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The Proprietary House as a Case Study in Historic Preservation and Social Change

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science Degree in Historic Preservation 2005.

Advisor: Randall F. Mason

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Comments

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THE PROPRIETARY HOUSE AS A CASE STUDY IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION
AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Norma Rosado

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2005

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my mother for all of her sacrifices which brought me to this point. And to my future husband for his love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank many individuals who assisted me with their tireless efforts. To my thesis advisor, Dr. Randall Mason, for his wisdom and guidance. To individuals at the Proprietary House, including Linda Blomquist, Ralph Jones, and John Solowinski. In addition, I acknowledge William Pavlovsky, as the Reader and the foremost resource on the Proprietary House and Perth Amboy. In addition, I wish to thank Treadwell W. Blake for his proofreading skills, computer expertise and emotional support. I wish to thank William Rosado for sharing his personal experiences as a Puerto Rican in Perth Amboy. Furthermore, thank you to Perth Amboy Library staff for their assistance, Rutgers University Reference staff, Rutgers University Special Collections and Archives staff, and the New Jersey State Library staff.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, THESIS AND HISTORY

Recently the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Association for State and Local History conducted a conference on the current status of the historic house museum. The majority of conference participants believed house museums are reproductions of each other. The house museum has not evolved since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century. The image of the house museum typically conjures up a sterile and static environment; progressiveness and house museums are polar opposites. A typical house museum is filled with period furniture which extols a romanticized history of a historical figure. The history is didactic, yet filled with personal narratives when possible. Most house museums have a picture or painting of the historical figure to provide a face to the name. Yet this is not enough to provide a detailed account of the daily lives of these figures. If, for example, you created a house museum for yourself, what might you include? Would you include family and friends in the history? Of course you would; they have influenced and shaped your life. Each detail of your life creates a complete picture. Even the most ordinary detail enriches your story.

Historic house museums typically sacrifice detail such as, relationship dynamic, for a concise story. However such detail is important to a story. The reason behind this trend is due in part to the house museum's origin in the mid-nineteenth century.

Mount Vernon

The first house museums, such as Mount Vernon, set a trend. Mount Vernon as the quintessential house museum was created to pay homage to George Washington. Its

creation is not a mystery. It was not created in a vacuum, but rather as a by-product of the post-Revolutionary era. George Washington was, "...a generator of patriotic fervor..."¹ Indeed this suggests that the process of preservation is not initiated through a physical act, that is, through conservation methods; but is rather a response to external social forces. Still other preservationists such as Nathan Weiberg believe preservation is an act conducted by citizens without any evaluation of social context. He argues the house museum is the result of "...concerned citizens who sought the public or private purchase of the property for its protection."² His analysis does not recognize the fundamental importance of social context in preservation. For example, efforts to preserve the Proprietary House before 1950 failed. They failed because the catalyst for restoration was not fully developed until particular social events occurred. What were the driving social forces behind the restoration of the Proprietary House? This thesis will seek to answer this question.

The Proprietary House's *physical restoration between 1986 to 1987* was the culmination of the restoration effort which began in the 1950s. The restoration effort began during the 1950s as Perth Amboy was experiencing a social shift. The town was in transition from a largely white population to include a significant new component - the Puerto Ricans. Their move caused great fear and tension among residents. Evidence exists to substantiate that Puerto Ricans were a source of great concern for residents. In an interview with William Rosado, he stated that many landlords were cautious about renting to Puerto Ricans. No evidence exists as to why residents were cautious, but I

¹ Murtagh, William, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. (Pittstown, NJ: Main Street Press, 1988) 28.

² Weinberg, Nathan. *Preservation in American Towns and Cities*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979) 31.

speculate it had to do with culture conflict between white residents and Puerto Ricans. An official response to Puerto Rican migration came from Perth Amboy leaders, who attempted to demonstrate their political and cultural dominance through historical writings and restoration of culturally significant structures, such as the Proprietary House. The Civil Rights Movement compounded fears. Additionally, the preservation movement of the 1950s focused on a patriarchal interpretation. The female and minority perspective were merely a side note; their interpretation in the house museum is a recent trend. The influx of Puerto Ricans, the Civil Rights Movement and preservation trends provide a framework for examining the Proprietary House. It will shed light on the relationship between culture and restoration. Because the preservation field has given marginal attention to this relationship, I therefore hope this thesis will initiate a dialogue. Ultimately, this thesis will find that restoration of the Proprietary House was in response to the activities of the 1950s in Perth Amboy including population shifts, the Civil Rights Movement as well as trends in the preservation movement. Before delving into the restoration, a history and a profile of Perth Amboy and the Proprietary House must set the stage.

Perth Amboy and Proprietary House

The town of Perth Amboy lies along the coast of New Jersey, which is situated twenty-five miles south of Manhattan and approximately seventy-miles northeast of Philadelphia. It is located across the Arthur Kill Sound from Staten Island. With over 3.5 square miles of land, Perth Amboy has a long and rich history. In 1651 August Herman purchased a tract of land from the Lenni Lenape³. The city received is part of its

³ www.ci.perthamboy.nj.us

name from the Earl of Perth, who was an original Proprietor of East New Jersey. Legend has it that the town got its name by way of a funny anecdote.

The Earl of Perth arrived on the land in his native kilt. The Native Americans laughed and said, “Perth am girl.” The Earl of Perth replied, “No, Perth am boy.” This is merely folklore and untrue. However it illustrates the value of research, which will prove significant to this thesis. The remnants of Perth Amboy’s early history, such as the Proprietary House, do remain.

The Proprietary House stands out among the predominately early twentieth century single-family residential neighborhood. As you approach from the west, a custom five-foot-high and ten-foot-long sign greets the visitor. The Proprietary House rises from the top of a graded grassy knoll. But the view of the home is interrupted by a black-topped twenty-five car parking lot. Its peculiar location is supplemented by its architectural features, which also make the Proprietary House stand out.

The white brick face building creates a stark appearance. [Figure 1]



Figure 1. The Proprietary House, 2005

The peeling paint adds to this starkness. It is a late Georgian three and a half story structure with Flemish common bond brickwork and brownstone keystone window lintels on the main structure. It has a brownstone water table across the façade and a brownstone belt course on the second floor. Reaching the museum from other parts of the state is relatively easy. It is a ten minute drive from major access roads such as the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike.

The museum receives approximately 6,000 visitors per year.⁴ The visitor has an opportunity to view 5,000 square feet of museum space, which requires only a donation. The other part of the home contains 10,000 square feet of office space for doctors, lawyers and county offices. The house employs an administrative assistant and a cleaning person. The administrative assistant handles the daily functions of the house,

⁴ Walker, Patricia Chambers. *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States*. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000) 367.

including tours. A site manager was employed part-time for approximately two years, but in 2004 the Board of Trustees phased out the position. The 22-member Board of Trustees serve three year terms. Members are elected by the board. Some members have expertise in preservation or architecture, but it is not a requirement. Major decisions are conducted by the Board, which meets monthly.

I asked Ralph Jones, archivist and current Trustee, when the preservation of the Proprietary House began. He stated that the restoration of the Proprietary House began during the 1960s with the creation of the Proprietary House Association. During the 1960s, the Proprietary House gained more attention through media coverage in the newspaper and garnered support from more citizens, however I believe the 1950s initiated the effort to preserve the home. The restoration of the Proprietary House was initiated because of the activities in Perth Amboy during the 1950s. The city was experiencing a great shift in the way people lived. I think there was a sense that the way American's experienced life would change because of media

Widespread media coverage on particular issues such as, Puerto Rican migration and the U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* was a highly charged transition in American life. I can not overstate the importance of both issues. I think they had a profound impact on American life. Puerto Rican migration and the Civil Rights cases will be discussed further, but for now the next section will review the demographic profile of Perth Amboy during the 1950s and Perth Amboy's current demographic profile.

A City of Change – Demographics in the 1950s and 2000

Perth Amboy's demographic profile during the 2000 census will provide an overall idea of current statistics in Perth Amboy. Specific changes include the change from an all-white neighborhood to include Puerto Ricans.

Since the 1950s, Perth Amboy experienced a shift in its economic and social standing. During the 1960s there was a consensus, even among Perth Amboy residents, that the city was in decline, economically and socially. This consensus is substantiated through newspapers and other publications such as the Model Cities Program, which attempted to address the economic and population decline of the 1950s.

The Model Cities Program studied several aspects of Perth Amboy life including the white flight away from Perth Amboy. Louis Booz, the city engineer, said the restoration was a way to "save" the city.⁵ Clearly there was a mission to save the town from further decline. Restoration of the Proprietary House was one way to accomplish this.

In 2000 Perth Amboy had over 47,000 residents.⁶ Table 1 presents the most current demographic profile with national percentile comparisons. The demographic profile of Perth Amboy will provide an overall assessment of current living standards in Perth Amboy.

⁵ Perth Amboy Evening News, February 8, 1951.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau web site <http://www.census.gov/> (April 2005)

TABLE 1 – 2000 CENSUS

RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENT	
	Perth Amboy	United States
Caucasian	46%	73%
African American	10%	14%
Hispanic/Latino origin ⁷	70%	13%
EDUCATION		
High School	56%	82%
Bachelors	10%	30%
INCOME/POVERTY LEVEL		
Median household income	\$38,000	\$55,000
Percent of individuals living below the poverty rate	18%	9%
REAL ESTATE		
Homeownership rate	41%	66%

As the demographics indicate, in 2000 Perth Amboy was well below the national average of high school graduates and homeownership rates. In addition, there is a relatively high poverty rate (18 percent) as compared to the national average (9 percent). The statistics suggest that Perth Amboy has a marginal appeal for affluent and highly educated families. But it is a city consisting of blue-collar, low to middle class families. A personal note suggests the town has an image problem.

It has been the writer's experience that most neighboring residents regard Perth Amboy in a negative manner. This is beginning to change with recent activities to spruce up the town, but the image problem still persists. This point illustrates that the

⁷ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics or Latinos may consider themselves of any race.

Proprietary House is not in the most ideal setting to attract visitors. Perhaps this is the reason for the low visitation rates. But I bring this point up to demonstrate that the cards are stacked against the Proprietary House. Many towns strive to attract tourists using preservation as a key component in their tourist plan. A tourist has many concerns about traveling to an unknown city, questions such as does the city have a reputation as being relatively safe and clean? Are there other venues to attract the tourist, such as restaurants and shops? These questions illustrate that Perth Amboy's image problem prevents the Proprietary House from reaping major benefits, such as tourism. However, it is the image problem which in part initiated the restoration.

