Embracing the Sacred in the Secular: Synagogue Architecture, Community, and God in Willemstad, Curaçao, and Newport, Rhode Island

Daniel Kurt Ackermann

Figure 1. Exterior of Mikve Israel, Willemstad, Curaçao, 1732. Courtesy the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion.

In 1659 Isaac da Costa arrived in Willemstaad, Curaçao, with a gift for the small Jewish community there. Several months earlier the Parnassim of Amsterdam's Sephardic congregation Talmud Torah resolved to send da Costa to Curaçao with a

> Sepher Torah of fine parchment with its yellow taffeta lining; a band of flowered blue damask; a cape of red damask with its fringe; a flowered green satin cloth for the reading desk; a cloak of orange taffeta to cover the Holy Scroll and another cloak of white damask with gold braid....[1]

The loan of this Torah represented the connection of Amsterdam's Sephardic Jewish community to their coreligionists in Curaçao. It also represented the connection of Curaçao's Jews to the larger Jewish community then emerging around the Atlantic basin. The text was a reminder of the shared history, values, and laws of this community. The fine accouterments transmitted with it—the satins, taffetas, and damasks—underscored the importance of the text, stressed that the Torah was an object for use—note the inclusion of a cloth for a reading desk—and also made evident in a material way the prosperity of two communities that were part of the networks of faith, kinship, and commerce linking Jews of different nations together into an emerging Judeo-Atlantic world.

Inside, synagogues stretching from Newport, Rhode Island, to Curaçao, and across the Atlantic to London and Amsterdam, architectural choices—and the prayer and study of Torahs they housed—reflected the place of each community in the Jewish landscape of the Atlantic basin.

[1] "Resolution of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jewish Community Granting Isaac Da Costa a Sepher Torah," in Isaac Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, trans. Suzanne Emmanuel, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), 2:748.

Figure 2. Interior of Mikve Israel, Willemstad, Curaçao. The Bimah is located in the foreground. The ark containing the Torah scrolls in the background. Note the sand floor. Photo courtesy the Personal Collection of Lori and Barry Stiefel.

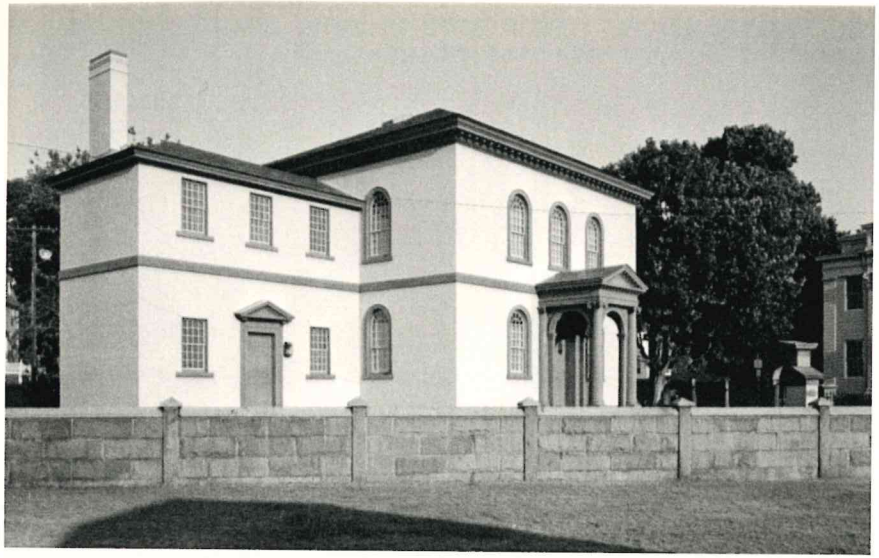

Figure 3. Exterior of Jeshuat Israel, design by Peter Harrison, Newport, Rhode Island, 1763. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

Outside, architecture expressed the place of each Jewish community within the secular landscape that surrounded it. The architectural choices made by Mikve Israel in Willemstad, Curaçao (*Figures 1* and *2*), in 1730 and those made by Jeshuat Israel in Newport, Rhode Island (*Figures 3* and *4*), in 1760 demonstrate how two of these communities, linked through faith, kinship, and commerce, used architecture to express their places within transatlantic-sacred and local-secular landscapes.

