

**Architectural & Historical Report
for
17 McKinley Avenue
Siasconset, Massachusetts**

October 15, 2019

Prepared by Marsha L. Fader, AIA Architect and Betsy Tyler, Historian
for The 'Sconset Trust, Inc.



THE 'SCONSET TRUST, INC.

Preservation Easements

The 'Sconset Trust preserves the unique character of the east end of Nantucket Island in Massachusetts through conservation of areas of open land and preservation of structures of historical and architectural significance in 'Sconset. The Trust works with the entire island community and collaborates with conservation and historic preservation groups to achieve its goals.

This report was prepared to highlight the important architectural and historic features of this house. The Trust hopes that emphasizing such features will encourage current and future owners of historically significant houses to preserve important interior and exterior building features for future generations. The Trust stands ready to assist homeowners in assessing the appropriateness of tools like preservation restrictions and rights of first refusal, which may include tax benefits.

For more information on how the Trust can help, please contact the Executive Director, Elizabeth G. Grubbs.

The 'Sconset Trust is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Please visit the web site at sconsettrust.org.

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1. SUMMARY AND PROJECT SCOPE

Built for George A. Sawyer between 1884 and 1888 in Siasconset, 17 McKinley Avenue is a contributing resource within the Siasconset Historic District, a National Historic Landmark District, which is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as well as a local historic district.

The intent of this report is to present the history of the structure at 17 McKinley Avenue and establish its architectural and cultural significance. This study includes a survey and study of the architecture, form and materials of the existing structure, a survey of historic photographs of the property, an examination of the records on file at the town of Nantucket Registry of Deeds and Probate Court, as well as published and archival sources.

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2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

17 McKinley Avenue, also known as "Sunningford" and "Dewey or Don't We", is an excellent example of late 19th-century Victorian architecture. The style is best described as a simple hybrid of late 19th-century period styles including Shingle Style, Eastlake, and Queen Anne that were popular in the United States. Representative architectural elements for this house include its steeply-pitched roofs with curved porch post brackets, bay windows, its decorative exterior shingle pattern, 9-over-2 window sash, roof overhangs, and original natural-finish wood interiors. The Eastlake fireplace mantelpieces are excellent period examples.

The original front portion of 17 McKinley Avenue, both the exterior and interiors of first and second floors, has survived nearly intact as an excellent representation of late 19th-century Victorian architecture.

3. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Assessor's Map: 73.3.2

Built for George A. Sawyer between 1884 and 1888

George A. Sawyer (1826–1910) purchased four small adjacent lots of land at the corner of Miner (now Everett) and Grand (now McKinley) Streets from Ellen Miner Round in 1884. (NRD Book 71, pp. 44–45) A house at that location appears on Harry Platt's Map of the Village of Siasconset on the Island of Nantucket, Mass., 1888, indicating that the house was built between 1884 and 1888 by Sawyer, a Boston haberdasher. It was one of only six houses south of Edward Fitch Underhill's enclave on Pochick Street in 1888.

In 1900, a "large addition" was built on Sawyer's "Sunningford" cottage, by Horace L. Gibbs. (Inquirer and Mirror, June 30, 1900). Not far away on Ocean Avenue, the Beach House hotel, featuring large three-story bay windows, was under construction directly in front of Sawyer's cottage and would continue to dominate the view eastward from 17 McKinley Avenue until it was torn down in 1957. In 1902, it was reported that Mr. Sawyer was contemplating adding a two-story bay window to his cottage. (Inquirer and Mirror September 13, 1902). That distinguishing feature was added on the north side of the house, together with a bay window in the eave of the front porch roof at the center of the second floor, on the east side. In 1907, Sawyer transferred the land, "with house thereon," to his daughter-in-law, Isabel Sawyer, widow of George A. Sawyer Jr.

Isabel F. (Sawyer Clark) Locke and third husband, John G. Locke, held the property until 1948, when they sold it to Louis Edmond Dean and Susan A. Dean of New York. (NRD Book 112, p. 127). The Deans and their four children made "Sunningford" their summer home for twenty years. Louis and Susan Dean, then of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, sold the property to Gordon C. Dewey in 1968 (NRD Book 132, p. 344). The Deweys renamed the cottage "Dewey or Don't We". In 1977, Dewey secured Land Court Certificate 7911, clarifying and establishing all property boundaries. The footprint of the house appears on Land Court Plan 38312A. Building departments records indicate that bathrooms were added on the second floor in 1991 and in 1993 the Deweys acquired a building permit for a garage designed by Bentley and Churchill Architects, and at the same time insulated the existing kitchen, installed a heating system, and added a dormer

to the south elevation. Gordon C. Dewey transferred the property to his wife, Frances C. Dewey, as trustee of Ramapo-McKinley Nominee Trust in 1996. (LC Certificate 17,338).

