



August, 1991

Volume XXIV, No. 3

## GEN. & MRS. CHARLES JACKSON PAINE AND THEIR WESTON ESTATE—PART II

*by Thomas M. Paine, a great-grandson.*

With the building of the second ell the house reached its zenith. It became, quite literally, the *eminence grise* in town. I have no evidence that it was painted any other color than gray. Though I was in every room, I cannot provide a room count for it all. To add to the confusion, an additional mansard-roofed wing was moved several hundred yards east and much later, after its career as a farmhouse, for the Moltons, became home to the family of one of the Paines' grandchildren. Conservatively, the room count is thirty-plus.



10.

The house was built to be cool, and it was built solidly. The floors had not sagged by 1972, nor did furniture jiggle. Bricks, possibly salvage from the Boston Fire, were used to insulate the exterior walls under their skin of clapboards. Cast-iron I-beams from Trenton, NJ, were used to span the wide entrance hall. Some of the huge pegged oak beams were twenty-five feet long.

The walls were papered at least twice; the second time some had a floral pattern remembered as green by my father. In the dining room opposite the



marble fireplace, Paine's Civil War brigade flag hung between two windows — a black four-bastioned fort symbol on a faded red field.

In 1894 the office of distinguished landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted provided plans for the grounds in an informal style. They show a curving gravel driveway connecting the house to the barns, and elaborate planting in the middle of the circle and around the house. As he had shaped places like Central Park and Boston's Emerald Necklace, Olmsted laid out Paine's grounds in his characteristic curves, despite this client's preference for straight lines. It may well have been Olmsted, if not Fehmer when the basement was dug, who recommended raising the lawn around the house to mask the stone walls, turning them into retaining walls — what the British call ha-ha walls — with the advantage of being invisible from the house, whence the greensward seemed to recede uninterrupted into the distance.

It should not be imagined that the farm was solely a working farm or even just a showplace. Sports were for the Paines, and not just the boys, to be taken rather seriously. Among them, tennis, bowling, trotting, and shooting. A grass tennis court originally lay in the center of Olmsted's avenue in front of the house. A plain clapboarded building to house twin bowling alleys was built in a field south of the house well back from the driveway. A later lawn tennis court, dating from the 1890s, was located next to the bowling alley.

Paine maintained two trotting racetracks, a half-mile and a one-mile. The former lies east of the site of the house very near Chestnut Street. The latter is a rough circle in the center of the Town Forest east of Highland Street. The sulkies that must have logged hundreds of miles on these tracks survived in the barn into the 1960s.

Not to be forgotten is the massive swing that no later than 1916 hung by iron rods from the branch of a huge elm in the back lawn.

One sport to which all the acreage did not lend itself was golf. Paine enthusiastically took up that sport at the suggestion of his minister Charles F. Russell, who introduced golf in Weston about 1895. Paine won the first club championship. Even into his eighties he loved to play golf, wearing his legendary red suspenders as he played the Weston links near Kendall Green in the company of wife or daughters Nina or Molly. Photographs taken in the Coburn pasture survive. In winter snow, red balls were used. Paine was an early President of the Weston Golf Club.

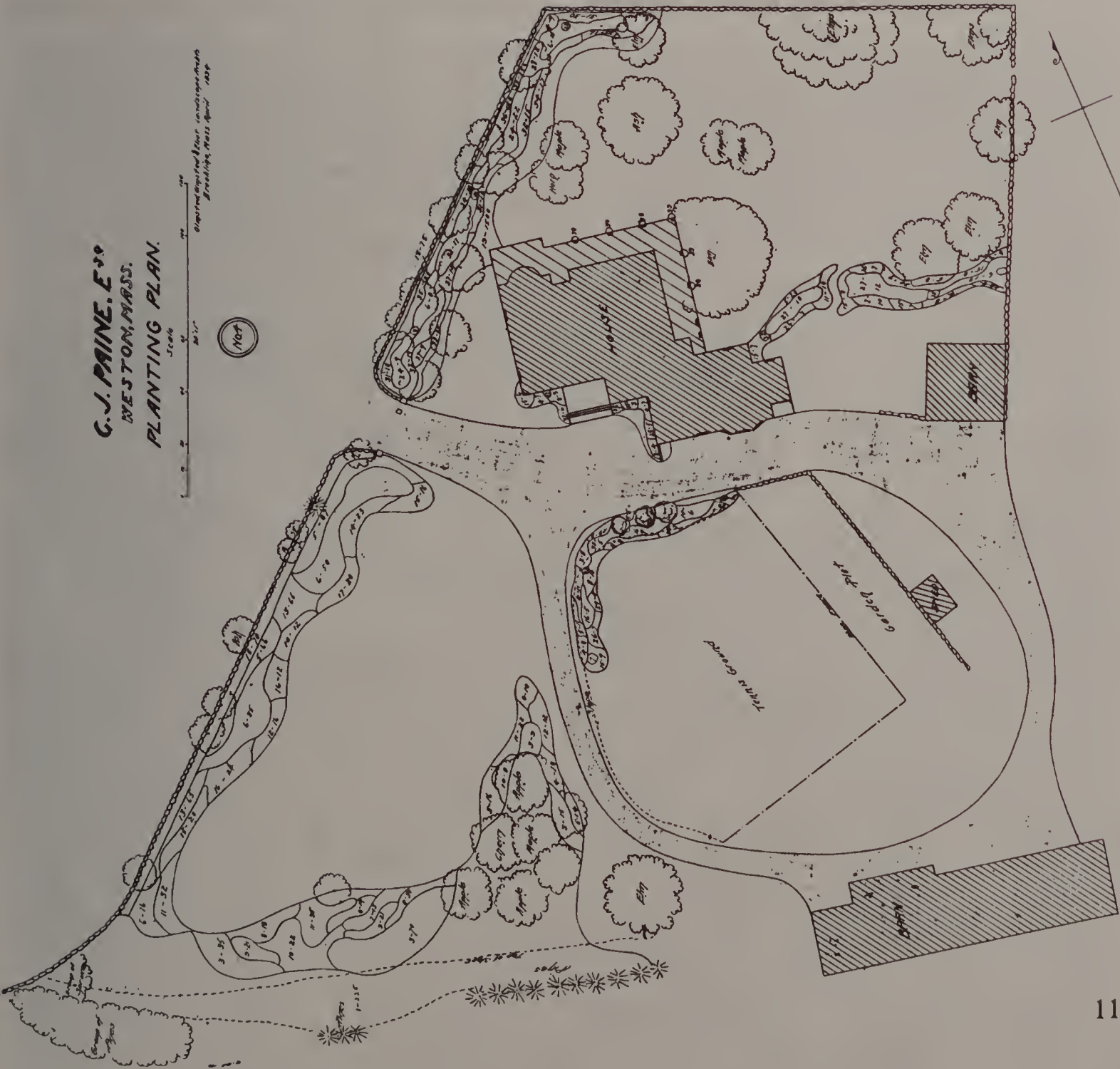
Of course the springs and falls in the country were not all play. A room off by itself behind the grand staircase was known as the School Room, and before that the Boys' Room, and I suspect that in the 1880s young Sumner, Johnny, Molly and the rest were at least occasionally doing their lessons in that room. Even in the country the children had their schoolwork each spring and fall, just as young Charles Jackson Paine had done at Prides Crossing a generation earlier. Nor did the School Room relinquish its purpose a generation later, when an equally large family lived there year-round.

Neither were the arts to be neglected entirely. There was the grand piano

G. J. PAINE, E.S.  
WESTON, MASS.  
PLANTING PLAN.

Scale 1" = 20' 0"

Original proposed flower landscape plan  
Dedicated, West April 1929



PLANTING LIST

1. Abies Canadensis Hemlock
2. Berberis Pinnatifida Spine Cherry
3. Cornus sanguinea Red Dogwood
4. Ligustrum ovalifolium Black Privet
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39. Ligustrum ovalifolium Black Privet
40. Ligustrum ovalifolium Black Privet

Note: First figures correspond to those in the list.  
Second figures indicate the numbered plants to be used.



in the living room. And there was the art studio — not a room, but an entirely separate and elaborate structure, which Paine built for his artistic daughters Helen and Georgina, on the edge of the back lawn near the frog pond. In style it was neoclassic or loosely Italian Renaissance. It was an early example of “tilt-up” construction — cast on the ground at the site, then hoisted into place. Tiles were inserted in the forms, and the surface had exposed aggregate. In construction one wall was ruined as the hoist snapped. Inside was pure drama: you entered in a corner on a balcony running the length of the structure and descended into a grand, coffered space, with a cozy fireplace under the balcony and opposite two stories of glass — artists’ northern light. The woodwork was left *au naturel*, and the walls were rough plaster. As of 1991 it survives.

The Anderson children snuck into the art studio where “Miss Helen” and “Miss Georgina” painted, among other things, numerous portraits of Mimi, whom the Andersons called “Moster”, suggestive of the stern, no-nonsense visage, tempered with ruddy cheeks and a sorrowful wetness about the eyes, that the Paine sisters repeatedly tried to capture.

Not much has been said of the barns. On the way to the barn complex was a massive stone foundation, much too massive for the duty of storing firewood and carrying a clothes line laundry deck that were its purposes by 1910. It supported a barn before Paine moved these noxious appendages further from the house. Perhaps the original Jones-Marshall barns were here.

