

SO, WHO WAS CHARLES BEVINS?



Two Bevins houses - Harbor Entrance (with domed tower) and the Lovering House

by

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JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jamestown, Rhode Island

BUILDINGS DESIGNED BY CHARLES BEVINS

Date	Address	Known as	Original Owner
1883	at Ft. Wetherill (destroyed)	Braecleugh	Charles Wharton
1883	at Ft. Wetherill (destroyed)	Stornaway	Benjamin Shoemaker
1883	17 Union St.		James Wilcox
1883	44 Walcott Ave.		Charles Wharton
1884	240 Highland Dr.	Horsehead	Joseph Wharton
1884	7 Newport St.		James B. Sword
1886	15 Dumpling Dr.	The Barnacle	Adm. T.O. Selfridge, Jr
1886	15 Priscilla Rd.		Dr. Lawrence Turnbull
1886	141 Conanicus Ave.	Beach Haven	Dr. David Kindleberger
1886	9 Bryer Ave.	Longwood	Adm. C.H. Wells
1886	22 Newport St.	Eglesfeld	Dr. R. Eglesfeld Griffith
1887	89 Walcott Ave.	Ledgehurst	Daniel Lyman Hazard
1887	103 Church St., Newport		Rebecca Hunter
1888	52 Newport St.	The Boulders	Prof. Charles Larned
1888	27 Newport St.	Channel Bells	Gen. Robert Patterson
1888	at Ft. Wetherill (destroyed)	The Steamboat	Annette Tilden
1888	32 Walcott Ave.(changed)	Belvedere	Adm. David Porter
1888	305 Beavertail Rd.(destroyed)	Wyndesweepe	Henry Audley Clarke
1888	11 Friendship St.	Meadowside	Adm. L.C. Logan
1889	345 Highland Dr.(destroyed)	Bramble Side	Adm. Charles Davis
1889	144 Walcott Ave.		Tunstall Smith
1889	25 Conanicus Ave.(destroyed)	Thorndike Hotel	P.H. Horgan
1889	10 Lincoln St.	Shingleside	Mrs. F.E. Homans
1889	95 Walcott Ave.	Anokat	John P. Green
1889	67 Dumpling Dr.(changed)	Pemberton Cottage	Mrs. J.S. Lovering
1890	2 Walcott Ave.	Driftwood	Mrs. F.E. Homans
1890	133 Ft. Wetherill Rd.	Wawbeck	Maj. Harry Potter
1890	11 High St.		Maj. Clinton Sears
1890	24 Lincoln St.	The Honeysuckles	James Richardson
1891	25 Cranston Ave., Newport		James T. Wright
1892	64 Bay View Dr.(destroyed)	Buffum Cottage	Rev. S.H. Gurteen
1892	340 E. Shore Rd.	Fowler's Rocks	Theophilus Stork
1892	corner of Thames and Frank Sts., Newport (destroyed)	Horgan Block	P.H. Horgan
1892	185 Walcott Ave.	Green Chimneys	Adm. T.O. Selfridge, Jr
1892	60 Narragansett Ave.	St. Mark Church	St. Mark Parish
1893	Bull Point (destroyed)	Harbor Entrance	Isaac Clothier
1895	15 High St.		Stephen Cahoon
1895	49 Walcott Ave.	Le Cadeau	John Carton
1895	51 Walcott Ave.(destroyed)		Clemence B. Faris
1895	170 Walcott Ave.	Half Acre	Elizabeth Clark
1897	73 Conanicus Ave. (destroyed)	Harbor View Inn	Abbott Chandler
1899	121 Walcott Ave.		Charles W. Bailey
1899	129 Walcott Ave.		Charles W. Bailey
1899	11 Harbor St.(changed)	Moveable Chapel	St. Matthew's Parish

SO, WHO WAS CHARLES BEVINS?