During the 1960s, restoration of the home was viewed as a way to "save" the town from further deterioration. Through research it was revealed that the restoration effort of the Proprietary House is related to social activities of the 1950s.

History of the Proprietary House

The Proprietary House was designed by John Edward Pryor and built between 1762-1764. John E. Pryor worked on several homes in England before he arrived in New York City in 1761.⁸ He conducted work for William Alexander, the Earl of Stirling. According to John Dickey⁹, Mr. Pryor worked on the Earl of Stirling's homes in New York City and Basking Ridge, New Jersey.¹⁰ In addition, Mr. Pryor constructed Captain Archibald Kennedy's house at No. 1 Broadway in New York City.¹¹ But it was further revealed Mr. Pryor constructed Captain Kennedy's home in New Jersey.¹²

⁸ Dickey, John M., *The Proprietary House: A Restoration Study*. (Perth Amboy, New Jersey: 1973) 27.

⁹ John Dickey was hired by the State of New Jersey to conduct the restoration study of the Proprietary House.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 27.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 28

¹² *Ibid.* 28.

John Edward Pryor's career in American began when he was commissioned by the East Jersey Proprietors to construct a home for the then royal Governor of New Jersey, Josiah Hardy. Before the Proprietary House's completion, William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, had succeeded as Royal Governor. The Proprietors commissioned the mansion to serve as the governor's primary residence and enhance their political power. Every source other than John Dickey's report states that the house was built for William Franklin. John Dickey's report on the Proprietary House states the home was actually built for Josiah Hardy, the then Governor of New Jersey. John Edward Pryor's account book states, "The Honourable Proprietors of the Jerseys Drs. (Directors) To Sundrye on Accot. Of Building Govern Hardye House..."¹³ Brick work for the house was procured through several companies in New Jersey including, Newark and Rahway.¹⁴ After many stipulations, including specific wallpaper demands, William accepted the mansion as his primary residence. He served as the last royal Governor of New Jersey from 1762-1776 and resided in the home from 1774-1776. Although William Franklin is probably the most famous resident he was not the first.

Chief Justice Smythe, the first New Jersey Supreme Court Justice, rented the home from 1766 until 1768. Ten years after the mansion's completion William Franklin, along with his wife, Elizabeth, moved into the home and remained there until his arrest as a Loyalist to the British throne. In 1776 William Franklin was awakened by a contingent of provincial militia army and placed under house arrest. He was eventually transported to England to live out the rest of his life. His wife remained behind and continued to live in the residence for approximately two years. The British occupied the home for about a

¹³ Ibid. 10.

¹⁴ Ibid. 10.

year, and then it was deserted. Soon after the British departure, a fire gutted the interior of the home between 1785-1790. The exterior was damaged as well, but most of the damage was sustained to the rear of the home. Evidence of this is suggested in a restoration study by a Historic Structure Report by Albin H. Rothe in 1978.¹⁵ In addition, John Dickey, the New Jersey State architect, revealed extensive rear exterior damage from the fire in circa 1785, "...the Flemish bond to stop seven courses above...the second floor window lintels...on the rear...the Flemish bond stops at the bottom of the first floor lintels suggesting greater damage to the rear."¹⁶ Consequently, the home was restored in 1794 by the next owner, John Ratoone, mayor of Perth Amboy and rumored to have been a double agent during the Revolutionary War.

After the war, the house was sold again in 1808 to Richard Woodhull, who added the third and fourth floor and a south wing, creating the Brighton House, a resort and hotel. [Figure 2]

¹⁵ Rothe, Albin, H. *Historic Structures Report for the Proprietary House*. (Prepared for the Proprietary House Association and the Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Historic Preservation of the State of New Jersey, March 20, 1978) 16.

¹⁶ Dickey 23.



Figure 2. South wing of Proprietary House, 2005

The hotel remained opened on and off for the next twenty years. It had a very successful business for many seasons, but the British blockade during the War of 1812 prevented the hotel from continuing its success;¹⁷ hence the house was put up for auction.

In 1815 Joseph Bonaparte came to the United States seeking a place to reside. He considered purchasing the home, but declined. Then in 1817 the Proprietary House was purchased through a Sheriff's sale by Mathias Bruen, who used the home as his primary residence until his death in 1846. Mathias Bruen's surviving sons reopened the house as the Brighton Hotel until 1880. Mathias Bruen's surviving sons then conveyed the home in 1883 to the Presbyterian Board of Relief for Disabled Ministers, Widows, and Orphans of Deceased Ministers where the home received its third name, the Westminster.

¹⁷ www.proprietaryhouse.org. William Pavlovsky's comments on this thesis mention the success of the Brighton for Philadelphia and New York residents (May 3, 2005).

However its namesake, the Westminster, did not remain for very long. The Presbyterian Board found the house too expensive to remain open. They then converted the house back to the Bruen family where they put it up for sale. It was purchased by J.P. Holm in 1904. He subdivided the rooms to serve as function space and hotel rooms. “Holm lost interest in the hotel...”¹⁸ Subsequent owners operated the house as a rooming house, but it eventually fell into disrepair and was a flop house until the 1950s.

In 1986 the physical restoration was completed. Since then the Proprietary House has served as a house museum in the main portion of the home and the upper floors are rented as professional office space.

Architectural and Historical Significance

The Proprietary House is historically significant because it is representative of New Jersey colonial and political history. It is one of the few surviving sites in the United States dedicated to a Loyalist. However this thesis will not focus on the historical or architectural significance, but rather social events of the 1950s which served as the catalyst for restoration. First, I will take issue with the time period in which the restoration began.

¹⁸ Mr. Pavlovsky’s comments in thesis (May 3, 2005).

CHAPTER 2

RESTORATION FROM 1905 TO 1986

This chapter will discuss the Proprietary House restoration period from 1905 to 1986. *The physical restoration did occur in 1986*; however, I contend that the restoration effort gained the most momentum and support during the 1950s through a concerted effort with Mayor Flynn's tenure (1950-1970). A timeline of structural changes and restoration actions is included on the following page.

Restoration of the Proprietary House began as early as 1905; however, the effort did not gain momentum until the 1950s. Several attempts were made to restore the home; however I contend that all attempts failed because particular social events had to occur before the restoration took firm hold. The catalyst for restoration was the influx of Puerto Rican immigrants and movement of whites to other suburbs. The restoration was not fully realized until the 1950s. Table 3 on following page illustrates the structural changes and restoration attempts which occurred since the Proprietary House's construction in 1764.

Early attempts to restore the Proprietary House began in 1905 with the then owner, J.P Holm, who revealed in a newspaper article his interest to create the Westminster museum.¹⁹ Mr. Holm envisioned creating a museum and a public park called the Westminster Park.²⁰ In addition, he wished to remove the George Washington statute near City Hall and place it near the Westminster Park for the public.²¹ Mr. Holm's

¹⁹ The newspaper sources is unknown. The article was found at the Perth Amboy Library in a subject file folder titled "Proprietary House". The article is dated 5 June 1905. Page number is unknown.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

TABLE 2 - The Proprietary House Structural Changes and Restoration Efforts (1764 - 1986)

1764	The Proprietary House is constructed by John Edward Pryor.
c. 1785	A fire guts the interior of the home and partially damages the exterior.
1794	John Ratoone restores the building and adds a Dutch gambrel roof.
1808	The third and fourth floors are added to the structure. In addition, south wing is added by Richard Woodhull; the structure becomes the Brighton Hotel.
1904	J.P. Holm purchases the house and uses it as a hotel rooms and function space.
1905	In a newspaper article, J.P Holm advocates saving the house as a museum with other city pieces, such as the George Washington statue near City hall. The effort does not go any further.
1914	The Westminster Historical Society is created to raise funds, purchase and restore the Proprietary House. The group did not sustain an effort, but the group did survive to become the Proprietary House Association.
1924	Alan Freeman speaks to the Women’s Club of Miami, Florida; he advocates saving the structure for the Franklins and as a place for Loyalist studies. The Great Depression occurs a few years later, which probably prevented the restoration.
1930	George J. Miller published his article, “The Westminster-Story of a Colonial House”; he credits the Perth Amboy History Club with an attempt to save the Proprietary House. The Club lacks the funds to continue an effort to save the Proprietary House.
1950s	Newspaper articles concerning Mayor Flynn's attempt to protect the home begin to circulate. In addition, Mayor Flynn asks Dr. McGinnis to author the published pamphlet, “ <i>The Westminster</i> ”. Mayor Flynn may have also authorized publication of other historical publications, including <i>History of Perth Amboy Volumes I - IV</i> , <i>The Kearny's of Perth Amboy</i> , <i>A Bit of Perth Amboy History</i> , and <i>History of St. Peter's Episcopal Church</i> . Mayor Flynn and other leaders garner support for restoration of the Proprietary House as a national shire to the National Park Service.
1960s	The Westminster Historical Society morphed into the Proprietary House Association in 1966; they continue with their efforts to protect the home. They seek support from local and state governments. In 1967, the State of New Jersey purchases the home.
1970s	A restoration study is conducted by the State of New Jersey. Material conservation is conducted, such as protection of the roof from further damage, simple repairs and addition of light fixtures to the exterior.
1986	The Restoration Partnership of Boston restores the home as a tax credit project. The Partnership agrees to lease the home from the State for twenty-five years; in return they restore the home and are reimbursed with revenue from rental of office space.

suggestion leads me to believe that there existed no cause, such as fluctuations in ethnicity and race, to interpret the Proprietary House as William Franklin's. It further reinforces the notion that William Franklin's interpretation could not occur until social changes, such as abolition of segregation, had transpired. A second attempt to restore the home occurred less than ten years later.

A group of concerned citizens formed the Westminster Historical Society in 1914 in an attempt to raise funds, purchase and restore the Proprietary House.²² This attempt failed. No evidence exists to explain why the effort in 1914 failed, but I have a theory as to why it failed. I believe particular events, such as the Civil Rights Movement and Puerto Rican migration to Perth Amboy, had to occur before a concerted effort could happen. The Westminster Historical Society eventually morphed into the Proprietary House Association in 1966. Other attempts to restore the Proprietary House occurred throughout the early twentieth century.

