

Welcome to the Wickford Walk

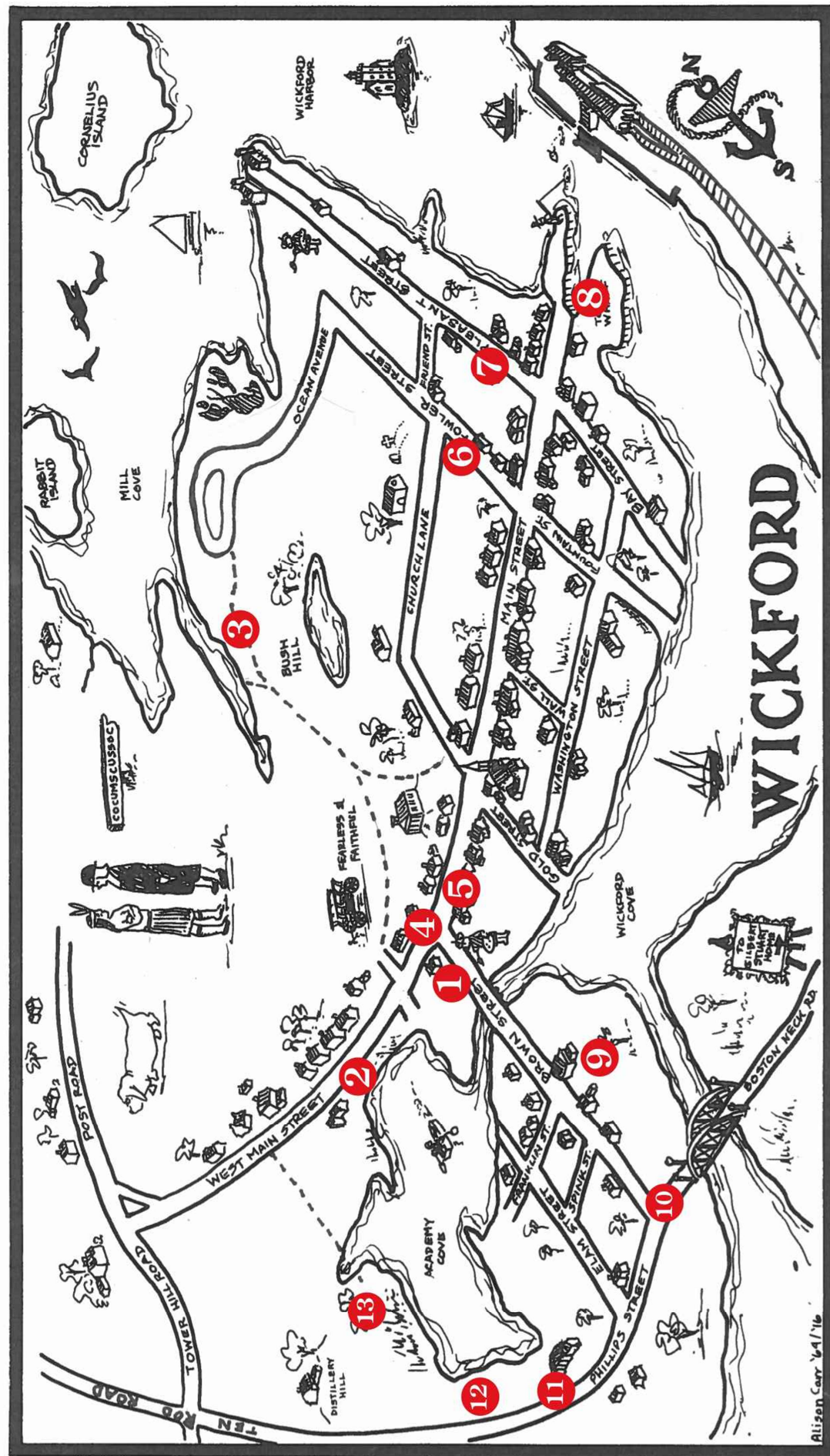
This walking tour starts at Updike Park on Brown Street in downtown Wickford Village. See a map of the marker locations on page 4. There is free public parking throughout the village.

