



**Architectural & Historical Report
for
18 Baxter Road
Siasconset, Massachusetts**

October 28, 2022

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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

Moved and renovated north of the Old Historic District of Siasconset, the property at 18 Baxter Road, known as Siasconset Humane House, Station 52, is a contributing resource within the Nantucket 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 study is to present the history of the dwelling at 18 Baxter Road 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 historical maps and photographs of the property, an examination of the records on file at the town of Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Probate Court and Planning and Land Use Services (PLUS) records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Humane Society of Massachusetts Records, as well as published and archival sources.

This report was prepared for The 'Sconset Trust, Inc. by Marsha L. Fader, AIA Architect and Betsy Tyler, Historian.

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 18 Baxter Road is significant as the last Massachusetts Humane Society house on Nantucket island, Siasconset Station 52. Built on the beach below the north bluff in 1904 to replace an earlier 1855 building, the station stored lifesaving equipment, including a surf boat, for use in offshore rescue missions. Moved up the bluff and converted to a summer cottage in the early 1940s, the form and footprint of the rectangular structure, including its gable roof and wood-framed walls, are intact.

3. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

18 Baxter Road, Siasconset Humane House, Station 52, built 1904, moved to current site circa 1940-44

AURORA HEIGHTS

The house at 18 Baxter Road is located on Lot 13 of the Aurora Heights subdivision created by Emily P. Rice and Robert B. Coffin in 1887 on the north bluff of Siasconset. The north bluff was developed beginning in the 1880s. William J. Flagg first acquired land just north of the village, from Nosegay Avenue to Rosaly's Lane, and sold individual house lots; eight houses were built in the area by 1888, as shown on Harry Platt's map of 'Sconset published that year. Flagg then purchased land that eventually encompassed most of the north bluff, from Ann's Lane to Sankaty Light in a development he called Sankoty (Sankaty) Heights. Between Flagg's two developments, from Rosaly's Lane to Anne's Lane were thirty-nine house lots in an area called Aurora Heights, laid out by Coffin and Rice. What is now known as Baxter Road was labeled Atlantic Street north of Rosaly's Lane in the Aurora Heights plan.

MASSACHUSETTS HUMANE SOCIETY HOUSE

The structure that became the dwelling at 18 Baxter Road was originally a Humane House. The Massachusetts Humane Society (founded 1786) initiated the construction of small houses of refuge for shipwrecked sailors along the coastline of the state. The first refuge houses on Nantucket—furnished with wood, matches, oil lamps, and a hatchet, among other necessities—were built in 1794. Others were eventually added, including the one at Siasconset, known as station 52, in 1855. The first fully manned U. S. Lifesaving Station on the island was built at Surfside in 1874, three years after the creation of the U. S. Lifesaving Service, which later became the U. S. Coast Guard. The Humane Society houses evolved in size and function to support the lifesaving stations, storing extra equipment, including specially designed surf boats, which were manned by volunteers. (Stackpole, *Lifesaving Nantucket*)

The 1855 Humane Society house in Siasconset was replaced with a new building in May 1904 (Mass Humane Society Records, v. 23). The location of the building is depicted on a map of Siasconset surveyed by W. F. Codd and published by J. H. Robinson, 1905. It was situated on the beach below the bluff, north of Rosaly's Lane, not far from lot 13 of the Aurora Heights subdivision, where it was moved.

In 1936, the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported that the last Humane House on the island, at 'Sconset, was bought by Henry Coffin Everett. The building was emptied and the contents sold, through an agent, to Henry Ford for his museum in Dearborn, Michigan. No deed to Everett was recorded for the building, as no land was involved in the transaction. In the summer of 1938, Charles Morris, former leader of the 'Sconset lifesaving volunteers, advertised that the Humane house was for sale or rent. In 1939, the unfurnished house was offered for rent by Mrs. Waite. Based on aerial views of the island from 1935 and 1940, which show the Humane House on the beach below the bluff, the date of the purchase of the house by Mathilde B. Hooper was after 1940.