by James C. Buttrick

The architecture of Jamestown that most defines the place is that of the original and picturesque Shingle Style of the late 19th century. One man is primarily responsible for the development of that style in Jamestown: Charles L. Bevins. Virtually unknown among architectural historians, Bevins was an Englishman whose practice centered on Jamestown. Forty island buildings are currently attributed to him, but the range of his work and the length of time that he lived in Jamestown suggest that many more houses may have come from his hand. Among his designs are many of the large summer houses in the Dumplings and on Walcott Avenue, as well as smaller houses in the village. His designs range in scale from the Thorndike Hotel to the Moveable Chapel. Although a number of his buildings are no longer standing, such as the first St. Mark Church and the three summer homes built on land taken for the creation of Fort Wetherill, his influence continues to define what is characteristic of Jamestown architecture.

How Did Bevins Get to Jamestown?

Charles Lovatt Bevins was born in Manchester, England, March 26, 1844, possibly the son of a cigar importer. Unfortunately, none of the standard British architectural sources even mention him. Where he studied and the circumstances of his early practice are as yet unknown. But in 1878, at the age of 34, he emigrated from Liverpool to Boston with his wife and two young children. Over the next three years he moved his family to three addresses in Boston and worked at four different offices downtown.

With whom or for whom he was working takes on importance since the late 1870's marked the emergence of the American Shingle Style, which Bevins was to master in his work in Jamestown. The Shingle Style developed as the confluence of two trends: first, a nostalgia for a simpler Colonial era and its buildings; and second, an admiration for the picturesque style known as Queen Anne, then popular in England. It is my belief, discussed below, that Bevins's English architectural background and his understandable lack of Colonial nostalgia led him to emphasize the Queen Anne in his own version of the Shingle Style.

In Boston, an intriguing influence could have been William Ralph Emerson, who designed the first fully-developed Shingle Style house¹. For a time both Emerson and Bevins had offices in Pemberton Square, Boston. However, no evidence exists of a connection between the two men. At one of the addresses where Bevins worked was also the well-regarded architectural firm of Cummings and Sears. It is reasonable to believe that he may have worked for them, but they were city architects and would not have provided much education in the developing Shingle Style. However, in 1881 he was in the office of Peabody and Stearns, one of the most prolific firms in the country, and one that had numerous commissions in the resorts of Newport, Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA., Lenox, MA., and Bar



Stornaway



Channel Bells

¹ Redwood (Bar Harbor, 1879) See Scully, Vincent Jr., *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style*, p. 84



**Meadowsweet Farm,
Bevins's Jamestown Home**

Harbor, ME. Peabody and Stearns was noted for being a good training ground for architects, and many of its employees went on to successful careers of their own. At the time that Bevins was at the firm, Peabody and Stearns had completed the first Breakers for Pierre Lorillard (which burned in 1892 after having been bought by Cornelius Vanderbilt) and was working on Vinland, also in Newport, for Catharine Lorillard Wolfe. The Breakers was notable for its high tower and steeply-gabled roof forms. In fact Peabody and Stearns was known for its towers and may have influenced Bevins, who also came to use towers extensively. The work of Peabody and Stearns featured complex, picturesque forms, artfully integrated with their sites, most famously at Kraggyde (1884), an icon of the Shingle Style at Manchester-by-the-Sea.



The Steamboat

Certainly the time that Charles Bevins spent with Peabody and Stearns was an invaluable education in current resort architecture, and it may have also introduced him to Newport through the firm's projects. In any case, Bevins and his family in the summer of 1882 rented Meadowsweet Farm (1843) at 191 Narragansett Ave., a simple, straightforward farmhouse on 22 acres. Although he had constantly moved during the few previous years, he ultimately purchased Meadowsweet Farm and owned it until his death in 1925.



Jamestown Houses

The houses of Charles Bevins are primarily in the Dumplings, on Walcott Avenue, and in the village south of Narragansett Ave. The size of the houses varies considerably, but many characteristics of Bevins's style are shared regardless of scale.



Lovering House

Remarkably, some of the earliest houses were among his largest commissions, notably Braecleugh (1883, destroyed for the construction of Fort Wetherill) built for Charles Wharton, and Horsehead (1884) built for his brother Joseph. No doubt Bevins's time with Peabody and Stearns, and possibly other Boston associations, helped secure these clients, but they are nonetheless remarkable first houses. They obviously found favor with their neighbors since Bevins built two other houses on what was to become Fort Wetherill: Stornaway (1883) for Benjamin Shoemaker and The Steamboat (1888) for Annette Tilden. In fact, Bevins built most of the houses surrounding Fort Wetherill, including four on Newport Street: Eglesfeld for Dr. R. Eglesfeld Griffith (22 Newport St., 1886), Channel Bells for Gen. Robert Patterson (27 Newport St., 1888), The Boulders for Prof. Charles Larned (52 Newport St., 1888), and a house for artist James B. Sword (7 Newport St.,² 1884), likened to an "East Indian bungalow." Just east and west, respectively, of Fort Wetherill were houses for Isaac Clothier, (Harbor Entrance, 1893), and Major Harry Potter (133 Fort Wetherill Rd., 1890). Harbor Entrance dominated Bull Point with its commanding tower until it was razed in 1967.



The Barnacle

² Attribution to Bevins is based on stylistic evidence. The original structure has been completely obscured by subsequent rebuilding.

Nearby were houses perched high on their own “dumplings”: Mrs. J.S. Lovering’s house (1889), known more recently as the Pemberton Cottage and now greatly changed, and The Barnacle (1886), built for Adm. T.O. Selfridge, Jr. While these two houses had very similar sites, they were markedly different. The Lovering house originally had an enveloping gambrel roof that swept down protectively over its surrounding porches, whereas The Barnacle thrusts up from its rocky base in a generally pyramidal massing topped by picturesque chimney pots. This illustrates one of the notable aspects of Bevins’s designs, namely that they all differed substantially from one another despite the fact that they were almost all shingle-clad, and built within a relatively short time of each other, often on similar sites. The integration of the houses with the superb Dumpling sites was done with great sensitivity, rock and house looking like they were designed for each other.



C.W. Bailey House

There was another grouping of Bevins houses less dramatically situated, but still with water views, on Walcott Avenue. These also demonstrated Bevins’s originality, ranging from the oriental dragon motifs originally atop Green Chimneys (185 Walcott Ave.³, 1892) to the confident neo-Georgian C.W.Bailey (of the jeweler Bailey, Banks and Biddle) house (121 Walcott Ave., 1899), made idiosyncratically asymmetrical by the addition of a projecting service wing. Eliminating the usual balance of a Georgian design demonstrates Bevins’s distaste for symmetry. Another Walcott Avenue house, the Faris cottage (1895, destroyed) has a similarly off-center projection within its gable end. Lack of symmetry was a common feature of the Shingle Style, but Bevins adopted it more aggressively than other architects. His only two symmetrical designs were his churches: the first St. Mark Church and the Moveable Chapel. Other Walcott Avenue houses by Bevins are Driftwood (2 Walcott Ave., 1890), Belvedere (32 Walcott Ave., 1888), a Charles Wharton cottage (44 Walcott Ave., 1883), the John Carton house (49 Walcott Ave., 1895), Ledgehurst (89 Walcott Ave., 1887), Anoatok (95 Walcott Ave., 1889), the former carriage house of the Bailey house (129 Walcott Ave., 1899), the Tunstall Smith house (144 Walcott Ave., 1889), and the Elizabeth Clark house (170 Walcott Ave., 1895). Nearby are the Major Clinton Sears house (11 High St., 1890) and the Stephen Cahoon house (15 High St., 1895).



