

# A Self-Guided Auto Tour of the “Ring of the Green” Rumford, RI

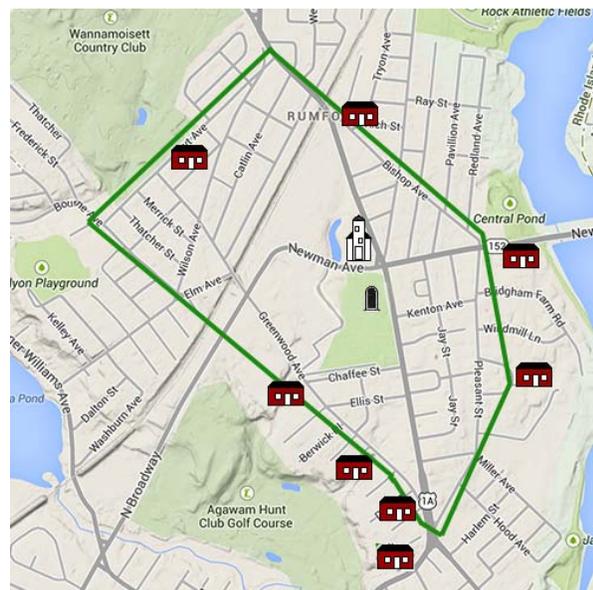
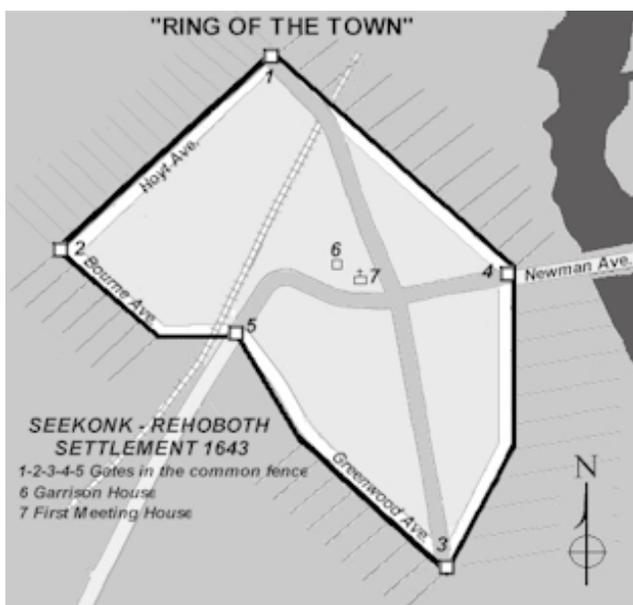
Brief history:

In 1641 The Plymouth Bay Colony gave John Brown and Edward Winslow permission to purchase 64 square miles of land from the Indian chief Massasoit. The piece of property extended eight miles from the Seekonk River East to the Taunton border.

The Reverend Samuel Newman of Weymouth was told to round up settlers for this new area and two surveyors, William Sabin and Richard Wright, were sent into the area to lay out the settlement of the new Seekonk Plantation.

The new settlement was a circular layout with five gates for entrance. The center area was to enclose the animals which the settlers would bring with them. There would be a continuous fence around this area and the house and farm lots would encircle the outside extending outward in six, eight and twelve acre lots. The Newman Meeting House for church services and settlement business and the cemetery would also be in the center of the circle. There would be five garrison buildings scattered throughout for security reasons to protect settlers from possible attack by the Indians. King Philip and his Indians did attack and burned the Ring settlement to the ground in 1676. The entire settlement had to be rebuilt. Only one man died during the raid although others died in later skirmishes with the Indians. In 1643 fifty-eight men including Newman formed the Seekonk Proprietors or Planters and drew lots for the order in which to select their property.

Court records show the area was settled as early as 1625. In 1641 the Court of Plymouth authorized Samuel Newman to purchase the original tract called "Eight Mile Square" in "Seacunk", (now in Rumford, RI.). This was the first land transfer in the area that was recognized by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1643 Mr. Newman established his community and called the area Rehoboth. The original 1643 compound of Rehoboth, known as the "Ring of the Town", is shown below.