HOOPER/ALLEN

Mathilde B. Hooper (1883–1966), her husband James P., and their three children, of Ruxton, Maryland, were vacationing in 'Sconset at the Villa Marguerite on Magnolia Avenue in 1933, when James P. died of pneumonia that August. Mathilde had purchased Lot 13 of the Aurora Heights subdivision on the north bluff in May 1933. Whatever plans she and her husband had for the property were put on hold by his untimely demise. A social note in the *Inquirer and Mirror* states that Mrs. Hooper arrived at the Kerwin cottage (10 Everett Lane) in August 1939 suggesting that she did not yet reside at her property on Baxter Road.

Sometime after 1940, Mathilde Hooper acquired the Siasconset Humane House and had it brought by horse team up the bluff, situated on Lot 13, and converted into a dwelling for her family. She added a kitchen on the west side, a small wart on the south side, and shed dormers on both sides of the roof to open up two bedrooms and a bath on the second floor. The *Inquirer and Mirror* noted in 1944 that Mrs. Hooper had opened her cottage on the north bluff. In 1946, the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported that she removed an ell from her house on Baxter Road and moved it to Lots 4 and 5 of the Aurora Heights subdivision, facing Sankaty Avenue, and with additions to the structure created a summer cottage there. The location of the ell that was removed is not obvious.

Mathilde Hooper transferred the house at 18 Baxter Road to her daughter Sarah Poole (Hooper) Allen and son James P. Hooper in 1948. Daughter Mathilde B. (Hooper) McNeill acquired the cottage on Sankaty Avenue. When James died in 1962, Sarah Allen became the sole owner of the property at 18 Baxter. She died in 1969. Her will, recorded in Nantucket Probate 3932, bequeaths all real estate to her husband Howard S. Allen. The land and house in Siasconset was valued at \$25,000. The Allen family kept their Baxter Road cottage until 1977, when they sold it with "all furniture, furnishings, and tangible personal property therein" to Frances Frost Overlock. Some of that furniture, including the dining table, tavern table, and dressers, remains in the house today

OVERLOCK

Frances Frost Overlock (1926–2017) and Willard J. Overlock (1922–2011), of New Canaan, Connecticut, and their sons Willard J. Overlock Jr. and Joseph L. "Bo" Overlock spent summers in Siasconset for two decades before purchasing the cottage at 18 Baxter Road. They were close friends with the McNeill family and rented 18 Baxter Road from the Allens for several years before purchasing the property.

In her will, Frances Frost Overlock left the Siasconset house in trust to her sons. Willard J. transferred the title to Joseph L. in 2019. According to the current owner, nothing in the main room of the house has changed since his family purchased the house in 1977. Alterations were made to the wart on the south side of the building, which was originally a bedroom, bunkroom, and bathroom. It is now a master bedroom with bathroom and laundry room. A two-story winterized addition was built on the west side of the cottage in 1985.

4. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

4.1 Description

This early 20th-century house on the west side of Baxter Road is an unassuming rectangular, wood-framed structure with a simple, yet unique architectural history. It was constructed as a house of refuge and equipment storage for shipwrecked sailors and was transformed into a summer home. The earlier 1855 station

may have aided shipwrecked sailors but the 1904 house was rescue equipment storage. This description documents its existing details followed by an analysis of its historical evolution. The house that was added to the west and connected to the original house in 1985 is not included in this report.

With a gable ridge paralleling Baxter Road, this rectangular, asymmetrical house of one-and-a-half stories, has two, one-story gable-roofed additions - one at the south and one at the west. This summer home contains a living room, dining room, kitchen, two bathrooms and three bedrooms.

The gable roof includes front and back flush, facade dormers, each with five, second-floor 6/6 windows and a brick chimney at the north end. The front door with transom lights, wood steps and railings, is flanked by 6/6 windows, one to the south and two to the north and rose trellises which extend also to roof areas. The bedroom addition at the south has a separate entry door and porch facing Baxter Road. The one-story gable addition at the west has kitchen windows overlooking a large open L-shaped deck. There is no basement and the foundation is believed to consist of piers.

