



**Architectural & Historical Report
for
5 Broadway
Siasconset, Massachusetts**

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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

Built in the Old Historic District of Siasconset, the property at 5 Broadway known as the “Gardner House” in Siasconset 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 5 Broadway 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 and Probate Court, 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 5 Broadway is an integral part of the early whaling & fishing village of ‘Sconset. With its small scale and typical T-plan, its richness of simple historic construction detail and materials, it presents a significant contribution to this centuries-old community. Also known as a boat’s crew cottage, a whale or fish house, and a medieval hanging-loft house, its original function was to house a boat’s crew. Its T-plan is unique to the early ‘Sconset village.

3. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

5 Broadway, Gardner House, aka Prince Gardner House and George C. Gardner House, built before 1797.

Siasconset developed as a fishing village on the eastern bluff of the island of Nantucket in the seventeenth century. Primitive, tiny one-room cottages were originally used as accommodation at whale-spotting stations, and when whaling moved offshore were taken over by cod fishermen in the spring and fall seasons. As the fishing village became a popular place of resort, the cottages were expanded with small additions and improvements that made them suitable as rustic summer vacation homes for Nantucket’s sea captains, merchants, tradesmen, and their families, who were well established there by the 1830s.

Historian Henry Chandlee Forman, in his book *Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses*, identified the cottage at 5 Broadway as one of the houses depicted by David Augustus Leonard in his 1797 etching *A View of Siasconset a Fishing Village on Nantucket*. ‘Sconset in 1797 was already a casual and entertaining gathering place, free from priests and lawyers (according to Leonard) and famous for chowder. Many prominent families with substantial houses in the town of Nantucket, kept a tiny ‘Sconset cottage as a summer getaway.

Forman deduces that the Gardner house is an imitation whale house, originally constructed in a T-shape—the oldest whale houses in the village began as rectangles and later acquired the warts that made them T-shaped—but he does not suggest an actual construction date for the house. Documentary evidence of the ownership of the property is incomplete. Known as the Gardner House, 5 Broadway belonged to George C. Gardner (1807–98) in the late nineteenth century. In 1882, the Proprietors of the Common and Undivided Lands granted him the lot marked B.B. on an 1835 map of the village. Gardner was already in physical possession of the cottage, however, as noted on Henry F. Walling’s 1858 map, which labels the cottage with his name.

The initials B.B. on the 1835 Proprietor’s map are thought to represent Barker Burnell, but there are no deeds from Burnell or his heirs to anyone for the property, which is not surprising. The site of the cottage remained common land until the Proprietors set it off to Gardner in 1882. It was not necessary to officially record a deed for a house or cottage alone, although such transactions do, rarely, appear in local deed books. George C. Gardner, it is believed, suggested that his grandfather Prince Gardner built the cottage, as that is the information published by ‘Sconset’s first historian, Edward F. Underhill, in 1888, and later repeated by Forman. That assertion cannot be proven from deeds and probate records of Prince Gardner or his son, Benjamin Gardner, father of George C. (See Betsy Tyler’s report on 5 Broadway prepared for Peter Rodts in 2009.) What is known for certain is that the cottage existed in 1797, it was owned by B. B. (most likely Barker Burnell) in 1835, and George C. Gardner was the owner in 1858.

George C. Gardner deeded the property to his daughter, Sarah Gardner Whittemore (1829-1909), in 1888. Sarah and her husband, George, had no children and the 'Sconset property devised to her brother John C. Gardner and the children of her deceased brother Harrison. John C. Gardner secured the title in 1909, and sold the cottage that year to Annie Barker Folger (1852–1936), a well-known local artist who had been a charter member of the Art Students League in New York City in 1875. Folger was interested in preserving the cottage for posterity, not summering in it. She sold it to the Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) in 1910. In the *Proceedings* of the NHA for 1910, it was stated: "the opinion was unanimous that the opportunity to preserve one of the ancient typical 'Sconset houses must not be lost." The house was furnished with artifacts from the NHA's collection and opened as a house museum in the summer of 1910. In 1939, the NHA sold the cottage to Mildred Gardner Burgess (1896-1970), great-granddaughter of George C. Gardner, for \$1200.

Burgess built the cottage "Low Tide" on the north side of 5 Broadway on the site of a cottage known as the "Headache House", removed between 1881, when it appeared on the Bird's Eye View map and 1888, when Edward F. Underhill wrote that it had been removed and replaced with a small barn. Burgess operated a real estate business in "Low Tide" beginning in the early 1950s.

Mildred Burgess bequeathed the property to her niece, Nancy Rodts, as per Nantucket Probate 4038. The property is now held by the Forrest A. Rodts Trust and represents eighty-two years of Burgess Family ownership.

4. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

4.1 Description

This 18th-century structure is a one-story, wood-framed, post-and-beam house. It is abundant with historic construction detail of the 18th and 19th centuries. Situated at the southern end of what began as a fishing village in the 17th century, this house enhanced the evolution of what Forman considered to be an organic and medieval plan: "It fitted the hamlet into the landscape, it kept to crooked and meandering rutted roadways, and it was full of walks for pedestrian purposes" . . . It possessed also small-scaled buildings in true English medieval *village* fashion" (Forman, *Early Nantucket*, p. 46).

Located between Broadway and Front Street, its footprint includes two bedrooms, one bathroom, a living room with fireplace, a kitchen and loft bedroom. There are door entrances for both street frontages at the east and west. However, Forman states that "like almost all the early cottages on the east side of Broadway the abode faced not that street, but Front Street" (Forman, *Early Nantucket*, p. 149).

The ridge of the gable roof parallels the two streets, running north/south with its brick chimney at the north end. There is a high eave line at the central portion of the house with long extended roofs at the south bringing the eave line to within four feet of the ground. This southern portion of the structure forms a T-shape to the plan of the rooms with the original three bedrooms in the "T" of the plan. Forman describes this style of roof as either a large outshut or addition, a lean-to, or a catslide (Forman, *Early Nantucket*, p.151). At 5 Broadway, this distinctive roof is believed to have been built as part of the original structure and not as an addition. Because of this integrated construction, Forman states that "the Gardner House is actually an imitation whale house" (Forman, *Early Nantucket*, p. 151) . . . since "it copied not the simple, early, rectangular whale huts, but those which had already sprouted warts on the staterooms". The original construction incorporated what had evolved over time in the village as a plan of rooms.

