

ORLEANS' HISTORIC MAIN STREET

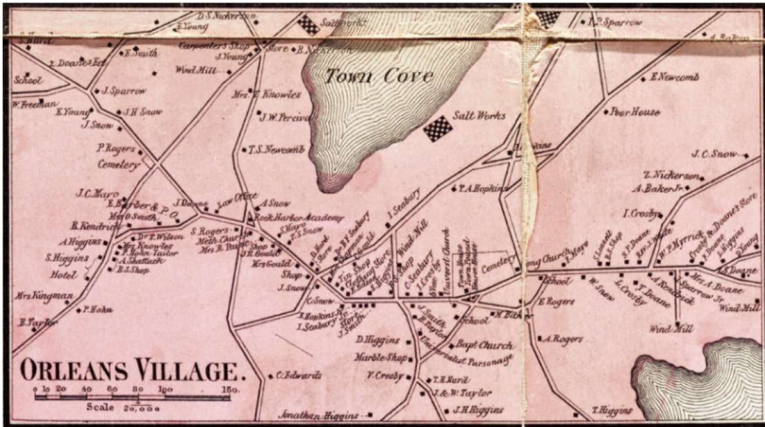


Figure 1. 1858 Walling map of Orleans Village

Orleans was part of a larger area of the lower Cape known as Nauset, inhabited primarily by the Nauset tribe, a part of the Wampanoag Confederation, for thousands of years before colonial exploration. Nauset was first occupied by English colonists from Plymouth in 1644. Before incorporation in 1797, Orleans was the south precinct of Eastham. Pre-19th century development was characterized by scattered, small-scale farmsteads in the east and north portions of what is now Orleans.

Main Street in East Orleans became the town's most historically and architecturally significant streetscape. This portion of Main Street was the institutional, religious, and civic center of the

town, and it retains multiple high-style and large-scale buildings of these use types. The area also contains a well-preserved, cohesive collection of historic residences from the early-19th to the mid-20th century, reflecting the greatest period of Orleans prosperity from maritime and agricultural industries up to the emergence of the seasonal tourist economy.

Residential development along this section of Main Street in the 19th century was directly tied to the growth of the maritime economy, with many of the houses built and/or occupied by sea captains and mariners.

Following the decline of the maritime industry in the mid- to late-19th century, and the arrival of regional train service in 1865, Orleans, like most Cape towns, began a shift to a seasonal/summer resort economy.



Figure 2. Undated early view of 80 Main Street.

The emergence of Orleans Center to the west as the commercial center of Orleans resulted in this section of Main Street retaining its rural character, but over time some residential and institutional resources were adapted to serve the needs of the new seasonal/summer resort economy; and many houses transitioned from ownership by local year-round residents to ownership by seasonal residents.



Figure 3. 1928 view of Orleans Town Hall.

Today, Main Street in East Orleans remains remarkably intact, with a compact collection of historic dwellings, along with a few churches, commercial, institutional and recreational buildings. Together, these properties represent the best collection of historic buildings in Orleans, and includes well preserved examples of Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival style architecture.



Figure 4. Undated early view of 193 Main Street.