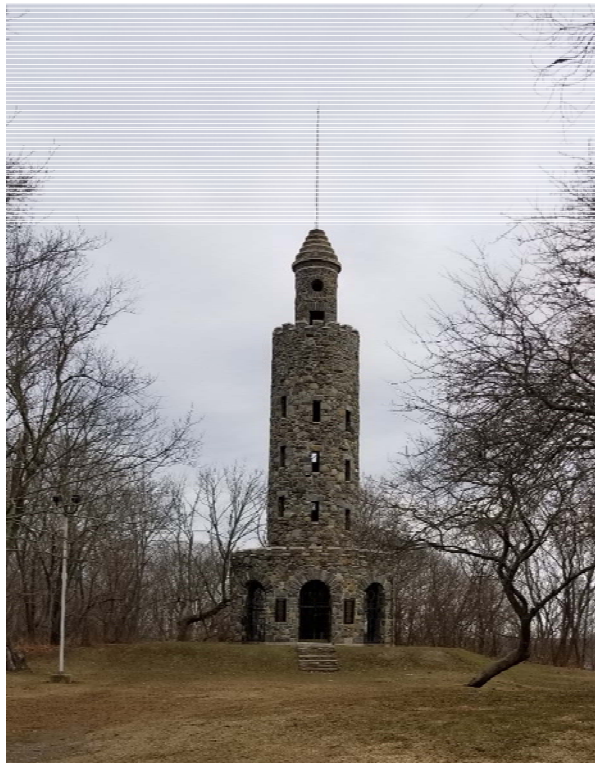
- **Geology**, specifically puddingstone, a cobble and pebble conglomerate held together by clast, which appears throughout the higher elevations in the park as boulders and outcroppings;
- **Flora**, including native, non-native and naturalized species, as well as invasive species. The park's woodland is the only mature deciduous forest remaining on Aquidneck;
- **Fauna**, including mammals, insects, birds, and migratory birds and the park's position and importance in the Atlantic flyway;
- **Evolution and climate change**, specifically the declining mature forest and subsequent regrowth, and associated habitats for insects, birds, mammals, and reptiles.

Cultural History

Located just one-half mile to the west of the park, the **Naval War College's Hattendorf Historical Center** is dedicated to interpreting naval history to the public. Staff of the center assert that the park began as a place for all and believe it should continue to serve this function. They also believe the full story of Newport is not currently being told elsewhere in the city, and the centuries-old landscape of Miantonomi Park provides an opportunity to do so. They noted that the War College campus was intended to be open to the public, but increased security following the 9/11 attacks has severely limited accessibility. The park is an alternative location, outside the Naval complex, where the college can interpret Naval history to the public. An example of this is the center's recent involvement in the re-dedication of the bronze World War I plaques at the tower.

The **Newport Historical Society** holds the largest collection of documents and photographs pertaining to park history, including minutes from the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission meetings. The collection also contains the original blueprints prepared for the park landscape by F. L. Olmsted, Jr. (version redrawn by Clipston Sturgis in 1921 based on Olmsted's 1913 plan) and Elizabeth Burckes (1935), as well as the McKim, Mead and White architectural drawings (1927) of the park tower. These support and augment those of the Hattendorf Center; together the institutions see the park as an ideal location for interpreting Newport and Aquidneck Island's multiple-century cultural history, specifically:

- Presence of the **Narragansett Indian tribe**, and in particular the sachem Miantonomi, dating to before 1630;



The Miantonomi Park tower, dedicated in 1929, sits on the highest point in the park. The location held beacons and fortifications throughout several previous centuries.

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- **Battle (Siege) of Rhode Island (1778)**, the largest battle between the Colonists and the French against the British;
- The **First Rhode Island Regiment** of the Continental Army, consisting of African American, Native American and Colonial soldiers, a significant player in the Battle of Rhode Island;
- **World War I**, during which Newport lost 56 men who are now commemorated by the tower, plaques, and bronze tablet affixed to a puddingstone boulder near the southwest park entrance;
- **Bernardo Cardines**, a resident of Newport and baseball player and the first soldier from Newport to lose his life in World War I (listed on one of the tower plaques). Newport's baseball park, dating to as early as 1893, one of the nation's oldest, was named for Cardines (the park was originally called Basin Field);
- **Landscape architecture and architecture**, including the work of the renowned Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and McKim, Mead and White, and lesser-known R. Clipston Sturgis (architect for the original tower) and Elizabeth Burckes;
- The **Newport Folk Festival**, launched in 1959, began in a football stadium and moved to a site adjacent to the west side of Miantonomi Park (now the site of Festival Field Apartments), and continued in this spot until finding its current home at Fort Adams State Park in 1974. Bob Dylan created controversy at the original site in 1965 when he performed with his electric guitar and did not return to Newport again until 2002;
- The **panoramic view** from the tower is a reminder of the importance of the place as a lookout first for the Narragansetts and later, for military operations. From the exterior tiers, visitors can see Conanicut Island, seat of Narragansett sachem Conanicus, as well as the War College, forts in the harbor, Goat and Gould Islands, all players in US military history.



The view from atop the tower extends in all directions.



The Newport Health Equity Zone has placed this colorful sign on Highland Avenue to encourage physical activity within the North End neighborhood and the park.

Health and Wellness

The **Newport Health Equity Zone (HEZ)** is a city-wide effort to enhance the quality of life of its residents, with a focus on the North End neighborhood. Because of Miantonomi Park's location in the heart of the neighborhood, HEZ sees the property as a prime spot to promote physical activity, healthy eating, and enrichment through the arts and culture. The **Housing Authority of Newport**, located on Hillside Avenue near the northern end of the park, helps residents address affordable housing needs. Like HEZ, the organization relies on Miantonomi Park as the only public green space in the neighborhood. The newest user of the park is **Bike Newport**, a city-wide organization that promotes non-motorized travel for the purpose of increasing physical fitness and reducing traffic congestion on Aquidneck. Bike Newport has established a "big blue bike barn" and pump track at the northern end of the park and plans to expand these efforts in the future. Interpretive subject areas pertaining to health and wellness supported by each of these organizations are as follows:

- **Nutrition and healthy eating**, including raising food and eating locally-produced food in conjunction with the local farmer's market and any future efforts to establish cultivated areas within the park;
- **Physical fitness, play and fun**, including the benefits of walking, hiking and running, playing games and taking time to have fun outdoors;
- **Bicycling**, including the evolution of the bicycle, its historical associations with Newport, and the many uses for it today.

Arts & Literature

Some of the organizations discussed above along with several others promote the visual and performing arts in Newport by bringing music, theater, sculpture and painting into the park as well as literature. **HEZ** has collaborated with arts faculty and students from **Salve Regina University** on the Sidewalk Parade, a moving work of art featuring musicians, costumes and more. Providence's **Trinity Repertory Theatre** will bring its traveling performance to the park in the summer of 2019. **Bike Newport** will feature the work of local artists on the outside walls of its big blue bike barns. Interpretive subject areas related to the visual and performing arts include:

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- **Public art**, or installations, either temporary or permanent, focused on natural and cultural history, health and wellness and/or social/environmental/political issues, created by local and regional artists; in particular, works that encourage physical interaction by park visitors;
- **Poetry**, specifically poems associated with the natural and cultural history of Newport, written by local and regional poets.