Although Forman describes "great diagonal braces of the wood framework" (Forman, *Early Nantucket*, p.149) to support his understanding that this house is "an imitation whale house", they are not currently visible. The 18th-century roof framing of rafters and purlins with wood sheathing parallel to the rafters, do provide evidence, however. While much of this framing has been reinforced with new material, as a surviving system, it does indicate an original construction for both the living room/'Great Room' and the bedrooms.

At the north end of the house there is a shed-roofed, one-story addition that contains the kitchen. This current space may represent two separate additions which does include a wood stove using the original chimney. The entire space had been built by 1898 when it appears on the Sanborn map. The east and west sides of the house have exterior doors: one fronting on Broadway and one fronting on Front Street with its ocean view. Both doors allow entry into the central living room. It is a historic feature found in houses within the Old Historic District of Siasconset where the parcels of land typically include two street frontages.

The fenestration includes early plank and later flush-framed windows in various glass arrangements of 12/12, 6/9, 6/6, 3/3, 3-light and 6-light. The three 6/9 plank frame windows on the west, Broadway side appear to be the oldest, with the double set in the living room having a distinctive curvilinear header/cornice trim. The large 12/12 plank frame east window, also in the living room, is unusually large in scale for the house.

The two kitchen windows, one 6/6 and one 6/9 on the north side are plank frame windows suggesting, as with all plank frames, that they were in place in the early 19th century. The Broadway Street front door has 9-lights over two raised beveled panels, a rim lock, thumbblatch and H-hinges. The Front Street door is a board-and-batten door as are all of the interior doors, of random, large-width vertical planks with wood lift bars and thumbblatches.

There is a rubblestone foundation forming small pier supports in some places. There is a later outdoor wood-encased shower at the northeast.

The living room is formed by exterior, wood lath & plaster walls on the east and west and vertical wood plank walls on the interior north and south walls. Structural corner posts are exposed together with the wood beams of the plaster ceiling. The brick fireplace has a simple wood mantelshelf and exposed, parged and painted masonry above the fireplace opening. Exterior doors are in the northeast and southwest corners while interior board-and-batten doors in the south wall lead into two bedrooms and a central bathroom. A former closet door west of the fireplace masonry has been closed off. A board-and-batten door at the east side of the north wall leads into the kitchen. The casings of both windows and doors also serves as the trim which is typical for the 18th century. Where additional flat trim exists in the bedrooms and bathroom, it is a later addition or change. Random width, natural wood floors run east-west with wood thresholds at doors.

The two bedrooms on the east and west ends of the "T-plan", have plaster walls and ceilings, exposed structural posts, with ceilings sloping to a low height (less than 4 feet) and wide natural wood floor boards. Their interior walls are vertical board walls enclosing what was an original third bedroom now converted into a bathroom.

At the east side of the fireplace masonry is a steep stair leading to an unfinished attic bedroom. The exposed roof framing of rafters, purlins, and sheathing is typical for 18th century.

The kitchen /dining room is located at the north portion of the house as a finished, open stud space with a shed roof of 2x4 rafters. None of the original post-and-beam framing exists in this later addition. A wood stove utilizes a flue in the existing fireplace masonry. A washing machine/ utility closet is located west of the fireplace in what was originally accessed from the living room. A white porcelain sink is supported on an early wood cabinet with an adjoining wood drawer. A separate floor cabinet with natural wood cabinet enclosed a clothes dryer. There are wide board, natural wood floors.

4.2 Alterations/Evolution

Changes include the following:

- Early photo (see photo page 14) shows a 6/9 window in the west bedroom that was changed to the current 6/6 window;
- Kitchen shed-roofed addition at the north;
- Living room closet converted as a utility closet accessed from the kitchen;
- Dining space addition to the kitchen at the northeast;
- Conversion of the middle bedroom as a bathroom while maintaining the original walls;
- Exterior shower added.

4.3 Character-Defining Features

This house is distinguished by its location in the Old Historic District of Siasconset, originally established in 1955. As an integral part of the early village, it is contributing to the entire sense and harmony of place.

Character-defining features include its:

- small scale with a “T-plan”, simple massing, gable roof and low eaves;
- placement fronting on two parallel streets;
- asymmetrical fenestration with variations of window size;
- abundance of original and early materials and construction detail of post-and-beam frame, wood lath & plaster, floor boards, trim, masonry, and hardware.

4.4 Outbuildings

There is an additional structure at the north of the property at 5 Broadway that was built by Mildred Burgess after she took ownership in 1939. As a separate cottage it is presumed to have been built after 1949 since it does not appear on the latest Sanborn Insurance map of 1949. It may be the third additional structure to have been built on the same location, having followed “Headache House” and a small barn. All of the Sanborn maps show a small structure in the northeast corner of the property.

5. PROPERTY INFORMATION

5.1 Property Identification: 5 Broadway, Nantucket Assessor’s Map: 73.2.4 4, .07 acres, zone SOH.

6. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

6.1 Published and Archival Resources

Forman, Henry Chandlee, ed. *Underhill’s The Old Houses on ‘Sconset Bank: The First History of Siasconset, Nantucket Island, America’s Most Unique Village*. Nantucket: Myacomt Press, 1961.

Forman, Henry Chandlee. *Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses*. New York: Hastings House, 1966.

Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS): Survey Nos. MA-1344, MA 1208, one incomplete measured drawing & Written Historical and Descriptive Data, 1930s.

Manon, Sarah. “The Gardner Cottage 5 Broadway, Siasconset, Nantucket Island, Massachusetts/photo documentation. Preservation Institute Nantucket, 2006.

May, Michael. *‘Sconset House by House*. Nantucket Preservation Trust, 2018.

Tyler, Betsy. “5 Broadway.” (prepared for Peter Rodts), 2009.

6.2 Historical Maps & Plans

Leonard, David Augustus. *A View of Siasconset a Fishing Village on Nantucket, 1797*.

Map of the Village of Siasconset, 1935. Proprietors Records Book No. 2, Folio 205.

