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## Cory House: History

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## Criteria Statement

Cory/Cornell Farm, 212 Cornell Road, Westport, Massachusetts

Georgian core circa 1780 constructed by Cory family with Greek Revival wing c. 1842 constructed by Cornell family

The Cory/ Cornell farm is of significant importance in the development of Westport, Massachusetts. The homestead of two important families, the Cory family who first purchased, owned and established the farm and the Cornells who added the Greek Revival wing, the property largely retains a portion of its original acreage including the circa 1840 barn. The property was historically used for farming purposes and retains that use presently for livestock pasturage. The house is structurally intact and its architectural archaeological and social history are important resources in documenting the development of not only Westport but of Southeastern Massachusetts. The property meets Criteria C) embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.. and D) likelihood of yielding information significant to history for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The house is dramatically sited on a hill approached from Cornell Road by an impressive driveway. The house and fields are surrounded by original stone wall. The site also contains its original well, a lye leaching stone and in the cellar under the Greek Revival addition is a 16-foot circular cistern. Most significant for students of early stonework is the large worked rock in one of the pastures containing flat, slot drill and wedge marks. This type of drill work predates the plug drill and is presently dated to between 1760 ö 1830.

The construction of the original, Georgian portion of the house is of a quality, detail and sophistication that indicates the wealth and position of the Cory family. The large Greek Revival wing was constructed with extraordinary attention to detail and may possibly have been built by a housewright. Anne W, Baker has written the complete architectural description of the house and it is included in this Criteria Statement.

Members of the Cory family owned the Cornell Road land long before the house was built. Originally the family settled in Portsmouth, Rhode Island in the seventeenth century and after 1660 began purchasing large tracts of land in what was then Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Westport became a separate town in 1787, well after the Revolution.

Dartmouth, Massachusetts was first visited and described by English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold in 1602. Settlers from Plymouth Plantation, wishing to escape the scrutiny of the First Comers and to establish their own homesteads moved to Southeastern Massachusetts. By the time of King Philip's war they had established farms and small settlements in South Dartmouth, Russells Mills,

Bedford Village, at the Head of the River near Acushnet and in Fairhaven. Later the vast area of "Old Dartmouth" became the towns of Acushnet, Fairhaven, Dartmouth, Westport and the City of New Bedford.

Research now indicates that a large number of families including the Corys, Akins, and Almys, moved to Old Dartmouth from Rhode Island. These families were not Quakers. The history of this Rhode Island migration is still largely unwritten and needs further research. The influence of these Rhode Island families may prove to have been significant in the architectural and social development of Southeastern Massachusetts. Their largely over-looked role most certainly changes the standard view of Old Dartmouth, as purely Quaker and purely devoted to the whaling industry.

As a tool to re-evaluate assumptions dealing with Massachusetts history, the Cornell Road house is of major importance.

The first description of the Cory land is a 1712 survey of what was noted as "214 qualified acres." In The Field Notes of Benjamin Crane, Benjamin Howland, and Samuel Smith, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Original Notes of Survey of Lands of the Proprietors of Dartmouth, including what is now the City of New Bedford, and the Towns of Dartmouth, Westport, Fairhaven and Acushnet, Published by the New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1910 the relevant entry reads:

P: 172

"June 11, 1712 then surveyed ye homestead of William Corie deceased beginning at ye n w corner of Henry Brightmans farme at ye edge of ye marsh thence n 40 degrees w 100 Rods to ye stonewall ye bounds between said Corie & ye homestead of Philip Taber thence a 44 w 18 rods to ye edge of ye marsh: as the stone wall now stands then from ye place where we Came to ye n Line thence to 44 dgs E as the wall now stands 13 rods to a flat Rock Just against ye Corner of ye wall a Little & thereof thence E 45 dgs n 100 rods to a heap of stones Just by a black oak tree on ye E ward side thereof for Joseph Tabors Corner.

Corner & on sd point 256 rods to a Stak on a plaine- Leave off June 12, 1712 for sd Cory beginning at 2 gray oaks Ebenezer Tripps S w Corner of his homestead thence E 166 rods to a stak & heap of stones on ye plaine for a Corner thence E 45 dgs S 18 rods to a young white oak sapling marked w stones about it then w 45 dgs S 8 rods to the place where we left off yesterday, then we began again at ye 2 gray oaks where we began in ye morning thence n 20 dgs w 44 rods to a stake on ye S ward side of ye path: Thence S 45 dgs w 13 rods to a stak & heap of stones on ye n side of sd path for a Corner thence 20 dgs E to ye Line that we ran up between of Taber and said Corys 191 rods to a Coventree marked in ye n w Line of ye homestead: This Land & ye Land Laid out yesterday measures 363 acres qualified 214 acres"

This William Cory, owned large tracts of land in Rhode Island in addition to the land surveyed for him. The 214 acres were left to a son, Caleb, who then apparently sold it to his brother, Thomas. Thomas in turn left the land to his son, still another, Thomas, who left it to his grandson, Thomas Cory. This grandson, Thomas was a minor in 1731 when his grandfather wrote a first will.

He wrote in part, ".I give and bequeath to my Grandson Thomas Cory son of my son Thomas Cory of Dartmouth deceased all that part of land and housing in Dartmouth aforesaid where he my said son Thomas lived: that is I give unto him my said grandson all that part of said farm with Haying thereon which is bounded and \_\_\_\_\_ by South Easterly on Thomas Brightman land or homestead North westerly on Phillip Tabor land and homestead South westerly on the westernmost \_\_\_ of all including all my Salt meadow at the foot thereof and to extend on the whole Breadth from said River North Easterly until it makes two hundred acres of land by measure."

