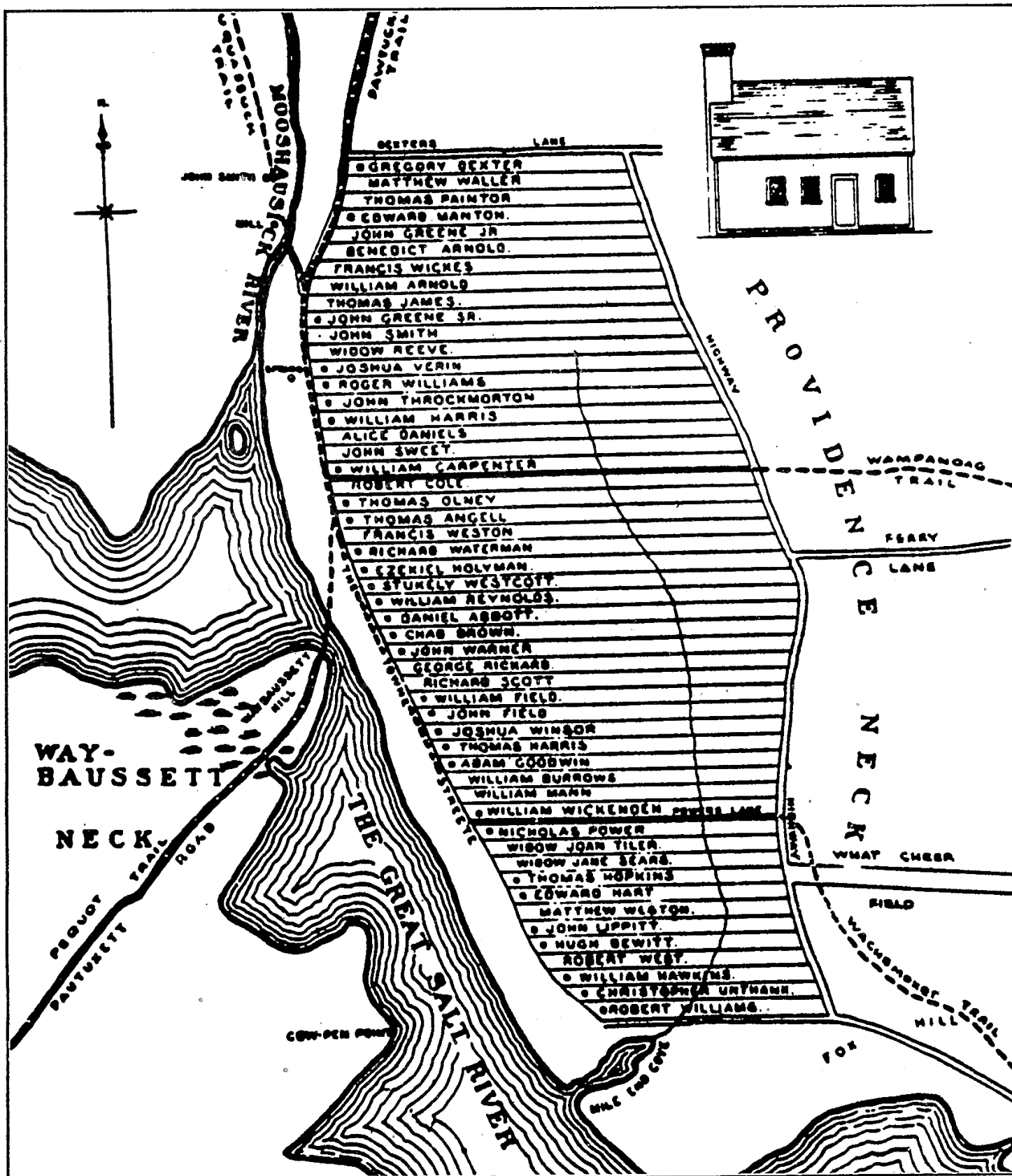


# IN DEPTH

Thursday, November 2

The Brown Daily Herald Monthly Supplement

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Providence's East Side in the Seventeenth Century.

## Where Are The Neighborhoods Now?

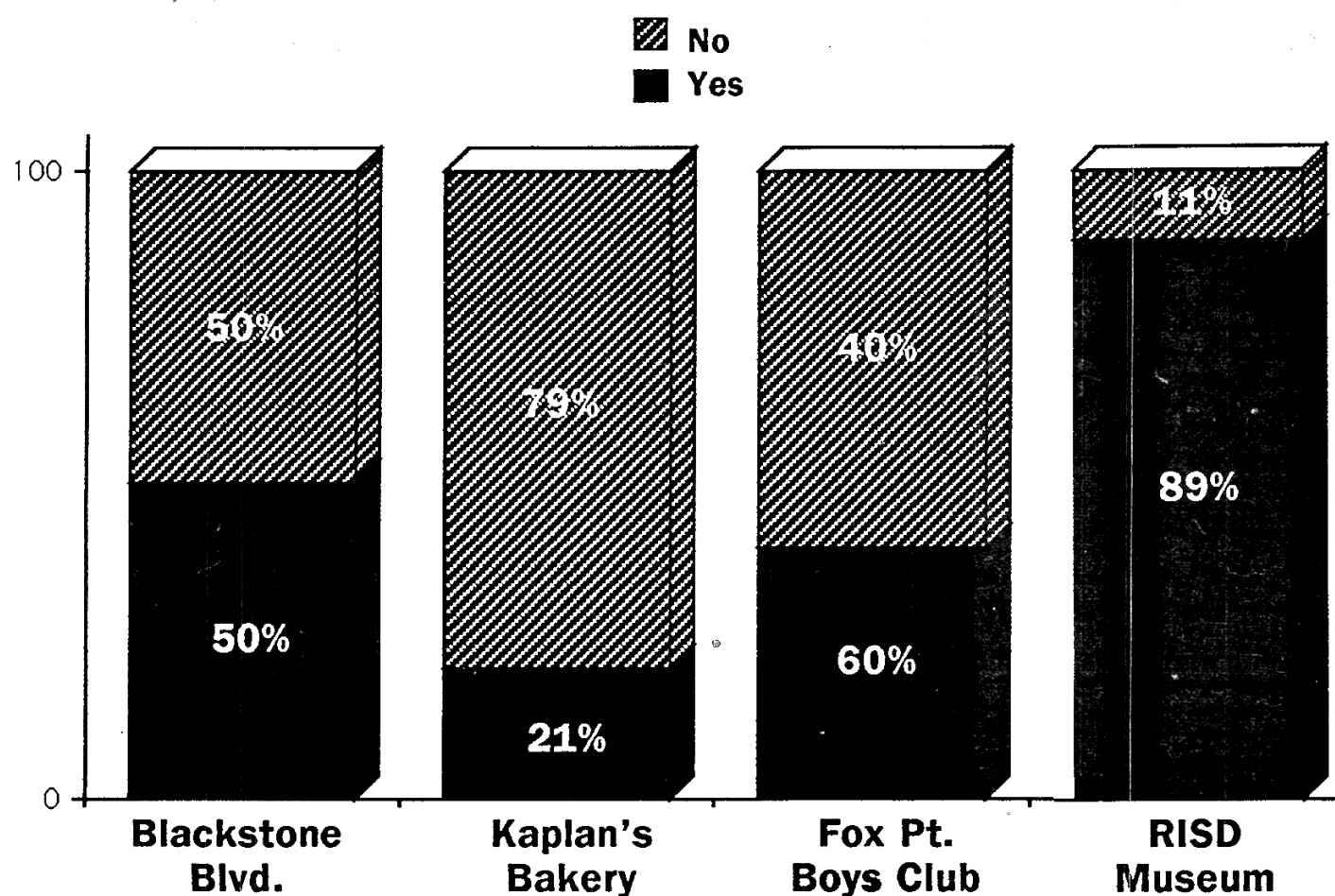
The Providence of Brown catalog fame was a quaint menage of Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Russian immigrant peoples. The Providence of reality is not quaint; it is in danger of losing its heritage.

# An In Depth Poll

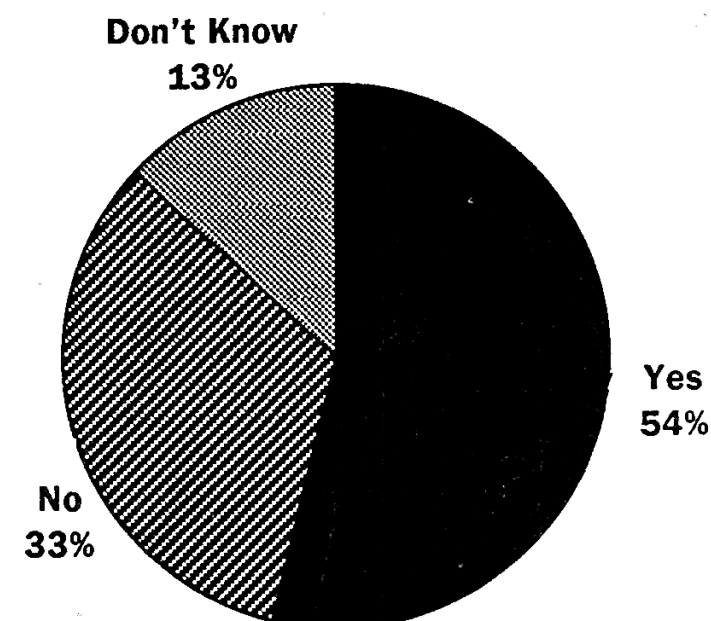
Poll conducted by Zareen Khan and Lisa Ryers

Margin of error is 7%

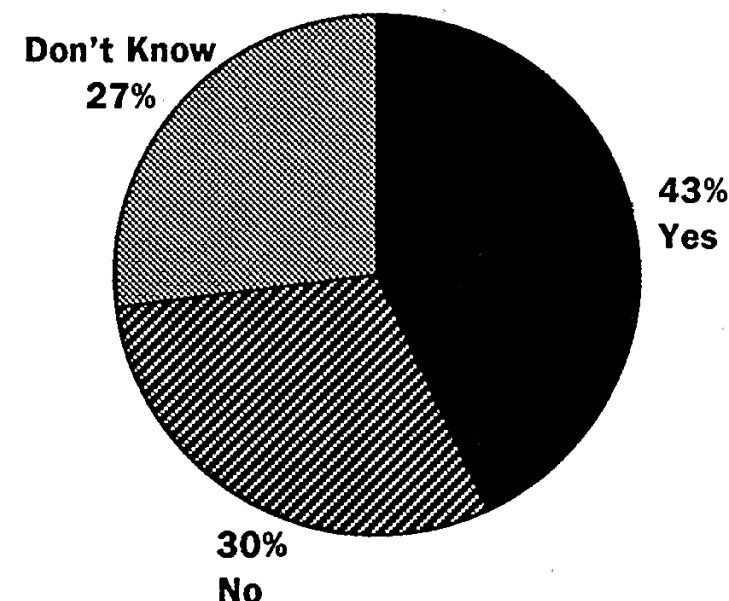
**Q:** Do you know where the following are located?