In the nearly three-quarters of a century that followed the first Torah on Curaçao the community prospered. On the fifteenth of Sivan 5490 (31 May 1730 by the secular calendar) the members of Congregation Mikve Israel gathered at the site of the old synagogue that they had outgrown. Haham Raphael Jesurun, the community's spiritual leader, looked into the foundation trenches of the new building and then up at the crowd. "This building," he intoned, "rises forth in the name of God and for the glory of His Holy name." Then he asked everyone to place a stone in the foundation trench so that each person present had a hand in the construction.[2] Each stone in the foundation represented the connection of a local Jew to the community in Curaçao; each Torah that would be kept inside that building represented a link of the island's Jews to Jews elsewhere.

On 26 July 1730 Hendrick Schielagh of Amsterdam entered into a contract with the "Parnassims and Treasurer of the Jewish Nation on the

[2] Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews,* 1:120–24.

Figure 4. Interior of Jeshuat Israel, Newport, Rhode Island, design by Peter Harrison, Newport, Rhode Island, 1763. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

Island of Curaçao" to "help build for them, at a site to be indicated a Synagogue or House of Worship, under the orders of and direction of Pieter Roggenburg, master carpenter."[3] Schielagh's contract required him to assist Roggenburg

[3] "Contract between Elias and Manuel de Crasto Junior and Hendrick Schielagh," in Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews,* 2:818–19.

> in planning the structure, drawing the ground plan, partitioning the said building, and doing everything required to complete the same to perfection and according to the strict rules of architecture....

Before Schielagh was hired, however, the old building had been razed and foundations for the new one dug. Schielagh's first act before setting sail for Curaçao was to help Elias and Manuel de Crasto, the representatives of Curaçao's Jews in Amsterdam, to acquire the "lumber, ironwork and other materials required for the construction of said building." Given the work that had occurred before he was hired, Schielagh must have had a good idea of what the community, and Roggenburg, intended to build. The contract he wrote for the lumber gave precise dimensions for virtually every framing member. When he set sail for the Caribbean on the *De Vogel Phenix* in the second half of 1730, he brought the ready-to-assemble frame of the synagogue with him.[4]

For the interior of their new synagogue Willemstad's Jews looked to the communal and spatial conventions found elsewhere in the Judeo-Atlantic world, especially Talmud Torah in Amsterdam where their Sephardic coreligionists worshiped and from where they had received their first Torah (*Figure 5*). It was also a building that Haham Jesurun knew well: it was where he had received his rabbinical training.[5] Both synagogues imbibed the Calvinistic language of Protestant sacred space—when the Amsterdam Jewish historian Jacob Judah Aryeh Leon Templo described "the Whiteness and Gentility" of the ancient Temple of Solomon in 1675, he could as well have been talking about Talmud Torah or any number of Dutch Reformed churches in his city.[6] Both synagogues focused attention on the Ark (the cabinet in which Torahs are kept) and Bimah (the reading desk) by being otherwise visually spare. The long axis between the Bimah and Ark is punctuated only by large roof-supporting columns that are not engaged with the women's balcony. Both synagogues are suffused with light from large compass-headed windows.

Curaçao's Jews also wrote their communal history and experiences into the interior architecture of their synagogue, particularly the experience of expulsion from Spain in 1492 and subsequent centuries lived as crypto-Jews, or Marranos, during the Inquisition. Mikve Israel's Synagogue has always had a layer of sand spread across its floor, a practice employed in the synagogues of Surinam, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, and

[4] Ibid., 2:818–21.

[5] Ibid., 1:117.