Since its construction circa 1885, the house at 17 McKinley has been owned by only three families: the Sawyers, 1884–1948; the Deans, 1948–1968; and the Deweys, 1968–present.

4. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

4.1 Description

The house at 17 McKinley Avenue is a wood-framed, 1-3/4 story structure built during the late 19th century. It was built as a rectangular, gabled structure with a central, gabled projection at the back (west), a gabled facade dormer at the centered east entrance, and a continuous porch on the east (front) and south sides. This original footprint is shown on Platt's 1888 map.

The wood-shingled upper roof and lower porch roof included painted, cased and moulded overhangs and cased downspouts with metal leaders. The painted porch posts were detailed with curved wood brackets at the top of the porch posts and a continuous painted wood railing at the deck level and painted narrow, vertical board porch skirting below. All exterior walls were shingled using a decorative pattern of staggered butts, or an up and down coursing. The walls were painted a light brown/beige color. An early photograph (GPN1677) shows all exterior wood trim, window sash, porch posts and railings, painted a dark color.

Windows were flush-framed with 9-over-2 sash except for the front first floor bay window with 3-over-2 sash. The same photograph shows an irregular, horizontal board fence supported by vertical boards. A somewhat later, undated photograph (SC612-29) shows a double row of fencing consisting of round posts and two horizontal rows of cable wire. Note that the trim has been changed to a white color with dark sash on this later photograph.

The original first floor of the house included a Living Room upon entry through double exterior doors, a Dining Room, Kitchen, and possibly a Pantry. The first floor now includes an enlarged Kitchen, a Bedroom and adjoining Bathroom, and a Bedroom at a lower level at the west end of the Kitchen. A stair to the second floor originates in the Living Room to what would have been four original bedrooms, now three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

17 McKinley Avenue was built as a summer house with open-stud exterior walls. Interior walls are natural-finish vertical boards, window and door trim and doors. Beaded window casings are detailed with corner 'bull's-eye' blocks. The L-shaped stair includes natural finish, turned newel posts, balusters, treads and risers, and railings. Most of the floors are also natural-finish with a few painted wood floors and bathroom vinyl flooring. Most ceilings are also natural-finish wood boards.

There are two excellent examples of late 19th-century fireplaces in the Living Room and Dining Room. They are both matching Eastlake-style, natural-finish wood mantelpieces. The Dining Room hearth has ochre-colored glazed tile with a decorative border while the Living Room hearth is brick. The two brick chimneys for these fireplaces are unusual in their location at the lower rear/west slope of the main roof. They are not visible from the front of the house.

4.2 Alterations/Evolution

Major changes to the house occurred during the Sawyer Family ownership from 1900-1902 (see *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 30, 1900 and September 13, 1902) including:

- the west gable at the back of the house was enlarged to nearly equal the north-south dimension of the house. This addition probably increased the depth to the west also.
- a 2-story angled bay window was added at the north side of the house to the existing Dining Room and second floor Bedroom. The 9-over-2 windows matched the original windows.
- a second floor, central hall, angled bay window was added with 9-over-2 windows matching the original windows. This bay window 'sits' within the original porch roof with its floor extending visibly under the porch roof.

At an unknown date, the front/east porch deck was extended along the north side as seen in photo 612-29. Also see photo SC660-1. It does not appear on any of the Sanborn Maps. At this time, the fence had also changed to posts and wire from the earlier horizontal board fence. See photo GPN1677. This porch deck extension was removed at an unknown date.

At an unknown date, a squared second-floor bay window was added to the south Bedroom. The 2-over-2 windows were not made to match the original 9-over-2 windows. This bay window 'sits' within the original porch roof with its floor extending visibly under the porch roof.

Changes made during the current Dewey Family ownership, ca. 1991-93 include the following:

- second floor Bathrooms were added in the southwest corner, probably using space from an earlier, original Bedroom. A shed-roofed facade dormer with two 2-over-2 windows was added on the south wall of the Bathroom.
- a new first-floor Bathroom and Bedroom required a southern extension of a portion of the south wall in the southwest corner with an exterior door and porch deck extended north to the Kitchen.
- the Kitchen, located in the northwest, has undergone many changes, including enlargement with a long shed-roof, sliding glass doors on the south, a heating stove with its own brick chimney, and the inclusion of what may have been an outdoor shed under the same roof.
- a freestanding Garage was built to the north and west of the house.
- a new heating system.
- a ramp along the north wall.
- the porch railing, cap, and front newel posts have been changed. While similar to what exists in photos SC612-29 and GPN1677, there is different sizing, spacing, support, and it is no longer painted.