Stop	Location	
1	Updike Park at the corner of Brown Street and West Main	<p>Our tour starts at the marker in Updike Park on Brown Street.</p> <p>Welcome to Wickford, Rhode Island, one of the oldest preserved Colonial seaside towns in the country. Join us for a walk back in time to learn about the diverse and often surprising history of Wickford Village. The historic markers that make up “The Wickford Walk”, offer stories of ship building, Narragansett settlers, steamships and grand architecture. This project was made possible by Historic Wickford, Incorporated as part of their ongoing commitment to protecting and preserving this very special place. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Facing the marker, turn right and walk up West Main Street away from downtown. The next marker is beside the cove.</p>
2	West Main Street by Academy Cove	<p>You should be facing “A Maritime Center” marker with Academy Cove in front of you.</p> <p>Since Colonial times, land based travel around coastal Rhode Island was grueling and slow. Between the early 1700s to the early 1860s, Wickford developed into an important and thriving maritime center. Hundreds of sailing vessels from small dories and catboats to substantial brigs, schooners and sloops were crafted at five separate shipyards by numerous craftsmen and tradesmen. You are looking at Academy Cove which was the location of a major builder. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Cross over West Main Street and take a left after the Wickford Kitchen Factory Outlet. Follow the trail in Bush Hill. The next marker overlooks the salt marsh.</p>
3	Path behind Wickford Kitchen Factory Outlet	<p>You should be facing “The People of the Small Point” marker with the salt marsh in front of you.</p> <p>Human settlement of the area we now call Wickford Village, began some 30,000 years ago during the post-ice age or Paleolithic period with Indigenous people living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. At some point in time as the climate warmed, the Narragansett people settled into a more permanent style of living in large semi-permanent coastal villages surrounded by extensive fields which they cleared for cultivation. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Walk back the trail and take a left on West Main Street. The next marker is in front of the turquoise building at 17 West Main Street.</p>
4	On the side of Grateful Heart Main Street	<p>The Women of Wickford. For the most part, women’s roles in the 18th and 19th centuries were centered on home, hearth and child-rearing. In villages like Wickford though things were different. The majority of able-bodied men was either off at sea or involved in the construction of sailing vessels allowing women the opportunity to be more than just a wife and mother. They stepped into societal roles that would not be tolerated in the majority of typical New England communities. Take a moment to read the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Walk toward Main Street crossing over at the Book Garden Antiques. Continue down Main Street. The marker is in front of 17 Main Street across from Canvas Works.</p>

5	Main Street in front of 17 Main Street	<p>You should be facing “The Grand Highway” marker and able to gaze down Main Street.</p> <p>Most of Wickford’s grand homes, seen here stretching up and down the “Grand Highway” which is now known as West Main, Main and Pleasant Streets are the result of an thriving era of maritime and trading center growth from the 1770s to 1836. Local builders constructed these beautiful homes for ship captains, bankers and merchants. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Walk down Main Street and take a left on Fowler Street. The next marker is across from 19 Fowler Street.</p>
6	19 Fowler Street	<p>This home, at 19 Fowler Street, is said to be the oldest home in Rhode Island built specifically for a black family. Domini Smith was one of many black and mixed-race men who worked on sailing vessels out of Wickford Harbor from the 1700s through the 1860s. During the American Revolution, Smith sailed on ships, owned by the locally prominent Baker family that ran the British blockade of the Salt Islands in the Caribbean. Salt was the only preservative at the time that allowed fish to be shipped long distances without spoiling, so blockade running was critical if New England’s important fishing industry was to survive the war. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Take a left on Main Street and a left on Pleasant Street. The next marker is across from 11 Pleasant Street.</p>
7	Beginning of Pleasant Street	<p>You should be facing “The Founding of Wickford” marker with a view of the house across the street.</p> <p>Captain Lodowick Updike was the first to envision a commercially profitable seaport and ship building town on the site of Wickford Village. In 1709, Updike planned roadways and platted out his future seaport town in the style of colonial Boston. It was initially called “Updike’s New Town” but later became known as Wickford Village. Look across the street at this grand Georgian Colonial style home at 19 Pleasant Street which was built sometime before 1745 for one of Updike’s descendants. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Walk back to Main Street and go left toward the marina. The next marker is at the end of Main Street.</p>
8	End of Main Street	<p>You should be facing “The Gateway to Newport” marker with a view of the marina and Narragansett Bay in front of you.</p> <p>Several events brought Wickford’s maritime period to an end in the mid 1800’s but the village was rescued from decline in the 1870s with the installation of the Newport and Wickford Railway and Steamship Line. The train left Wickford Junction on a regular basis making the short run south to Poplar Point and stopping at Belleville and Wickford Village. At Poplar Point a luxurious steam ferry set sail directly to Jamestown and Newport. The railway brought new money, jobs and visitors to Wickford. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Walk back to Brown Street and left to Library Park. The next marker is under the wooden pavilion.</p>
9	Library Park on Brown Street	<p>Some believe that this enigma in stone is a record of a visit to Narragansett Bay by the Vikings, Norsemen, other Icelandic explorers or a voyage by the Knights Templar. Some believe it was more likely rendered by immigrants to our area out of national pride in the 19th-20th centuries. Although no one can say with complete certainty exactly by whom or when these intriguing Runic symbols were carved, it is safe to say, as quoted from Professor Henrik Williams of Uppsala University in Sweden, the rune stone is “of considerable cultural significance to Rhode Island and New England, not the least because of the controversy, mystery, and even intrigue connected with it.” Take a</p>

