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Captain Thomas Paine House: Jamestown Historical Society Information

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JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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JAMESTOWN, RI 02835

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July 9, 2003

Ann Baker
29 Drift Road
Westport, MA 12790
508 636-3272

Dear Ann,

Here is the information I promised you:

catalogue of contents of miscellaneous items relating to Cajacet & Capt. Paine
information provided for Bill Burgin, October, 2000
my notes on the chain of owners of the Paine property
my article written for the JHJS Newsletter, September 1997
membership application, JHS

I hope you were successful in reconciling your images with the ones in the computer at the Library.

As you know, I promised to send this all to Ron. When you and he have digested this, let me know what you'd like to see, and I'll try to set up a time when we can meet at the Library to discuss your questions. (The Library, unlike the Museum, is air-conditioned and it has a copier.)

I hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Mary R. Miner, Archivist
790 East Shore Road
Jamestown, RI 02835
401 423-0937

cc Ron Long

article for *JHS Newsletter*, Fall 1997

A Treasure of a House

The Captain Thomas Paine house in Jamestown stands on land that Captain Paine bought in 1690. The house, as it appears today is the result of numerous additions and renovations to the early Paine home. However, the overhanging second story on the east side and the enormous fireplace and hand-hewn beams in the living room attest to the building's 18th century beginnings.

Captain Paine has been described as a mariner, a buccaneer, a soldier, a patriot, and a churchman. Little is known about his career before he arrived in Newport in 1683 on his ship, *Pearl*, a barque with a crew of 80 men. Apparently he was ready at that time to retire from a successful career preying on Spanish ships. He settled first in Newport and married the daughter of Caleb Carr, the ancestor of Jamestown's Carr family. Captain Paine appears to have been active in civic affairs. He was a tax assessor, he served on the jury he was a captain of militia, and he was one of the group that petitioned for the establishment of Trinity Church in Newport. In 1690 he became a local hero when he took command of two sloops and fought off a fleet of French privateers who were threatening to sack Newport.

Captain Paine and his wife had moved to their new home in Jamestown when Captain Kidd sailed up the bay in 1699 and dropped anchor in front of their house. All we really know of Captain Kidd's visit is that he invited Paine out to his ship. This brief encounter has led, over the years, to rumors that Kidd had buried some kind of treasure on the Paine farm. Rumors, repeated often enough, are frequently accepted as fact. In this way, Captain Kidd's buried treasure at Captain Paine's has become a favorite Jamestown legend. Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence to back up the legend.

Captain Paine's house is treasure enough. It has been cherished by different families for 300 years. Its architectural changes reflect changes in lifestyles between the 17th and the 20th centuries. It is a handsome piece of architectural and social history.

The Paine farm, too has reflected changing times. In 1767 the livestock on the 160-acre farm included 75 sheep, 24 dairy cows, 11 cattle, 10 swine, and 2 horses. Understandably, 114 acres were devoted to pasture, with 29 acres mowed to produce 12 tons of hay. The farm harvested 330 bushels of grain that year, and the orchard yielded a barrel of cider.

The original farm was divided in half in 1815: the southern half, with Captain Paine's house, became the home of John Jay Watson. He lived there for 30 years, was known locally as Uncle John to distinguish him from his nephew of the same name, who lived on North Road, across from the windmill. Uncle John maintained a public library in his house. The books were kept in a kitchen closet. The catalogue, written on a sheet of paper, was pasted on the inside of the closet door.

They say that in his later years Mr. Watson had the only garden of any pretension in Jamestown. It started in the front of the house and extended toward the shore through two terraces "with a profusion of flowers of many varieties." It was the show place of the island, a place where islanders were known to take their guests to see Uncle John's flowers. It was no easy trip in a buggy since the entrance to the farm in those days was on North Road, with a long dirt lane leading across the fields to the house.

