

STATE: **Massachusetts**
 COUNTY: **Nantucket**
 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY DATE: _____

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK) (Type all entries complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Jethro Coffin House
 AND/OR HISTORIC:
Jethro Coffin House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Sunset Hill
 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 type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input 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	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Nantucket Historical Association
 STREET AND NUMBER:
Box 1016
 CITY OR TOWN:
Nantucket STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **25**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Registry of Deeds, Courthouse
 STREET AND NUMBER:
Broad Street
 CITY OR TOWN:
Nantucket STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **25**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: _____
 DATE OF SURVEY: _____
 Federal State County Local
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: _____
 STREET AND NUMBER: _____
 CITY OR TOWN: _____ STATE: _____ CODE: _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Massachusetts**
 COUNTY: **Nantucket**
 ENTRY NUMBER: _____
 DATE: _____
 FOR NPS USE ONLY

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 type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jethro Coffin House is a one-and-a-half story frame structure, built around a central chimney and covered with cedar shakes. The structure has a short steep front roof and a long rear slope which extends out over the rear lean-to. Small diamond paned casement windows are placed symmetrically on the front and arranged assymetically on both ends and the rear lean-to. The roof is currently of tar shingles but plans have been made to replace these with cedar shakes.

The chimney is unusual. The figure in projecting bricks on its face has caused considerable speculation. Its obvious resemblance to a horseshoe seem not to be the original intention, for a nailed-up horseshoe open at the bottom stood for bad luck. It might, however, have been a charm device to prevent witches from coming down the chimney. It may also have been a ~~wishbone~~ or simply a Jacobean chimney arch applied in a provincial fashion.

Inside, the porch and hall narrow and the stairs opposite the entrance are narrow and winding. On the east was the great hall and on the west the parlor. The fireplaces were back to back, with the one in the great hall slightly larger because of cooking. It also has a recessed oven, 2 feet in diameter, in the southwest angle. The framing consists of eight posts, one at each corner of the two rooms, connected by horizontal sills and girts, with a larger summer beam extending from the fireplace wall to the outer girts. The walls themselves were originally vertical boards fastened to sills and girts, with a filling of clay for insulation. The two chambers on the second floor were equal in area to the hall and parlor. A straight flight of steps leads up from the second-story landing toward the chimney and turns for access to the garret.

In the rear lean-to addition, added in the eighteenth-century, the walls were without clay fill and the ceiling was supported on two summers but without joists. The kitchen flew was run up the back of the original chimney. The new kitchen was built with a fireplace comparable to that in the parlor, but with an oven twice the diameter of the old one in the hall fireplace.

Most all of the corner posts, girts, sills, rafters, and diagonal braces had to be replaced. One corner post in the upper room remained. It was of oak with a bracketed top and was therefore used as a model for the rest. All the fireplaces were repaired or replaced. The part of the lean-to which had burned before 1868 was rebuilt as well as the chimney, which was raised and given a new foundation. Most of the material used in rebuilding was obtained from another ancient house which was disassembled for the purpose.

Prior to the reconstruction of 1927, the architect ~~chosen~~ for the work, Alfred E. Shurrocks, produced measured drawings that show the rafter mortise holes for two front dormers or gables, and the cut in

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

4. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian; 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) C. 1686

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 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 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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Jethro Coffin House, originally built about 1686, is generally cited as one of the finest surviving examples in New England of a typical seventeenth-century "Cape Cod" house or saltbox. It is also unusual for the island of Nantucket in that it has remained on its original site. The house underwent heavy reconstruction in 1927 to bring it to its present form of a one-and-a-half story frame central chimney dwelling with a rear lean-to. Although hardly in its original 1686 form, either in design or materials, it does serve today as a textbook example of the saltbox house, and its present state does illustrate this rather well. The top of the large central brick chimney has an unusual ornament which has been variously interpreted as an inverted horseshoe for an anti-witch charm, a wishbone, or simply a Jacobean decoration. The house has a typical floor plan of a seventeenth-century central chimney structure with a hall and parlor, that is to say a large square room located on either side of the chimney and the kitchen in a rear lean-to.

