

# TIME AND TIDE IN PORTSMOUTH

BY SUE HERTZ

**K**

ATHY JARVIS WAS HOMESICK. WHEN the 20-year-old Boston native married Sam Jarvis in 1958 and moved to his hometown of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, she escaped to the Massachusetts city as often as she could. Much of her week was spent commuting south via bus. She found Portsmouth dreary and backward: junkyards in

the South End, crowded tenements in the North End, few movies, no theater, not even a decent dress shop or restaurant.

During one trip she overheard two Boston businessmen talking. She looked out the window. Past the Portsmouth scrap metal pile. Past rows of neglected houses with sagging porches and ripped window shades. Over the railroad tracks and into town, a cluster of drab buildings covered with aluminum siding and glaring neon signs.

"What a dumpy town," one of the businessmen said. "What a lousy place to live."

Kathy Jarvis shriveled in her seat. As she stepped off the bus she thought, "I'm embarrassed to let these people know I live here."

She's no longer embarrassed. In fact, she's proud. There's little she likes better than to guide her houseguests through shops on Commercial Alley or watch the glass-blowing at Salamandra Glass on Market Street. In the summer, she'll treat them to homemade ice cream at Annabelle's and point out tugboats chugging around Portsmouth Harbor. Sometimes they'll enjoy an outdoor theater production at Prescott Park or stroll through the 220-year-old Moffat Ladd House.

"I hated Portsmouth at first," Jarvis says. "I cried every day. Now I love it."

LOVE ISN'T A STRONG ENOUGH WORD FOR MANY. PEOPLE are passionate about Portsmouth. Ask residents about their town and they'll tell you about the fettuccine at Anthony's Al Dente, the flowers at Prescott Park, the scenic waterfront, the delight of living an hour from the mountains and an hour from Boston. They'll mention the first-class productions at Theatre by the Sea and Sunday night jazz at the Press Room. They've found paradise. Or so they think.

Beneath the quaint brick sidewalks bubbles controversy, as Portsmouth, like so many other cities, comes to grips with the process of change. The past twenty years of transformation have brought as much conflict as pride — along with a more modern and increasingly common breed of problems. In place of honky-tonks and winos on Ceres Street the city now has soaring housing prices and property taxes. Some locals whose roots wind back for centuries cannot afford to live here anymore. Those who can stay must learn to live with locked doors and guard dogs. More newcomers mean more transients, more crime.

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The old guard is quick to point out the trouble. Slow down, says; change should be an evolution, not a revolution. The new guard says, Forge ahead. Predictably, the two groups lock horns. Transitions that should be painless often drag for months, even years. To place six tables outside his downtown cafe, Teddy's Lunch, for summertime dining, Paul Rampon endured a City Council debate, a month-long test period, and a second council deliberation. Discussion in the City Council often turns into a verbal free-for-all.

Tension breeds from resentment and fear of growth. The Portsmouth that Kathy Jarvis loves is the Portsmouth that natives Evelyn Marconi and Bill Palfrey deplore. They have no use for artichoke stuffed quail at the Blue Strawberry or futons on sale at Macro Polo. Marconi's back arches at the mention of Strawberry Banke, the ten-acre museum district of historical homes. Palfrey, who is 77, drives through blocks of narrow side streets to avoid the rejuvenated Market Square. Longtime residents cringe as they watch 65,000 tourist trek through their turf each year and as industrial parks fill with the likes of the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company and Data General Corporation. They say that they've paid dearly for a solid economy.

"The revitalization of Portsmouth was a big flop," says Marconi. "Plastic City, USA. All revitalized downtowns look the same. They all have brick and granite. They've changed it so, Congress Street doesn't even look like Congress Street."

Marconi, a 50-year-old native of the city's South End, is unflinching in her criticism. Portsmouth is her city, and there's little about the metamorphosis that she likes. Newcomers mean trouble, she believes. She says she was evicted from her home to make room for Strawberry Banke. The boutiques are too expensive, the fashion offered too chic. Too many restaurants, not enough gourmets. She says she can predict which eateries will make it.

It isn't so much the new facade that pains the old-timers. Rather it is the loss of what they knew, what they see as the end of an era. Marconi yearns most of all for the tight camaraderie of her old neighborhood. William Keefe, a consummate state and city politician, mourns the passing of the time when he knew every person downtown. Real estate broker John McMaster misses the ethnic flavor of the North End.

Their desire to hold onto the past, however, is thwarted by the stampede of newcomers to the city rated one of the four best places to live in 1983 by Rand McNally's *Places Rated Almanac*. While the natives grunt when they hear their city dubbed the San Francisco of the East, transplants rejoice at their discovery. They feel they have found a business environment without the back-stabbing competition of New York, a haven for recreation without hour-long waits for a tennis court. They live in a state without a personal income or sales tax and in a city with low unemployment. Last November, when New Hampshire's unemployment rate was 7 percent, Portsmouth's was only 5.6 percent.

The credit for the low jobless rate belongs to a diverse economy.

*The conversion of a historic home into a bowling alley spurred Portsmouth librarian Dorothy Vaughan (right) to plead that urban renewal funds be used to restore the city, not destroy it. Robin and David Bellantone (bottom right), owners of Salamandra Glass on Market Street, one of the city's many new shops, pose with their daughter, Jessica.*



In addition to tourism and two industrial parks, there's the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, employer of nine thousand, across the Piscataqua River in Kittery, Maine. New, small retail businesses, restaurants, Pease Air Force Base in neighboring Newington, the University of New Hampshire in Durham fifteen miles north, the New Hampshire Vocational/Technical College in Greenland, and the new one-hundred-store Fox Run Mall also help keep jobless statistics down.

All the ringing cash registers, however, do not soothe the feelings of the old-timers as they watch mansions being divided into condos and summer traffic snarl into next-door Newington. But throughout its history Portsmouth has felt the pangs of progress. Change is nothing new to a city that for 360 years has bounced between rags and riches, dormancy and development.