[6] Jacob Judah Aryeh Leon Templo, *A Relation of the Most Memorable Things in the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Salomon: According to Text of Scripture* (Amsterdam, 1675), *Early English Books,* University Microfilms International, 1986, http://wwwlib.umi.com/eebo/fullcite?id=27355148, p. 2.

Figure 5. Interior of Talmud Torah Synagogue, engraved by Romeyn de Hooghe, Amsterdam, 1675. Courtesy the William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston Library.

St. Eustatius, but not outside of the Caribbean.[7] These sand floors, found in places where Marranos lived under Spanish rule, or on Caribbean islands to which Marranos emigrated, were likely tightly constructed references to the shared memory of persecution.

Inquisition records give just a few glimpses into the nature of Marrano worship spaces. Tucked away inside houses and secluded from prying eyes, they consisted of a few pieces of innocuous furniture: benches, a reading desk, and possibly a hidden niche where a fragment of surviving Jewish text might be kept. The floors were covered with rugs or other noise-deadening materials to conceal the sound of the prayers.[8] Sand is

[7] Mordehay Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean: The Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Settlements in the Caribbean and the Guianas* (Jerusalem, Israel: Gefen Publications, 2002), p. 19.

[8] For a discussion of Marrano Jewish worship spaces see David M.Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), pp. 508–13. For a more anthropological look at Marrano worship as it existed into the twentieth century see *Les Derniers Marranes*, dir. Frederick Brenner, Les Films d'Ici, Canaan Productions, 1997.

Figure 6. Detail of *'t Eyland Curacao, anno 1800*. Pen-and-ink and watercolor view of Willemstad, Curaçao, under siege by British sailors and soldiers, 1800. The synagogue is located in the middle-right of the panorama and is denoted by the number sixteen. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

both noise deadening and ritually cleansing.[9] By replacing a custom performed on colored rugs to one performed on white and ritually purifying sand, Curaçao's Jews recognized their shared Marrano history in a ritually pure manner. Additionally, Marranos from other islands who traveled to Curaçao to conduct business could—by merely entering the synagogue with its sand floor—ritually cleanse themselves.

The choice of sand, as opposed to rugs or other noise-deadening floor coverings, also found biblical parallel in the story of the Exodus from

[9] In giving instructions about the prohibition of washing during bereavement, the Talmud notes that mourners may bathe or clean their clothes "in water, but not in natron nor in sand." I. Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1965–1989), Toanith 53a.

Egypt. The soil of the Promised Land represented a physical link to the deliverance from Egypt and the promise of redemption and return. In a 1754 letter David Lopez Penha, the sexton of Mikve Israel's Synagogue, cited another letter between Amsterdam and Izmir, Turkey, anticipating the arrival in Willemstad of

> two bags of holy earth sent from Safed through Messrs De Costa and Lameira of Izmir, one for our synagogue (Talmud Torah of Amsterdam) and the other for Curaçao, which we are forwarding.[10]

Some of the soil was for use in burials, a widespread Jewish custom. Traditionally some of this "holy earth" was also mixed into the sand on the floor as a physical link to the Promised Land.[11]

Mikve Israel's interior took its inspiration from the architecture and shared communal experiences of the Judeo-Atlantic world; its exterior found its inspiration closer to home. Mikve Israel's 1732 synagogue adopted the common civic and religious architectural language of Willemstad. With its stuccoed exterior and distinctive triple-gabled roof, the synagogue conversed in the common architectural language of the Dutch and English Caribbean. Scrolled-gable roofs had waned in popularity in Europe during the late seventeenth century but remained popular in the Caribbean.[12] In an 1800 view of Willemstad from the harbor, scrolled gables are evident on domestic, commercial, and public buildings (*Figure 6*).[13] The city's Dutch Reformed church and the colony's state house both converse in this common architectural language. By engaging with this local idiom, the Jewish community made a statement about their place in Willemstad and the place of the synagogue within their own community. For the Jewish community the synagogue united all of the functions capped elsewhere by scrolled gables: it was a house of God, a place of prayer, and a court of law. And, like the successful mercantile Jewish community it served, its secular engagement rendered it secularly anonymous.