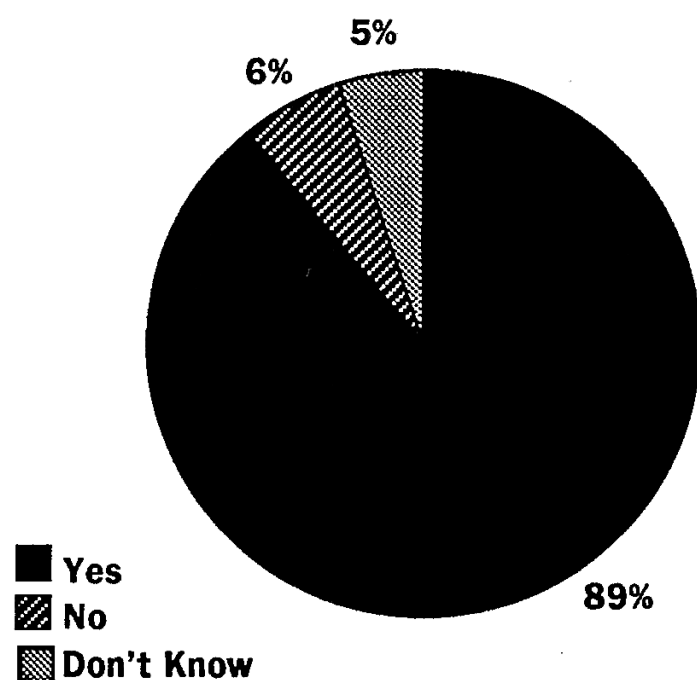
**Q:** Would you rent an apartment in the Fox Point area?



**Q:** Do you think it's ethical to live in Fox Point as a student?

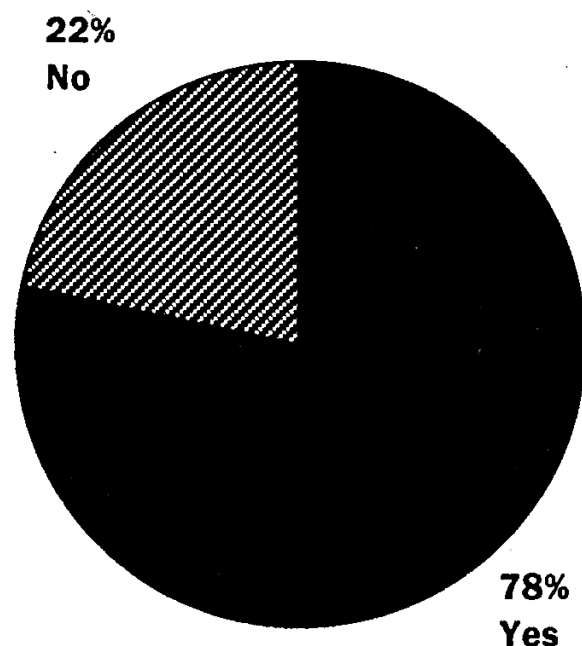


**Q:** Should Brown forge stronger ties with Providence via sponsoring internships, social services, scholarships or other modes to spread awareness?

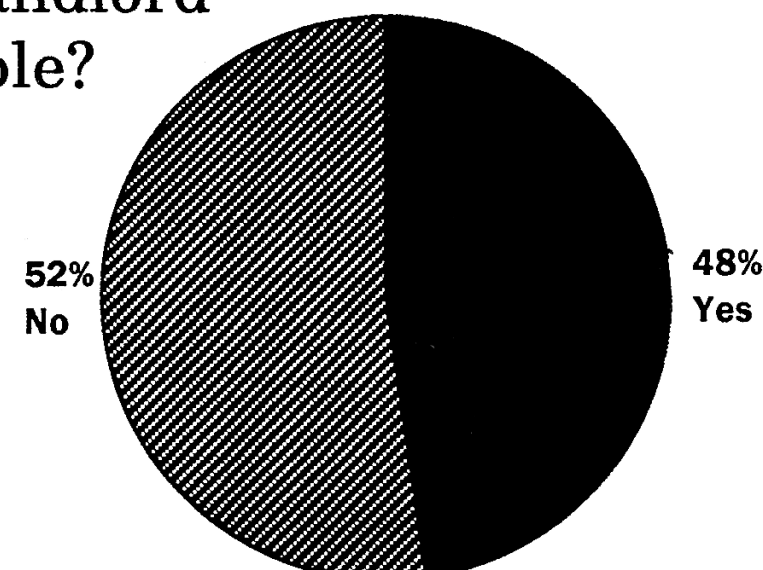


## QUESTIONS ASKED OF OFF CAMPUS STUDENTS

**Q:** Do you know the residents on your block who are non-Brown students?



**Q:** Is your landlord responsible?





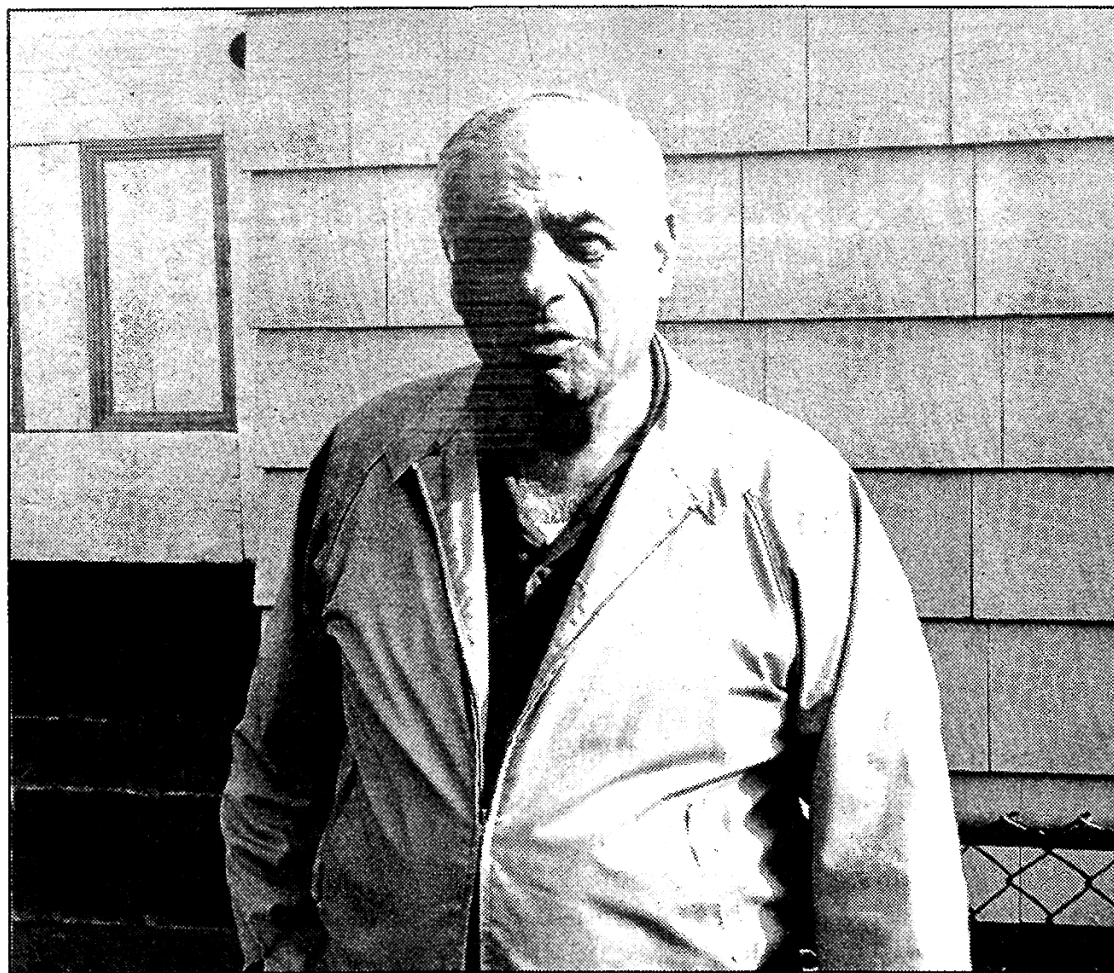


photo by Kermit Pattison

Charlie Simon

# Remembering The Good Ole Days

**W**hen Charlie Simon was born on Fox Point 68 years ago, the neighborhood stretched from South Main Street over the Hill to the Seekonk River. Like most of his neighbors, he grew up in a cold-water tenement. When he needed to take a shower, he would walk down to the Fox Point Boys Club on the corner of South Main and Power Streets. It used to take him hours to walk across his Fox Point because he would stop to say hello to all his neighbors.