Walling, H. F. *Siasconset* detail from *Map of Nantucket*, 1858

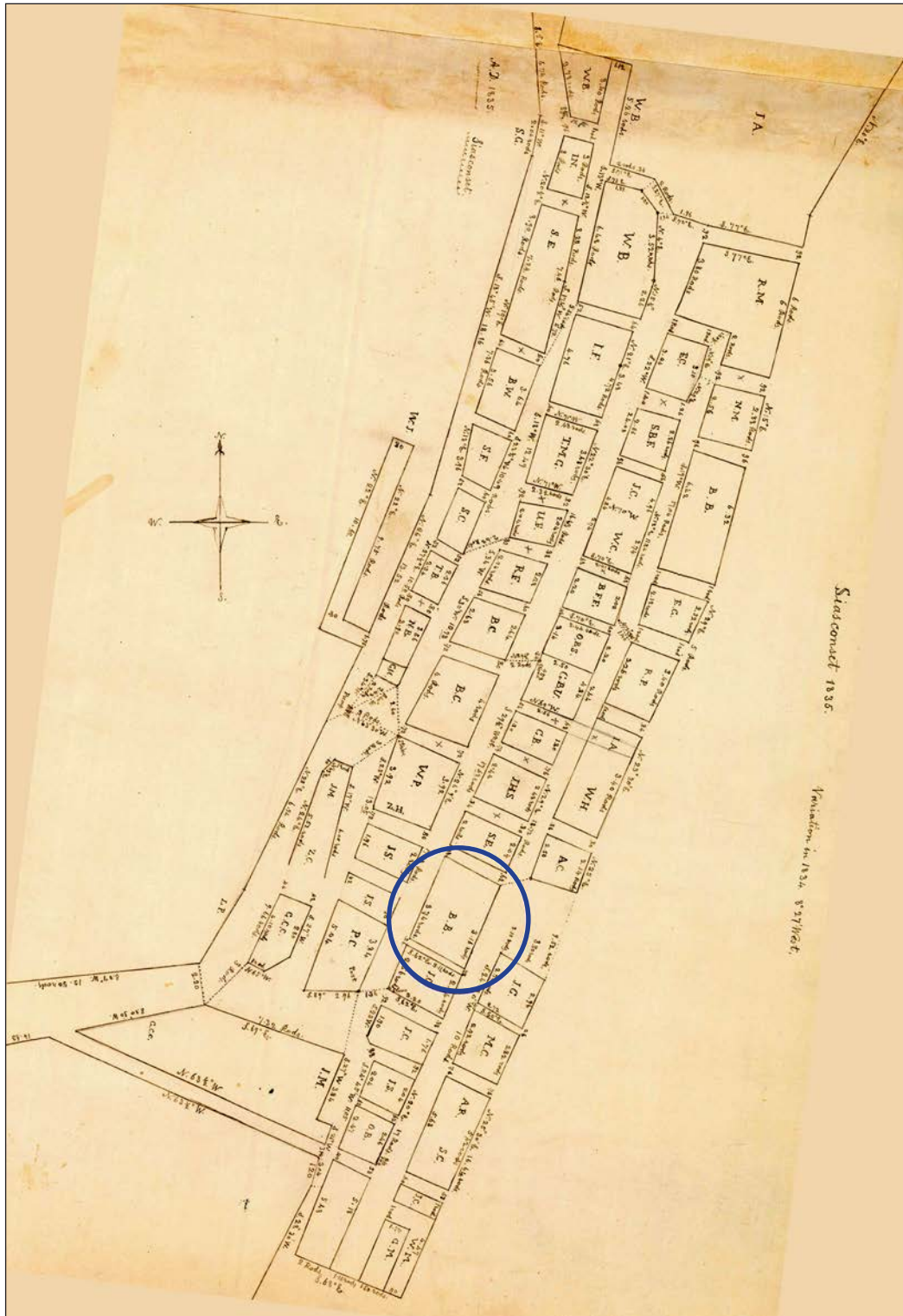
Stoner, J. J. *Siasconset* detail from *Bird’s-Eye View of the Town of Nantucket*, 1881

Platt, Harry, *Map of the Village of Siasconset on the Island of Nantucket, Mass.*, published by E. T. Underhill & Co., 1888

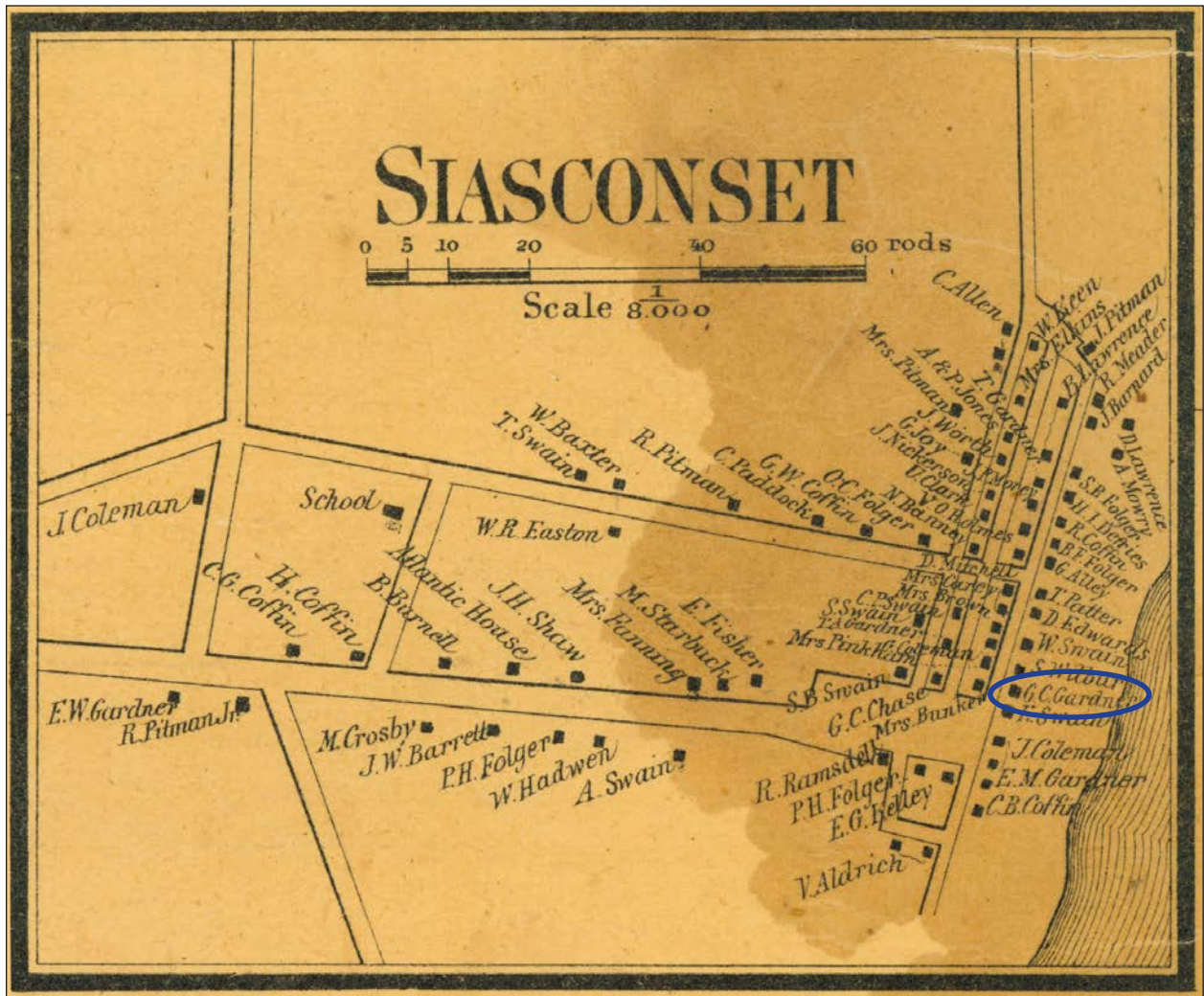
Sanborn Insurance Company 1898, 1904, 1909, 1923, 1949



