

India Street Neighborhood Study  
Rescom Taber House  
also known as Captain Joy House  
45 India Street  
Nantucket  
Nantucket County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-1040

HABS  
MASS  
10-NANT  
75A-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

INDIA STREET NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY  
 RESCOM TABER HOUSE  
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Location: 45 India Street (on north side at corner of  
 Hussey Street), Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Janet Forman Sheets

Present Occupant: Janet Forman Sheets or leasees.

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
 of Significance: A typical Nantucket house; part of the India Street  
 Neighborhood Study (MASS-1013).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1804 -- Rescom Taber bought land "at a place called  
 Egypt" from William Rawson, mariner, for \$466.80.
- 1813 -- James Barker bought land with dwelling house from  
 Rescom Taber.
- 1820 -- William Robinson bought from James Barker for  
 \$1000.
- 1843 -- Emmaline H. Balch bought from William Robinson.
- 1844 -- Daniel Moulton, a caulker, bought from Emmaline  
 H. Balch for \$1100.
- 1844 -- Daniel Moulton bought a small piece adjoining on  
 the north from Absalom Coffin for \$12.50.
- 1846 -- Frederick Swain, master mariner, bought from  
 Daniel Moulton for \$1100.
- 1847 -- Nantucket Institution for Savings on mortgage from  
 Frederick Swain.
- 1859 -- Lewis B. Imbert bought from Nantucket Institution  
 for Savings.
- 1888 -- George Lewis Imbert by inheritance from his father,  
 Lewis B. Imbert.
- 1892 -- Ann Maria Imbert by inheritance from her husband,  
 George Lewis Imbert.
- 1925 -- Heirs of Ann Maria Imbert inherited. They were  
 Sarah E. E. Burnside, Mary E. Enos, Lillian L.  
 Estella and Oscar M. Brown.
- 1927 -- Harrison G. Gardner bought from heirs of Ann Maria  
 Imbert.
- 1927 -- Nathaniel E. Lowell from Harrison G. Gardner.

- 1930 -- Adelaide F. Young from Nathaniel E. Lowell.
- 1939 -- Nathaniel E. Lowell bought back from Adelaide F. Young.
- 1940 -- William J. and Anne C. Henderson bought from Nathaniel E. Lowell.
- 1953 -- Patricia H. Morrison from William J. and Anne C. Henderson.
- 1958 -- Francis O. and Dorothy A. McGarvey bought from Patricia H. Morrison.
- 1967 -- Alice Cary Williams from Francis O. and Dorothy A. McGarvey.
- 1968 to date -- Jane Forman Sheets bought from Alice Cary Williams.  
(Abstract: Records at Registry Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts.)

2. Date of erection: Between 1804 and 1813. (Abstract: Book 18, Page 178 and Book 22, Page 460, Registry Deeds, Nantucket, Massachusetts.)
3. Architect: None. Rescom Taber was a carpenter and no doubt built his own house.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: House when built was a simple two and a half story, gable roof building with sheds at north and east.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The appearance of this house has been changed many times. For a while in the 1930's a shedlike addition on the west served as a small store. This has recently been removed and other restoration has improved the property. A wider front doorway has displaced both the old door and adjoining single window. The original burning room is now a library and the old kitchen a diningroom with present kitchen in shed. A bathroom has been added in the front stair hall.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

This house is located in that area originally described as the Third Squadron of Wesco Acre Lots, at a place commonly known by the name of Micah's Pond. India Street in the early 1800's was largely occupied by the wealthier families, many of whom derived large profits from the East India trade as well as from whaling. According to the Portfolio, written in 1811, it was first called India Row; later it became Pearl Street and still later the name was changed back to India Street. When this house was built, the street was known as Pearl Street. Westminster Street to the north was formerly called Clay Lane, and Micah's Pond extended from that area to the central part of India Street.

When Rescom Taber bought the land on which to build this house, the deed read "at a place called Egypt". It is believed that

this section near the old Lily Pond was often referred to by this name only because it had been jokingly referred to "as dark as Egypt".

