

DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT WALKING TOUR



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Easy Street Basin

Have you ever seen the little red rowboat originally called "007," with a yellow dog painted on its side? Made famous by painter Marshall DuBock in the 1980s, the boat today serves as one of the island's most popular photo opportunities. Come December, a second boat arrives: the "Killen dory." Since 1965, the Killen family have gathered to deck out a rowboat with a Christmas tree and lights and place it in the harbor for the holiday season.



2

Dreamland Theater Complex

Before becoming part of the complex, this building existed across the harbor and was floated to town in 1906. It has been a Quaker meeting house, a factory, a rink, a hotel, a lodge hall, and a vaudeville performance space. It hosted abolitionists Lucretia Coffin Mott and Charles Lenox Remond, and employed 300 women as a straw-hat factory. In the 20th century, men swapped stories here around a fishing shanty stove. They named themselves the Wharf Rat Club, today an active but mysterious Island society. The Club places little value on money or social standing - its motto is: No Reserved Seats for the Mighty. Members included clam diggers, ambassadors, artists, pilots, fishermen, and President Roosevelt. The Wharf Rat Flag has been flown in spots around the world, including the North and South poles.



3

The Opera House

The sign "Opera House" is a "quarterboard." In 1815, maritime law decreed all ships bear signs with their names, and quarterboards became standard. They would sometimes detach and wash to shore. Homeowners then salvaged them and affixed them to their homes. Today homeowners have quarterboards made with their name of choice. This building began as a saloon, which closed during Prohibition, and then a bistro, which closed during the Depression. The Boys Club was here during WWII and then the Gaillards opened "Nantucket's first naughty restaurant" - The Opera House. For over 40 years (1945-1985), everyone who was anyone frequented the Opera House. Judy Garland sang, and Liz Taylor mingled here. On party nights, Gwen Gaillard filled a silver punch bowl with her famously powerful Bombay Cooler, and then drove home any patrons who overindulged. In 1973, the sailors who frequented here decided to organize a wooden boat race in her honor. The Opera House Cup Regatta is still held the third Sunday in August, serving as the finale of Nantucket Race Week.



4

The Pacific Club

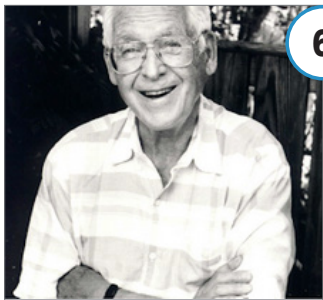
Whaling merchant and candle maker William Rotch constructed this building in 1772 as his offices and warehouse. The Great Fire of 1846 destroyed the interior, but the building survived and today is the only 18th century brick building on the Island. A white sign outside the club explains the connection between William Rotch and the American Revolution. Two of the three ships involved in the Boston Tea Party, though carrying British tea, were American. His family owned the Beaver and the Dartmouth, which Rotch originally sailed as a whaler out of New Bedford. The fourth ship listed on the sign, the Bedford, played a different role in the American Revolution. A month before the war's end, Rotch's Bedford sailed up the Thames, put down anchor in front of the Tower of London, and raised the Stars and Stripes. Following Rotch's offices and warehouse, this building has housed a customs office, weather bureau, insurance company, court, Chamber of Commerce, TV station, and a photographer's studio. After the Great Fire of 1846, twenty-four men created shares in a reading room here, dubbed the Captain's Room, and eventually purchased the building. The club still owns the building, and members are descendants of the original twenty-four.



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Thos. Macy Warehouse

Long before Rowland Hussy Macy founded the NY-based Macy's Department Store, his ancestor Thomas Macy was making money selling goods on Nantucket. His was one of nine English families who "bought" Nantucket in 1659 for 30 pounds and two beaver hats. Rowland Hussy Macy, born here in 1822, set sail on the whaler Emily Morgan at the age of 15. Back on land, he worked in several family shops, traveled West seeking gold, then opened a dry-goods store with his brother in Haverhill MA. Rowland Macy's arm featured a tattoo of a red star. One legend suggests Macy acquired the tattoo while sailing on the Emily Morgan. Another version claims the tattoo was inspired by his time as a ship's navigator, where he used a star to guide the vessel out of fog. Rowland Macy branded his MA store with a red rooster logo. When he opened R.H. Macy and Company in NYC in 1858, he decided to turn his red star tattoo into the store's now-famous logo. After the Great Fire, ship-owner Thomas Macy (descendant of settler Thomas Macy), built this brick building as a warehouse. It was considered the first "fire-proof" building on the Island. The warehouse is the oldest surviving building on Nantucket's waterfront. The Macy family owned it into the early 20th century. Now the Nantucket Historical Association owns it and is planning a full restoration.



