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History and Historical Sites

Nantucket's rich history – from a sleepy 17th-century farming community to its centenary reign as Whaling Capital of the World, to its current incarnation as an art and resort colony – is replete with many facets that contribute to its inimitable charm. This charm is owed, at least in part, to the ongoing – and fiercely dedicated – conservancy of its remarkable resources, both natural and built.

The island is fortunate to boast some of the finest 18th and early 19th-century architecture in the nation. Its historic core was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966, a designation extended to the entire island in 1971. Since 1955, the Nantucket Historic District Commission has regulated the exterior appearance of new construction as well as changes made to existing structures throughout the island in an effort to safeguard Nantucket's historical integrity. Thanks to the stringent efforts of the

Conservation Foundation and Land Bank, acres of conservation land remain untamed, evidenced by glorious open vistas like the Serengeti-like Middle Moors bordering the Milestone Road.

Testimony to Nantucket's commitment to the preservation of arts and culture – both architecturally and in practice – 18 historic structures in the Core area of Downtown alone continue to function as museums and galleries, as well as venues for theater, music, learning and research, and culinary pursuits. Six of the buildings house theaters, a box office and art gallery. Six are places of worship, including Unitarian, Catholic, Episcopal, Quaker, Congregational and Methodist denominations. There's also an Aquarium, our Whaling Museum – accredited by the American Association of Museums – and the Atheneum, our island library. All lie within an easily walkable 28 short blocks! More details on nantucketchamber.org

Visit nantucketchamber.org for more details.

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Historical Sites

Nantucket Historical Association: Nantucket Whaling Museum, 13 Broad Street

The Nantucket Whaling Museum and NHA historic properties depict the island's transformation from a 17th-century farming community to whaling capital of the world, to a 20th-century art and resort colony. The Whaling Museum features a 46-foot sperm whale skeleton and top-quality exhibition halls. Visit www.nha.org for information, hours and admission prices, or call 508-228-1894.

Old Mill, 50 Prospect Street



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America's oldest continuously operating windmill retains original handcrafted wooden gears that harness the wind's power to grind corn. Guided tours daily from 5/26-10/8/18.

Fire Hose Cart House, 8 Gardner St.

The last remaining structure of its kind on Nantucket, housing vintage 19th-century hose carts and pumps. Guided tours daily from 5/26-10/8/18.

Oldest House & Kitchen Garden, 16 Sunset Hill



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Sole surviving structure from the island's original 17th-century English settlement. Guided tours daily from 5/26-10/8/18.

Greater Light, 8 Howard Street



©Michael Galvin

An 18th-century livestock barn transformed into an eclectic summer home in the 1930s by the Quaker Monaghan sisters. Guided tours daily from 5/26-10/8/18.

Quaker Meeting House, 7 Fair Street

Utilized as a school and church by Society of Friends, and NHA's first museum. Open during the NHA's Downtown Walking Tour from 5/12-10/28/18, and during NHA Research Library hours. www.nha.org

Old Gaol, 15R Vestal Street

©Michael Galvin



The Town's House of Correction facility until 1933. Guided tours daily 5/26-10/8/18.

Hadwen House, 96 Main Street

©Michael Galvin



Stately Greek Revival home symbolic of 19th-century whaling era prosperity. Open during the NHA's Downtown Walking Tour departing from the Whaling Museum 5/12-10/28/18.

NHA Research Library, 7 Fair Street

©Michael Galvin



Houses an array of manuscripts, journals and letters, books, ships' logs, genealogical materials, maps and charts, 60,000+ photographs, and more. The Whitney Gallery is suitable for small exhibitions of art and artifacts. Open year-round. www.nha.org.

African Meeting House, 27 & 29 York Street at Five Corners

©Cary Hazlegrove



A National Historic Landmark built circa 1820s, one of the oldest Black church buildings in the nation functioned as a church, school for African children, and social center for the New Guinea community. Boston-Higginbotham House is adjacent. Call 508-228-9833 or visit www.maah.org for information.

