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Captain Thomas Paine House: Baker's Letter to Ron Long, 2003

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January 6, 2003

Ron Long
Scaife Road
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Dear Mr. Long,

I am very glad you found me. I was excited to learn of your interest and concern for Cajacet.

Enclosed is a small bit of history about the house and Captain Paine, Cady's general report, plus his alterations, and specifications schedule. I have also included (in draft form only as it was all I could find) my 1978 thoughts on Cady's report. In addition I have 18 sheets of Cady's blueprints and a few of mine. I will bring them along on February 1.

There is no doubt that Cajacet is historically a very important house. Not only because of its unique 17th century components but also because of the excellent architectural documents that chronicle the many changes brought about over the years. I have always felt that it belongs on the National Register. That alone should help protect its future.

It is definitely important to research its history. In addition to looking at deed and probate records there is also information at the RI Historical Society. I believe that Cady's records are also at the RI Historical Society and perhaps the original photos that he took of the house.

When you look at the enclosed drawing of your house -1882- I hope you feel better about the porch you added to the East side. Even back then there was a need to look out over the bay.

I look forward to our meeting. I talked with Steve Tyson and he will definitely come on the 1st. He reminded me that we even covered that little drawing, on the stairway boards with Plexiglas. I hope it's still there.
Sincerely

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February 17,2003

Hi Ron,

I'm beginning to unearth all kinds of interesting things about your house and land.

First the name Cajacet. (See enclosure # 1) I'm not convinced though. While trying to find the meaning of the name I also discovered that a renewal/revitalization project in Providence was named The Cajacet Project. This made sense as renewal was what Vose was doing. Then I found that a ship that was owned by the Sun Oil Company in 1920 was named Cajacet. I wrote to them asking about the name, but doubt I will ever get an answer. In any case I was glad to find something even though it's still not resolved - for me anyway.

Following is what I have found out so far about Thomas Paine:

Bom 1657. Died 1715.

Paine married Marry Carr in 1693. She was bom 1661 and died 1717. They had NO children.

Mary was fue daughter of Governor Caleb Carr who owned a great deal of land in Newport and Jamestown and this is where it gets interesting. Apparently Carr never lived on Jamestown but built at least two houses there. It is obvious from letters that he was very friendly with T. Paine, his son-in-law. I plan to search further to see if Governor Carr might have built Cajacet, perhaps for his daughter when she married T.P or earlier for a member of his family. The Carr family is intriguing and I feel that there is an important connection involving your house so have begun research on them also.

So far I have come upon two deeds for the " sale of land with house" to T. Paine but both parcels are in Newport. (see enclosure # 2) Thomas Paine had a brother Andrew who I suspect was the next owner. I will know more when I have a chance to read T P's entire will -and also Andrew's. (T P also had a nephew John who owned land next door to Cajacet. See enclosure # 3) I can't remember if it was James or John Paine on the stone in Owens workshop but it is definitely not a child or grandchild of T.P's.

I have enclosed a 1870 map of Jamestown. (Enclosure # 4) At that time Cajacet was owned by a John J. Watson. Watson - a Rhode Island name - is also my family name and my middle name, so I checked that out and found that he was my 10 greats-ago grandfather. Wow!!! (see enclosure # 5 for a bit about John J. and your house.) I am also enclosing a delightful letter from Appletown (enclosure # 6) the founder of SPNEA. (The Society for The Preservation of New England Antiquities.) The letter is written to Norman Isham who was well known and respected for his research on RI. Stone-enders from 1895 to 1940. He also was a friend of Cady's. When I get a chance I will go to Boston and search SPNEA's archives and see if I can find Isham's reply to Appleton's letter. Could be interesting. If you want to know more about Isham go to my Webb site <http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/awb02> or simply put the name Norman Isham into a search engine.

I look forward to finding out who the Paine's heirs sold the property to and if the Watson family sold same to Vose. Somewhere between the Paine's and Watson's is an owner by the name of Hopkins. More on that I hope.

I am really interested in trying to find out when the house was built. Yours is one of only 3 other RI houses that part or all still exist. The existing details in your house; crossed summers, jetty overhang, the type of joinery, shadow molded wall boards, gable dormer, etc., are of particular interest in determining the chronological architectural details of second period New England structures.. In all cases your house definitely meets the National Registry criteria for nomination. The main benefit is a certain amount of protection if the state or federal government ever decided to take the land for some god forsaken reason. I can help you with the application if you are interested. (Enclosure # 7 Jamestown Commission Meeting -.and some drawings of RI. Stone-enders)

So for the moment this is where we are. I have taken Cady's plans to be copied. I also have an appointment next week to look at Cady's collection at the RI Historical Society. Apparently there is quite a bit so I am hoping I will find the original photos that he took of the house during restoration and maybe more.