The original house walls, trim, windows, and doors were painted dark colors. A light brown/beige color, which may be an early exterior shingle color, is intact at the south wall, under the later bay window. The trim and porch railings were later changed to a lighter color while maintaining the darker window sash color. See photos SC612-29 and GPN1677.

4.3 Character-Defining Features

The original ca. 1884-88 front portion of the house has largely survived intact with ca. 1900 historically-appropriate changes with character-defining features as follows:

1. Steeply-pitched gable roof with facade dormer;
2. Roofed-porch with bracketed posts;
3. Window sash 9-over-2;
4. Cased roof overhangs;
5. Original interior room plan (front portion only) and all finish materials as noted above;
6. Original interior stair including railings, newel posts, treads and risers;
6. Original Eastlake-style fireplaces: mantelpieces, hearths and brick chimneys

Future restoration work could include painted, staggered butt exterior shingled walls, original detailing of porch railings and newel posts, and replacement of the kitchen shed roof with a gable roof.

4.4 Outbuildings

A one-and-a-half story Garage/Guest House was designed by Bentley Churchill Architects in 1991 with historically-appropriate features and scale including curved bracketed posts matching the main house.

5. PROPERTY INFORMATION

5.1 Property Identification: 17 McKinley Avenue, Nantucket Assessor's Map: 73.3.2, .36 acres (15,890 square feet), zone SOH.

5.2 The SOH (Sconset Old Historic) zoning allows 50% ground cover of its 15,890 square feet or 7,945 square feet. The house and garage represent approximately 3,166 square feet, leaving more than 4,700 square feet of allowable future ground cover expansion.

6. FURTHER STUDY

6.1 The Dewey Family collection includes hand-drawn house drawings and documents that add greater detail to the history of the house.

6.2 Elizabeth Churchill has 1991-93 hand-drawn drawings of renovation work that should be digitized. No other measured drawings exist for the house.

