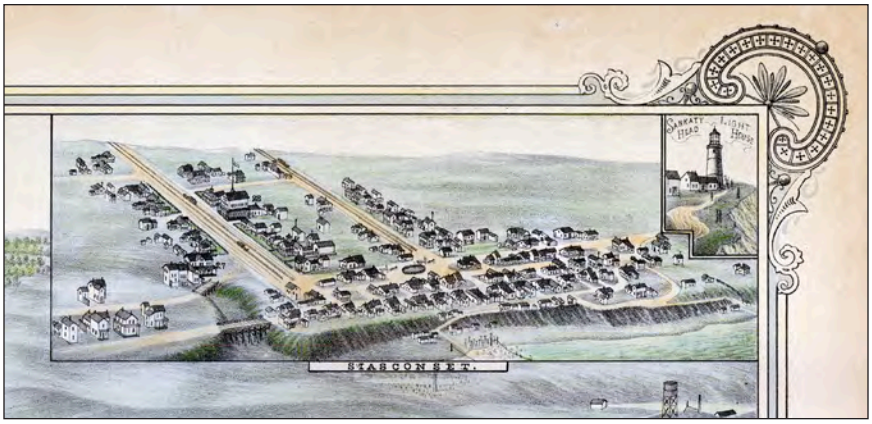

Architectural & Historical Report
for
28 Main Street
Siasconset, Massachusetts

February 4, 2019

Prepared by Marsha L. Fader, Assoc AIA 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 House History 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 1837, the property at 28 Main Street 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 update the history of the dwelling at 28 Main Street and establish its architectural and cultural significance. This study includes a survey and study of the architecture, form and materials of the existing dwelling, 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.

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

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The dwelling at 28 Main Street, Siasconset, is significant for its architectural style; for the Crosby, Nichols, Jerome, and Arnoff families that have owned it for the past 182 years; and for the substantial amount and integrity of original form and materials that have survived. It is significant and rare that the builder of 28 Main Street is known as well as his contract with the original owner, Matthew Crosby.

The dwelling at 28 Main Street, also known as Villa Jerome, was part of an early nineteenth century trend among year-round residents of the town of Nantucket to escape to a summer home. What evolved was a tree-lined Main Street boulevard with fenced homes set back from the street. Many of the homes on the south side took advantage of a cool, north-facing front facade in the summer to include columned porches that wrapped around three sides. As a summer cottage, 28 Main Street significantly set the trend by establishing an early Greek Revival style of architecture. Combined with transitional elements of Federal style architecture, it represents an excellent example of a 'Sconset summer cottage vernacular.

3. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The house at 28 Main Street was built in 1837 for Matthew Crosby (1791–1878) by Charles Pendexter, as specified in a contract between the two men dated November 1836. [Nantucket Historical Association, MS4, Crosby Family Papers, 1812-1893, folder 2]. Pendexter was born in New Hampshire. He appears in the U. S. Federal Census for Nantucket in 1840, but in the 1850 census he is listed as a master carpenter living with his family in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An examination of deeds recorded in the period 1836–45 reveals that Pendexter was active as a housewright on the island for at least a decade. Although he and Crosby did not record the building contract for the cottage at 28 Main Street in the Nantucket Registry of Deeds (NRD), Pendexter did record several subsequent building contracts and business agreements that identify him as a housewright. In addition, filings in the NRD identify Pendexter as the builder of Trinity Church on Broad Street, destroyed in the Great Fire of 1846.

Matthew Crosby, a prominent whale-oil merchant, was a resident of 90 Main Street in the town of Nantucket. Like many other wealthy island merchants, he established a summer home for his family in the village of 'Sconset in the 1830s. Unlike the small fishermen's cottages on the bank, some of which dated back to the seventeenth century, the Main Street cottages were purpose-built as comfortable summer retreats with spacious lawns, fenced yards, porches, and outbuildings. Crosby chose to have his 'Sconset cottage resemble that of Frederick W. Mitchell at 20 Main Street. Mitchell's cottage was the earliest of those constructed along Sconset's primary boulevard, and it became the prototype for several other Main Street dwellings. The building contract lists in detail the desired measurements and features of Crosby's cottage, which would "be of the like finish of Frederick W. Mitchell's," to be completed by May 1, 1837 for a total cost of $1,897. Evidence culled from Crosby's diaries reveals that the final cost of the project was closer to $4,000. [Crosby, Everett U. *The Making of Nantucket: Family Lives and Fortunes in the 19th Century* (New Bedford: Spinner Publications, 2018), page 160].

