

dwelling house and 16 ½ acres of land in Watertown; also 28 acres of land south of Brattle Street to the Charles River.”⁵⁴ When he added the acreage located south of the road to Watertown, Hooper may have connected his farm to the Charles river in the same manner as other farms along this road in the 18th century. Although dense 19th-century residential development in the area has obscured the relationship between colonial period houses along the north side of Brattle Street and the river, the Vassal-Longfellow House and the remnant of its estate preserved in Longfellow Park provide a hint of this early pattern of landscape use.

IV. The Georgian Period of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House: 1733 – 1802.

When the Boston merchant Cornelius Waldo purchased Dr. Hooper’s house and land in 1733, it marked a new period in the house’s history, in which the property functioned less as a homestead farm and more as a gentleman’s country seat. By the mid-eighteenth century, wealthy Boston merchants were beginning to build country seats in coastal towns which were accessible from Boston by boat, such as Cambridge and Watertown. The Royall family in Medford and Governor Shirley in Roxbury are two early examples of this pattern.⁵⁵ From the 1730s to the close of the century, the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House was “Georgianized” through several phases of remodeling and redecoration, in keeping with the fashions of the eighteenth century. During this period,

Zimmerman, *Hooper -Lee-Nichols*, 123. I was unable to locate a copy of this deed at the Registry of Deeds.

⁵⁴ MD, 34:416, as quoted in Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper -Lee-Nichols*, 123. This may be a paraphrase rather than a direct quote from the deed. “Brattle Street” was probably still called the “road to Watertown” at this time.

⁵⁵ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 19.

the property became part of Cambridge when the town boundary was shifted westward in 1754.

Cornelius Waldo, the new owner of the house in 1733, was not a native of Watertown or Cambridge. He was probably the son of Cornelius Waldo who was one of the founders of the church at Dunstable in 1685, and grandson of the Cornelius Waldo who arrived in Ipswich in 1654 and later moved to Chelmsford, where he was a deacon of the church.⁵⁶ No Waldos are listed in the Cambridge Vital Records in the 18th century. Waldo probably lived primarily in Boston, but also held “substantial real estate” in Worcester, Rutland, and Holden.⁵⁷ He was a very wealthy man and probably a land speculator and developer.⁵⁸ One historian described him as “a well-known merchant living in Boston and dealing in real estate elsewhere if he saw a chance of profit.”⁵⁹ It is likely that the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house was not his primary residence, but physical evidence suggests that he probably remodeled the house and occupied it for at least part of the time that he owned it.

Although local historians have generally credited a later owner of the house, Judge Joseph Lee, with “Georgianizing” the house in the 1760s, I agree with Grady and Zimmerman that it is more likely that Cornelius Waldo first introduced the Georgian style to the house. Many features of the house’s interior and exterior ornament are more

⁵⁶ Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 4:389, and John Farmer, *A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England* (Lancaster, Mass.: Carter, Andrews, & Co., 1829), 300.

⁵⁷ Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 21.

⁵⁸ I have not pursued extensive research into the Waldo family, but I am told that Waldo family papers exist at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Mass., because Waldo and his descendants developed that city. Other papers may exist in Boston collections as well. Cornelius Waldo may have been socially connected with Isaac Royall and other prominent Bostonians who were building and remodeling houses during this period. Oral interview with Karen Falb, member of Cambridge Historical Society, October 19, 1999.

⁵⁹ William L. Payson, “Notes on Some Tory Row Land Titles,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society* 37 (1959) 21.

in keeping with the Early Georgian style of the 1730s and 1740s, and would have been quite out-of-date by the time of Judge Lee's ownership.⁶⁰ Waldo is probably responsible for:

1. casing all the interior exposed beams,
2. applying crown moldings,
3. installing window seats and interior shutters in the east and west rooms on the ground floor,
4. applying feather-edged paneling to the fireplace wall in the west room (and possibly the west chamber),
5. applying bolection molding to the fireplaces in the west room (and maybe the west chamber),
6. raising the roof to its present low pitch,
7. constructing and embellishing the 3-story front staircase in its present form (closed-string with baluster),
8. applying quoins to the exterior.⁶¹