"Everybody knew each other," he says. The child of Lebanese immigrants, Charlie grew up in a polyglot community of Portuguese, Cape Verdeans, Azoreans, Afro-Americans, Irish, and Jews.

"We had so little that all we had was each other. We didn't know we were so poor because everybody was so poor," he remembers.

By the late 1950's, however, everything began to change. First the interstate came and cut Fox Point in half. In the 1960's, many residents whose homes fell in the new historic preservation and urban renewal areas left the neighborhood. People living on South Main and Benefit Streets sold their houses or were bought out to make way for demolition and historic renewal projects. Then Brown began to expand.

The residents of Fox Point were the odd men out. The Providence Preservation Society and Brown were now working in concert ("a bunch of blue-bloods," Simon calls them). John Nicholas Brown, a university trustee and descendant of the founding family, organized the Preservation Society in order to reconcile the university's need to grow with historic preservation efforts. It was agreed that Brown would expand away from the historic district. That meant towards Fox Point.

Thirty years later, Charlie Simon's Fox Point is a different place. His old neighborhood has shrunk to a fraction of its former size. Interstate 95 cuts beneath his window. A pizza delivery business plans to open next door. Students and young professionals surround his house. The value of his home has increased tremendously, but so have his taxes. Most of his old friends have moved out. Now he can walk across the neighborhood in five minutes.

He still gets together with some of his pals at the Fox Point Neighborhood center on Ives Street, where the last fragments of the old neighborhood still remain. In these few square blocks, the smell of Portuguese soup still hangs in the air and vegetable gardens and grape vines hanging from trellises still tangle the yards.

**Lifetime Fox  
Point resident  
Charlie Simon  
recollects good  
times, and a  
victory over  
Brown's varsity  
basketball  
team.**

**by Kermit  
Pattison**

But even this remnant of the old neighborhood is a dim reminder of the old friendly, tranquil neighborhood where nobody bothered to lock their doors. Today, people start to gather at dusk to buy drugs on the street outside the Neighborhood Center. Cars cruise Ives Street with stereos booming out of the windows—a signal that some one is looking for drugs.

No other neighborhood has felt the pressures of historic renewal, gentrification and the expansion of Brown as much as Fox Point. With the jump in property values over the last thirty years, most tenants have been priced out of the market and many homeowners have sold out at a profit. Since 1976, the average price for a single family home on Fox Point rose from \$18,000 to \$174,000, while the average cost of a multi-family home jumped from \$19,000 to \$162,000. What used to be a sprawling working class area has shrunk to a small ethnic enclave amid the gentrification.

"Real estate pressures have driven housing prices up beyond the reach of your average blue-collar working person," says Larry Novick, a former director of the Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Association who left the neighborhood due to the high rents. "It's becoming more and more upscale housing."

Although the expansion of Brown and the influx of students were sources of conflict in the 1960's and 1970's, now Fox Point residents see gentrification and the high cost of living as the main threat. After twenty years of organized activity to protect their neighborhood, most residents have resigned themselves to the changes.

"It came to the point where they realized that Brown was going to be doing what Brown was going to be doing," says Novick. "But I don't think students are playing a major force in the neighbor-

hood right now. "It's your yuppie class."

Brown and gentrification have changed Fox Point forever. With the exception of Ives and Gano Streets, the old multi-ethnic, working class community has evolved into a neighborhood of expensive shops, gourmet restaurants, students, and young professionals. Almost everyone on Fox Point admits that the old neighborhood is gone.

When Charlie Simons gets together with his old pals for neighborhood reunions at the Fox Point Community center, they muse about the good times they had down at the old boys club and about the time they beat the Brown Ivy League champion basketball team. The group gets a little smaller every year.

"I don't think I'll live to see it, but eventually this will be a Brown community," says Simon. "We're going to lose our ethnic neighborhoods."



## •Fox Point•

It's 3 p.m. At the corner of East and Williams, a.k.a. "off-campus", four students play hockey in the street, stopping momentarily for a Saab to glide by. They've finished their homework so they are anxious to trounce each other, shouting "get with the program Wesley", and "where'd you learn how to play hockey, from Stevie Wonder?" This is a group Brown brochures would characterize as "diverse"—an Asian American, a black, and two Portuguese. At 3:15 p.m. they stop the game because Tychonn, the forward, has a paper route to finish.

These "off campus" residents were here long before any current Brown student matriculated. To these sixth graders, Fox Point is not just a quaint means to establish independence, but simply: "our excellent and quiet neighborhood."

Whatever the epithet, the Fox Point neighborhood has come to terms with the changing face of its neighborhood. Some remnants of Portuguese culture and its Catholic umbrella appear in nooks. Pictorial representations of the Annunciation scene or a statue of Guadalupe situated in bathtubs are common along Power Street. One resident on East Street places a candle in every window after attending morning mass services.

But these cultural tokens are overshadowed by other images: The one time Union Baptist Church on East Street gone condo: "spacious two bedrooms, two and a half bath, central heat, AC, and elevator." Two Portuguese bakeries within a block of each other supplicating "For Rent" signs. A stop sign on Transit Street carries an additional warning etched on it: "Recall the Mayor." Wide American cars, a.k.a. "streetshakers", dizzying pedestrians with a sonic

onslaught, indicating an interest to buy drugs. Teenagers loitering on Ives Street are waiting at the drug drive-thru. A totally dismembered Chevy Ninety-Eight, with glass strewn everywhere sits two blocks away from an elementary school.

The Fox Point icons of the past are just that—past. Twenty years ago, the focal point for Fox Point activity would have been Faria's Bakery in the a.m. after St. Joseph's mass servic., or maybe dropping by Lisbon Dry Goods Store or Dean's Variety on Wickenden. Today, residents say, only one institution makes the community coalesce—The Fox Point Community Center. The center serves several functions: boys club, senior center, health center, and library. The center also boasts an indoor pool. If the center closed, Wesley says, he and his teammates would just "hang around and do nothing."

Wesley is not alone. Lisa Santos, 11, says she stays at the Boys Club till nine every night except Sundays and Mondays when the club is closed. The club offers a gym, video games, activities and weekly excursions to roller rinks, and shopping. But the club might be a way of avoiding the household. Lisa says her uncle and a friend of her mother's were both shot outside her home. A lot of her neighbors sell drugs while their own children are playing in the backyard. "I don't like it," she says.

Lauri Silvia, director of the senior center, admits that drugs permeate Fox Point, but that the problem is "different here."

"We don't have problems like kids [who sell drugs] assaulting people. If anything, they help us by helping seniors with their groceries."

The drug issue stems from several factors, Silvia says. Education is not stressed so students drop out of school at age 16. At the same time, Brown students who live in Fox Point are coming home in BMW's. Selling drugs affords

the native residents the same luxuries that appear mere staples for Brown students. Drugs are a quick and lucrative way to compete and make money. "I know kids who have sent their parents on trips, as a result," she says.

Silvia is bitter about Brown's effect on the Fox Point area. "Brown has completely changed the neighborhood. Fifteen years ago if you had a problem you could go to a neighbor. All the shopkeepers spoke Portuguese. Now the shops on Wickenden Street are geared to students. Now this building [the Fox Point Neighborhood Center] is it."

"This building" serves 350 seniors annually for no fees. Project Hope provides hot lunches each day, and the center also offers activities such as bowling, bingo, exercise classes and card games. A nurse performs medical examinations once a week.

Julia Moniz, 63, grew up on Transit Street where her father, a longshoreman, paid a three dollar monthly rent in 1937. Today she lives on Governor and pays 247 dollars more than her father did. Although inflation has affected every aspect of life, Moniz does not point to housing as the neighborhood's crisis point. Shelter can be found, but trust cannot develop via paperwork and lobbying alone.

"It used to be kids could walk in the neighborhood, now you can't trust your neighbors. These kids don't listen to their parents. I'm afraid to go walking at night," Moniz says.

Moniz's perspicaciousness rose concurrently with the influx of drugs in the community. The dealers come from East Providence but the trading occurs in front of households on Wickenden, Ives and Gano streets, she says.

Moniz returned home once to find a pusher on her stoop. She asked him to leave and he complied, but most Fox Point residents will not involve themselves because they are scared of violent repercussions. Neighbors cannot trust the police either, because some policemen are "in

# Touring The Neighborhood



photo courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society

A Wickenden Street resident in her confirmation dress in the 1940's.

**Brown advertises  
itself as "diverse,"  
but it overlooks  
the unique  
communities  
outside the Van  
Wickle Gates.**

**-by Lisa Ryers-**



**“ Brown students who live in Fox Point are coming home in BMW's. Selling drugs affords the native residents the same luxuries that appear mere staples for Brown students. Drugs are a quick and lucrative way to compete and make money. ”**

with the drug dealers,” she says.

Since Fox Point is tucked behind campus elements that some find distant already, many Brown students are unaware Fox Point exists at all. This is ironic, for were there no Fox Point, Rhode Island may have been founded elsewhere. Roger Williams, in an attempt to forge a colony of religious freedom, landed in Providence on the west shore of the Seekonk River—where Williams and Gano streets meet now. Soon settlements developed and this area east of Hope Street was designated for six acre farms.

By the eighteenth century, Fox Point had evolved into a maritime epicenter. Providence's first wharf developed on Transit Street, attracting homesteads for merchants and captains. As trade developed, Providence initiated a train route to Boston in 1835.

The burgeoning economy attracted a number of immigrants. St. Joseph's Cathedral on 92 Hope Street was built to accommodate the new denizens. In the 1870's alone, a wave of 2,000 Portuguese Bravas and Cape Verde Islanders graced Fox Point shores.

Soon Providence was busting at the seams and community quality plummeted. By 1876 Wickenden Street was condemned for slum clearance. These problems contributed to the passing of the 1924 immigration laws restricting Portuguese migration.

