

**TUMBLING DOWN** — The wall in the Fowler Avenue house gives way and crashes to the ground as Laferria walks away from the window.

Kathryn Whitney/Daily News photo

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## Town explores options for Gray Craig

By Mary E. Cronin  
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**MIDDLETOWN** — The town will look into buying the Gray Craig property on Paradise Avenue.

But officials of the neighboring Norman Bird Sanctuary have already begun negotiations with the owners of Gray Craig, Robert Kempenaar and his partners, who own the 78-acre estate, are planning to renovate and construct 56 single-family, duplex and multi-family units.

Several Middletown residents have asked the Town Council to help preserve the estate, and the town's Open Space Study Committee will look into buying the property.

Sanctuary officials have objected to Kempenaar's plan out of fear it could adversely impact the surrounding environment.

Kempenaar said this morning that he is still negotiating and both the developers and the bird sanctuary are in the process of getting separate appraisals. Kempenaar and his partners — Alexander Grande and Thomas Dimeo — paid \$3.5 million for the estate about 2½ years ago. Kempenaar said he could not estimate the property's value or the price tag associated with the development plans.

Kempenaar said he is willing to talk to the town about the land, or even the town and the bird sanctu-

ary together.

Meanwhile, the plans — which call for 22 new structures and renovation of the existing manor house and other buildings — are now before the town Planning Board. It will take several more months before any type of approval is given, though. The plans must also be approved by the state Department of Environmental Management and the Coastal Resources Management Council because of the nearby wetlands.

Monday night, the Town Council, after receiving three letters from residents concerned about the development, asked Council member Peter O. Grimes, chairman of the open space committee, to investigate buying the land.

Lawrence A. Allen, chairman of Avid Airline Products Corp., wrote the Council to "urge (officials) to consider the possibility of the town joining with the Norman Bird Sanctuary's efforts to preserve the Grey Craig Estate."

"I could get very, very excited about the town buying Gray Craig," Council President Philip E. Coen said. While it might be an expensive undertaking, the idea is at least worth looking at, he added.

"It's a landmark, really," Coen said. "It's Middletown as it used to be as far as I'm concerned."

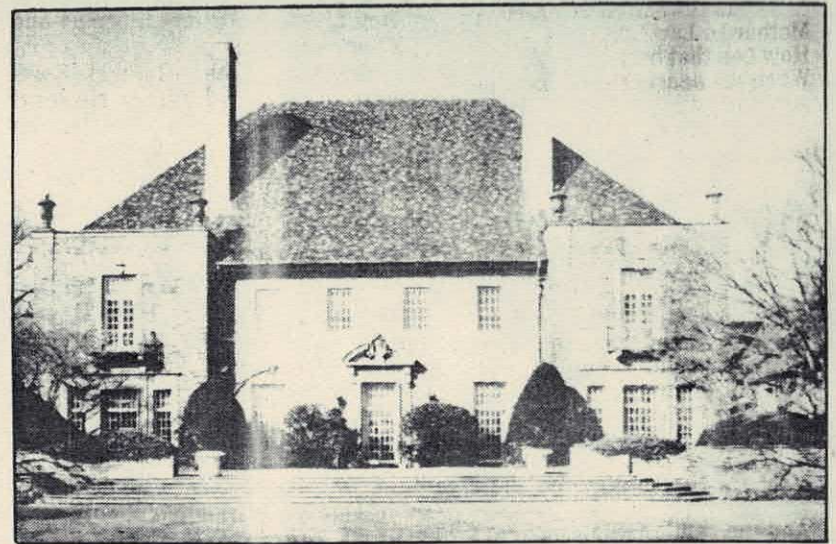
Pawcatuck River, ordering the man to stand trial next month.

Donald Hopkins' case is expected to set a precedent in Rhode Island for the balancing of Indian rights against state law.

Hopkins has admitted he was teaching his son how to fish when he was cited by the state Department of Environmental Management for illegal fishing in the Potter Hill Dam fish ladder in 1987.

Judge Joseph Rodgers said the Narragansetts gave up their rights in a 1978 land settlement with the state and the federal government.

Karen Ellsworth, a lawyer for Hopkins, said Hopkins will probably appeal to the state Supreme Court if a jury convicts him. Rodgers recommended in January that the case be sent straight to the Supreme Court, but defense lawyers said they wanted to be sure they went through the proper steps first.



**FUTURE TOWN LAND?** — The Middletown Open Space Study Committee will look into the possibility of buying Gray Craig, the former Archbold van Beuren estate on Paradise Avenue.

The estate "abuts one of our prime water supplies and is rich in scenic and historic values that have been celebrated by many of America's foremost artists in the nineteenth century," Allen said in his letter. "This area is the only area in Middletown that still retains the characteristics that makes our town unique; it is part of the jewel that is Middletown's most precious possession."

A group of Portsmouth residents also wrote the Council about the preservation of the Gray Craig Estate.

"We feel it's ludicrous to endanger a sanctuary, whose purpose it is to preserve and protect ...," the letter, signed by seven residents, says. "There's got to be a better solution than ransacking nature for 56 unnecessary housing units."