Matthew Crosby was married twice and had thirteen children, one of whom, Lydia, was married to Barker

Burnell Jr., whose father built the house across from Crosby at 29 Main Street, 'Sconset. For several years they were summer neighbors, until Lydia and husband moved to Chile in the late 1840s. Matthew's youngest son, Frank Lewis Crosby (b. 1841), wrote that the family's summer cottage was "a very small pretty home with a coach-house, horse stalls, workshop, and land given to pasture and vegetables. [We] lived in town October to June and the rest of the years at the farm."

Crosby's many heirs sold the cottage to Maria L. Nichols of Cincinnati, Ohio in 1881. The tract included land that Crosby purchased south of 28 Main from Philip H. Folger in 1840. Nichols owned the property for five years, during which time artist George Inness, one of the foremost American landscape painters of the nineteenth century, painted a scene titled *Back of Nichols' Barn, 'Sconset, 1883*. The painting is now in the collection of the Nantucket Historical Association. Maria's husband, Col. George Ward Nichols, formerly on the staff of General William T. Sherman, was an amateur painter as well as the founder of the College of Music in Cincinnati. He died in 1885 and Nichols sold her 'Sconset property the following year to Jennie Jerome of Detroit.

Jennie Sherman Leach Jerome (1845-1914) and George Jerome (1822-97) and extended family owned the cottage they called Villa Jerome for more than sixty years, through the era of 'Sconset's great popularity as an actors' colony (1895-1925) and into the mid-twentieth century. When her health was failing in 1914, Jennie Jerome transferred the title to her 'Sconset property to nephew Cullen Brown, son of her sister Eliza. Cullen was married to Grace Jerome Wesley, a niece of George Jerome. She succeeded Cullen as owner of the house when he died in 1918, and several years later married Paul F. Bagley. Her daughter Hester Brown Sweeney inherited the house when Grace died in 1956.

Hester B. Sweeney sold Villa Jerome with all contents to Arthur E. Arnoff in 1959. He and Marie H. Arnoff and their four children summered there for almost sixty years, equaling the Jerome family's long tenancy. The Arnoff children—Polly Arnoff, Arthur E. Arnoff Jr., Linda MacKay, and Ellen Sonis became equal owners in the property in 2017; that year Ellen Sonis sold her one-fourth interest to her three siblings.

4. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

4.1 Description

Built in 1837, 28 Main Street is an excellent example of a 'Sconset vernacular version of the Greek Revival style of architecture combined with transitional elements of Federal style architecture. It is a five-bay, wood-framed structure with central doorway surrounded at the front, east, and west sides with a roofed porch supported by simple columns. There are painted clapboards and gable end chimneys. The detailing of the doors, windows, hardware, and mantelpieces represents a consistent abundance of original Greek Revival period design. The transitional elements of Federal architecture include the symmetry of the front facade, the splayed window lintels, and the fan-work above the second floor windows.

The house at 28 Main Street is a 1-3/4-story structure with a gable roof ridge paralleling the street. The rectangular plan is true to the original builder's contract of 33 feet by 20 feet. The house has a gable-roofed ell at the west which creates an original L-shaped plan. This west ell is difficult to discern from the original builder's contract. It may be what is described as a "porch" of 15 feet by 18 feet. The actual dimensions of the west ell at 14 feet by 17 feet are close to the specified "porch" dimensions. As part of the builder's contract, a room was also added during the 1837 year of construction at the southeast.

The exterior wall treatment at the original front, east, and west sides is painted wood clapboards. The window trim has splayed lintels and a narrow, 5-sided jamb. The windows have painted wood shutters at both first and second story windows. Second floor east and west windows have circular fan-work above the lintel.

The plan of interior rooms originally included two front rooms or parlors, a corridor behind these rooms providing access to a bedroom on the east side and a dining room on the west. A stair to the second floor was also located leading from this passageway. The original second floor would have included four (4) small bedrooms. This corridor/passageway seems to be what the builder is describing in his contract as a 'Back Entry' of 5 feet with a "back roof running over it."

It is clear from the allocation of space, that gathering was a priority. The first floor contained two parlors and a large 3-sided porch. Ample space was also given to a dining room but very little to the kitchen. None of the existing three bathrooms would have existed during most of the 19th century. There would have been an outdoor privy.