New Whale Basin

Millionaire Walter "Bud" Beinecke, Jr. deserves much of the credit for the transformation of Nantucket from a lovely but dilapidated island into a high-end tourist destination. In the process, he directed the restoration of countless Nantucket landmarks and created this marina. Beinecke, heir to the S&H Green Stamp fortune, spoke bluntly of his goals for Nantucket's future. "Instead of selling six postcards and two hot dogs, you have to sell a hotel room and a couple of sports coats," he told the New York Times. Beinecke was an early adopter of the idea that historic preservation can strengthen a local economy. In addition to restoring landmarks, he bought up many local properties and renovated them to fit with his vision for the Island. Walter Beinecke is credited with leading the revitalization of Nantucket's waterfront and retail district, transforming the area where you stand into the vibrant, commercial heart of the Island. He also faced opponents who did not approve of his upscale brand of revitalization. Back in the 1960s, his detractors gathered under slogans including "No Man is an Island" and "Ban the B."



George's Park

In summer, the boat basin fills with mega yachts. Stretching up to 200 feet, the yachts feature such amenities as helicopter pads, air-conditioned gyms, and formal dining rooms. But the basin has a far humbler history. The private club located on the second floor of the building to your left is the Angler's Club, founded in 1969. A member once said, "The Anglers' Club has the cheapest beer in town and the most down-to-Earth people you'll ever meet." The club is known for its fishing tournaments and friendly vibe. Back in 2013, the vessel the Ruthie B. netted a 10,000-pound basking shark. Trying to cut the animal free of the net, the captain slipped underneath the bus-sized fish. His crew managed to free him, and then freed the shark. Since then, the Shark Tournament is the highlight of the Anglers' Club fishing tournament season. The rules? Sharks must be edible and must be at least 150 pounds.



Petrel Landing

This landing is named after a small steamship, the Petrel, which fished out of Nantucket in the 19th and early 20th century. The Petrel's crew searched for mackerel, salvaged other vessels, and performed rescue operations. The Nantucket Land Bank now owns this landing, and hopes to build a public dock here. The pile-supported pier straight ahead is Town Pier, which is refuge during storms for fishing boats from New Bedford and Rhode Island that work Georges Bank. At the foot of Town Pier is the Harbormaster's office. Current Harbormaster Sheila Lucy once saved a man clinging to a buoy, trapped by waders full of seawater. Another rescue involved a boater who thought he had arrived in Belgium! Though the Island's commercial fishing era is past, the Ruthie B., the same one which caught the 10,000 lb. shark, captained by Willis "Bill" Blount, fishes commercially in the waters off Nantucket. The boat was almost docked for good in 2014, until a Kickstarter campaign raised money for necessary repairs.



Scalloping

October is the start of Scalloping Season on Nantucket. Locals (with permits) can catch one bushel a week, all month. In November, it's the commercial scallopers' turn until winter arrives and they dock their fleet in the boat basin. If the temperature is below 28 degrees before 10 a.m., the harbormaster flies a red flag signifying "no scalloping today." Regardless of the weather, spats - a baby scallop - are off limits! Scallopers may only harvest fully-grown bay scallops. How can they tell which scallops are fully grown? Look at the ring on the scallop's shell. If it's bigger, and toward the top of the shell, it is an adult. The Maria Mitchell Aquarium sits to your right. Staff and local fishermen bring in animals all summer for guests to "meet." Tropical fish aren't native to these waters, but every year the Gulf Stream sweeps some north. If local fishermen or aquarium staff find them, they often end up on display until autumn when they are returned to the sea.



SOMA — South of Main

New York has SoHo, Boston has SoWa, and Nantucket has SOMA: South of Main, which stretches down Washington Street, between Main and Commercial Streets. Until 1996, all Island electricity was produced here. The old brick buildings in the lot across the street were part of a coal gasification plant providing power to Nantucket, which then switched to diesel before being torn down. Today, all of Nantucket's power arrives via two enormous cables, carrying power from substations on Cape Cod, underneath the Nantucket Sound, to the brick building on the corner, and from there into all Island businesses and homes. The red brick building behind you on this side of the street has been home to American Legion Post 82 since 1919, the same year Congress chartered the national American Legion. The local organization hosts events and supports Island students via scholarships. Now look for the triangle, with a flag post and monument below. This is Wilkes Square, named after Francis Wilkes, an African American Islander who died when his Coast Guard ship was torpedoed during WWI. Just past the monument is the Greenhound Building, where Nantucket Regional Transit Authority buses - known as the WAVE - depart for the south and east ends of the Island.