Faris Cottage



11 Friendship St.



9 Bryer Ave.

A group of smaller houses was built in the part of the village called Ferry Meadow: at 17 Union St. (1883), 10 Lincoln St. (1889), 24 Lincoln St. (1890), and 11 Friendship St. (1888). The house currently at 15 Priscilla Rd. (1886) on Shoreby Hill was originally on Union St. as part of this grouping. Again, in spite of smaller lots and budgets, each house is a singular design. The earliest, 17 Union St., shows a characteristic typical of Peabody and Stearns, namely a bay appended to a corner at a 45 degree angle to the façade. In this example the bay is extended to the upper stories to give the effect of a tower. At 11 Friendship St., the design is given the visual interest of a larger house through the variety of dormers (gable, hip and originally, eyebrow), porches and overhangs. Two additional smaller houses, adjacent at 9 Bryer Ave. (1886)



141 Conanicus Ave.

³ Green Chimneys is traditionally attributed to Bevins, although documentation is lacking.



The Boulders



Buffum Cottage

and 141 Conanicus Ave. (1886), express the same relaxed informality of the larger commissions, in part owing to Bevins's liberal use of porches. Nine Bryer Ave. even has a second floor porch, a favorite feature of the larger houses. The Conanicus Avenue house is encircled by a porch so large that a contemporary account suggested that it "might be described as a piazza with the house inside."

Not only did Bevins put porches on as many as three sides of a house, he often made them unusually deep, in effect creating outdoor rooms. Occasionally he may have overdone it and cut off too much light from the interior. It is noted that an early photograph of The Boulders shows a continuous porch across the entire front of the house. Part of this porch has since been eliminated, presumably to brighten the interior. Deep porches also extend the living space to the side and rear of this house. A more light-sensitive solution was to have the porch project from the house, as at the Buffum cottage (Bay View Dr., 1892, destroyed.) A newspaper account described the porch as "some thirty feet in diameter with ample room for a private ball."

Public Buildings



Thorndike Hotel

While Bevins is primarily identified with his houses, he also did important non-residential work. The most significant was the Thorndike Hotel, built for P.H.Horgan in 1889. a composition reminiscent of Peabody and Stearns's first Breakers. The hotel had numerous Bevins characteristics: the asymmetry, the prominent tower, the profusion of dormers, paired gables, porch supports sheathed in shingle, and the lattice-like railings on the first floor. Bevins also built for Horgan a brownstone business block on Thames Street in Newport (1892, destroyed).

In 1892 he built the first St. Mark Church (destroyed in 1959), a simple, appealing building with a hammerbeam ceiling. This was an English medieval form of roof support, which Bevins adapted in a more simplified form. On the gable end of the church was a rare example of Bevins' use of patterned shingling.

The original design included a bell tower and ornamental towers, but these were never built.



The Moveable Chapel Moving

The most singular building in which Bevins had a role was the Moveable Chapel of the Transfiguration (1899), built by St. Matthew's Church to serve the tourists at Conanicut Park in the summer and a community of mid-island farmers in the winter. Measuring 18 by 27 feet and mounted on wheels, the "Go-chapel", as it was nicknamed, could seat 100. Despite its diminutive size, it was well proportioned and detailed, with a church-like

feeling. It turned out to be more novel than practical, however, as the difficulty in moving it limited its use. It was subsequently integrated into a house.

A few buildings are known to have been designed by Bevins and not built. In 1907, a fire station with an unusual Flemish gable was proposed, but the existing fire station was not replaced until 1928 by a Herbert Wetherill design. The largest unbuilt project was a hotel for P.H.Horgan in 1902, planned for the vicinity of High Street. Horgan had purchased the building site, but the project did not go forward for unknown reasons. There is another mystery in a set of plans commissioned by Joseph Wharton sometime after 1897. He had been concerned that Horsehead would be appropriated by the United States government for the building of Fort Wetherill (1902). He had purchased the land of Beavertail Farm in 1899 for a house to replace Horsehead if necessary. It is logical that the existing plans are for that house. The plans show a house much more Colonial Revival than Shingle Style in feeling, with a shallower roof pitch and more horizontal massing. In the end, Joseph Wharton did not lose Horsehead and built a smaller house at Beavertail Farm, which could possibly be a Bevins design.