Subsequent owners have continued ornamental planting on the grounds of the Paine farm. The fine beeches and the large holly tree are thought to have been planted over 100 years ago by Seth Vose. It was Mr. Vose, proprietor of the Vose galleries in Providence, who enlarged the old house in the 1880s and named it *Cajacet*. The origin of the name is uncertain, but it is not unlike *Cajasset*, the name of Oliver Arnold's 17th century farm on Taylor Point.

The land at Cajacet has been divided and subdivided, but the 19th century innovation of handsome planting continues. the house has been changed radically in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, but it still looks out on the bay as it did 300 years ago.

Mary R. Miner
September, 1997

Notes::

Page 1

- paragraph 1 Jamestown Land Evidence, Volume 1, p.118
- " 2 Howard M. Chapin, *Captain Paine of Cajacet*, pp.30,31
pp.19,23,,25,29, RIHS Bulletin Vol XXIII, #1
- " 3 Chapin puts the Paines in Jamestown in 1688—two years before Paine bought his 160 acres. Caleb Carr's will has them living in Newport and owning a house there in 1694.
- " 3 I have intentionally omitted mention of Sarah Kidd's letter to Paine and the gold that Paine turned over to Lord Bellomont
see Chapin, *Captain Paine of Cajacet*, pp.30,31

Page 2

- paragraph 1 Jamestown Census, 1767
- " 2 Jamestown Land Evidence Vol.5, p.17
Jamestown Town Council & Probate Records Vol 3, p.316
Newport Daily News, 8/18/1931, letter to the editor
- " 3. ibid
Beers Atlas of Rhode Island, 1870
- 4 photograph, JHS P1975.018
Benedict Arnold will, 1678
- " 5 18th century enlargement, post 1725
19th century enlargement, post 1882
20th century restoration, 1950
...John Hutchins Cady drawing

material in ephemera file *Houses, 18th century, 2*

- NDN 8/18/1931: description of John Jay Watson's garden "50 or 60 years ago" ...
- L. & H. Collins: correspondence, chain of owners & research notes
reference to Henry Turner excerpts at NHS::" book of Land Evidence 2, p16,
1694-5 ", of Caleb & Wm Arnold transactions mention of tract in **Jamestown on which Capt Paine now lives.**
- H. Collins notes Paine will & inventories with side by side comparison of rooms mentioned; research notes
- anonymous drawing: rough sketch of house ayout as described in 1715 inventory
- W. L. Watson: correspondence 1952, '56, '60; Thomas Paine abstracts; Lena Clarke notes, Vose comments on Cady drawing
- WLW's cut of illustration from Whitefield, *Homes of Our Forefathers*
- Title Guarantee Co/Sheffield & Harvey: title inquiry & research, 1960
- J. H. Cady: drawing: Cady's concept of architectural changes at Cajacet with Vose & Miner corrections and an anonymous drawing of possible floor plan
- *Antiques*, 1982: Vose Gallery ad
- H. M. Chapin, *Capt Paine of Cajacet...RIHS Vol. XXIII #1*
- L. Panaggio: reference to *PSJ* article, 8/28/1945, "Garrison Paine House"
- S. Morton Vose/Town Clerk correspondence: chain of owners 1881-1948
- MRM letters, Oct, 2000 to Bill Burgin
- M. Miner, *A Treasure of a House*, JHS Newsletter, Fall 1997
- B. Parker, *Of Capt. Paine, Capt Kidd's Treasure, & Cajacet*, JHS Newsletter Spring 1998

material in ephemera file *PIRATES & PRIVATEERS*

- transcript *Capt. Kidd on Narragansett Bay*, RIHS Collections Vol XV #4
- H. M. Chapin, *Capt Paine of Cajacet...RIHS Vol. XXIII #1*
- R. M. Eastman, *Some Famous Privateers of New England*, *State Street Trust Co.*, 1928
- *Treasure Hunter*, article, *Prov Evening Bulletin*, 7/25/1957
- *Capt Kidd's House on Conanicut*, fictional drawing for magazine illustration, W. L. Sontag, late 19th century

Abstracts from letters to Bill Burgin:

8/17/2000

About the Cajacet building date: as I see it, the house was built some time between 1690, when Paine bought the land, and 1699, when he mentioned the house in his deposition to Lord Bellomont.

