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AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND NATIVE-AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL HONORING CUFF SLOCUM, PAUL CUFFE, MICHAEL WAINER AND THEIR FAMILIES



FROM THE 1740S TO 1817, THE WESTPORT/DARTMOUTH/NEW BEDFORD AREA WAS HOME TO THREE REMARKABLE, INDUSTRIOUS, RELATED FAMILIES OF COLOR, OF AFRICAN AND NATIVE HERITAGE. THESE FAMILIES INCLUDED SUCCESSFUL FARMERS, SHIPBUILDERS, COASTAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADERS, AND PROMOTERS OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT. IN AN ERA WHEN SLAVERY WAS STILL PREVALENT IN BOTH THE SOUTH AND NORTH AND NATIVE-AMERICANS WERE BEING DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMELANDS, THESE FAMILIES PROVIDED LIVING TESTIMONY TO THE POTENTIALS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT ACROSS ALL PEOPLES.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Cuffe Slocum'.

CUFF SLOCUM, an African slave, and the patriarch of the families, arrived in New England on a slave ship in the 1720s, bought his freedom from John Slocum in the 1740s, married a Native woman, Ruth Moses, in 1747, raised a family of 10 children on Cuttyhunk Island, and bought a 120-acre farm in Westport in 1766 that passed to his widow and two younger sons when he died in 1772.



PAUL CUFFE, Cuff and Ruth's youngest son, was the most prominent and influential member of the family and the one best known and celebrated in modern times. He took to the sea soon after his father's death, ran British naval blockades to supply goods to Nantucket during the Revolutionary War, petitioned for the right of black citizens to vote in Massachusetts, married Alice Abel Pequit, a widowed Native-American woman from Harwich in 1783, built ships and engaged in coastal trade and whaling from his Westport River wharf in the 1790s, set up a free, integrated school nearby, became a member of the Westport Friends Meeting in 1808 and from 1811 to 1816 gained international prominence through his efforts to assist former slaves settled by the British in their colony of Sierra Leone by helping them produce commodities for international commerce. He was memorialized in New York, Philadelphia and London as well as Westport upon his death in 1817.



MICHAEL WAINER, son of a Native woman and probably a Native man, was born in 1748 in either Dartmouth or Martha's Vineyard. In 1772 he married Mary Slocum, daughter of Cuff and Ruth Slocum and sister of Paul Cuffe, bought property and established a tanning/shoemaking business in Russells Mills in 1776, partnered with Paul Cuffe in building ships and coastal trading (1785-1800), bought the 100-acre former Eddy homestead on Drift Road in Westport in 1800 and resided there until his death in 1815. Six of his sons sailed on and captained the ships owned by their father and Paul Cuffe, including the trips to Sierra Leone. The sites on this Heritage Trail were important in their lives.





SITES ON THE HERITAGE TRAIL

1. THE PAUL CUFFE MEMORIAL AND FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AT 930 MAIN ROAD IN WESTPORT'S CENTRAL VILLAGE

A monument to honor Paul Cuffe, an esteemed member of this Quaker Meeting, was placed in the yard of the Friends Meeting House in 1913 by his great-grandson, Horatio P. Howard. Paul Cuffe was a member of the committee responsible for constructing this Meeting House in 1814 and contributed a major share of the total cost.

2. CUFFE GRAVE SITE 930 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT

Gravestones commemorating Paul Cuffe (1759-1817) and his wife Alice Abel Cuffe (1755-1819) are located in the cemetery behind the Friends Meeting House.

3. CUFFE WINDMILL 1853 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT

The site of a windmill at Westport Point owned by Paul Cuffe, Washington Davis and Samuel Hicks. This site on the crest of a hill was a favorable location for a wind-powered mill to grind grain for the local citizens. No structure remains.

