

High House Mystery

From *AROUND AND ABOUT CARY*, by Thomas Byrd (Raleigh, NC: Daniel Industries, Inc., 1970), pp. 17-18. See also, "The Ghost of High House," *AAFA ACTION*, June 1991, pp. 60-62.

Mystery surrounds a final Jones to be mentioned—Fanning Jones. The name

"Fanning" once struck terror in the hearts of North Carolinians because of David Fanning, "the most perfect scoundrel in the history of the state." He led a band of Tories during the Revolution that murdered, pillaged, and even kidnapped Governor Thomas Burke and handed him over to the

British. David Fanning was a native of this county but gained his notoriety after moving to nearby Chatham. His connections, if any, with Fanning Jones are a mystery. Chamberlain in her 1922 history of Wake County [Hope S. Chamberlain, *History of Wake County, North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards



Historic Jones House

The Nancy Jones House at 837 W. Durham Road in Cary, North Carolina, is reportedly a copy of High House. The houses were supposedly built by brothers, Nathaniel Jones building the Jones House and Tingnall Jones building High House. The Jones House is on the National Register of Historic Places. Built circa 1805, it has a well-preserved interior and was a stopover in 1847 for President James K. Polk. A famous saying, "It's a damned long time between drinks," probably occurred in the Jones House in June 1838 when Governor Edward Dudley of North Carolina greeted the Governor of South Carolina in the Jones House parlor with the remark.

& Broughton Co., 1922)] wrote:

There stands . . . a desolate house with vacant windows and grinning rafters, a high four-square old house, dating from the Revolutionary time, but which has been deserted many years. It stands near the town of Cary, to the west, and its story was told to me by an old lady who remembers traditions, and who was somewhat kin to the former owner, Fanning Jones, but who was not proud of the relationship.

Whether his name means a relationship or connection with the notorious Tory Leader who stole the Governor, or whether it is merely a coincidence, no one can now declare, but he is said for some vague reasons to have forfeited the regard of his patriotic relatives, and to have been driven from the neighborhood for that reason. The Old Tory, they called him. (pp. 89-90)

Fanning Jones' house was known to generations of Caryites as "High House." This legendary old house once stood on the left side of High House Road, on the next hill down from Hi-House Mobile Park. As the name implies, High House dominated the landscape. It was a two-story affair, with high ceilings, standing on a hill. Some people say it resembled the Jones House, which stands on Highway 54. One legend says the two houses were built by brothers. If this is true, High House was built by Tingnall Jones, the father of Fanning Jones.

No one knows today if Fanning Jones was driven from the neighborhood as Chamberlain said. But Fanning Jones did move to Tennessee in 1822 "... after turning over his property to a Raleigh lawyer. (Wake County Deed Book 5, p. 340).

Green Alford bought High House and 1,200 acres of land in 1833. (Wake County Deed Book 11, p. 176) The house, which was later occupied by the Williams family, was abandoned early in this century.

People said High House was haunted, and there was much digging around the place for buried treasure. Miss Margaret Williams tells of one such treasure hunt. Her father, Leander Williams, was born in High House in 1833. After the family had moved away, Williams had a dream about treasure buried in the hearth. He told his mother about the dream the next morning, only to discover that she had the same dream. They rushed down to the house, but someone had already torn the hearth apart, brick by brick.

Some of the old fireplace brick remains on the site, and a cemetery is located nearby. Only a few tombstones remain, so it is not known if Mrs. Fanning Jones is buried there. She died a tragic death only a few years after her marriage in 1799. *The Raleigh Register* of September 8, 1806, reported that Mrs. Jones "... was found in a grove far from the house, depraved of all reason, where it is supposed she had been praying (having been very religious for some time past). She remained in the deplorable condition till her death. . . (on July 27, 1806)." (p.3) ❖

(Alford Cemeteries, cont. from p. 61)

7. Form a committee for the identification of all those buried in the cemetery and decide whether individual headstones should be provided or names and data inscribed on a group plaque or marker. Consider removal of old and delicate headstones which will not take any more deterioration to a museum or other institution, and replace them by suitable replicas. This is a tricky business, however, so be sure you have permission of proper authorities. You don't want to be arrested yourself as a ghoul—vandalizing or desecrating a cemetery.
8. Plan carefully the continued maintenance of the private plot after the restoration work is done. This might be done by individual descendants, or a trust fund might be set up. In North Carolina, funds can be deposited with the Clerk of the Superior Court and will be invested to generate income used for maintenance. Another option is to purchase the cemetery plot with rights of access. Other options might be possible.

But whatever is done, as St. Paul said, "Let it be done decently and in good order." Good Luck! ❖

Thank You!

A number of members volunteered to serve as officers, i.e. told the Nominating Committee that they recognized the need to have a change of officers and would give it a try even though they did not know what to do, etc. We had at least three folks for every office! This participation is very heartening and welcome, and the Association is grateful to each one of you for your enthusiasm and can-do spirit. So to all those members who consented to be candidates for office, a huge THANKS!