

# 8 Center Street

“THE CORNERS”

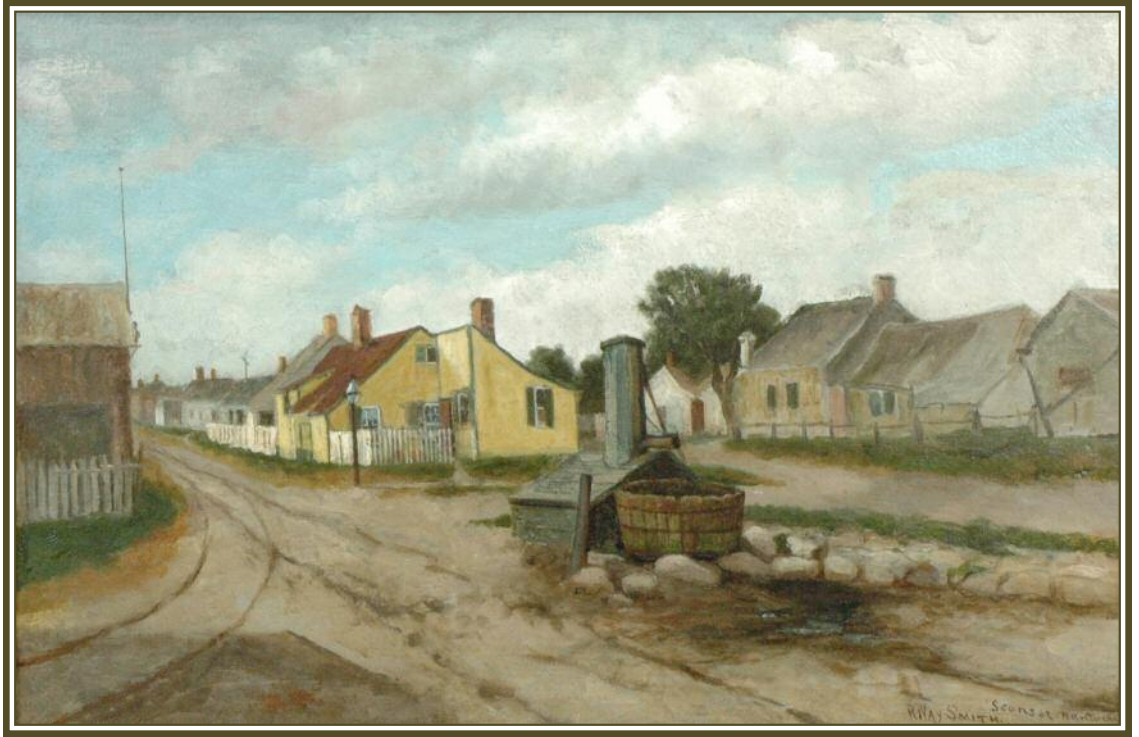
Siasconset

## *A House History*

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[www.nantucketpreservation.org](http://www.nantucketpreservation.org)



*Meerheim with new shingles, c. 1889, painting by R. Way Smith*

*Hannah B. Sharp*

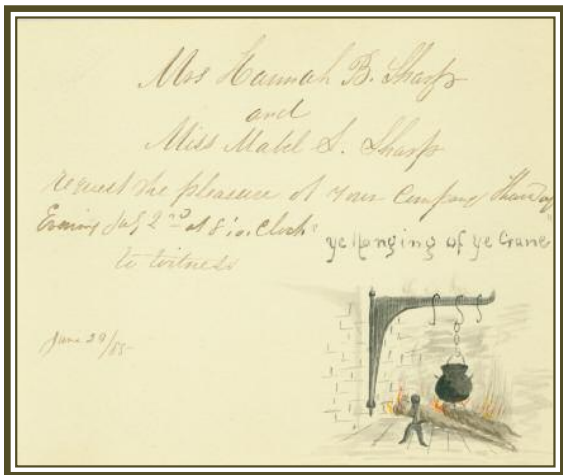
*1885–1912*

*Dorothy Sharp Richmond*

*1912–1923*



*H*annah Sharp (1824–1912), widow of Benjamin Sharp of Philadelphia, occupied the house at 8 Center Street during the height of 'Sconset's heyday as the mecca for a sophisticated but fun-loving summer crowd, who helped to establish the railroad, the Chapel, and the Casino. The popularity of the village led to real estate development north and south of the original fishing hamlet, and filled the big hotels and the little cottages with families from the major cities along the eastern seaboard.

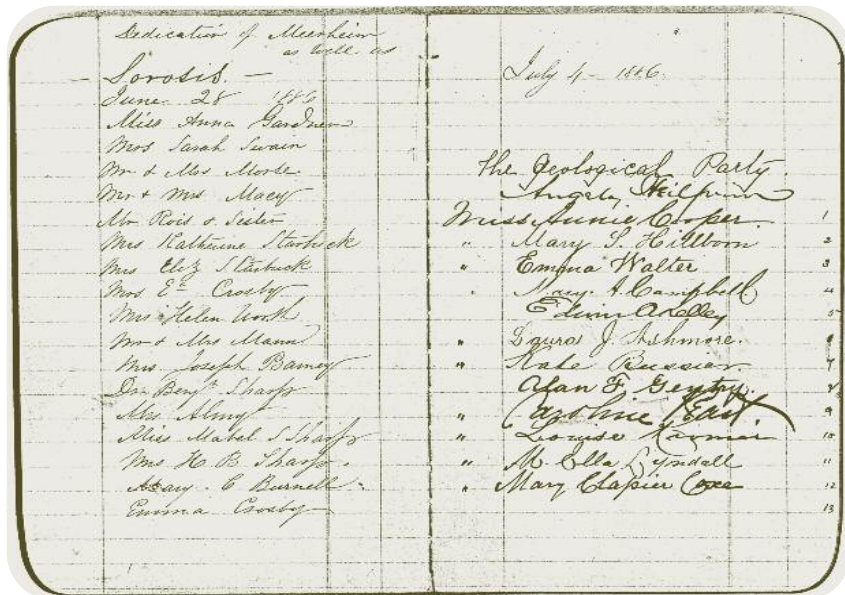


Hannah Sharp rented the  
cottage at 8 Center Street  
for the summer of 1885, and  
purchased it that September:



Invitation to the hanging of the crane,  
1885

Page from Meerheim  
guest book, 1886



Hannah and her daughter, Mabel, named their cottage Meerheim, German for “ocean home,” and they kept a guest book in 1886 and 1887 that recorded visitors. The dedication of Meerheim on June 28, 1886, coincided with a meeting of the Nantucket Sorosis Club, a literary and philosophical sisterhood who educated one another with discussions of literary topics. The *Inquirer and Mirror* reported the meeting:

*On Monday, June 28th, Sorosis was invited to meet with Mrs. Benjamin Sharp at her new cottage at Siasconset. Pleasant weather always lends inspiration to an out-of-town excursion, and this was one of the perfect days. So on the 10 o'clock train the happy band sped their way across the plain, by the placid sea, and were soon welcomed by the kindly hostess within the cozy dwelling.*



*Interior of Meerheim, 1886*



Hannah Sharp

Sixty-nine-year-old Anna Gardner, well-known abolitionist schoolteacher, contributed a dedicatory poem to the 'Sconset cottage that Hannah had purchased the previous September:

*By invitation of our friend beloved  
To her delightful summer residence  
(So aptly named Meerheim, or Ocean home),  
Sorosis greets its members and its friends.  
The dwelling that we dedicate to-day,  
This pretty cottage by the sounding sea,  
Though fashioned new and altered, yet retains  
What is so charming to a modern guest,  
The architectural quaintness of the old.*

The poet suggests that alterations and improvements had been recently made to the cottage, and she goes on at great length describing the interior decoration: curtains, carpets, and rugs in muted colors; German pottery; fans; a spinning-wheel, milking stool, and other antique furniture. She also describes an earlier era in the house, when she visited Nathaniel and Eliza Barney there:

*... Gifted authors have  
Oft gathered here around the social board,  
Where sterling character and wealth of thought  
Excluded pomp and ostentatious show.  
Then, honored friends, the Barney's ruled the feast  
At sweet Rose Cottage—well-remembered place!  
The honeysuckle climbed its lowly roof,  
Twining its tendrils with the roses' bloom  
And mingling fragrance with the salt sea air.*



*Dr. Sharp in parlor of Meerheim*

Sages and poets who visited the cottage in the 1840s and '50s included Lydia Barney, George Bradburn, Maria Mitchell, Lucretia Mott, Phebe Coffin Hanaford, and William Lloyd Garrison.

When Hannah Sharp signed her will on July 3, 1911, she bequeathed her 'Sconset property to her granddaughter, Dorothy, who was born to her son, Benjamin Sharp Jr., and his wife, Virginia Guild, in 1882, when they were living in Wurzburg, Germany, where Benjamin was studying for his Ph.D. in zoology. He completed his thesis on the eyes of mollusks in 1883, and the family returned to the states. Dr. Sharp had an impressive and varied career as a professor and

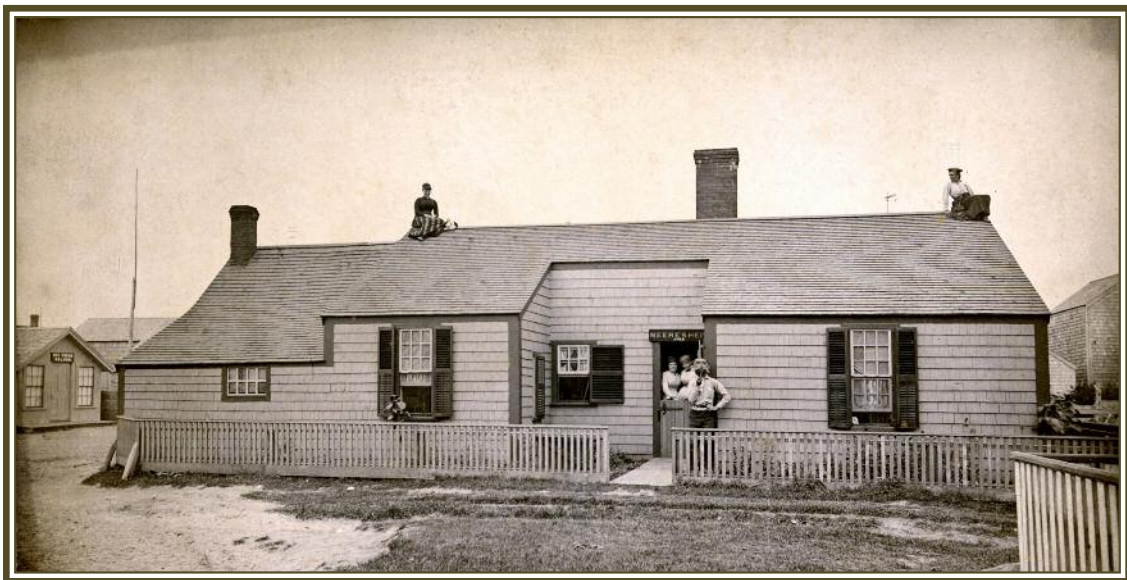


*Hannah Sharp with Dorothy in doorway*

scientist, traveling to Greenland, the West Indies, and the Sandwich Islands on research expeditions. The family spent summers in Nantucket and 'Sconset, and in Quaise, where Dr. Sharp had a cottage, and they settled on Nantucket year-round in 1907.

Dorothy Sharp (1883–1960) married Dr. George D. Richmond in Yokohama, Japan, in 1915; he had moved there to pursue his career in dentistry after several years practicing on Nantucket. The couple returned to Nantucket in the early 1920s, and soon afterward sold Meerheim.





*Meerheim with people on roof, man in mask*



*Meerheim with awning*



*Dorothy Sharp Richmond and her dog*