Paine’s spacious barn, with sliding doors at each end, was home to fifteen to twenty horses and, in an ell, some fifteen cows, the pigs being directly below





13.



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15.





16.

in a dark fragrant basement, just a trap door away. The barns were tended by one foreman and two or three ostlers, many of them family men who lived on the place in scattered farmhouses, mostly south and east. Lingley and McCollough lived on Chestnut Street; Saunders up Highland Street. Another man in the barn was Compton. At the end of a long day's work, the men could be found near the pot belly stove in the harness room playing cards.

The barn had much chestnut framing, and was completely transformed by



17.



one of the Paines' great-granddaughters, who added architectural elements salvaged from the Big House in the 1970s. Perpendicular to the barn and facing west was the carriage, sleigh and sulky barn; its stick style doors were in vogue in the 1870s.

A second barn and lesser sheds attached to these enclosed a quadrangular riding ring. And southwest of all this were two or three greenhouses, once home to showy chrysanthemums, orchids, lilies, roses, all just a carriage ride from the vases at Mount Vernon Street. Mr. Schwartz presided over these. West



18.



19.

of these still stands the clapboarded bowling alley, painted yellow. It had two lanes. Between this and the greenhouses were three large trellises of roses.

While they were growing up, the Anderson children loved to explore the farthest reaches of house and farm just as their Paine counterparts did. In the house, they looked for secret panels; they loved the cigar smell of the General's office, they hid in the tower, they dropped golf balls down from the top of the stairwell. Outdoors, they watched men at the barn chopping wood or playing cards in the harness room. They rode in the swing. They slid down the hay chute into a pile of hay. They skated in the tiny frog pond. They got rides on the pungs, or large firewood sleds, headed for the house in Boston, where milk and cookies awaited them in the kitchen.

The farm had long been famous for its apples. There were apples around the bowling alley, mostly Baldwins. Russets, a golden variety, were near the corn crib. Later there was an apple orchard along Highland Street, planted by John B. Paine; apples were preserved all year long in the cold cellar of what became the Ganson's house, after its move from its original position as part of the Big House. The pear orchard (Seckels and Bartletts and Dana Hovey) was west of the tennis court beside the bowling alley. And the peach orchard was east of Chestnut Street, beyond the half-mile race track, along with more Baldwin apples and some pears. John B. Paine also planted blueberries across from the barn in some wet ground. The vegetable garden was originally across Highland Street west of the house. Traces of its hothouse and persistent rhubarb survived into the 1970s.

There was a man in the orchards, a man in the greenhouse and one or two hired men of Italian descent to pot plants. One Mr. Randolph was an eighty year old Civil War veteran who walked daily to the farm from the Wayland line, and besported a cane with gold ornaments. He worked in the vegetable garden. Two men in the barn prepared harnesses and carriages. Milk was delivered to the houses at Boston and Nahant. Sometimes Mr. Anderson, Mimi's brother-in-law, carried a quart of cream and a gallon of milk on foot to the train station in Weston Center!

After Paine's death in 1916, three of the seven children chose to live in town on a more permanent basis than just spring and fall. John Bryant Paine moved his own family of then six children into the house. Georgina Paine Fisher lived on Love Lane, and Charles Jackson Paine, Jr. lived on the way to Kendall Green.

Under the second generation of Paines came few modifications to the estate in general or the Big House in particular. The most drastic change was the advent of year-round occupancy. Winterizing such a house was no joke, and coal heated the thirty-plus rooms to the very end. The curious system of radiators in the great hall rattled and clanged in the winter.

The "hideous" wallpapers downstairs were covered with lots of white paint, and later still rice paper. A greenhouse was added off the parlor in the 1930s; here, the night blooming cereus held a place of honor.



Running the place now took a staff of eight — Mary, Nora, May, Margaret, Philip, Ray, Compton (still in the barn), and Miss Armstrong are listed in 1927. The Mary mentioned may be one Faster Marie, a Swedish wetnurse, perhaps the last of Mimi's recruits. Philip Carrigan, the chauffeur since the 1920s, survived into my era as a cheery deliverer of eggs from the chicken coop to our fridge every week; in earlier decades he had driven grandchildren to school.

Mimi now ran the Boston house when empty in the summer. In winter, the Frank Paines took up residence there, and Mimi headed for Florida. Once when she was laid low in Mass. General Hospital, both Virginia Paine and Georgina Paine Fisher visited her, and each day Helen Paine Kimball's chauffeur delivered a new vase and fresh bouquet of flowers from her house in Milton. In the late 1920s Charles Paine Anderson also briefly worked at the Boston house. The senior Andersons lived in Clifftondale, Saugus. Mimi died in 1939, devout to the last, and gave much to the Swedish Church, relocated in Rox-



20.



21.



bury, and to the needy. Christine Larson, the cook, died rather wealthy, having bought herself a house in Roxbury.