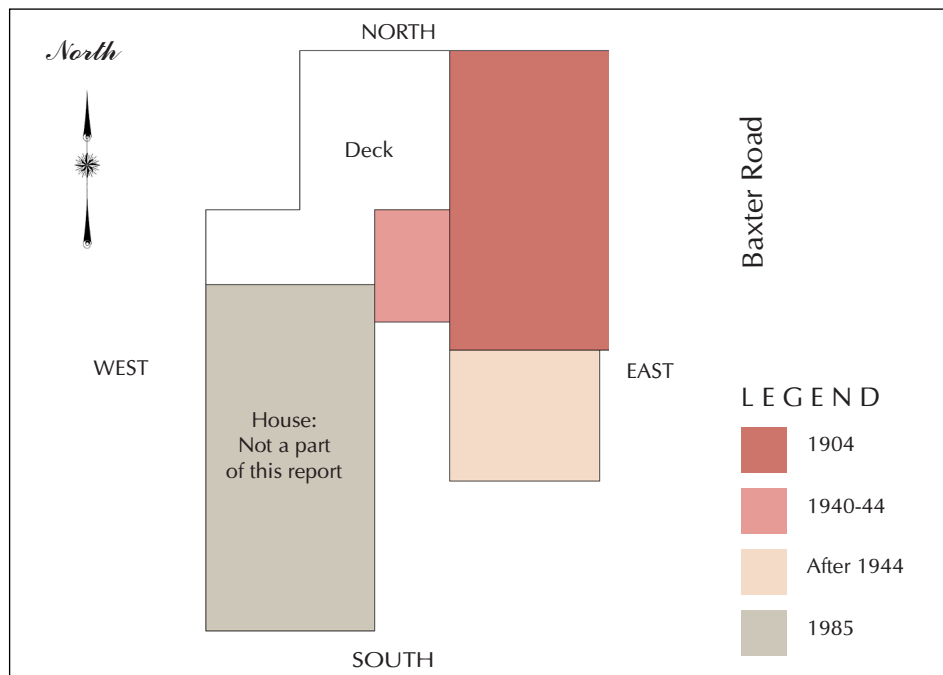
The living room has exposed, painted floor joist framing; finished vertical board walls; a painted, simple mantelpiece; painted, louvered wood shutters on the windows; natural wood floors; and a wood stair hall to the second floor bedrooms. This room and the staircase display Nantucket memorabilia, featuring the original sign, 'MASS. HUMANE SOCIETY. No. 52' above the mantelpiece.

The kitchen and first-floor bedroom have cathedral ceilings with exposed, natural wood roof framing. Together with the dining room, they have plaster walls and painted wood floors. The two second-floor bedrooms feature cathedral ceilings with exposed, natural and painted wood roof rafter framing, vertical board and plaster walls and wood floors. Doors are board-and-batten with thumb latch assemblies. The bathroom has painted wood surfaces and an antique tub and sink. The house is not winterized with a heating system.

4.2 Alterations/Evolution

Major alterations occurred with the move of this Humane House from below the bank to Baxter Road and with its renovation as a summer house sometime between 1940 and 1944, with the following changes:

- two large flush facade dormers, each with five windows, were added to both sides of the gable roof;
- a new brick chimney with fireplace was built at the north gable end;
- a one-story kitchen addition was added at the west side;
- two second-floor bedrooms and a bathroom were added;
- windows, interior walls and doors were added. It is not known whether the Humane House had any windows.



Changes that were made after the initial, early 1940s renovation include:

- a one-story bedroom addition was added at the south end;
- the front door was moved to a center location on the front;
- rose trellis brackets on the east were removed and replaced with wall trellis;
- a wood deck was added at the west
- a two-story house was built behind the main house in 1985.

4.3 Character-Defining Features

The character-defining features at 18 Baxter Road include the following:

- a 1904 form, footprint, and materials from the original Massachusetts Humane Society structure;
- exposed wood framing.

4.4 Outbuildings

The two-story house added in 1985 has a connector to the original, main house. While it is larger than the main house, it is here given an 'outbuilding' status, due to its recent history.