		<p>moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Take a left on Brown Street and left at the intersection. The next marker is before the bridge.</p>
10	Hussey Bridge	<p>You should be facing the “Hussey Bridge” marker with the town harbor and bridge in front of you.</p> <p>Young Clarence Hussey was a hot shot engineer straight out of MIT when he was hired by Rhode Island as its first state bridge engineer. He was given a tiny office in the basement of the Capitol building and carte blanche to bring the state’s bridges up to safety standards. By 1925, when Hussey’s priority list brought him to the rapidly deteriorating Hamilton Bridge in Wickford, he had already gone a long way towards that goal. Sadly though, this was to be Hussey’s final bridge. Just prior to its completion, Hussey died at the age of 42 years old. His obituary noted that he was known across America as a premier designer of bridges. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Take Ten Rod Road toward the Wickford Elementary building. The next marker is beside the basketball hoops.</p>
11	Ten Rod Road at Wickford Elementary School	<p>Livestock Driver’s Turnpike. From the late 1600s through 1727, this parcel and the surrounding land was the property of the Updike family and part of the approximately 27 square mile plantation known as Cocumscusoc. There is little historical information detailing the construction and operation of this livestock drover’s turnpike. We do know that Ten Rod Road (named for its ten rod width – 165 feet) was a major route of passage for livestock from farm, to village, to ship. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: The next marker is beside the playground area.</p>
12	Playground at Wickford Elementary School	<p>You should be facing the “Washington Academy” marker with the school building in the distance.</p> <p>The Washington Academy was founded in 1800 by educationally minded wealthy landowners and merchants in Wickford and Newport. It was once the second oldest institution of higher learning in the state of Rhode Island, eclipsed only by Brown University. It built specifically to educate and train young men for careers as teachers, land surveyors, and celestial navigators; all skill sets that were in high demand at the onset of the 19th century. Take a moment to read the details on the marker.</p> <p>CONTINUE ON: Take Boone Street and a right to the North Kingstown Library. The next marker is behind the library. Follow the Rain Garden path.</p>
13	Lower Rain Garden at the NK Library	<p>You should be facing the “Academy Cove” marker which overlooks the water.</p> <p>Formerly West Cove, this inner-cove of Wickford Harbor became known as Academy Cove around 1800 when the Washington Academy was constructed on the knoll along the western edge. The cove was home to one of our five shipyards and along its western shore was as extraordinary agricultural venture. Learn more by reading the details on the maker.</p>

This is the end of our Historic Markers walking tour. We hope you enjoyed your stroll through history. Please feel free to peruse the shops, restaurants and public common areas of our village and come back and join us for other historic walking tours. Visit HistWick.org for more information about how to become a member of Historic Wickford and help us continue to celebration and preserve this unique village.



WICKFORD

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