Nantucket Lightship Basket Museum, 49 Union Street

©June Meyers



An internationally recognized Nantucket icon, lightship baskets were once crafted by sailors stationed on lightships off the island's dangerous coast. Annual exhibits, guest speakers and weaving demonstrations. Open Memorial Day to Columbus Day. Call 508-228-1177, or visit nantucketlightshipbasketmuseum.org.

Nantucket Atheneum, 1 India Street

Established in 1834, becoming a public library in 1900. Books, films, music, and 1.5+ million items available through CLAMS. Free wifi and public computers with Internet access. Downloadable books, music and film, videoconferencing, 3D printing, and



long distance learning capability. Visit www.nantucketatheneum.org or call 508-228-1110.

Nantucket Shipwreck & Lifesaving Museum, 158 Polpis Road
Affiliate of Egan Maritime Institute



Houses a collection of 5000+ objects relative to late 19th and early 20th-century lifesaving efforts. Family-friendly programs, hands-on activities and picnicking on museum grounds. Museum and gift shop open 10AM-5PM Monday-Saturday and 12-5PM on Sunday. Memorial Day to Columbus Day. Call 508-228-1885 or visit nantucketshipwreck.org for more information.

Maria Mitchell Association,
4 Vestal Street



America's first female astronomer was born and raised on Nantucket. Maria Mitchell Association provides science education in astronomy, environmental science, and island history. Open late May to early September. Visit www.mariamitchell.org or call 508-228-9198.

Maria Mitchell Aquarium,
28 Washington Street

Exhibits local marine life and runs ecology and beach field trips for families; reservations required. Call 508-228-5387 for information.

Maria Mitchell Loines Observatory,
59 Milk Street Extension

View the night sky during public Stargazing Nights. Astronomical photos and telescope viewing (weather-permitting). Call 508-228-9273 for information.

Maria Mitchell Natural Science Museum, 7 Milk Street

Features a live animal room, native specimens, programs, and a Museum shop. Offers children's nature classes, bird and nature walks, and field trips. Call 508-228-0898 for information.

Mitchell House, 1 Vestal Street

The birthplace of Maria Mitchell, focusing on mid 19th-century Quaker life and life of the Mitchell family. Call 508-228-2896 for information.

Vestal Street Observatory, 3 Vestal Street



Experience observatory tours, solar system models and sunspot observations. Call 508-228-9273 for information.

Historical Sites



BRANT POINT

- 1 Whaling Museum
- 2 Oldest House
- 3 Old Mill
- 4 Hadwen House
- 5 Quaker Meeting House/
NHA Research Library
- 6 Fire Hose Cart House
- 7 Coffin School
- 8 Nantucket Shipwreck &
Lifesaving Museum
- 9 Maria Mitchell Aquarium
- 10 Mitchell House
- 11 Hinchman House
- 12 Maria Mitchell Observatory
- 13 Nantucket Atheneum
- 14 First Congregational Church
- 15 Unitarian Universalist Church
- 16 Great Point Lighthouse
- 17 Sankaty Head Lighthouse
- 18 Brant Point Lighthouse
- 19 African Meeting House
- 20 Native American Burial Ground
- 21 Lightship Basket Museum
- 22 Greater Light
- 23 Old Gaol
- 24 Loines Observatory

Nantucket Lighthouses

The island is home to three distinctive lighthouses standing sentinel at Brant Point, Great Point and the 'Sconset bluff. Evoking Nantucket's rich maritime legacy, these majestic beacons led vessels safely around the treacherous shoals and through the fog to avoid shipwrecks, of which a staggering 700-800 are recorded in the annals of island history. Both Brant Point Light and Sankaty Head Light are part of the National Register of Historic Places.