Each of the two front parlor rooms have painted wood, Greek Revival mantelpieces. Interior window and door trim is in the Greek Revival style with corner rosettes with walls and ceilings of wood lath and plaster. Hardware includes original thumblatches, butt hinges, glass and wood knobs, and rim locks. Doors are original 5-panels with Greek Revival mouldings while original windows are 6/6 wood sash.

The foundation for the house consists primarily of the original brick and added concrete block piers. The builder's contract called for 'pillars 2-1/2 feet in front'. There is a partial cellar at the southwest.

4.2 Alterations/Evolution

While there have been many changes during the 182-year history of 28 Main Street, most of the changes have not had an impact on the original house itself. The changes have occurred to the back or south of the main house, at the east side.

The first change was written into the 1837 builder's contract which added a first floor bedroom on the east side. According to the contract this change was added in September of the same year:

> "In addition to the above I have agreed to add eight feet on to the porch put in one window & door on the East side put down two floors uppers one plain and one a passway door & window on the west".

This bedroom addition is visible in Photo #GPN4435 (page 7). It had its own gable roof with a slightly different roof pitch than the adjoining front porch roof and a window on the east side with wood shutters. Note that all of the exterior trim in this undated photograph was painted a dark color in the photo.

Subsequent changes included the following:

1. A small shed was added at the south wall of the west ell. This may have been an early addition since the original kitchen was quite small.

2. The eastern slope of the west ell roof was extended to cover what may have been an outdoor porch. The interior of what is now a kitchen has the evidence of its original, exterior painted shingled walls at the west and south walls. There is also a second stair leading to a bedroom in the west ell. A chimney was also added in this new interior space near the exterior east wall. Reference Photo #GPN4435 (page 7).

3. A roof ridge cresting was added to the front roof and removed at a later time. Reference Photo #'s GPN4435 and GPN2543 (pages 7 & 9).

4. The bedroom addition and the roof extension described above, was removed for a gable roof running with an east-west ridge. This roof now covers the first floor bedroom and kitchen at the east side. This change would also have included demolition of the earlier chimney and rebuilding the current chimney at the exterior of the east wall. This appears to be the configuration shown in the 1923 Sanborn Map.

5. A shed was added at the east side of the south wall. This appears in the 1923 Sanborn Map.

6. The original three chimneys were rebuilt above the roof. They no longer have the distinctive brick corbeling of the original chimneys seen in Photo #GPN525 (page 8).

7. A roofed porch was added to the west shed addition.

8. At some time the exterior trim was painted a dark color, possibly a green matching the wood shutters. The original paint color may have been white, followed by a dark color, then reverting to the current white. Reference Photo #GPN4435 (page 7).

9. A trellised-wood arbor at the front porch was added at an unknown date and later removed. Reference Photo #'s GPN525 and GPN2543 (pages 8 & 9).

10. What appears to be a wind-powered water pump was built and later removed. Reference Photo #'s SC777-23 and SC809-50 (pages 9 & 10).

11. Painted white wood fencing at the street front was removed followed by the planting of privet hedge. Reference Photo #'s GPN592 and GPN525 (page 8). The photos suggest that the design may also have changed from a fence with large posts to a simple capped fence.

12. The original front 5-foot porch was extended to a depth of 9 feet on the east and west sides.

4.3 Character-Defining Features:

The 1837 house at 28 Main Street has retained a great wealth of its original character-defining features, including the following:

1. The original form and L-shaped footprint of the house with its original framing, columned front porch, walls, doors, windows, shutters, Greek Revival detailing and hardware, mantelpieces; few changes have been made to these elements and materials;

2. Half-round fan-work above east and west second floor window lintels;

3. Porch columns;

4. Three (3) Greek Revival mantelpieces;

5. A most unusual kitchen sink.

4.4 Outbuildings

The existing Barn appears on the 1923 Sanborn Map and Photo #GPN528). It is a 1-3/4-story, wood-framed shingled structure with a gable ridge paralleling the street and a shed/lean-to type of addition at the south. It contains a variety of finished and unfinished spaces for a shop, garage, storage, sleeping quarters, and a bathroom. There are double barn doors at the north and south, a single door at the west, and 6/6 windows. Early cut nails suggest a pre-1850 date of construction. Frank Lewis Crosby (b. 1841), refers to the property as a farm with a "coach-house, horse stalls, workshop" suggesting that the Barn was built soon after the house.

- An existing, small wood-framed, gable-roofed structure contains a room with two beds. It does not appear on the 1923 Sanborn Map.

- A small structure that no longer exists, was located at the west side of the main house on the 1923 Sanborn Map.