[See Fig. 10a – 10j] As Grady and Zimmerman discovered, there is almost no documentary evidence to link Waldo with these changes. Aside from the stylistic evidence, the most important clue may be the fact that the signature of “Daniel Waldo” was found scratched in one of the window panes in the west chamber; Daniel Waldo was Cornelius Waldo's son, born in 1724 and nine years old when his father bought the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house in 1733. The presence of Daniel Waldo's signature proves that the early Georgian 8-over-12 sash windows were in place during the time of the Waldo ownership. It also suggests that the Waldo family may have occupied the house at some time in the 1730s, while Daniel Waldo was a boy or young teen who might have engaged in this small act of graffiti.⁶²

The other important piece of evidence about the Waldo family's use of the property is an advertisement Waldo placed in the *Boston Newsletter* of 1742, which read:

⁶⁰ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 77.

⁶¹ Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 20-21.

⁶² *Ibid*, 22.

“to be lett
a farm in Watertown near the Charles River together with back part of
Dwelling house thereon to a good husbandman, and front part of said
house with gardens and other accommodations to a gentleman for a
country seat being pleasantly situated & but 4 miles from Charlestown
Ferry.”⁶³

This advertisement shows the property’s transition from a farm to a country seat: in this period, Waldo intended it to be used for both functions. The wording of the ad also gives clues to the physical characteristics of the house. The fact that the “back part of [the] Dwelling house” could be occupied by a husbandman living separately from the gentleman using “the front part of said house” suggests that a sizeable lean-to containing a hearth existed by 1742. The existence of a sash window – identical to those on the front of the house – in the west wall of the ground floor of the rear (lean-to) portion of the house also indicates that the lean-to existed or was built at the same time that the front of the house was re-modeled.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the description of the front part of the house “with gardens and other accommodations to a gentleman” suggests that Waldo’s renovations to the house in the newly-fashionable Georgian mode were completed by this date.

Cornelius Waldo died in 1753 a very wealthy man, with a net worth of 5106-9-7, and left this house and other property to his widow, Faith Waldo.⁶⁵ As executrix of her husband’s estate, Faith Waldo sold the property in 1758 to Judge Joseph Lee for 42-13-4 pounds.⁶⁶ The house and land were now part of Cambridge; four years earlier, in 1754, the western boundary of Cambridge had been extended westward to include this and

⁶³ *Boston Newsletter*, March 7 1742, quoted in Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 22.

⁶⁴ Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 27.

⁶⁵ Suffolk County Registry of Probate 10482, June 22, 1753, cited in Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 22. I was unable to find this docket but a further search of the probate records held at the State Archives would probably locate it.

⁶⁶ MD, 56:211, as cited in Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 123. I was unable to locate this deed at the Registry.

other properties along the former “Path to Watertown,” now Brattle Street. What Judge Lee purchased probably included not only the house and land north of Brattle Street, roughly conforming to the parcel conveyed by John Holmes to Dr. Richard Hooper in 1685, but also about 28 acres south of Brattle Street which Dr. Henry Hooper had purchased before he sold the property to Cornelius Waldo in 1733 (see above).⁶⁷

While the Waldo family never put down roots in Watertown or Cambridge society, Judge Joseph Lee was one of Cambridge’s most eminent social and political leaders and he occupied the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House for 44 years. For these reasons, Judge Lee was strongly associated with the house in local tradition, and historians of the 19th and 20th centuries tended to over-emphasize his role in the eighteenth-century remodeling of the house. While Lee made alterations to the house during his occupancy, the house’s major shift from its First Period form to the Georgian style almost definitely occurred in the 1730s under the Waldo family ownership.

Judge Joseph Lee was one of the prominent Tories who gave this section of Brattle Street its popular nickname “Tory Row.” Son of the Boston shipbuilder Thomas Lee, Joseph Lee graduated from Harvard College in 1729. He became a “substantial merchant owning much real estate in Boston,” and also speculated in iron mining and frontier land development.⁶⁸ He served as a Justice of the Peace and Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Middlesex County, and was a representative 1764-1765.⁶⁹ Lee secured his social position in 1755 when he married Rebecca Phips, one of three

⁶⁷ Although I was unable to locate MD, 56:211, which described the Waldo-Lee transaction, Payson wrote in his study of Tory Row Estates that “the part south of the road was conveyed to him [Judge Lee] in the Waldo deed.” Payson, “Notes on Some Tory...,” 20.