Bike Newport and partners have placed this sign on Highland Avenue to encourage biking as a way of exploring the neighborhood and city. It features the work of a local artist, Navaea, age 9.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the previous section, interpretation opportunities associated with Miantonomi Park center on four themes: natural history, cultural history, health and wellness, and visual and performing arts. These themes emerged from a study of the park's history, identification of its extant natural and cultural resources, and an understanding of interpretation needs of park stakeholders. This final section provides recommendations for interpreting the four themes, along with methods for doing so.

All Interpretive Themes

- Connect with tourism organizations in Newport, such as Discover Newport and cruise companies with port excursion programs, to promote the park through website(s) and printed visitor information materials.
- Work with publications such as *Newport Life Magazine*, the *Patch* of Newport, and *Newport Daily News* to publish articles and stories about Miantonomi Park's history and current programming.
- Include the park in city-wide and island-wide interpretation efforts in parks and open spaces.

Natural History

- **Ranger.** Employ a park ranger to orient visitors and share information about natural history, including forest decline and the effects of climate change on the park landscape. Because this would be a seasonal position, it could be a summer employment/internship opportunity for high school and/or college students.
- **Trail and Map.** Create a trail and map that guides visitors to the natural features of the park, including geology and wildlife. Make this map available through the city website (linked via a QR code) and/or through OnSell, Pocket Tour, or Field Trip (Google) mobile applications.²⁴ Update Rhode Tour, a website dedicated to places of interest in Rhode Island, to include the park and its natural history features.²⁵ Make the map available in multiple languages.
- **Films.** Create a series of short films about the natural history of the park, focusing on the four subject areas, and make the films available for viewing on mobile devices and in classrooms.

²⁴ www.onsell.com; www.pocket-tour.com; www.fieldtripper.com.

²⁵ www.rhodetour.org;

MIANTONOMI PARK INTERPRETIVE THEMES & SUBJECT AREAS

NATURAL HISTORY

- Geology
- Flora
- Fauna
- Evolution & Climate Change

CULTURAL HISTORY

- Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Battle of Rhode Island
- 1st Rhode Island Regiment
- World War I
- Bernardo Cardines
- Landscape Architecture & Architecture
- Newport Folk Festival
- Panoramic View

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Nutrition & Healthy Eating
- Physical Fitness, Plan & Fun
- Bicycling

ART & LITERATURE

- Poetry
- Public Art

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- **Signs.** Develop a sign program that provides information about the park's natural features taking care not to clutter the landscape. Where possible, integrate the signs with existing natural features. Consider printing sign text in more than one language and making the signs accessible to the visually impaired.



Interpretive signs are best when integrated with the landscape, such as this panel near a pond and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

- **Outdoor Classroom/Summer and School Vacation Camps.** Encourage teachers at the Claiborne Pell Elementary School to utilize the park as an outdoor classroom for teaching natural history. Utilize the park for summer and school vacation camps, organized by park stakeholders including the City of Newport, Bike Newport, HEZ, the YMCA.
- **Treasure Hunt.** Create a temporary or permanent exploratory game for children, in the form of a treasure hunt, designed to illuminate the geology, flora and fauna of the park by following a network of clues placed throughout the park and leading to a final "treasure."
- **Arboretum.** Work with the Newport Tree Conservancy to update and add labels to trees in the park.

Cultural History

- **Ranger.** Employ a park ranger to orient visitors and share information about the 400+ years of cultural history, from the time of the Narragansetts to the present. Because this would be a seasonal position, it could be a summer employment/internship opportunity for high school and/or college students.
- **Re-enactments.** Work with staff at the Hattendorf Historical Center to organize live re-enactments of military conflicts and/or peaceful negotiations with the Narragansetts.



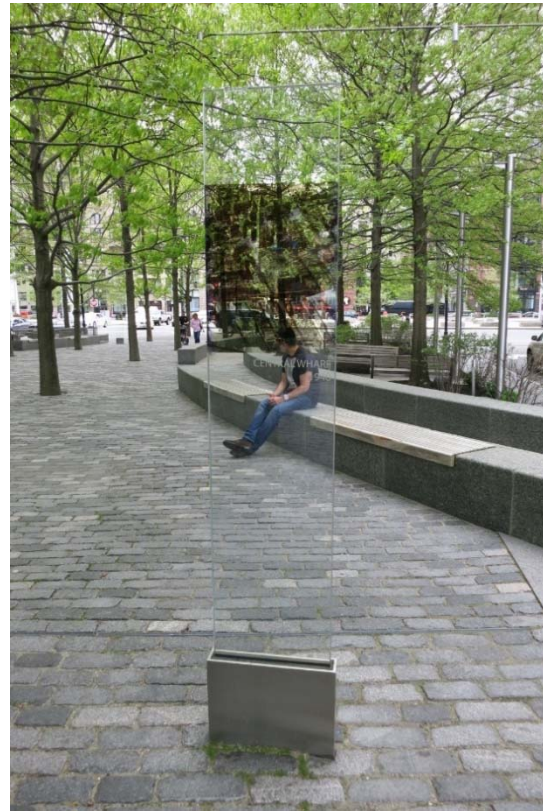
The existing tree labeling program can be updated and expanded to include new species.

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- **Trail and Map.** Create a trail and map that guides visitors to the cultural features of the park, including the redoubt, World War I tower, design elements developed by Olmsted and Burckes, site of the Newport Folk Festival. Make this map available through the city website (linked via a QR code) and/or through Onsell or Pocket-Tour mobile applications. Update Rhode Tour, a website dedicated to places of interest in Rhode Island, to include park and its cultural history features. Make the map available in multiple languages.
- **Films.** Create a series of short films about cultural history, focusing on the Narragansetts, Battle of Rhode Island, 1st Rhode Island Regiment, World War I and Bernardo Cardines, Olmsted's work in Newport, McKim, Mead and White's design for the tower, etc., and make the films available for viewing on mobile devices and in classrooms.
- **Projections.** Work with a media artist to create a series of temporary projections of images depicting historical figures and events.



In Montreal during the summer months, historic images and film footage about events and people are projected on building facades through a program called Cite' Memoire.



Interpretive signs on Central Wharf in Boston consist of a clear panel containing a silk-screened historic view. Visitors can look through the sign to compare what was once in the distance with what is there today.

- **Signs.** Develop a sign program that provides information about the park's cultural features taking care not to clutter the landscape, and where possible, integrating the signs into existing landscape. Atop the tower, install a set of sign panels oriented in several directions to interpret the view. Consider printing sign text in more than one language and making the signs accessible to the visually impaired.

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- **Outdoor Classroom/Summer and School Vacation Camps.**

Encourage teachers at the Claiborne Pell Elementary School to utilize the park as an outdoor classroom for teaching local cultural history. Utilize the park for summer and school vacation camps, organized by park stakeholders including the City of Newport and Newport Historical Society.



