

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

STRAIGHT WHARF THEATRE BUILDING

Location: On north side of Straight Wharf; south side of Still Dock and east of Macy Warehouse, Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Sherburne Associates

Present Occupant: Straight Wharf Theatre

Present Use: Theatre

Brief Statement of Significance: One of the small wooden buildings erected on Straight Wharf immediately after the Great Fire of 1846, to be used as a store supplying whale-ships.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1846 -- Daniel Jones, "merchant", owned a ships' supply store here up to 1846, when it was destroyed by fire. Daniel Jones died of consumption in 1848.
  - 1849 -- Charles F. Winslow, physician, bought the land from Henry H. Jones, son of Daniel Jones.
  - 1849 -- Benjamin Gardner 4th, who had built a store here right after the fire of 1846, bought the land under his store from Dr. Winslow for \$250., three days after the doctor had bought it.
  - 1866 -- Joseph B. Macy bought from heirs of Benjamin Gardner "land with store thereon".
  - 1888 -- William T. Swain bought from Rebecca M. Macy, widow of Joseph B. Macy. Joseph B. Macy at one time owned considerable property on both sides of Straight Wharf, most of which was sold to William T. Swain.
  - 1905 -- Byron E. Pease and John K. Ayers bought from heirs of William T. Swain.
  - 1929 -- John K. Ayers Land Courted property.
  - 1937 -- Frederick C. Ayers et al inherited property.
  - 1940 -- Robert and Margaret Fawcett Wilson bought from Frederick C. Ayers et al.
  - 1955 -- Margaret Fawcett Wilson owned.
  - 1966 -- Island Service Co. Inc. owned.
  - 1966 to date -- Sherburne Associates.
- (Abstract, Records Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts)

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2. Date of erection: Between 1846 and 1849. (Abstract, Deed Book 48, Page 194, which reads ". . . said Benjamin (Gardner) has built a store thereon since the fire of 1846".)
3. Architect: None
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Small wooden building with two stories, built to house ships' supplies. Double doors on 2nd floor were probably used to hoist these supplies from the water side on Still Dock.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: In 1905, under the ownership of Pease and Ayers, the building was used as storage for their carriage business. A cement floor was installed for the purpose of washing these carriages. The east end was partitioned off and this small space was used by William H. Barrett as a tin shop, using the present Theatre entrance door.  
When the building was converted for use as a theatre in 1939, the second floor was cut back, leaving the present balcony. A stage and proscenium were built at the west end which at first had two columns and an arch. These columns were brought from the Siasconset home of the famous actor, George Fawcett. They were later removed and are at present under the stage. A wing was added to the north to be used as a dressing-room, at first with only one story and some time later with an added second story.  
At this time the building next on the east side was in use as Killen's ice house. It was soon torn down and another built there.
6. Important old views and references:
  - a. Water color by W. Channing Cabot, "Straight Wharf in 1899", owned by Mrs. Hugh W. Sanford, and reproduced on cover of Historic Nantucket, October, 1962.
  - b. 1926 Aerial Views of Nantucket, Mass. -- Lang
  - c. Photographs taken before changes made in 1939 -- In Scrapbook owned by Mrs. Margaret Fawcett Barnes.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Straight Wharf, on which this building is situated, is the oldest wharf in Nantucket, built in 1723 by Richard Macy. Daniel Jones not only lost this store building in the Great Fire of 1846, but 8 years previously, in 1838, he had suffered the total loss of his candle factory when fire destroyed everything between Union Street and the harbor, a locality which at that time was covered with oil factories and oil sheds. (Abstract, Inquirer and Mirror Jan. 2, 1897)

In 1849 Dr. Charles F. Winslow bought several pieces of property from the heirs of Daniel Jones, one piece being the land under the present theatre building. The name of Dr. Winslow is now famous because of the fact that in accordance with his will, his body was cremated but his heart was buried in Nantucket. Over the grave is the inscription "The Heart of Dr. Charles F. Winslow Lies Buried Here". (Abstract, Historic Nantucket Oct. '63)

