

STATE: <b>Massachusetts</b>
COUNTY: <b>Nantucket</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE:

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Nantucket Historic District**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Nantucket Historic District**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Nantucket** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **12th**

STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **25** COUNTY: **Nantucket** CODE: **019**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: **contact City of Nantucket, Board of Selectmen.**  
**various public and private**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Registry of Deeds, Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Broad Street**

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:  
**Nantucket Massachusetts 25**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Historic American Buildings Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1965**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Library of Congress/Annex**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Division of Prints and Photographs**

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:  
**Washington D.C. 11**

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The architecture of 17th century Nantucket reflects, like the land ownership pattern, the influence of medieval England. Many characteristics of its design and material lingered for over a hundred years and have given Nantucket its special visual quality. Early houses seen today in the town were moved there from the prior settlement near Capaum Pond. The mid-18th century Christopher Starbuck House at 105 Main Street combines a small late 17th century house moved from Sherburne and a new house, the west end, constructed after the house was moved.

Nantucket town developed much of its present appearance in the eighteenth century. As early as 1678, the Proprietors had begun to survey the land near the harbor. The earliest of these subdivisions, Wesco Acre Lots, was laid out in 1678 on either side of Center Street, extending to Federal, Quince and Liberty Streets.

On the south side of Main Street, another series of lots called Fish Lots, were surveyed in 1717. These stretched inland from Quanty Bank to Pine Street. East of Fish Lots another 27 lots were surveyed in 1726-27 called West Monomoy or New Town, which is the extent of the built up town of today. Sheep roamed the island common. The town retains its narrow winding lanes today, preserving intact the original character of the town.

Houses built in Nantucket in the first half of the 18th century closely followed the design precedents of earlier homes. Similar in structural systems and materials to 17th century houses, the architecture of the island was more severe, with decorative detailing limited to utilitarian trim, and on the interior, to the articulation of the structural system. Examples of this style are the Nathaniel Macy House, 12 Liberty Street and the Tristram Bunker House, at 3 Bear Street, both probably relocated from the earlier settlement.

Siasconset, the only other sizable town on the island, preserves many ancient structures. Auld Lang Syne dates from 1676, as does Rose Cottage, and Shanunga from about 1682. All of these houses are located on the west side of Broadway which was once three streets back. The bank gradually eroded and Front Street became the first street. Shell and Centre Streets were added about 1790 while the spaces between the cottages served as the cross streets.

Siasconset houses differed from those of the main town. Most began as small shacks, one room deep with vertical board partitions and a half loft to provide sleeping space for the team of whalers. This use of the hanging loft or baulk, over part of the main hall opened to the rafters, is a rare example of this Welsh-English construction in the United States. Later, these were either closed off for privacy or more generally continued to a full loft. Chimneys were of wood and kitchens were in sheds or open porches. Interiors were first board and batten, later sometimes tongue and groove or plastering with bark or oak

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |  |                                       |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1661, 1813, 1846

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The American Whaling industry originated on Nantucket Island late in the 17th century. This industry flourished, and the town of Nantucket remained the leading American whaling port until the 1840's. Nantucket today is the finest surviving architectural and environmental example of a late 18th and early 19th century seaport town in New England. The island itself, today almost unchanged, preserves the open moors and coastline where early whaling stations were located. Of these, only Siasconset survives, giving a fair impression of an early station and settlement with many of the old houses, in part or whole, including Auld Lang Syne, probably the oldest structure on the island. Nantucket, in its entirety, today presents an accurate impression of the ambience of the early whaling industry and serves as an important part of Americas' material culture.

HISTORY

Nantucket was settled originally by people seeking religious freedom. A small group of non-Puritans and separatist sympathizers, led by Tristram Coffin of Salisbury, sought asylum off-shore and applied to Thomas Mayhew owner of Nantucket, for the purchase of the island. Eighteen men, plus Mayhew and his son, became the first twenty purchasers or original proprietors and the surnames for the most part descend to important figures in Nantucket history. At the first meeting of the proprietors on Nantucket, in 1661, each man was allowed to select his homesite. Tristram Coffin chose a location at the head of Capaum Pond, then a harbor, and Edward Starbuck chose a spot near the north end of Hummock Pond. Thomas Macy selected a place in the vicinity of Reed Pond.