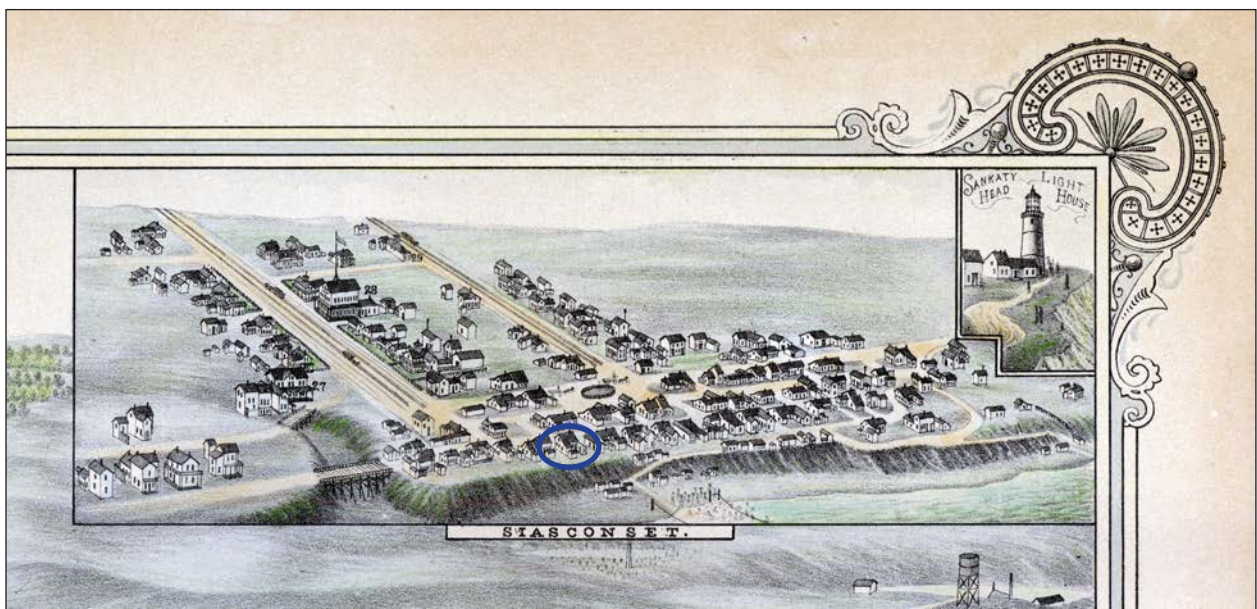
A View of Siasconset a Fishing Village on Nantucket, 1797
by Davis Augustus Leanard



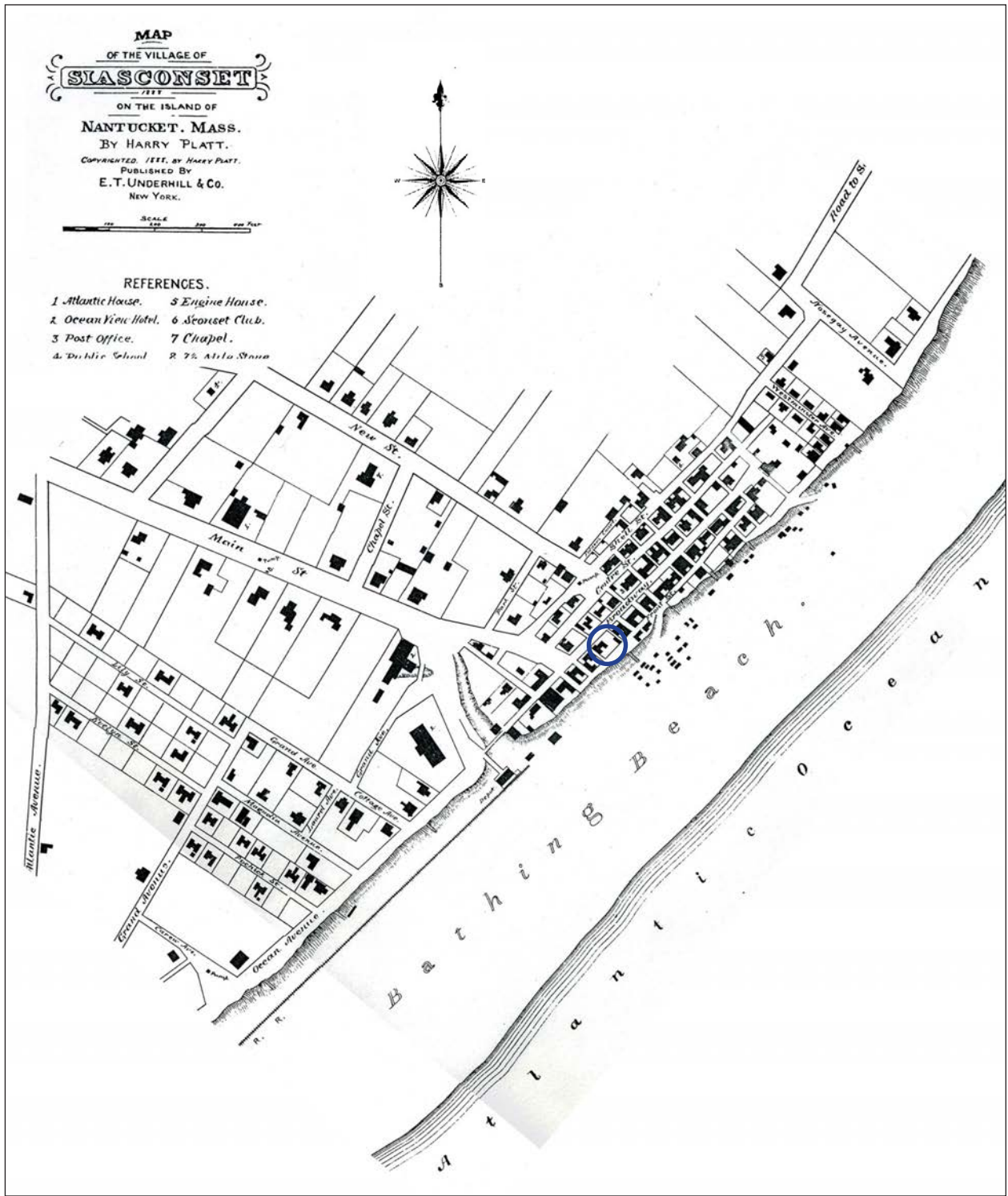
Proprietors map of the village, 1835



Walling, H. F. *Siasconset*, 1858



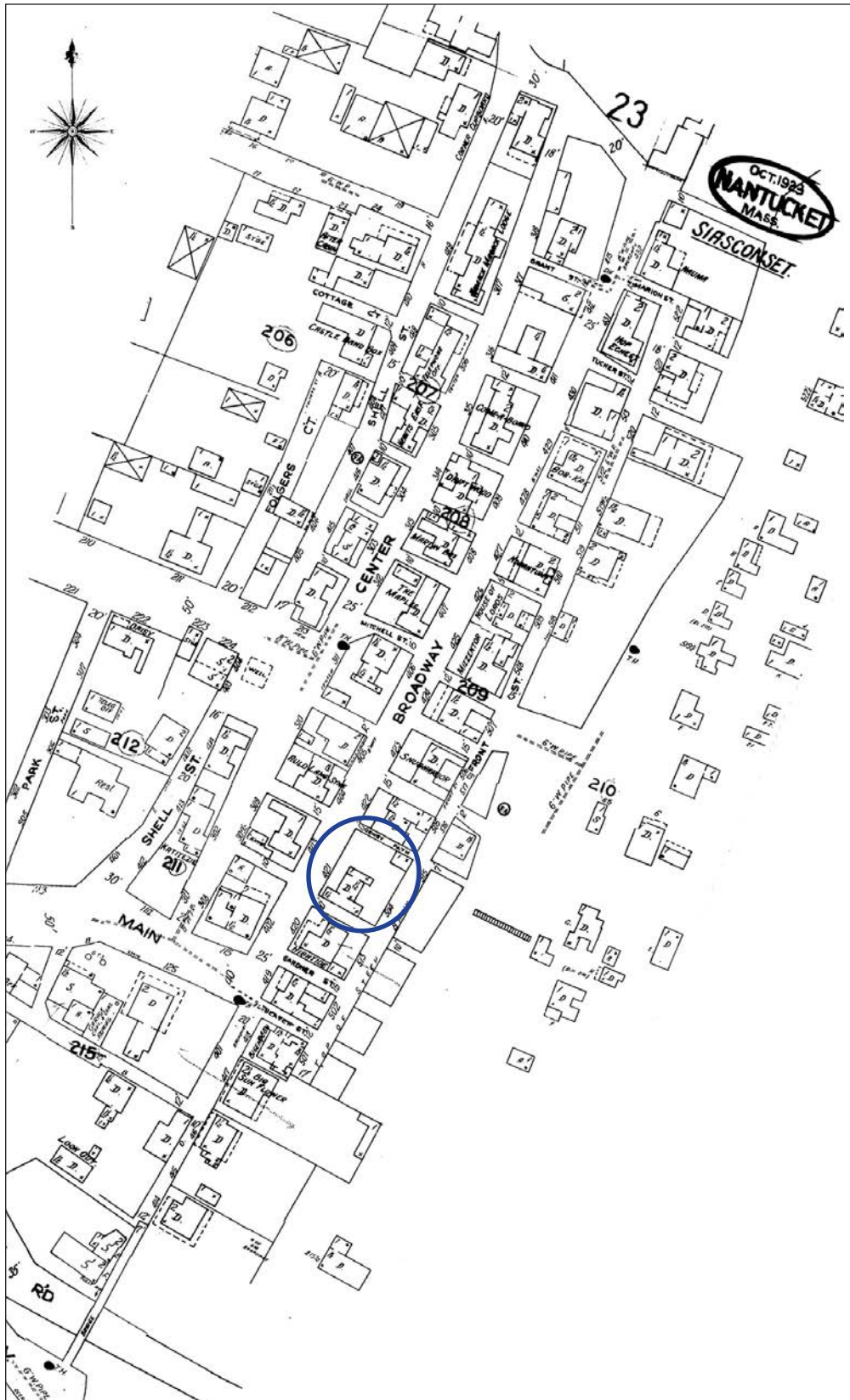
Stoner, J. J. *Bird's Eye View of the Town of Nantucket*
[Siasconset detail], 1881