Straight Wharf Theatre was established in 1939 by Robert and Margaret Fawcett Wilson who for several years presented plays written and produced by them. Later, professional companies from New York presented plays in the summers and in winter the Theatre Work Shop, a local organization, carried out a program of amateur performances. This is continued at the present time.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History: Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
July, 1967

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1847 -- Richard Mitchell and Sons built.
- 1849 -- William Hadwen and Nathaniel Barney bought from assignees of Richard Mitchell and Sons for \$3000. "the brick mill and candle factory, store, bleaching establishment and oil shed, and all other buildings thereon with all the fixtures, furniture and tools in and belonging to said factory".
- 1851 -- Sally M. Broadwell bought from the children of Joseph Barney, they having inherited it from William Hadwen and Nathaniel Barney.
- 1855 -- Robert G. Worth et al from Sally M. Broadwell.
- 1855 -- Amy C. Schaufler from Harbert G. Worth, Lynn G. Worth and Harry A. Tobey.
- 1888 to date -- Nantucket Historical Association from Amy C. Schaufler.  
(Abstract: Deeds Registry Deeds, Nantucket)

2. Date of erection: 1847

3. Architects: Unknown

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The building was very heavily timbered with beams and supports such as are no longer produced. It was simple in its lines, with good proportions, a substantial two-story slate roof brick building about 40 x 90 ft. in size. The doorway, still intact, is recognized as a choice architectural example among the many in Nantucket. A short flight of stairs leads to the second and main floor of the building. The hand-rail and chain balustrade are evidence of a craftsman's work and the small ivory button knob in the hand-rail at its first turning is Nantucket's sign that the building is free and clear of mortgage.

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WHALING MUSEUM

Location: On north side of Broad Street at west corner of South Beach Street, and at head of Steamboat Wharf, Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Nantucket Historical Association

Present Occupant: Nantucket Historical Association

Present Use: Whaling Museum

Brief Statement of Significance: Built as a brick candle-house, it is one of the half-dozen remaining commercial buildings of whaling days. The structure has the general effect of dignity and good taste.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1847 -- Richard Mitchell and Sons built.
- 1849 -- William Hadwen and Nathaniel Barney bought from assignees of Richard Mitchell and Sons for \$6200. "the brick oil and candle factory, store, bleaching establishment and oil shed, and all other buildings thereon with all the fixtures, furniture and tools in and belonging to said factory".
- 1911 -- Emily M. Treadwell bought from the children of Joseph Barney, they having inherited it from William Hadwen and Nathaniel Barney.
- 1923 -- Herbert G. Worth et al from Emily M. Treadwell.
- 1925 -- Henry P. Schauffler from Herbert G. Worth, Byron E. Pease and Harry A. Tobey.
- 1929 to date -- Nantucket Historical Association from Henry P. Schauffler.

(Abstract: Records Registry Deeds, Nantucket)

2. Date of erection: 1847

3. Architect: Unknown

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The building was very heavily timbered with beams and supports such as are no longer produced. It was simple in its lines, with good proportions, a substantial two-story slate roof brick building about 40 x 90 ft. in size. The doorway, still intact, is recognized as a choice architectural example among the many in Nantucket.

A short flight of stairs leads to the second and main floor of the building. The hand-rail and stair banisters are evidence of a craftsman's work and the small ivory button inlaid in the handrail at its first terminus is Nantucket's sign that the building is free and clear of mortgage.

5. Although the building was structurally in comparatively good condition when purchased in 1929, extensive repairs were nevertheless made and in 1955-56 a large amount of further restoration was done. The outside brick walls were repointed and waterproofed and the restoration of walls and ceiling in the South Seas room was completed. All flooring, cross timbers and supporting columns were replaced in Sanderson Hall, a concrete block foundation was built under the try-works and the flooring under the press and other heavy exhibits reenforced. A sprinkler system and burglar alarm system were also installed.

