

# Historic Structures



## Unit 3: Historic Structures at Cape Cod National Seashore

**It's your job!** Be an Architectural Historian and determine if the Captain Penniman House is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*This unit has five activities:*

1. *Assessing the exterior's integrity.*
2. *Determining architectural style.*
3. *Assessing the interior's integrity.*
4. *Estimating age from outbuildings*
5. *Making a determination.*

*Start this unit by the whalebone gate in front of the Captain Penniman House. To view the interior, call Salt Pond Visitor Center ahead of time at 508-255-3421.*

*Total time: 70 minutes.*

### **Career Profile:**

What does an Architectural Historian do?

- Studies a structure's exterior and interior design and construction.
- Evaluates the historic integrity of a structure and its site.
- Inspects outbuildings.
- Determines whether a structure is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



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Architectural Historian



# Historic Structures

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register of Historic Places (also called the “National Register”) is our nation’s official list of historic places deemed worthy of preservation. A property is eligible to be listed on the National Register if it:

|   |
|---|
| 1. Retains its integrity (still looks much the way it did in the past)  |
| 2. Is old enough (generally at least 50 years old)  |
| 3. Has significance in at least one of the following four ways:   |
| a. Is tied to historic events or activities, such as Monroe Elementary School (now Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site), KS. |
| b. Is associated with an important person in history, such as George Washington’s Mount Vernon Home in Virginia.                            |
| c. Has distinctive design or physical character, such as New York City’s Guggenheim Museum, designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright.       |
| d. Provides, or could provide, important information about our past, such as the Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde, CO.      |

In this unit, you will be looking for clues to determine if the Captain Penniman House meets the National Register’s integrity requirement (Criteria 1), its age requirement (Criteria 2) and one of its significance requirements (specifically, Criteria 3c)



## ACTIVITY 1- ASSESSING THE EXTERIOR’S INTEGRITY

To be listed on the National Register, a structure must have integrity and it must remain mostly unchanged from how it looked in the past. In regards to the exterior, this requirement applies to both the structure and the surrounding grounds. The Architectural Historian looks for clues from old photographs and from building features and materials to see how much the property has or has not changed over time.



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As an Architectural Historian, you've been asked to compare the Captain Penniman House site as it is now with a photograph of it from around 1880. Stand in a spot that gives you a view of the property similar to the one in the photo.

*Circle all the features in the photo that you can still see.*



The Captain Penniman House was built in the ornate Second French Empire Style.

Visually, how much would you say the property has changed over time?

A lot

Some

A little

Not at all



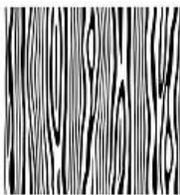
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Building features and materials tell a lot about how true a property is to its original construction. The more original features and materials there are, the more historic integrity the site has.

*As an Architectural Historian you have been asked to locate features made from original materials on and around the Captain Penniman House. Draw lines to match each material with its location and purpose. The first one has been done for you.*

| <u>material</u> | <u>location</u>             | <u>purpose</u>                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|
| wood clapboards | entrance to yard            | as drain pipes                               |
| granite blocks  | foundation at base of house | as a foundation                              |
| copper pipes    | beneath the house           | as symbol of a profession                    |
| stained glass   | sides of house              | as crank for old doorbell                    |
| porcelain knob  | sticks up from roof         | as siding to protect house                   |
| field stones    | running from roof to ground | for decoration & privacy                     |
| whalebone       | in bay window               | to create terracing and soil retaining walls |
| bricks          | stacked in yard as walls    | as chimneys                                  |

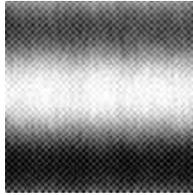
*Here's a challenge. See if you can find anything on or around the exterior of the house made from any of the modern building materials listed below (there is at least one).*



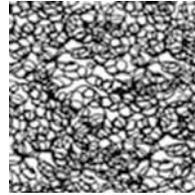
Plywood



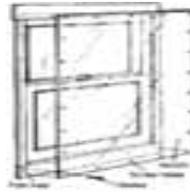
Trex



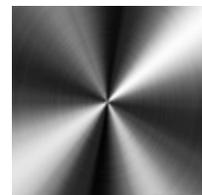
Aluminum



Styrofoam



Plexiglass



Stainless Steel

Based on your observations, which of these statements would you agree with most?