Building upon the architecture and experiences of their Caribbean and European coreligionists, the Jews of Newport also used architecture to proclaim their own civic and spiritual engagement. Unlike Willemstad's congregation, Newport's Jews looked more to London than to Amsterdam. And despite the view expressed in most historiography of the American Jewish experience, the synagogue they built was anything but

[10] Arbell, *The Jewish Nation,* p. 25.

[11] Ibid., p. 165.

[12] Jona Schellenkens, "Scrolled Gables of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in the Low Countries," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51 (December 1992): 434–35.

[13] C. L. Temminck Groll and W. van Alphen, "Willemstaad on Curaçao," trans. Michael Hoyle, in *Curaçao: Willemstaad: City of Monuments,* ed. H. J. Scheepmaker (The Hague: Gary Schwartz/SDU Publishers, 1990), pp. 28–30.

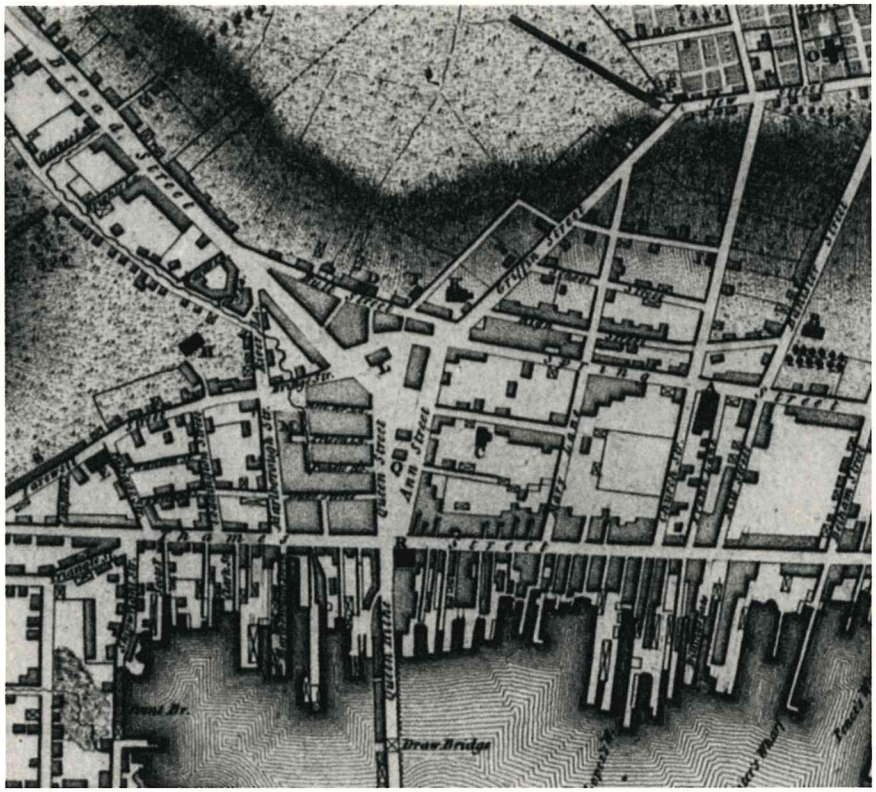

Figure 7. Detail of A Plan of the Town of Newport in Rhode Island, surveyed by Charles Blaskowitz, published by William Faden, London, England, 1777. Note the location of the synagogue (K) to the Colony House (L), the Redwood Library (O) and the Brick Market (R). Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

anonymous.[14] Jeshuat Israel's 1761 synagogue, popularly known as Touro Synagogue, was a bold structure that asserted the prominent place of the Jewish community within colonial Newport. Built on a high point near the Colony House, on the road to the Redwood Library, and on axis with the city's primary commercial vista, its site was chosen to make a statement. In a city of painted frame structures, the red brick synagogue on the hill—one of only three prerevolutionary brick buildings in the city—boldly stated the prominence, confidence, status, and openness of Newport's Jewish community.