- **To begin the tour from Rehoboth: Follow rte. 44 west to Seekonk. Turn right from 44W at traffic light at Ann & Hope onto rte. 114A north (Pleasant St.).**

## Stop #1: The John Hunt House

69 Pleasant St.



The Hunt House was built for Lt. John Hunt, Jr. (1720-1806) around 1750. John Hunt, who was known as a clothier by trade, was also a Lieutenant in the Militia. He was the great grandson of Peter Hunt, one of the fifty-eight Seekonk Proprietors who owned land in the original Ring of the Green of Rehoboth in 1645. It is reported that John inherited a sawmill, fulling mill, (fulling is the beating and cleaning of cloth in water. The process shrinks the loose fibers of the cloth, making it a denser fabric) and grist mill along with land along the Ten Mile River from his father John Sr. in 1751. The mills were first located here by Stephen Payne as early as 1645. In 1671 Israel Sabin and Mr. Payne were operating four mills on this site.

Hunt Jr. married Rachel Carpenter in March, 1749. John Jr. and Rachel needed a large house, as they had six children before Rachel died in 1759. John then married Sarah Bullock and they had one son, Josiah.

- ***Return to Pleasant St. and the end of the driveway and turn left.***
- ***Veer Right staying on Pleasant Street after the traffic light.***
- ***Take the third right onto Morra Way.***

## Stop #2: The Hyde-Bridgham House

21 Morra Way



The Hyde-Bridgham House, formerly located at 120 Pleasant Street, was built on an old foundation around 1767. It is located today at 21 Morra Way. The whole area is newly developed on and around the Bridgham farm and you can still find the restored water tower of the old farm when driving through the neighborhood.

The house, a two story five bay Georgian with center chimney, was built by Ephraim Hyde, pastor of Newman Congregational Church. Dr. Joseph Bridgham purchased it in the 1780s. It was later occupied by his son, Samuel Bridgham, who served in the Rhode Island House of Representatives. He was state Attorney General and later the first Mayor of Providence.

- ***Continue on Morra Way. Turn right onto Pleasant St. to stop sign at Newman Ave.***

## Stop #3: The Widow Hill House 324-326 Newman Ave.



The Widow Hill House, built around 1800, is located at 324/326 Newman Ave. It was originally a three bay Federal building with four end chimneys. It was occupied by Rev. John Hill, Pastor of Newman Congregational Church in 1809. He was minister there from 1802 until 1816. In 1850 it was owned by his widow. Over the years several additions were made to the original structure. It has been suggested that a part of the house was once used as a school and library.

- *Cross Newman Avenue to Bishop Avenue.*

## Stop #4: The Bishop-Leonard House 35 Bishop Ave.



Around 1810 John Bishop built this two story, six bay double house at 35 Bishop Avenue. The interior was redesigned in 1938 by Mr. Leonard, the founder of Leonard's Antiques. He installed refinished parts from other old houses during his ownership, thereby making it difficult to establish a precise building date for the house. At one time the house was owned by the Rumford Baking Powder Company and housed four families.

## Stop #5: Hoyt-Hammond House 101 Hoyt Ave.



(This house is now painted white)  
This is also a two floor, five bay Georgian house. The original center chimney has been removed and replaced by two end chimneys. It was moved here from its original foundation across the street by the Wannamoisett Country Club in 1928. At one time it was used as a mill house for four families.