**F**ROM THE TIME THAT THE FIRST SETTLERS stepped onto its strawberry-blanketed shores in 1623 until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Portsmouth was one of the busiest seaports on the East Coast. At first the city, then known as Piscataqua, thrived as the fishing and shipbuilding center for the Royal Navy. Trade in rum and slaves was brisk. Wealthy seamen and shipbuilders used their profits to construct hundreds of mansions, many of which still exist. When the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was established by the new United States government in 1800, the seaport was the fifteenth-largest city in the nation.

Then hard times hit. The rich Tories returned to England, and Thomas Jefferson's embargo on foreign trade in 1807 drastically reduced the work of the shipbuilders, sailors, and sailmakers. Trade dwindled. Fires ripped through the city, leaving many families homeless.

But Portsmouth survived. The years of plenty over, residents kept the economy stable with shipbuilding — city historians boast that many of America's fastest clipper ships were built there in the 1840s and 1850s — and brewing Frank Jones Ale. The twentieth century brought construction of 134 submarines at the Navy Yard, but due to the fickle nature of shipbuilding, a stable economy remained an elusive dream.

"Before the 1960s, the Navy Yard was boom or bust," says Raymond Brighton, former editor of the *Portsmouth Herald*. "One week the yard would need a thousand welders; the next week it wouldn't. The work force was down to four thousand in the early fifties."

The city's economy teetered on the edge of disaster in the 1960s, when defense secretary Robert McNamara proposed to cut the defense budget by closing ninety-five military installations, including the Navy Yard. After years of lobbying by citizens and representatives, President Richard Nixon and Congress rescinded the yard's closing. Since then, business at the yard has stabilized.

Except for a surge of immigrants during the submarine boom years, the population of Portsmouth stagnated. Few tourists traipsed



through town, fewer newcomers settled. There was little to attract them. The downtown was a maze of chaotic traffic patterns and empty storefronts. National supermarket chains and shopping malls sprouted up outside the city center, luring customers away from downtown mom-and-pop shops. Unable to compete with their selection and prices, the small Portsmouth retailers sought new work. Those who remained glumly watched potential business speed by on the new three-lane bridge over the Piscataqua that linked New Hampshire and Maine.

The city remained divided into ethnic pockets. The Greeks lived on Fleet, Hanover, and Vaughan streets, the Polish on McDonough. Christian Shores was Irish, and the North End was Italian. The South End was a melting pot of Jews, Catholics, Russians, and Yankees. Though groomed mansions on Middle Street gave evidence of past opulence, most of the city's dwellings begged for repair.

The South End, in particular, was an eyesore. A hodgepodge of auto junkyards and dilapidated homes, this section, known as Puddle Dock, was built around a tidal creek that flowed into the Piscataqua. By the end of the nineteenth century, the surrounding wharves had rotted and the creek shrunk into a stinking mud flat. By the mid-1950s, the area was labeled a health hazard by the citizens and slated for urban renewal.

Dorothy Vaughan, the city librarian, had other ideas. Watching one eighteenth-century home after another disintegrate tormented her. The last straw was when a two-hundred-year-old Colonial was converted into a bowling alley in the late 1950s. Vaughan stood in front of the Rotary Club and asked for help in seeing that the city's federal urban renewal funds were used to restore, not destroy. The city should capitalize on its history, she pleaded, not bulldoze it.

The Rotary Club agreed and sprang into action. Committees formed, research began. Yet years slipped by before the proposal jelled. Restoration meant relocating families, ripping up roots. Though many of the Puddle Dock homes "were substandard by today's standards," the city had little right to disrupt a way of life, says Marconi. The Portsmouth Housing Authority reported the area "showed widespread evidence of blight," but Marconi describes her neighborhood as "close-knit and compassionate," one with few fences and nary a locked door.

And so came the beginning of the end of old Portsmouth, a change marked by a battle so emotional the bitterness still lingers. After a series of dramatic public hearings, the forces of community revival won. Most Puddle Dockers scattered to other parts of the city, but some left. Their homes were either leveled or restored as part of what is now Strawberry Banke. Marconi cringes as she recalls her neighbors receiving eviction notices. "They disemboweled Portsmouth," she says. "They cut out the heart. It is missing the people, the ethnic groups."