In 1967 a small building was erected at the northwest corner of the Museum building to house boiler, fuel tank etc. for the new heating system. Piping, radiation and thermostat controls within the main building were installed. Later this year the Broad Street entrance was altered in the inside vestibule without disturbing the front doorway. The offices were rearranged, eliminating former confusion.

6. Important old views and references:

- a. Photograph of building in 1926 -- folder published in 1926 by Appeal Committee of N.H.A.
- b. Photograph of building -- Historic Nantucket, issue of July, 1953
- c. Exterior and many interior views; also complete history of the Museum -- W. Ripley Nelson in Historic Nantucket, issue of July, 1955.
- d. Photographs of restoration in progress, 1955 - 1956 -- Historic Nantucket, issue of Jan., 1956.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The building was erected as a candle-house on New North Wharf, now Steamboat Wharf, by Richard Mitchell and his sons. Two years later William Hadwen and his partner Nathaniel Barney, successful oil merchants and candle-makers, bought it for sperm oil candle manufacturing and for use as a warehouse and office.

The structure was closely identified with Nantucket's palmy days as a whaling port. With the decline of whaling, it was used in connection with various other businesses for many years.

The building was opened as a Whaling Museum on Sunday, June 15, 1930. Much credit was given Edward F. Sanderson for the generous gift of his great collections, his foresight in securing and holding the old candle-house through his friend Henry P. Schauffler, and the liberal

terms granted on its purchase by the Historical Association.

George A. Grant, a whaler in his own right and son of Charles Grant, one of Nantucket's most successful whaling captains, set up the exhibits and served as the Whaling Museum's first custodian.

In 1932 the Carnegie Corporation of New York gave the Nantucket Historical Association the sum of \$5000.

"toward forwarding the educational program of the Whaling Museum".

Brief Statement of Significance: Built in the winter directly following the  
Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
August, 1967

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Prior to 1844 -- Dr. Paul Swift owned this land, with dwelling-house and outbuildings thereon, which he sold to James Athearn.

1844 -- In January 6th George Harris, master mariner, bought from the assignees of the goods and estate of James Athearn, an insolvent debtor.

1844 -- In May George Harris and Edward H. Barker became co-owners of the property.

1845 -- Benjamin F. Riddell bought Barker's share.

1847 -- George Harris and Benjamin F. Riddell built the "block of stores and tenements" owned in common and filed an agreement (see Book 48, Page 440 Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts). The second floor hall was rented at once to the Old Fellows Lodge; it was quite probably built for that purpose.

1852 -- Lydia Athearn, widow of James Athearn, bought the Riddell part.

1857 -- Henry Coffin bought from Lydia Athearn.

1858 -- Independent Order of Old Fellows bought from heirs of Benjamin F. Riddell one undivided half of the block.

1880 -- I.O.O.F. bought the Athearn half from heirs of Henry Coffin.

1880 -- Property was land courted by Nantucket Lodge #66 I.O.O.F.

1887 -- Owner: I.O.O.F. (Abstracts: Mass. Land Court Title #14310)

2. Date of erection: 1845 - 1847 (Abstracts: Book 40, Page 440 Nantucket Registry Deeds)

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ODD FELLOWS BUILDING

Location: A block on east side of Centre Street and on west side of Coleman's Court, Nantucket, Massachusetts. Numbered 7 through 21.

Present Owner: Nantucket Lodge #66, I.O.O.F.

Present Occupants: Nantucket Lodge and lessees of stores.

Present Use: Lodge headquarters on second floor; first floor occupied by stores.

Brief Statement of Significance: Built in the months directly following the fire which devastated this whole section; has been little changed structurally.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Prior to 1844 -- Dr. Paul Swift owned this land, with dwelling-house and outbuildings thereon, which he sold to James Athearn.

1844 -- On January 6th George Harris, master mariner, bought from the assignees of the goods and estate of James Athearn, an insolvent debtor.

1844 -- In May George Harris and Edward H. Barker became co-owners of the property.