[14] Of eighteenth-century synagogues, historian of the American Jewish experience Jonathon Sarna has written: "All their houses of worship disguised themselves as domestic structures to visually distinguish themselves from established churches and avoid offending the majority faith. They present an image of defense offering neighbors the reassurance that Jews kept to themselves. In so doing, they reinforced for local Jews an important cultural lesson that centuries of diaspora experience had repeatedly taught them: to practice great discretion on the outside, not drawing excessive attention to themselves...." Jonathon D.Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 17.

Freedom of conscience made Newport a city of many religions. Congregationalists, Quakers, Anglicans, Baptists, Moravians, Sabbatarians, and Jews were all part of Newport's sacred landscape before 1776.[15] Worshiping separately, they did business and were governed together. Newport's commercial artery was Thames Street. Running north to south along the harbor, it was intersected at regular intervals by the wharves that symbolized Newport's commercial connections to the rest of the Atlantic world (*Figure 7*). By 1680 Newport's most prominent merchants bound themselves together as the "Proprietors of the Long Wharf."[16] A fifteen-hundred-foot causeway and wharf, it fed directly into Queen Street, the V-shaped parade formed by Broad and Griffin Streets, and into the front door of the Colony House. Located less than four hundred feet from the Colony House, and on an axis with the long wharf, the synagogue's location placed the Jewish community at the heart of Newport's legal and commercial core.

In 1759 Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, Moses Levy, and Isaac Hart paid fifteen hundred pounds to purchase a plot of land for a synagogue. Construction, overseen by a committee of Rivera, Levy, and Hart, began in earnest in 1760 with the purchase of 196,715 bricks.[17] The committee turned to Peter Harrison, a gentleman-architect living in Newport, for a design. Harrison was best known in Newport for his work on the Redwood Library. A Palladian temple of learning on a ridge above the city, it was a place with which Rivera and Levy were familiar. Both were members.[18] When Rivera died, he left all of his gold and silver valuables, his silver-hilted sword, and all of his books except his personal Torah to the Redwood.[19]

Harrison's composition for Jeshuat Israel placed the religious and communal needs of the congregation within a fashionable Georgian exterior that exuded rationality. To non-Jews, especially non-Jews used to a more sober, auditory Anglican worship, the participatory exuber-

[15] Ezra Stiles, "Notebook of Observations on Silk Worms and the Culture of Silk," *Ezra Stiles Papers at Yale University,* 23 May 1763, ed. Harold E. Selesky, *National Historical Publications Commission Microfilm Publication Program* (1976): 353.

[16] Antoinette F. Downing, and Vincent J. Scully Jr., *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640–1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 12.

[17] Department of the Interior, Historic American Buildings Survey, *Touro Synagogue: Congregation Jeshuat Israel* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1971), HABS 1–2, 7; and Morris A.Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1936), p. 83.

[18] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison: First American Architect* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1949), pp. 50, 99.

[19] William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1658–1800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 2005), p. 92.

ance of the Jewish faith was its defining feature. In 1662 the diarist Samuel Pepys attended a worship service of the Sephardic Jewish congregation in London. His Anglican sensibilities took particular note of the

> disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like Brutes than people knowing the God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more; and indeed, I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this.[20]

While the Jews of Newport did not seek to drastically change their mode of worship, they did try to influence how it was perceived by placing it within the rational, ordered, and symmetrical shell afforded them by classical Palladian architecture familiar to secular Newport in buildings like Richard Munday's Colony House and Peter Harrison's Redwood Library.[21]