When asked what he thinks of his Brown student neighbors, Tychonn says “They're nice, but rich. They buy a lot of candy bars.”

Lisa Santos echoes the sentiment that affiliation with Brown equals big bucks. She described her joy that she might get a Brown big sister through Brown Community Outreach. “When I found out I might get one, I went home so happy. Big sisters take you out to such nice places.”

Moniz says Brown students have never posed any threat to her sense of community. If anything, she feels sorry for “the young people” because “they'll have to pay extra taxes for her neighbors who abuse the welfare system. Many residents who immigrate from Portugal go directly on welfare without seeking jobs, Moniz says.

“They are nice kids from college, and better than some of our kind—they're slob.”

But others do not see Brown as a benevolent hand. Silva blames Brown for the area's current housing crisis because the university “did not pro-

vide enough on campus housing and never discouraged living in Fox Point.” She thinks Brown could involve themselves in the community by offering scholarships instead of “just studying the area.”

Although a Rhode Island law prohibits more than three people co-habiting one apartment, students disobey this, Silvia says. As a result, landlords can make more money and expel the natives who cannot meet the rents students take for granted. The Portuguese who used to live in Washington Park and East Providence two generations ago, are moving back. “When someone offers you \$225,000 for a house you bought for \$10,000, it's tough not to sell.”

For cultures based on extended family relationships, moving can be disarming. Silva says several senior center regulars and community activists have left because their families can no longer afford to live in Fox Point.

“Fifteen years from now there won't be a neighborhood,” Silva says.

## • Mount Hope •

You start with your playing piece at Hope High School. You could go right, but that's tired. Going left spells the unknown. You advance past four yard sales; Chabad House; a sign announcing “Free film series at Bell Street Chapel: October 20, Hitchcock festival, November 3, French film series, November 17, Peter Sellers festival”; a strip of social service buildings including a day care center, the YMCA, a psy-

chiatric health center, a library; a predominantly black region; a predominantly Jewish region; the Interchurch Center built in 1929 relaying its gospel: “The best way to get even is to forget”; a bakery with the accolade “best brownie of 1987”; a “European hair-cutter”; a line of people awaiting the “Ready Freddy” money machine. You reach your destination: the park. You have just traversed the Mount Hope neighborhood game and all its perks.

For students experiencing real -world -withdrawl -syndrome, they need only walk up the same strip they usually recognize only as a gateway connecting the Athletic Center and Perkins dormitory—Hope Street. Hope Street links the Fox Point end of Wickenden to the Mount Hope and Hope neighborhood districts and ends in the city of Pawtucket.

The Mount Hope district is a middle class settlement, composed of mostly one to two family dwellings and nineteenth century cottages and bungalows. The area was first settled in the seventeenth century but the population remained sparse until the early 1800's, attracting tavern keepers and farmers.

The southern most portion of Mount Hope evolved into a black settlement. By the 1950's, institutions such as the Mount Hope Day Care Center, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and the Providence Center for psychiatric services called the area home, giving the area a reputation for social services.

Meanwhile in the northern section, the area accommodated an influx of Russian Jews who settled around Rochambeau Boulevard in the 1890's. A century later, the demographics remain the same as signified by several Jewish delicatessens and a bakery that is Providence's main distributor of challah and synagogues.

It seems that the only requirement for meshing with the Mt. Hope community is what most landlords would call anathema: dogs. Walking your dog is the fad. One threads conscious canine sported a tee-shirt which was larger than the one his master was wearing. Naturally the best place to show off one's dog is at a park. Residents agree that the parks are the most cohesive element of Mount Hope's stratified cultures. The thirty-something clans converge with their pre-school age kids in tow. Common dialogue: “How old is yours?”, “Sorry I missed your sale. I told my wife I could use a lamp for the den”, and “It's about time that mutt learned to catch a frisbee.”

“The parks are the most contact we have with neighborhood people,” Kipp Van Nostrand, 30 says.

The sometimes plastic talk as a simulation of neighborhood feeling reveals the general feeling about the area. Residents are concerned with community, but not necessarily their neighbors.

“It's a diverse area with the Cape Verdeans and Brown students,” Mount Hope resident Gail Davis, 33, says. “It's not like South Providence where I used to live where it is mostly black.”

“Everyone keeps pretty much to themselves, unless there is an issue to bring us together,” Dennis O'Brien, 35 says. “Other than that, everyone is pretty independent.”

“Issue” runs the gamut from lobbying to keep their parks in order, to forging preservation activity, to screening new neighbors.

Sandra Elfrank, a former Minneapolis resident, has lived in the Hope district for eight years. She describes her neighborhood as blue collar -Irish that have lived there all



photo by Phil Hult

**A Mount Hope family returns from Saturday Jewish services.**

See TOUR on page 9





photo by P

**Fox Point (left) shows that modern conveniences aren't everything. But those in the Blackstone District (above) might disagree.**

# The Transformation of College Hill

# GENTRIFICATION

by Kermit Pattison

College Hill stands at a crossroads. It is a pressure point where Brown University rubs against the hill's old neighborhoods and its historical district. Every year the pressures mount—the University's growth, gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods and historic preservation—and crunch ever more tightly together.

Increasingly, the University has emerged as the victor in the struggle. In the last 30 years, College Hill transformed itself from a set of sleepy, cohesive communities into an upscale, gentrified professional district surrounding Brown University.

When Mary Young paid \$1500 for her house on the north end of Benefit Street in 1944, she knew everyone in the poor, closely-knit community of Afro-Americans, Jews and Irish.

"It used to be warm. Everybody knew everybody," she says as she sits inside the old beauty parlor she used to run on the first floor of her house. Forty-five years and millions of dollars later, her neighborhood is a gentrified street of mercedes and million dollar historic houses filled with professionals and students. It is also less of a community.

Now she does not even know who most of her neighbors are. "It's a dog-eat-dog world. They don't give a darn. You could lay in the street and they wouldn't look at you," she says. "Once upon a time these were all poor neighborhoods. Now they're all upgraded."

Along the walls, old bottles of hair oil, combs, worn barber's chairs and photographs from the past echo the days before the preservationist "muck de mucks" came, before they made Benefit Street a historic district, and before the rich folks moved into the restored houses. The mementoes are precious, since only Youngs and her niece remain to remember the old days.

"I think the only ones left are Virginia and myself," she says. "Everyone else is really passed on." Young and her niece Virginia Williams belong to a shrinking few who recall Benefit Street before its restoration began the gentrification of College Hill, before Providence ever dreamt of being a "hot city."

The transformation of College Hill began with the historic renewal project of the 1960's. Since the turn of the century, the shut down of Providence's textile industries made it an economically depressed city. But it also prevented further development. Unlike other older cities, Providence's historic houses had not been destroyed to make room for further growth. In the late 1950's, when the Providence Preservation Society formed in response the destruction of a block of historic houses to make way for Keeney quad, residents had begun to realize the historic value of their decaying buildings.

As the Society began to study plan for historic preservation of the Hill, they learned that Benefit Street area had been slated for an urban renewal program by the federal govern-

ment. After Congress passed the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the government began to promote historic preservation means restoring decaying inner cities. Instead of being demolished to make way for new developments, the Benefit Street area was designated as one of the first national historic districts in America.

"Demolition was the method the federal government was using to try to bring life back into these older cities in the 1950's and early 1960's," says Antionette Downing, one of the founders of the Preservation Society. She recalls how the creation of the historic district began to attract investors.

"People in the area responded very positively and began to buy the houses along Benefit Street because they were in very bad condition," says Downing. Wealthy factors snatched up hundreds of properties along Benefit Street and adjacent streets and began to restore them.

Slum properties suddenly became promising investments. Land speculators began to buy tenements and restore them. Property values and rents increased. Benefit Street, which had been primarily a low income black and Jewish neighborhood, became more valuable. People began to get pride in the neighborhood.

"The people were told that if they moved out, they would have the first chance to move back," says Paul McNamara, former president of the Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Corporation. "But of course the rents were much more expensive than they were used to paying."

"Everybody who was poor got booted. The black population declined by two thirds," says College Hill district representative Ray Rickman. Many people also sold out at a loss. Poorer residents who owned their houses took the money and moved to other parts of the city.

"They were all scattered, I guess," says Youngs, "from a poor neighborhood to an affluent neighborhood. Of a sudden it became that it was historical." The gentrification of the Hill had begun.

## GENTRIFICATION

Since College Hill was declared a historic district decades ago, the neighborhood has undergone a steady process of change and gentrification. This transformation has been most pronounced in the last 20 years. When Rickman first came to College Hill in 1979, property values were about a third of what they are today. The Hill was still run down. Elegant mansions stood next to decaying tenement houses.

"When I first came here, one-fourth of College Hill was called slum. Every street you could name had one slum property," he says. "Now half the slum properties have gone condo and half are high rent."

"The neighborhood was a wonderful mix of very poor families and middle and lower income families," says Russ Gower, a 1952 Brown graduate who has lived on East Side for thirty years. "It had a number of be-



the early 1980's, Providence's newly restored historic houses became promising investments. The high cost of a Boston prompted many young professionals to look at Providence as a cheaper, more liveable environment. For the first time in 70 years, people began to move to back. Suddenly Providence was a hot city.

Of a sudden, here was a quaint community. Very quaint, says Rickman. "You had about 10 or 11 boom here."

With the influx of new money onto the hill, property values went up. Between 1976 and 1988, the average price for a family house rose from \$41,000 to \$298,000, while the price for a multi-family home rose from \$32,000 up to \$100,000. Rents also increased dramatically. Ten years ago, a two-bedroom apartment rented for about \$325 a month. Today the same apartment costs about \$925.

College Hill is a much more affluent community than it was ten years ago. The average household income on the hill is about \$36,000, including students living in the neighborhoods. High property values require household income of over \$46,000 to purchase a home. After a tax revaluation in 1988, most residents' property taxes increased by 100 percent. The high cost of living has turned College Hill into a white collar community.