1845 -- Benjamin F. Riddell bought Barker's share.

1847 -- George Harris and Benjamin F. Riddell built the "block of stores and tenements" owned in common and filed an agreement (see Book 48, Page 440 Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts). The second floor hall was rented at once to the Odd Fellows Lodge; it was quite probably built for that purpose.

1852 -- Lydia Athearn, widow of James Athearn, bought the Riddell part.

1857 -- Henry Coffin bought from Lydia Athearn.

1868 -- Independent Order of Odd Fellows bought from heirs of Benjamin F. Riddell one undivided half of the block.

1920 -- I.O.O.F. bought the Athearn half from heirs of Henry Coffin.

1930 -- Property was Land Courted by Nantucket Lodge #66 I.O.O.F.

1967 -- Owner: I.O.O.F. (Abstract: Mass. Land Court Title #14210)

2. Date of erection: 1846 - 1847 (Abstract: Book 48, Page 440 Nantucket Registry Deeds)

3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Very much as it now stands. Built over the charred timbers of house foundation which have recently been discovered and examined.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Small changes have been made from time to time to store fronts and interiors to accommodate lessees. Sherburne Hall on second floor little changed.
6. Important old views and references:
  - a. Photograph, view from South Tower -- Souvenir of Nantucket, Murphy, n.d.
  - b. Sketch of District Burned in Fire of 1846 -- Nantucket Inquirer, July 27, 1846.
  - c. Photograph, looking south from Broad Street --1870 - One Hundred Years on Nantucket, Inquirer and Mirror Supplement, 1921.
  - d. 1900 Survey of East Side of Centre Street, by William F. Codd -- on file at Registry of Deeds.
  - e. Sketch of Petticoat Row -- Nantucket Sketchbook, Eberman, n.d.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Centre Street was laid out in 1678 when Wesco Acre lots were divided and was one of the first ways opened within the present limits of the town. After the Great Fire of 1846 Main Street was widened. Independence Lane, which was a narrow passageway from Federal to Centre Streets disappeared as the Main Street stores were built in their new location, and soon afterwards the Town built an engine house on the Centre Street end directly south of the I.O.O.F. building. The section behind the Centre Street block and the Main Street stores is known as Coleman's Court and the owners of the block have right of way for all purposes over it to Pearl and Federal Streets. In more recent years the east side of Centre Street became known as Petticoat Row as the direct result of many of the store-keepers being women.

The Nantucket Lodge of Odd Fellows was founded in 1845 as No. 66. Unfortunately during the following year all of its possessions were destroyed by fire, a disaster which crippled its progress materially for a time. It gradually recovered and by 1882 Historical Godfrey wrote "This order appears to have met with considerable favor upon the Island and now numbers about 100 brothers. They are the proprietors of what is doubtless one of the most valuable pieces of property in the town, which is known as Odd Fellows Block". At that time the Odd Fellows met



in the upper part, Sherburne Hall, on Tuesday evenings and the Wanackmanack Encampment #16 met there Thursday evenings. By 1914, according to Lithgow, a later historian, members numbered 200 and the financial situation of the Lodge was "very satisfactory".

The Odd Fellows did not own the property until in 1868 they bought one-half and in 1920 the other half. As it was known from the beginning as the Odd Fellows Block, it is the general belief that it was built for them, although not under their direct ownership.

In 1851, a few years after the building was erected, a mortgage was taken on the property for \$1000., and reads that it was to be paid "at the expiration of the Ship Christopher Mitchell's present voyage". It was paid promptly as the voyage under command of Capt. Thomas Sullivan, from Dec. 11, 1848 to 1852, resulted in a good take of 2023 barrels of sperm oil.

Dr. Paul Swift is believed to have come to Nantucket from Sandwick, Barnstable County, and in 1821 married Dorcas Gardner, daughter of Zenas and Susanna Gardner of Nantucket.