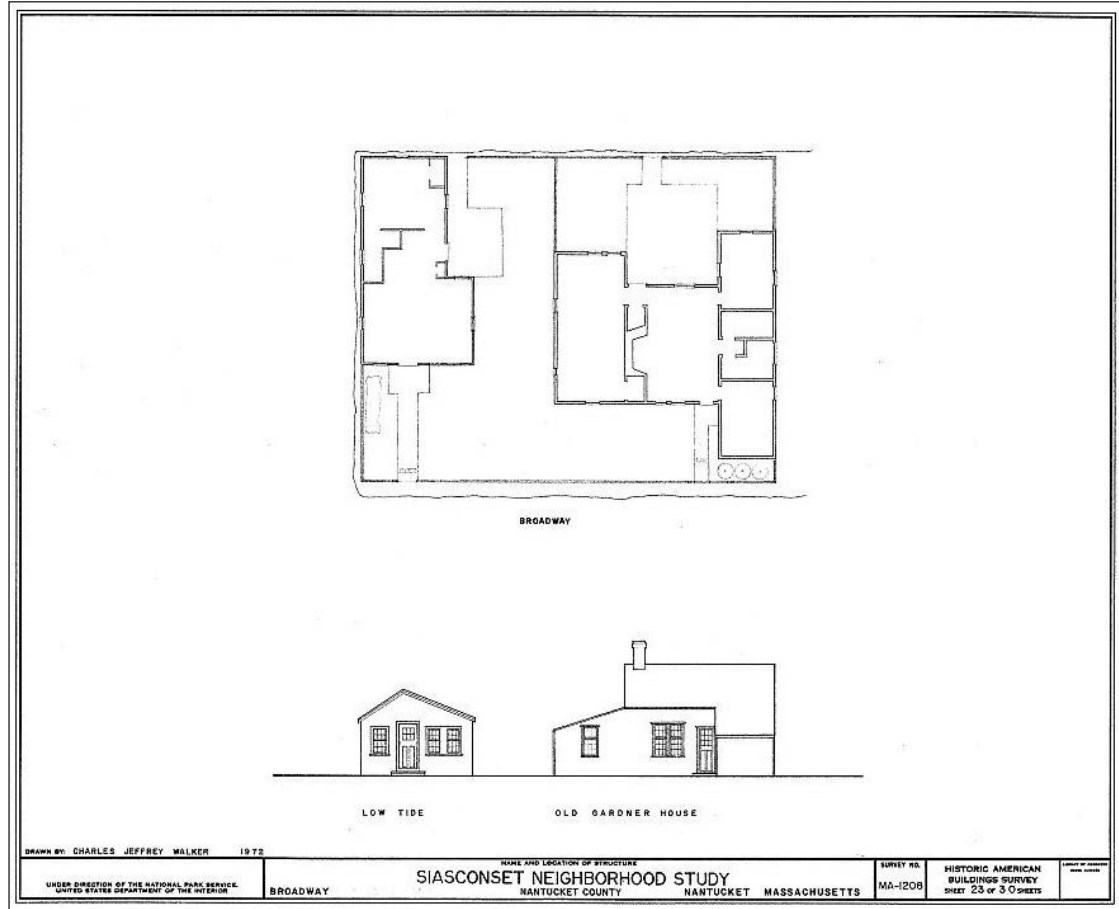
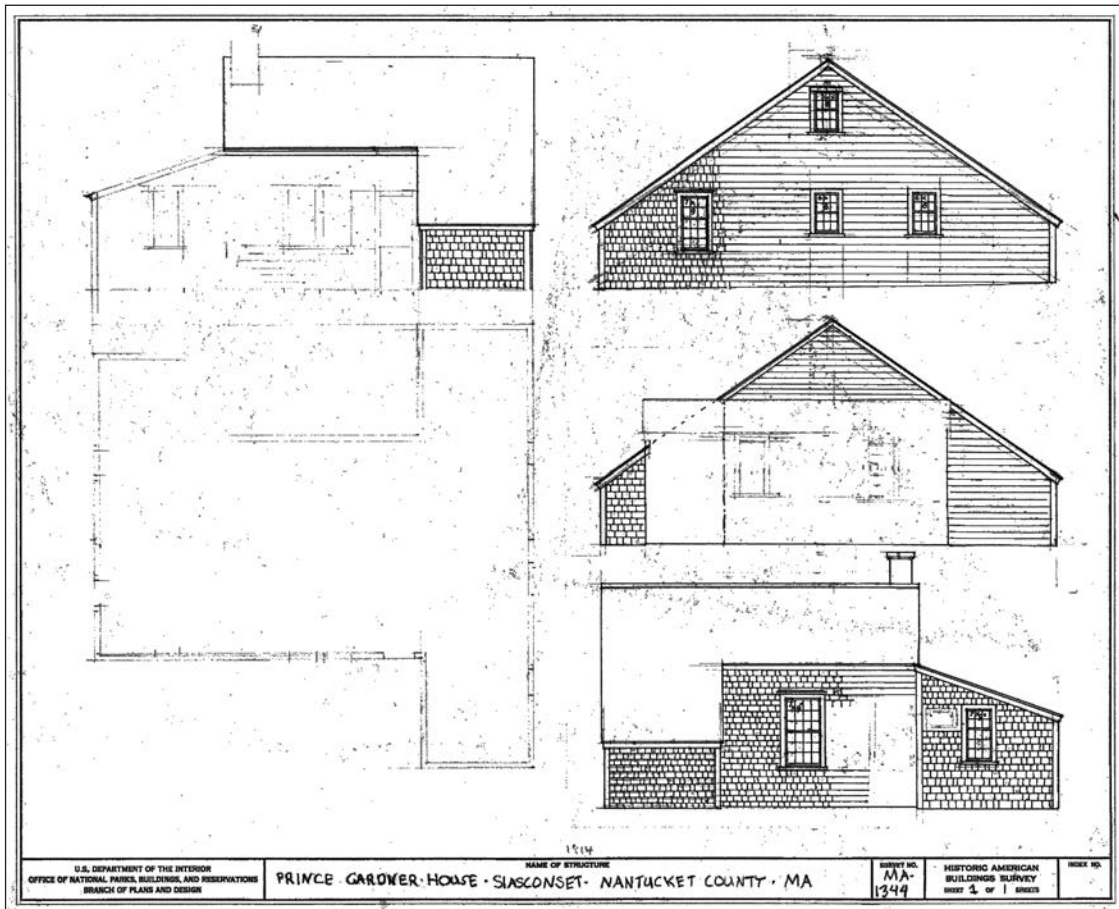
Platt, Harry, *Map of the Village of Siasconset on the Island of Nantucket, Mass.*,
Published by E. T. Underwood & Co., 1888