Younger communities of students and young professionals have pushed aside the old family-oriented communities. The boom in the Providence housing market pumped the professional population on the hill up by 60 percent in the 1960's. The number of students living in the neighborhoods jumped up by 35 percent. Fewer families now live on College Hill, and there has been a decrease in the number of elderly.

"I don't think it has the mix it had," says Gower. "There are much more wealthier people." He notes that a family buying a house on College Hill would have to pay between \$125,000 and \$1 million.

Gentrification has made many of the old residents a thing of the past. Although many tenants and people on fixed incomes were forced out of the neighborhood over the last few decades, many poorer residents enjoyed a profit from the higher property values.

"People got hurt, but not in the last ten years," says Rickman. "People who owned their houses got to stay if they wanted to stay." He also notes that the increase in tax revenues helped improve the quality of public services, such as schools.

Opposed to people getting put out on the street, but not willing to have a tax base. It has to have middle and upper class residents paying the taxes," Rickman says. "Doing well to do people is not all bad."

The historic restoration of the early 1960's dramatically altered the face of College Hill. No longer a cohesive, mixed race and multi-ethnic community, the neighborhood has become more of a transient, upscale community of students and young professionals. It also has lost the solidarity of a tight-knit community. But even as College Hill becomes more gentrified, it faces another challenge—the growth of Brown University.

#### THE UNIVERSITY

More than any other force, the growth of Brown has reshaped College Hill. Since the 1950's the University's desire

to expand has rubbed against the surrounding communities and the historical architecture of the Hill. By penetrating into the community, students have disrupted the coherence and tranquility of old neighborhoods. Like the Brown buildings that tower above the hill, the expansion of Brown has cast a shadow on the surrounding communities and has permanently changed the character of the Hill.

#### BROWN'S EXPANSION

Since the University destroyed an entire block of historic houses to make room for the Keeney Quadrangle in the 1950's, neighbors have watched Brown grow with apprehension. Many complain about the University's disrespect for the historic integrity of the hill and the lack of coherence in its architecture.

"It was Brown University's reckless, thoughtless destruction of some of the most beautiful houses that you ever saw that led to the establishment of the historic district," says Gower.

"They've been catching land as they could to build as they could," says Antionette Downing of the Providence Preservation Society. "We've been going up and down Waterman and Angell Streets in different scales and putting in buildings as we could and they don't have a coherence in their own design and very often disrupt the growth pattern from the visual point of view."

*"Since the University destroyed an entire block of historic houses to make room for the Keeney Quadrangle in the 1950's, neighbors have watched Brown grow with apprehension."*

"If Brown wanted to build a tent, people in the community would say no," explains Rickman. "It's because they built the ugly science building."

Faced with a need to expand in a limited urban environment, the University has often been forced to compromise historic preservation and architectural coherence. It has also sought to construct new classroom and dormitory buildings to combat space shortages, a prospect that many neighbors view with disdain. Still, many university officials say what is good for Brown is good for the community.

"We have a very tight campus," says William Jordy, an art history professor who chairs the campus planning committee. "I can't think of any university that's in a worse situation. The University will simply have to go up in the air."

"The long view is that you simply have to build some quality building for Brown students, faculty and staff," says Associate Dean of Residential Life Arthur Gallagher. "We need to be able to attract students into the 21st century. One of the reasons Providence is so attractive is that Brown is

here. Both concerns have to be balanced. As a matter of policy, Brown consults with neighbors, historic preservation organizations, and the Providence zoning board before starting construction projects. When the University built a parking garage on Power Street last year, neighbors' demands forced the University to make adjustments that increased costs by about \$500,000.

"Our policy is to let people know what we're thinking," says Ancellin Lynch, vice president for university relations at Brown. "There is an opportunity for our plans to reflect their input."

Despite Brown's desire to cooperate with its neighbors and to design its buildings to match the historic architecture, many residents feel the character of the Hill already has been lost. They point to the towering science library, the monolithic medical buildings and the heterogeneous Athletic Center complex as examples of Brown's insensitivity in maintaining the historic character of College Hill.

"I think the integrity is already lost," says Downing. "We have fringes left. When you look at the generally heterogeneous character of the educational buildings that we have developed, it's lost the very fine growth pattern that followed over the hill."

Brown's effect on the skyline of College Hill has been startling. Thirty years ago, College Hill was a community of small wooden houses surrounding a few colonial university

buildings on the college green. Now Brown's buildings tower over the rooftops of the old wooden houses. Although the university has no further construction plans after it builds the new Thayer Street dormitory, administrators say they cannot rule out additional projects in the near future.

University planners face an impossible dilemma. They must allow for growth to insure the quality of Brown academic resources while trying to preserve historic architecture. In the limited space on College Hill, something has to give.

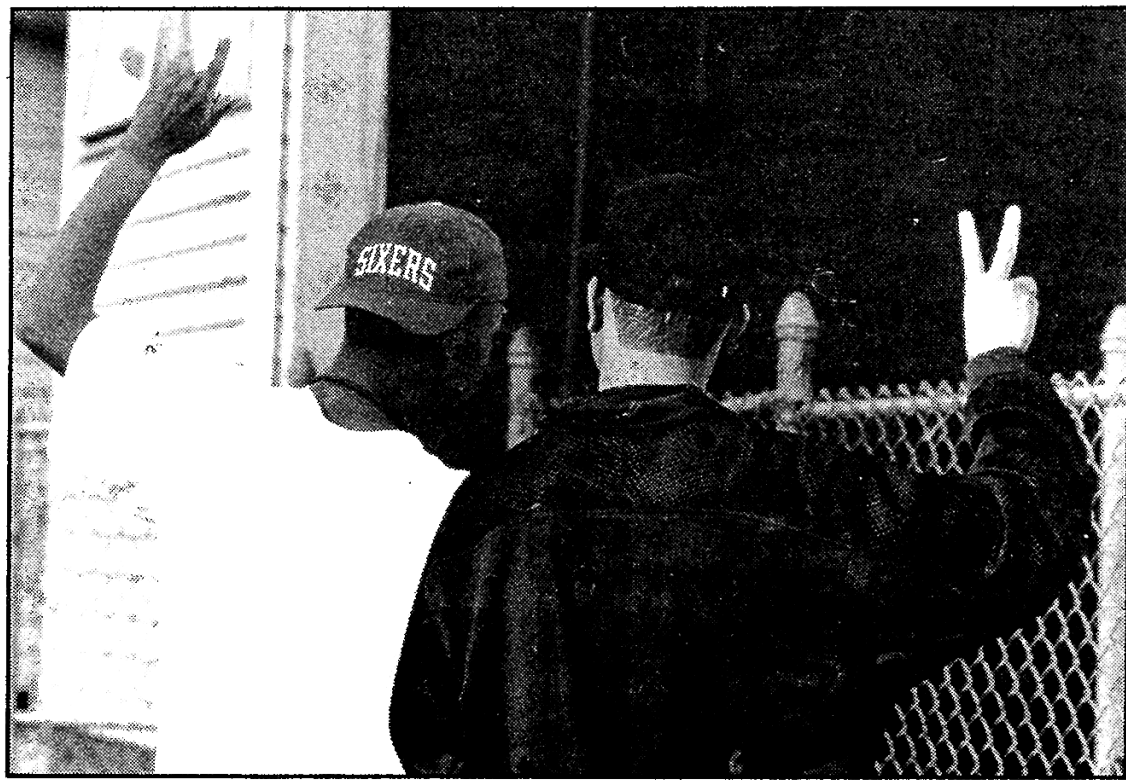
#### THE INVASION OF STUDENTS

Edward and Patricia Zesk thought they had found a wonderful family neighborhood. A young professional couple with two children, they moved to Providence eight years ago and bought a house on Barnes Street two years later. When they first moved into

See CHANGE on page 8



**The Fox Point elders recall a cohesive neighborhood. Today's youth might encounter a different experience.**





# CHANGE

continued from page 7

their new house, much of the neighborhood was still run down. Students rented two houses on their block. Today, absentee landlords have bought up six houses on their block and rented them to students.

Noise, litter and traffic sometimes makes the neighborhood intolerable for the Zesks. One student house threw parties every Thursday and Saturday, keeping the Zesks awake with music blaring late into the night and people yelling in the street. Drunken students would litter the street with plastic cups and would urinate or vomit on neighbors' lawns.

"We had 500 people in the street," says Patricia Zesk. "This street was so bad that during party weekends out-of-town people would be told to have their bus driver go to Barnes Street. We had busloads of people."

Like many residents, the Zesks fear the invasion of college students will destroy the tranquility of their neighborhood. Today, some 1400 Brown students live off campus. With the student age group comprising about 70 percent of the population on the hill, their impact has indelibly altered the atmosphere of the neighborhoods. The effects of students—the noise, the garbage, the traffic—have forced neighbors to defend the quality of life in their communities and demand that Brown exert more control over its students.

"We're conscious of them when they're making noise, when they're eating in the street, when they're dumping their junk out, when they're packing themselves into houses," explains another Barnes Street resident. "Nobody is taking responsibility for their actions."

Alarmed by the disruption of their neighborhood, the Zesks helped form the College Hill Neighborhood Association in 1983. The organization, which was founded to preserve the residential quality of life on the hill, now boasts about 350 families. Frustrated by Brown's helplessness in controlling its students, the association targeted absentee landlords as the cause of the neighborhoods' problems.

As real estate prices rose steadily in the last ten years, land speculators have bought up houses, remodeled

them into apartments for students. Often, landlords have violated city housing ordinances prohibiting more than three unrelated people from living together. Recently, the Neighborhood Association's demands for enforcement of housing codes resulted in the indictment of landlord Demetri Foussekis for renting illegal apartment units, as well as the subpoena of thirteen Brown students as witnesses.