- A wind-driven water pump appears in Reference Photo #'s SC809-50 and SC777-23 (pages 7 & 10) near the back of the house on the east side.

5. OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. The East Front Parlor has a rounded wall enclosing a closet and stair accessed from the back hall. Nothing in the function of this space suggests a reason for building the wall as a curved wall. With its baseboard matching and continuous with the two parlors, it is believed to be original.

2. The date of construction for the Barn is not known.

3. Reference Photo #GPN592 (page 8) appears to have a white-painted balustrade on top of the porch roof. It does not appear in any other photos.

4. The evolution of paint colors and changes is not known.

5. The location of the "7-ft cistern" specified in the builder's contract is not known.

6. Two unusual 18-light (6-over-6-over-6) windows in the original front portion of the house with sills that are close to the floor level. They are believed to have been added at a later date.

6. FURTHER STUDY & INFORMATION

1. Architectural Drawings: The dwelling and barn at 28 Main Street should be documented with a set of measured drawings by hand or created from laser scans.
2. Archeology: The property may contain archeologically-significant artifacts due to the known existence of a prior cistern, outbuildings, a wind-driven water pump and a privy.
3. Historic Furnishings Inventory: The sale of the property in 1959 included all contents. Original furnishings may be part of the existing household contents.
4. Property Identification: Nantucket Property ID/Parcel: 28 Main Street, 73.3.1 47, .29 acres, zone SR10; Property ID/Parcel: 28R Main Street 73.3.1 47.1, .34 acres, zone SR10

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

7.1 Published and Archival Resources

Building Contract between Matthew Crosby and Charles Pendexter, 1837, Nantucket Historical Association, MS4, Crosby Family Papers, 1812-1893, folder 2

Crosby, Everett U. *The Making of Nantucket – Family Lives and Fortunes in the 19th Century* (New Bedford: Spinner Publications, 2018)

Judy, Paul. "Villa Jerome, 'Sconset," 2011, unpublished family history

Tyler, Betsy. *Main Street, 'Sconset: The Houses and Their Histories*, with contributions by Michael May (Nantucket Preservation Trust, 2012)

Tyler, Betsy. *The 'Sconset Actors Colony: Broadway Offshore, 1895–1925* (Nantucket Historical Association, 2011)