Sanborn Insurance Company 1898



Sanborn Insurance Company 1949



Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS): Survey Nos. MA-1344, MA-1208 ,
incomplete measured drawing (top), 1930's; plan and elevations (bottom), 1972

6.3 Historical Photographs: Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association:

A15-24 (GPN3434), 1882, from "Old 'Sconset and along Shore" H.S. Wyer

PH18-6, Looking northeast

GPN4303, Looking north

F770, 1920s

SC 612-248, 1910s, Nantucket Historical Association, House Museum

P2632, Looking south on Broadway,

PH12-0422, 1992, East & North Elevations

PH12-0423, 1992, West & North Elevations

GPN2815 & 2816, Julia Macy Urann and Billy Bowen, costumed, in kitchen

PH12-0421, 1992, south & west elevations of "Low Tide"

F142: aerial, 1924

F4097: aerial, 1926

AP1940-71: aerial

AP1955-Sias-014: aerial



A15-24 (GPN3434), 1882, from "Old 'Sconset and along Shore" H.S. Wyer
The wood kitchen drawer and sink cabinet shown in this photo have survived. Changes include a larger sink, a refrigerator in the corner, and the removal of the fireplace masonry. What now remains are the angled brick sides.



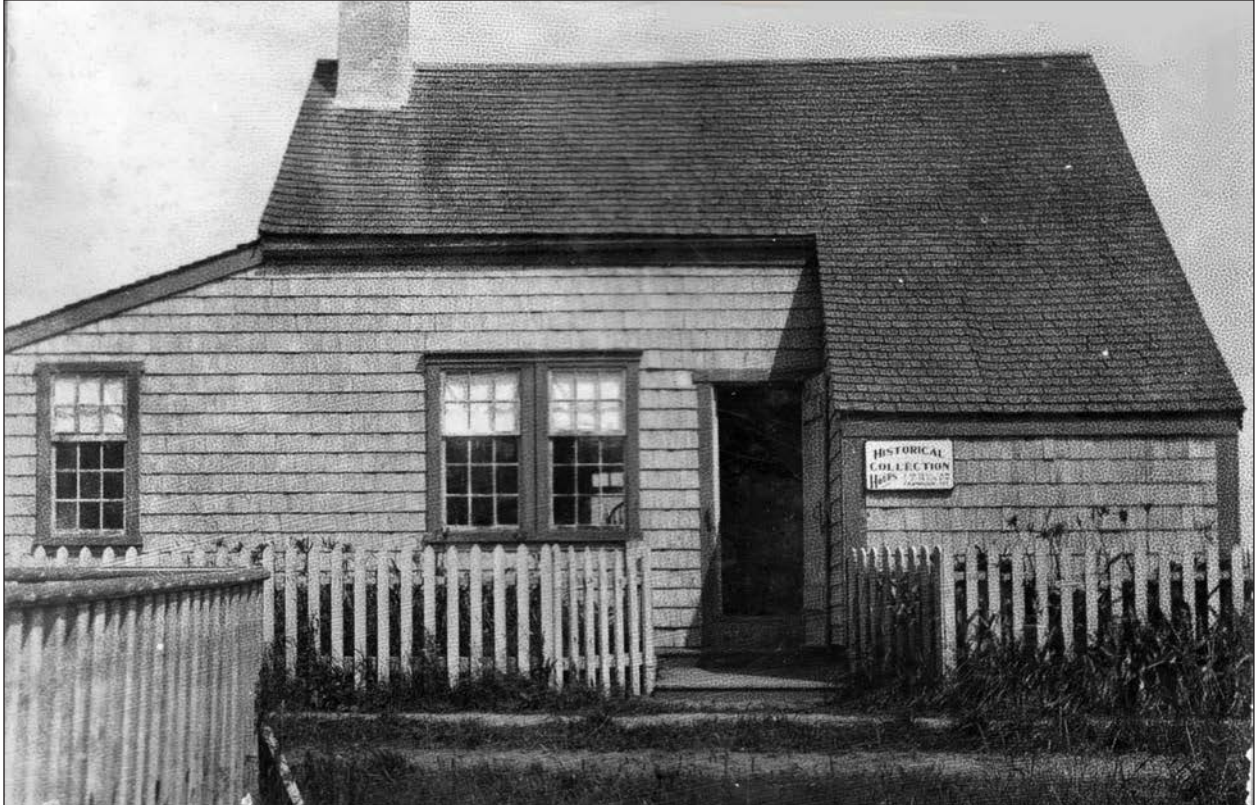
PH18-6, Looking northeast, second house on the right showing earlier 6/9 bedroom window



GPN4303, Looking northeast, first house on the right



F770, 1920's, Looking south on Broadway (the third house), showing darker trim, a house to the north, possibly a paraged chimney



SC 612-248, 1910's, open to the public by Nantucket Historical Association
This photo shows a paraged chimney, dark or natural trim color, and an unpainted fence.



