



The 1800 House at 4 Mill Street in the 1970s

JOHN MCCALLEY PH7-72

1800 House

In 1807, Eunice Baxter Lawrence (1770–1859) moved with her husband and four children to a handsome new house on Mill Street, at the southern edge of the town of Nantucket.

Occasional cart traffic clattered its way toward the mills on the Popsquatchet Hills nearby and the random mooing of cows and the smell of backyard oil refineries filled the neighborhood. Local housewright Richard L. Coleman had purchased the land on Mill Street in 1801, and within the next half-dozen years built the house now known as the 1800 House. Like other local housewrights of his generation, Coleman no longer built lean-to houses like the Oldest House (ca. 1686) and the Macy-Christian house (ca. 1745). Instead, he configured a house that is two and a half stories high, symmetrical, with a center chimney and a central doorway, presenting a more classically proportioned exterior. He gave it embellishments suitable to a substantial house of the era, such as paneled walls around the fireplaces, wainscoting in

ADDRESS

4 Mill Street

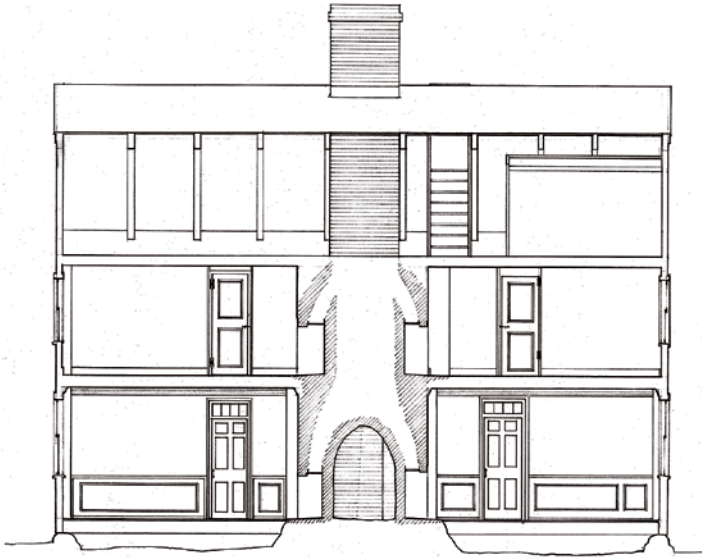
CONSTRUCTED

circa 1801

DISTANCE FROM WHALING MUSEUM

.6 miles





Historic American Buildings Survey sectional view of 4 Mill Street

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the parlors, and interior wooden shutters. In 1807, Coleman sold the house to Jeremiah Lawrence (1768–1827), High Sheriff for the County of Nantucket, for \$2,000, an above-average price for a new house of the period, indicating that the house had features that made it special.

Lawrence held the office of sheriff until 1822, but all the while he was in business with a partner as a “hatter,” with a store on Old North Wharf. Later in his career, he was a merchant advertising a “handsome assortment of Fancy Goods” — silk gloves, Kerseymere shawls, figured muslins, and English gingham — for sale in exchange for cash or spermaceti candles.

Although they lived on the outskirts of the commercial area of town, the Lawrences were a short walk from the Court House then on Main Street near the present-day Civil War Monument and the Old Gaol not far distant on Vestal Street, where the sheriff escorted those awaiting trial or recently convicted. Lawrence enjoyed his new house on Mill Street for twenty years, and his wife, Eunice, continued to live there until 1856, when she sold the property to Love Calder for \$700. The beginning of the end of Nantucket’s whaling-era prosperity was already felt, and the value of the fifty-year-old house was less than half of what it had been when new in 1807.



Love Calder, a former owner of 4 Mill Street, stitched this sampler in 1800, when she was fifteen years old. 2006.27.3

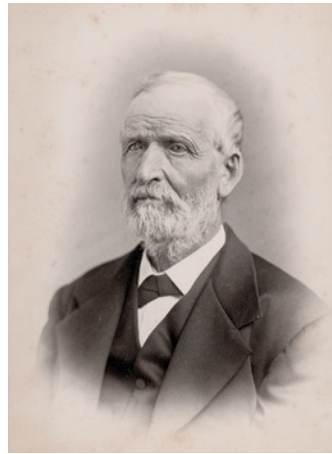
Love Calder (1785–1870) was a single woman, but she shared her house with relatives: an 1865 census indicates that she was head of a household that included her cousin and other family members. Calder sold her Mill Street house to James Monroe Bunker (1818–1902) in 1865 for \$300. Bunker had sailed on the Nantucket ship *Aurora* to California in 1849 to explore opportunities in gold mining, but like many Nantucket men who were tempted to the West Coast by reports of quick fortunes, he returned to the island. He was a carpenter by trade in an era when there was little new construction and few could afford to make improvements or repairs to their homes, but he may have improved his own residence, adding the one-and-a-half story kitchen ell and a large barn that are first documented on the property in an 1887 map. He and his wife, Rebecca, were fixtures of Mill Street for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In 1903, Leonora James bought the Bunker house. She and her husband, Everett, had a twelve-year-old daughter, Marion. Everett died in



Rebecca Bunker, circa 1880

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James M. Bunker, circa 1880

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**James M. Bunker preparing fish for drying and Rebecca Bunker at the pump,
4 Mill Street, 1893**

PH53-49



A decorative-arts class at the 1800 House

BRITTANY THURMAN, 2014

1914, but Leonora stayed at 4 Mill for almost fifty years, and Marion did, too, along with her husband and daughter. In 1950, Louise Melhado, owner of neighboring Moors End — the large brick-walled property at 19 Pleasant Street — purchased 4 Mill Street from Leonora James and the next year gifted it to the Nantucket Historical Association. Melhado wanted to preserve the hundred-and-fifty-year-old house to protect her own extensive estate from possible changes in the local streetscape, in the days before the Historic Districts Commission had oversight of new construction and alterations to buildings. At the time, it was a perfect fit for the NHA, which did not yet own the Hadwen House, and, according to an article in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, had “for years been desirous of having a resident property of the period of the whaling prosperity, namely from about 1800 to 1850, which could be furnished appropriately. . . .” It was the era of house museums, and the NHA increased its property portfolio with a representative house from the early nineteenth century.

For many years, the 1800 House was furnished with artifacts from the NHA’s collection and was open for public viewing; it provided curious visitors with a glimpse of domestic life in an earlier era. The house underwent a major restoration beginning in 2003, and reopened in 2005 as a center for instruction in early-American decorative arts and crafts, celebrating the rich legacy of Nantucket artists and artisans.