

Creating 20th Century Warren, 1905-1925

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More than most places, Warren is a 20th century city. Very little in Warren predates the turn-of-the-century era and most of the city was built in the first half of this century. This is rather surprising since Warren was one of the earliest places on the Reserve and achieved a reputation later in the 19th Century as an outstanding bulwark of New England character. Warren is no longer the picturesque small town it was 100 years ago. Back then a small number of landed gentry controlled the town led by the dominant Henry B. Perkins. But the sudden demise of the Perkins family left Warren founding for leadership just as the new century began. The town soon after stumbled out of the dark into the light of a new era. Warren awoke from its enforced bucolic slumber and began to soar. The pent-up energy released propelled the city into the 20th Century and thrust it into the national economy. The city set out to make up for lost opportunities and soon was challenging old rivals for new business. Warren aimed to muscle its way onto the national stage. The new leadership rushed forward with little thought except to make-up for lost time. The city

threw-off old ways and embraced what was new and modern. So intense was the drive toward the future that little effort was made to utilize the best of the past. This was especially true for buildings and other things associated with the old order. In the twenty years between 1905 and 1925, nearly everything changed in Warren. New leadership took power. There was a sudden and dramatic expansion of industry and commerce. New ethnic groups arrived in pursuit of the American dream. During this brief period, Warren glowed white hot in its attempt to transform itself. This throwing off of the old order set the stage for new outlooks and values. This stimulating environment produced talented individuals who helped propel the national society forward into the modern era. Among these were the suffragist Harriet Taylor Upton and the poet Hart Crane. These personages personify the caliber of talent that resulted from this brief, but remarkable time. They and others were influenced and molded by the stimulating milieu in which Warren made itself over into a 20th century place.