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

7.1 Published and Archival Resources

Inquirer and Mirror, June 30, 1900

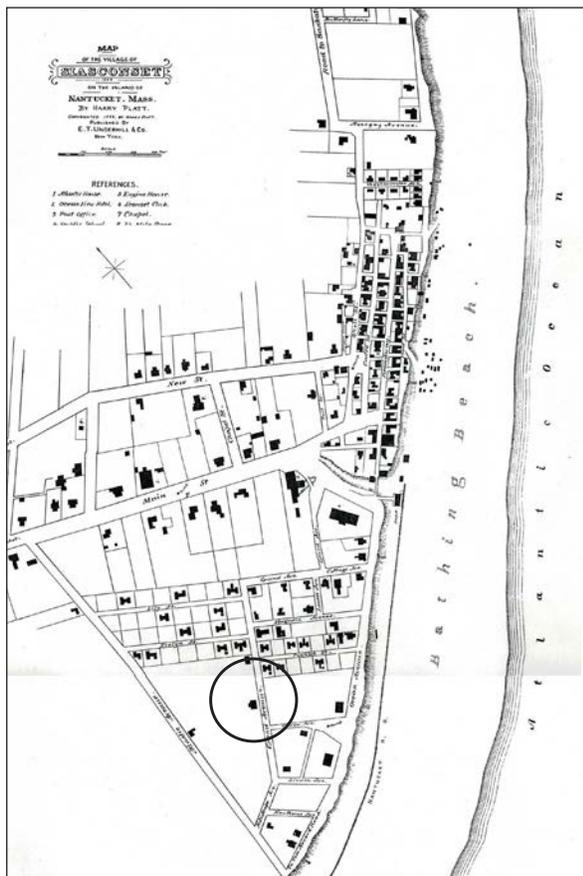
Inquirer and Mirror, September 13, 1902

7.2. Historical Maps

Harry Platt, Map of the Village of Siasconset, 1888

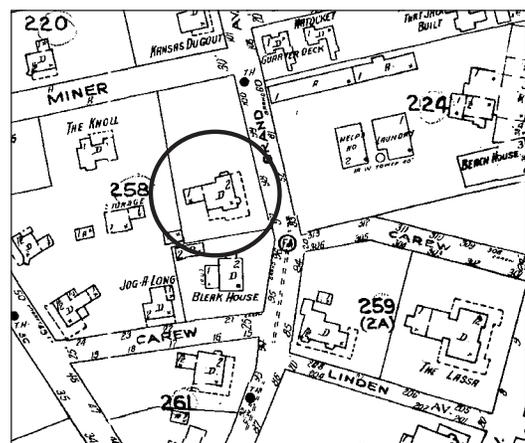
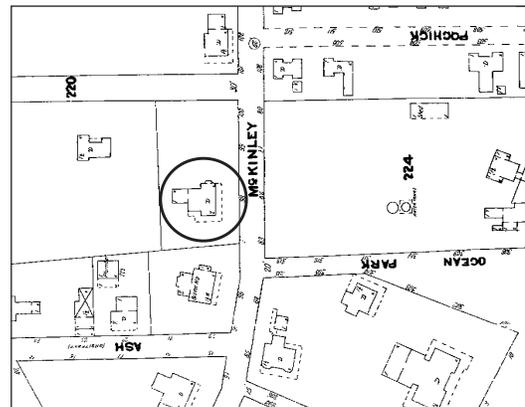
The first map to show the footprint of 17 McKinley Avenue.

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, 1904, 1909, 1923, 1949.



Harry Platt, *Map of the Village of Siasconset, 1888*

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps: 1904 (top), 1949 (bottom)



7.3 Historical Photographs: Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association

GPN1677: Original construction, pre-1900

SC612-29: Post-1900

SC660-1: Beach House Hotel with 17 McKinley behind

SC675-2007-6: North and east view, 2007



GPN1677: East & south views of the house known as "Sunningford", between 1885-1900, showing original construction and dark paint colors.
Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association



SC612-29: East & north views of the house known as "Sunningford", after 1900, showing added bay windows and lighter paint colors.
Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association



SC660-1: East view of the house known as "Sunningford", after 1900, middle left area of the photo behind the Beach House Hotel.
Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association

7.4 Current Photographs



North & East Elevations and Garage



North Elevation and Garage



East (front) & South Elevations



West & South Elevations



Original painted, staggered butt decorative shingle pattern. Note later added bay window insertion in porch roof above.



East (front) Elevation



Original Stair to Second Floor



Original Stair to Second Floor



Original Window Casing: Corner Block
Bulls-eye and Beaded Board



Original Stair Detail



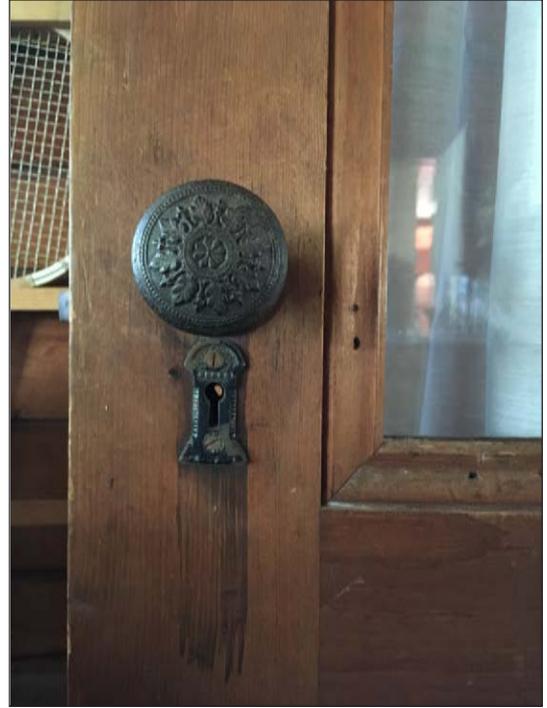
Original Eastlake-style Fireplace Mantelpiece



Original Ochre Glazed Fireplace Hearth Tile



Original Built-in Corner Cabinet



Original Door Hardware



South Bedroom, Second Floor



South Bedroom, Second Floor



North Bedroom, Second Floor

7.5 Chain of Title

From deeds recorded in the Nantucket Registry of Deeds (NRD)

NRD Book 71, pp. 44–45: Ellen Miner Round to George A Sawyer, 1884.

NRD Book 88, p. 476: George A. Sawyer to Isabel F. Sawyer, 1907.

NRD Book 93, p. 194: Isabel F. Locke to Emma Cook, 1913.

NRD Book 93, p. 195: Emma Cook to John G. Locke and Isabel F. Locke, 1913.

NRD Book 112, p. 127: John G. Locke and Isabel F. Locke to Louis Edmond Dean and Susan A. Dean, 1948.

NRD Book 132, pp. 344–45: Louis Edmond Dean and Susan A. Dean to Gordon C. Dewey, 1968.

Massachusetts Land Court Certificate 7911: Gordon C. Dewey, 1977.

Massachusetts Land Court Certificate 17338: Francis D. Dewey, Trustee of Ramapo-McKinley Nominee Trust, 1996.