5. PROPERTY INFORMATION

5.1 Property Identification: 18 Baxter Road, Nantucket Assessor's Map: 49.2.3, Parcel 39, .14 acres, zone SR10.

5.2 Setting: This house is located within an 1887 subdivision known as Aurora Heights on the north bluff of Siasconset. This area is immediately north of the Old Historic District of Siasconset where there is less density. This setting includes lawn, perimeter foundation plantings, rose trellises, a tree, brick walkways, a shell driveway, and views of the ocean.

6. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

6.1 Published and Archival Sources

Inquirer and Mirror: Hooper family at Villa Marguerite, 7/15/1933; Mrs. Hooper and family at Lisnahoe on north bluff, 7/21/1934; Henry Coffin Everett purchases Humane House, Henry Ford acquires equipment, 9/9/1936; Humane house for rent, 7/30/1938, 7/1/1939; Mrs. Hooper arrived Kerwin cottage, 8/5/1939; Mrs. Hooper opened her cottage on the north bluff, 7/8/1944; removed ell to Sankaty Ave., 4/6/1946; Clem Penrose reminiscence mentions Humane House now cottage of Mrs. Hooper, 7/26/1947.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Inventory System (MACRIS) NAN 2545, 2546.

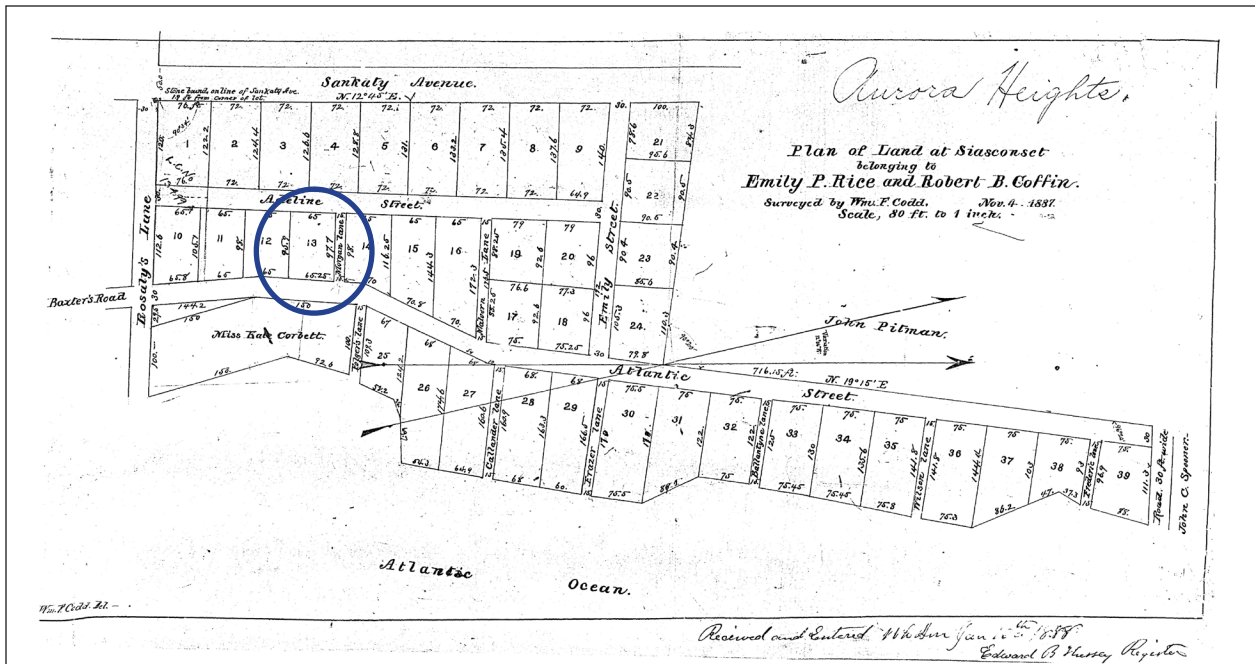
Massachusetts Historical Society, Humane Society of Massachusetts Records, 1786-2004, Lifesaving Stations 1849-1910, vol. 23.

Stackpole, Edouard. *Life Saving Nantucket*. Nantucket Lifesaving Museum, 1972.