Signs at the summit of Mount Greylock (Massachusetts) are integrated into a stone wall and orient visitors to landmarks in the corresponding view. (Photo courtesy of Design Division, Inc.)

- **Treasure Hunt.** Create a temporary or permanent exploratory game for children, in the form of a treasure hunt, designed to explore Native American, military and farming/country estate history by following a network of clues placed throughout the park, leading to a final “treasure.”

Health & Wellness

- **Fitness Trail.** Develop a fitness trail within the park and an accompanying map that shows trail routes, distances and degrees of difficulty, and number of calories consumed when completing each distance.
- **Connections Signs.** Develop a sign or signs that tie Miantonomi Park to the larger North End neighborhood, City of Newport and Aquidneck Island, as a way of encouraging exploration.
- **Nutrition Signs.** Develop a revolving sign associated with the Farmers’ Market that interprets the nutritional value of various foods sold at the market. Change the sign panel weekly to convey information about farm products as they come into season.

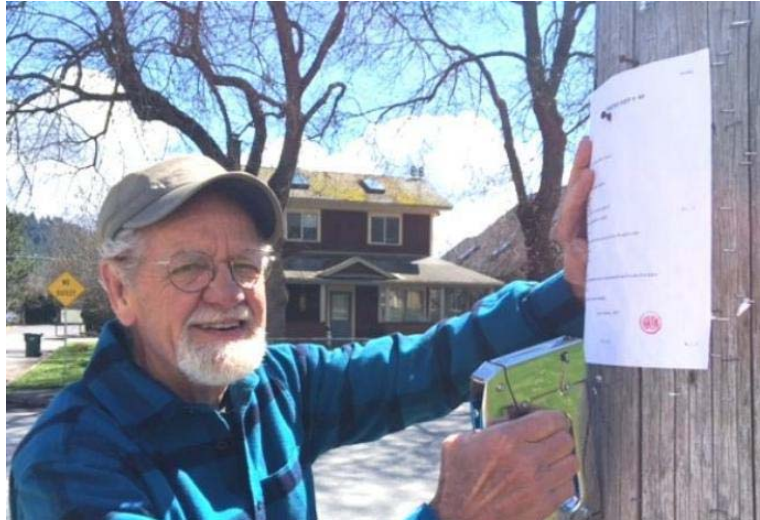


In late summer, tomatoes are ripe and abundant. One of the changing interpretive signs associated with the Farmers’ Market could focus on the nutritional benefits of these fresh products.

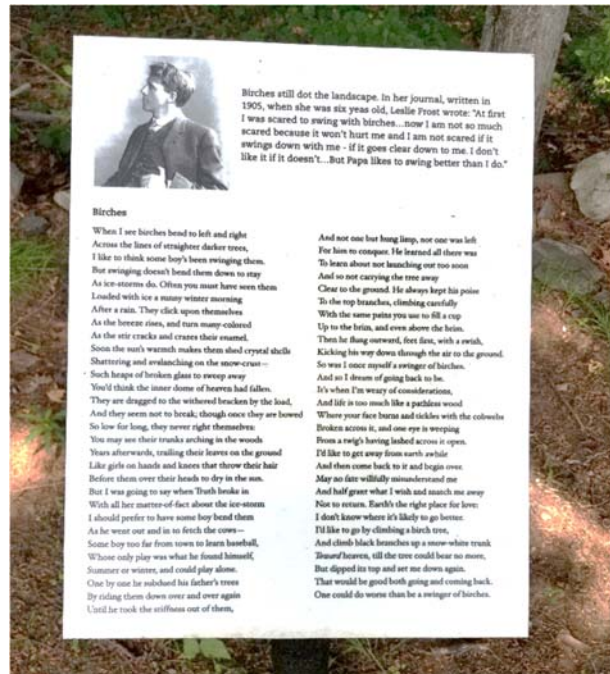
Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
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Arts & Literature

- **Public Art Installations.** Work with local arts organizations to temporarily install works of public art in the park and develop interpretive programs to accompany these installations.
- **Theater and Dance Performances.** Encourage local and regional performers to hold events at the park and hold educational forums and discussion sessions around the themes of the performances. The “playback theatre” genre is one way of providing an interactive, interpretive experience for children and adults, drawing on neighborhood themes.
- **Poetry Posts.** Work with local poets to post their poems temporarily on trees, posts, and other vertical elements.



Roger Dunsmore posts his work and that of other poets on telephone poles throughout his home town of Cour De Laine, Idaho, as a way of generating thought and conversation about natural history, cultural history, philosophy and spirituality. (Photo courtesy of the writer)



At the Robert Frost Farm in Derry, New Hampshire, selections of the poet's work appear on small sign posts along a pedestrian path that traverses the farm landscape.

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APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Before 1630

1534. Italian navigator Giovanni Verrazano sailed to Rhode Island, and “discovered an island in the form of a triangle, distant from the mainland ten leagues, about the bigness of the (Greek) Island of Rhodes.” Verrazano was referring to Block Island. (RI Sec. of State)
- Native Americans inhabited coastal Rhode Island for thousands of years prior to European exploration, gathering marine resources and farming. Conanicut Island (island containing Jamestown) was a center of Narragansett activity during summer months, as observed by Verrazano. (PAP Project 20)

1630-1660

1631. Roger Williams and his wife, Mary Barnard, sailed to America on the ship “Lyon,” landing at Boston on February 9, 1631. He served as an assistant in a church in Salem and spent two years in Plymouth, where he met sachems Massasoit (Wampanoag) and Canonicus (Narragansett). (FWP, 33)
- The park site was part of Aquidneck, and the seat of power of Miantonomi, the nephew of Canonicus and known as his “marshal and executioner.” The name was referred to interchangeably as Wonnumentonomey, Wanemetonomy, Miantonomi, Tomany (or Tomony), and several others with varied spellings. (NR) Newporters commonly refer to the site as Tomony Hill. Wanemetonomy may also be simply a place name, which in the Narragansett language means “good lookout.” (O’Brien)
1635. Williams was banished from the Bay Colony because of conflicts with the Puritan leaders. He had upset the authorities in Massachusetts Bay because he insisted that the Indians were the legal owners of their lands. If the English were to take title, he argued, they must first purchase the land from its previous owners. However, the English concept of land ownership was initially unfamiliar to the Indians. Instead of a title and deed, the Indian’s relationship to the land was based on a complex mixture of cultural factors, with the sachem possessing the right to distribute land in his own territory. (Philbrick, 170)
1636. Williams fled south to avoid arrest and deportation to England, settling first on the east side of the Seekonk River, and then to the banks of the Moshassuck River, and in commemoration of ‘God’s providence to him