- The features and materials look mostly original.
- The features and materials are mostly modern repairs or replacements.
- There is a pretty even mix of old and new



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## ACTIVITY 2 - DETERMINING ARCHITECTURAL STYLE



The Captain Penniman House was built in 1868 in the French Second Empire architectural style. This style includes a mansard roof, quoinss and dentils. Label the features in the photo with terms on the table below. Write the correct term in the blanks next to the highlighted features.

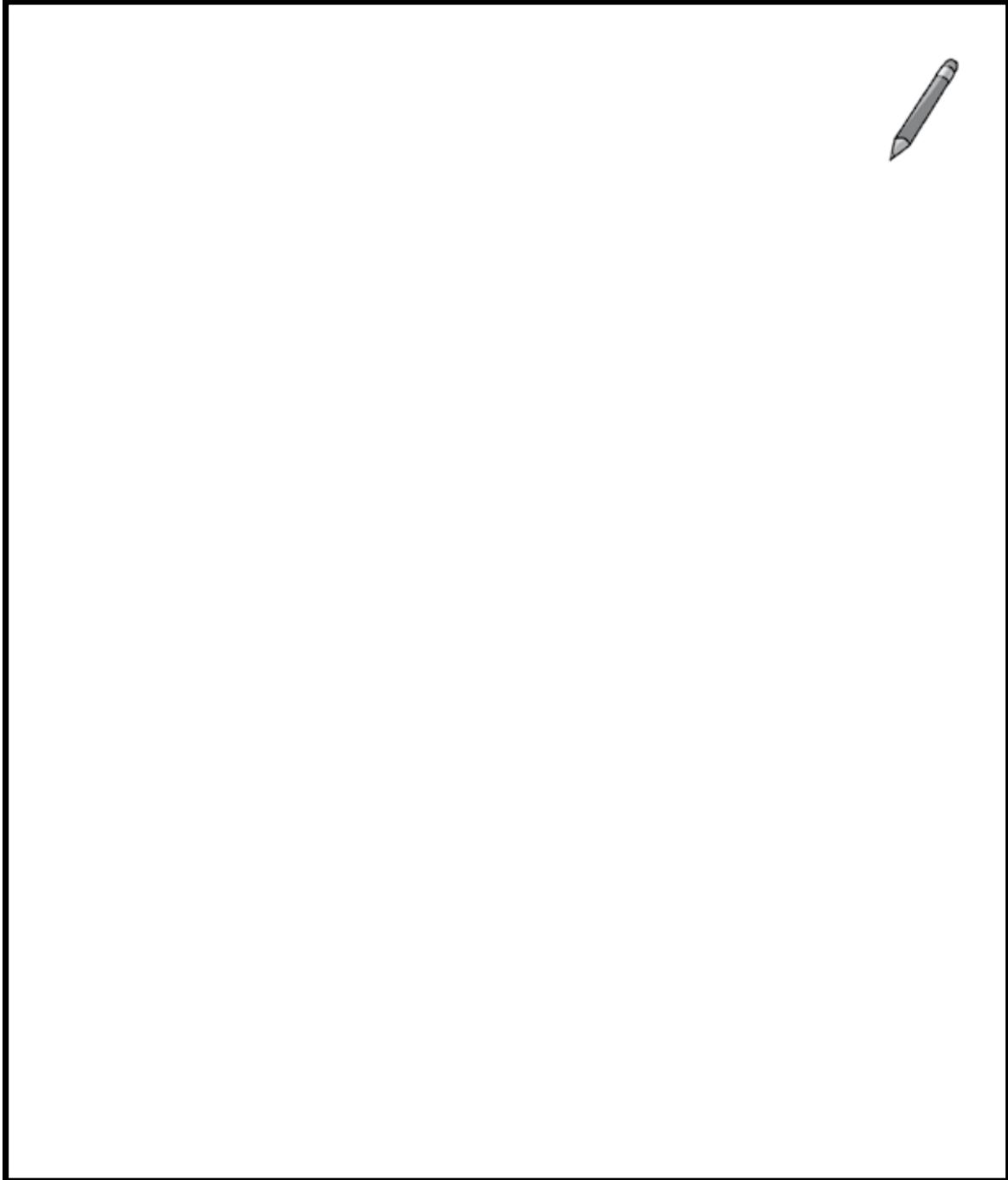


| FEATURE           | DESCRIPTION  |
|-------------------|--|
| Mansard Roof      | Two-part roof where the lower part is steeper than the upper part          |
| Dormers           | Upper-story windows that project outward from the mansard roof             |
| Dentil            | Decorative trim cut to look like “teeth”                                   |
| Lightning Rod     | Metal rod that “grounds” a lightning bolt to prevent damage                |