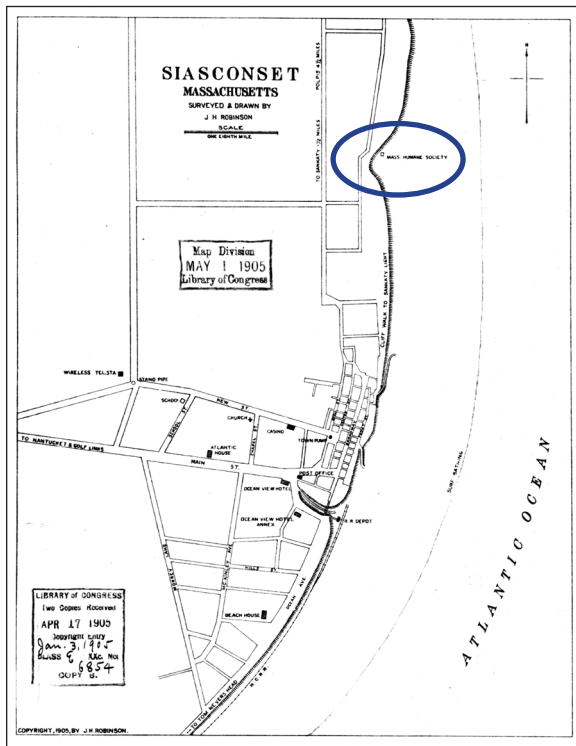
6.2 Historical Maps & Plans

1887 Codd, Wm. *Plan of Land at Siasconset belonging to Emily P. Rice and Robert B. Coffin*, [Aurora Heights], 1887.

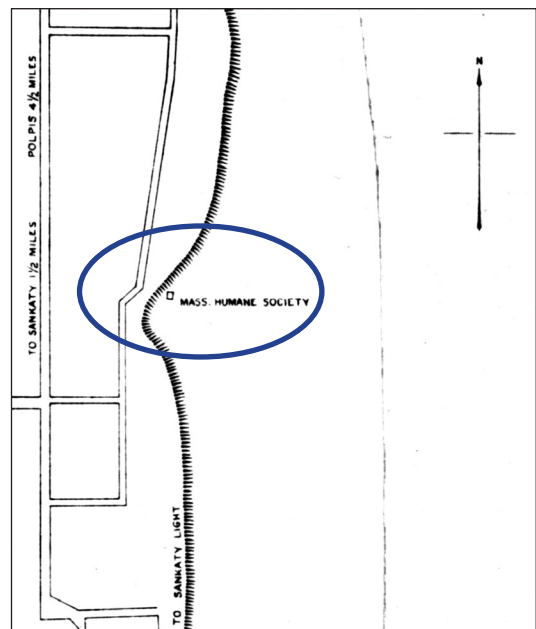
1905 Robinson, J. H. *Siasconset, Massachusetts*, surveyed and drawn by J. H. Robinson, 1905. NHA MS1000-6-4-1



Plan of Land at Siasconset belonging to Emily P. Rice and Robert B. Coffin, [Aurora Heights], Wm. Codd, 1887, Lot 13.



Siasconset, Massachusetts, surveyed and drawn by J. H. Robinson, 1905, showing location of Massachusetts Humane Society building.



Crop of 1905 Survey by J. H. Robinson, to show location of Massachusetts Humane Society building.

6.4 Historical Photographs:

Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association:

P8000, 1935 aerial

AP1940_071, 1940 aerial

Courtesy of the Bo Overlock Collection:

Painting looking north from below the bank showing houses on Baxter Road above, no date

Painting below the bank, west and south elevations, no date

Postcard below the bank at the gully, front and back sides, 1916

Before 1940-1944, located on the lower bank:

South Elevation, 1940-1944

East Elevation, 1940-1944

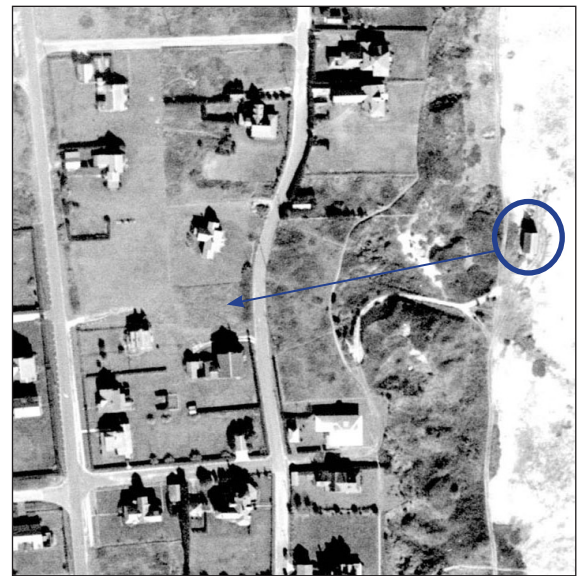
West Elevation_1, 1940-1944

West Elevation_2, 1940-1944

North Elevation, 1940-1944



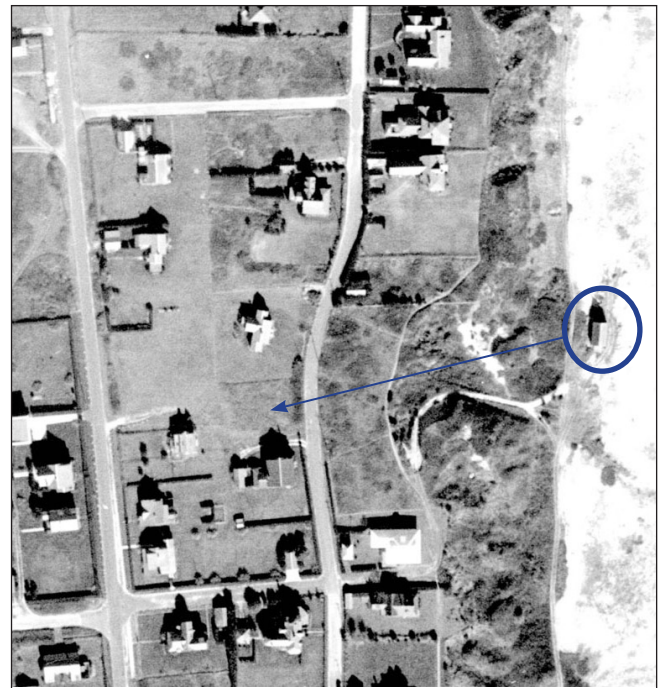
1935 Aerial, p8000, showing location of Massachusetts Humane Society building.



Crop of Aerial, p8000, showing location of Massachusetts Humane Society building with arrow indicating the 18 Baxter Road site.



1940 Aerial, AP1940_071, showing location of Massachusetts Humane Society building.



Crop of 1940 Aerial, showing location of Massachusetts Humane Society building with arrow indicating the 18 Baxter Road site.



Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52
on the beach at Siasconset



Painting looking north from below the bank showing
houses on Baxter Road above, no date