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in his distress.” Canonicus made Williams and his companions that followed him a present of all the neck of land between the Pawtucket and Moshas[s]uck Rivers, that Williams named Providence. (FWP, 33) Williams wrote, “here was an act of kindness, which even at the present day demands a requital from the whites towards the remains of the Indian tribes.” (Allen) He founded what became the religiously tolerant colony of Rhode Island, a haven for Baptists, Quakers and other non-Puritans. He turned the former indigenous people’s country at Providence in to a typical English plantation, securing a large tract of land. (FWP, 34)

1638. Massachusetts residents John Clarke and William Coddington were ordered to leave because of dissenting religious beliefs. Arriving at Providence by boat, they consulted with Roger Williams regarding a place of settlement, and secured a deed from the indigenous people – Canonicus and Miantonomi - to Aquidneck Island. They settled first at the north end of the island, naming it Pocasset. Later they re-named it Portsmouth and welcomed religious exiles from Massachusetts. (FWP, 34)
1639. Coddington moved southward from Portsmouth and founded Newport. Williams and eleven others founded the first Baptist Society in America and carried out the first baptismal ceremony by immersion in America. (Williams did not remain a Baptist, but rather became a ‘Seeker,’ ascribing to the good elements to be found in all ecclesiastical systems.)
1640. Portsmouth and Newport united under a common rule.
1643. Mianotonomi died. Up until that time, he had been the right-hand man of his uncle, Canonicus. “He was constantly suspected of disloyalty to the English, but he managed to clear himself of definite charges when summoned to Boston in 1640 and 1642. He was much impressed by the preaching of Roger Williams. He was captured by the Mohegans in 1643 and sent to Hartford for trial; Hartford sent him to Boston, where he was condemned to death and delivered to his enemy, Uncas, for execution.” (FWP, 27)
- Also in this year, Roger Williams went to England to secure a charter which would give the Colony a legal basis for existence, known as ‘The Incorporation of Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay In New England.’ (FWP, 36) The charter, granted by King Charles II, provided a greater degree of self-government than any other colony in the New World and authorized the continuation of freedom of religion. (RI Sec. of State)
1644. At the general Court of Election held in March, it was ordered that the island called Aquidneck should henceforth be known as the Isles of Rhodes, or Rhode Island. (FWP, 35)

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1647. Canonicus died. Roger Williams had called him a “wise and peaceable prince.” (Allen, 221)
- 1660-1800**
1667. By this year, a beacon was established which, when fired, was the “directory to the rest of the beacons in the colony to be forthwith fired throughout the whole colony.” (NR)
- Mid 1700s. At this time, the land that would become Miantonomi Park was likely part of the 700-acre estate of Godfrey Malbone (1695-1768), a merchant and shipbuilder and one of the most prominent and influential men in Colonial Newport (HALS).
1776. Another beacon was built on the hill “to give the country an alarm in case of invasion.” Beacons were established on the high lands in other parts of the colony to further the spreading of news, in case of any unusual demonstration or attack by the enemy. Providence maintained such a structure. A beacon stood on Tonomy Hill on the island of Rhode Island. A trial of this was made June 20, 1776, but no record is found regarding the arc of illumination. (Field, 55)
- Colonel Israel Putnam built fortifications at the same time. (NR) The British had been forced out of Boston, and moved south to occupy Newport. To strengthen their defenses, they established a stronghold on the hill and constructed a redoubt to the north of the hill (referred to as Little Tomony)
1778. The Battle of Rhode Island (also known as the Battle of Quaker Hill and Battle of Newport) took place with the Continental Army attacking the British at Newport and taking control of Aquidneck Island. The battle was noted for the participation of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, which consisted of Africans, Indigenous Peoples, and European Colonists. (HALS)
- Following this conflict, fortifications, including the forts on Tomony Hill, were strengthened, and remains of the powder magazine and other works used as part of the British lines of defense are still visible. (NR)
1784. The first existing deed referring to the Miantonomi parcel was documented, recording the sale of the “farm called Mount Pleasant” by John Hancock to Godfrey Malbone, Jr. and John Malbone of Newport. (HALS)
1796. The Secretary of War reported to Congress that a citadel for the protection of the inhabitants had been erected on Tomony Hill. This

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structure proved useful in allowing distant views to approaching British forces in the War of 1812. (HALS)

1797. Godfrey and John Malbone deeded the property to William Rotch of New Bedford, Massachusetts, specifically mentioning “all that certain farm or tract or parcel called Tamani Hill, situate partly in Newport and partly in Middletown...containing by estimation six hundred and thirty acres.” The prosperous Rotch family made their money in the whaling industry, and likely purchased the Malbone property as a country retreat. They leased the property to David Buffum, a Quaker preacher who lived there for many years and operated it as a working farm. (HALS)

1800-1919 Property owners included: Rowland Hazard (a descendent of one of Newport’s founders), Philip Caswell (partner in a local apothecary and cosmetic business), and Anson Stokes (banker, real estate development, commodore of the New York Yacht Club). (HALS)

1817. President James Monroe, on an inspection tour of military and naval installations, visited Miantonomi Hill. (NR) The 1796 citadel was destroyed in the same year. (HALS) The site was no longer used as a military installation, and the property returned to farmland (NR).

1832. William Rotch, Jr. deeded the property to David Buffum’s son (also named David). (HALS)

1834. Buffum deeded 60 acres of the south part of the “Tamani Hill Farm” to Rowland R. Hazard, a descendent of one of Newport’s founders. (HALS)

1850. Benson Lossing, a writer of popular history, wrote A Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution and in it, described the Hill. Under an illustration showing a view of the hill from the north, he wrote:

About a mile and a half northward of Newport rises a bold, rocky eminence, called "Tonomy Hill" (the first word being an abbreviation of Miantonomoh), celebrated as the seat of the Narraganset sachem of that name, and the commanding site of a small fort or redoubt during the war of the Revolution. (Lossing, 37)

Tonomy Hill is said to be the highest land upon the island, except Quaker Hill, toward the northern end. On its southern slope is the mansion of Mr. Hazzard, where families from a distance have a pleasant home during the warm season, while the younger fashionables are sporting at the Ocean House on the shore. On the top of the hill Mr. Hazzard has erected an observatory, seventy feet high, over a cellar which was dug by the Indians, and in which is a living spring of water. The hill is two hundred and seventy feet above the bay, and the top of the observatory commands one of the most beautiful panoramic views in the world.

