



## Guide's Guide

### *Bound Brook*

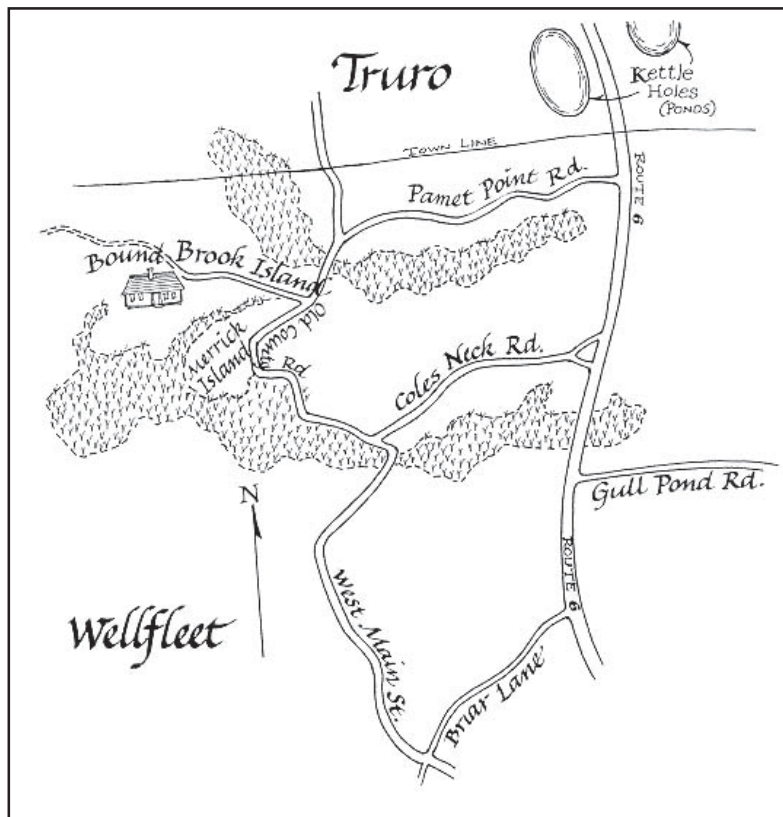
#### *Location Summary*

**Directions:** Bound Brook Area can be reached by turning left off Route 6 onto Coles Neck Road and returning to Route 6 via Pamet Point Road.

**Safety:** Wellfleet town roads are narrow and winding, and are not well-suited for larger vehicles. **Watch out for ticks and poison ivy. Mosquitoes can also be numerous here during summer months.**

**Other:** Atwood-Higgins House is accessible only during limited tour periods seasonally, and by reservation.

**Tips:** Tell the Cape Cod architecture stories on the bus on Route 6. Look for examples of Cape Cod architecture along Route 6 between Wellfleet and Truro. Two kettle ponds will also be visible on the right and left side of Route 6, just after passing into Truro.



**Time Frame:** Five-minute narration time if bus remains on Route 6. Thirty minutes to one hour needed if group goes to Bound Brook area.

**Notes for Educators:** The Atwood-Higgins house exemplifies sound environmental principles learned by early Cape Codders in constructing their homes. The central chimney and south-facing facade provided passive heating enhancements. Furthermore, these houses were often situated on the leeward side of hillsides for additional shelter. The Atwood-Higgins house is situated off Route 6 and difficult to reach because of narrow roads. Numerous examples of Cape Cod architecture abound along area roadways.

**Highlights:** Cape Cod House Architecture  
Other architectural styles, e.g., Victorian era  
Kame formations and marsh habitat in Bound Brook area  
Kettle Ponds (visible from Route 6 across the Truro line.)

# *Bound Brook*

## *Prominent Natural Features*

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**Kames (or Knobs) are prominent along** Old County Road. These elevated mounds of glacial debris are a result of retreat of the ice front some 18,000 years ago.

**Pamet Point Road** follows a dry glacial drainage channel (called hollows in other portions of Cape Cod).

**The Herring River system** adjoins the Bound Brook area. This area has undergone alternate isolation and attachment because of transportation and deposition of sediments.



