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Cory House: Letter to Abbot Cummings, regarding door frame

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November 17, 2004

Hi Abbot,

I have just come on a first – first for me anyway. No, not 17th century—much as I wish it was—instead a fascinating mid 18th century house here in Westport. Two story, planked sided, 5 bay, center chimney. Sounds typical but wait.

The front and some of the windows had been boarded over with fake brick siding and the original doorway removed. Yesterday we removed the brick siding on the front wall hoping to find indications of what the original doorway looked like and found clear markings on the planks of the original door frame and to our surprise discovered that the door frame had an elliptical pediment with a 4 light rectangular transom much like the enclosed picture of the Benedict Arnold House in Newport. OK, that was obvious, but what Steve Tyson (Steve and I are working together on this house) and I found next amazed us. Not only were there clear marks of an elliptical pediment over the front door but also over the windows. Within the area of those marks there were few nail hole suggesting that the window pediments were original. See enclosed photos. Both of us have spent hours looking in old house books hoping to find a picture of this type of elliptical pediment applied over the windows on a plank framed house and have found nothing.

Do you know of any other examples of this window treatment in a mid 18th century planked framed house? So far we have also found this detail on the front and end walls. I don't know about the back yet, and have yet to determine if it was originally clapboarded, shingled, or if the corners had coins.

Considering these sophisticated details I find that the location of the house most interesting. Located on Cornell Road, now a back road between Westport Point and Adamsville, it was originally a 200 acre farm owned by Thomas Cory, and later Joshua Cornell . In depth deed research, followed by probate records is in progress. Also trying to find old pictures, but so far unsuccessful.

Steve and I both feel very responsible for the architectural history of the house which means having discovered elliptical pediments over the windows we can't make something up of what might have been . This is an important Westport house that was slated for demolition. I stopped that, which means that now it has a chance to tell its story and how it fitted into the surrounding community.

I certainly understand if you don't have time to answer this. It is just wonderful knowing you are there and an good exercise for me to try and put my thoughts in order.

Happy Thanksgiving,