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
Interpretive Plan

Stretching away northward was seen Narraganset Bay, broken by islands and pierced by headlands, and at its remote extremity the spires of Providence were glittering in the sun. On its western shore were glimpses of Warwick, Greenwich, and Wickford, and on the east were seen Warren and Bristol, and the top of Mount Hope, the throne of King Philip. On the south and west were the city and harbor of Newport, the island of Canonicut with its ruined fort, and the smaller islands in the harbor, with the remains of fortifications. Beyond the city, looking oceanward with a spy-glass over the ramparts of Fort Adams, was seen the dim outline of Block Island, like a mist lying upon the waters. There rolled the dark and boundless Atlantic, with no limit but the blue horizon, no object but a few sails. Turning the glass a little more eastward, there was a faint apparition of Gayhead, on Martha's Vineyard, and of some of the islands in Buzzard's Bay. The cultivated fields of more than one half of Rhode Island, upon which I stood, were spread out like a map around me, rich in Nature's bounties and historical associations. From our lofty observatory, let us take a field survey with the open chronicle before us. (Lossing, 38)

1877. Hazard sold the land to Philip Caswell, a partner in a local apothecary and cosmetic business. The deed stipulated "all that land and farm in said Newport with the improvements thereon called Tonomi Hill Farm." *Note: Caswell and his partner, Rowland Hazard, parted ways in 1876 and it is possible this transfer of land was part of the dissolution settlement. (HALS)*
1881. Caswell's heirs sold "about 26 acres and being all of Tonomy Hill Farm" to Anson Phelps Stokes, a wealthy Gilded Age banker, real estate developer and merchant. (HALS)
1913. Anson Stokes died and his wife, Helen inherited the property. (HALS) The newly-formed Newport Improvement Society commissioned the Olmsted Brothers to prepare a report for Newport, that recommended the preservation of the hill site as a recreation area. The firm described the virtues of Miantonomi Hill in a report entitled "Proposed Improvements for Newport:"
- It is a beautiful, wooded hill, easily accessible from every part of the city, affording woodland and meadow scenery of a charming quality. It is the highest land in Newport, affording opportunity for broad and impressive views over the surrounding country to the north and east, over the city, the harbor, and the open ocean to the southward, and over Narragansett Bay, with Conanicut, Prudence and other islands, to the west and north. Furthermore, on this hilltop was once a fort, which lends added interest and value to the hill as a public holding. For it may be accepted as a good general park policy to preserve as far as possible for the use and enjoyment of the people such landscape features as are of unusual geological or historical interest. I believe this hill should be*

acquired by the City before the woods are cut, the ruins of the fort destroyed, or other injury wrought to its value as a rural park. (FLO, 26)

1919-1990

1919. A sub-committee on a Newport War Memorial convened in November 1919, and voted to select Clipston Sturgis as architect, and enlist the services of “Mr. Olmste[a]d in conjunction with Mr. Sturgis.” The latter came from a suggestion of Mr(s). Stokes. (MMPC)

1920. At a meeting of the Newport War Memorial sub-committee, Mr. Sturgis presented his plan. The group voted to present a bond issue to the city to fund the memorial. In April, Sturgis made observations to the sub-committee in the form of a program for the memorial that included:

- 4,800 feet around hill
- Stone wall for fence
- Distinct gate posts
- Cost – approximate \$15,000
- Parking facilities at entrance
- Perpetual care
- Permanent control to insure care

Mr. Stokes also made a presentation to the subcommittee, stating that the wishes of the family to be as helpful as possible in carrying out the plans of the committee; that stone is the natural substance to use for fence; that he agreed with Mr. Sturgis in the development of the park – roads and paths to be open up; that the project should be started with a guardian (steward or caretaker); that it would be wise to keep the Broadway entrance open.

Sturgis created a model of the park and memorial (May). He portrayed, by the use of models, the unique chasms of the hill and location of the memorial. (MMPC)

1921. The City of Newport purchased the 37-acre site (1,613,553 square feet) for use as a park from the Stokes family, with the development and operation entrusted to the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission (MMPC). (NR) The purchase price was \$13,850 and the sale stipulated that the property was to be “used and maintained by the said City of Newport as and for a public park for the free use of the public.” It also stated that within three years, the park was “to be improved and developed in substantial accordance with the present plans of the Newport War Memorial Committee and of its architect, R. Clipston Sturgis.”

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
Interpretive Plan

Work on the park began soon after the sale, with participation by many volunteers.

1922. The MPMC began meeting several times per month. They voted to discuss the keeper's house and comfort station with the Board of Alderman, and to conduct a tour of the park with the board. Additional work on the park defined by the MMPC included trimming trees; removing dead wood; draining paths; clearing underbrush; building a "well curb" and installing a pump for drinking water; building benches; clearing and establishing a subgrade for the roadway. They consulted with the garden club on choices of flowers. Working with Clipston Sturgis, the MPC finalized a design for a cement bench (made from a mould). (MMPC Minutes, 1922)
1923. An act of the Rhode Island General Assembly gave overall control of the park to the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission. The park was dedicated on Armistice Day. (HALS) A bronze plaque was installed, dedicating the park as a memorial to the "Great War." (NR)
- The MMPC established a committee on a plan to raise money for the erection of a stone tower.
1924. The MMPC printed leaflets about the park and voted to have postal cards made that showed park views. Sturgis worked on a tower design.
1925. Sturgis was asked by the MMPC to revise his design for the tower and produce new sketches – the original design was too elaborate. Philip Caswell operated a riding school, and his pupils were exercising horses in the park. The MPC voted to restrict such use of the park, as they saw it as a potential danger – the paths were constructed for pedestrians, not horses.
- 1926/1927. The MMPC engaged in extensive discussion about Clipston Sturgis and his design work for the tower. By 1927, they had sought advice from the city solicitor about terminating his contract with the city. In March of 1927, the MPC voted to retain the services of McKim, Mead & White, represented by Mitchell Kendall. In May of 1927, MM & W submitted drawings and limited detail plans to the commission for review. In June, Kendall submitted a figure of \$28,512.00 to build the tower. His final price was \$26,000 plus 10% and traveling expenses of architect. Also in 1927, the commissioners approved the construction of a bridal path within the park to meet the needs of Philip Caswell's riding school, Rosedale. The path included 20 directional arrows and two signs on stakes 6 ft long, showing 4 ft above ground, all painted white.
1928. In 1928, plans to build the path were put on hold. The MMPC sought to secure stone for the tower from the Wanumetonomy Golf Club (Middletown). A revised estimate from the architects totaled

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
Interpretive Plan

\$35,398.00. Six firms bid on the project, and Carey Quarry & Construction was the preferred bidder. The addition of a lantern for the tower was withheld from the project. The MMPC voted to have the commissioners' names placed on a tablet to be mounted on the interior of the tower. The MMPC also arranged for a copper box to be placed inside the corner stone. Inside the box they would place a Newport Directory, World Almanac, list of subscribers, current coins and stamps, Daily News, Newport Herald, County Sentinel and copies of the Boston and New York papers, as well as the Newport Chamber of Commerce, "Newport Capital of Vacation Land."

1929. The MMPC discussed the building of a beacon light but decided not to pursue it until all funds could be raised. It was also voted to add an extra balustrade on the iron stair at the top of the tower as a measure for the safety of children. In May, the MMPC voted to accept the bridal path, so long as it was used at riders' own risk (this vote was reversed in 1933). Opening of the tower was scheduled for August, Rhode Island Battle Day anniversary.