The bowling alley became a target range and a henhouse. East of this was a new corn crib and dog kennel. The tennis court by the henhouse was enlarged and resurfaced. There was never any swimming pool.

Wartime brought the necessary blackouts — quite a chore for a house with perhaps a hundred windows. Over the years, especially after World War Two, the farm operation dwindled. Most noticeably, the orchards were let go, and the old vistas were overgrown. Gradually, too, the stables had emptied of horses and cows. Much of the land from the top of Highland Street to Wellesley Street and South Avenue was by World War Two leased to the Mezitts whose Weston Nurseries have since become a legend among gardeners.

Life went on quietly, except when the attic workshop was abuzz with furniture making. Then, too, my live-at-home father had set up a Scott audio system with speakers that had enough power to make the huge stairwell resonate handily. John B. Paine's daughters' wedding receptions were held here. For one wartime wedding, Mrs. Frank Paine beat the gasoline ration by arriving from her house in Wayland in a horse drawn carriage. Every year the Christmas parties grew more numerous with grandchildren. Mrs. John B. Paine loved giving them Easter parties as well. The back parlor by that time was closed off and filled with toys of long-lost eras, such as giant tricycles which I rode all over the great hall — quite a run.

In 1966 Mrs. John B. Paine left the house for something more manageable on Chestnut Street. Mr. Clark still came to work in the vegetable garden and the barn. Philip Carrigan still delivered eggs from the chicken coop. Both were ready to retire. But the big house remained vacant, as the family wondered what to do with it. It took months to empty it, layer by layer, of a century of accretions. Richard Ames came over to sweep stray remnants into nice neat piles.

But this state of things could not go on forever. Sadly, in 1972, the big house suffered the fate of many other oversized houses before it. Had the year been 1982, this sad loss would not have been necessary, for surely preservation minded Victoriana buffs would have found in the house a challenge worth the cause, and two, or more, families could have coexisted here quite as peacefully as had Paines and Andersons at the turn of the century.

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This article is primarily excerpted from Thomas M. Paine, *Growing Paines, Paternal Patterns and Matrimonial Matters in a Family Boston Born & Bred*, Wellesley, Mass., 1991. This clothbound book of over 350 pages and 80 illustrations is for sale by the author. For further information contact the author at 2 Cushing Road, Wellesley Hills, Mass. 02181. Tel. (617) 431-9759. The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Mildred Anderson of Dubuque, Iowa, housekeeper Maria von Gerber's neice, and Linda Carmichael, of Lynnfield, Mass., Maria's great niece, for sharing reminiscences.



## Key to Photographs

*A portfolio of the Paine estate, mostly in its prime.*

10. Front parlor, circa 1940. The court cupboard remains. Mrs. John B. Paine's brother Horace Frazer, Brookline based architect, has added bookcases, over which hangs the framed laurel wreath won by John B. Paine for pistol shooting in the 1896 Olympics in Athens. Now, too, there is a step-down greenhouse.
11. Planting plan for C. J. Paine, Esq. prepared by Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, April 1894. Lawn, lawn everywhere, and nary a straight line in Olmsted's palette, save a fence on two — not four — sides of the tennis court. Lawn tennis, it should be noted, lacked full enclosure fences. That the plan was carried out at least in part can be inferred from the survival I well recall of mature Dutchman's pipe vine on the piazza, just where shown on the plan. (courtesy of Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)
12. The study or office, circa 1940, showing the roll-top desk of the first generation and the bird trophies of the second.
13. The art studio, built by Gen. Paine for his artistic daughters Helen and Georgina, seen in 1917, a year after Gen. Paine's death. The windows face north, as they should. (All photos taken in 1917 are by John B. Paine, Jr., grandson of the Paines.)
14. Portraits by the Paines' daughters Helen and Georgina hanging in the studio, 1917. Mimi is the subject of the leftmost three on the bottom row. Gen. Paine is the subject of the second from the right on the top row of the back wall — and also of the bust.
15. The art studio in 1925.
16. The Big House in the aftermath of a blizzard in 1923. To the right, behind the ell, is the art studio.
17. Winter view from the tower, 1923. The hazards of the country life: auto being dug out for the seventh time between Highland Street and the barn. Beyond, (left to right) the greenhouses, bowling alley and the tennis court. The forest is much thinner than today, and the frontage along Highland Street looks open clear to the crest of the road, not shown to the right.
18. The barn, from the southwest, on the circular "avenue," 1917.
19. Neighbor Mrs. B. H. Dickson and the Paines' granddaughter Charlotte mounted in front of the barn, early 1920s. Beyond, to the left, is the carriage barn, with its stick style door.
20. The greenhouses, from the south, 1917. Beyond is the barn.
21. The bowling alley, 1917. The level ground to the right was for lawn tennis.



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