Harrison was greatly influenced by the many architectural design books being published in London in the middle of the eighteenth century. His particular talent was for combining design and pattern-book details in imaginative ways that expressed his skill as a designer and his respect for the canons of eighteenth-century taste.[22] For instance, Harrison's 1749 plan for King's Chapel in Boston combined galleries lit by two tiers of windows from Palladio, interior order details from James Gibbs, and an altarpiece inspired by Batty Langley. The works of Gibbs and Langley in particular imparted a rationality, order, and cosmopolitan aesthetic on the synagogue building. In turning to Gibbs and Langley—as well as Isaac Ware and William Kent—Harrison connected the synagogue and its community to the refinement and culture of fashionable English Atlantic society.[23]

Like the Jews of Curaçao, the Jews of Newport looked to their coreligionists around the Atlantic for the creation of Jeshuat Israel's sacred space. Recognizing that the most uniquely "Jewish" part of the new synagogue was its interior, the Reverend Ezra Stiles was lavish in his description of it in his diary entry covering its dedication in 1763. After more than a page of details Stiles concluded that he had found "a faint

[20] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 284.

[21] For a detailed architectural discussion of these two buildings see for the Colony House: Carl R. Lounsbury,"Colony House," *The Early Architecture and Landscapes of the Narragansett Basin,* ed. Myron O. Stachiw (Vernacular Architecture Forum, 2001), pp. 114–17; for the Redwood Library see: "Redwood Library," *The Early Architecture and Landscapes of the Narragansett Basin*, pp. 59–60.

[22] Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison,* p. 57.

[23] For a discussion of Peter Harrison's use of pattern books in the construction of the synagogue in Newport see Fiske Kimbell, "The Colonial Amateurs and Their Models: Peter Harrison," *Architecture* 54 (July 1926): 185–90, 209.

Figure 8. Interior of Bevis Marks Synagogue (1701), engraved by Augustus Pugin and Thomas Rowlandson, published by Rudolph Ackermann in *Microcosm of London,* 1808–1809. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts at Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Idea of the Majesty and Grandeur of the Ancient Jewish Worship mentioned in scripture" in the Newport synagogue.[24] This spatial majesty was shared by many of the synagogues of the Judeo-Atlantic world. Jeshuat Israel sought and received donations from New York, Jamaica, Curaçao, Surinam, London, and probably Amsterdam.[25] Newport's connections with these communities were spiritual and commercial.[26] With each dollar raised came expectations about the sacred space being built. Though many scholars have cited Amsterdam's Talmud Torah as the model for Jeshuat Israel's Synagogue, it is far more likely that

[24] Stiles, "Notebook of Observations on Silk Worms," p. 309.

[25] Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1936), p. 88.

[26] For a discussion of Jewish trade, and in particular Aaron Lopez's trade networks, see Stanley F. Chyet, *Lopez of Newport: Colonial American Merchant Prince* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), pp. 118–35.

Newport's Jews looked to London's Bevis Marks Synagogue for their inspiration (*Figure 8*).[27]

The personal experiences of many of Newport's Jews, mercantile interactions with coreligionists abroad, and a thriving print culture helped to inform Newport's Jews about the reorientation of the Judeo-Atlantic world during the first half of the eighteenth century.[28] In London's Bevis Marks, constructed in 1699, the Dutch classicism of Talmud Torah and Mikve Israel was supplanted by a style that wove aspects of Sir Christopher Wren's auditory church interiors into the simplified Georgian classicism of English dissenter meetinghouses. While the choice of a meetinghouse exterior marked the Jews as nonconformists in Anglican London, in Newport this architectural style brought the synagogue into close conversation with the city's other religious structures. When it was completed in 1763, Jeshuat Israel shared features with many other Newport religious structures (*Figure 9*). The city's Quaker meetinghouse shared the hipped roof and facade with two rows of windows. The city's two Congregational churches made use of double rows of windows in their facades, and the First Congregational Church featured a primary door embellished with a design-book surround similar to that on the synagogue.[29] At 1,580 square feet the synagogue may have been among the smallest religious buildings in Newport.[30] But what it lacked in sheer size, or the vertical embellishment of a cupola or steeple, it more than made up for with its use of architectural details and its advantageous location.

