

A Planter House: The Simeon Perkins House, 1766-7, Liverpool, Nova Scotia

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After twelve years of work unravelling the history of the Simeon Perkins House there is now a text of 330 pages,¹ but despite all attempts, some of the questions remain unanswered. When work began the key word was 'interpretation' and that word is used here as a central theme in this discussion of a single Planter house.

Our interpretation of any house is greatly influenced by the setting. The Simeon Perkins House (Figure 1) was built in 1766 in Liverpool, Nova Scotia.² By 1981 it had become severely compromised as a historic house because of the dramatic change in its context.³ Visually overpowered by a new museum built too close beside it, Perkins house had become a cottage in the front yard of the museum.

Interpretation is also required in something as straightforward as the picture by which Simeon Perkins is usually recognized (Figure 2). There is only one known portrait of Simeon Perkins (Figure 3)⁴ and this is a small profile painted in watercolour in an elliptical mount. The author was fortunate in tracking it down in York, Maine. As all the known published photographic representations appear to be reproduced from this one image, photographed and published in a book in 1895,⁵ it is possible to reconstruct the sequence of retouching of the photographs over time. Whereas the latest reproductions show Simeon Perkins as a young man without a wrinkle or hair out of place,⁶ the original watercolour shows him as a man with furrowed brow and wispy, greying hair which appears a trifle unruly. Interpretation of the latest and most heavily retouched photo-

1 Allen Penney, *The Simeon Perkins House, Liverpool, Nova Scotia*, Curatorial Report Number 60, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax, N.S., 1988.

2 Dates are all derived from the Diary entries, usually footnoted as follows: Diary, I, 19 June 1766, for the start of construction and Diary, I, 18 April 1767, for the date on which he moved in and started to live there.

3 The Simeon Perkins Museum, now the Queens County Museum, was opened on 17 September 1980.

4 A watercolour portrait of Simeon Perkins is located in the Elizabeth Bishop Perkins Museum in York, Maine. There is no mention of either date or artist.

5 Mary E. Perkins, *Old Houses of the Ancient Town of Norwich, 1660-1800* (Norwich, Connecticut, 1895). At least three stages of re-touching of the photograph of Simeon Perkins have been used to illustrate the different volumes of the Diary and other publications.

6 *The Diary of Simeon Perkins 1780-1789*, Vol.2 (Toronto, 1958).



1. The Simeon Perkins House in 1982 with the new Queen's County Museum built beside it. The size and proximity of the latter are an aggressive and unfortunate intrusion, diminishing the house.



2. The original and only known portrait of Simeon Perkins now in the drawing room of the Elizabeth Bishop Perkins House, York, Maine. This small watercolour has no date.

(Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, York, Maine.)

graphic images would lean towards youthfulness, vigour and a slight arrogance brought on by success in business, whereas interpretation of the original painted image suggests a care-worn and harassed middle-aged businessman who was neither very astute nor successful, an interpretation one is likely to make from Perkins' writings.

Also located in York, Maine, is Simeon Perkins' grandfather clock. It has a maker's label glued to the inside of the door to the clock case to show that Simon Willard of Roxbury (who was born in 1753) was the manufacturer.⁷ Below it is attached a handwritten provenance together with a type-written biographical sketch of the maker. If the provenance were true, then Simon Willard made the clock when he was just nine years old; an obviously suspect fact. Whoever wrote out the provenance made a primary error in interpretation. In the belief that Simeon Perkins owned the clock when he emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1762, it is easy to attribute too early a date for the manufacture of the clock. The author of the provenance had either no knowledge of Simeon Perkins' travels or failed to make the connection between the facts as existing, starting with the birthday of Simon Willard. According to his Diary, Simeon Perkins spent several months in New England in 1768 and probably in 1771 as well.⁸ His diary for these two periods is missing but is believed to still be in the United States. Missing passages may contain references to the purchase date of the clock, but this is unlikely as Simon Willard would still have been too young. Other solutions may be found. For example, Simeon Perkins was forced into receiving goods instead of currency so often in his business transactions that the clock may not have been purchased by him directly from the maker at all, but came into his possession as part payment for goods or services.⁹ But the solution found inside the clock case is the least likely of all: "This clock was probably made for Simeon Perkins after he returned to Norwich, Conn. from Nova Scotia where he spent the war years as a Loyalist." Also included on the label of Simon Willard is the location of his business, Roxbury. The type-written note which states that he started his business there in 1780 suggests the date of the purchase must be later than this.

How we interpret information may depend on the scope of our knowledge and how diligently we check out and order the facts. As we look at the house, the portrait or the clock, we exercise judgement, gathering as much data as possible to bolster our position and then we put it all together

7 Simon Willard, b. 3 April 1753, had his business at Roxbury, Massachusetts.

8 Diary, I, 24 February 1786. On the occasion of his birthday, Simeon Perkins refers to his family history. All the portions referring to his life in the United States were removed by the Reverend Joshua Newton Perkins before repatriation of the bulk of the Diary in 1900.