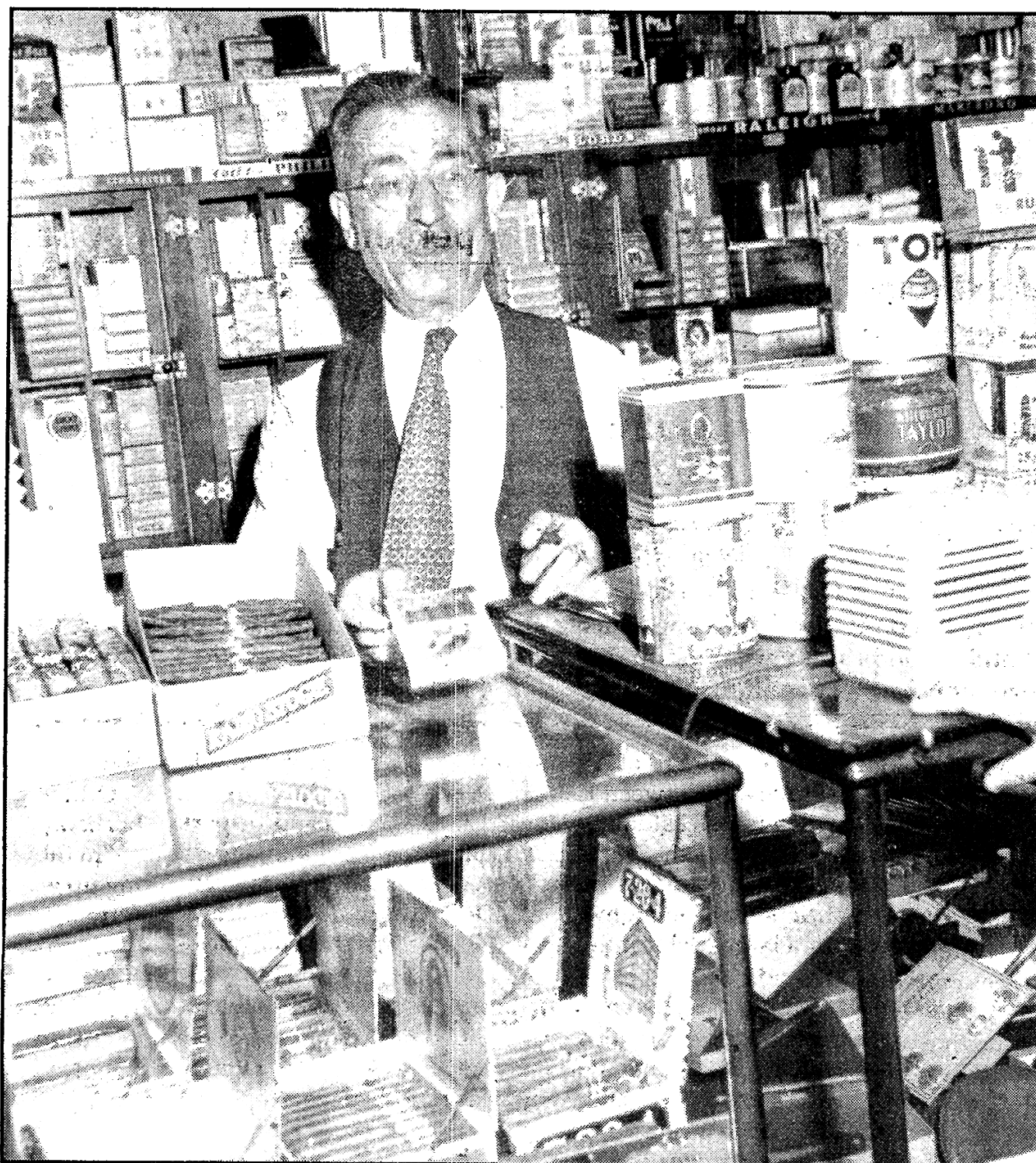


photo courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society

A local tobacco shop in the 1950's.

"The problem is that students as well as the community are being victimized by a situation in which people who are out to make a lot of money real fast are violating city ordinances and codes," says Edward Zesk. "We need to protect the community from these guys who are taking advantage of the real estate situation. They don't care about the community and they certainly don't care about Brown students."

Brown administrators agree the number of students living off campus strains neighboring communities. They worry about the erosion of a residential community on the Brown campus. Since the early 1980's, the university has tried to cut the number of students living off campus and exert more control over their behavior.

"We feel that this is a residential university," says university spokesman Robert Reichley. "We feel that we have too many students off campus."

"We're concerned about the impact of students living in the off campus community," says Ancellin Lynch. "Brown has some responsibility for their behavior. We're talking about making it clearer that you're taking on more responsibility because your living next to someone who has to go to work the next morning or who has kids."

So far, Brown's effort to control off campus students has been limited to minor disciplinary actions in response to neighbors' complaints, such as written warnings. Many neighbors have been frustrated by the university's inability to control its students.

"The administration talks a good battle in terms of trying to cope with these problems," says Edward Zesk. "I don't think they're as effective as they like you to believe."

Brown's impact on the surrounding communities probably will continue to grow in the years ahead. In order to significantly reduce the numbers of students on campus, the university will have to build more student housing.

prospect that many neighbors and preservationists view with disdain. Regardless of whether Brown succeeds in bringing its students back into dormitories, the volume of students living off campus and the debates over new construction probably will affect neighbors for years to come.

*Residents point to the towering science library, the monolithic medical buildings and the heterogeneous Athletic Center complex as examples of Brown's insensitivity in maintaining the historic character of College Hill.*

## BLUES

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accept their claims that "everyone was better off than before." They stood up against the efforts of those who wished to divide the community and walk off with the profits of internecine rivalries.

They, with others, banded in 1979 to form the Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Corporation (FPNHC), an outgrowth of the housing committee of the Fox Point Community Organization. FPNHC's purpose is to combat the further displacement and gentrification of the Fox Point community and to facilitate the development of ample, adequate and affordable housing for the low-income working class and elderly Fox Point residents.

Membership in the organization is open to all Fox Point residents and, with Pereira

and Britto, those of Portuguese, Azorean and Irish as well as Cape Verdean extraction are associated with FPNHC because they are feeling the pressures leading to involuntary displacement brought on by rising taxes and rents.

The FPNHC is in the process of developing a community revolving loan fund and a bilingual community education project in order to keep existing available housing within community control. Developing limited equity, scattered site housing cooperatives and providing on-going education for successful community operation is just one means of controlling a neighborhood such as Fox Point.

The FPNHC wants to see the music of "Gentrification Blues" replaced by the rhythm of the morna, the fado, the jig or the reel, and any other type of melody which signifies the celebration of a community's coming together stronger and more unified than before. The time is now to halt the "Gentrification Blues" before the committed residents of Fox Point have nothing left to lose.



# TOUR

continued from page 5

their lives. Appearance is paramount; a gardener works from house to house. To maintain this demographic make-up, they use xenophobic tactics.

"We rent from a Russian woman," Elfrank says. "But I remember that the people in the neighborhood spoke to the landlords and said they didn't want blacks living there. That's the way they have seen it for fifty years. They are very protective."

Residents are not afraid to assert themselves to clean up the streets. Van Nostrand says some Hope high students cut class and loiter across the street from his house and sell drugs. Unlike Fox Point residents who are afraid to call the police, Van Nostrand had no reservations.

"I came up to them with fire in my eyes; they aren't bad ass delinquents, they just need a place to do drugs. They're kids."

High property taxes also bother these denizens.

"The property taxes are terrible here," Joe Jackson, 35, a ten-year Mount Hope resident says. "But right now I pay five and change which for these days is fabulous."

Unlike some Fox Point residents who reject development, Mount Hope residents embrace it. Over ten homes in the area are undergoing renewal.

Their attitudes might reflect the transient state of the neighborhood. Some people see Mount Hope as a temporary state. Ten years from now Van Nostrand sees himself in Smithfield or East Providence.

"Ten years from now people like me will be moving out and turn over to younger people," O'Brien says. "That's our community, working class, young-marrieds. As such, there is a constant turnover of people."

This is one area where residents don't seem to blame themselves for property woes.

"The resentment some people feel for Brown is unfounded. You could put Brown anywhere in the city and it wouldn't change things. Rents have gone up everywhere," Van Nostrand says.

Davis agrees.

"I don't think Brown is the reason why rents are so high, because you can find low rents too. Anyplace around here will be 300 to 400 dollars. Most people respect Brown and are influential. I think it's great that we have a college in the area."

## Blackstone Blvd.

In New York it would be called the Upper East Side. In Los Angeles, Bel Air. Boston-Brookline. Phoenix-Scottsdale. The Blackstone area is probably the wealthiest part of Providence, flanked by Brown to the southwest and the Mount Hope and Hope districts to the west. Blackstone residents of note include an ex-governor and the owner of Ann and Hope. "It has a rich reputation, composed of old Brown and new. It has a highly affluent appearance," Brian Lynch, 27, says.

Some may quarrel with Lynch's diagnosis as a generalization but it is difficult to reject. Passers by need only witness the manicured lawns, trees shaped like parasols, non integrated garages, statues of lions, green and red awnings, the Italian flag and wide spaces

between homes along the neighborhood's great white way: Blackstone Boulevard. Along this 200 foot wide, 2.2 mile long strip, the district spotlights a menagerie of Georgian revival mansions with tuscan porticos, Frank Lloyd Wrightish prairie style homes and Queen Anne cottages with Japanese influences. It is virtually devoid of commercial property with the exception of the New England Academy of Torah, which used to be a hospital.

Modern appearances have past philanthropy to thank.

Augustine Colella, 60, has lived on the Boulevard for 15 years and remains content.

"I love the prettiness of it, the strictly residential feeling of peace. You're not exposed to any professional offices or malls or shopping areas directly," Colella says.

