

Crocker Tavern
Main Street
Barnstable
Barnstable County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-694

HABS
MASS,
1- BAR,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CROCKER TAVERN

HABS No. MA-694

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MASS,
1-BAR,
2-

Location: South side of Main Street (U.S. Highway 6A).
Barnstable.
Barnstable County.
Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
141 Cambridge Street.
Boston, Massachusetts.

Present Use: House museum, partially occupied by caretaker.

Significance: This is a large example of eighteen-century architecture on Cape Cod. It was used as a public house from pre-Revolutionary times forward into the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1754.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

The following brief history has been compiled from the records of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

The earliest known owner of the house was Cornelius Crocker, who may have bought the property before 1748 and apparently about 1754 built the main block of the building now existing. Cornelius Crocker conducted a public house, or tavern, in this building from a period before the Revolution until his death in 1784. By the terms of his will (Barnstable County Record Book 23, p. 464) he left the eastern half of his house and land to his grandsons Robert, Uriah, and Joseph Crocker; the western half of land and house went to his daughter Lydia, widow of Captain Samuel Sturgis (d. 1762). The house was "to be divided through by the middle of the great chimney and the shop or bedroom adjoining with half the kitchen and oven & half the cellars & pump or well with full liberty of egress and regress to & from the said premises" going to the widowed daughter. In 1791 the grandsons conveyed their interest in the property to their aunt, and it was presumably after this date that the eastern wing was constructed. Lydia (Crocker) Sturgis, who lived to be 86 years old, apparently continued her father's business, for the house became known as the Sturgis Tavern or Aunt Lydia's Tavern.

The property passed from Lydia (Crocker) Sturgis to her daughter Sarah Sturgis, who married Daniel Crocker, thus coming down through descendants (not always Crocker by name) until it came into the ownership of David Crocker. His widow, Julia G. Crocker, who died in 1927, left the house and grounds by the terms of her will (Barnstable County Probate No. 22008) to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. An accompanying bequest of \$10,000 was provided to support the house as a historic museum.

Some changes have apparently been made in the building over the years, but these are imperfectly understood. Since 1927 some restoration work has been carried out. Most notably a portal, or frontispiece, from another mid-eighteenth-century house has been set up on the north front of the main building. This and other changes can be seen by comparing the measured drawings made in 1962 with the unfinished set begun by the late Frank Chouteau Brown (d. 1947).

Prepared by:

Ernest Allen Connally
Ernest Allen Connally
National Park Service
Cape Cod Survey II
Truro field office
August 1962

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Crocker Tavern is a two and a half story residential building, facing north and covered with clapboards. The rectangular building has an eastern ell, a southern ell, and faces north. The building is surrounded by residential landscaping and has a board fence at the street front. This timber structure was built ca. 1754 and is now owned and operated as a museum by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

The over-all dimensions of the building including the ells is 61' on the north by 46' on the west. The building has rubble stone foundations, and a timber frame with non-bearing walls. The main house is covered with clapboards, and the east wing is covered with wood shingles. There is a wood porch on the east ell, with two columns supporting a pediment over the door. The other doors have simple stoops. There are four red brick chimneys and interior evidence of a fifth in the south ell.

There are three exterior doors. The main front door is a five panel door with six lights above it. The frontispiece has pilasters on the sides carrying a segmented pediment. The door on the front of the east wing has four panels with simple trim. All windows have 6/6 light double hung sash except one in the rear wing which is a 1/1 light double hung sash. There are exterior painted wood blinds on the north, west and east sides.

The main house and the ells have gable roofs with asphalt shingles and simple trim and box cornice. The gutters and cornice molding are at the heads of the second floor windows.

The cellar runs only under a portion of the main house in an irregular fashion.

The first floor has a main center hall with two stairs starting at opposite ends of the hall and running to the second floor. Two main rooms flank the hall on each side. To the rear of the house the south ell contains two rooms. The east wing contains an entry and three rooms. The second floor of the main structure has five rooms. The south ell has one room and the east ell has three rooms. The attic has one small bedroom and storage space.

There are two main stairs running from the first floor main hall to the second floor where they meet. There is one stair in the center hall of the main house second floor to the attic. All of these stairs are open.

The original flooring was random width planking, but only a few sections of this remains. Much has been replaced by modern narrow width flooring. All of the walls and ceilings are plastered. The fireplace walls in the first floor northwest, the second floor northwest and northeast are panelled.

There is a great variety of interior door treatment from all ages. Two main rooms on the first floor, which have been restored by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities have many decorative moldings. All doors have four panels except for the door in the attic to the small bedroom which is a simple board door. Most rooms are trimmed simply. The restored rooms, however, have chair rails, cornice moldings, wainscoting and some panelling. All doors have simple iron lift latches.

The house has modern central heating and lighting.

There is a summer kitchen to the south of the structure. There is a barn to the southeast and there is evidence for some other farm buildings. Some of these are located on the site plan of the Crocker Tavern as recorded and drawn for HABS.

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