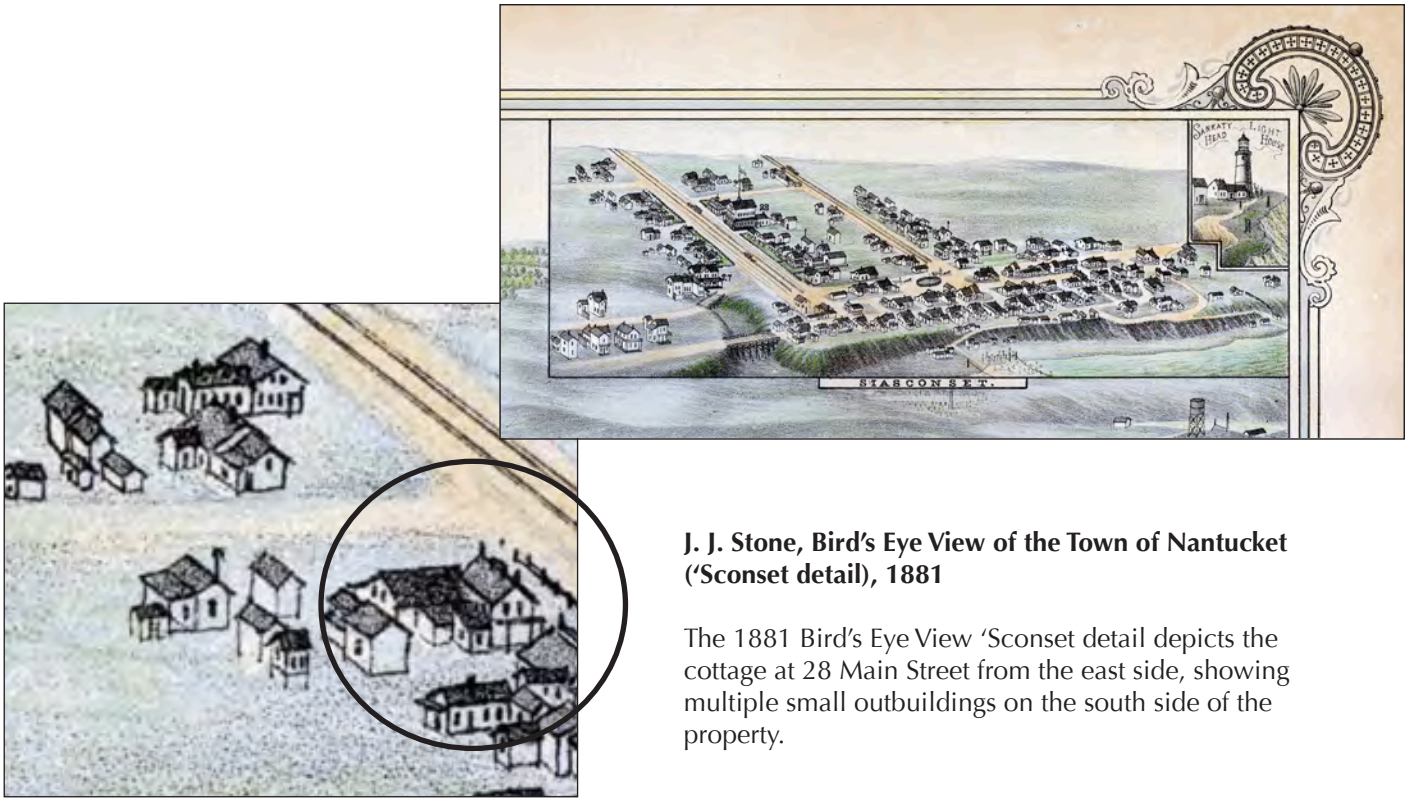
7.2 Historical Maps

H. F. Walling, Map of the Counties of Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket, Mass. ('Sconset detail), 1858
A detail from Walling's 1858 map of Nantucket notes the owners of houses along Main Street in 'Sconset, and places M. Crosby across from Burnell. This map indicates location only.

J. J. Stone, Bird's Eye View of the Town of Nantucket. ('Sconset detail), 1881
The 1881 Bird's Eye View 'Sconset detail depicts the cottage at 28 Main Street from the east side, showing multiple small outbuildings on the south side of the property.

Henry Platt, Map of the Village of Siasconset, 1888
The first map to show the footprint of the cottage appeared during Jerome ownership of 28 Main Street. Platt's 1888 Map of the Village of Siasconset clearly depicts the outline of the building.

Sanborn Insurance Company maps, 1923, 1949.

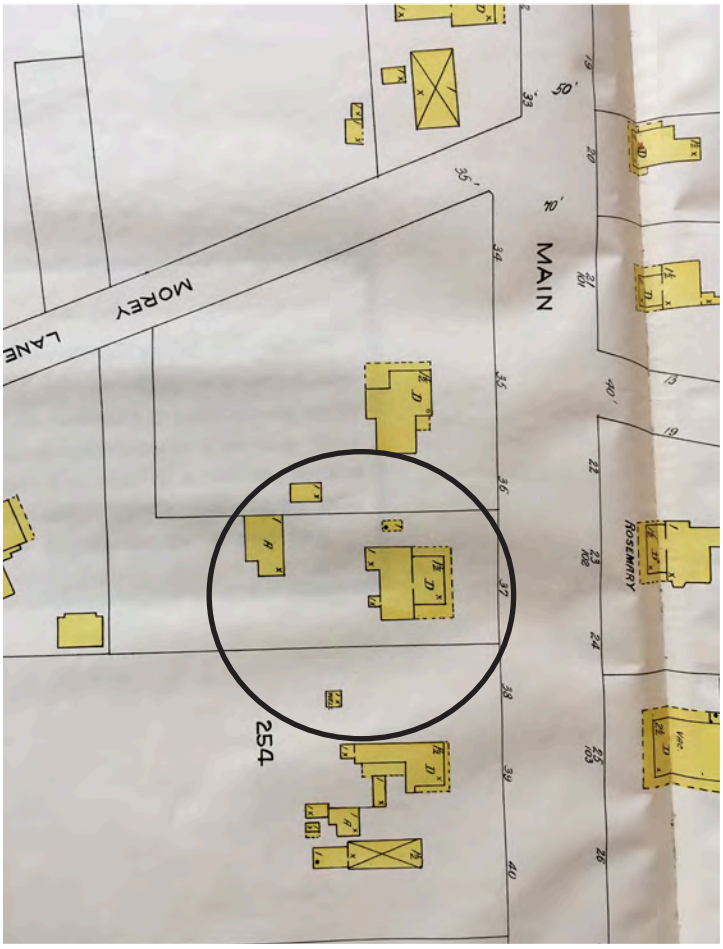


J. J. Stone, Bird's Eye View of the Town of Nantucket ('Sconset detail), 1881

The 1881 Bird's Eye View 'Sconset detail depicts the cottage at 28 Main Street from the east side, showing multiple small outbuildings on the south side of the property.