| Cupola            | Small structure that projects upward on a roof, also called an observatory |
| Quoin             | Stone, brick, or wood blocks that line the corners of the building         |
| Bay Window        | Set of windows that stick out at angles from the side of the house         |
| Portico           | Covered porch entrance   |
| Balustrade        | Railing with spindles (posts) called balusters                             |
| Corinthian Column | Column with a base, column, and decorative top design                      |
| Foundation        | Base that the house sits on (no matching photo insert)                     |



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*Sketch the Penniman House with its geometric shapes: squares, rectangles, triangles, 1/2 circles, rounded details*



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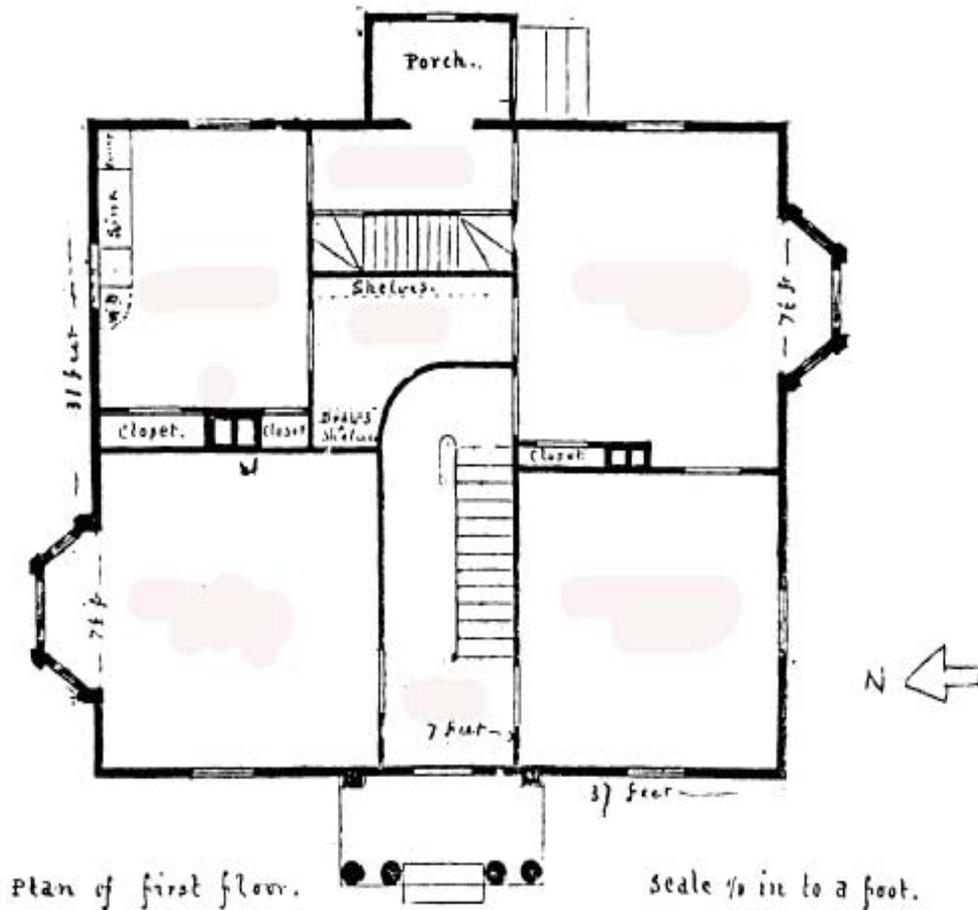
## ACTIVITY 3 - ASSESSING THE INTERIOR'S INTEGRITY