©Arlene O'Reilly



©Terry Pommert



©Terry Pommert

Brant Point Light, a mere 26 feet tall, is New England's shortest lighthouse and America's second oldest, greeting travelers as they round the Point into Nantucket Harbor. A majestic 70 feet tall, Sankaty Head Lighthouse – with its jaunty red stripe – stands on 'Sconset bluff overlooking the mighty Atlantic. Severe erosion from merciless

nor'easters necessitated its historic move 400 feet back from the cliff's edge in 2007. Past Wauwinet stands Great Point Light, the most powerful light in New England. Flashing its beacon every five seconds, this lighthouse continues to aid vessels navigating the precarious waters of Nantucket Sound.

Places of Worship

Baha'i Faith

Call for location of meeting;
508-325-4325

Christian Science Society

2A Madaket Road;
508-325-5540

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

Call for location of meeting;
508-325-0583

Congregation Shirat HaYam

Unitarian Church,
11 Orange Street, P.O. Box 1145;
508-228-6588
A pluralistic Jewish congregation

First Congregational Church

62 Centre Street, P.O. Box 866;
508-228-0950

Jehovah's Witnesses

Kingdom Hall, 43 Milk Street;
508-228-8816

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

7 Fair Street in Friends Meeting House; 508-325-4524 or 508-325-2625

'Sconset Union Chapel

Corner of New and Chapel streets, Siasconset;
508-257-6616

St. Mary

Our Lady of the Isle
Federal and Cambridge streets,
P.O. Box 1168; 508-228-0100
Roman Catholic

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

20 Fair Street, P.O. Box 278;
508-228-0916

Stillwaters Community Worship

9 E. Creek Road, P.O. Box 297;
508-228-5582

Summer Street Church

1 Summer Street; 508-228-4930
An Evangelical Fellowship

Unitarian Universalist Church

11 Orange Street,
Church office; 508-228-5466

United Methodist Church

2 Centre Street at Main Street,
P.O. Box 264; 508-228-1882



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Nantucket: a birder's paradise!

By Ken Blackshaw

Surrounded by beaches and salt water, you are never far from birds on Nantucket. You'll discover species such as cool wading birds, gulls and terns in summer, as well as gannets, penguin-like alcids – and perhaps a Snowy Owl – in winter.

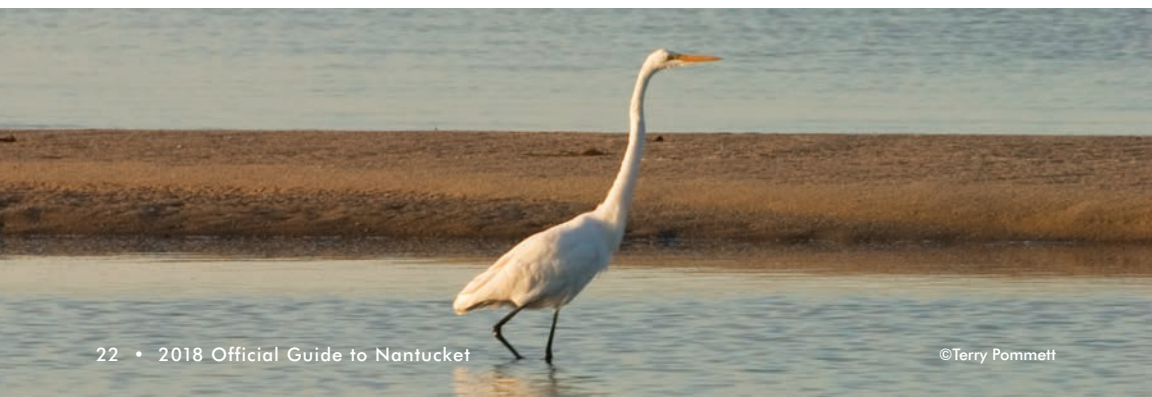
Situated at the eastern edge of North America and the western edge of the Atlantic Ocean, Nantucket is often the last land mass seen by lost birds from western North America, or the first ray of hope for others straying from Europe. The Cornell database shows 364 diverse species recorded here, with a remarkable 250 logged in a single year.