St. Mark Church

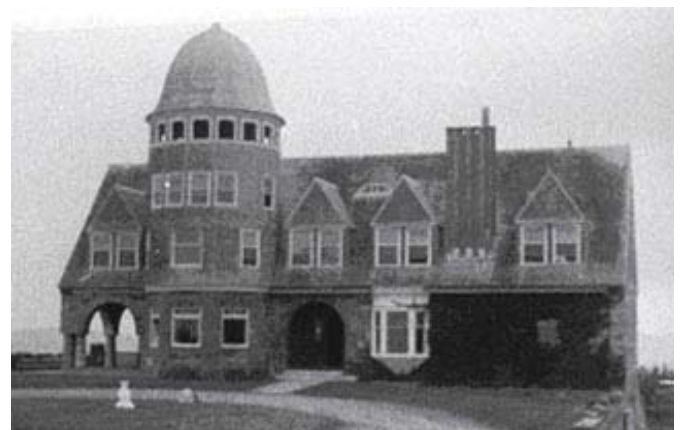
Bevins's Architecture

Given the variety of the designs, it is a challenge to generalize about Charles Bevins's work. Nevertheless, some observations can be made.

He had a strong sense of geometry, evident in the fact that his compositions are arrangements of masses with little ornament. His roof overhangs generally are minimal, emphasizing the basic shapes of the structures. The exception is where the roofs extend over porches and loggias to provide shelter, the resulting voids forming additional volumes. Bevins often emphasized the integration of porches by extending the shingle sheath of the building over the porch supports instead of using turned porch posts. This suggests the volume of the building contains the porch, rather than it being an added element. While Bevins focuses on masses, he also de-emphasizes surface decoration. He hardly ever used patterned shingling, e.g. a wave or sawtooth pattern, common in this period. He seldom used contrasting materials such as brick or stone to interrupt the surface plane. An exception might be Bevins's use of windows, which, while penetrating the surface, also elaborate the surface. Bevins used windows of varying size and type, and their placement was carefully considered for exterior effect. He was partial to the use of stained glass, notable examples being at Horsehead, Ledgehurst, The Boulders, and 11 High St. Given Bevins's very restrained use of ornament, his interest in colored glass is somewhat surprising, but effective.



Braeclough



Horsehead

Bevins's houses generally are tightly composed; they do not ramble or contain superfluous elements. One method of achieving this effect is to recess entries and porches into the body of the house, as was done at 144 Walcott Ave. and 15 High St. Even a house as grand as Horsehead has its entry recessed behind an arch rather than under a porch extending to the drive. Its loggia is sheltered by the overhanging second story and further contained visually by surrounding arches. The tightness of the composition suggests H.H. Richardson in his Stoughton House (1883) at Cambridge, MA. The detail of the short columns supporting the arcade around the loggia also suggests Richardson. But Bevins's work could also be more informal, in keeping with the ambience of a seaside resort. For example, Braecleugh, the house that Bevins was building almost contemporaneously for Joseph Wharton's brother Charles, was a markedly looser design with its broad roof overhangs, L-shaped massing, and extended porches. Both houses were well integrated with their similar sites, promontories with spectacular views, but they did so with quite different sensibilities. One wonders whether this difference reflected the personalities of the brothers or the vagaries of the architect.