4. CUFFE WHARF 1430-1436 DRIFT ROAD, WESTPORT

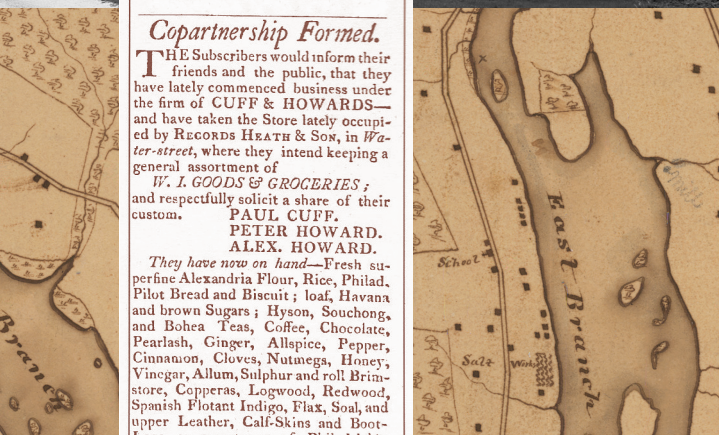
At the end of a private drive, the wharf was on the West bank of the East Branch of the Westport River. Paul Cuffe purchased a small lot of 0.22 acres on the riverfront in 1789 from Isaac Soule, built and docked most of his ships here, including his last ship, Traveler, and constructed a substantial house here in 1797. His free integrated school was also established nearby in 1797. No structures from that time remain.

5. CUFFE HOMESTEAD 1430-1436 DRIFT ROAD, WESTPORT

Paul Cuffe purchased about four additional acres around his wharf and residence from David Soule in 1813. He willed this property to his wife and children upon his death in 1817. No structures from that time remain.

6. WAINER HOMESTEAD 1510 DRIFT ROAD, WESTPORT

The Wainer Homestead straddled Drift Road running from the river front to what is now Route 88. The original Eddy house, shown in the picture, was at 1510 Drift Road, and the farm fields ran to the west of 1507, parts of which remain in Wainer descendants' hands today. Paul Cuffe purchased this 100-acre property from Ebenezer Eddy in 1799 and sold it to Michael and Mary Wainer, his brother-in-law and sister, in 1800.



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7. CADMAN WHITE HANDY HOUSE 202 HIX BRIDGE ROAD, WESTPORT

In the 19th century this was the residence of Dr. James Handy. The records and accounts of Dr. Handy have survived, recording the treatment that he provided for Paul Cuffe and other members of his family. Dr. Handy visited Paul Cuffe regularly during the last months of his life in 1817. The Handy House is now owned by the Westport Historical Society and is open to the public.

8. CUFF SLOCUM FARM 761 OLD COUNTY ROAD, WESTPORT

Cuff Slocum and his wife Ruth purchased a 120-acre farm at this location in 1766 and moved their family of ten children here from Cuttyhunk in the spring of 1767. The farm remained in his family's hands for fifty years. A house and barns that were on the farm when they purchased it have since been replaced. The western half of the farm was inherited by Paul Cuffe and then his son, Paul Cuffe, Jr. A new solar farm, the Cuff Slocum Community Solar Farm, has recently been established on part of this property and named in honor of Cuff Slocum. It is on private property and not accessible to the public.

9. CUFFE/HOWARD CEMETERY 665 OLD WESTPORT ROAD, CORNER OF FISHER AND OLD WESTPORT ROAD, DARTMOUTH

This cemetery, on high ground at the northeast corner of the Cuff Slocum farm, is believed to be a burial site of many of the Slocum and Cuffe family members. Following both the Quaker and Native-American traditions, there are no marked stones, only unmarked fieldstones. The cemetery is named for Naomi Cuffe Howard, daughter of Paul and Alice Cuffe and wife of Peter Howard, who died in 1810.

10. WAINER EARLY HOME SITE 1228 RUSSELL'S MILLS ROAD, DARTMOUTH

Home and business site of Michael and Mary Wainer (1776-1792). This is now the site of Davoll's Store. Michael Wainer (c. 1748-1815) married Mary Slocum Cuffe (1753-1804), daughter of Cuff and Ruth Slocum, in 1772. They purchased this property from Giles Russell in 1776, resided here and probably operated a leather tannery and shoe-making business until 1792 when they sold the property to William Howland a merchant from New Bedford.

11. THE CAPTAIN PAUL CUFFE PARK AT THE NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM 18 JOHNNY CAKE HILL

The Captain Paul Cuffe Park adjacent to the Museum building is a memorial park commemorating his life and legacy. The Cuffe Kitchen on the 2nd floor of the Museum provides an exhibit space for some of his artifacts. Cuff & Howards store, founded in 1809, sold imported goods from the West Indies. It was located on the west side of Water Street in an area that is now part of the Whaling Museum complex.