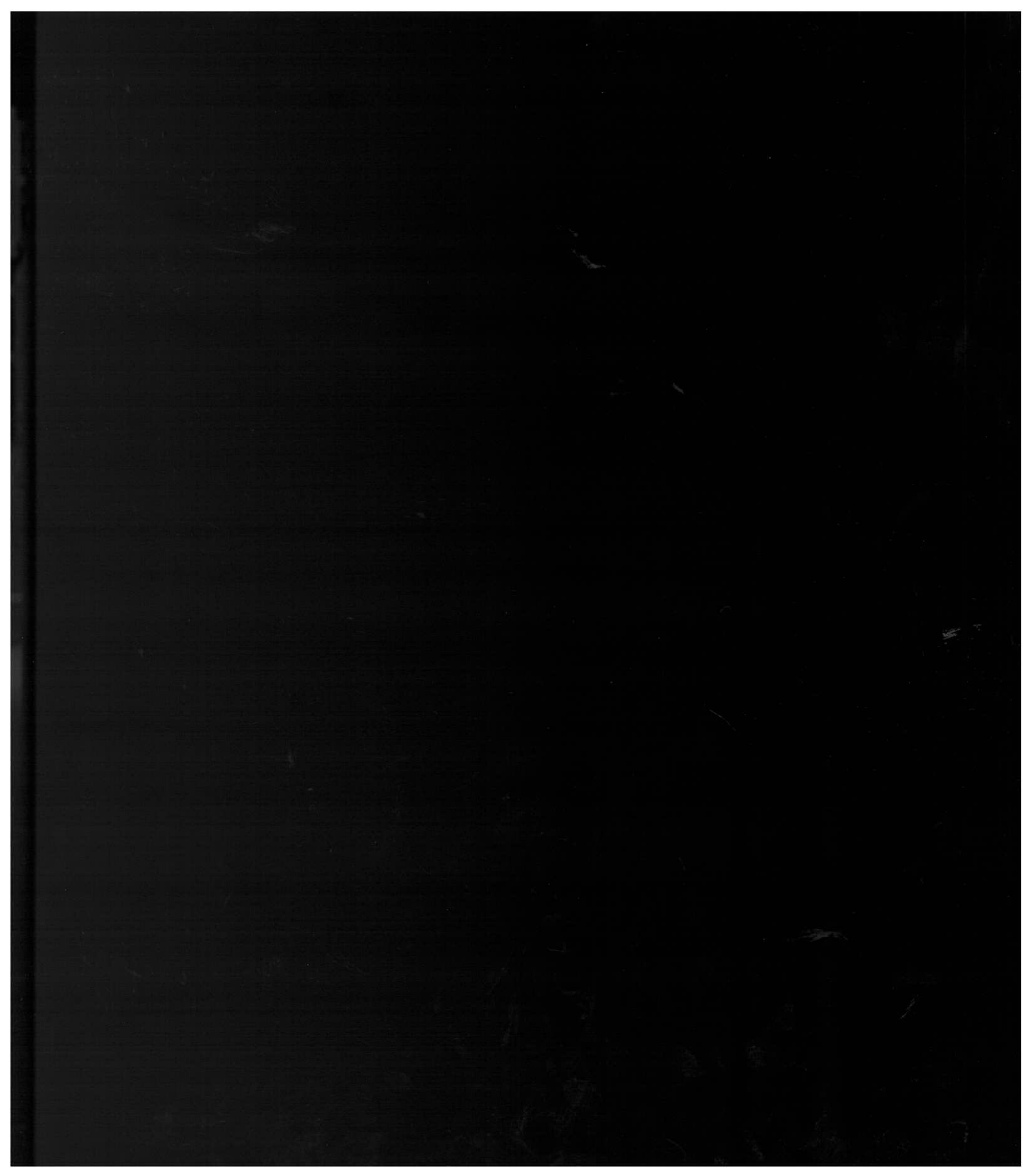
Historical salvation fever was contagious. One group of citizens worked on the South End. Meanwhile, another organization, called Portsmouth Preservation, renovated parts of the North End. It demanded that sixty-five houses marked for demolition there be restored instead. At first the troupe was treated as "old house nuts," recalls Nancy Beck, one of the organization's founders. But through determination, fund raising, and lobbying, Portsmouth Preservation achieved part of its goal: Thirteen houses were saved and renovated into an attractive Colonial office village known as the Hill.

The fever spread. Once community development funds were offered by the federal and state governments, neighborhoods were transformed overnight. One after another, homeowners snatched up low-interest loans to refurbish their property. Fresh paint, new shutters, revived roofs, and manicured lawns could soon be seen. Residents who could not keep pace left town. Those who could bought property for peanuts. Raymond Brighton knows one couple that bought and restored five homes.

**D**OWNTOWN CAUGHT THE BUG, TOO. VISION INC., a Cambridge architectural and environmental consulting firm, was hired by the city to nudge merchants toward storefront makeover. The firm showed the storeowners how other communities had revitalized their downtowns. Portsmouth hired an architect to provide ideas and plans for renovations. Low-interest government loans clinched the merchants' enthusiasm for the project.

Down went the neon lights and aluminum siding, up went hand-crafted wood signs and handsome brick. *Continued on page 50*

**The old guard sees change as an evolution, not a revolution, while the new guard wants to forge ahead. Yet many new residents continue to pay homage to the past.**



## Portsmouth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Trees were planted, park benches installed, traffic patterns simplified. Asphalt sidewalks became brick. But the most dramatic metamorphosis occurred on Ceres Street.

The late Richard Morton looked beyond the

eroding brick warehouses and derelicts littering the waterfront street. He envisioned apartments, shops, restaurants. Using profits he had accrued as owner of the New Hampshire Highway Hotel in Concord, he bought warehouses and created his dream. His apartments, complete with harbor view, were the most fashionable in town. His street-level storefronts lured the best tenants. The Blue Strawberry restaurant pitched its linen-covered tables in one; the Oar

House restaurant followed suit a few years later. Schermerhorn's Wine and Cheese Store, the Ceres Street Bakery, and Annabelle's ice cream parlor helped transform the waterfront strip from the city embarrassment to the city treasure. Of greatest impact was the tenant on the end of the street, the Theatre by the Sea.

Now nestled in a remodeled brewery several blocks away, the theater slowly evolved from an amateur community group to a professional dramatic company. The ninety-nine-seat house on Ceres Street drew patrons from as far away as Boston and actors from theater-rich New York and Los Angeles. Portsmouth's growing reputation as the cultural center for northern New England attracted more artists. The Pontine Mime Company planted its roots in Market Square. A block south, the Young Fine Arts Gallery arranged its wares.