In 1924 Alden Freeman, Chairman of the Committee of the Society of Mayflower Descendants in New Jersey made plea to restore the Proprietary House. Mr. Freeman made a speech to the Women's Club of Miami, Florida about preserving the structure as Benjamin Franklin's home.

In a published pamphlet of the speech, Mr. Freeman says he had an interest in preserving the home since 1900.²³ In his speech, Mr. Freeman advocated using the structure as a central meeting place for patriotic societies of New Jersey.²⁴ He associated

²² Randall, William Sterne, *The Proprietary House in Amboy*, (Commissioned by the Proprietary House Association. Perth Amboy, New Jersey: 1975) 32.

²³ Freedman, Alden. *The Franklin Mansion at Perth Amboy, New Jersey: A Synopsis of Remarks before the Women's Club of Miami, Florida on May 3, 1924.* (Miami, FL: Franklin Press, 1924) 2.

²⁴ Freedman 4.

the structure with three generations of Franklins: Benjamin Franklin, William Franklin and William Temple Franklin. Mr. Freeman's comments suggest the purpose of saving the structure was an intellectual reason. He framed his argument by stating that the Proprietary House could provide insight into opposing viewpoints of the American Revolutionary War. Mr. Freeman was specifically interested in the American Loyalist during the Revolutionary War. "...the Franklin Memorial may do a useful service and help us to understand the conflicting loyalties of conscientious men as has been recently so admirably shown by John Galsworthy in his place called *Loyalties*."²⁵ Mr. Freeman believed protecting the home would serve more than as a memorial to the Franklins, but as a meeting space for "...historical, genealogical and patriotic societies and organizations representing the laboring men and women of America."²⁶ Mr. Freeman's speech leads me to believe that the Proprietary House was useful in more than just a nostalgic reason, but rather a complex one. That is, it could serve an intellectual purpose and as a functional space. This attempt proved unsuccessful because no other resource mentions this preservation effort in the 1920s or 1930s. However the Great Depression, which occurred less than five years later, probably prevented the preservation.

A fourth attempt to preserve the home was described in the publication, *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*. In an article titled, "*The Westminster-Story of a Colonial House*", the author George J. Miller examined the structure's history. He described an attempt by the Perth Amboy History Club to preserve the structure. Mr. Miller further states, the Club was unsuccessful due to a lack of funds; however they

²⁵ Ibid 5.

²⁶ Ibid.7.

managed to purchase a bronze tablet for the structure.²⁷ The author pleads with the “City Fathers...[to] assist in a material way to preserve the Westminster. It would make a beautiful memorial for those Perth Amboy soldiers who died in the Great War.”²⁸ Here is a contrast with the restoration effort of the 1950s. Whereas the 1950s was directly tied to the social activities of Perth Amboy, Mr. Miller’s suggestion is rather tied to the national activities. It is not focused on a local issue of problem. His suggestion further illustrates a the lack of a compelling issue to protect the Proprietary House. Each restoration effort prior to 1950 was unsuccessful because events, such as Puerto Rican migration and the Civil Rights Movement were necessary catalysts. There were several factors that lead me to this conclusion.

Why They Failed

Perth Amboy prospered between 1905 and 1950, with an exception during the Great Depression. Economically the city thrived before the Great Depression and after. Perth Amboy was the hub for several industries, including textiles, terra cotta, copper and oil refineries, which amounted to a healthy economy and job opportunities for residents.²⁹ In addition, the population of Perth Amboy increased over the forty-five year period, with the exception of the Great Depression years. Table 3 shows Perth Amboy’s population from 1900 to 1970.

²⁷ Miller, George. “The Westminster – Story of a Colonial House,” Proceeding New Jersey Historical Society. (Newark: New Jersey)_Volume XV No 4, October 1930,_ 483-484.

²⁸ Miller, 484.

²⁹ Fernandez 40.

TABLE 3 – PERTH AMBOY POPULATION FROM 1900 TO 1970

Census Year	Population³⁰	Percent change from previous census
1900	17,699	n/a
1910	32,121	81.5
1920	41,707	29.8
1930	43,516	4.3
1940	41,242	-5.2
1950	41,330	0.2
1960	38,007	-8.0
1970	38,798	2.1

As the table indicates, Perth Amboy experienced a decrease in its population between 1940 to 1950. In addition, it experienced an insignificant population increase by 1950. Finally, the population had a marked decrease of eight percent by 1960. Herbert H. Smith reported in, *Background Planning for Perth Amboy*, many whites moved to outlying suburbs, while the Puerto Ricans continued to move into Perth Amboy between 1950 to 1960.³¹ Although many Puerto Ricans had come to New Jersey before the 1950s, most worked on the mainland seasonally and returned to Puerto Rico for the sugar cane harvest.³²

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau 14.

³¹ Smith

³² Jones

During the 1950s, migration of Puerto Ricans made a marked difference; they began settling in Perth Amboy in larger numbers. By 1952, it was estimated that 1,500 Puerto Ricans had settled in Perth Amboy.³³ Social changes such as the influx of Puerto Ricans and the civil rights movement, prompted a concerted campaign to save the Proprietary House and in the process save the city.

The 1950s Campaign to Restore the Proprietary House

Although no physical efforts were completed during the 1950s, the preservation campaign was a concerted endeavor to protect the structure. The campaign to save the Proprietary House had several components including: newspaper articles; recruitment of high level individuals and organizations such as the National Park Service; books and pamphlets about the Proprietary House and Perth Amboy general history; heighten awareness of other structures in Perth Amboy through written pamphlets; registration of St. Peter's Episcopal Church to the National Register and a written account of the Kearny family of Perth Amboy. Prior attempts did not encompass a large and formal body of officials such as the Mayor's office. In addition, other attempts to save the Proprietary House were not successful because there wasn't a compelling argument to save the structure. For instance the restoration effort during the 1950s had a compelling cause; it was an attempt to not only save the structure, but also to save the city of Perth Amboy. In addition, the 1950s effort was motivated to protect the Proprietary House which directly related to protecting a dominant white culture values and ideas.

³³ Golub

“From the Mouths of Babes”

Further evidence suggests that the restoration began during the 1950s. In 1950, James J. Flynn was elected mayor³⁴ of Perth Amboy and served until 1970. In 1962 a local newspaper quoted Mayor Flynn by saying, “I’ve been advocating saving the building [Proprietary House] for many years. The place has great historical significance not only to Perth Amboy, but to the state itself.”³⁵ Evidently, restoration of the Proprietary House was on Mayor Flynn’s agenda before 1962. Louis Booz, the city engineer, clearly indicates the restoration started during the 1950s. Mr. Booz stated to the *Perth Amboy Evening News*, that restoration of the Proprietary House was key to improving the city, “[the restoration can provide an]...overall plan for city betterment.”³⁶ Direction of the restoration came directly from Mayor Flynn.

In a newspaper article dated February 8, 1962, the mayor is credited with conducting a financial campaign to save the Proprietary House.³⁷ Additionally, Mayor Flynn is credited with authorizing Dr. McGinnis’ pamphlet of *The Westminster* and directing Louis Booz to research the structure.³⁸ “[Mayor Flynn] also authorized the publication *The Westminster* booklet in 1956 and has assigned Louis P. Booz, “...to see what can be done to save the building for posterity.”³⁹ Undoubtedly, the restoration effort was a concerted campaign directed by Mayor Flynn in the 1950s.

Mayor Flynn undoubtedly spearheaded the restoration campaign for the Proprietary House. As the newspaper article alluded to earlier, Mayor Flynn authorized

³⁴ According to William Pavlovsky, the city did not have a direct election of the mayor prior to 1972. The mayor was elected by a group of city commissioners; the commissioners were elected by the people of Perth Amboy.

³⁵ Perth Amboy Evening News, February 8, 1962.

³⁶ Ibid. February 8, 1951.

³⁷ Perth Amboy Evening News, February 8, 1962.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

the publication of *The Westminster*, written by Dr. William C. McGinnis, Superintendent of Schools and later city historian. If Mayor Flynn authorized the publication of *The Westminster* by Dr. McGinnis, then perhaps it is safe to assume Mayor Flynn authorized the publication of other historical accounts. There are several factors that lead me to this conclusion.

First each publication written by Dr. McGinnis occurred during Mayor Flynn's tenure... coincidence? I think not. Secondly, Dr. McGinnis was appointed by Mayor Flynn. Mayor Flynn could have appointed anyone else as city historian. Why Dr. McGinnis? In addition Dr. McGinnis, as former Superintendent of Perth Amboy Schools was a widely published author on education. No evidence exists to suggest that Dr. McGinnis wrote previously on Perth Amboy history. Perhaps Dr. McGinnis was chosen as city historian because he was so widely published. As a prolific author and scholar, Dr. McGinnis' intellect would lean itself well to the campaign to save the Proprietary House. Dr. McGinnis had a proven record of publication, which would mean publishing *The Westminster* and *History of Perth Amboy Volume I – IV* easier. It would also provide a legitimate and scholarly viewpoint to the campaign to save the Proprietary House.

Furthermore, Dr. McGinnis dedicated his first volume of *History of Perth Amboy* to Mayor Flynn. This suggests they shared a very close relationship. All told I believe the publications came directly from Mayor Flynn.

During the 1950s, Dr. McGinnis created a substantial amount of books and pamphlets on Perth Amboy history, which coincide with Mayor Flynn's tenure as

mayor.⁴⁰ They include: *A Bit of Perth Amboy*; *The Kearnys of Perth Amboy* (1956); *William Dunlap* (1956); *History of St. Peter's Episcopal Church*; *History of Perth Amboy Schools* (1957); *History of Perth Amboy Y.M.C.A.*; Col. John Parker's Account Book (1725-1732) and Chapman Letters (1823-1839) (1960); *History of Perth Amboy Volumes I to IV* (1958-1962). What is interesting about this collection is the level of sophistication as the 1950s progressed. For instance, the first publication *A Bit of Perth Amboy History* is a very small account about the first mayor of Perth Amboy in 1718. The last publication was a series of volume books on the history of Perth Amboy, which was not a chronological history, but rather a selection of Perth Amboy organizational histories (i.e. Post Office, Navy.) The books do contain traditional history, such as colonial experience in Perth Amboy, but is not in chronological order.

Since 1962 there have been no other definitive books on Perth Amboy history. Why? Was this part of the city betterment plan? What prompted the writings? To answer these questions we must review the underpinnings of the 1950s culture locally, statewide and nationally. I suggest there were three issues at work: first, the roots the Civil Rights Movement and other occurrences during the 1950s; second, the influx of Puerto Rican workers threatened the dominant cultural population in Perth Amboy; finally, trends in the preservation movement influenced the interpretation process. First, I will discuss the 1950s and the Civil Rights Movement.

⁴⁰ Dr. McGinnis died in 1961 before the final publishing of the *History of Perth Amboy Volume IV*. However Perth Amboy official and Dr. McGinnis' wife took up the effort and had the final installment of the book published.

CHAPTER 3

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION IN NEW JERSEY

Federal Government and the Civil Rights Movement

During the late 1940s and 1950s, the assertion of minority issues signified a change in American culture. Issues such as segregation in public school and discrimination in housing were challenged by the federal government. Declaring these issues unconstitutional was the result of grass root efforts by local organizations, but it signified a shift in American thinking. Indeed challenging long held notions about segregation based on race created tension between cultures. There was fear among white Americans that imparting minorities with the same civil liberties was an act of submission and signified an end of white cultural dominance. Indeed this produced great fear.

The federal government took a leading role on several minority issues in the 1940s, which signified a change. For example, in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the federal justices ruled restriction from public housing based on race was unconstitutional. The following year saw the another U.S. Supreme Court case of *Schnell v. Davis*, which declared literacy tests unconstitutional. Furthermore, in 1954 the Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education* and concluded school segregation was unconstitutional. American's could see that this was a turning point in history. These cases and other events shaped the trajectory of America's future. No longer were minorities willing to sit idle, which was reflective in the bus boycotts of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. Small scale boycotts also sprang up throughout the southern states, which signified a change. And change for some is difficult and frightening.

Popular Culture

Popular culture was reflective of fear and reinforced white American ideals. *The Crucible*, written by Arthur Miller, was brought to Broadway in 1953. The play's story line followed the Salem witch trials, but it contained a deeper social commentary about fear and bigotry of the 1950s.⁴¹ In the film industry anti-communist movie films, such as "The Runaway Daughter" and "Big Jon McCain" starring John Wayne were huge hits. Cartoon characters epitomized American ideals, such as Superman, whose motto was, "Truth, Justice and the American Way,". Although Superman was created in the late 1930s, his image endured well into the 1950s, especially with the advent of the television.

New Jersey Division Against Discrimination⁴²

In order to provide an assessment of New Jersey's role in the Civil Rights Movement I will review New Jersey's history on race and ethnicity.

During the mid-1940s, New Jersey created the Division Against Discrimination (DAD) to combat racism and create an official governmental body charged with investigating racial complaints.⁴³ New Jersey was one of the one of the first states in the nation to address racial issues. It was created from the 1945 Anti-Discrimination Law, which was amended by the State legislature in 1949 and 1951.⁴⁴ In 1947, the State Constitution was amended to include a clause which protected people based on, "...religious principles, race, color, ancestry or national origin."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Olson 67. Olson, James S. *Historical Dictionary of the 1950s*. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000) 67.

⁴² In 1960 the Division Against Discrimination later became the Division on Civil Rights and was administered by the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety.

⁴³ Department of Education of the State of New Jersey, Division Against Discrimination. *Division Review*, Volume X, Number 2, Spring 1960, 3-4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 3-4

⁴⁵ New Jersey State Constitution, Article I section 5. (1947).

In 1955, the DAD convened the New Jersey Governor's Conference on Civil Rights. The conference focused on several issues related to minorities groups, such as housing, employment and language. A session titled, "Working with Changing Populations" focused on creating solutions such as language classes. Clearly, the state was willing to address discrimination and assimilation. In addition, it conducted several studies to cover a range of minority groups including Puerto Ricans.

The organization authored a report titled, "*The Puerto Rican Worker in New Jersey*" in 1955. Additionally, beginning in 1945, DAD put out a *Biennial Report* which was conducted to assess its state of affairs. Initial reports were sketchy; however, subsequent reports became more sophisticated. The reports conducted in depth studies concerning "Joe Citizen" in various aspects of New Jersey life including his experience with motels, hospitals and education. The initial studies concerned themselves with blacks, but other minorities groups were included in the focus of their studies. This was in an effort to understand new minorities, namely Puerto Ricans and their plight. During the 1950s, Puerto Ricans arrived in droves to take advantage of work opportunities, but many soon settled in towns across the United States.

Puerto Rican Migration

The United States saw an increase of Puerto Ricans to the mainland during the 1950s. Table 4 indicates the rise in Puerto Ricans on the mainland over a fifty year period. The largest increase in the United States occurred between 1940 and 1950; the table indicates a 223 percent increase.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Golub 6. Golub, Frederick. *Some Economic Consequences of the Puerto Rican Migration into Perth Amboy, NJ (1949-1954)*. thesis Rutgers University Graduate School, May 1955, 6.

TABLE 4 – PUERTO RICAN POPULATION ON MAINLAND UNITED STATES

Year	Population⁴⁷ Total
1910	1,513
1920	11,811
1930	52,774
1940	69,967
1950	226,110

In New Jersey, the Puerto Rican population increased by 519 percent between 1940 and 1950.⁴⁸ Prior to the 1950s, Perth Amboy’s population consisted of whites including, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Poles.⁴⁹ Although the Puerto Rican population overall was a small percentage of Perth Amboy’s total population, it was indeed a visible migration. This will be discussed further in the paper. The increase of Puerto Ricans to the mainland was not self-induced, but rather part of an organized labor movement in New Jersey, which tied directly to its economy. Why did they migrate? To answer this we must examine the driving forces behind the attraction to move to the mainland.

Why Puerto Ricans Migrated

High unemployment rates on the island and overpopulation on the island “pushed” many Puerto Ricans to seek opportunities on the U.S. mainland.⁵⁰ Ease of transportation, including less red tape since Puerto Ricans are citizens and new air routes

⁴⁷ Golub 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 5-6.

to the island, made migration from the island easy.⁵¹ This was also a time of change for American workers.

More manufacturing and service oriented jobs were the primary job source for most of New Jersey in the 1950s.⁵² A large portion of the workers was filled by skilled white workers, whereas the agricultural jobs were filled by unskilled laborers.⁵³ Therefore, a need for agricultural laborers was created. Simultaneously, the agricultural industry was in a decline. This was a result in a sharp decline in importance in the economy. The economy relied less on agriculture and more on manufacturing, trades and services.⁵⁴ As a consequence, agricultural jobs shifted from a respectable job for white residents to a less desirable one. The same generation began attending college and working in white-collar jobs as a result. Therefore the desire to continue in the agricultural field lost its appeal and prestige. Hence new immigrants were given jobs which white Americans found less desirable. Puerto Ricans workers filled the labor shortage.

During post-World War II, New Jersey was experiencing an economic surge. Labor opportunities easily supported an influx of migration. This led to a population increase. From 1950 to 1957 the population in New Jersey increased by 13 percent; the growth rate in 1957 was 1.8 percent which was slightly higher than the U.S. rate of 1.7 percent.⁵⁵ It is difficult to ascertain the numbers of migrating populations in New Jersey during these years, yet a report completed by Rutgers University found that, "...average

⁵¹ Golub 8.

⁵² Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, *The Economy of New Jersey: A Report for the Department of Conservation and Economic Development of the State of New Jersey*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958) 4.

⁵³ Golub 35.

⁵⁴ Rutgers. 136.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 17.

net in-migration was about 32,000 per year ...as compared to 62,000 natural⁵⁶ increases per year.”⁵⁷ Approximately one-third of the total population increase was from migration between 1950 and 1955.⁵⁸

Push and pull factors are geographical references to explain why individuals migrate to or from a particular place. In the case of Puerto Ricans, one “pull” factor included an organized labor agreement in 1947 between United States agricultural farms and the Puerto Rico Department of Labor.

The Puerto Rican Worker

According to published newspaper articles and *The Puerto Rican Worker in New Jersey*, Puerto Ricans provided a labor source for New Jersey’s blueberry, cranberry and tomato farms. Additionally, Puerto Ricans also worked on farms in New York and Pennsylvania. In New Jersey, they were brought as early as 1945. They primarily worked on farms throughout New Jersey. They worked on blueberry and cranberry, tomato and a small percentage on strawberry farms. Initial waves of workers were seasonal. The Puerto Rican worker came during the summer months and returned in the fall to harvest sugarcane on the island.⁵⁹ The convenience of these harvests supported employment for Puerto Ricans for many years,⁶⁰ however many eventually settled in local cities such as Perth Amboy.

⁵⁶ Natural increase refers to more births than deaths within New Jersey.

⁵⁷ Rutgers 19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 19.

⁵⁹ Jones, Isham B. *The Puerto Rican in New Jersey: His Present Status*. (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey State Department of Education Division Against Discrimination, July 1955) 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

Puerto Rican Settlement Patterns in Perth Amboy

Puerto Ricans in Perth Amboy settled in clusters. Each successive Puerto Rican arrival settled together,

“...not only for fellowship but due to the fact that the original colony settled in an eroded area, hastened its decline in property values and created the incentive for the conversion of old apartments and houses to even higher densities....which create slum conditions and further accelerate[d] the outward flight of the better paid native white stock...”⁶¹

Puerto Ricans settled in high traffic areas of Perth Amboy, including State Street and Hall Avenue.⁶² Figure 3 highlights State Street, Hall Avenue, downtown Perth Amboy and City Hall. Their socialization patterns, which will be discussed in the next chapter, compounded their visibility. The cultural differences between Puerto Ricans and established residents created tension. Residents frowned upon Puerto Rican socialization habits. In addition, they were not accustomed to ethnic groups which are vastly different from their culture. The typical resident in Perth Amboy during the 1950s was a white middle-aged individual. Ethnic groups then consisted of Italians or Jews. Puerto Ricans were vastly different from these ethnicities. However, I think residents were too quick to pass judgment; it seems unfair. Puerto Rican culture did not end when they came to the mainland, but to the contrary. Puerto Ricans continued their habitual cultural traits once they reached Perth Amboy.

Human Relations Commission

In the early waves of Puerto Rican migration, Perth Amboy leaders created the Human Relations Commission. It investigated complaints based on race, ethnicity or

⁶¹ Smith, Herbert H. *Perth Amboy: Background for Planning*, (Herbert H. Smith Associates: September 1962) 4.