# *Bound Brook*

## *Touring Script*

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The landscape of this portion of the Cape reveals another aspect of the glacial history of Cape Cod mounds of sand, rock and gravel (known to geologists as “Kames,” which became islands on the bayside), and the freshwater and estuarine systems associated with the Herring River.

The early English residents of this area built homes that became known for their architecture. (Many such homes are still evident along Route 6 throughout Wellfleet.) This architectural form became known as the Cape Cod style, and consists of a central chimney, steep pitched roof, and central doorway. Variations consist of the half, three-quarter, and full Cape house.

An example of a house that went through all such phases, known as the Atwood-Higgins house, is preserved by the Cape Cod National Seashore and located on Bound Brook Island.

Bound Brook, Great, and other such “islands” now are accessible by roadway, as sand deposition and marsh deposits have rejoined these once isolated land forms with the rest of the Cape.



# *Bound Brook*

## *The Cape Cod House*

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Early descriptions of the Cape Cod house came from 19th-century literary and historic figures such as Timothy Dwight, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Freeman, Shebnah Rich and Charles F. Swift. Some of their comments, while clever, do not define the features of this house. Thoreau, for example, said the gable windows looked as if each occupant punched a hole where his necessities required it, and according to his size and stature, without regard to outside effect. Some descriptions of room arrangement and uses were made by these writers.

Historical definitions of the Cape Cod house are varied. However, one can summarize some basic features:

- ❖ The Cape Cod house was identifiable as such by the end of the 18th century.
- ❖ The plan of two south rooms and a north kitchen flanked by two bedrooms and a buttery or pantry, was arranged around a central chimney. This was known as a “double house” with a central front doorway and two windows on either side. Today, we call it a “full Cape.”
- ❖ A “house-and-a-half” had an off-center doorway flanked by one window on one side and two on the other. The chimney was over the doorway. We call it a “three-quarter Cape” today.
- ❖ A dwelling called simply a “house” had a doorway at one end, two windows between it and the other end, and a chimney centered over the door. We call it a “half Cape.”
- ❖ Exterior walls were most frequently shingled.
- ❖ The front facade faced south and was often faced with clapboards. Gable ends often had two larger and two smaller windows.

All historical sources have contributed something to our knowledge of the Cape Cod house, despite frequent inaccuracies.

### **Architectural Heritage**

Most architectural historians have ignored the Cape Cod house, but in the 1960's, Ernest A. Connolly and Richard M. Candee contributed important additions to our knowledge of this style of architecture. Connolly was involved in a study of Outer Cape architecture for the Historic American Buildings Survey and authored an article in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. He called the Cape Cod house one of the best known and most frequently imitated forms of American architecture. In his view, examples of half-Cape, three-quarter Cape and full Cape existed at the same time. A house grew from one to the other because of the needs of a family, not because of stylistic desires. This house form is simple and flexible. Builders of earliest houses were not concerned with symmetry for doorways and windows on front facades and had window lintels up to the eave line. Newer houses can be spotted by symmetrical facades and lower window lintels.

Richard M. Candee wrote for *The Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities*. He wrote that architecture of the Plymouth Colony (of which Cape Cod was a part) was a unique form of New England house style, partly because of vertical plank wall boards. Founders of the Plymouth Colony, English Separatists spent twelve years in Leyden, Holland, prior to embarking on the Mayflower. Vertical plank wall boards are common in Holland. Post-and-beam framed construction, typical here, is also found in other parts of New England, but a dwelling with one story with an attic under a gable roof really distinguishes the Cape Cod house. Possibly the severe winds on and near the Cape dictated building houses low to the ground with minimum vertical surfaces.

In New England, a region noted for good domestic architecture, replete with many fine examples of Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival houses, another distinct style-the Cape Cod has flourished. There is no evidence that it actually originated on the Cape. The oldest examples still standing are probably in Connecticut. Here on the Cape, many examples are found in all the towns, but the greatest concentration is on the Cape Cod Bay side, on or near Route 6A, as the early settlers quite literally turned their backs on the cold, windy “back” or ocean side of the Cape.