He says most of his neighbors are middle-aged and elderly, and "heterogeneous," at least in terms of religion with a Jewish community center and several catholic and Protestant functions.

Unlike the Fox Point area where views toward Brown are mixed, most Blackstone residents share either an affiliation and/or a respect for Brown's presence. One resident, who asked not to be identified, says that Blackstone becomes more racially diverse as a result of different Brown faculty members and graduate students.

A former Fall River resident, Joan Smith, 35, moved to the area because it was "more culturally rich," offering theater, restaurants, lectures, and church activities that she could not find in Fall River.

"Because most people here are related to the university, we have a lot of artistic people living here. Very open, very friendly," Smith says. When Smith moved in last year, several residents came by her house to welcome her with crafts,

she says.

Others felt there was a screening process in the neighborhood.

"In this area people are very protective. They start opening up when they know you'll be here for a while," Sandra Elfrank, a former Blackstone resident says.

Smith admits that "a lot of old money" lives here and fifteen years down the road, the demographics will stay the same.

"In fifteen years they will have wiped out all the poor people near Fox Point."

Dennis O'Brien, a Hope district resident, says there is a marked difference between the residents of his district who will move in a decade with their neighboring district.

"Blackstone residents will not move out. We're talking about homes that are 200 thousand dollars and up and they will be maintained in the hands that have money."

Economics is a major issue. Although most people know the others on their block, efforts to forge neighborhood interaction is rare unless an economic or political issue is at stake.

"To describe these people as stuck-up is a bad term, but if it's financially related, they will get together," Lynch says.

Colella disagrees. "It's probably just more conspicuous when problems arise, but the networks are there."

Another resident who asked not to be identified said canvassing and fundraising parties often promotes community interaction. He is also concerned about what he calls the "development/greed" aspect of commercial development in the area such as the waterfront, where some corporations are proposing development of 550 housing units and utilities development.

"Like the new bay power plant is not a meaningful way to do power generation. One or two should be put in on a statewide basis. All these things put a huge burden on the environment and destroys our rural character."

But generally speaking, complaints are few.

"There's nothing about the place that angers me except maybe the police radar," Lynch says.

## Condition of Residential Properties

Neighborhood	# of bldgs	*percent rated poor or fair
Blackstone	2,078	3.0
College Hill	718	8.2
Fox Point	888	15.4
Hope	1,020	6.7
Mount Hope	939	15.7

\*According to a 1987 revaluation conducted by SABRE Systems. "Fair" defined as "dwellings constructed with economy quality materials, and fair workmanship. Minimal built-in features, Minimum code."

"Poor" defined as "dwellings constructed with a very cheap grade of materials, usually culls and seconds and very poor quality workmanship. Minimal code."

Information courtesy of the Taubman Center of Public Policy.

In 1933 the Board of Aldermen abandoned the former public highway between Pawtucket and the Wayland district which is Blackstone Boulevard today. An island of park area divides the boulevard which residents and Brown students nowadays use to jog or stroll. Because the construction of the highway attracted Irish immigrant workers, a large Irish contingency still exists towards the northern end.

In the early twentieth century, Swan Point Cemetery, east of Blackstone, also donated two parcels of land to the city - an extension of Lorimer Avenue to Blackstone Boulevard and six acres at the triangle section where Hope and Blackstone meet.

Since the area is composed of professionals and retired professionals, the district's blocks are quiet during the day with the exception of kids coming home from school. Unlike the Mount Hope area where refurbishing and renovation is no oddity, nearly every home here is preserved as if frozen under glass.

Over the weekend, many residents immerse themselves in the scenic beauty of the Blackstone park thoroughfare. As evidenced by their meticulously kept homes, residents are proud of their area.



What being neighbors is all about.



# The Gentrification Blues

*Somebody said, "where will we go?"  
There aren't any places left around  
here any more*

*I got the gentrification blues  
Guess we have to fight back  
Cause we have nothing to lose.*

-From the "Gentrification Blues"  
by Judith Levine and Laura Liben

by Lawrence G. Novick

1981

The following was published in the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* on October 19, 1981

**T**hey weren't singing that tune along Benefit and South Main Streets in the Fox Point section of Providence during the 1940's and 50's. The music heard coming from the tenements, barbershops, and grocery stores in the area tended to be the sensuous rhythms of the *morna* and *coladeira* from the islands of Cape Verde, an archipelago located 300 miles off the coast of Senegal in West Africa. Thousands of Cape Verdean immigrants, who landed at the docks at India Point after an arduous sea journey, lived in Fox Point during that era.

The Cape Verdean immigrants and their families stayed in Fox Point and prospered as a racial and ethnic minority working class. They dedicated their energies to the development and growth of such institutions as the International Longshoreman's Association Local 1329 and the original Fox Point Boys Club located on the north side of Power Street, east of South Main.

But other people had ideas for the future of South Main Street and Benefit Street and the many adjacent cross streets within Fox Point on which were located the residences of Cape Verdean families. Few, if any, of these ideas considered the future of the people who made up a solid close-knit community based on more than five centuries of common heritage.

During the 1950's and the early '80's, other people's ideas for the future of Fox Point included improving traffic flow, removing "urban blight" and restoring historic architectural facades to their original beauty and significance.

Nothing was wrong with these ideas—mind you, nobody really likes traffic jams, a deteriorating neighborhood and destruction of historic landmarks.

What was wrong was that somebody forgot about the people who stood in the way of the future—the Cape Verdeans and others whose only misfortune was to live in the path of "progress."

As houses and business establishments were torn down for highways and "urban renewal," as land values soared and entrepreneurs and real estate exploiters took advantage of the "preservation" boom to reap unconscionable profits at the expense of long-time Fox Point residents, nobody bothered to look for the people who were displaced from the homes behind the architectural facades, or whose homes were destroyed to improve a traffic pattern or to build a highway. In the flash of a decade, a community was gone.

It took until the mid '70's for the residents of Fox Point to realize what had happened and what was still happening and what would continue to happen unless something was done to halt it.

People like Manuel Pereira, a retired Providence fireman, and John Britto, youth director at the Fox Point Boys Club, two Fox Point natives, sons of Cape Verdean immigrants, were tired of being called a minority of malcontents when fighting against the encroachment on their community by a socio-economic system which was alien to their way of life.

They disputed the statements of the gentrifiers who denied any knowledge of involuntary displacement. They refused to

See BLUES on page 8

1989

**D**eja vu. Eight years ago, almost to the date. Same typewriter... same topic... catchword of the early '80's although it had been going on for years, the multi-syllabic moniker for a very simple event... move out the poor and move in the not so poor... sometimes it happens in the name of urban renewal or neighborhood restoration and beautification or improved traffic access but always the same bottom line.. move out the poor and move in the not so poor... gentrification.

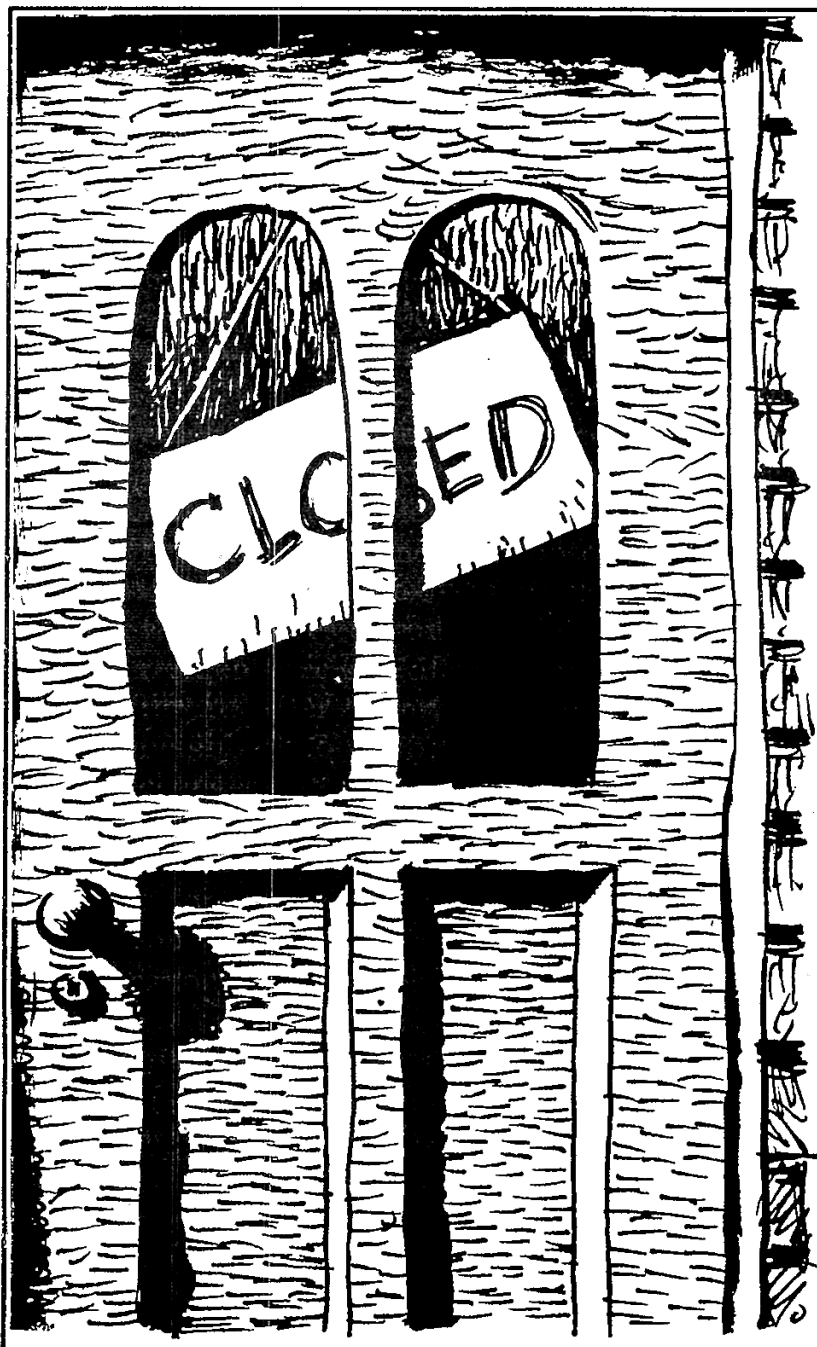
Eight years ago, I was a newcomer to Fox Point, a square mile ethnic enclave at the southern tip of the East Side, bounded on three sides by water and on the fourth by College Hill. At that time, the "G" word had been happening in the neighborhood for a couple of decades. The South Main Street area, a gathering place for Cape Verdean immigrants since the days when sailing ships tied up along the adjacent Providence River, was "renewed" into a strip of condominiums and chic shops. The original Fox Point Boys Club on Planet Street was no more. The area south of George M. Cohan Boulevard was demolished to make way for Interstate Route 195. Housing developers, lured by tax incentives for historic rehabilitation, effectively changed the socio-economic demography and the families who came from Cape Verde, the Azores, continental Portugal and Island of Madeira to find their golden dream in America (America meaning Fox Point, where family members and friends had come before), slowly but surely found the dream was in Fox Point anymore but in East Providence, Pawtucket, or the Washington Park, South Providence, and West End neighborhoods of Providence.