9 See, for example, Diary, III, 27 October 1792.



3. Portrait of Simeon Perkins. A photographic copy hangs in the office of the house. Neither the date nor the artist are known.

to tell a story. This is always an interpretation of the facts as far as we can find and understand them. Fortunately Simeon Perkins left us more than a mere house. He put down on paper his own particular history covering a period of fifty years. His *Diary* and a collection of some of his letters have been published in five volumes by the Champlain Society.¹⁰ These documents offer an excellent source of Planter knowledge and a significant source for the interpretation of the house.

A considerable quantity of other information relating to the house and its context is available; some interesting rather than relevant, and some interesting in its own right. For instance, the Charles Morris map of Nova Scotia from 1755,¹¹ and his town plan for Liverpool dating from 1759,¹² clearly show how planners are limited by other people interpreting their intentions. The actual development of Liverpool took place in an area which Morris had left undesignated as a white gap in the middle of the plan. This is precisely the area covered by the town centre today and over two centuries later the town still covers only a small area of that proposed by Morris. Having arrived after the initial land grants, Simeon Perkins had to wait two years before new land was freed for granting, when in 1764,

¹⁰ The *Diary of Simeon Perkins* has been published in five volumes, Vol. I, 1766 to 1780 in 1948; Vol. II, 1780 to 1789 in 1958; Vol. III, 1790 to 1796 in 1961; Vol. IV, 1797 to 1803 in 1967; Vol. V, 1804 to 1812 in 1979.

¹¹ Map of Nova Scotia, dated 1755, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

¹² Map of Liverpool, dated 1759, from a dyeline print from the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests.

from fish lots A & B, he drew lot B5 on which he began to build his house two years later.¹³

On 20 July 1817, John Elliot Woolford made seven sketches of Liverpool on the same day.¹⁴ One of them shows the Liverpool lighthouse for which Simeon Perkins laid the foundation stone just before he died. Photographs are a valuable resource, yet few exist of the house before the 1940s, none show the back or the interior before 1947. Other interpretations of the house have been few and some have been quite inaccurate, suggesting, for example, that the windows have been replaced at some time.¹⁵

Before we can interpret the house, it is necessary to interpret the man. What of the man, the Planter Simeon Perkins? He was apprenticed to his cousin, Colonel Jabez Huntington,¹⁶ who lived in a large house in Norwich, Connecticut, and who was a merchant and very obviously successful in business. Later he became a general on George Washington's staff. Simeon Perkins married Abigail Backus in 1762,¹⁷ but she died soon after delivering a son named Roger. Abigail was a cousin of Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, and therefore a cousin of the famous painter Jonathan Trumbull. As a young widower of twenty-eight Simeon Perkins wrote that he came to Nova Scotia a disconsolate man.¹⁸ He nevertheless became a pillar of society, serving as magistrate, judge, town clerk and county treasurer, and Colonel in the Queens County militia during the American War of Independence.

The evidence suggests that we must interpret the builder of the house as a sad young man, a merchant, well-connected in Connecticut, but with limited resources from his trading in Nova Scotia: a Planter of limited success. In 1813, a year after the death of Simeon Perkins, a portrait was painted in Liverpool of his second wife, Elizabeth (Figure 4), wearing widow's grey.¹⁹ All eight children born to her by Simeon Perkins were still alive in 1812, but within another nine years five of them had died. In 1822 she left Nova Scotia for New York with her two remaining unmarried daughters.²⁰

13 Town of Liverpool, Proprietor's Book, Queens County Record Office.

14 The sketchbook of John Elliot Woolford is in the Nova Scotia Museum.

15 Parks Canada, Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, report by John F. Stevens, 1965.

16 General Jabez Huntington, b. 1719, d. 1786, graduated from Yale College in 1741.

17 Abigail Backus, b. 1742, d. 1760.

18 Quoted in Perkins, *Old Houses of the Ancient Town of Norwich*, 235, 236, quoting from the missing section of the Diary written before 1764 to which she had access.

19 A watercolour by J. Comingo painted in 1813 now in the Elizabeth B. Perkins Museum, York, Maine.

20 Public Archives of Nova Scotia, vertical mss. file, "Simeon Perkins," and Perkins, *Old Houses of the Ancient Town of Norwich*, 553.



4. Elizabeth Headley Perkins, the second wife of Simeon Perkins painted by J. Comingo in 1813. The original hangs in the drawing room of the Elizabeth Bishop Perkins House in York, Maine.

(Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, York, Maine.)