The synagogue sits askew from the road on the northeast side of Griffin Street. Oriented to the primary waterfront grid of the city, its facade reads as two distinct masses with embellished doorways centered in each block. A classical portico with Ionic capitals sets off the doorway to the large worship space on the right. The doorway into the school block is simpler but also elegant: a molded triangular pediment with dentils. The woodwork for both door surrounds was given a coating of sand and painted to simulate stone. Twenty-one single-sash, double-hung compass-headed windows

[27] Nancy Halverson Schless, "Peter Harrison, the Touro Synagogue, and the Wren City Church," *Winterthur Portfolio* 8 (1973): 187. Gutstein states, "The similarity between the Newport and the Amsterdam synagogue must have been planned." He mentions Bevis Marks only in so much as—in his opinion—it is also a copy of Talmud Torah. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport,* p. 94; Rachael Wischnitzer likewise privileges Amsterdam over London in her interpretation of the Newport synagogue. Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), pp. 15–16. Bevis Marks (1702) is generally credited to Joseph Avis, a Quaker who worked with Wren on St. Bride's Fleet Street (1672) and with Wren's associate Robert Hooke. Sharman Kadish, *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), p. 59.

[28] Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires, 1540–1740* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2002), pp. 567–68.

[29] *View of Newport* (ca. 1740), collection of Alletta Morris Cooper on extended loan to the Newport Art Museum and Art Association, Newport, R.I.

[30] Stiles, "Notebook of Observations on Silk Worms," p. 353.

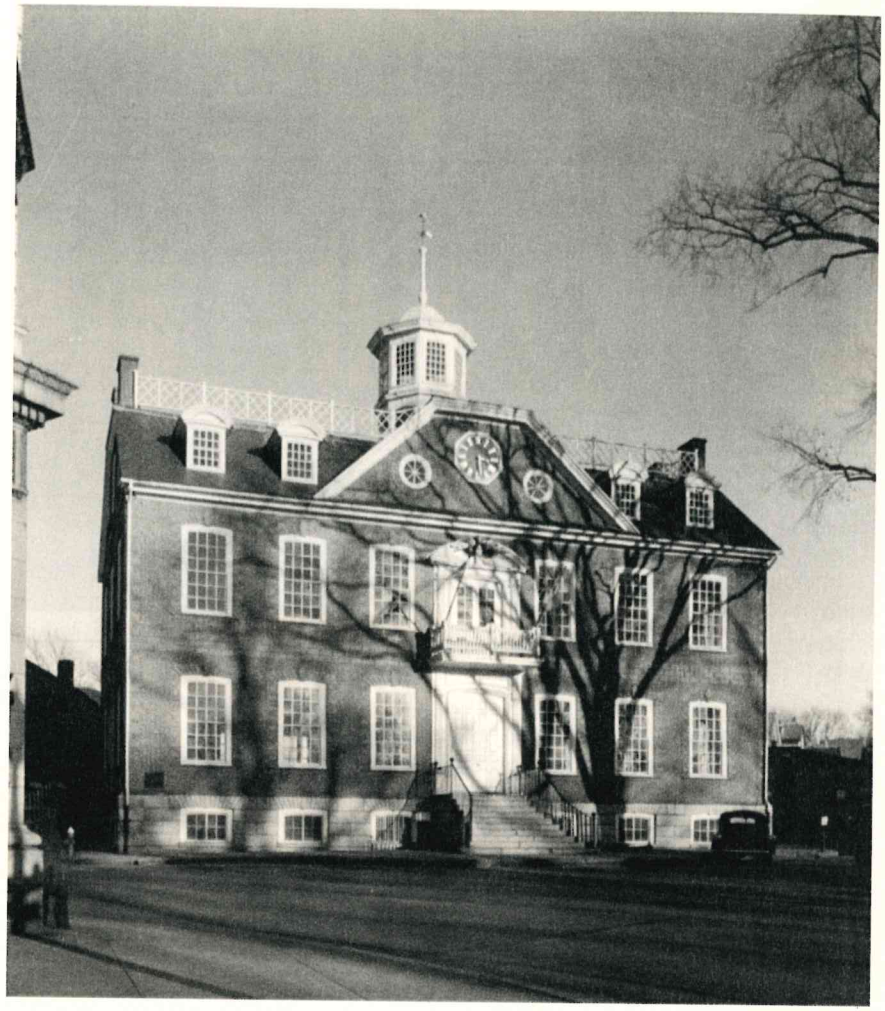

Figure 9. Colony House, Newport, Rhode Island, design by Richard Munday, Newport, Rhode Island, 1739. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