# *Bound Brook*

## *Atwood-Higgins House*

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The early settlers were governed by determining conditions for house building—climate, topography, and prevailing winds. They also had other needs, such as food and shelter, to consider when choosing locations. Therefore, they built among the sheltering hills, usually facing south, and near harbors for access to fishing and transportation. What they built was influenced as well by custom and available materials.

The very first such houses were wigwams, copied from the Native Americans. The English settlers used the wigwams only for a short period of time, perhaps for their first winter or two.

In time, the Cape developed an interesting mixture of architectural styles, including the Cape Cod cottage, still the most popular form on Cape Cod. The first of these appeared as one-room framed structures and were built in the post-and-beam method of construction, with walls made of vertical planks.

These houses often grew from a one-room dwelling, or “half house” to a seven-or eight-room, story-and-a-half Cape Cod cottage. An intermediate step was often to a three-quarter Cape Cod house. We can still see many of these various forms on the Cape, and such is the story of the Atwood Higgins house. This house, whose first portion was constructed around 1730, is located on what was once an island in Wellfleet.

### **Land Based and Marine**

The site of the Atwood-Higgins house on Bound Brook Island was chosen wisely to take advantage of various natural resources. The location satisfies the criteria for subsistence living of the period, both land-based and marine. The fact that this area was an island solved one problem of making a living for the resident mariners and captains by allowing them access to the sea either through the adjacent shoreline or via the Herring River.

The Atwood-Higgins half-Cape house of the early 1700s grew to a full Cape house by the end of that century. The facade of the structure has a central front door, flanked by two windows on each side, with a massive chimney. Clapboards covered the front. However, the side and rear outer walls were shingled, which was a common practice attributed to frugality expressed by New Englanders at the time.

Styles and types of the homes on Cape Cod can be divided into chronological periods. The Cape Cod cottage and the Colonial form which expanded into a saltbox style are representative of the Colonial Period from around 1630-1770. The extreme pitch of the roof and plain, simple details are important characteristics of this form.

A refinement of the Colonial period can be found in the homes from the Federalist Period, dating between 1775 and 1820, and named after the emerging government. Clues to identifying this style are “light columns” (consisting of windows in vertical rows), “fanlights” over central doors, a lower-pitched roof and two chimneys, one on either end, instead of a central chimney common to the earlier houses.

### **Change and Expansion**

During this period and subsequent ones, most existing Cape Cod houses underwent individual modification. This can be seen in the Atwood-Higgins house where, during the 1800s, structural components built during this period became concealed, beams were no longer visible, posts were smaller, and there were more detailed cornices and mantels. Also, at the Atwood-Higgins house, the four fireplaces became subjected to constant tinkering and repairing. They, and the two beehive ovens, were all fed into one chimney with separate flues, some joining above the attic floor.

As a sign of wealth from the successful exporting trades, whaling, and fishing industries, the structures built during the Victorian age from the 1830s into the 1900s showed an increasing number of ornate architectural details. The pediments, pilasters, columns, and houses turned “end-on” were evidence of the classic Greek influences during the

### **Greek Revival Period**

As noted earlier, many traditional Cape Cod cottages also changed and expanded during this time. The addition of an ell to the Atwood-Higgins house included a second pantry and another bedroom. Under the pantry was a beanpot cellar for vegetable storage. It was circular to minimize the effect of sand caving it in. A straight pair of stairs replaced the old winder stairs which were eliminated by the second kitchen’s fireplace.

Possibly two Atwood families occupied the home from 1825 to 1873, when it was no longer used as a year-round residence. Before the Atwood Higgins house ceased to be occupied year-round, the train reached Wellfleet and came through the Atwood Higgins property, bringing about yet another era in Cape Cod lifestyles and architecture.

As it stands, the Atwood-Higgins house is a fine example of a properly framed Cape Cod cottage which grew from a half house in the early 1700s to a full Cape with eight rooms by the 19th century.

George Higgins, a distant relative of the original builder, assumed ownership of the house in 1919 and restored it according to his ideas of an 18th century house. The barn, woodshed, guest house, and store were added by George Higgins in the 20th century to fulfill his concept of a northern New England farm settlement. In 1961, Cape Cod National Seashore, as an agency of the Department of Interior, became the guardian of the house and site.