The tower was dedicated to the 56 men from Newport who died in the service of their country or in the service of an ally in World War I. Designed by William Mitchell Kendall, senior partner in the firm of McKim, Mead and White and constructed for \$37,600, it is based upon the numerous circular watchtowers or beacons of fieldstone which are to be found along the coasts of the Old World. An arcaded terrace surrounds the base, a feature inspired by Newport's Old Stone Mill. The tower is crowned with a lantern reminiscent of the Pharos, the lighthouse at Alexandria, Egypt. (NR)

The tower rises 78 feet, six inches above the top of the hill. Height to the first parapet is 16 feet nine inches, and to the second, 58 feet nine inches. An interior circular staircase ascends nearly to the second parapet level. From this point, a short, narrow stairway provides access to the second terrace, from which visitors can take in long views of the island and ocean. (NR)

1931. Field stone steps and a field stone walkway surrounding the tower were laid.
1932. Discussion took place about installation of a baseball diamond.
1933. The MMPC approved the construction of the comfort station.
1934. Elizabeth H. Burckes of Weston, Massachusetts, working under the auspices of her firm, Little Gardens, prepared a plan for the landscape in 1934. (HALS) Discussion took place amongst the MMPC members about removing the top section of the tower, giving greater artistic appearance to the structure. The MMPC voted to locate archery space

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
Interpretive Plan

on the west side of the park, with the privilege of caring for the section by the Archery Club. 1934 was the last year the MMPC recorded meeting minutes.

1960s/1970s

Several urban renewal projects during these decades resulted in the north end of Newport becoming increasingly cut off from the rest of the city. Miantonomi Park fell into a state of disrepair.

1969.

The park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1977.

Community Development Block Grant funds paid for new picnic tables, playground equipment, erosion control, fencing, trees and shrubs.

1978.

The tablets honoring the 56 servicemen from Newport who were killed in WWI were stolen from the tower.

1990-Present

1990.

The Miantonomi Park Commission completed a renovation master plan for the park. Many of the plan's recommendations were implemented.

2005.

The Aquidneck Land Trust secured a conservation easement for the park from the city. In conjunction with this, the ALT commissioned a management plan for the park, which included recommendations about scenic and historic resource protection, recreational and educational uses, and wildlife habitat conservation.

2006.

The Aquidneck Land Trust secured a conservation easement for adjacent Sunset Hill and in conjunction commissioned a management plan.

2017.

The Miantonomi Park Tower was named an Official WWI Centennial Memorial on September 27th. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission awarded the city a grant to pay for the replacement of the plaques that were stolen in 1978. The Newport Open Space Partnership commissioned an open space plan for the city through which specific recommendations for the park and associated programming were made.

2018.

The replacement plaques were installed in the tower.

2019.

Excerpt from Newport Open Space Partnership website: Miantonomi Park plays a critical role in northern Newport from many perspectives – offering key recreation, gathering space and passive enjoyment, wildlife habitat, and tree canopy in a densely populated neighborhood. Named after Chief Miantonomi of the Narragansett Indians and home to Newport's only official WWI Centennial Memorial, the park has a rich

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
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history. The Master Plan highlighted Miantonomi Park as a key project and opportunity.

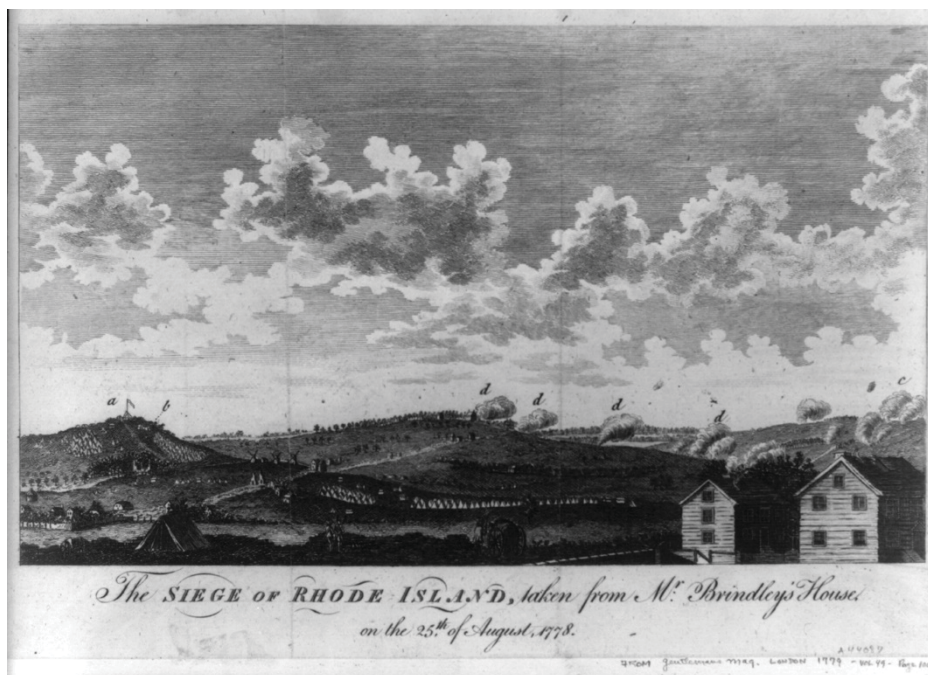
NOSP has focused on Miantonomi Park for our summer programming (see the Parks in Motion project for more info) and has been working to secure additional funding for critical infrastructure upgrades. NOSP helped write a successful grant, alongside the City of Newport and the Miantonomi Park Commission, to receive funding from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to replace the WWI plaques on Miantonomi Tower. Additionally, NOSP has worked with the City of Newport to secure funding from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to replace the bathrooms. Finally, NOSP has been working with the City of Newport and the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, through their Island Waters program, to address drainage issues in sections of the park. These must-needed improvements will greatly improve the experience for park users.

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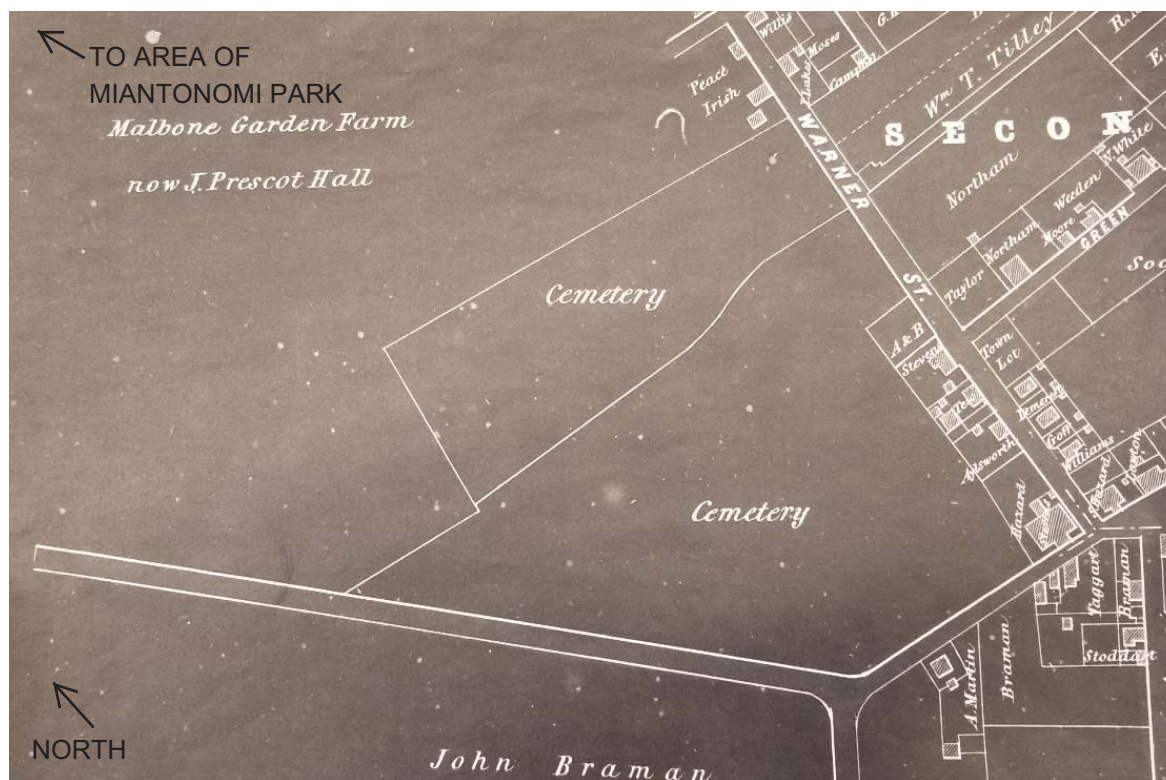
APPENDIX B: HISTORIC IMAGES