⁶² Golub 29.

religious preference and developed policies to eliminate discrimination. In its *Tenth Year Anniversary Report* the Commission reported that only two claims of discrimination were filed. Each case was investigated and found without merit based on miscommunication. Was it true that this organization had only two cases in its ten year history? This sounds biased if you consider the following examples.

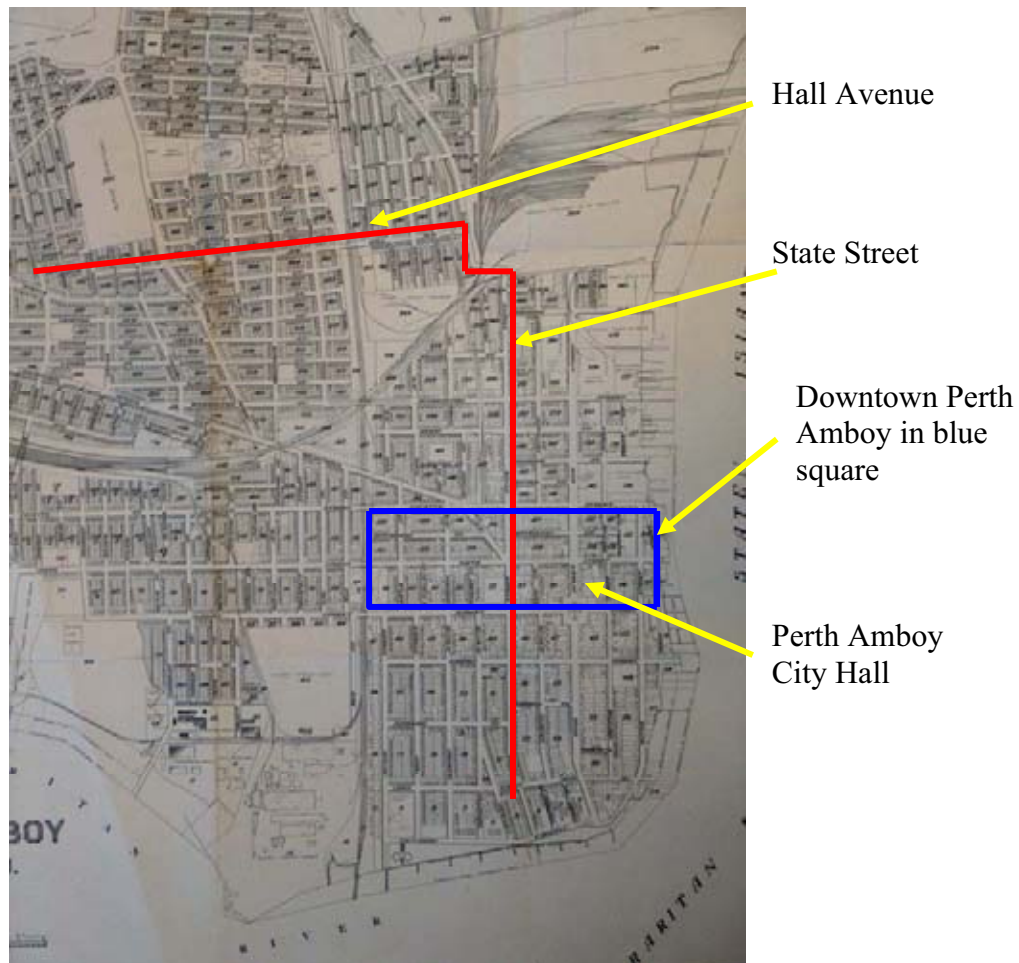


Figure 3. Map of Perth Amboy, with Hall Avenue and State Street in red. Downtown Perth Amboy in the blue square and City Hall.

Evidence exists to suggest the all events of the 1950s were necessary catalysts for the restoration. During the 1950s, Perth Amboy residents experienced changes in their lives. They experienced life with much of the same vigor as they did previously, but they

had to make concessions to Puerto Ricans. They had to create a tolerant environment, which was very different from the way they previously experienced life. In its *Tenth Year Anniversary Report*, the Human Relations Commission reviewed its efforts to create a tolerant and welcoming environment for Puerto Ricans. Programs created included, Spanish language classes for the police department, a Neighborhood Nights, and participation in state-wide conference on discrimination. Indeed there had to be a period of adjustment for residents and leaders. Were there tensions between the existing white residents and the Puerto Ricans community? The next section will reveal tensions between whites and Puerto Ricans on a national, state and local level.

Tension Between Puerto Ricans and White Residents

Prior to the 1950s tension between whites and Puerto Ricans was real. Several articles in the *New York Times* allude to some of the concerns of whites. In a published article on June 1, 1947, it was found that 75 percent of Puerto Rican workers return to the island because of discrimination.⁶³ Furthermore, whites believed there was an increase of welfare cases in New York City as a result of the Puerto Rican influx.⁶⁴ Concern over housing and health issues associated with Puerto Ricans was voiced by the same newspaper in August 1947.⁶⁵ Initial reports on welfare cases were demystified by other articles two years later. In an article published on October 1949, social workers state that “[although 10 percent of New York City’s relief rolls includes Puerto Ricans it tends to overshadow that fact that nine out of every ten Puerto Ricans is getting by without assistance].”⁶⁶ The article goes on to mention that their adjustment has not been as

⁶³ New York Times, O’Reilly, E5

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* E5.

⁶⁵ New York Times, Gordon, 1.

⁶⁶ New York Times, Grutzner 38.

smooth as other new immigrants, however most had only been here for a very short period of time.⁶⁷ Workers and non-workers alike were victim to substandard living conditions, underpayment and racial prejudice. This was reinforced by the media and books. For example, Christopher Rand published *The Puerto Ricans*, which provided a profile of the Puerto Rican in New York. He characterizes Puerto Ricans as living in slums, on public assistance and unwed mothers; "...you can spot Puerto Rican women a block away by the clothes she wears...and by their movements."⁶⁸ Notions expressed by Mr. Rand and others compounded tension between whites and Puerto Ricans.

There was a clear indication that the Puerto Rican immigrant was a source of great concern among white Americans. In New Jersey, Puerto Ricans began immigrating as early as the mid-1940s, however mass populations did not begin until the 1950s. This caused tension and fear among white Americans. High ranking officials made derogatory public statements about Puerto Ricans and the island. Judge Frank T. Lloyd, Jr. was removed from the New Jersey Superior Court by the New Jersey Governor Robert B. Meyner because of his "...intemperance in his judicial conduct."⁶⁹ Among other things, the Judge cited Puerto Ricans as source of slums and cited the island as a filthy place. Additionally, newspaper articles made it a point to note the ethnicity of criminals. For example, the *New York Times* habitually cited the ethnicity of criminals in their articles, "...Puerto Ricans die tonight in New Jersey's electric chair for a fatal shooting..."⁷⁰

In Perth Amboy, the Puerto Rican immigrant was a source of strain for many. According to a thesis completed by Frederick Tobias Golub, residents held widely

⁶⁷ New York Times, Gutzner 38.

⁶⁸ Rand, Christopher. *The Puerto Ricans*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), 14.

⁶⁹ New York Times, Wright, 33.

⁷⁰ New York Times, May 4, 1955.

accepted notions about Puerto Ricans, such as they took jobs away and they were lazy.⁷¹ Laziness and other notions were not based on hard evidence, but rather unsubstantiated information; they were based on "...a single incident or hearsay..."⁷² This is a contradiction; however, it illustrates the irrational thought process among white residents. Clearly there was a prejudicial environment towards Puerto Ricans. Furthermore, evidence suggests this struck at the core of American ideals.

Myths and Minorities

Another important trend during the 1950s was the production of mass suburban neighborhoods. The house with the "white-picketed fence" was every American's dream. The demand for housing was great. Americans placed a great emphasis on owning their own home. The home became representative of American values and was at the core of the American ideal; this is still true today. In New Jersey, reports circulated that the movement of non-whites into all-white neighborhoods would drive down the value of homes. This is substantiated through the DAD's *Biannual Report*.

In its newsletter the DAD, published an article titled "*Property Values and Race*". In the article experts cite that there is no correlation between the movement of minorities into an all-white neighborhood and a drop in real estate values.⁷³ In fact, the article was part of a published book on property and race during the 1950s. This evidence directly ties into the fear white American's were experiencing. Rumors and myths about Puerto Ricans were well circulated, but unfounded. Based on these misconceptions, Puerto Ricans were routinely discriminated against.

⁷¹ Golub, 1.

⁷² Golub, 1.

⁷³ Department of Education, 3-4.

Studies conducted by the DAD revealed that Puerto Ricans workers were discriminated against on the same level as blacks for jobs. In a report conducted by DAD, it concluded that the issue with minority groups such as blacks and Puerto Ricans was the restructuring of power relationships between groups, as minorities move into suburbs...[this would lead to] engender hostility and conflict.”⁷⁴ As minorities moved into the suburbs, tension and fear grew. New Jersey lawmakers attempted to alleviate tension with DAD’s actions such as quarterly newsletters and programs. However the DAD masked the truth about New Jersey’s record on race relations. New Jersey had a paradoxical relationship with race.

Race Relations in New Jersey

Giles Wright argued in his book, *Afro-American in New Jersey*, that racial attitudes were divided into Northern and Southern New Jersey. Each geographical area had its own culture and economy. Southern New Jersey exhibited a tolerant society whereas, Northern New Jersey was an intolerant society. Mr. Wright further argues that New Jersey’s race relations can be traced back to its early history.

After 1880 New Jersey had a strong Democratic government, which opposed Republican views on emancipation.⁷⁵ “The state’s politics were heavily influenced by pro-Southern feelings during the Civil War and Reconstruction.”⁷⁶ Wrights continues his argument by connecting Southern New Jersey attitudes with the Quakers, who believed slavery was immoral. Whereas Northern New Jersey was influenced by its ties to the

⁷⁴ Dodson 8. Dodson, Dan W. Consultation Report on Community Relations Program of the Division Against Discrimination, (Trenton, New Jersey: March 1959) 8.

⁷⁵ President Lincoln was a Republican, however not all Republican supported emancipation and universal suffrage. Lincoln did not necessarily share this view either. Lincoln’s objective was to save the Union even if it meant maintaining slavery.