⁶⁸ Payson, “Notes on Some Tory...,” 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid, and Paige, *History*, 461.

daughters of then Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips. Each of the Phips sisters married into families that lived in grand houses along Brattle Street in the 1760s and 1770s.⁷⁰

Lee and his near-by neighbors General William Brattle, Col. John Vassal, Penelope Vassal (widow of Col. Henry Vassal), Richard Lechmere, Capt. George Ruggles, and Lieutenant Governor Thomas Oliver were “citizens of the more wealthy and aristocratic class, who adhered to the British government.”⁷¹ They formed an exclusive social group that was broken apart by the Revolution. Although most members of the Tory Row clique were forced to flee Cambridge during or shortly after the war, Judge Lee was “a man of mild disposition and...not so firm a Tory,”⁷² which probably allowed him to keep his house after the Revolution. When Judge Lee was appointed to the unpopular Mandamus Council in 1774, he resigned within a few weeks because he was confronted with “such continued insults and injuries as [he was] unable to sustain,” and shortly thereafter placated an angry mob on Cambridge Common by assuring them he would “not act in any capacity whatever disagreeable to the people.”⁷³ This act of appeasement seems to have kept Judge Lee in the good graces of the Cambridge citizenry. Although he probably spent part of the war away from Cambridge, possibly in Philadelphia, New Jersey, or Boston, he was listed in the tax census in Cambridge in 1777.⁷⁴ He remained resident in the Brattle Street house until his death in 1802 at the age of 93.

⁷⁰ Arthur Eugene Sutherland, “A House and Three Centuries,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society* 36 (1959) 67.

⁷¹ Paige, *History*, 168.

⁷² Mary Isabella Gozzaldi, “The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society* 16 (1922) 18.

⁷³ Payson, “Notes on Some Tory...,” 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, and Paige, *History*, 444.

Judge Lee's most significant contribution to Cambridge was in supporting construction of Christ Church, built in 1760 on the south side of Cambridge Common and designed by the famous gentleman-architect Peter Harrison.⁷⁵ Lee was one of the signers of the 1759 petition to build the church and one of the six original subscribers to the church – men who were wealthy enough to provide support for a chaplain. Of the total of 68 subscribers to the Church before the Revolution, Lee was one of only two who remained on the rolls after the Revolution.⁷⁶

Lee's involvement with the church construction may explain an unusual exterior finish at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House: the roughcast applied over the clapboards only on the west end of the building. The date of this roughcast is unknown, but it bears resemblance to that used on the Henry Vassal house, and Vassal also served with Lee on the church building committee. This committee originally called for Christ Church to be covered in roughcast, but apparently the builders of the church chose wisely when they decided to merely *simulate* the look of roughcast by adding sand to the paint on the church's flush wooden siding.⁷⁷ The roughcast at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house shows evidence of a long history of instability and repairs, and continues to present conservation problems.

While it is unclear whether or why Lee may have experimented with covering his house with roughcast, it is likely that he made other changes to the structure. He probably raised the roof to a full three stories to the rear of the ridge pole. As Grady and Zimmerman observed, physical evidence in the roof system indicates that the roof was raised to its present slope in two stages, beginning with the portion in front of the ridge

⁷⁵ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 135-136.

⁷⁶ Paige, *History*, 308 and 310.

⁷⁷ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 135.

pole and followed by the rear slope. Cornelius Waldo probably raised the front portion to create the two front rooms on the third floor, because the ca. 1730s (early Georgian) decoration of the front staircase is of consistent design and construction all the way up to the third floor. Judge Lee may have raised the rear portion of the roof to give the house a more symmetrical and impressive appearance, though he did not finish the space. The rear area of the third floor was unfinished as late as the 1850s.⁷⁸

Lee may also have made some changes to the interiors. Remnants of wall papers bearing ca. 1780 English tax stamps were found during restoration in the 1950s in the west room and west chamber.⁷⁹ It appears that in the west chamber, the early eighteenth century paneling (possibly dating from Henry Hooper's remodeling ca. 1716) was plastered over to receive wall paper. The use of imported wall papers would be consistent with not only with decorating styles prevalent in the late Georgian period, but also with Judge Lee's wealth and loyalty to England (and possibly English decorating fashions). In the late 18th century, Lee also likely added the heavy outside shutters and the projecting entrance vestibule with its neoclassical design.⁸⁰