Note: For references to additional images, see Appendix C: Bibliography

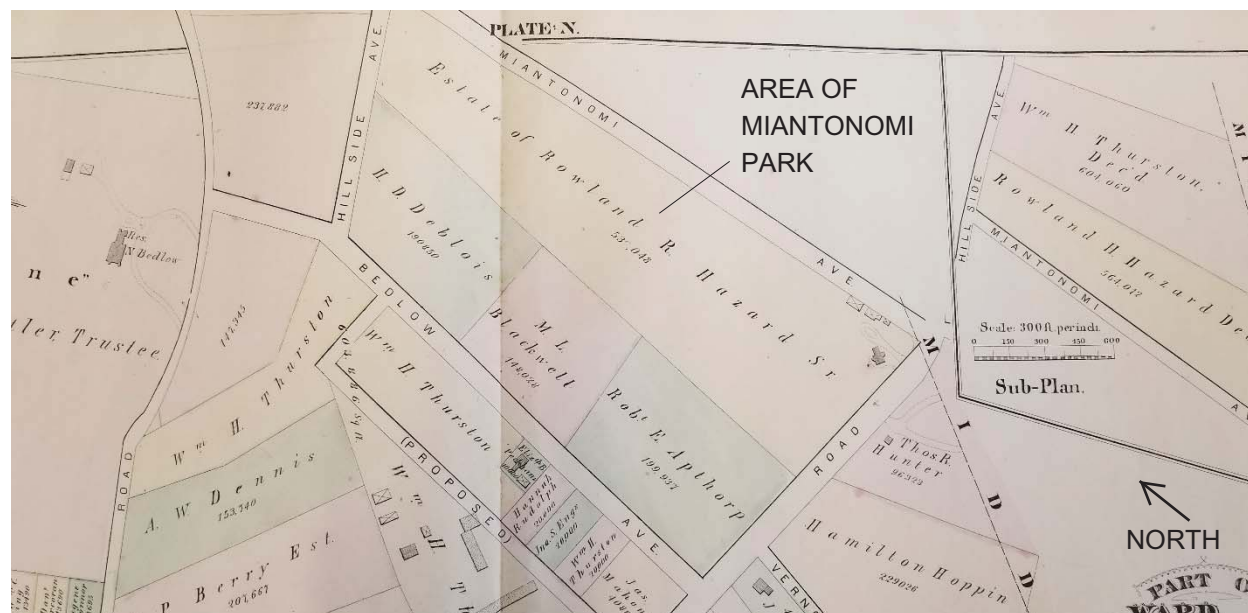
1660 - 1800



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Interpretive Plan

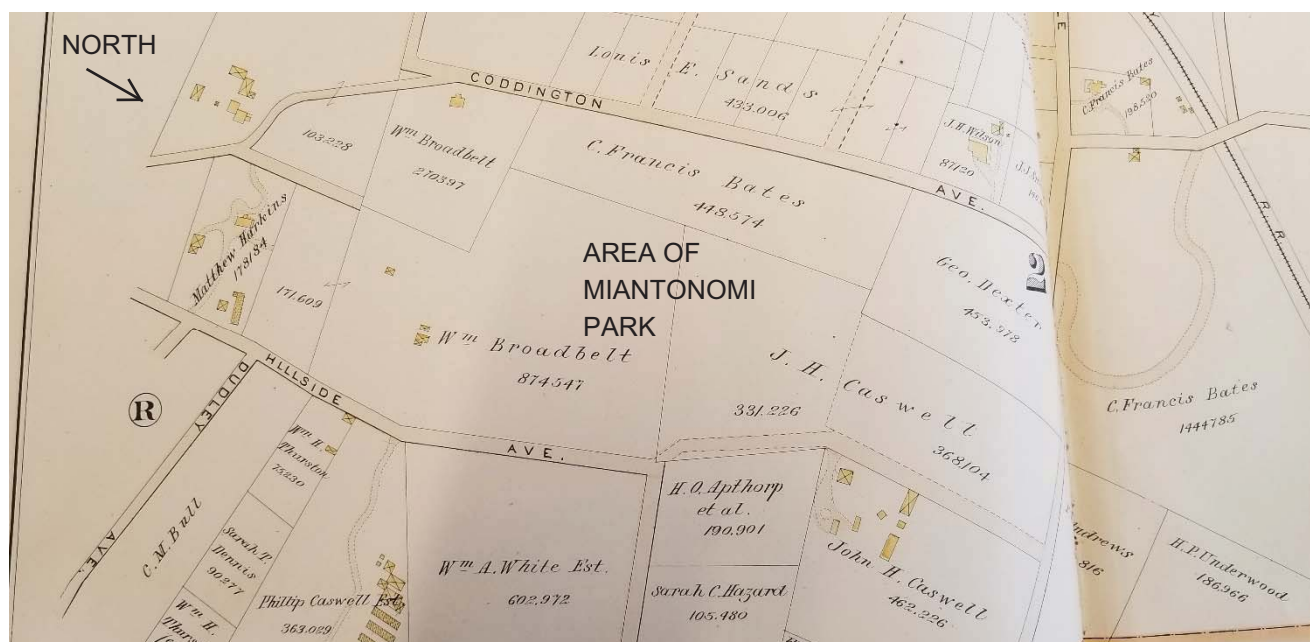


1870 Newport and Vicinity, Matthew Dripps



1876 City Atlas of Newport, G. M. Hopkins

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1883 Atlas of the City of Newport, RI, G. M. Hopkins (Note: Anson Stokes owned the property beginning in 1881 – this map was likely drawn several months before its actual publishing date, thus reflecting ownership before Stokes)