As different as Bevins's designs were from one another, there are some apparent connections in the controlled geometries, picturesque roof forms and emphasis on verticality. Bevins uses subsidiary masses to create a picturesque effect most particularly in the use of dormers, varying their type, size and position. It is rare that any two adjacent dormers on a Bevins house will be identical. Sometimes dormers were used for effect with no regard for their utility. For example, on the first St. Mark Church there are eyebrow dormers, which are not glazed. Dormers without windows could be attributed to whimsy or economy, but may have resulted from a desire to preserve the integrity of an unbroken ceiling inside, while giving exterior interest to the roof. In other eyebrow dormers Bevins curiously uses square panes of glass, either singly as at 11 Friendship St. or

in series as at 11 High St. This could be considered the equivalent of putting a square peg in a round hole. While adjoining dormers usually differed from one another, a common Shingle Style element also used by Bevins was the paired gable (two similar gables side by side), as on The Barnacle. Roof forms were elaborated and combined with considerable inventiveness. On Channel Bells, for example, gable, hip, gambrel and saltbox roof forms peacefully coexist. In spite of the variety, there is an overall sense of the mass rising in roughly pyramidal fashion.



Anoatok

Predominant in Bevins's work is an emphasis on the vertical even if the house is not very tall. Often this will be achieved by having the gable end face the street, even when logically it might not. The gable end of a building is usually narrower than the side elevation, but at Anoatok the gable end facing the street is the widest elevation. At the Bailey House, a cross gable dominates the street elevation, providing a vertical emphasis in lieu of the usual Georgian horizontality. Verticality is also emphasized by towers and turrets.

These were common Shingle Style elements, but in Bevins's designs, the towers tended to rise above the roofline, whereas other architects often kept these forms to a subsidiary scale to preserve the horizontality of the roof. Houses without towers might have a tall window lighting a stair hall, as at Green Chimneys, to provide a vertical focus. Dormers were often extended through the roof cornice to break that strongly horizontal element. The wall plane would thus be knitted together with the roof geometry, as seen at The Boulders and 9 Bryer Ave.



Green Chimneys

Concurrent Architectural Trends

In looking at the Bevins houses, it is useful to consider them in the context of the period. Charles Bevins's arrival in this country in 1878 coincided with two trends coming together to culminate in the Shingle Style. One trend was rising interest in this country's Colonial past, at least in part reflecting a desire for times simpler than those of increasingly urban and industrial America. This interest was evidenced in the popular and architectural press and was further encouraged by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. The architecture that attracted attention comprised the rural, vernacular forms of the 17th and 18th centuries: gambrel roofs, saltbox shapes, small-paned windows, and wood construction, notably shingles.



Harbor Entrance

The other trend was occurring in England: the rise of the Queen Anne Style, a reaction to Victorian heaviness. The style was lively, designed to please the eye rather than conform to academic theory. The buildings were asymmetrical, featuring eclectic details such as balconies, turrets, bays, swags and plaster panels of sunflowers. Enhancing the picturesque were steeply pitched roofs and small-paned windows. If any classical details were included, they were used creatively and unacademically. The first notable house in this country with a marked Queen Anne influence was the William Watts Sherman House (1876) in Newport, designed by H.H.Richardson with his assistant Stanford White. Its English features included half-timbering, overhanging gables, numerous bays, leaded windows and an upper-story porch. It was built of stone and brick on the lower story, in the English style, but significantly, the upper stories were shingled where terracotta tile would have been hung in England. The American substitution of shingles for tile was a seminal event in the development of the Shingle Style. A contemporary English observer⁴ notes that the Shingle Style, “even though its ‘Queen Anne’ elements are still in evidence, is notably different from anything in England but also, it must be admitted, both more adventurous and exciting.”

In 1878 Stanford White left the office of H.H.Richardson, and the next year joined Charles Follen McKim, who had also worked in Richardson's office, and William Rutherford Mead to form McKim, Mead & White. This is the firm that would fully develop the Shingle Style and be its greatest proponent. Thus when Charles Bevins was in Boston, the Colonial and the English influences on the Shingle Style had just come together, and architects were developing it in individualistic ways.