- *To stay on the Ring, continue to the end of Hoyt Ave. to the stop sign. Turn left on Bourne Ave. Continue to stop sign. Go straight, crossing Wilson St. and turn left on Elm St. to the end. (The Ring originally continued onto Elm Court which is now a dead end road.) At the end of Elm St. turn right onto Greenwood Ave.*

## Stop #6: The Phaniel Bishop House 150 Greenwood Ave.



The house located today at 150 Greenwood Avenue is called the Phaniel Bishop House. It was built around 1760 as a two story, five bay Georgian on the foundation of the Reverend Newman House. Reverend Samuel Newman was the founder of the Newman Congregational Church and had his farm at this location of the Ring. While most houses of this time period were built around a center chimney, this one has two end chimneys, which allowed for a large central

hall and staircase. During his life Phaniel Bishop was a member of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and also served as a representative in the United States Congress.

## Stop #7: The Caleb Abell House 66 Greenwood Ave.



The original foundation from the 17th Century is still intact beneath this house on 66 Greenwood Avenue which was rebuilt by Caleb Abell, a relative of the man who built the 8 Greenwood Avenue home. It was designed as a two story four bay dwelling with center chimney and an addition was added c. 1880. The first house at this location was built in 1643 and burned in 1676. In 1750 the second Abell House was built on top of the original foundation. Story has it

that King Philip dragged a chair out of this house and sat in front of it to watch the Ring of the Green burn in 1676.

## Stop #8: The Abell House 8 Greenwood Ave.



This house, located at 8 Greenwood Avenue, was built on the original foundation of the house that was burned during King Philip's War. It is a two story four bay Federal building with center chimney and was built by the Abell Family, relatives of Caleb Abell who rebuilt the house at 66 Greenwood Avenue.

- *Continue on 1A, west, Pawtucket Ave., bearing right at the light.*

## Stop #9: 1527 Pawtucket Ave.



2 ½ story gable center chimney colonial one of oldest houses standing in E. Providence and vicinity of the green. c. 1700. Originally a typical 2 story, 3 bay, end chimney early Colonial house with one room on each floor. An addition on the opposite side of the chimney was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and another across the back in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. An addition to the west was added in two increments in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is one of the oldest houses standing in East Providence and is the oldest dwelling in the vicinity of the Ring of the Green.

- ***If you retrace your route back to Pawtucket Ave., You will drive straight through the center of the Ring of the Green to the Newman Church, the 4<sup>th</sup> on this site since 1643. The center of the Green contained grazing land and the cemetery.***
- ***Turn left at the light at Newman Ave. You can easily park across the street from the church, at the entrance to the Newman Cemetery.***

## Stop #10: Newman Congregational Church 100 Newman Ave.



The congregation was organized in 1643 by the Reverend Samuel Newman and the first Newman Meeting House, which served also as a meeting hall for village business, was built across the street from today's church in the center of what was the Ring of the Green.

There is a stone indicating that site on Newman Avenue across from the present church. When King Philip burnt the first meeting house in 1676, a second and later a third were built.

By 1810 a move was in the works to change the town name from Rehoboth to Seekonk, and a new town hall was planned to go on Pawtucket Avenue. The congregation could now have a full fledged church building. The lumber from the third meeting house was used to build the new town hall in 1812.

The Newman Congregational Church was built c. 1810 and redesigned in 1890 when the church was raised onto a foundation. The two side doors were removed and a portico was built over the front door.

# Hunt-Newman Cemetery



Not only was the church/meeting house located in the center of the Ring of the Green, but also the burial ground for the community. Stones in the cemetery date back to 1658. The oldest one, that of William Carpenter is simply marked with his initials and the year of his death. Below are some examples of typical head stones you will find.



The designs of the stone carvings allow you to trace three distinct periods of mortuary art. The oldest ones, depicting death and decay, date generally to before 1790 and show grimacing skulls and wings.

As the people's attitude about life and the afterlife changes and takes a more positive turn, the carvings change to sweet cherubs and angel wings. Most of these graves date to between 1760 and 1810.

From the late 1700s until about 1830 the carvings show various designs; simple urns or vases, geometric designs, weeping willow trees, the family coat-of-arms, or any combination of them.

Acknowledgements:  
National Register of Historic Places Inventory  
East Providence Historical Society