1923 Sanborn Insurance Company Map

The earliest Sanborn Insurance Company map of the village that includes 28 Main Street is dated 1923 and shows significant alteration to the rear ell of the building when compared to Platt's 1888 footprint. The next and final Sanborn map, updated in 1949, indicates no changes to the footprint of the building since 1923.



7.3 Historical Photographs

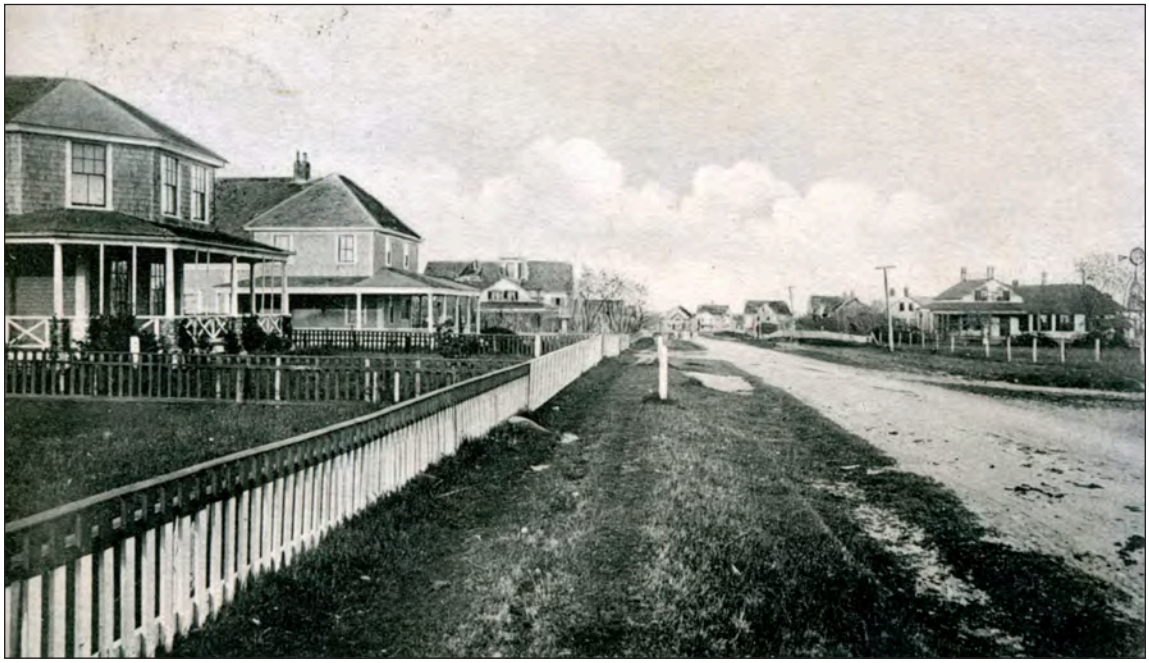
GPN4435: Rear view of the house, circa 1870s
GPN525: Front of house, circa 1880s
GPN592: 28 Main in the distance, east side partially visible, circa 1870s-80s
GPN2543: Front of house, circa 1880s-'90s
SC777-23: Henry S. Wyer postcard, 1910s, 28 Main on right
SC809-50: Back yard of house, circa 1900s
PH73-12: 90 Main Street, in-town home of Matthew Crosby