Architectural Historians investigate the interiors of structures to see if they are in their original condition or if they have been remodeled. They look for clues as they follow the floor plan through a house:

- Have structural elements (walls, windows, doors, etc.) been altered?
- Have finishes (wall coverings, flooring, trim, etc.) been replaced?
- Have systems (plumbing, lighting, heating, etc.) been updated?

The more changes that have been made to the interior, the less historic integrity the structure has.

*Use the floor plan below to investigate the first floor of the Captain Penniman House. For each room you visit, write on the plan what type of room it is and circle the window locations. Also make a note on the plan if you find any visible remodeling changes. Do not enter any roped-off rooms.*

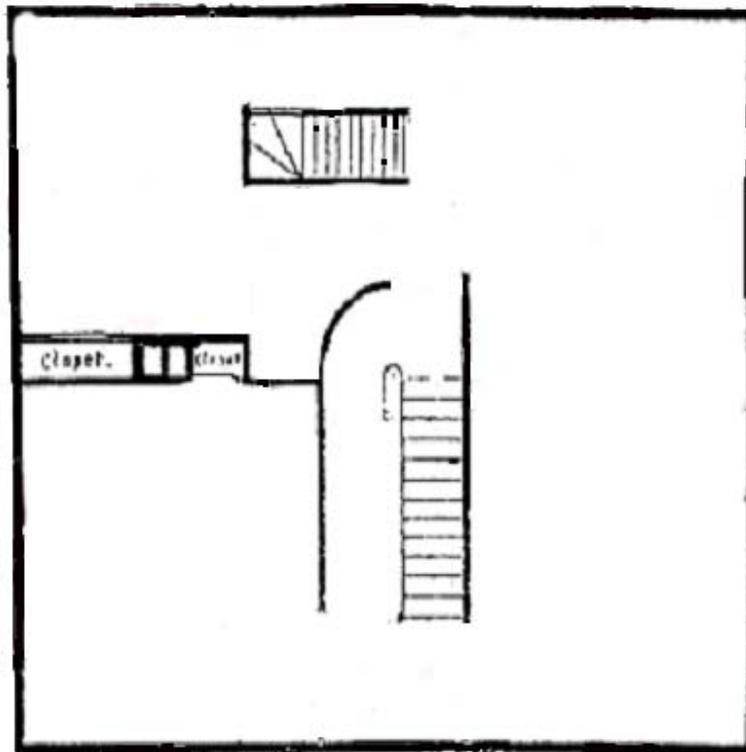


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Architectural Historians sometimes do more than read floor plans—they draw them too. Below is a partial plan of the second floor. It shows the exterior walls and the stairwells. Working your way around the upstairs, add the interior walls, doors and windows to the plan.

*Again, write on the plan what each room is and make a note if you find any visible interior remodeling changes. Do not enter any roped-off rooms. Bonus: Put an X on your plan on the spot of the first in-home toilet in Eastham, MA.*



Based on your observations of the interior, which of these statements would you agree with most?

- The interior seems like it hasn't been changed much since the house was built.
- The interior looks like it has been remodeled significantly.
- Some parts of the interior look like they've been remodeled and others do not.



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## ACTIVITY 3 (Part II) - ASSESSING THE INTERIOR'S INTEGRITY FROM THE OUTSIDE

Sometimes Architectural Historians are unable to gain entry to the buildings they are studying. If you are not able to enter the Captain Penniman House, you can still get a sense of its historic integrity on the inside by observing the exterior features of the house and matching them with the original floor plans. If the exterior shape of the house has been changed (luckily-it has not been changed), then maybe the interior walls, windows and spaces of the interior have also been changed.