- The deed to the property is recorded in Jamestown's Land Evidence Volume I, p 62. The deed, dated 1690, was notarized in 1692, and entered upon record in 1697/8. There is no mention of a house in that deed.
- In Chapin's RI Colonial Land Evidence, Volume I, is a deed from Caleb Carr, Jr. to Thomas Paine for the "house lot with dwelling house where he now dwelleth" in Newport. This deed is dated 1682.
- At the time that Gov. Caleb Carr wrote his will, 1693/4, Thomas Paine was living in Newport in the house that Gov. Carr bought from Ruth Pierce. (Carr left that house to his daughter Elizabeth.) It appears that Paine still owned the house that he bought from Caleb, Jr., and was letting it at that time to Mr. William Brinley.
...Jamestown Land Evidence, Vol. I, p 74

So now we have Thomas Paine moving from one house to another in Newport between 1682 and 1694, and buying his land in Jamestown in 1690. The earliest mention that we have of the existence of his Jamestown house is in Paine's deposition concerning Capt. Kidd's visit in 1699. I think there's sufficient proof here that the house was not built in 1680.

I was interested to hear that you don't agree with all of Cady's conclusions about the changes at Cajacet. I'd like to know where you disagree with him. I sometimes wondered if he didn't cater to the Collinses' hopes.

8/30/2000

When the Collinses left town they gave the Library an account written by J.H. Cady of some of the structural details he uncovered in the old house, with photographs and a diagram of the floor plan that he created for the "restored" Cajacet.

It's called "The House of Capt. Thomas Paine", filed in the local history section, call number: Cady 728.67.

There is also a file on the house in the locked vertical file at the Library. I think it's filed under P for Paine. I'm not sure if there's anything there that you'd care about, but you might want to take a look.

Chain of owners, Capt. Thomas Paine farm
1657-1872

Thomas Paine's 160 acres were made up of 100 acres owned originally by Smith, Wooly, & Taylor, and 60 acres from the 103 acres owned originally by Porter, Hazard & Gould
...Fisher map 1657

Taylor sold his share to Smith in 1657, Wooley sold his share to Smith in 1668.
Smith sold 100 acres to **Stephen Arnold** in 1669...RI Colonial Records, p394,395
Stephen Arnold sold his 100 acres to **Benedict Arnold** 11/3/1677...RI Colonial Records?
Hazard's share changed hands a number of times. I have yet to trace Porter & Gould's shares, but Benedict Arnold appears to have owned them when he wrote his will in December 1677. This made a total of 203 adjoining acres. *no buildings mentioned*

1678 Benedict Arnold leaves to his son **Caleb Arnold** eight score acres near the land of Francis Brinley. This central part of Benedict's 203 acres, was bounded north & south by land of Arnold or his "asignes", east by the sea & west by the broad highway. *no buildings mentioned*
...will written Dec 1677

1690 Caleb Arnold & son William sell to **Thomas Paine**, 160 acres
...LE1/118
no buildings mentioned

1715 Thomas Paine leaves property to wife **Mercy Paine** in his will, written 6/28/1714 and probated 5/17/1715, *probate inventory has 1st mention of a house*
...LE1/130-131 (typed copy)

1717 Mercy Paine dies intestate, property goes to her **Carr relatives**
...LE1/ 172 (typed copy)

1747 Nicholas Carr sells property to **John Paine**, nephew of Thomas
...LE3/49

1772 John Paine leaves property to grandson **Paine Hammond**
...TCP2/79

1781 Paine Hammond sells "a mansion house, 2 orchards, 2 stables, crib & cheese house, & other buildings" to **Aaron Sheffield**
...LE3/439

1787 Aaron Sheffield sells a mansion house, 2 orchards, 2 stables, crib & cheese house, & other buildings" to **Jonathan Hopkins** in
...LE3/545

[1799] Jonathan Hopkins leaves the property to sons **Fones & Oliver Hopkins**,
...not in probate, but LE4/218 mentions a will, suggests sons were sharing the dwelling house.

