



Thomas Nickerson, circa 1870s

**Famous
and
Notable Buildings
on Nantucket**

**Courtesy of
Nantucket Visitor Services
25 Federal Street
Nantucket, MA 02554**

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1) The Dreamland Theatre – 17 South Water Street

Originally built on Main Street as a Quaker Meeting House in 1829, this building was moved to the Brant Point area in 1883 and incorporated into the Nantucket Hotel. In 1905, it was floated across the harbor and placed in its current location. At that time it operated as a lodge room, dance hall and moving picture theatre. Eventually the building was purchased by 4 local families and was solely run as a 400 seat movie theatre.

In 2004, the building was sold to an off-island developer for \$6 million. For 5 years, the building has stood empty and closed. The developer ran afoul of local authorities by making unapproved structural changes while trying to renovate the building to be not only a movie theatre, but also condominiums and a restaurant addition in the back. In 2007, the building was sold again to a consortium of summer residents led by Google CEO, Eric Schmidt.

In 2010, the building was dismantled. The wood beams supporting the roof were saved. In 2012, A new modern structure was opened. It houses a 325 seat movie main theatre, offices, meeting spaces, a 2nd floor reception area with views of the Easy Street Basin and a Performing Arts space that includes the original beams saved during demolition.

2) The Pacific Club – 15 Main Street

Built in 1772 by William Rotch as a counting house, the interior was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1846. It was renamed the Pacific Club in 1854 when 24 whaling captains purchased the building. These captains would meet and trade stories about their days whaling in the Pacific. Today, the building is used as commercial space.

The sign “Dartmouth, Beaver and Bedford” located on the front of the building were Nantucket based ships. The *Dartmouth* and the *Beaver* owned by William Rotch were used during the Boston Tea Party in 1773. The *Bedford* was the first American flagged (Nantucket as its home port) vessel to sail into a foreign port in 1783.

3 The Pacific Bank – 61 Main Street

Built in 1818, the bank was named as such because of the financial wealth generated by whaling in the Pacific Ocean at the time of its construction. On October 1, 1847, while looking thru a telescope on the roof, the bank manager’s daughter discovered a comet. In 1954 murals were added to the interior walls. The murals depict the whaling days of Nantucket. Images include a ship’s captain, his wife, the wharves and a ship yard. The bank remained independent until 1998 when it was bought by Bank Boston, then Fleet Bank and now Bank of America.

4) Old South Church/ Town Clock

Built in 1809, this building complimented the Old North Church (the white steepled Congregational Church on Centre Street). Today, many people know this building with the clock and gold dome as the Unitarian Church. The clock with 4 faces is also known as the Town Clock. In 1811, a bell, a gift from the government of Portugal, was installed. In the 19th Century during the Quaker/ Whaling era, the clock in addition to ringing on the hour would also ring 52 times at 7:00am, (Go to Work) 12 Noon (Lunch) and 9:00pm (Curfew/ Bed). It was estimated that in the time the bell rang all 52 times, one could have been able to travel from home to work, work to home or anywhere to home.

In 1844, Carl Wendte painted the Trump L'oeil design on the ceiling.

The building is open to the public in July and August, Mon-Fri 10am – 2pm

5) Fair Street Museum @ the Quaker Meeting House – 7 Fair Street

Built in 1904, by the Nantucket Historical Association to house its growing collection, this building is an excellent example of early poured concrete construction. It was an innovative building method to make the structure fireproof. The meeting house located in front was built in 1838.

Most of the NHA collections are now housed in the Whaling Museum, located at 13 Broad Street. The building now houses the NHA's Research Library which is open Monday – Friday. Closed Wed, Sat & Sun.

6) St. Paul's Church – 20 Fair Street

Built in 1904, this stone walled church is renowned for its Louis Tiffany stained glass windows especially those on the west (front) wall facing Fair Street.

The building is open during the day.

7) This Old House – 3 Milk Street

Airing on PBS, beginning in September 1996, 18 episodes showed the renovation of this Victorian style house. General Contractor and island native Bruce Killen was prominently featured. Since then the house was sold by the couple who commissioned the work and is under new ownership. Bruce Killen died in 1999.

The building is privately owned and not accessible to the public.

8) The Bug Lights – Pawguvnet Lane

Made famous by the Gilbreth family of “Cheaper by the Dozen” fame, these two round buildings were range lights for ships entering Nantucket harbor from 1839 to 1907. The higher building had a fixed red light and the smaller building had a white light. They were decommissioned in favor of a more accurate system located at the Coast

Guard Station at Brant Point. The lights were bought by Frank Gilbreth in 1921 and converted into living quarters.

The buildings are privately owned and not accessible to the public.

9) The Eighth Lighthouse at Brant Point – Easton Street

From 1856 to 1901, this building housed the Brant Point lighthouse. In 1901, the current lighthouse at the point was built and the light, lens and black cap from the stone built eighth light was removed from the top of that structure and placed on the new lighthouse. The old lighthouse is now an office building for the Coast Guard.

Established in 1746, Brant Point Light is the 2nd oldest lighthouse in the country. The first lighthouse is Boston Light located on Brewster Island in Boston harbor

The building is not accessible to the public.

The whaleship *Essex* buildings

In 1819, the Nantucket whaleship *Essex* set sail for the Pacific Ocean. Once around Cape Horn in November, 1820, a whale rammed the *Essex* and the ship eventually sunk. Twenty survivors filled three whale boats drifting for three months before being rescued. Some died. One whaleboat was lost and those who survived resorted to cannibalism. The eight who were rescued were never the same.

Herman Melville visited the island in the 1830s and spoke to Owen Chase and George Pollard and the rest is literary history. In 2000, Nathaniel Philbrick published “In the Heart of the Sea.” It is a riveting and mesmerizing true story that as soon as you start to read the first page, you cannot close the book.

A) 74 Orange Street

Owen Chase – First Mate (1798-1869)

Author of “Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship *Essex*,” 1821, Chase went back to sea and became a successful whaling captain.

The building is privately owned and not accessible to the public.

B) Seven Seas Gift Shop – Corner of Centre and Quince Streets

George Pollard – Captain (1791-1882)

Captain Pollard returned to sea to captain the *Two Brothers* which sank off the Alaskan coast. Pollard returned to Nantucket and became a night watchman.

The building is open in season as an art gallery

C) Springfield House – End of North Water Street – northeast corner

Thomas Nickerson – Cabin Boy (1805-1883)

He wrote a manuscript that was never published in his lifetime, “The Loss of the Ship ‘Essex’ Sunk by a Whale and the Ordeal of the Crew in Open Boats.” Nickerson went back to sea but eventually returned to Nantucket operating a guest house until he died.

Recently, the building was completely renovated by Nantucket Island Resorts.

The building is now part of the White Elephant Village complex.

Out of Town

10) Star of the Sea Youth Hostel – 31 Western Avenue

Built in 1873 as 1 of 4 Life Saving Service stations on the island, this building served diligently in saving people from shipwrecks along the south shore. In the 1960s the building was resurrected by Hostelling International and currently is a youth hostel. It is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is open from May to October.

Please ask management for permission to enter otherwise building is accessible only to guests in season