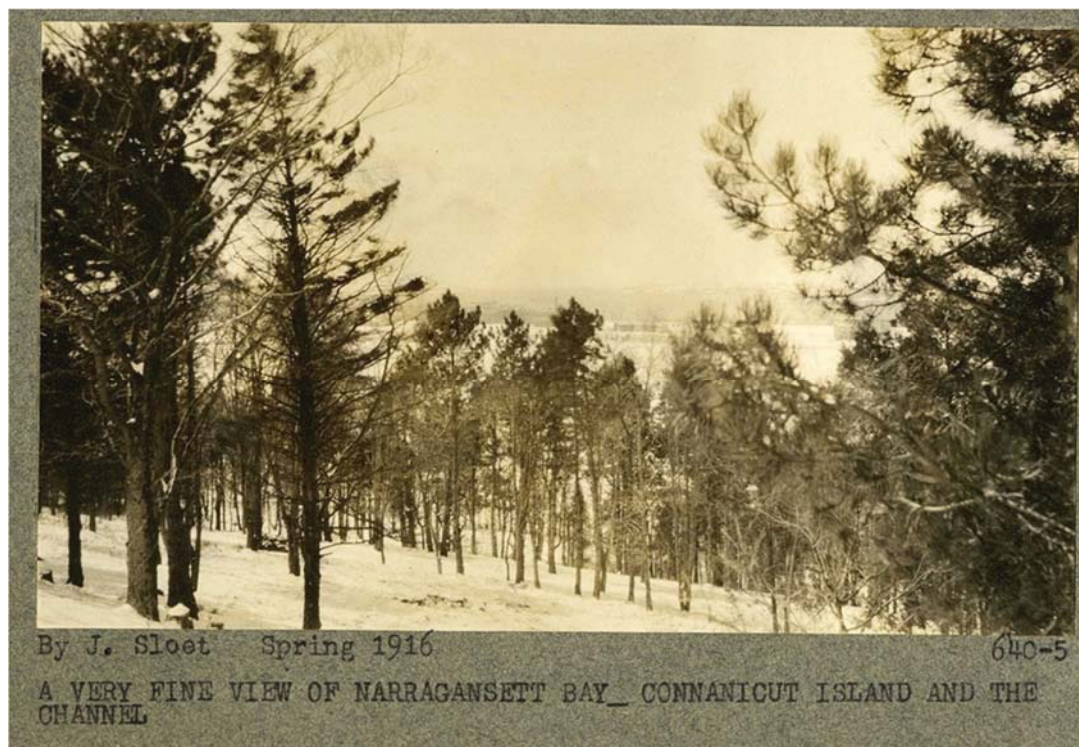


1893 Atlas of Newport, L. J. Richards

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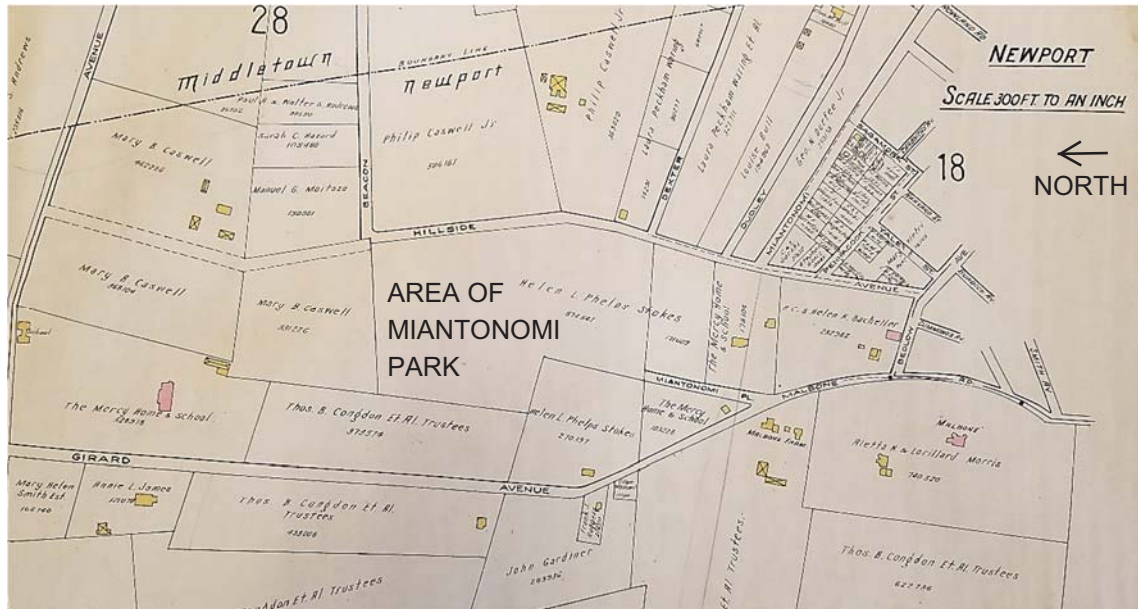
1907 Atlas of the City of Newport, L. J. Richards



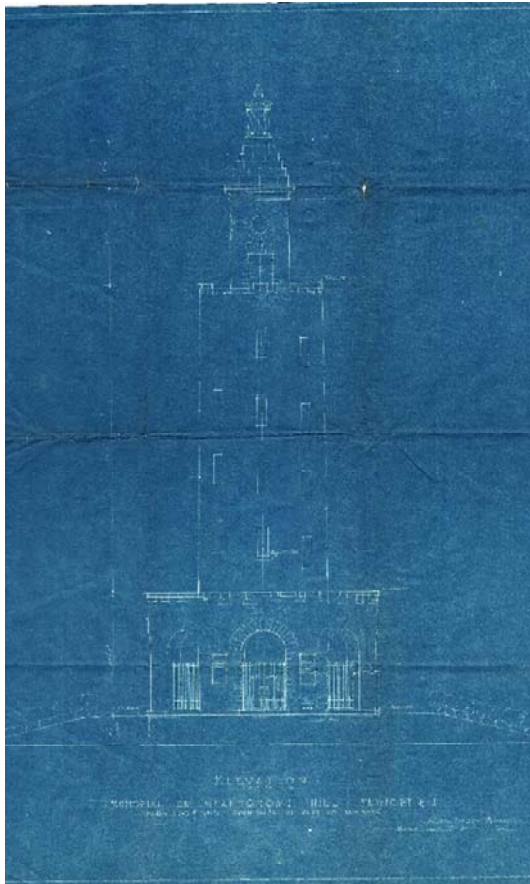
1916 photograph of Narragansett Bay from the slope of Miantonomi Hill, Job # 00640, A. P. Stokes, Miantonomi Hill, Photo 5. (Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Miantonomi Park, Newport, Rhode Island
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1919 - 1990



Newport, Jamestown, Middletown & Portsmouth, Sanborn Map Co., 1921.



1927 McKim, Mead, and White Plan for the Miantonomi Park tower (Collection of the Newport Historical Society)

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*1929 Dedication of the
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