Rescom Taber bought the land from William Rawson, a successful whaleship captain who also owned the lot on which #43 India Street was built and who no doubt had invested in land in this coming residential area.

Frederick Swain, master mariner, bought the house in 1846 but lost it on a bank mortgage the following year, perhaps due to the deep depression following Nantucket's Great Fire of 1846. Captain Frederick Swain had been master of the whaleship Susan on three of her voyages out of Nantucket from 1829 to 1837. Everett U. Crosby's book, Susan's Teeth and Much About Scrimshaw, published in 1955, states that the whale teeth scrimshawed aboard the Susan are the outstanding ones in their field.

The property had changed hands many times until Lewis B. Imbert bought it in 1859. It passed by inheritance to his son and then to his son's widow's heirs until they sold in 1927, after which there were many more new owners.

Although Captain Whitford Joy never owned the house, he and his family resided there for some years after 1900 when the house became known as the Captain Joy House.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Old photograph of "Pearl Street" in Nantucket Illustrated by A. Wittemann, New York: Albertype Co., 1888; 1953 view of east end of house in photograph of 43 India Street in Ninety Five Per Cent Perfect by Everett U. Crosby, Nantucket: Tataukimmo Press, 1953.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
January 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Typical eighteenth century Nantucket house of two-and-a-half stories with shed appendages to the north and east, wood frame, shingle exterior, gable roof.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent with minor modifications in the shed and loft area.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 37' - 0" by 41' 0".
2. Foundations: Brick and stone rubble.
3. Wall construction: Wood shingles on horizontal wood siding, corner boards.
4. Structural system: Post and lintel, platform framing; corner posts and girts exposed second floor.
5. Stoops: Front stoop of wood, stairs on each side, mortise and tenon construction with dowel fasteners, rhombic newels and palings.
6. Chimneys: Multi-flue brick chimney, painted, necking with dentil course; one chimney in shed.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorway and door: Carpenter classic doorway with pilasters and simple entablature, five-pane side lights, six-panel wood door.
  - b. Windows: Six-over-six single hung windows, plank and board frame with cap.
8. Roof: Gable roof parallels street, asphalt shingles, boxed cornice and eaves with projections and gable ends of house, irregular gable in shed appendage.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans (the survey limited to the first floor): Entry and stair hall at southeast corner reworked to accommodate bathroom, parlor at southwest corner, "borning room" used as library, "old kitchen" as dining room, kitchen and store rooms in shed; two 8' - 7" diameter root or butter cellars under shed (east cellar is filled with earth and rubble); three second floor bedrooms and bath, bedrooms in ell at rear, stair to attic.
2. Stairways: Front stairway is L-shaped with winders at second floor, rectangular balusters, turned newels, scroll-saw pattern on stringer, panel wainscot; stair to second floor and cellar in shed.
3. Flooring: Pine boards of various widths, painted and natural finish cut nails.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.

5. Doorways and doors: Simple trim, four fixed lights in overdoor, two- and four-panel doors.
6. Decorative features and trim: Decoration limited to panel fireplace wall, molded window trim and closet under stair.
7. Notable hardware: Appropriate iron thumb latches.
8. Lighting: Modern electric.
9. Heating: Fireplaces reworked, closet immediately adjacent to "old kitchen" fireplace; cement and brick hearths; modern oil-fired hotwater system with radiators.

#### SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The Rescom Taber or Captain Joy House faces south on India Street with no landscaping due mostly to its site restricted to the proximity of India, Liberty and Hussey Streets and a private way to the rear of the Melatiah Nye or Carroll House (MASS-1041) to the east. Sidewalks are brick on Liberty, macadam at India and Hussey Streets.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A.  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
August 1970

#### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the India Street Neighborhood Study (MASS-1013) made in the summer of 1970 by the Historic American Buildings Survey on Nantucket, Massachusetts. This is the fifth summer project of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Director was Professor F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A., of the University of Florida. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Jack E. Boucher of Linwood, New Jersey. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, August 1971.