HISTORY

The Jethro Coffin House was erected supposedly as a wedding present for Jethro and Mary (Gardner) Coffin sometime around 1686. All the materials for construction came from Exeter, New Hampshire, where Jethro's father, Peter, Coffin, owned timberland and a saw mill. In 1708 the Coffins sold the house to the Paddocks who owned it until 1840. After a series of unrecorded owners and uses it was bought by Tristram Coffin of Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1881, a direct descendant. At this time some repairs were made which included a new roof, a new cornice for the old chimney top, the insertion of strengthening timbers and the application of new shingles in bare sections. In 1923 it was bought by the Nantucket Historical Association who undertook its reconstruction.

The lean-to, which was replaced in the reconstruction, was a later addition of the early eighteenth century. It had burned in part before 1868 (as shown in old photograph) and it was decided to recreate it during the restoration. The chimney was realigned and nineteenth century sash windows were replaced with leaded diamond

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Forman, Henry C., Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses, New York, 1966.
 Lancaster, Clay, The Architecture of Historic Nantucket, New York, 1972.
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.
 Ripley, Hubert G., "The Jethro Coffin House on Sunset Hill Sometimes Called
 the Horseshoe House," Journal of the American Institute of Architects,
 Vol. XVI, No. 6, June, 1928, p. 218-223.

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	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW		19.407240.4571090	0 0 0		0			0		
NE		19.407310.4571120	0 0 0							
SE		19.407360.4571041	0 0 0							
SW		19.407270.4571010	0 0 0							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **.75 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmark Review**
 Project, original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1968

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey** DATE: **1/23/75**

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

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

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 State Local

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name _____

Title _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register as of **Nov. 24, 1968**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Cornelius W. Keene
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Chief, Eval. & Reg. Div. date **7-16-75**

Date _____

ATTEST: *R. Hartman* **7/25/75**
 Director, OAHF date _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Nantucket	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM
LANDMARKS)**

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries) 7. Description second page

the top side of the west upper front plate for the base of a casement window. These window openings are smaller than the ones used in the rebuilding. The plain roof from a later period of the house was preferred by the owners with the resulting creation of the typical saltbox.

BOUNDARY

The Jethro Coffin House is located on a rise of ground called Sunset Hill, northwest from the main center of town, surrounded by open fields. It is approached by a semicircular drive which curves off Sunset Hill Lane. Because of the lack of topographical features upon which to establish a boundary, two arbitrary points have been selected for the northwest and northeast corners, with the end points of the drive used for the southwest and southeast corners, beginning at the northwest corner at UTM 19.407240.4571090, continuing east to the northeast corner at UTM 19.407310.4571120, then going south to the southeast corner where the semi-circular drive meets Sunset Hill Lane, then continuing west along Sunset Hill Lane to the point where the other end of the semi-circular drive meets the Lane, then north from this point to the northwest corner, the point of beginning.

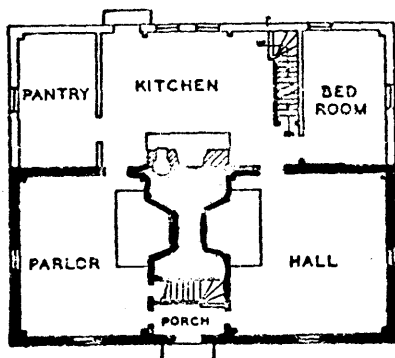
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Nantucket	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)



Floor plan of Jethro Coffin House

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Nantucket	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

nineteenth century sash windows were replaced with leaded diamond paned casements. Very little of the original timber was left and materials from another ancient house were used. Prior to the reconstruction and investigation revealed that the original house had two front dormers or gables. These were not used in the rebuilding in an effort to create a "typical" saltbox.

The Jethro Coffin House is operated today as a house museum by the Nantucket Historical Society.