1805 Oliver & wife, Mary Hopkins, sell house yard containing about 20 rods yard with all the lower part of the dwelling house thereon partly standing, given to us by our late father by will, to **Fones Hopkins**
...LE4/218

1815 Fones, wife, Hannah, & Mary (widow of Jonathan) Hopkins sell 84 acres with dwelling house & other buildings (southern 1/2 of Sheffield) farm to **Robert H. Watson**
...LE5/17

- 1828 Robert H. Watson gives his son **John J. Watson, 1797-1871**, 10 acres, bounded northerly by Oliver Hopkins
...LE5/179
- 1840 Robert H. Watson dies intestate. Administrators of his estate appear to have assigned remaining 74 acres to **John Jay Watson, 1797-1871**
... LE 6/264 confirms JJW as owner.
- 1852 William H Hopkins, wife Susan A., & sister Susan M sell all right in land inherited from their father, Oliver Hopkins, to **Oliver W. Hopkins**
...LE5/543
- 1866 Oliver W. Hopkins and wife Jane, sells 82 acres, dwelling house & other buildings to **John J. Watson, 2nd, 1841-1912** nephew of John Jay Watson, reserving family burial lot
...LE6/264
- 1870 John J. Watson, 2nd, 1797-1871, sells lot with dwelling house, barn, etc. reserving the exclusive use of the family burying lot, right to bury and remove & when dead are removed said lot to belong in fee simple to owner of said farm, to his uncle, **John J. Watson, Sr., 1797-1871**
...LE 6/319
- 1871 John Jay Watson, 1797-1871, dies, no will in probate, but his property is given to some, not all of his **near relatives**, suggesting some kind of directive. His heirs are 3 siblings, 10 nieces & nephews & a 1st cousin once removed who married one of the nieces
...TCP4/384-87, 399-401
- 1872 John J. Watson's heirs sell "both the Paine & Hopkins" farms to **L. D. Davis**
...LE6/384

Summary

Thomas Paine's farm was bounded on the east by the bay and on the west by North Main Road. The north and south boundaries of the farm did not coincide with the original lots laid out in 1657 by Joshua Fisher, but once established by Paine's purchase in 1690, they remained as legal boundaries until Lucius Davis bought the property in 1872. Between 1799 and 1815 Fones & Oliver Hopkins owned the farm jointly; they shared the house until Oliver sold his interest in the building to Fones in 1805. The farm was divided into two lots that were about equal in size in 1815 when Robert H. Watson bought the southern half with Captain Paine's house. These approximately 84 acres kept the designation "Paine farm" and remained in the Watson family until 1870. The northern half stayed in the Hopkins family until 1866 when Oliver Hopkins sold it to John J. Watson, 2nd. The two halves returned to single ownership in 1870 and were sold together in 1872 as "both the Paine and Hopkins farms."

L. D. Davis bisected the Hopkins farm with Broadway (present day East Shore Road ca 1873 and subdivided it as part of Conanicut Park. He didn't include the Paine farm in the Park, but it was soon to be bisected when the new East Shore Road met the southern end of Broadway in 1888. The Voses bought their Paine farm property in three increments between 1881 and 1882. In 1883 they added Conanicut Park lots 113 and 115 on the north side of the property along Broadway so they could belong to the Conanicut Park Improvement Society. Three Newport businessmen bought the farm area on the southern side of the Cajacet property in 1966 and created the Collins Terrace subdivision.

Captain Paine's property has diminished over the years, but his house has grown. Opinions vary as to the building's original form, but hints of the structure that Captain Paine was living in 1694* are still visible in the present day structure.

* see ephemeral's tract in Jamestown in which Capt Paine owned 1694-95