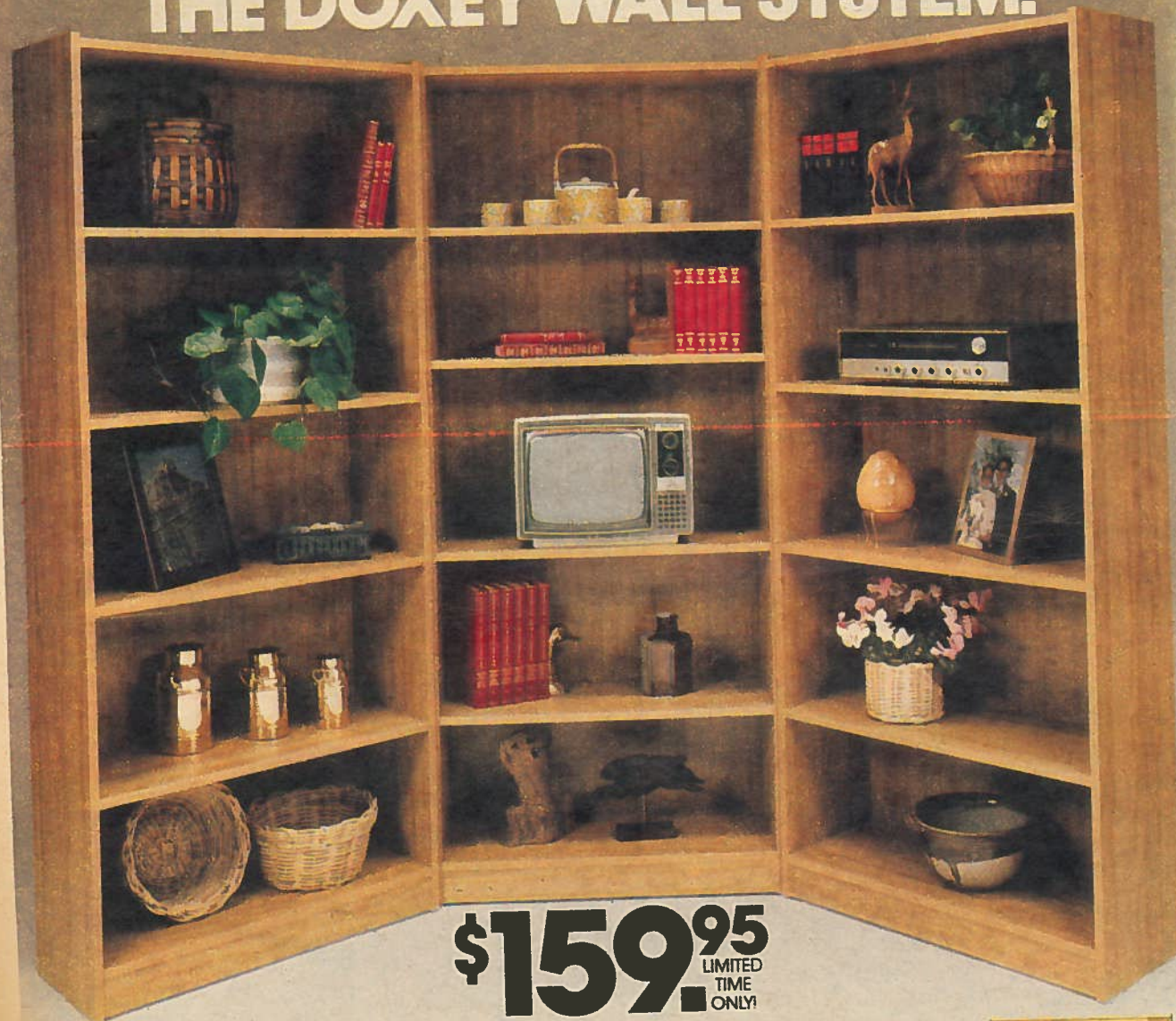
With new charms to offer, the city wooed industry. Booth Fisheries moved into the first industrial park. Others, including Liberty Mutual and Data General, followed. A second park was established. In came Post Machinery and Erie Scientific Company. Wheelabrator-Frye, Inc., moved its headquarters to neighboring Hampton, and Congoleum Corporation, a manufacturer of ship and floor tiles, transferred its base of operations to Portsmouth.

The residents were divided in their loyalties. As old-timer Morris Foye directed meter maids to illegally parked cars owned by transplants and tourists, Harry and Sam Jarvis embraced the growth without a glance backward. The brothers updated their family restaurant, a Portsmouth institution for decades, from a coffee shop to an elegant dining room called the Metro. Sam's wife, Kathy, was delighted. Finally, she felt a breath of Boston.

"A certain number of people didn't feel the need to change," says Sam Jarvis. "But to be successful, you need to change. Demands change, tastes change. We have to be youthful in our thinking."

Business blossomed. The city folk liked the stained-glass and mirror decor. Yet, as the Jarvis brothers thrust their gears into forward, many of their peers were stuck in neutral. Change bred suspicion. When Paul Rampon bought Teddy's Lunch, a Market Square breakfast and lunch spot, three years ago, few old-timers spoke to him. Rampon was a transplant from Boston, an outsider. But he played their game; he was friendly but not nosy. He worked hard but didn't coddle them. Months after he opened,

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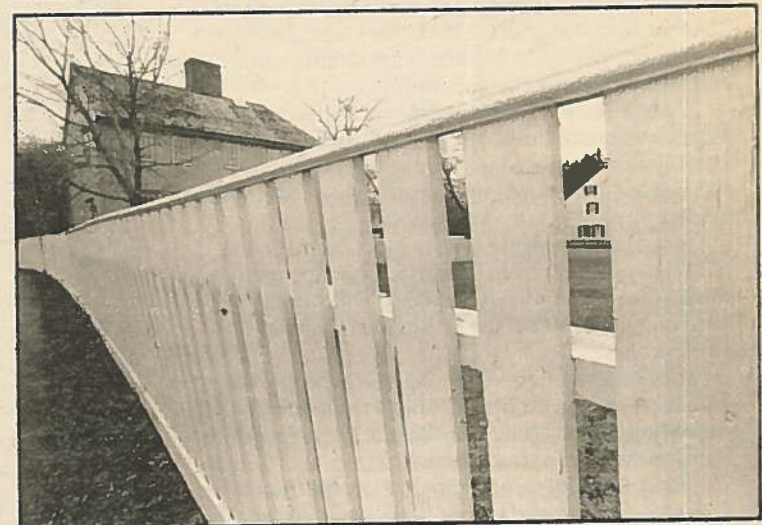
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**Puddle Dock:** Most of the houses were either leveled or restored.



**Strawbery Banke:** The city's ten-acre district of historical homes.

once assured he was there to stay, the regulars greeted him with, "Hey, carpetbagger, how ya' doin'?"