It is my contention that Bevins's English background affected his interpretation of the style, leading him to favor the Queen Anne elements. These were primarily its picturesque characteristics: asymmetry, eclecticism and complex roof forms, all embraced by Bevins. The towers employed by Bevins had Queen Anne antecedents, although there are also the Colonial echoes of lighthouses and windmills. Since Queen Anne was primarily a style for cities and towns (with the notable exception of the influential country house designs of Richard Norman Shaw), its buildings tended to the vertical, a bias retained by Bevins. By contrast the influence of the rambling Colonial farmhouse on the Shingle Style frequently gave it a horizontal emphasis in the hands of other architects. It is equally relevant that Bevins downplayed the elements that derived from the Colonial: the gambrel roof, the saltbox, and such motifs as the scallop shell. When



Eglesfeld

⁴ Girouard, Mark, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900*, p. 208

Bevins did use the gambrel roof, he usually changed the proportions by making the side walls more nearly vertical, as at 15 High St. and Eglesfeld.

In considering Bevins's use of English elements, it is noted that he twice used half-timbering in a limited way: on 15 Priscilla Rd., as originally clad, and on Harbor Entrance. Half-timbering made a half-hearted appearance on some early Shingle Style houses, but it had largely disappeared by the early 1880's. The late date of Harbor Entrance (1893) makes the motif all the more remarkable. In several ways Harbor Entrance resembled Horsehead, designed a decade earlier: the domed stone and shingle tower, the stone first story, the paired gables, and the drop-off of the rear elevation, following the contour of the land. But Harbor Entrance was a more eclectic design, with the elements less rigorously combined than at Horsehead.

An additional influence on Bevins was likely the Shingle Style building in Newport. The most significant structure may have been the highly visible Newport Casino (1881) by McKim, Mead & White. An aspect of the Casino that seems to relate to Bevins's work is the extensive use of raised paneling, both on the exterior and in the second floor club rooms. Bevins favored varying patterns of raised paneling on his front doors and in such interior applications as fireplace surrounds. In the same rectilinear vein, the Casino evokes Japanese screens and lattice with the strapwork grids used as interior wall treatment. These motifs were used by Bevins in porch railings, as at Green Chimneys and the Sword House (which also had strapwork on the exterior walls.) The Casino's masonry and shingle tower may have influenced Horsehead and Harbor Entrance. The façade of the Casino uses a gable form placed within the corner of a larger gable, the same arrangement that Bevins was to use in the Thorndike Hotel and Harbor Entrance.

While McKim, Mead & White often employed exuberant ornamentation under the influence of Stanford White, Bevins's detail tended to be more restrained. A small example is an elaborate sunburst design worked out in upholstery nails by McKim, Mead & White on a door at Southside (Newport, 1883) compared with the chaste, rectilinear design done by Bevins at Horsehead's entryway a year later. McKim, Mead & White were also in the vanguard of spatial planning, having space of one room flow into another through wide doorways and floor plans that leant a sense of progression. An important aspect of these plans was the living hall, incorporating stairs and a fireplace, which served not only as entry hall, but also as the center of activity. The hall could be the largest room in the house, as in the Isaac Bell House (Newport, 1883) of McKim, Mead & White. Bevins adopted this plan to a degree: typically his halls had fireplaces and staircases, but these rooms were not scaled to displace the living room in importance.

One notable aspect of Bevins's planning was his entrances. They were often designed to create an indirect approach to the house (Channel Bells, as originally designed; Anoatok, as originally designed), sometimes with the front door on a side porch (17 Union St., The Barnacle, Ledgehurst) or the entry stairs turned 90 degrees (Green Chimneys as originally designed, the Clark house). The rationale may have been that the less direct approach would increase the visitor's appreciation of the architecture. This would be consistent with the idea that the houses should be experienced by progressing through them. It is noted that a number of these circuitous entrances have been undone by subsequent renovations.