⁷⁶ Wright 28.

southern states, who wished to continue slavery. Wright goes on to state that the New Jersey legislature tended to side with northern New Jersey.

The New Jersey legislature favored re-colonizing blacks back to Africa. During the 1850s the legislature made a decision to provide money to send former slaves back to Africa.

“Perhaps no other free state was so enthusiastic for the expatriation of Afro-American[s]...Lawmakers responded to these appeals with an annual appropriation of \$1,000...to remove free blacks from New Jersey to colonies in West Africa.”⁷⁷

Perhaps this was a sympathetic gesture, but it is a clear statement that Africans in New Jersey were not welcomed. Indeed this was one hundred years prior to the entering of the next generation of minorities, the Puerto Ricans, but were there residual effects of this attitude still present in New Jersey? Were there similar roots in Perth Amboy? The Human Relations Commission did attempt to create a tolerant and welcoming city, but if you consider the ethnic riots of 1961 in Perth Amboy perhaps it would change your mind.

An Ethnic Riot in Perth Amboy

At the end of Mayor Flynn’s tenure as mayor, the city erupted in an ethnic standoff between the police and Puerto Rican community. It began with a city ordinance aimed at curbing loitering on city streets. The Puerto Rican community felt it targeted them. As a result, a young Puerto Rican was arrested and the community erupted over the incident. For three days the Puerto Rican community staged protests over the arrest and the ordinance. The protest, at times, became violent with the community burning police cars. Mayor Flynn relented and repealed the ordinance. To shed more light on the Puerto

⁷⁷ Price, Clement, Ed., *Freedom Not Far Distant*. (Newark: New Jersey, The Historical Society of New Jersey. 1980) 80.

Rican experience in Perth Amboy, I interviewed William Rosado who migrated to the mainland during the 1950s

William Rosado's Interview

In an interview, William Rosado, stated his initial visit from Puerto Rico was during the early 1950s as a laborer for a steel mill in Ohio. He heard about job opportunities in the United States from family members and friends. He never worked on farms in the northeast region, but had friends and acquaintances who did. He stated, most were treated decently. Working conditions were not as desperate they are with current Mexican migrant workers. He feels Mexican migrant workers are treated worst as compared to Puerto Rican migrant workers of the 1950s. However he knows the work was very difficult and hard.

I then asked him about settling in New Jersey and his experience as a new immigrant. He stated living conditions in New Jersey were different. Ethnicity was an issue; most landlords were cautious about renting to Puerto Ricans. Landlords didn't ask outright about your ethnicity; they were sneaky about it. He stated, "[There was] a little bit of racism in living quarters; but you could get by."⁷⁸ Although he was never denied housing, he did feel his ethnicity was a source of concern for individuals.

I then inquired about the ethnic riots in Perth Amboy in the 1961 during Mayor Flynn's tenure. He stated it was a result of the misunderstanding between the white culture and Puerto Rican culture.

“[In] Puerto Rican culture we like the outside. We don't stay indoors, so we just followed the same culture here. The Mayor and the police weren't cool with that....Flynn was mayor; Otlowski was more lenient. Clean the city, Hall Avenue and State Streets. Otlowski tried to understand the

⁷⁸ William Rosado interview March 23, 2005.

culture of Puerto Ricans; he helped Puerto Ricans more than other mayors; he tried to help us.”⁷⁹

I then asked if he thought Mayor Flynn did a poor job as mayor in relating to Puerto Ricans. Mr. Rosado stated, “Well he didn’t know how to react to the inflow of Puerto Ricans.”⁸⁰ I asked about how the police department reacted to Puerto Ricans in the 1950s and 1960s. “They were tough; they don’t understand Puerto Ricans; there was a discord between Puerto Ricans and police....I wouldn’t say they mistreated us, but we were watched by the police.”⁸¹ Clearly there was an environment of mistrust. It probably stemmed from fear; fear of a new and very different culture. Additionally, it illustrates that the environment in which the restoration effort was conceived was during a time of great uncertainty to Perth Amboy leaders. In such uncertain times it is inevitable that something had to occur. The ethnic riots in 1961 were the culmination of these fears.

⁷⁹ Rosado interview

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

PUERTO RICO: PEOPLE, HISTORY AND CULTURE

The following chapter will illustrate the Puerto Rican culture as a distinct ethnic group as illustrated with the variation between other Caribbean groups such as Cubans and Dominicans. This chapter will also demonstrate that the Puerto Rican culture was in direct contact with existing white residents of Puerto Rico, which caused tension, fear and ultimately the ethnic riot of 1961. Chapter four will also capture the assimilation problems that Puerto Ricans faced upon their arrival to the mainland and how it affects the psyche of the Puerto Rican mind. I use an example from Alex Haley's *Roots* to illustrate the impact on Puerto Rican psyche.

Puerto Rico was inhabited first by the Taino culture, which is analogous to the Native American in the United States. They were the indigenous group of Puerto Rico. Europeans discovered the island during the fifteenth century. Clearly, Puerto Rico has a long and rich history. It wasn't until 1898 that Puerto Rico became a commonwealth of the United States. Although Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, they vastly differ from American culture and other Caribbean cultures.

A Distinct Culture - Hablo Español

Language is probably the most obvious difference. Spanish is the native language of Puerto Rico with some island variation. Cubans and Dominicans can communicate effectively with Puerto Ricans, but even cultures which speak the same language possess some differences. There are variations in words such as the term car. Dominicans tend to use "coche" whereas Puerto Ricans use "carro." "In [the] Dominican Republic the

Spanish language is closer to a Castillian Spanish.....than in Puerto Rico of Cuba. In Puerto Rico “Spanglish”, a mix of Spanish and English, can sometimes be heard...”⁸²

Arroz con Pollo y Gandules

Other variations in Latino culture is food. Cuban cuisine tends to use more garlic than Puerto Rican cuisine. Puerto Rican foods tend to weigh heavily on fried foods, such as tostones (a fried sliced plantain) and pastelillos (a fired dough pocket filled with ground beef). Arroz con pollo y gandules (Rice with chicken and gandules) is also a Puerto Rican favorite. The variations in Latin cultures are so widespread that it is difficult to lump them into one category. However, in the United States it is customary to lump Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Dominicans and others into a “Hispanic” culture. This point merely illustrates that although whites may view Puerto Ricans as part of a larger Hispanic culture, they do possess a distinct culture. They have their own customs and cultural traits that distinguish them from other Latino cultures.

A Paler Shade of Gray

Puerto Ricans vary in skin color; they range from white complexion to olive skin and dark complexions. Furthermore, hair texture ranges from fine thin hair, curly and coarse hick black hair. Theses differences and complexities stem from the various cultures that inhabited the island or were brought to the island.

A Melting Pot

Indigenous inhabitants of the island included natives from the Taino Nation. During the fifteenth century, Spanish exploration began influencing culture and migration patterns. They introduced African slaves to the island. Racial mixing between Tainos, Spanish and Africans resulted. As a consequence, the Puerto Rican has become a true

⁸² <http://www.saxakali.com/caribbean>.

“melting pot” of several races and cultures. Hence the appearance of Puerto Ricans is a variety of skin tones, hair textures and facial features. Socially, Puerto Ricans cultural is dissimilar to American culture.

Puerto Rican Culture

The climate in Puerto Rico is tropical, which influences social patterns. Puerto Ricans focus their lives around the outdoors to discuss politics, entertain, and communicate with neighbors. This social pattern continues today.

Many enjoy the outside to listen to music, play dominos or communicate with neighbors. In Puerto Rican neighborhoods, chairs line the front porches for people watching and the occasional friend. Any make shift item can be a chair, such as an industrial plastic bucket.

Island living is heavily influenced by climate and therefore social patterns parallel. On the mainland, this was a cause for concern for whites because they did not abide by the same socialization patterns. Whites view their front lawns a showcase of living for Americans, who pride themselves on vast well-maintained front lawns. Puerto Ricans utilize the same space for socialization. They congregate to discuss various topics and provide an active space for the community. These differences between Puerto Rican culture and American culture create conflict. As Puerto Ricans moved to Perth Amboy their socialization patterns were highlighted by the high traffic areas in which they settled.

Allen L. Woll states that critics of Puerto Rican culture and history tend to use criteria based on a European model.⁸³ In other words, evaluating Puerto Rican culture

⁸³ Woll 2

based on a European paradigm has caused conflict. They are two distinct cultures with their own set of mores, social habits and traditions.

Perth Amboy Puerto Ricans – Losing Their Identity

In 1961, Mayor Flynn passed a city ordinance to prevent individuals from congregating on city corners. The Puerto Rican community felt this was targeted at them, because it was in direct opposition to their socializing patterns. If Mayor Flynn had a better understanding of Puerto Rican culture, perhaps he would have prevented this ordinance from passage. Puerto Ricans viewed the ordinance as a tool to prevent them from practicing their cultural habits. In addition, the ordinance created a challenge to Perth Amboy officials. It prevented many from engaging the Puerto Rican community. It was an indication that city officials did not understand Puerto Rican culture. Indeed there were well intentioned gestures to assist Puerto Ricans, such as the Human Relations Commission. However I think there was a high level of individuals who were intolerant and less welcoming. Perhaps feelings were subverted by token gestures such as the Human Relations Commission. Alternatively, the most logical reason for an intolerant society is ignorance. During the 1950s, the lack of information on Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican culture was widespread. It has been suggested that the lack of information on the Puerto Rican is because whites think of the island's history as an afterthought of U.S. mainland history. The following evidence supports this claim.

Puerto Rican history is an afterthought for many Americans. Traditionally, American history books focus on white males. Since the 1970s, historians have included a broader range of cultures. African-American history has been the topic of recent historical writings as well as women's history. However, there still lie misconceptions

about cultural history. For example, slave narratives were viewed as African-American history rather than American history. Slavery is a sensitive subject. I think Americans have difficulty reconciling with such as dark part of their history. Still Americans refuse to acknowledge this as a legitimate part of American history. Leading historians have pushed this type of history into the mainstream and have forced Americans to view parts of their ‘unwanted’ history as genuine. The lack of minority related history has led to speculation and fear. The Puerto Rican has dealt with this issue.