"They reminded me I was a carpetbagger," Rampon recalls. "But they were friendly."

They aren't always so friendly, however. The old guard of Portsmouth is stubborn, and the consequence can be years of inertia.

There was the Farragut dilemma, for example. Most locals over 30 attended high school in the yellow brick Farragut building next to the public library. In the mid-1960s a new high school was built and an elementary school moved in. A few years later, the elementary school shifted to newly built quarters. Several members of the City Council and downtown businessmen proposed that the building be demolished and the land paved for a parking lot. Parking was a chronic problem, all agreed, but the old-timers said no. The Farragut was their high school, harboring their memories.

The building sat. Parking headaches intensified. Housing was tight. The old-timers crossed their arms and shook their heads. Pigeons moved

into the empty building's cupola, vandals shattered the windows. Occasionally the city placed a for sale ad in the *Portsmouth Herald*. In 1979, ten years after the building closed, the old guard gave in. Berkshire Builders purchased the property and transformed it into elderly housing. Many of the old-timers moved in.

And there is the South Mill Pond quandary. When the wind blows just right, a foul odor rises from the stagnant pond beside the city tennis courts. For almost twenty years new city officials have entered office and suggested the pond be filled and used as a parking lot. For almost twenty years the old-timers have said no. They remember the pond as their skating rink in winter and swimming hole in summer. The pond no longer freezes and not even tadpoles brave the water, but it remains a pond, and the stench and lack of parking remain problems.

Though annoying, the stench can be tolerated. Financial losses can't. Though neither the old nor the new blood on the City Council can deny the seacoast's dependency on

*Continued on page 56*

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## Portsmouth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52

tourism, they can quibble for  
hours, sometimes weeks and  
months, on how best to reap  
the revenues.

**F**or years city officials  
like Mayor Peter Weeks  
and city manager Calvin  
Canney have argued the need  
for a downtown hotel. Aside  
from a few bed and breakfast  
establishments, the closest  
lodging lies three miles away at  
the Portsmouth traffic circle.  
Travelers en route to northern  
New England and Maine can  
easily bypass the downtown  
area. Those who choose to ex-  
plore the seacoast often hope  
to stay at Wentworth-by-the-  
Sea, the 109-year-old hotel  
complex in neighboring New  
Castle. That will be impossible  
for another year and a half  
now: The Victorian hotel was  
sold and closed two years ago  
for renovations.

Last January, the fourth  
hotel proposal in six years  
came before the City Council.  
Councilor Mary Keenan feared  
a large hotel would endanger  
Portsmouth's small-town at-  
mosphere. Councilor William  
Keefe asked, "What's the  
hurry?" Weeks, Canney, and  
Councilor Jay Foley argued  
vehemently in favor of the  
hotel. After an hour's debate,  
the City Council narrowly ap-  
proved the proposal that would,  
subject to many conditions and  
countless further debates, create  
a downtown hotel.

Downtown merchants also  
clash on their approach to tour-  
ism. While younger merchants  
like Will Berliner, owner of  
Wholly Macro, a boutique, keep  
their shops open into the eve-  
ning, most of the older mer-  
chants operate nine to five.  
David Choate, executive direc-  
tor of the Greater Portsmouth

Chamber of Commerce, is frus-  
trated. He sees the dollars of  
tourists and working people  
alike evaporating.

"The downtown business  
people are sometimes their  
own worst enemy," he says.  
"Everyone is an independent  
business person with his own  
ideas of what should happen;  
they won't give of themselves  
to make the changes happen.  
Some people have tunnel  
vision. They can't see beyond  
their front door. They complain  
about Market Square Day [an  
outdoor festival held every  
spring], which brings thousands  
of new people to the area. They  
[tourists] may not buy anything  
that day, but they'll return  
when they have more time."

It is estimated that one  
tourist dollar recycles in the  
community five times, yet to  
some locals "tourist is a dirty  
word," says Peggy McLaugh-  
lin, Strawberry Banke's public  
relations director. "I haven't  
encountered any problems, but  
I know the bitterness is still  
there."

Strawberry Banke is the tar-  
get of much of that bitterness.  
Marconi refers to historical dis-  
tricting as "hysterical district-  
ing." One building in particular  
arouses local wrath — the two-  
hundred-year-old home at the  
corner of Court and Pleasant  
streets. The building is owned  
by Strawberry Banke and rented  
to the Feminist Health Center.  
Like most women's health clin-  
ics, the center offered gynecolo-  
gical, counseling, and birth  
control services. Unlike some  
others in New Hampshire, it of-  
fered abortions. When the di-  
rectors of the Concord-based  
center leased the building in  
1979 to house the clinic, local  
residents rallied. It was old  
versus new, pro-life against  
pro-choice. While the center  
fought to obtain the certificate  
of need that was required from  
the state for it to operate,