Preliminary research indicates that this grandson, Thomas Cory, built or had built the original Georgian core of the property around 1780 or possibly slightly earlier. By June 20, 1796 when Cory made his will, parts of the house are described. The farm was left to his son, William Cory, with rights left to his daughter, Elizabeth. These rights give a partial description of the house.

"I give unto my daughter Elizabeth Cory the use and improvement of my great chamber and southwest bedroom adjoining. Also a privilege to the well for water and to the oven to bake and a privilege through the kitchen and up and down the kitchen stairs to the chamber and also a privilege round the house for laying wood??? for and during the term she shall remain unmarried if she shall see fit to improve the farm herself but not to hire the farm out to any persons."

William Cory inherited upon the death of his father in 1802. Apparently childless he left the property in an 1831 will to his sister, Elizabeth. "I give unto my sister Elizabeth Cory and to her heirs and assigns forever, all my land and buildings and all the rest and residue of my estate of every sort and kind not herein before disposed etc." At the time of his death, however on October 4, 1842, he was no longer William Cory of Westport but William Cory of Fall River.

At an undetermined point between 1831 when William Cory made his will and 1848, the Cory farm and homestead was bought or inherited by Charles M. Gifford, "yeoman." Research is underway to firmly connect Gifford with the property.

By 1848 the 214 qualified acres surveyed in 1712 had shrunk to 60 acres. The acreage had been deeded to various members of the Cory family and/or sold to neighbors. The Gifford deed to Joshua H. Cornell reads in part:

"The homestead farm where I now live containing 60 acres more or less bounded Northerly by Godfrey Cornell's land

Easterly partly by the woods, partly by the John Brightman farm so called

Southerly partly by said Brightman land and partly by the river and

Westerly by the river reserving for a burying grounds a piece of land at the north end of the meadow north from the dwelling house of thirty feet wide from the west side to the road."

The price was \$3,400 and Gifford's wife, Susannah renounced her right to the property.

That same day Joshua Cornell sold to his father, Godfrey Cornell, "'A tract of a land containing 15 acres being a part of the land which I have this day bought of Charles M. Gifford commencing at the river in the line between this farm and the Grantees thence easterly in the line about 69 and a half rods to the north east corner of a meadow thence southerly by the wall about 51 rods to the corner of the wall adjoining the pasture thence westerly by the wall to the wharf meadow thence northerly by the wall to the corner of the middle meadow thence westerly by the wall to the river with a privilege for passing from the roads over the pass way to the river and the land hereby conveyed."

Joshua Cornell and his wife, Angeline, eventually had nine children and from the evidence of Joshua's will added to the house. It seems likely that this is the Greek Revival wing. Cornell's will was made on January 6, 1865 and probated on August 16th of the same year. The children were minors and Angeline and the description of the property remarkably complete. The property was appraised at \$5, 700.

One paragraph details the interior of the house and mentions the "new part of the dwelling house."

"We have set off to Angeline R. Cornell widow of said Joshua H. Cornell as her Dower in said estate as follows:

All of the Porch or new part of the dwelling house. The southeast front room in the old or main part of the dwelling house and the front chamber over it with the privilege of using the front entry above and below and also the front stairs for the purpose of occupying said front room and chamber, the back entry or sink-room, and the room over the same and the stairs that goes up out of the said sink-room or entry together with the clothes room or closet under said stairs. Reserving the privilege for the occupants of the remainder of the dwelling house to pass and repass through said entry or sink-room and to get water from the pump in said entry or sink-room provided said occupants pay one half of the expenses of keeping the cistern in repair. The south half of the garret with the privilege of passing and repassing through the backroom in the

chamber of the house to and from the garret stairs and using said garret stairs and passing and repassing through the north part of the garret to the south half thereof. "

"The south part of the cellar under the house the cellar to be divided by a line passing through the middle of the cellar way through the center of the foundation of the chimney. Also the slaughter house so called standing at the north of the barn, and ten feet of the north end of the woodshed and the north half of the crib or grainway. Also the privilege of using the backhouse or privy in common with the other occupants of the house together with all of the trees and fruit that grows in the house yard. Also the rights and privilege of the house yard and the lane leading to the road in common with the occupants of the remainder of the house and farm."

The farm remained in the Cornell family until 1920 when Joshua Cornell's heirs sold it to Ethel Kaplan, Rose Goldstein and Beckie Goldstein. The property continued in use as a working farm throughout the twentieth century. A 1938 sale of the property included 30 cows with ear tag numbers, a black and white cow without ear tag, a bull, two of the four horses on the farm and milking equipment including "One General Electric Frigidaire; One Perfection Milking Machine, 685 pound Milk rating which they have with Braleys Creamery; Hay in barn and in stacks; two silos with contents; All Roughage on Farm." The farm sold for \$12,000.

212 Cornell Road is that most endangered and therefore valuable properties - a farm with its fields largely intact used for its original purpose. Even as responsible and deliberately rural a Town of Westport, Massachusetts is hard pressed to retain its historic character in the face of development. Placement of the Cory/Cornell farm on the National Register will help insure its rehabilitation.