

# The Story of the Cape Cod House



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## *The Story of the Cape Cod House*

**T**HE recent interest in Cape Cod and the resulting building activity in this region calls for an intelligent study of the best local architecture, so that new work may be carried out in a harmonious manner.

Two types of houses are prevalent on the Cape; the early one-storied or farmers' cottages, and later the more expensive two-storied house generally found along the main

streets of the villages. Let us consider each of these types in turn.

1. The earliest Cape Cod Houses, most of which were built by settlers from the Pilgrim Colony at Plymouth, were located along the "Kings Highway," which ran along the north coast from Plymouth to Provincetown. The first farm houses were very small and consisted of but a single room with a great brick chimney and fireplace with a small entrance hall and stair leading to the attic above. A house of this type was poorly suited to the use of any but the smallest of families living in the simplest possible manner, and additional space soon became necessary. This was obtained simply by adding another room on the opposite side of the chimney, which brought the door in the centre of the house with either one or two small paned windows on each side. This is the type which, sometimes varied with a small ell or woodshed on either side or back, is the most common and which has earned the well known title of "Cape Cod Cottage." As examples of this, note cover picture and illustrations, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

2. As the settlers became more prosperous, other rooms were added in a second story, see illustrations, Nos. 5, 6 and 7. Later on, across the back of the house, a lean-to room was built by continuing the slope of the roof and closing in the space at the rear, see illustrations, Nos. 8 and 9. Doorways of examples 6 and 7 are shown in plates 10 and 11. No. 12 shows a fan top door typical of the Cape.

In the early type of house, the front door opens into a small entry, which contains a stairway against the central chimney up to the rooms above. When the later houses were elaborated and boasted two chimneys, see illustrations, Nos. 13 and 14, this entry was often extended from the front to the back of the house.

One of the most interesting features of the Cape Cod house is its interior. In the simpler farm houses, one may look for vertical board wainscoating, exposed hand hewed corner posts and ceiling beams, and wide hand split plank flooring. Even the doors are unplanned planks, battened or dove-tailed together, and the latches are of wood.

Under the mantel, one often finds, besides the main fireplace, a dutch oven with iron door. In the former hangs the crane with pot hook and kettle.

In the more elaborate village houses of the later periods, one finds more plaster in evidence. Doors are panelled and hung with hand wrought hardware. The fireplace walls are of special interest. These are usually panelled up with white pine, see illustration, No. 15, and in the houses of the wealthier sea captains, built during the "whaling days," they were elaborated with much hand carved woodwork.



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10.



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11.



6.



12.



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PHOTOGRAPHS  
TAKEN FROM  
TYPICAL HOUSES  
ON CAPE COD



9.



13.



15.



14.