From 1660 on, the first settlement extended in a crescent from Reed Pond, just east of Capaum Harbor, past Wyer's or Moxcy's Pond to the western arm of Hummock Pond. Incorporated under the name of Nantucket in 1671, the name was changed to Sherburne in 1673 by Royal Governor Francis Lovelace when it became part of New York Province. Sherburne was really no town at all but a spread out country village. From 1700 the settlement continued northward to Wesco on Nantucket Harbor. The mouth of Capaum Harbor was closed by a sand bar in 1717, forming Capaum Pond. From that time on the large natural harbor of Nantucket Island around Brant Point to the east became the center for the community totally oriented toward the sea. The open moors proved

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Ashley, Clifford W., The Yankee Whaler, Boston, 1938.  
 Forman, Henry Chandlee, Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses, New York, 1966.  
 Guba, Emil Frederick, Nantucket Odyssey, A Journey Into the History of Nantucket, Waltham, Mass. 1965.  
 Lancaster, Clay, The Architecture of Historic Nantucket, New York, 1972.  
 Morrison, Samuel Elliot, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860, Boston, 1921.  
 Ramire, Constance Werner, The Historic Architecture and Urban Design of Nantucket, Smithsonian Institution, 1969.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	UTM LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	19.412990.4583370	0 0 "	0			
NE	19.419660.4571110	0 0 "				
SE	19.419400.4562290	0 0 "				
SW	19.396510.4568480	0 0 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **30,000**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmark Review Project, original form done by S.S. Bradford, 1967**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service** DATE: **2/4/75**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L. Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title **(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register. Registered: **Nov. 13, 1966**

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)** date **7-24-75**

*Constance Werner*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary Affirmed: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: *A. W. Merten* **7/24/75**  
 Director, OAHIP date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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lathe. The framing was mortise and tenioned together to withstand the strong sea winds.

Gradual additions or "warts" extended these small structures to various shapes and sizes but many valuable architectural features remain.

By the early nineteenth century a shift toward classical detail and the Federal style can be seen in such buildings as the Second Congregational Meetinghouse of 1809.

The Golden Age of Nantucket began about 1820 when the whaling industry flourished again after the recessions caused by the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The large homes built between 1820 and 1850 indicate the wealth of merchants and sea captains. Two streets, Orange and Main, contain most of the outstanding buildings. Sea captains built their two story houses with white clapboard siding and a view of the harbor on Orange Street. The elegant mansions of the merchants and ship owners were built on the upper part of Main Street, a tree lined thoroughfare paved with cobblestones.

In the 1830's and 1840's over a dozen mansions were constructed on upper Main Street. Many of them, like the "Three Bricks, number 93, 95, and 97 Main Street (mid-1830's) were little different from early Federal houses like the Henry Coffin House, 75 Main Street. All four of these houses have double end chimneys with a roof balustrade between them and a small two columned entrance portico. The "Three Bricks" were built for Joseph Starbuck, a wealthy oil merchant, for his three sons and all the residences are identical.

The peak of Nantucket's domestic architecture was reached in 1845 with the construction of the Hadwen-Wright house at 94 Main Street. Fluted columns with beautiful Corinthian capitals support a wide, ornate entablature and pediment creating the most impressive house facade on the island. The interior ceilings, carved molding, graceful stairway and curving hall with domed ceiling and a ballroom, surpasses all other efforts at grandeur on the island. The house's twin, 96 Main Street, built for Hadwen's adopted daughter, has Ionic columns.

In 1846 the entire central business district was destroyed by fire, a total of about 36 acres. The rebuilding of Main Street began immediately with new two and three story brick stores constructed along the widened cobblestone streets. These buildings have Greek Revival details in brick.

The handsomest building rebuilt after the fire is the Atheneum. Perhaps the most monumental building on the island, the wooden structure has an abundance of classical detail including two columns in antis and superimposed pediments.

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Although the island has undergone modern development in its schools, a hospital, shopping areas and oil storage tanks, as well as summer cottage condominiums and separate houses, much of the 30,000 acres (1050 of which are ponds and 750 of which are peat swamps) survives in open brush covered moors. Its 75 miles of coastline remains relatively unspoiled and returns to a natural almost wild state after the summer inhabitants depart.

Much of the wharf area has been continuously changed. Most recently in the 1960's, Straight Wharf underwent renovation as a shopping area. It had always been a center for whaling and trading and two historic buildings, the Thomas Macy Warehouse and the Benjamin Gardner Store survive. Although the redevelopment has been criticized, many, including architectural historian Clay Lancaster, believe that a modern version is better than no wharf at all. In any event the continuous use of the harbor for commercial purposes gives historical continuity and adds to the quality of the landmark as a whole.