As Puerto Ricans arrived many were discriminated against based on nothing more than speculation or rumors. There lies no evidence to suggest that books on Puerto Ricans existed prior to the 1950s. This is due in part to the notion that Puerto Rican history is viewed as lacking a genuine history. Since the 1950s, there have been many books authored on Puerto Rican culture and history. However, Puerto Rico has not been studied on its own merits, but rather it has been examined in relation to the United States. “...Puerto Rican history seems to begin in 1898, the year Puerto Rico became an American possession.”⁸⁴ The implications of this are great. Puerto Rican culture is viewed as less worthy to study and therefore questioned by the “establishment.” Their history and identity is at the core.

Identity with heritage is a fundamental part of an individual. Puerto Ricans faced a difficult task to maintain their culture, yet assimilate to American cultural at the same time. Often it was encouraged that Puerto Ricans shed all traces of their culture. Speaking Spanish was discouraged through compulsory English on the island. In addition, socialization patterns were restricted by such ordinances as the one passed in Perth Amboy in 1961. I think part of this had to do with Americanizing the Puerto

⁸⁴ Woll, 2.

Ricans. It was a way to assimilate Puerto Ricans into a new culture. In addition, it is a way to create a disconnect Puerto Ricans from their heritage. Alex Hailey's *Roots* provides a prime example.

“My Name is Kunta Kinte”

In a poignant scene, Kunta Kinte is forced to take an American name, Toby by his “Master”; he refuses. He is subsequently whipped until he utters the name Toby. The Master explains, “Your name is Toby!” He replies, “No, my name is Kunta Kinte.” This debate goes on until he is whipped so severely that he gives replies, “My name is Toby.” The music rises and the scene turns to Kunta Kinte’s fellow slaves who are in agony over his name change. I think this is illustrative of the fundamental meaning an individual has in identifying themselves with their culture. At that moment, Kunta Kinte gave up the last hope of linking himself to his homeland and his identity. I see parallel traits with the Puerto Rican community and their language.

Yo No Hablo Español

Puerto Ricans were forced to speak English as soon as they arrived on the mainland. Puerto Rican’s were meant to feel ashamed of their culture, for example speaking Spanish was often discouraged. David Perez, author of *Palente: Young Lords Party*, stated he felt speaking Spanish would result in punishment in school.⁸⁵ In addition, Puerto Ricans lack a political connection on the island. They are neither an independent nation nor a state of the Union. They are rather in limbo caught between two cultures. Residents of the island are not allowed to vote for President and have no representative in the U.S. Congress. As a citizen the United States, it seems difficult to

⁸⁵ Cordasco, Francesco. *Puerto Ricans on the United States Mainland*. (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972) xxi.

believe, "...they are often denied the full advantage of such status..."⁸⁶ I think this denies the Puerto Rican a full sense of identity with his culture and American culture.

As a half Puerto Rican young girl during the 1970s in New Jersey, I got a sense that I was supposed to feel ashamed of exuding any hints of my ethnicity; this was mostly coerced through peer pressure and messages from the media. Puerto Rican's who feel ashamed of their culture or feel they have to assimilate quickly are made to feel inferior; this was especially true in the 1950s. If Puerto Ricans did not assimilate they were meant to feel un-American. Discrimination and alienation would result. As a counter to the Puerto Rican community, Perth Amboy leaders felt the need to continue a conscious effort to protect themselves. Here I see parallel lines between the Perth Amboy 1950s preservation movement and the early twentieth century preservation movement.

⁸⁶ Mapp, Edward, Ed. *Puerto Rican Perspectives*. (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1974) v.

CHAPTER 5

PRESERVATION MOVEMENT AND THE PROPRIETARY HOUSE

Preservation Movement of the 1950s – Male and Female Roles

During the late 1940s, the U.S. government had a slow hand in conducting preservation related activities; as a consequence the preservation movement was at a standstill. However, during the post-World War II period the expansion of suburban neighborhoods created the catalyst for protecting cultural resources. The destruction of historic landmarks prompted many federal, state and local initiatives to protect them. This gave rise to the 1950s preservation movement. The following chapter will explore the preservation movement as a framework for examining the Proprietary House.

Additionally, the 1950s culture will be examined to reveal its impact on the preservation movement.

During the 1950s, male and female roles were polarized. Gender roles were rigid. Men played the dominate role and women were subservient. Gender roles were learned at a very young age and reinforced as girls and boys aged.

Girls were socialized to become wives and mothers. This socialization pattern was reflective in the toys she played with, such as the baby doll and kitchen related toys. As she aged into her teen years, she was socialized to become a housewife through education of home economics. As she got older and married she was socialized to be the perfect housewife; all the qualities of a perfect feminine woman (i.e. perfect clothes, impeccable make-up and hair). Meantime, house chores were foremost for women; maintaining a clean home and well fed family was the mark of the ideal woman. Gadgets, such as the dishwasher, which typified the 1950s culture, were created to save women time in their

house chores. These ‘time-saving’ devices actually made women’s house chores harder because they were expected to do more. Television and other forms of media reinforced these ideals, such as *Leave It To Beaver*. Women only attended college in the 1950s to find a husband. This ideal was difficult, if at all, impossible for women to maintain.

On the other hand, men worked outside the home. They identified their lives through their work and family. The husband was an articulate, hard-working and dedicated father. The relationship between the husband and wife was one of dependency.

Women were dependent upon men to provide financially and legally. In court, women were not allowed to testify against their husbands. Women were considered a dependent upon either their fathers or husbands. Until 1979, some states did not allow women to have communal property with their husbands.⁸⁷ Many of these practices have endured, but they are a commentary on our culture. In a patriarchal culture, where girls and boys are socialized to become men and women, it seems hard to argue why men’s history was valued in the 1950s.

Historic House Museums

The preservation movement of the 1950s valued didactic history. The interpretation at each house museum provided information only. The Proprietary House is illustrative of this idea.

During the 1950s, the house museum was growing at a rapid rate. The *New York Times* estimated that by 1955, over 1,500 historic house museums existed in the United States; they credited the automobile and highways as reason for their popularity.⁸⁸ As a by product of the 1950s, the house museum focused on history in compact discrete parts;

⁸⁷ <http://www.jofreeman.com/lawandpolicy/revlaw1.htm>

⁸⁸ New York Times, September 25 1955, p 27.

this notion has endured, however managers are beginning to change the traditional house museum. The house museum of the 1950s did not seek out any relation between gender or the environment, which was reflective of the culture.

Furthermore, W. Brown Morton argues that the typical house museum of the 1950s was more associated with the decorative arts and theatrics than concerned with accurate historical research.⁸⁹ He contends that many house museum committees tended to blur the lines between historic accuracy, antique collecting and interior decoration.⁹⁰ Additionally, he states that house museums were filled with individuals who made decisions based on, “Social position, money and personality....”⁹¹ This is certainly not to take issue with the individuals associated with the Proprietary House, but rather to illustrate the conditions in which the Proprietary House was conceived. During the 1950s, there existed few resources on ‘How To’s’ for house museums. The resources that were available were focused on the financial condition and factual history of the house museum.

The New York State Historical Association conducted a seminar on historic house museums in 1955, which concluded that there were three areas of focus: fundraising, making best use of the house, and how to keep the house.⁹² Facts above all were paramount in their presentation. Consequently, the 1950s house museums were sterile environments completed with little scholarly research. In addition, house museums were showcases of history.

⁸⁹ Lee and Stipe, Stipe, Robert E., Lee, Antoinette J., Eds. *The American Mosaic: Preserving A Nation's Heritage*. (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1987).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² New York Times, September 25, 1955, p 27.

Current interpretative theories suggest facts in a house museum are not enough to engage the visitor. Providing historical facts is essential, but connecting the facts with current social issues is necessary to provide a well rounded interpretative history. For example, the Proprietary House focuses solely on William Franklin's history. However the Proprietary House was home to many women, including Elizabeth Downs Franklin, who lived there after William Franklin's arrest. Female servant stories are important too. In the aftermath of William Franklin's arrest, did the servants play a larger role in Elizabeth's life and hence in the Proprietary House's history?

Patricia West proposes in her article titled, "Interpreting Women's History at Male-Focused House Museums." that men's lives can not be fully understood until the lives of women are told.⁹³ She suggests the reason for not including women's history is partially because of the way sites become part of the National Park Service and their use of the resource, *Interpretation of Historic Sites*.⁹⁴ She finds use of these resources on women's history as "fringe benefits" and not the whole part of the story. Patricia West believes that interpreting the house museums as an entire functioning space would produce richer evidence into past lives.⁹⁵

The Proprietary House is a fine example of the 1950s house museum interpretation methods. Interpretation was narrowly defined. The focus on William Franklin disregards almost a century of history. Sandra Weber believes most cultural resources are the result of presenting "...isolated islands of the past [which] tends to

⁹³ West, p 8. West, Patricia. "Interpreting Women's History at Male-Focused House Museums," Cultural Resource Management, (Volume , Number 9,1997), 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibib.*

⁹⁵ *Ibib.*

encourage visitors to regard these resources in purely nostalgic terms.”⁹⁶ The history isn’t presented to include social history, but is rather perceived as small discrete parts.

Barnes Riznik agrees but goes further to say,

“The historic house’s greatest asset is its personal history: Its greatest potential lies in its ability to engage the public and sensitize it to the larger social context that has shaped that history and is in turn reflected in it.”⁹⁷

Preservation to Protect the Social and Cultural Elite

The preservation movement of the nineteenth century was a tool used to protect social elites. The social elites took it up themselves to protect their class by venerating their ancestral history through creation of historical societies and structures.⁹⁸ House museums grew by 400 percent between 1895 and 1910.⁹⁹ Mike Wallace argues the creation of such organization as Daughters of the American Revolution, Mayflower Descendants and Sons of the American Revolution provided them with a cohesive identity and they therefore acted as the custodians for American culture.¹⁰⁰ He further argues that this placed them in a distinct level of visibility. They were a distinct class of citizens. They separated themselves from the new European immigrants and the new class of capitalists. I see similar patterns with the preservation of Perth Amboy structures and influx of Puerto Ricans.

⁹⁶ Weber, Sandra. “Interpretation: Interpreting Our Cultural Ecosystem,” *Cultural Resources Management*, (Volume 13, No. 3, 1990) 1.

⁹⁷ Riznik 28. Riznik, Barnes, “Overview of Historic House Museums and Parks in Hawai’i: Changing Ideas of Preservation and Interpretation”, *Cultural Resource Management*, (Volume. No. 9, 1998) 28.

⁹⁸ Wallace, Mike. *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996) 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*. 7.