Many species are not readily found elsewhere in the country. You'll easily spot gulls, terns, and sandpipers at the shoreline in the warm months. In the off-season, Nantucket often presents an awe-inspiring 'gull show' featuring thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls, rare 'white-winged' gulls from the north, and several species crossing from Europe. Incredible flights of hundreds of thousands of Long-tailed Ducks have been spotted across the west end of the island to feed out in the Atlantic.

Nantucket's Audubon Christmas Bird Count attracts birders from all over the northeast, and often boasts the highest total species logged in New England. Maria Mitchell Association (MMA) offers birding programs twice weekly in June, July and August, and regularly scheduled programs during the rest of the year from their 4 Vestal Street location.. Linda Loring Nature Foundation (LLNF) hosts bird walks every Wednesday from May through October. An informal Nantucket Bird Club meets at 8AM every Sunday in front of the High School for several hours of birding fun.

Our *Inquirer and Mirror* newspaper hosts a weekly bird column by Ginger Andrews, with the latest bird news and up-to-date information on local birding events. Mitchell's Book Corner and Nantucket Bookworks carry copies of the indispensable 'Birding Nantucket' guidebook, and many other great books about local birds.

Birds abound on our Faraway Island, and can add a wonderful dimension to any travel itinerary. As the late, great Vern Laux used to say: "*While out in the field – keep your eyes to the sky!*"



Public Beaches


©Terry Pommett

North Shore

1 Jetties Beach 
Easy bike ride from town. NRTA shuttle service is available (summer only). Great for families: changing rooms, playground, public tennis courts, and a boardwalk to the beach. Windsurfing, sailboat, and kayak lessons and rentals available. Beach-accessible wheelchairs also available.


2 Brant Point
Easy walk or bike ride. No lifeguard. Scenic beach beside Brant Point Lighthouse; a pleasant spot to sit and watch the boats rounding the Point. **Strong current - experienced swimmers only.**









3 Children's Beach 
On the harbor, an easy walk from town. Ideal for small children: park, playground, picnic tables and bandstand. T-shirt tie-dyeing sponsored by Nantucket Park & Recreation Commission – Fridays at noon, mid-July through August. Enjoy free G-rated movies Friday nights at dusk. Free concerts 6:00 - 7:15 p.m. on Sundays.


4 Dionis 
Three miles by bike from town. Sheltered by dunes; calm waters for swimming; safe for children.


5 Francis Street Beach
Five-minute walk from Main Street. Calm harbor waters for wading; no lifeguard. Turtle climb, kayak rentals.

South Shore

6 Surfside 
Located at the end of Surfside Road, a 2.2-mile ride on paved bike path or via NRTA shuttle bus (summer only). Good beach for families: picnics, kite flying, beach games, and surfcasting after 5 p.m. Beach-accessible wheelchairs also available. **Surf can be heavy.**


| Symbol Legend | | |
|--|--|---|
|  restrooms |  food |  lifeguard |
|  handicapped accessible |  free parking |  phone |
|  outdoor cold-water showers |  equipment rental | |

7 Miacomet 
Located at the end of Miacomet Road, a 2.5 mile bike ride from town. **Heavy surf.**

8 Cisco 
Four-mile bike ride to the end of Hummock Pond Road. Surf School available. **Heavy surf.**

9 Madaket 
As far west as you can go. Regular NRTA shuttle bus service or 5.5-mile bike ride on scenic, paved bike path. Food available nearby. Famous for viewing sunsets. **Heavy surf.**

Eastern Shore

10 Siasconset 
Regular shuttle service, or 6-mile ride on paved bike path. Food and restrooms are available in nearby village of 'Sconset. **Surf can be heavy.**

There is no charge to access any public beach. For any questions regarding lifeguards or beaches, please call the Police Department non-emergency line at 508-228-1212. Beach driving permits may be purchased at the Public Safety Facility located at 4 Fairgrounds Road. Credit cards are accepted. For additional details, visit www.nantucket-ma.gov/pages/nantucketma_police.