BOUNDARY

The landmark designation is the entire island of Nantucket, approximately 75 miles in circumference and 30,000 acres in area.

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unproductive for extensive farming and served for sheep grazing and some raising of grain.

Men from Nantucket began whaling late in the seventeenth century following the example of the islands original Indian inhabitants. As early as 1672, some islanders attempted to create a whaling company for offshore whaling. Nothing came of that endeavor until 1690 when Icabod Paddock of Cape Cod was invited to move to Nantucket and serve as an instructor in whaling. As a result, the industry grew rapidly in the 1690's and the first years of the eighteenth century. The island acquired its first whaling sloop in 1694 and by 1712 owned five vessels. That fleet had grown to nine by 1714. In the following year N antucket whalers brought home 600 barrels of oil. Twelve years later Nantucket had twenty-eight vessels engaged in offshore whaling.

In the earliest days whaling stations were established along the open beaches to spot whales for offshore hunting. The first four date from around 1660 to 1670. They were Cisco near Hummock Pond, one between Miacomet Pond and Weweeder Pond, Sesachacha and Siasconset. They began with a small shelter and a tall spar from which to scan the ocean. Gradually the number of stations increased as well as the number of shelters in each.

Off shore whaling was on the decline from 1712 and was totally abandoned by 1760. During its peak, Sesachacha Beach was the largest fishing stage but by 1820 most of the dwellings had been moved to Siasconset. This forms the only surviving example of what the island was before the prosperity of Sperm whaling.

When Nantucket began to build her own ships in 1730, she sent out twenty-five whalers that returned with cargoes. By 1748 the island owned sixty ships.

Until the American Revolution, Nantucket's whaling industry flourished. In 1766, 118 ships sailed for the island and returned with a total of 11,969 barrels of oil. Of the 250 New England ships engaged in whaling in 1774, Nantucket claimed 150 of them. Before 1745, Nantucket had sold most of its oil in Boston, then it began to ship it to London. The ships would return from there with goods of all kinds. Therefore during the Revolution the economy of the island suffered greatly. Aside from the blockade during 1777-78, 134 ships were lost during the conflict. Most importantly, Nantucket lost many sailors, over 1,200 were killed or captured during the war.

Nantucket regained supremacy in whaling after the Revolution and

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retained it until the early 1840's. The War of 1812 caused the loss of 38 ships but remarkably resilient, Nantucket soon recovered from the destruction and controlled over 80 vessels by 1822. The industry continued to flourish in 1830's even though the great rival, New Bedford, counted more whalers than the island did. This was a warning for the future; after 1843 Nantucket's whaling industry began to dwindle.

Several factors underlay the demise of Nantucket whaling. In 1846 a fire demolished the town's center and wharfs; then in 1849 the California Gold Rush lured some 400 young men away from the island. But sand, more than any other factor, destroyed the island's whaling. Sand bars in the harbor made it impossible for the increasingly heavier ships of the early nineteenth century to dock at the town. The island sought Congressional aid in order to dredge the harbor in 1803 and 1806, but met with indifference. Thus Nantucket's whalers were forced to use the docks at Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard. In 1839 a steam camel was devised to use the sand blocked harbor. The camel was a floating dry dock that could pick up a loaded whaler and carry it into the harbor. Although an ingenious machine, it failed to overcome the sand bars.

The bark Oak sailed from Nantucket in 1869. She was the last whaler to put out from America's oldest and once greatest whaling port. In 1874 Nantucket's name ceased to be listed among the names of America's whaling ports.

At its height Nantucket's population numbered about 10,000 with five wharves ten rope walks, thirty-six candle factories, sail lofts, cooper shops, boat, and ship yards. Nantucket ships had discovered one new hunting area after another and led the way in developing new techniques of hunting. It was the Nantucket whaler that first carried two whale boats instead of one and employed brick tryworks on the whaler's decks to extract the whale oil. Nantucket whalers were the first to have a full knowledge of the Gulf Stream and Captain Timothy Folger of the island, mapped it for Benjamin Franklin, then post-master General. In 1795 the name of the town had been returned to the original name of Nantucket and both the town and the island have become synonymous with the great age of New England whaling to the present day.



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9. Major Bibliographical References

Wyer, Henry S., Nantucket Old and New, Nantucket, 1895.  
\_\_\_\_\_. Nantucket, Picturesque and Historic, Nantucket, 1901.