During the early 1880's McKim, Mead & White were at their most inventive in developing the Shingle Style, but they may have been victims of their own success. Vincent Scully, the primary theorist of the Shingle Style, hypothesizes⁵ that the large number of commissions pushed the office toward a more reproducible style and away from each house being a highly original composition. The firm, and the profession generally, did move toward more ordered designs, using an increasingly formulaic approach with Georgian and Norman details. Charles Bevins, however, was not under the same pressure. For the most part, his designs of the late 1880's and 1890's maintained the same originality of his earlier work. There were some changes, however, such as a greater horizontality and balance. An example is the sea front at Fowler's Rocks (340 East Shore Rd., 1892). Bevins did move with the times, but he retained his individuality.

⁵ Scully, *Op. cit.*, p. 142

Bevins had his office in Newport for at least twenty years, but he is so far known to have built only three Newport buildings: the aforementioned Horgan Block, and houses at 103 Church St. (1887) and 25 Cranston Ave. (1891). The latter was built for a client, James T. Wright, but Bevins subsequently bought the house and made it his winter residence from 1894 to 1898. Charles Bevins's obituary refers to his having "designed houses in the South and other parts of the country", but their whereabouts are unknown. His obituary also refers to his being an artist, evidence of which is a children's book he illustrated. *Father Gander's Chimes*, by Joseph Watson, was published in 1882 with nearly one hundred pen-and-ink drawings by Bevins. Besides his obvious creativity, his correspondence reveals him to be a tenacious perfectionist, but one without much ego or ambition.⁶

Conclusion

Although Bevins's practice was very limited geographically, the architect's originality and the prominence of some of his clients suggest that he would be better known than he is. There are no references to him in the contemporaneous architectural press. There are the most perfunctory references to him in the Newport press, in contrast to more self-promoting designers such as J.D. Johnston. More recent citations have been few but intriguing. Vincent Scully, in his definitive analysis, *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style*⁷, notes and illustrates the Thorndike Hotel and the Bay View Hotel (1873), without identifying their architects. He describes them thus:

"These two mountains of shingles, each in its own way a dynamic architectural form, created by the shore at Jamestown a vision of the kind of monumentality which was possible in the shingled style: a monumentality of inspired impermanence. Such buildings represent the qualities of abstract formal organization which were not without importance in the last phase of the domestic development of the 80's."

In the 1990's, William H. Jordy (1917-1997), a well-known architectural historian at Brown University, wrote about architecture in Jamestown in an unpublished manuscript. He argues that Jamestown is the best place in Rhode Island to view Shingle Style architecture, based on the quality and quantity of the architecture, as well as the relatively well-preserved landscape. He says that Bevins designed

". . . a few of the largest, finest and most inventive shingle-style houses in the state [and] some medium-sized, shingled houses . . . As in most outstanding examples of group styles which came to focus in a particular place at a particular time, a notable designer usually leads by his liberating example which, . . . in this instance, seems to have been Bevins."

He particularly singles out a "grand neo-classical house" which is "unique for Jamestown even to the present and, with its personal eccentricities, unique in the colonial revival style." He refers to the Charles W. Bailey House. In speaking of another house (Channel Bells), he notes

"C.L.Bevins's typical deadpan vernacular, in which he subtly inflects the commonplace toward the exceptional shaping of mass, shifts in scale, calculated placement of openings, and the occasional muted trumpet note of some bit of high style."

As Jamestown, developed as a resort in the late 19th century, it thought of itself as a bit removed from the ostentation of Newport. It was more individualistic, more original but more restrained. How remarkable that Charles Bevins should arrive from England at the beginning of a building boom to realize those very values.

⁶ per Barbara Harding, certified graphologist and document examiner.

⁷ p. 112

Note on Additional Bevins Designs

In addition to the structures discussed above, the following buildings, which have been destroyed, are attributed to Charles Bevins. No picture exists for Bramble Side (Highland Dr., 1889), built for Adm. Charles H. Davis.



Wyndesweepe
305 Beavertail Rd.
H. Audley Clarke



Harbor View Inn
73 Conanicus Ave.
Abbott Chandler

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