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May 2022

Captain Thomas Paine House: Handout from Anne W. Baker Notes

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Recommended Citation

"Captain Thomas Paine House: Handout from Anne W. Baker Notes" (2022). *Documentation*. 126.
https://docs.rwu.edu/baker_documentation/126

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The **Captain Thomas Paine House**, 850 East Shore Road, Jamestown, Rhode Island, has a Second Period core, circa 1694, constructed by Thomas Paine with 18th, 19th, and 20th century additions. The Captain Paine House is significant in the development of Jamestown, Rhode Island. It has been the homestead of three noted families: Captain Thomas Paine who first purchased the property, built the house and established the farm; the Watson family who owned and lived on the farm from 1815 to 1872; and Seth M. Vose who used the property as a summer residence from 1882 to 1949. The farming activities were maintained and according to S. Morton Vose II were an important part of the childhood memories of several generations of Voses.

The property retains 6.9 acres of its original 160 acreage, a 17th century house, two circa 1885 barns, a stone boat house and a 20th century cottage. The house is dramatically sited on a hill that slopes down to the East Passage of Narragansett Bay. The house and fields are surrounded by stone walls, rail fences and beech trees many of which are over one hundred years old. Fields, stone walls and rail fences still reflect a time when the property was a farm and livestock roamed these fields.

The house is structurally intact and its architectural, archaeological, and social histories are important in documenting the three hundred year development of the architectural and cultural history of Jamestown. Further research is necessary to understand the significance of various pre-colonial artifacts found on the property including an existing upright grouping of four large stones which suggest cardinal points.

The construction of the original 17th century portion of the house is of a quality, detail, and sophistication that indicate the wealth and position of Captain Thomas Paine. At his death his estate was worth four hundred and fifty four (454) pounds sterling.

Paine, who was born in 1657, arrived in Newport in 1683 with a forged commission from the Lieut. Governor of Jamaica. He settled first in Newport where he married Mary (Mercy) Carr (b. 1661) the daughter of Governor Caleb Carr. In 1689 Paine was commissioned by Governor Carr to defend Newport from the French privateers who were threatening to sack Newport. Taking command of two sloops he successfully fought off a fleet of 5 pirate ships. Not only was he a mariner, soldier, and patriot, but he was one of the founders of Trinity Church in Newport.

In 1690 Caleb Arnold, son of Benedict Arnold, and Porter, Hazard & Gould (Fisher Map 1657) sold 160 acres of land to Thomas Paine. This is confirmed in Jamestown Land Evidence Volume 1, page 62. No buildings are mentioned.

An early mention of the Jamestown house is in Paine's deposition concerning Captain Kidd's visit there in 1699. All that is known is that Captain Kidd, an old pirate friend, sailed up the bay, dropped anchor in front of Paine's house and that Paine visited Kidd on his ship.

Captain Paine died in 1714 leaving his estate to his wife Mary (Mercy) Paine. They had no children and in 1717 Mary (Mercy) Paine died intestate at which time the property went to her Carr relatives. In 1747 the property returned to the Paine family when Nicholas Carr sold the property to Thomas Paine's nephew John (James) Paine.

In 1772 John (James) Paine left the property to his grandson Paine Hammond, who sold the farm in 1781. After 1781 the farm had several different owners, including at least three generations of Watsons, a well established family of farmers living in Jamestown for generations.

In 1882 Seth M. Vose, a Providence and Boston art dealer acquired the property to use as a summer residence and named it *Cajacet*. During their ownership the Voses added a third story to the original house and a series of wings off the back. The Voses occupied the site for 60 years until 1949 when they sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Collins. The Collins hired John Hutchinson Cady to restore the house to its present appearance. Cady's blueprints and journal documenting his 1949 restoration are available. Cady's First Floor Plan is attachment 1.

The property changed hands again in 1978 (Bertham Parker) and in 2003 (Ron Long).

Architectural Significance

The hewn oak frame of the original two-story Paine House is one room deep with a gable roof and second floor overhang. The stud-framed building includes an end chimney the mass of which is stone. There is no evidence of an oven.

The exposed and decorated framing details include decorated summer beams, corner and story posts each with a flat chamfered edge and a lamb's tongue stop. The second floor posts are gunstock.

The first and second floor, and great room (A) and chamber above (E), measure 28' by 18'. (Attachment 2 and 3. Early floor plans by AWB.) Both rooms have crossed summers (9" by 10 1/2") with splayed prick posts located beneath the transverse summer beam. Only two other examples of crossed summers are known: Cocumscussoc in North Kingstown, RI and the William Coddington House in Newport now demolished.

The 3" by 4" joists are tusk-tenon at both ends and pegged. The joists on the east side of the longitudinal summer are tusk-tenon and pegged at the summer and lay on top of the 4" by 10" east girt to frame the 1' 6" overhang. The exterior sections of these joists are weathered suggesting that they were originally exposed beneath the over-hang.

The studs and down braces (first and second floor, A and E) are pit-sawn. Ghost marks of clapboards could be seen on the exterior of the first floor studs. White plaster lines on the inside outer edge of the studs suggests that plaster had been applied directly to the interior side of the clapboards. The studs on the west exterior wall of A) were removed when a 9' 6" addition was added to the back west facade possibly to accommodate a salt-box roof.

Mortise pockets for framing a façade gable dormer were discovered in 1979.

The doors and fireplace paneling are shadow molded vertical boards, first and second floor. Installed by Cady in 1950 he noted in his journal that some boards are original and some are copies.

The stairwell in the east entrance hall (B) is sheathed with white washed vertical white pine boards. Carved into a board at the top of the stairs and directly opposite a window that looks to the bay, is a boat known as a Shallop.

The Paine House has traditionally been referred to as a Rhode Island stone-ender and given a date of 1680—ten years before Paine bought the land and fourteen years before there is a mention of a

house. (1694-5 Cabebe & Wm Arnold transaction mention of tract in Jamestown on which Capt Paine now lives.)

The earliest known illustration of Captain Paine's house was drawn by Edwin Whitefield in 1882. **Attachment 4.** Previous to Edwin Whitefield's illustration nine feet (9' 0") of the south end, first and second floor, had been removed. The original stone foundation for this 9' section still exists underground. There is no recorded information about why or when the nine feet were removed. However, the type of splice used on the first floor new south girt might shed some light on when the wall was removed and replaced. Also in the Whitefield's 1882 illustration the chimney is near the center instead of exposed at the north end. Conjecture suggests that the nine feet on the south end were removed when an owner wished to have the appearance of a center chimney house.

In the first floor of this north section (B) there is a large stone firebox that appears to be integral with the original mass. Cady reported that he found some marks of clapboards next to the chimney which he felt proved that the house was originally a stone ender. **Attachment 5.** However in 1978 it was discovered that the front girt in the east entrance hall, first and second floor, (B and F) have a scarf joint. On the first floor, (B) both timbers on either side of the scarf joint are chamfered.

On the second floor, (F) at the junction of the splice, the south east girt has a chamfer and lambs tongue stop while the northeast girt is plain. The remaining framing for this north end (B) is no longer visible. But the scarf joints and large stone fire box suggest the possibility of an original lean to or small ell on the north end of the Paine House not unlike the Congdon House in Wakefield, and the Perry house in Matunuck .

Research and analysis of Thomas Paine's 1714 will indicate three rooms with fireplace equipment.

Thomas Paine's original purchase of 160 acres on Conanicut Island has been divided and subdivided, but the heart of his house still looks out to Narragansett Bay as it did 300 years ago.

From notes of Anne W. Baker