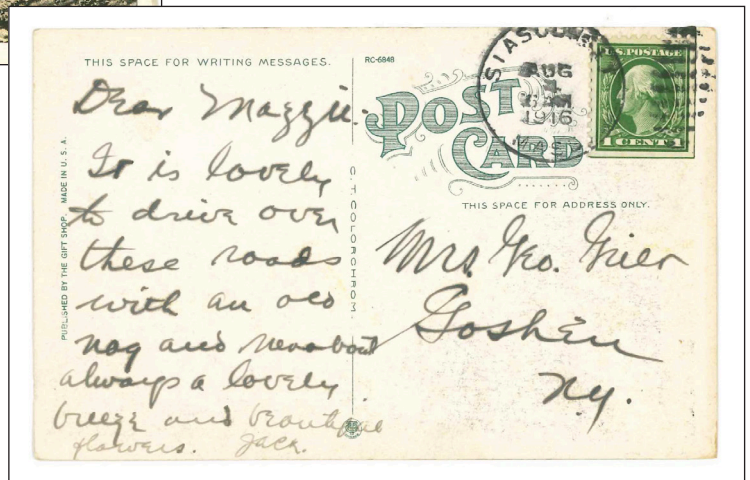


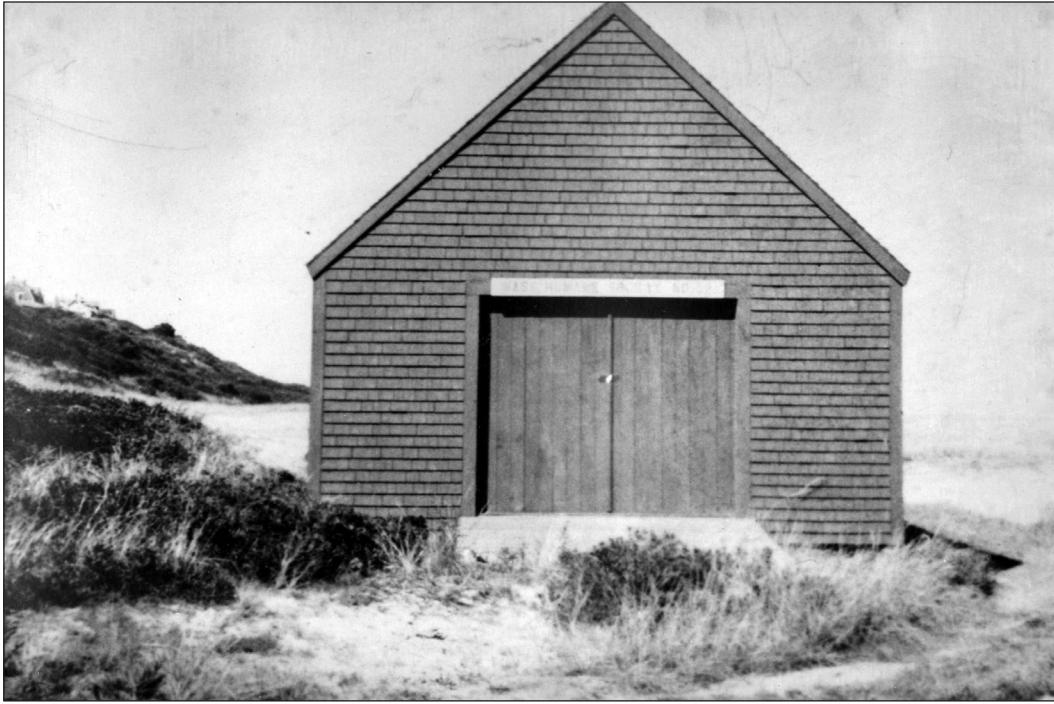
Painting below the bank,
west and south elevations, no date



A BEACH ROAD, SIASCONSET, MASS.

Postcard below the bank at the gully,
front and back sides, 1916





Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52
on the beach at Siasconset



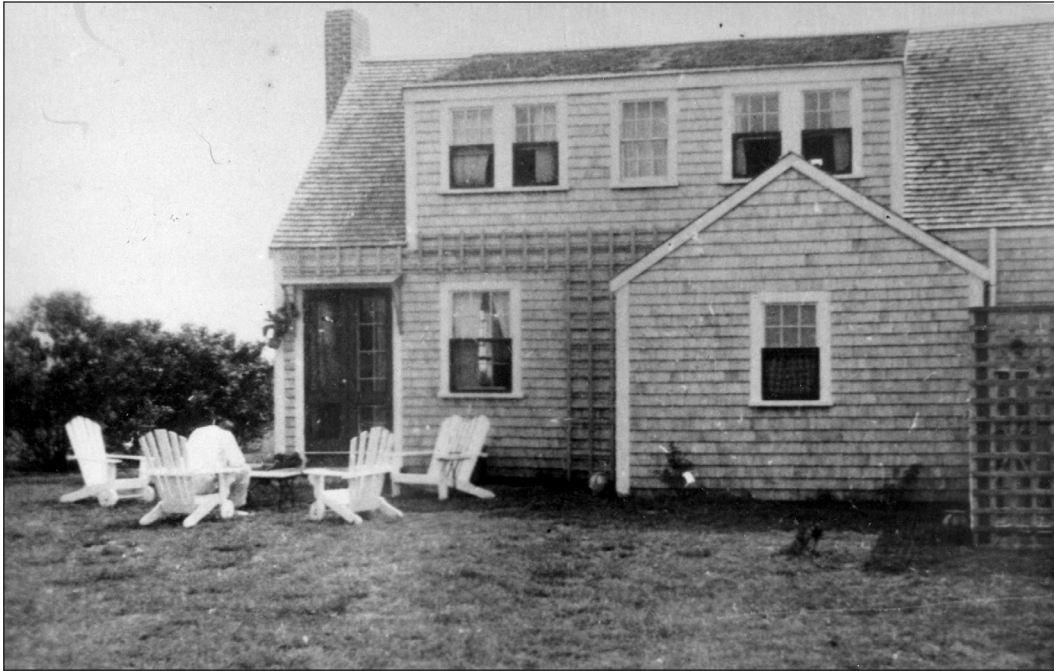
Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52, 18 Baxter Road
South Elevation



Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52 , 18 Baxter Road
East Elevation



Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52 , 18 Baxter Road
West Elevation



Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52 , 18 Baxter Road
West Elevation



Massachusetts Humane Society Station 52 , 18 Baxter Road
North Elevation

6.5 Year 2022 Photographs



East/Street Elevation



West Elevation



South & East Elevations



Connector to 1985 House



Living Room, North Elevation



Living Room, West Elevation



Living Room, East Elevation



Living Room, South Elevation



Looking Up at Staircase Walls



Looking Down Staircase



Dining Room, South & East Elevations



Dining Room, North & East Elevations



Kitchen, West Elevation



Kitchen, North Elevation



Kitchen Hall



North Bedroom, West Elevation



North Bedroom, North & East Elevation



North Bedroom, South Elevation



Bathroom, Second Floor



South Bedroom, South & East Elevations



South Bedroom, West Elevation



South Bedroom, South & East Elevations



South Bedroom, North Elevation



South Bedroom, North Elevation



Bedroom, First Floor, East & South Elevations



Bedroom, First Floor, South Elevation



Bedroom, First Floor, West & North Elevations

6.6 Chain of Title

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book = NRD

1918 Burgess to Quinn

NRD Book 97, pp. 336-39: Ellen H. C. Burgess, wife of Lincoln Burgess, to sister Mary J. C. Quinn, wife of John A. Quinn, lots 6-9, 13-14, 20-24, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1918

1921 Quinn to Preston

NRD Book 99, pp. 276-77: Mary J. C. Quinn, wife of John A. Quinn, to Arline Smith Preston, 1921, lots 13 and 14, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1921

1928 Preston to Nicholas

NRD Book 104, pp. 334-35: Arline Smith Preston, wife of Horace G. Preston to Barbara Preston Nicholas, wife of W. Stuart Nicholas, lots 13 and 14, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1928

1932 Nicholas to Hecker

NRD Book 107 p. 73: Barbara Preston Nicholas, wife of W. Stuart Nicholas, to C. Henry Hecker, lots 13 and 14, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1932

1933 Hecker to Hooper

NRD Book 107, pp. 325-26: Christian Henry Hecker, Jr. to Matilda [sic Mathilde] B. Hooper, lot 13, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1933

1948 Hooper to Hooper

NRD Book 112, p. 128: Matilda [Mathilde] Hooper to James Phillip Hooper Jr. and Sarah Hooper Allen, 1948

1962 Hooper to Allen

NRD Book 122, pp. 465–66: James P. Hooper to Sarah Hooper Allen, interest, 1962

1966 Probate 3932 Sarah Poole (Hooper) Allen

1977 Allen to Overlock

NRD Book 160, p. 247: Howard S. Allen to Frances Frost Overlock, lot 13, Aurora Heights, Plan Book 2, p. 52, 1977

2019 Overlocks to Trust

NRD Book 1701, p. 194: Willard J. Overlock, Jr. and Joseph L. Overlock, II, personal representatives of the estate of Frances Frost Overlock to Willard J. Overlock, Jr. and Joseph L. Overlock, II, as Trustees of the Frances Frost Overlock Revocable Trust

2019 Trust to Overlock

Willard J. Overlock, Jr. and Joseph L. Overlock, II, Trustees of the Frances Frost Overlock Revocable Trust to Joseph L. Overlock