Brown University did its small but important part by refusing to deal with the embryo Fox Point Community Organization and its affiliate, the Fox Point Neighborhood Corporation, concerning excess property they owned in the neighborhood.

Now, eight years later, where is the neighborhood? Lisbon Dry Goods (closed), Faria's Sweet Bread (closed), Dave's Grill (closed), Cornell's Pharmacy (closed), Custy's Barbershop (closed), Fox Point Bakery (closed) plus all the families who have moved away to who knows where. The Fox Point Community Organization is defunct. The Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Corporation, after rehabilitating 26 units of family housing and making them available for neighborhood low-income residents, dwindled away. The community activists, for the most part, are either dead or gone. Brown doesn't own too much, if any, property in Fox Point and nobody really cares if they do or not. Students taking residence in Fox Point don't affect low income families because low income families can't afford the rents anymore.

Sure, the neighborhood has changed just like many others throughout the country. Blame... where the blame... community apathy, real estate pressure, university encroachment, the yuppie invasion... etc. The bottom line is, nobody is singing the "Gentrification Blues" in Fox Point anymore. The people who sang it in the '70s and the early '80s aren't around and the people who are around now just don't know the words...

Lawrence G. Novick was the director of the now defunct Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Corporation.





**Students and  
residents need to  
unite against  
greedy landlords  
who threaten**

# The Future of College Hill

by Ed Zesk

**R**ecently, there has been a great deal of publicity surrounding the City of Providence's efforts to enforce municipal building codes and zoning ordinances. Some members of the Brown University community have expressed concern that those efforts are targeted at Brown students and reflect an anti-student mentality among residents in the College Hill Neighborhood.

In fact, the focus of the community and municipal government actions is on unscrupulous landlords who are victimizing college students from Brown and RISD, as well as the full-time residents of College Hill. It is the actions of those landlords in recent years that is threatening the quality of life in our neighborhood.

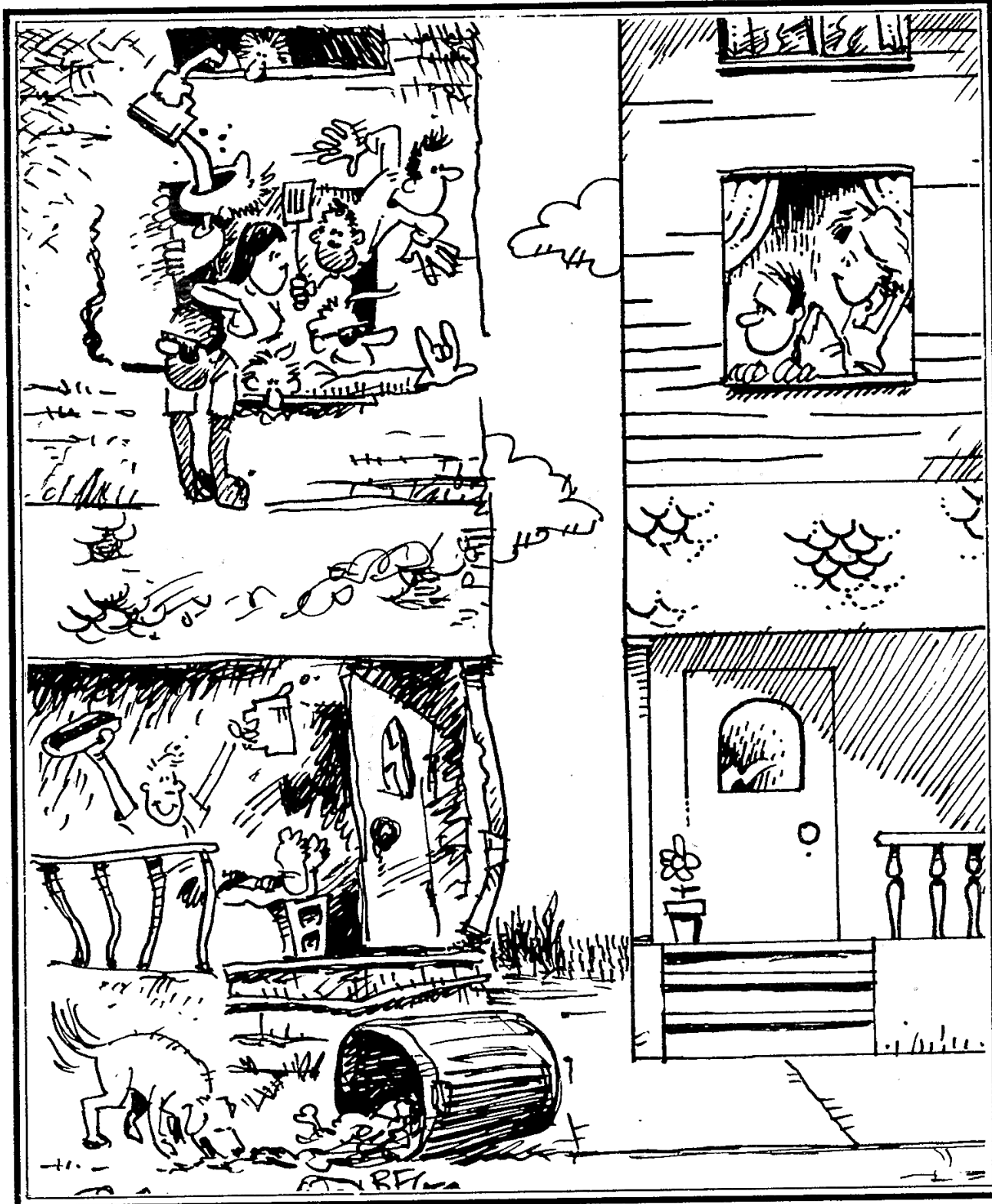
Those of us who own homes on College Hill value highly the advantages of living in a university atmosphere. Brown and RISD contribute significantly to the quality of life on the East Side. Having college students and faculty as neighbors and friends is one of the factors that makes living in our community so attractive.

While problems have been created in the past by Brown and RISD students who have abused the privilege of living off campus by ignoring the rights of their neighbors, including their fellow students, those students who are too immature and inconsiderate to be good neighbors have been a small minority. Bad neighbors are bad neighbors regardless of whether they are students, families with children or any other residents of a community. That is not the issue here.

The issue is that real estate profiteers who have made enormous profits in the past on the purchase and sale of College Hill properties due to the dramatic increases in real estate values in recent years no longer can do so legally. Property values on the East Side have stabilized, and in some cases dropped, over the past couple of years. The only way these speculators can make a fast buck these days is by cramming houses on College Hill full of students and charging them exorbitant rents. To do this, some of these landlords have created illegal units and rented existing units to more unrelated individuals than city ordinances allow, in blatant disregard of the law.

In some parts of College Hill, the increased density of the population has resulted in severe parking, trash, and other related problems. Instead of students being able to live off campus in a residential setting, what amounts to off campus dorms have been created with up to 20 students living in a single or two-family dwelling.

The proliferation of these off-campus dorms has been alarming. On my street alone, the number of these prop-



erties has tripled in the last two years. Many of these houses have been allowed to deteriorate. The landlords often keep their properties long enough to make a quick profit and then unload them, often to another absentee landlord, when they feel the heat from their renters, neighbors, and city building inspectors.

Home owners have become increasingly concerned about the impact of this trend on the quality of life on College Hill. Clearly, over-crowded dorms on campus is an issue the city's universities and colleges must address. The solution to the problem is not to create similar over-crowded situations in residential neighborhoods surrounding those campuses.

We cannot allow the efforts over many years of those who love College Hill that have resulted in the unique community in which we live to be undone by the greed of a few unscrupulous real estate speculators. Building codes and zoning ordinances are the only protection neighborhoods have against over development. They must be enforced.

The college and residential communities must work together with city government to ensure that the beauty, charm, and livability of College Hill is preserved. Students must be afforded not only acceptable living conditions on campus but also the opportunity to live in residential neighborhoods free of the disadvantages of dormitory life if they chose to do so. We are allies, not adversaries in this effort.

I invite Brown students living off-campus in the neighborhood bordered by Hope, Olney, Prospect, and Waterman Streets to become involved in the College Hill Neighborhood Association. Membership is \$5 per year. We especially would like to get students involved in our crime watch efforts. Interested individuals should call me at 274-1261 between 6 and 9p.m.

*Ed Zesk is president of the College Hill  
Neighborhood Association*



# COMMITMENT.

Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.

It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions. And the actions which speak louder than the words.

It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year.

Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things.

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