Has Owen been able to find a solution for stabilizing the whitewash on the old stairway? Another idea would be to cover it with Plexiglas. I have included a photo of the type of boat that is scratched into the wood on the stair landing. (Enclosure # 8) Also a copy of the photo I took of the boat. My flash hit it straight on and left a big spot. UGH. I will take another after you have the wiring moved.

I hope I haven't overloaded you. I'm excited and just wanted to bring you up to date on what I have discovered so far. When all is sorted out I will write a decent report.

Pete

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Hi Ron,

I hope you have had a chance to read the newspaper clippings that I gave to Owen. Not only does Cajacet have its share of ghosts and pirates, but also was the site of an Indian settlement.

However, the most exciting moment was finding Thomas Paine's original will at the Jamestown Town Hall. His will consists of 7 pages written on parchment. Not only did T.P inventory his belongings but he mentions each room – a kitchen, a hall (the room with the crossed summers), bedroom, annex, etc. and everything that was in them. But, because it is an original document (300 years old) the Town Hall does not allow Xeroxing. I think we need a copy as it definitely has a lot of clues about the size, shape, and number of rooms in the original structure. I have found somebody that can copy it but before I give the go-ahead I want to look in the Jamestown Library. Apparently the Collins did a lot of research and gave it to the library when they sold Cajacet. I will take a look next week to see what they might have already accomplished before going any further.

I am also enclosing information about the National Registry. It explains what is and is not involved when listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Hope to see you soon.

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Hi Ron,

April 1, 2003

Enclosed are my latest discoveries.

Thomas Paine's will is very interesting. There are 3 rooms —Hall, Hall Chamber (bedroom above the Hall) and Kitching (kitchen)— that include utensils used with a fireplace. If, as I have suspected, the fireplace in the now library is original, the outline of this section of the house could have been something like either of the 2 enclosed photos. (east exposure) The will also indicates that the house had 6 rooms plus the garret or attic. Not surprising as Paine was certainly a wealthy man.

I have also included the description of the boundaries -1881-1882 -when Lucius Davis. sold the land to Mary Vose.

Even though I'm sure you know about Conanicut Park I couldn't resist sending along a description. Lucius Davis was quite a guy.

Also have included the history of the Philomenian Library. Wouldn't you love to find that cupboard.

I had a wonderful conversation with John Howard, previous president of the Historical Society. (Bill Bergen is away) Howard is excited about your research and when done he told me that the Historical Society would be interested in publishing it.

I tracked down Seth Vose III by phone. He is now 94 and very deaf. His wife had to relay my questions. One of my first questions of course was the meaning of the word Cajacet. Vose said his grandmother choose the name, an old Indian word that means old man's rest. I like that, but I'm still suspicious as the Narragansett Indians did not use the letter J. On the other hand the letter J could have been an H that later was interrupted as a J. Maybe even by his grandmother? Your turn.

I also found out that Mr. Vose has photos and documents that he has written about the house. I asked if I /we could visit. She told me to write a letter to Mr. Vose explaining what we were interested in looking at his material. Mr. Vose seems very interested in the history of the house (I have attached a copy of his letter to the Town hall) so I included a copy of Paine's will and the deed transactions from Davis to Vose in the letter I wrote to him

What next?

I have learned that a Caleb and William Arnold sold the land (160 acres) to Paine and that the Paine family sold the farm in 1781. I think the next owner was a Hopkins who sold it to Watson and the Watson heirs to Davis. So I would like to find those deeds to make sure that's correct and particularly to find the year that the Arnolds sold to Paine if that is correct. The 1659 map does not show an Arnold at Cajacet's location.

So far we have:

Davis to Vose – 1881 (3 parcels \$711.00)

Vose to Worth - 1945

Worth to Ceppi - 1945

Ceppi to Collins - 1948 (\$5,000.00)

Collins to Parker – 1978 (\$750,000.00)

Parker to you.

I have contacted a person who is an expert on the preservation of historic paint in hopes of finding a good method for preserving the whitewash on the walls in the old hall stairway. When I hear from him I will let you know what ideas he might have.

That's it for now.

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Dear Ron,

May 3, 2003

I have received a second letter from you concerning the cottage. In both letters there was no note from you so I assumed you wanted me to take care of it which I have. I called Sue Madden and told her that it had been completely razed and rebuilt. Because it is not the original building she said that they would not be able to include it in the book and no further information from you is needed. Seems too bad as it still has history and photos.

Another reminder of how hard it is to know what to save and what to throw away.

Because I have not heard from you directly I haven't done any further research on Cajacet. At this point I am not sure of your continuing interest or intentions. However, as I mentioned in my letter of April 29th, I would very much like to get permission from you to have Myron Stachiw take a look at Cajacet. I would also ask you to please think seriously about a National Register nomination.

Thanks,