The preservation movement of the early twentieth century was generated by the social elites to protect their values and revere their descendants. Similarly, the preservation movement during the 1950s in Perth Amboy was created under the auspicious of the cultural elite. Both movements were used to assert their “American ideals” and therefore legitimize their social standing. In addition, the preservation movement of the early twentieth century was a tool used to protect the political and social standing of the elite. David Lowenthal argues it was a way to comfort the current population from the tribulations of the world.¹⁰¹ Individuals feared the future and change; however, this feeling has not diminished.

Perth Amboy officials responded to newcomers by creating a world in which they felt comforted, accepted and reassured. Preservation was a tool to protect their political and social standing; it legitimized their role. Perth Amboy official created historical accounts of their history, such as the *The Westminster*. In addition, they protected tangible pieces of their history, including the Proprietary House. Protection of the Proprietary House was a critical component because it provided evidence of their history. The current argument for preservation is that it provides us with reminders of our heritage and identity. Buildings are clues to our past and connect us with the past.

There were differences between the nineteenth century preservation movement and the movement in Perth Amboy. In Perth Amboy the preservation effort was divided along cultural lines (Puerto Ricans and whites) whereas, the nineteenth century was divided along class lines (wealthy class versus poor). During the 1950s preservation

¹⁰¹ Page and Mason 9. Page, Max and Mason, Randall Eds. *Giving Preservation a History*. David Lowenthal, “*The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions*,” (New York NY: Rutledge, 2004) 9.

movement, the Proprietary House was meant to “Americanize the new immigrant.”¹⁰² , which was similar to the nineteenth century preservation movement. The house museum was an instrument whose purpose was to demonstrate to new immigrants the grandeur and a romanticized story of the dominant class. Here too I see similarities with the preservation of Proprietary House. The Proprietary House was conceived during a time of great tension and uncertainty. It wasn’t a scholarly project, but more a tool to transcend white American values.

Survival of the Fittest

The need for self-preservation is great. Survival of the fittest is not only applicable to biological survival but survival of culture. Sometimes survival is not enough; the desire to dominate is sometimes necessary to ensure future lineage. Sociologists believe this need to dominate harkens back to the most primitive parts of our brain. And the purpose to dominate is to ensure the protection of future generations. The desire to dominate culture is so great that it creates biased environment. Perhaps this drove the Proprietary House Association. Preservationists, such as Robert Stipe, argued in 1972 that preservation is a way to maintain difference in an ever increasing time of culture homogeneity.¹⁰³ Perhaps Perth Amboy leaders sought to maintain their culture during a period of great change and uncertainty. It also provided a way to distinguish their culture from others.

¹⁰² Wallace, 8.

¹⁰³ Stipe, Robert, Ed. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) xiv.

William Franklin's Place in History

Attributing the Proprietary House with William Franklin undoubtedly placed Perth Amboy officials in a caste system of marked proportions. William Franklin's father, Benjamin Franklin, was certainly a legacy of his time. It was a moot point to question his legacy and legitimacy in American history. Furthermore, experts agree that restoration legitimizes political power.¹⁰⁴ Mount Vernon was one of the first examples. William J. Murtagh states the creation of Mount Vernon was a result of

“...individuals and groups we looked to associative history for reassurance. In the face of post-Civil War affluence, established families pursued genealogy and the preservation of their ancestral homesteads as a challenge to “new money’s” claim of legitimacy.”¹⁰⁵

This example is a prime reason the Proprietary House was restored. During the 1950s, there was great fear among Perth Amboy leaders that the shift in American culture (i.e. influx of Puerto Ricans, Civil Rights Movement) was a threat to the “establishment.” Additionally, the 1950s was an era of suspicion and fear, which heighten these feelings. It culminated in a haphazard environment, which created writings and plans to protect buildings without much context or connection with the environment.

In 1962, Perth Amboy conducted a planning study. The study's purpose was to examine the exodus of families during the 1950s. The other part of this study focused on the a, “...152% increase in non-white population from 1950 to 1960 [in Perth Amboy].”¹⁰⁶ Although this study does project an objective opinion, I think it provides a distinct shift away from the earlier historical writings. The historical writings hide a subtle message. The research in Perth Amboy's history was focused on nostalgia rather

¹⁰⁴ Murtagh 30.

¹⁰⁵ Murtagh 30.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, 5.

than empirical data. The switch occurred in between 1959 to 1962. It reveals Perth Amboy's efforts to fully understand the social ills of the city. The writings by Dr. McGinnis focused too lightly on historical research. I believe the books were a fixation on history than an intellectual account. In a sense it was more about nostalgia than intellectual study.

The Problem with Nostalgia

Indeed nostalgia is a legitimate feeling; however it evokes an emotional response, which can produce a volatile environment. Nostalgia elicits an emotional response rather than a rational, intellectual response. "Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement..."¹⁰⁷ Perth Amboy leaders were facing a changing environment, which meant they needed to focus on a time period when they felt at ease or comfortable. Looking to their founders was a way to provide comfort and reassurance. Furthermore, they garnered support for other historic structures through writings and nominations to the State and National Registers.

Perth Amboy officials conducted a campaign to create a prolific source of writings on Perth Amboy's history. Frequently, the St. Peter's Episcopal Church was highlighted, including nomination to the National Register. It was also frequently highlighted in newspaper articles as a prime example of Perth Amboy's early history and a source of pride. In addition, Kearny Cottage, a house museum constructed in 1781, was part of this campaign to establish Perth Amboy's early history. Dr. McGinnis produced several writings concerning the historical structures throughout Perth Amboy. It was an attempt to provide a safe environment in which they felt comforted by familiar

¹⁰⁷ Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001) xiii.

surroundings. Indeed the Proprietary House was an impressive building which probably required a larger than life to figure.

Wanted: A High Profile Historical Figure

William Franklin provided the high profile image the Proprietary House needed to garner support. Certainly, there were other famous residents, such as Chief Justice Smythe or Mathias Bruen. And research shows that the house was constructed the royal Governor of New Jersey, but still other residents had just as much impact on the home as did William Franklin. However there were other forces which the restoration had to contend with, such as the trend of the preservation movement.

The Proprietary House was in a competition for its life. With the purchase of Woodlawn by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1951 there came a revelation that similar homes had to compete with high profile historical figures. The Proprietary House was a home for example for Chief Justice Smythe and Mathias Bruen; however their profile did not embody the same prestige as William Franklin. His relation to Benjamin Franklin gave his profile the needed boost to compete with such high ranking house museums. City officials were so concerned about protecting the home as William Franklin's mansion, that they rejected the New Jersey's recommendations to save the structure as the Brighton Hotel. The state found that restoration as the Governor's mansion would be impossible without some conjecture. To avoid conjecture they believed it would be most appropriate to save it as the Brighton Hotel because more historical information was available to create an appropriate restoration. Louis Booz claimed saving the structure as the Brighton Hotel would "...obliterate the heritage of the

Franklin Mansion...”¹⁰⁸ Even its name change during the 1960s was a suggestion that there was a clear need to associate it with a high profile figure.

The Proprietary House was referred to as the Westminster until the 1960s. The Association was initially called the Westminster Historical Society. The need to project a relationship with William Franklin dictated the name change. In a letter dated June 26, 1964, to Dr. William Cole from Louis Booz, it was suggested that in order to gain interest from States officials and organizations such as the East New Jersey Proprietors, he suggested renaming the place the Proprietary House. This illustrates how protecting the home as William Franklin was more about garnering support for the home rather than an intellectual study.

¹⁰⁸ *The News Tribune*, November 1, 1975.

CONCLUSION – THE FUTURE

Emerging from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Association for State and Local History conference is the sense that house museums should project more than one story. In addition, house museums should also reflect social change. However, the Proprietary House has not followed this path. The Proprietary House has become entrenched in William Franklin's history. Why? There are two reasons. First, is William Franklin's legacy. He is regarded as the most famous and therefore the most appropriate historical figure associated with the Proprietary House. And second the Proprietary House Association was founded to protect the memory of William Franklin; their Bylaws reflect this mission. There is no doubt that William Franklin played a significant part in New Jersey history, however there are increasing reasons to include forgotten stories such as women and minorities in the Proprietary House's history.

First, the future of the preservation movement is changing to include a broader scope of stories, including other cultures, classes and gender. Second, there has been a steady increase in the minority population in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics were the largest minority group in 2001.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Hispanics have the highest birthrate among whites and African-Americans,¹¹⁰ which suggests that they will maintain their status as the largest minority group. Puerto Ricans, who are Hispanics, may alter the importance of the Proprietary House in the future. Puerto Ricans may place less emphasis on the Proprietary House if it does not engage their story. To engage the Puerto Rican community the Proprietary House should reflect

¹⁰⁹ CBS news web site online <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/21/national/main537369.shtml>

¹¹⁰ Population Resource Center web site <http://www.prcdc.org/index.html>.

their story. This will serve two purposes: First, it will create a broader audience and a larger base of support for the Proprietary House. Therefore, it will sustain the survival of the Proprietary House. Secondly, it will provide a comprehensive and richer history, which will provide a more dynamic experience for the visitor. But how to incorporate the Puerto Rican community?

A recent fact was revealed to the writer regarding the Proprietary House and Puerto Ricans. According to William Pavlovsky, the Proprietary House was home to many immigrant Puerto Ricans as a rooming house in the 1950s. Perhaps the Puerto Rican story, along with other stories (i.e. women's history and social/class history) could reconcile the issue of forgotten history and the Proprietary House. It is unjust that the Proprietary House does not reflect social change in Perth Amboy, such as fluctuations in the population or the changing role of women. It is unjust because preservation should reflect social change. The Proprietary House is a good example of preservation of the 1950s, but to ensure its future it needs to reinterpret its history.

The Proprietary House should inter-weave each period of its history, including its story as a rooming house in the early to mid-twentieth century. There is the notion that the glory of the Proprietary House was associated with William Franklin's time period, but doesn't it behoove us to embrace all parts of its history to better understand the house?

This thesis, I hope, has shed light on the importance of social change and preservation. There is a crucial relationship between social change and preservation. That is, social change can serve as a catalyst for preservation and restoration. In addition, social change will impact the restoration process. As shown in this thesis, social change,

such as Puerto Rican migration, had a dramatic impact on the restoration campaign of the Proprietary House. Studying the nexus between social change and preservation will provide a fuller understanding as to why we preserve and restore buildings.

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