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Isaac Collins House/Farm: Baker Letter to Sanderson, February 7, 1995

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A. W. Baker
29 Drift Road
Westport, Massachusetts 02790

February 7, 1995

Edward Sanderson
Dir. RI Preservation and Heritage Commission
Old State House - 150 Benefit Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Mr. Sanderson,

I am currently employed as the Architectural Conservator for Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Kells in connection with the Isaac Collins Farm complex.

During a detailed investigation of the main house (see enclosed floor plan) the East room (A.) appears to be circa 1720, earlier than originally determined. This became evident after the removal of the superfluous cardboard from the ceiling and walls revealing the remains of an originally exposed and cased frame with a perpendicular summer beam and various artifacts, including, feather boarding. The summer beam had been replaced by a grouping of 2"x6" sticks but the mortise pocket and shadow image of the original summer were clearly visible on the chimney girt.

The structure of room (C.) was quite different. The double posting in the front hall (B.) and the 3" x 5" chestnut ceiling joist running full width indicates that this South room was a mid to late 18th century addition. Room (D.) and (E.) have been through so many changes that, at this time, it is difficult to determine what the original layout and roof line was.

Room (F.) "The Ell" was probably built in the early nineteenth century and it is this added structure that I would like to direct your attention to. It is very evident that this two-storey 16' x 14' addition was originally a one-storey building. The first floor is framed with 6" x 6" hewed pine posts and girts which are mortised and tenoned and 4" x 5" joists spaced on 40" centers. The second floor is of balloon construction with a shoe attachment on top of the 1st floor plates. This second storey addition has created a building higher than the original hence an unattractive piggy-back effect can

be seen from the south east side of the house. The final addition is the existing kitchen (G.)built in 1959.

It is the desire of the Kells to remove the later kitchen (G.) and the second storey of the ell (F.) preserving the 1st floor and returning this area to what it probably was, a kitchen ell. Perhaps you noticed how this huge ell overwhelms the house. By reducing it in size the integrity of the site will be returned and the complexity of today's living needs be recognized.

It is my understanding that there is an Historical Easement on this site and that work can not commence without written permission from the Commission. We look forward to hearing from you and if permission is granted, I will forward a drawing of the proposed renovation and new roof line. In addition I would be happy to meet with you at the site, at your convenience. I am enclosing some photos of work that the Kells have completed to date.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anne W. Baker