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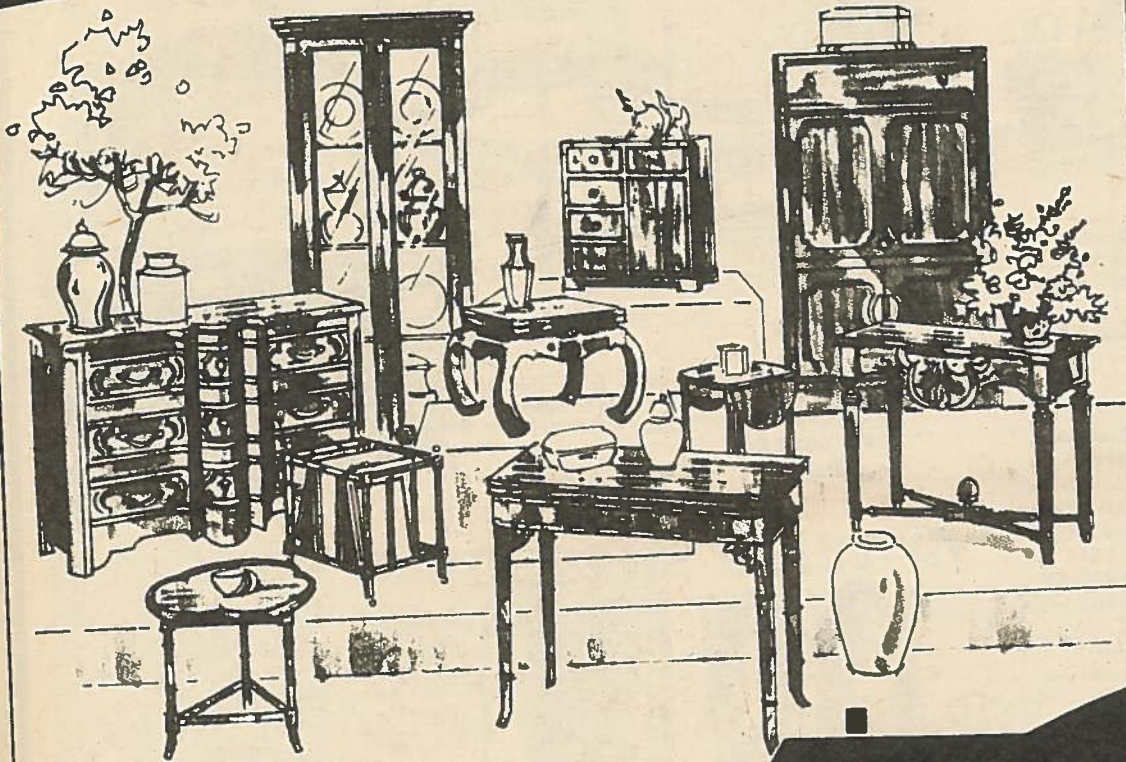
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Walter Bibikow



**Wentworth-by-the-Sea: The New Castle hotel is closed for repairs.**

labels like "abortion mill" swirled around town. Opponents carried picket signs and wrote letters to the *Portsmouth Herald*. "The anti-abortion forces suddenly had a cause," remembers Joan Lovering, director of the center.

But support for the clinic was overwhelming, says Lovering. During the public hearing that determined the need for the clinic, the supporters claimed victory. But the opponents did not rest. The center's first year of service was punctuated by picketing, sometimes passive, sometimes violent. The center continues to operate. The controversy has dimmed in intensity, says Lovering, but antagonism has not diminished.

Other issues distract the public's attention today. To few residents' surprise, the influx of tourists and transients brought crime: more than four times as many crimes in some cases. In 1967 Portsmouth witnessed 319 thefts, 1 robbery, and 164 burglaries. By 1981 the figures had swelled to 1282 thefts, 19 robberies, and 494 burglaries. Residents took action. Doberman pinschers, deadbolts, and high wire fences became fixtures in once carefree neighborhoods.

Business folk learned to

deal with robbery. Crime did not cross Carol Moody's mind when she opened her clothing boutique on Market Street in December 1981, but the following April she was robbed. A woman shopper snatched a purse containing the shop's bank deposits from the counter.

"I thought I wouldn't have to worry about putting the purse on the counter," says Moody. "That made me realize I was doing business not in a small town, but in a city with city problems."

Robbery causes only a fraction of the fear. Portsmouth is also plagued with major crimes like rape, drug trafficking, murder. William Mortimer, deputy marshal of Portsmouth's detective force, calls 1982 "the year of the bodies."

In a city unaccustomed to murder, maybe one every other year, the homicide wave that began in 1981 was an ugly jolt. The first victim was 23-year-old Laura Kempton. Any Portsmouth local can recite the details. At 6 p.m. on a Sunday in September, Kempton left work as a sales clerk at Wholly Macro for Luka's restaurant. After a night of dancing she ate a late dinner at the Victory Spa. The next morning she was found in her apartment, raped and beaten to death. Her murder, still unsolved, shot a shiver

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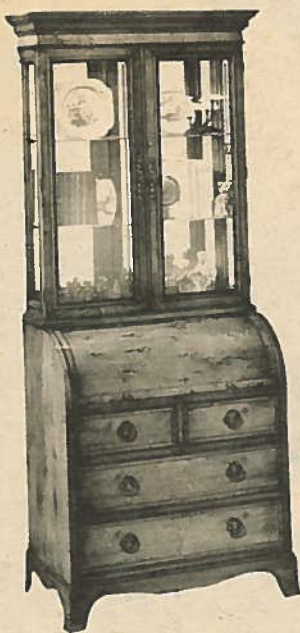
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of panic through the community. Few women walked unescorted after sunset. Transients were eyed with suspicion. One single woman says she slept with her light on for ten months after the murder.

Six months after Kempton's death, 23-year-old Valerie Blair was shot to death in neighboring Rye's Odiorne Park. Two months later, Michael Bouchard, 25, was slain by a single gunshot in his Middle Street home. In the house across the street, 46-year-old Dennis Chase was shot to death last October. Four days later, Tammy Little, 20, was found bludgeoned to death in her downtown Portsmouth apartment. Like Kempton's, Little's murder remains unsolved.

In response, citizens organized the Stop Seacoast Crime Committee. Paul Rampon, the committee's chairman, says SSCC's purpose is to make the downtown area safer, but so far the fear remains. Kathy Jarvis will not walk unescorted from the movie theater to her husband's restaurant, two blocks away, at night; 26-year-old Hazel Molin refuses to budge out of her downtown apartment alone after sunset. "Just when I feel secure enough to walk to the downtown A&P, I read

about another murder," Molin says. "I asked the landlord for a deadbolt."

Mortimer shakes his head. "Years ago we [the detective squad] were busy," he says. "But the busy part of our lives wasn't the major crimes like murder and drugs. It was burglaries and robberies."

Drugs are considered a major cause of crime. A deep-water port boasting easy access to an interstate highway, Portsmouth is an ideal spot for drug trafficking. Cocaine and marijuana busts make frequent headlines. Last December New Hampshire State Police confiscated 113 pounds of marijuana and over \$200,000 worth of cocaine in the seacoast area over a four-day period. Rumors still circulate that the drug culture was behind the murders of Little and Kempton. Raymond Labrie, deputy marshal of Portsmouth, says only, "We're trying."

Limitations on staff, vehicles, and office space hinder the police department in its work. Frustrated by the unsolved murders and spiraling crime rate, the community pressured the City Council to act. Despite a painfully tight budget, in January the council

approved a \$60,000 supplement to the police budget to increase the force from fifty-five to sixty. Chief of police Stanton Remick hopes next year brings money for more cruisers.

Money, of course, is the issue. In a sour economy, raising taxes to fund services, even to hire police, is not politically wise. The recent property tax jump of \$8 per 1000 square feet threw Portsmouth residents into a tizzy. They complain to each other, to strangers, to city officials. Portsmouth has always prided itself on its low tax rate. City manager Calvin Canney maintains that taxes remain lower than in other New Hampshire cities — in 1980 Portsmouth residents paid \$1.99 per \$100 of property value while Manchester residents paid \$2.47 and Concord residents \$3.12 — but they are higher than ever before. And no one likes it.

"One of the most unfortunate by-products of improvement is that things cost more," says Canney. "Rentals, property taxes, parking. This restricts people who lived in Portsmouth first. They own property and are on fixed incomes. Property taxes go up. Often there are no alternatives. They have to seek other quarters. This forces

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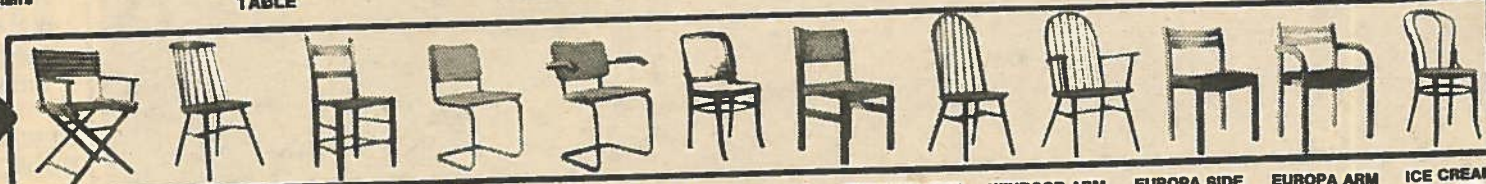
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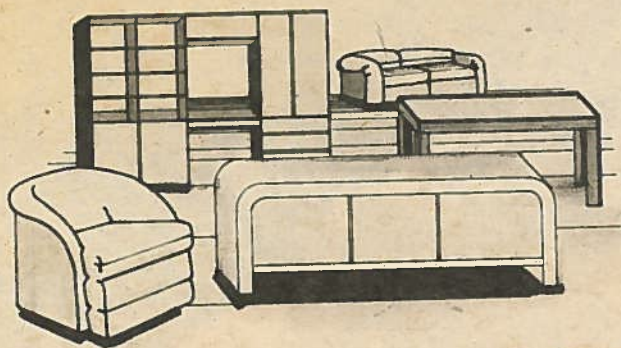


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some of them out of the community."

Many low-income families flee north to Dover and Rochester or west to Greenland and Stratham seeking a more hospitable housing climate. Property in Portsmouth is expensive. The city's renaissance sent real estate prices sky-high. As homes and neighborhoods took on new life and Portsmouth became a fashionable place to live, housing shifted from a buyer's to a seller's market. Transplanted corporation employees from New York and Milwaukee, accustomed to high-cost property, did not dicker about price.

"The sellers got wind of this and jacked the prices up," says real estate broker John McMaster. And they've stayed up. A three-bedroom New Englander that sold for \$28,000 ten years ago is listed for \$55,000 to \$65,000 today.

The result is a community makeover. Gone are the clusters of Italians and Greeks and Polish. In their place are neighborhoods of upper-middle-class professionals.

"This city is very homogeneous," says Louisa Flanagan, a New York actress performing at Theatre by the Sea.

Walter Bibikow



From Teddy's Lunch, owner Paul Rampon can watch the city.

"I have black eyebrows and feel ethnic up here. If you're a little swarthy and don't wear Lacoste shirts, you feel out of place."

Yet even the middle class feels a pinch. Since many of the old Colonials were designed for large families, the homes are often too spacious for a four- or five-member household. Heating the high-ceilinged rooms is a cost few care to shoulder. Consequently, many of the two-hundred- and three-hundred-year-old mansions are now multiunit dwellings of apartments, condominiums, and offices. As childless professionals move in, families are forced to

seek new homes. Like the low-income residents, the ousted middle class often heads to surrounding towns.

By the same token, renters are in a squeeze. Despite the earlier home conversions, apartments are in short supply. With a 1 percent vacancy rate, landlords can get whatever they ask for; a studio apartment can rent for as much as \$400 or \$500 a month. During the summer months it is standing room only at Apartment World, a renters' listing agency.

And there is no relief in sight. Portsmouth sits on 15.3 miles of land, most of which is already topped with homes, businesses, and schools. There is no room for blocks of affordable homes and apartments. The only way to go is up. City manager Canney predicts that high-rise construction will house the Portsmouth population of the future — a population he says could swell to 45,000 by the year 2020.

Canney welcomes the growth. He is eager for the new downtown hotel to be built and hopes to attract high-technology companies for a third industrial park. To Canney, growth means a healthy econ-

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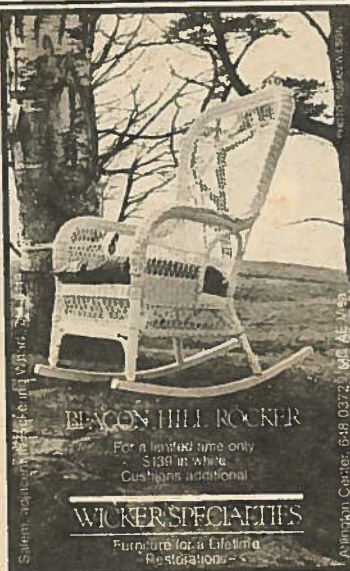
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omy.