James Athearn, whose home on the opposite side of Centre Street was blown up in an effort to stop the conflagration of 1846, was one of the early owners of this property, and although he lost it through insolvency in 1844, his widow again purchased part of it in 1852, selling in 1857 to her sister's husband, Henry Coffin.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
August, 1967

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH BUILDING

Location: On north side of York Street at corner of Pleasant Street, Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Florence Higginbotham

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Occasional storage or garage

Brief Statement of Significance: It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period; a typical school building of the late 20's and early 30's.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1826 -- Trustees of the African Baptist Society bought land for \$10.50 from Jeffery Summons.

1911 -- Henry C. Chase bought from Trustees of the African Baptist Society, for \$250. "a certain tract of land with the building thereon known as the African Baptist Church . . . situated in Newtown, on the corner of Pleasant and York Streets.

1933 to date -- Florence E. Higginbotham bought from Estate of Henry C. Chase for \$3000. (Abstract: Records Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts)

2. Date of erection: Some time after land was purchased in 1826, and probably before 1831. (Abstract: Churches & Pastors, - Dudley and 1834 map of Town drawn in 1831 by William Coffin Jr.)

3. Architect: None

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: This was a rectangular building with hip roof, double door entrance and Greek revival motif. At one time there was a cupola on the building, the exact details of which are at present unknown. In 1845, when the Masonic Lodge sold their building on Main Street, their chandelier was donated to the African Church Society. After a few years it was installed in this Church and remained there until the building was sold in 1911, at which time the chandelier disappeared and was believed to have been destroyed.

5. Notes on alterations and additions:

Around 1920, during the Chase occupancy, large garage type doors were installed and the floor construction strengthened in order that trucks could be parked inside the building. Mr. Chase removed portions of the east side and extended the building on the north side.

6. Important old views and references:

- a. 1834 Map of Nantucket -- Wm. Coffin Jr.
- b. 1880 (c.) view of building -- In Fair St. Museum.
- c. Historical references: Churches & Pastors of Nantucket -- Dudley  
History of Nantucket -- Alexander Starbuck  
The Island of Nantucket -- Godfrey

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

According to historians Myron S. Dudley and Alexander Starbuck, the York Street Colored Baptist Society was founded in 1831 and the African or Colored Baptist Church was established in a building on York Street that was used both for a colored school and for religious services. Death and other causes so depleted the Society after a few years that it ceased to exist.

In 1847 the Pleasant Street Baptist Society and Church was organized out of the York Street Church Society by and for colored people, and the location was at the corner of Pleasant and York Streets. The Church continued active from 1847 to 1888, after which there is no record of a minister, and services were held only on special occasions.

The use of different names for the Church Society is confusing. They may all refer to the same Society and Church. If the Society was not formed until 1831 as historians have stated, how could it buy land under the Society's name in 1826 as is proven by the Town records?

The Reverend James E. Crawford, the colored pastor, held the pastorate at the Pleasant Street or African Baptist Church for 41 years from 1847 to 1888, the year he died. He was so light complexioned as easily to pass as a white man and was one of those genial but sincere and upright men who commanded respect and esteem. The receipts from his parishioners were meager for his parish was small and its members poor, and Mr. Crawford supported himself by following the occupation of a barber. Farnham in his "Brief Historical Data" states, "Under Brother Crawford's ministerial leading and by his messages presented, his Baptist chapel on York Street provided indeed a Bethel to many seeking Christian consolation and ethical uplift. He not infrequently preached also for the white people in the Summer Street Baptist Church".

Another Church, the African Methodist Episcopal,

BUILDING -- AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH  
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known as the Zion Church, was located in 1835 on West York Street. A dwelling now stands on the site and little is known of the Church activities.

The section west of Orange Street and south of Silver Street was known as "Guinea" as it was at that time a localized community of colored residents, with shops and stores of their own in the neighborhood. Guinea was a small section of that part of Nantucket known as Newtown.

Under the ownership of Henry C. Chase the building was used in connection with his trucking business and in later years for storage purposes.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
August, 1967