pierce the brickwork of the synagogue block and sit on brown sandstone sills and wooden moldings that have been sand coated and painted to simulate the brown sandstone found elsewhere in the building's fenestration. Eleven single-sash, double-hung windows with jack arches provide light to the interior of the school wing. Those windows are embellished with flat jack arches and plastered brick sills that echo the stone sills on the synagogue wing of the building. Both portions of the structure present symmetrical two-story, three-bay facades.

What set the synagogue apart from other religious and civic buildings in Newport was the color of its walls. Newport was a city of painted or stuccoed frame buildings. Even the architecturally precocious Redwood

Figure 10. Brick Market, Newport, Rhode Island, design by Peter Harrison, Newport, Rhode Island, 1772. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

Library with its Palladian pattern-book classicism was executed in wood that was finished in imitation of ashlar masonry. Of the fourteen surviving colonial religious structures in Rhode Island, the synagogue in Newport is the only one constructed of brick.[31] On the south and west elevations of the main body of the building the walls were laid up in expensive and decorative Flemish bond. On the less visible elevations less expensive 1:3 common bond brick was used. Before the brickwork was painted buff and brown during the restoration of 1827 to 1829, the building would have stood out as the little red brick synagogue on the hill.[32]

Harrison's final building in Newport was the 1772 Brick Market, a symbol of the great commercial wealth that made the city—and the synagogue—a possibility (*Figure 10*). Its location at the base of the Parade (the intersection of Queen and Thames) and its academic classicism place it at the beginning of a progression across Newport's civic land-

[31] Harold Wickliffe Rose, *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America: Built in the English Colonies before the Republic and Still Standing* (New York: Hastings House, 1963), p. 400.

[32] Department of the Interior, Historic American Buildings Survey, *Touro Synagogue: Congregation Jeshuat Israel* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1971), p. 12. For a discussion of the finish evidence on the synagogue see Claude Emanuel Menders, Architects, Inc., *Master Plan for Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island,* vol. 1 (Newport: Congregation Jeshuat Israel and Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Shrine, Inc., 2000), pp. 59–66, 141–42.

scape. Newport's three public brick buildings stood within one thousand feet of each other. Built on higher ground than the Colony House or the Brick Market, the synagogue—thirty feet shorter than the Colony House with its cupola—is only ten feet lower in its elevation than the seat of government. Clearly visible from the harbor, the three brick buildings along a single axis rising gradually away from the harbor were linked in the landscape: a house of commerce, a house of law, and a house of God. From the synagogue the axis continues along Griffin to the Redwood Library, a house of learning. Through its location, the synagogue, like the community it nurtured, expressed itself as an integral and engaged part of Newport.

The Jewish communities of Willemstad, Curaçao, and Newport, Rhode Island, both used architecture to express their place within the secular community and their participation in a transnational Judeo-Atlantic world. These two synagogues, built nearly thirty years apart, demonstrate the increasing boldness with which Jewish communities used architecture to assert themselves upon the landscape. Tied together though webs of faith, kinship, and commerce, the two communities looked to each other, as well as to the other communities of the Judeo-Atlantic world, particularly London and Amsterdam, as they created buildings that were symbols of their identity. Inside, both buildings created sacred space in similar, if evolving, ways. Outside, the buildings, like the members of the congregations, increasingly engaged with their surroundings in an evolution from secularly anonymous to secularly bold.