When Lee died without children in 1802, his wife having predeceased him, he made his nephews Thomas and Joseph Lee executors of his estate and left them the residue of the estate after the distribution of various properties and monies to several family members. This residue included the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House, although it is not specifically mentioned in the will.⁸¹ After Joseph in 1803 conveyed his interest in the Cambridge property to his brother Thomas, Thomas gradually divided the estate and sold

⁷⁸ Grady and Zimmerman, *Hooper-Lee-Nichols*, 27-29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 31. Samples of the wall papers as well as some research notes regarding the dating of the samples exist in the files of the Cambridge Historical Society.

⁸⁰ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 75.

⁸¹ MP, 13935. A further search of probate documents might yield an inventory describing the property.

it in portions to various buyers. He probably did not live in the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House before he sold it in 1808, since in 1803 he built a house slightly east of it on a portion of the remaining Judge Lee estate. This house, which displays very conservative late Georgian design, remains today at 153 Brattle Street.⁸²

In 1808, Thomas Lee reduced the size of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House property and began the process of subdivision that would continue in the next decade. [See Fig. 11, 12 and 13] Many years earlier, Judge Lee had sold part of his land south of Brattle Street to his neighbor Thomas Oliver in 1768, and Thomas Lee sold off the remainder of the land south of Brattle Street in 1807.⁸³ In 1808, Thomas Lee divided the former Judge Lee estate north of Brattle Street along a north-south axis that is now Appleton Street. Lee retained the eastern half where his 1803 house was located, and sold the western half (including the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House) to John Appleton for \$8400. This sale conveyed “a certain piece of land situate in said Cambridge with the dwelling house thereon being the mansion house of the late Joseph Lee Esquire, deceased, the part being conveyed being about fourteen acres, one quarter and thirteen poles.”⁸⁴ To summarize, the property surrounding the house had been expanded in the 1720s with Henry Hooper’s addition of the land south of Brattle Street, but reduced by Judge Lee’s heir to a smaller lot by 1808.

⁸² Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 83, and Robert Bell Rettig, *Guide to Cambridge Architecture: Ten Walking Tours*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press with the Cambridge Historical Commission, 1969) C33.

⁸³ Payson, “Notes on Some Tory...,” 22.

⁸⁴ Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 65, and MD, 177:437.

V. The Nineteenth Century to 1861

After John Appleton bought the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House and its surrounding fourteen acres from Thomas Lee in February 1808, he continued the process of subdividing what had been the Lee estate. Born in 1758, John Appleton was descended from a family with connections to Ipswich and Salem, but also prominent in Cambridge. (His great-grandfather Nathaniel Appleton attended Harvard College and served as pastor of the Church in Cambridge for 66 years, from 1717 – 1783.) In 1807, Appleton married a woman from an important Cambridge family, Sarah Fayerweather, daughter of Capt. Thomas Fayerweather. Appleton later served as U. S. Consul in France.⁸⁵ Although Appleton owned the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House for only six years, selling it in 1814, he continued to reside in Cambridge until his death in 1829; in 1822 he was listed as a voter.⁸⁶

John Appleton's brief ownership of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house had a significant impact on the size of the property. On its western boundary, the former Lee estate abutted property owned by John Fayerweather and probably part of the 45-acre Fayerweather estate.⁸⁷ Perhaps Appleton bought the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house and land shortly after his marriage to Sarah Fayerweather in order to be near her family, and then later received part or all of the Fayerweather estate. In 1810, Appleton built a new house on part of the former Lee land, just west of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house, which survives at what is now 163 Brattle Street.⁸⁸ It is possible that he needed a new house suitable to his prominent role as a U.S. diplomat, and the old Hooper-Lee-Nichols house

⁸⁵ Paige, *History*, 482; Mary Isabella Gozzaldi, *History of Cambridge Mass. 1630-1877 by Lucius R. Paige: Supplement and Index* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Historical Society, 1930); VRC, 2:494 and 2:521.

⁸⁶ VRC, 2:521, and Paige, *History*, 448.

⁸⁷ MD, 177:437, and Bunting and Nylander, *Survey*, 66.

⁸⁸ Rettig, *Guide to Cambridge*, C43.