



Name of Property: Nantucket Historic District
(Updated and Additional Documentation)

City, State: Nantucket, Massachusetts

Period of Significance: 1659-1975

NHL Criteria: 1 and 4

NPS Theme:

- I. Peopling Places
 - 3. Migration from Outside and Within
 - 6. Encounters, Conflicts, and Colonization
- II. Creating Social Institutions & Movements
 - 2. Reform Movements
 - 4. Recreational Activities
- III. Expressing Cultural Values
 - 5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design
- V. Developing the American Economy
 - 1. Extraction and Production
 - 6. Exchange and Trade
- VII. Transforming the Environment
 - 3. Protecting and Preserving the Environment

Previous Recognition: 1966 National Historic Landmark
1975 National Historic Landmark Boundary Expansion

National Historic Context: III. Development of the English Colonies

- D. Social and Economic Affairs
 - 2. Economic Affairs and Ways of Life
- XII. Business
 - A. Extractive or Mining Industries
 - 5. Fishing and Livestock
- XVI. Architecture
 - V. Historic District (multiple styles and dates)
- XXXIII. Historic Preservation
 - D. Regional Efforts: New England
 - 1. Regionalism and Preservation
 - 2. Private Historical Societies

XXXIV. Recreation

C. General Recreation

2. Resort Communities

NHL Significance:

- The American whaling industry originated on Nantucket Island in the late seventeenth century, the town remained the leading American whaling port until the 1840s. To the present, both the town and the island have remained synonymous with the great age of New England whaling, and Nantucket Town is one of the finest surviving architectural and environmental examples of a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century seaport town in New England.
- Nantucket is also one of the nation's earliest seaside resort communities. As early as the 1790s, Nantucketers and off-island visitors went to the fishing village of Siasconset seasonally both for its perceived salubrious climate and as a pleasure ground. By the early nineteenth century Nantucketers built cottages at Siasconset for the purpose of providing seasonal housing. With the decline of the whaling industry, the community's economic success became closely linked to tourism, a growing national trend that took hold in earnest by the 1870s. A boom in construction of seasonal homes, hotels, institutional buildings and commercial structures continued into the twentieth century.
- The wealth of extant historic buildings and vast areas of open space unchanged from the settlement period, were recognized early as key assets of the island. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, seasonal visitors and residents joined forces to preserve and conserve the island's character, setting standards and reflecting national trends in the historic preservation movement. Nantucket remained in the forefront of historic preservation establishing voluntary guidelines for retaining historic appearance and eventually becoming one of the nation's first communities to implement a local historic district ordinance. Running parallel with its efforts in historic preservation, Nantucket also preserved large tracts of land representing a range of historic land uses from grazing lands to cranberry bogs and marshland. In the twentieth century the island led the nation in other preservation practices, such as land conservation and preservation education.

Integrity:

- Nantucket retains two exceptionally well-preserved village centers (Nantucket Town and Siasconset) which retain significant examples of architecture from the Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival, and Victorian period. In the twentieth century, as a result of the island's nationally significant historic preservation movement, architectural preservation and architectural revivals became the dominant themes of local architecture. These resources also retain integrity.
- In addition, land conservation efforts have preserved more than 40% of the island as open land, portions of which are managed as cranberry bogs and grazing land. These conservation lands preserve the windswept marine setting that has characterized all periods of Nantucket's historic past and protect key vistas associated with the built environment.

- The long-time preservation ethic of Nantucket has been an essential reason for the survival of its rich architectural heritage. Today, the entire community is a historic district designated by the local government, providing for review proposed changes of every building exterior--both for historic structures and new construction. Because of threats, there has been an increased awareness and a trend to protect exteriors and interiors through preservation easements. Preservation organizations such as the University of Florida's Preservation Institute, Nantucket, and the Nantucket Preservation Trust, promote best preservation practices, including programs that highlight traditional building methods and materials. A large group of other preservation-minded nonprofits, such as the Nantucket Historical Association and the Sconset Trust, local government commissions, and dedicated part-time and full-time residents work together to promote the island's rich architectural heritage.

Owner of Property: Multiple private and local public owners.

Acreage of Property: 28,381 acres

Origins of Nomination: The Nantucket Preservation Trust, a nonprofit preservation group, hired consultants to prepare the updated NHL nomination, with funding approved by the Nantucket Community Preservation Committee at the Town Meeting.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Updating the NHL nomination will bring recognition to the importance of twentieth-century buildings and the importance of the historic preservation and conservation movements on shaping the American landscape.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (comments received as of 11/08/11):

Brona Simon, State Historic Preservation Officer, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Murtagh moved, Dr. Mills seconded; unanimous approval.

Advisory Board Recommendation: