



Thomas Macy Warehouse

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Nantucket's wharves were a bustling center of activity during the age of sail, where whaleships and trading vessels loaded and unloaded their wares and fitted out for voyages.

All manner of items and equipment, including casks of oil, ships' supplies, lumber, and general merchandise was trundled down the wharves for storage in nearby warehouses. Thomas Macy, a prominent whale-oil merchant with interests in whaleships and spermaceti-candle manufacturing (whose residence at 99 Main Street is also a Nantucket Historical Association property), built this warehouse during the spate of rebuilding that took place after the Great Fire of 1846 consumed the wharves and commercial heart of town. Heeding the cautionary tale of that conflagration, Macy chose to build this impressive example of Greek Revival industrial architecture of brick, with granite sills and lintels defining the windows. It was strategically located at the very center of Nantucket's active waterfront.

ADDRESS

12 Straight Wharf

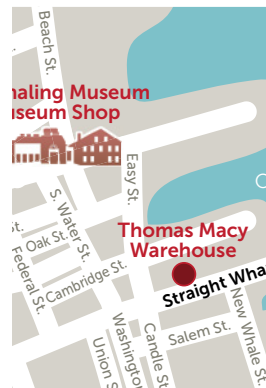
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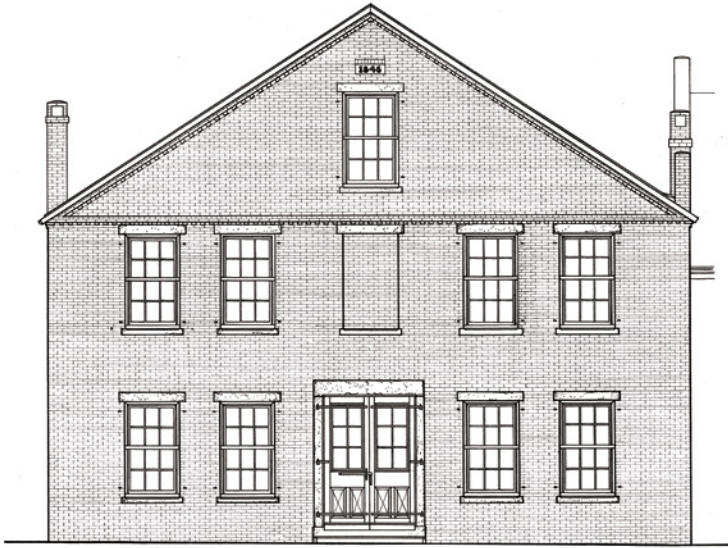
1846

DISTANCE FROM

WHALING MUSEUM

.2 miles





Historic American Buildings Survey drawings of north and south elevations of the Thomas Macy Warehouse

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Although the whaling industry did not recover from a series of mid-nineteenth-century calamities immediately following the 1846 fire – including the exodus of hundreds of men to the California gold fields in 1849–50, the inaccessibility of the shallow harbor entrance to larger vessels, the increasing scarcity of sperm whales in the Pacific, and the genesis of the petroleum industry in Pennsylvania – the solidly built warehouse was adaptable to other uses. Macy's sons Isaac and Philip inherited the property and continued to use it as a chandlery and warehouse. In the early twentieth century, Macy heirs sold the building to Chester Pease and James A. Holmes Jr., who ran their carpentry shop there.

The Nantucket Foundation purchased the building in 1944 and the Artists Association of Nantucket operated the Kenneth Taylor Galleries in the space for forty years, exhibiting the work of local artists during the summer season. In 1980, the Nantucket Historical Association acquired the building from the Nantucket Foundation. In a prime location on Straight Wharf, the warehouse is currently leased for commercial use.



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