

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cape Cod National Seashore
www.nps.gov/caco



Maritime History



Clockwise from upper left: Penniman House, Eastham; one of the Three Sisters lighthouses, Eastham; Old Harbor Life-Saving Station, Provincetown

Penniman House

Captain Edward Penniman was a successful whaling captain whose family accompanied him on many of his whaling expeditions. He settled in Eastham and built an ornate home in 1868. The home was styled after the French Second-Empire period and included every known comfort of the day and many innovative ideas. It was the first house in Eastham plumbed for kitchen and bath, and it also featured the town's first flush toilet. Carpeting, stained glass windows, fine woodwork, running water, and an efficient heating system, made it one of the finest homes in town.

Captain Penniman and his descendants enjoyed this home for nearly 100 years. The house was sold with twelve acres to the National Park Service in 1963 when the Cape Cod National Seashore was formed.

The Penniman House is located in the Fort Hill area, off Route 6, Eastham. Tours and open houses are scheduled late spring through fall. Check the park's website at www.nps.gov/caco for details.

The Three Sisters

The romance of lighthouses has long drawn visitors to Cape Cod. Their beacons have served as guides to mariners off Cape Cod shores since the 1700s. The lights at Nauset Beach have had a long and evolutionary past. In 1838, three brick towers were built in a row 150 feet apart on the cliffs of what is now the Nauset Light Beach area. Known as the Three Sisters, the original brick towers fell victim to erosion in 1892 and were replaced with three movable wooden towers. In 1911, one light that flashed three times was retained and two of the “sisters” were sold. The one remaining light became known as “The Beacon.” The Three Sisters are now arranged in their original configuration in the woods just off Cable Road, Eastham.

The Three Sisters are located on Cable Road, off Ocean View Drive, Eastham. Tours are scheduled late spring through fall. Check the park’s website at www.nps.gov/caco for details.

Old Harbor Life-Saving Station

At Old Harbor, the National Park Service interprets the dramatic story of shipwrecks and the role of the U.S. Life-Saving Service in performing rescues off the Outer Cape. The building was constructed in 1897 at Nauset (North) Beach in Chatham. It was one of thirteen stations built on the Outer Cape to house surfmen and rescue equipment, and to provide temporary shelter for rescued shipwreck victims.

The U.S. Coast Guard later used Old Harbor until it was decommissioned in 1944. The National Park Service acquired it in 1973. In 1977, due to the threat of erosion, the station was moved from its original location in Chatham and floated by barge to Provincetown Harbor, where it weathered the now-famous “Storm of 78.” It was reassembled on its present site, the stretch of shoreline known as Race Point. It is one of the few intact reminders of U.S. Life-Saving Service history on Cape Cod.

Old Harbor is located at the end of Race Point Road in Provincetown. It is open during the summer months, and rescue reenactments are performed weekly. Check the park’s website at www.nps.gov/caco for details.

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