GPN4435: Rear view of the house, circa 1870s;
south and east elevations

GPN525: North & West Elevations, circa 1880s

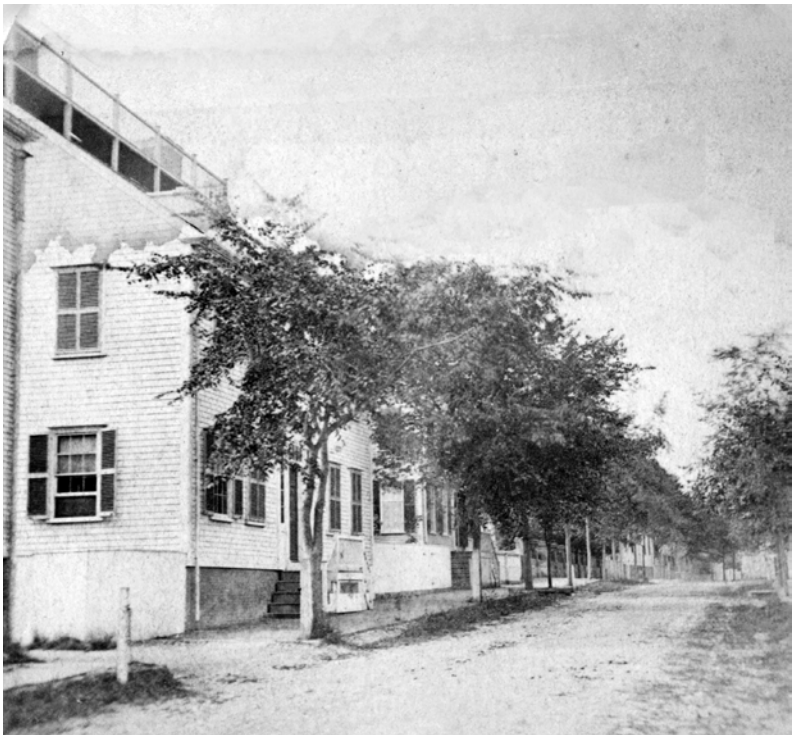
GPN592: 28 Main in the distance, east side
partially visible, circa 1870s-80s

GPN2543: Front of house, circa 1880s-'90s



SC777-23: Henry S. Wyer postcard, 1910s,
28 Main Street on right

SC809-50: Back yard of house, circa 1900s, looking east, northeast. The house at 26 Main Street is visible. Note base of wind-driven water pump structure on the right.



PH73-12: 90 Main Street, in-town home of Matthew Crosby, original owner of 28 Main Street, 'Sconset.

7.4 BUILDER'S CONTRACT, 1837

Building Contract between Matthew Crosby and Charles Pendexter, 1837, Nantucket Historical Association, MS4, Crosby Family Papers, 1812-1893, folder 2. Transcribed by Betsy Tyler, 2018

Contract between Matthew Crosby and Charles Pendexter, builder, May 1, 1837

Nantucket Historical Association, Crosby Family Papers 1812-93, MS 4, folder 2

This is to certify that I have this day contracted with Matthew Crosby to build him a House at Siasconsett to be completed on or before the first day of May 1837 of the following dimensions

Say the Main House	*33 ft front*
	20 ft rear
	12 ft 9 in Posts
Porch	*18 ft rear by 15 ft*
Bed Room	*11 ft square in the clear*
West front room	*16 ft by 15*
Front Entry	*6 ft*
Back Entry	*5 ft back roof running over it*
Closets in all the rooms & chambers & larthed [sic *lathed] plaster*	
Cellar	*7 ft, cistern 70 bbls*

House to be set up on pillars 2 ½ feet high in front. Terrace five ft wide with balestrades [sic *balustrades*] *all round & rail & banisters & spouts. Window blinds to all the windows & front door, walls & trimming and all the work to be of the like finishes—Frederick W. Mitchell—all the front fence, from west side of the tract of Jos Barrett, fine including gates & trimmings of same style, & fences running from the house to the front fence. Three chimneys, oven, sink, etc., all to be done in a faithful and workman-like manner with all the trimmings steps etc. for the sum of eighteen hundred & twelve dollars —glass of the best kind size of F. W. Mitchell's including pump in cistern, and everything completed according to the plat or the above dimintions* [sic *dimensions*]*with all the shelves, draws, and what will be wanted in the closets. M. Crosby to furnish posts for fence.*

Nantucket 9 mo In addition to the above I have agreed to add eight feet on to the porch put in one window & door on the East side put down two floors uppers one plain and one a passway door & window on the west

November 10 mo for the additional sum of sixty five dollars

Also agreed to finish the addition for $20

Charles Pendexter

7.5 Current Year 2019 Photographs

North & East Elevations

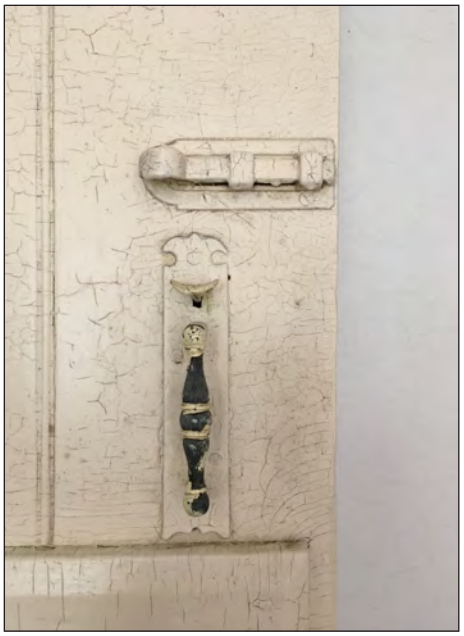
South Elevation with comparative historic photograph