To others, more growth means nothing except more traffic. Already the roads leading out of town are jammed. Locals know better than to go anywhere near DeMoulas Market Basket between 4 and 6 p.m. Traffic to the Newington Mall is always congested. The opening of the Fox Run Mall in Newington in February created miles of bumper-to-bumper traffic. If shoppers prefer the downtown, they must battle for a parking spot.

Yet compared with other traffic trouble spots — like Boston's Southeast Expressway — road conditions in Portsmouth are a breeze. In fact, to immigrants from Boston and New York, accustomed to daily homicides and armed robberies, Portsmouth's problems are minuscule. To urban survivors, this seaport provides relief.

The future of Portsmouth is anyone's guess. So far, the city has successfully warded off the tattoo parlors and cotton-candy booths that frequently invade a tourist area. It has squelched the flowering of cheap split-levels. Downtown renovations continue in the same tasteful manner in which they began. Yet the threat of losing control over growth lurks behind every new building proposal.

Portsmouth residents need only look north to the Maine coast to see the consequences of unchecked development. Without the defenders of small-town Portsmouth, they, too, might live in an environment ripe for construction-crazed contractors, watching fast-food chains replace outdoor cafes and neon signs replace those made of wood. After all, many resort towns have gone that route.

But old and new guard alike seem to agree that without its Colonial allure, Portsmouth would lose its identity, blending facelessly into the list of indistinguishable New England retreats. As the old guard dwindles, new residents continue to pay homage to the past with organizations like the Historical Commission, which, among other things, keeps neon blight out of designated historical zones.

And in spite of the fact that Evelyn Marconi and Kathy Jarvis have distinctly different ideas of what the word "preservation" means, their goals are really not all that far apart. While Jarvis and others proclaim themselves guardians of Portsmouth's past, with a strong gaze toward the future, Marconi and those like her say they are protecting Portsmouth's future while keeping a firm grasp on its past. •

## Energy options

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

daily, and in some remote spots — like Nantucket — wind power is proving its worth. Yet wind power is not likely to become widespread soon. "The utilities seem to be very excited about the growing interest in wind," says Don Reece of Eneritech, a Norwich, Vermont, manufacturer of wind generators. "But there are those with substantial commitments to nuclear power and conventional energy sources who are intimidated by it."

Privately produced power is fed into the main power grid, and federal regulations require utilities to pay for it at "avoided cost." This means utilities must pay owners of windmills, cogenerators, and hydrodams at a rate pegged to the current

cost of oil-fired electricity. When OPEC is riding high, such small-scale producers are sitting pretty. But fluctuations in the price of oil create great uncertainty for such development. Says Reece, "The utilities have a kind of stranglehold on the situation."

The development of renewables is hindered by less tangible factors as well. Thompson's analysis shows that wind power can, in principle, provide 80 percent of New Hampshire's power needs, and several studies have uncovered 300 megawatts of untapped potential capacity in hydroelectric power in New Hampshire. Neither technology is likely to be used to such an extent, however: The prospect of wind towers on New England highlands, a view some consider unsightly, will prevent many of the generators from being installed; similarly, hydroelec-

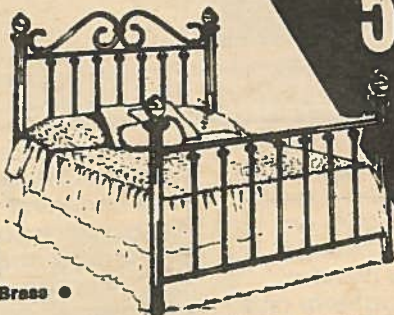
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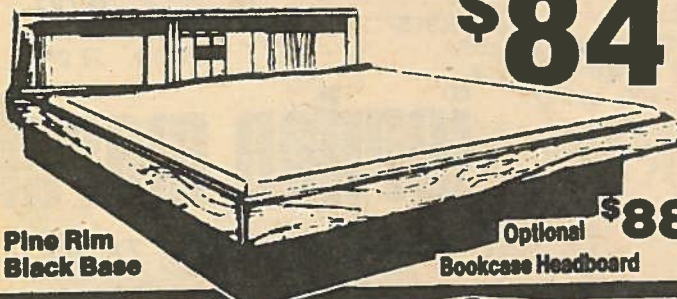
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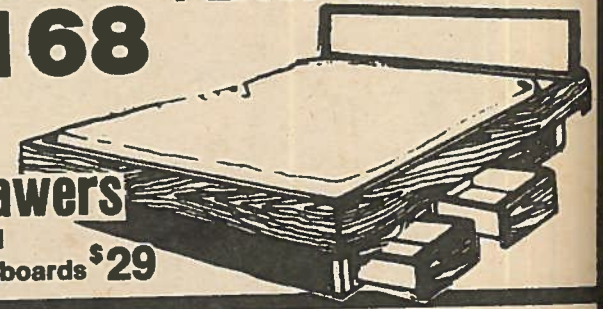


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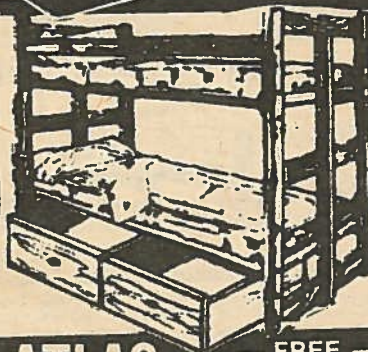
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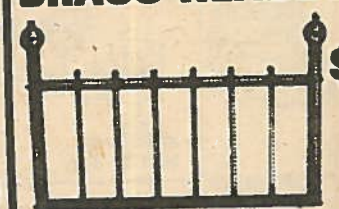
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