*Walk around the house and match windows, exterior doors, and porches to their location on the original floor plans on the previous 2 pages, you will have to complete the activity about the second floor to complete this activity.*

- *Circle each feature whose position on the plan matches its position on the house.*

*Circle one:* If the exterior shape of the house still matches the original floor plan, does that mean the interior of the house has remained unchanged? Yes No Maybe

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Can you think of two other ways you could gather information as to the integrity of the interior of the house without going inside?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_



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## ACTIVITY 4 - ESTIMATING AGE FROM OUTBUILDINGS

An outbuilding is a structure that is part of a property but is not the main structure. Your school grounds might have outbuildings—bus garages, a shed, maybe even an old outhouse! At the Captain Penniman House, the outbuilding is the barn.

Architectural Historians learn a lot about the true age of a site by looking at its outbuildings. Outbuildings are less likely to be remodeled, so they are more likely to have their original style and materials. Also, the exterior walls of outbuildings are often left uncovered on the inside, so you can easily see how the building was constructed. The type of wood, type of nails, how beams and columns were placed, all provide information about when a building was built.

*As an Architectural Historian, you've been asked to look for clues inside and outside the Captain Penniman House barn that will help determine if it is over 50 years old. On the table below, use the left column to list features of the barn that seem to be more than fifty years old. Use the right column to list features that seem to be less than fifty years old. Find at least five of each.*

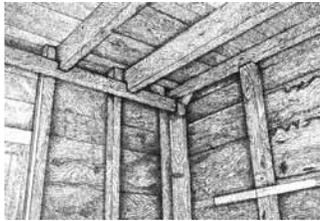
| MORE THAN 50 YEARS OLD | LESS THAN 50 YEARS OLD |
|------------------------|------------------------|
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |
|                        |                        |











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Based on your observations of the features of the barn, which of these statements would you agree with most?

- For the most part, the structure is over 50 years old.
- For the most part, the structure is under 50 years old.
- There is such a mix of old and new that it's hard to tell.

*Sketch features of the barn you think are important.*



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## ACTIVITY 5 - MAKING A DETERMINATION

Now that you have completed Activities 1-4, you must decide if the Captain Penniman House is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Remember, it must meet Criteria 1 *and* Criteria 2 *and* one of the four ways listed under Criteria 3 (we've only considered 3c in this unit).

Based on your observations from Activities 1 and 4, would you say the house and grounds have retained their historic integrity? *If so, put a Y for yes in the box to the right of Criteria 1; if not, put an N for no.*

Based on your observations from Activity 2, would you say the house is over 50 years old? *Put your response in the box to the right of Criteria 2.*

Based on your observations from Activity 3, would you say the house has a distinctive design or physical character? *Put your response in the box to the right of Criteria 3c.*

The experts do say that the house has important ties to historic whaling activities on Cape Cod, so put a Y to the right of Criteria 3a.

Y or N

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Retains its integrity (still looks much the way it did in the past) |  |
| 2. Is old enough (generally at least 50 years old)                     |  |
| 3. Has significance in at least one of the following four ways:        |  |
| a. Is tied to historic events or activities.                           |  |
| b. Is associated with an important person in history.                  |  |
| c. Has distinctive design or physical character.                       |  |
| d. Provides, or could provide, important information about our past.   |  |



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*Circle one:* From your observations, is the Captain Penniman House eligible to be listed on the National Register? Yes No Maybe

Explain your answer:



FACT: Experts say that Captain Penniman is not an important enough person in American history for the house to meet Criteria 3b. They also say that the house does not provide us with important enough information about our past to meet Criteria 3d. The experts do say, however, that the house has important ties to historic whaling activities on Cape Cod (Criteria 3a) and that it is an outstanding example of French Second Empire architecture (Criteria 3c).



## EXPLORE FURTHER:

Are there buildings in your area that might have historic character? Are any listed on the National Register of Historic Places? How can you find out? Visit them if you can to find out why they are listed.



## RESOURCES:

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/about.htm> The National Register of Historic Places website, great for finding out what places are listed.

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/112penniman/112penniman.htm> *The Penniman House: a Whaling Story*, a lesson plan from “Teaching with Historic Places.”

[www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history) The National Park Service’s “Discover History” website.





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## Notes Page

Take your own notes, draw sketches to remind yourself of ideas you think are important.