Original 1837 wood fan-work above
second floor windows

Original 1837 Greek Revival front door

Original 1837 Rimlock

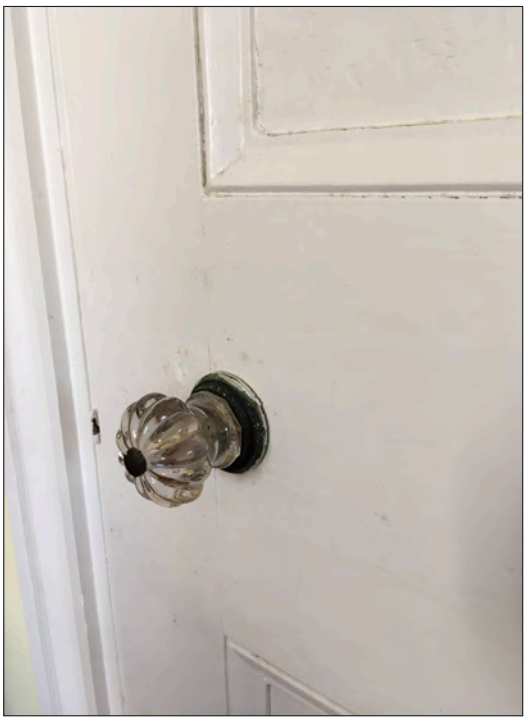
Original 1837
Greek Revival Mantelpiece



Original 1837
Door Hardware:
Norfolk Thumb Latch
and Slide Bolt

Original 1837
Greek Revival
Mantelpiece Detail

Original 1837
Norfolk ThumbLatch
Door Hardware



Original 1837
Glass Door Hardware

Undated Kitchen Sink

7.6 Chain of Title

From deeds recorded in the Nantucket Registry of Deeds (NRD) and bequests noted in Nantucket Probate (NP)

NRD Book 35/page 465
Philip H. Folger to Matthew Crosby, 1836

NRD Book 66/page 474
Heirs of Matthew Crosby to Maria L. Nichols; deed confirmed by Crosby heirs NRD 71/50, 1881

NRD Book 70/325
Robert C. Nichols to Helen A. Nichols, 1886

NRD Book 71/pages 25-26
Helen A. Nichols to Osborn P. Nash, 1886

NRD Book 71/page 37
Osborn P. Nash to Helen A. Nichols, 1886

NRD Book 71/page 38
Helen A. Nichols to Jennie Jerome

NRD Book 92/page 470
Jennie Jerome to Cullen Brown (nephew), 1914

NP 3319
Grace Jerome Wesley Brown Bagley (widow of Cullen Brown married to Paul F. Bagley) to Hester Brown Sweeney (daughter), 1956

NRD Book 119/page 395
Hester B. Sweeney to Arthur E. Arnoff, 1959

NRD Book 485/page 1
Arthur E. Arnoff to Arthur E. Arnoff and Marie H. Arnoff, 1995

NRD Book 882/page 194
Arthur E. Arnoff and Marie H. Arnoff, joint tenants to Arthur E. Arnoff and Marie H. Arnoff, tenants in common, 2004

NRD Book 882/page 198
Arthur E. Arnoff to Arthur E. Arnoff Revocable Trust, Arthur E. Arnoff, Trustee, 2004

NRD Book 882/page 202
Marie H. Arnoff to Marie H. Arnoff Revocable Trust, Marie H. Arnoff, Trustee, 2004

NRD Book 1111/page 311
Marie H. Arnoff, Trustee of Marie H. Arnoff Revocable Trust to Linda MacKay, Polly Arnoff, Ellen Sonis, and Arthur E. Arnoff Jr., 2007

NRD Book 1607/282
Ellen Sonis, successor Trustee of the Arthur E. Arnoff Revocable Trust, to Linda MacKay, Polly Arnoff, Ellen Sonis and Arthur E. Arnoff Jr. in equal parts, 2017

NRD Book 1612/43
Ellen Sonis to Linda MacKay, Polly Arnoff, and Arthur E. Arnoff Jr., one-fourth undivided interest in the property at 28 Main Street, 2017