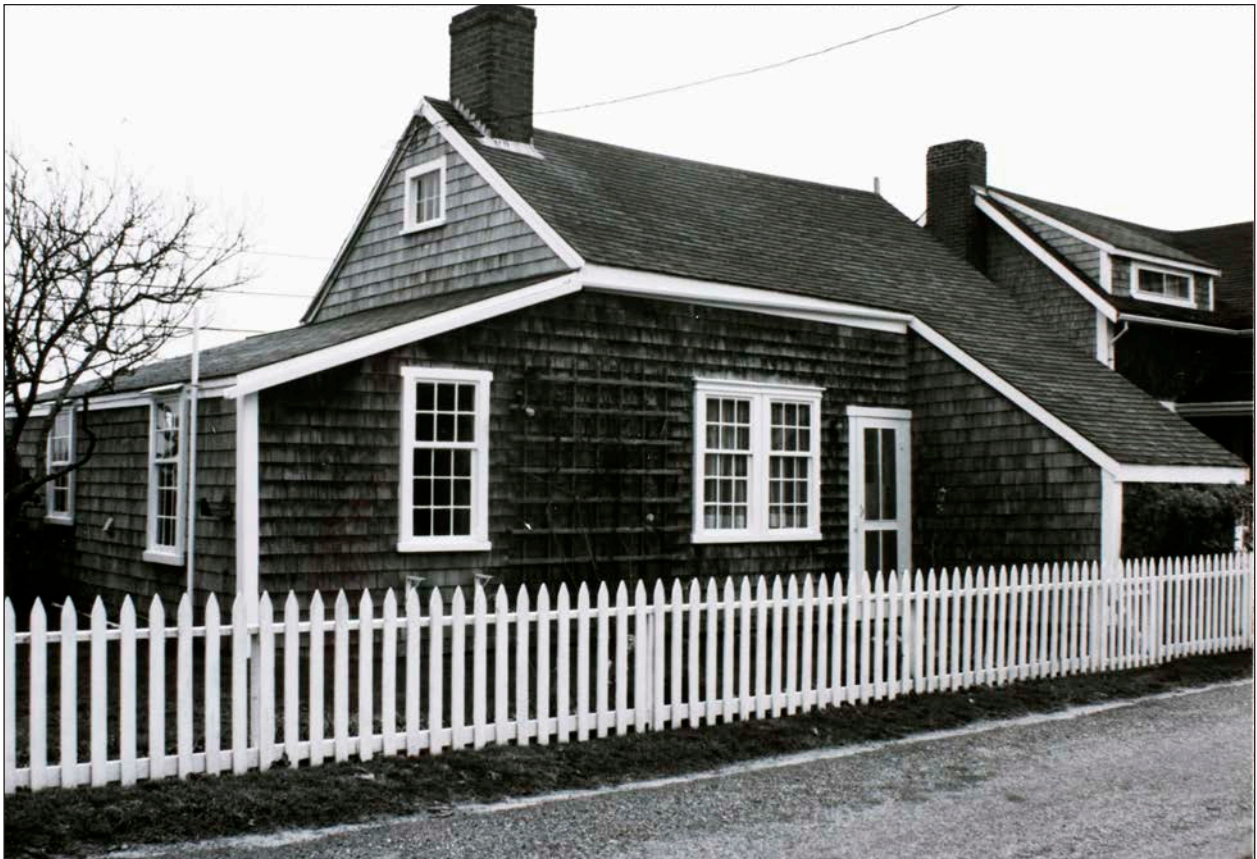
P2632, Looking south on Broadway (the second house on the left), showing a darker trim, a house to the north, possibly a parged chimney.



GPN2816, Julia Macy Urann and Billy Bowen, costumed, in kitchen



PH12-0422, 1992, East and North Elevations



PH12-0423, 1992, West and North Elevations



PH12-0421, 1992, South and West elevations of "Low Tide" Cottage built by Burgess north of 5 Broadway



F142: aerial, 1924



F4097: aerial, 1926

6.4 Current Year 2021 Photographs



East/Front Street Elevation



Broadway West and North Elevation



East and South Elevations



North and West Elevations



Double Plank Frame Window with Curvilinear Head Trim



Living Room



Fireplace



Window Trim



Living Room looking south



Southwest Bedroom



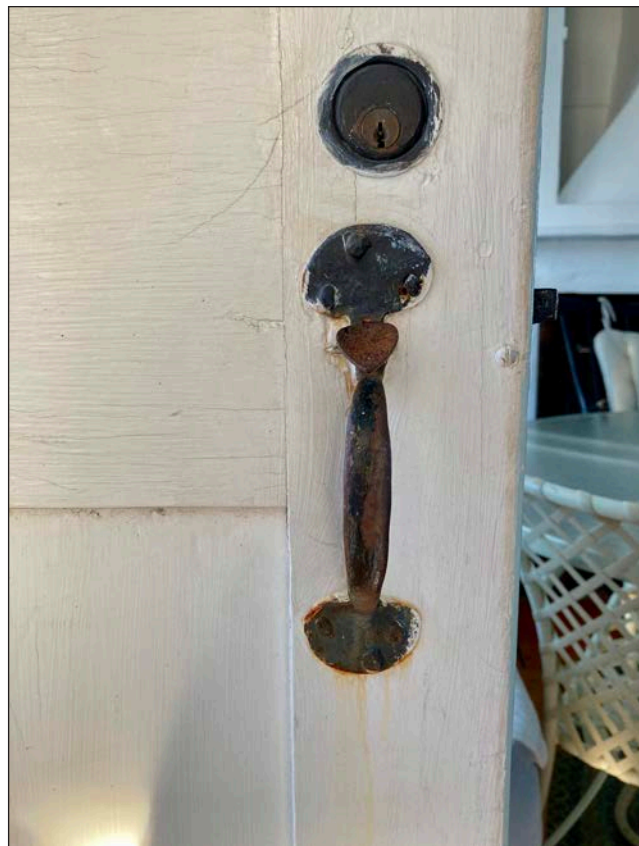
Southeast Bedroom



Stair to Attic



Hardware Detail



Suffolk Thumbblatch



Kitchen



Kitchen

6.5 Chain of Title

Proprietors Record Book 5/pp. 137-38: Proprietors of the Common and Undivided Lands to George C. Gardner, 1882

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 80/pp. 153-54: George C. Gardner to Sarah Gardner Whittemore, 1888

Estate of Sarah Gardner Whittemore to John C. Gardner, 1909

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 93/p. 16: Children of Harrison Gardner to John C. Gardner, 1909

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 92/p. 83: John C. Gardner to Annie Barker Folger, 1909

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 94/p. 249: Annie B. Folger to the Nantucket Historical Association, 1910

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 109/p.78: Nantucket Historical Association to Mildred G. Burgess, 1929

PROBATE 4038: Mildred G. Burgess, 1967

Nantucket Registry of Deeds Book 404/p. 213: Nancy B. Rodts and Peter E. Rodts to Forrest A. Rodts, Trustee of Old Gardner House Trust, 1992