With this evidence of the owner's personal life, we can now attempt to interpret his house. Even the most ordinary descriptions of the architecture are confused by obscure terminology or mis-information. A standard design of house throughout New England is the so-called 'Cape Cod' or 'one-and-a-half storey' house, which are misleading terms and might be replaced with the more accurate 'floor-and-a-half' house, for the houses are externally single storey and internally are undoubtedly two stories high with an upper floor reduced in size by the lack of headroom at the eaves. These houses are typically built with a massive central chimney where several fireplaces are connected into one flue. Much less common is the house with end chimneys, though they can be found, including a brick house (Figure 5) in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, built the same year as Perkins House in 1766. It too has corner fireplaces.

Interpretation is made more difficult when there are few end chimney houses compared with central ones and very few published plans.²¹ But if one travels far enough there are photographs to study as well as a few sketch books drawn by itinerant artists.²² From these documents we can

21 It would appear that the ratio is about 4:1 in favour of central chimneys. In general there are few drawings published of single storey houses in New England, and very few plans of houses with end chimneys have been found.

22 Searches were made in the photograph collections and libraries of the American

see that the norm is a vernacular architecture of order, if not symmetry, and that additions often create their own form of naïve asymmetry. On the other hand there are few photographs of interiors and therefore meagre interpretations of the construction to be found. Visits to actual houses are necessary to discover their construction methods. Inside Perkins House the construction is still clearly visible today. The frame shows the state of development of the North American stud frame construction by the middle of the eighteenth century. Gone is the heavy European framing but remaining are widely spaced rafters and, spanning between them, horizontal purlins (Figure 6), a carry over from thatched-roof technology.²³ All there is to hold up the roof are the vertical planks in the perimeter wall (Figure 7). The house was built quickly. No time was wasted on grubbing out the tree stump under the parlour floor. The joint still shows clearly where the house was extended in 1781. Trim was not unnecessarily removed and replaced.

Other evidence suggests the sequence of alteration. The parlour door handle does not match the handle on the keeping room door. From the Diary we find that the keeping room door and wall were not built until October or November 1787, twenty years after the parlour was built. The builders were Mr. Grant and John Miles. The locks are of substantially the same pattern, but the style of handle varies; a carriage handle in the early one is replaced by a simple brass knob in the later one. In a photograph taken in 1947 (Figure 8) we find an entry without a stair, and might reasonably ask when it was removed. In a photograph taken in 1978 it had reappeared. Why? Today's stair is actually the fourth main stair in the house. The first dates from 1766 (original construction), and was replaced by the second in 1787 (recorded in the Diary); this was removed in about 1840 (based on oral tradition), and relocated at the back of the house; the fourth stair was the one reinstated at the front in 1949 (recorded by Raddall), which is the one we now see. Fortunately for the interpreter another person connected with the house also kept a diary. Thomas Raddall recorded all the activities of the Queens County Historical Society, including alterations to the house from 1935 to 1959,²⁴ so we have

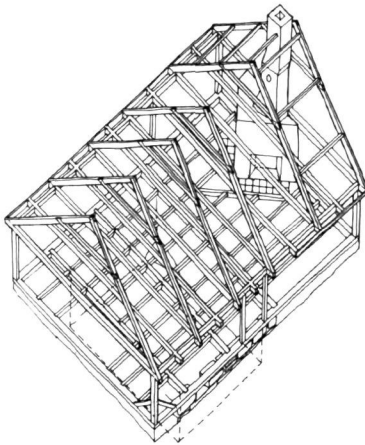
Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA., New Haven Colony Society, New Haven, CT., and the Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities, Boston, MA., where the search was time-consuming as the information was purely visual in nature and for which there is no easy index. The complete files were accessed. This obviously implies a great privilege and thanks are due to these organizations.

23 See R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (London, 1978); J. Frederick Kelly, *Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut* (New York, 1963); and N.M. Isham and A.F. Brown, *Early Connecticut Houses* (New York, 1965).

24 Thomas Raddall, "The Queens County Historical Society, 1929-1959," unpublished excerpts from his personal diaries. Copies can be seen in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and the Queens County Museum.



5. The Moses Farnham house at Uxbridge, Massachusetts, built in 1766 and located about 65 km north of Norwichtown, Connecticut. Although built of brick, this house is remarkably similar to the initial phase of the Perkins house. There are end chimneys within the exterior wall, corner fireplaces in the main rooms and there is a central hallway with a staircase boxed in with vertical boards. Drawn from a photograph taken in June 1894, the original is in the collection of the American Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



6. The frame of the Simeon Perkins House.
Note the small number of vertical posts, the relatively few number of rafters and the use of purlins between the rafters. No evidence of a summer beam has been found but there has been no attempt at destructive investigation to make sure, so it cannot be entirely eliminated. The small cellar provides support in the centre, but when first built there were no walls under the sills except at the cellar.

an accurate date for the removal of the rear stair and the replacement of the front stair. But as with Simeon Perkins' Diary there are no drawings, photographs or sketches to show the architectural details, only words. This lack of visual proof so broadens the opportunity for inaccurate interpretation that it is at the same time both helpful to have a date, and frustrating to know the date and not have the details. The writings of Perkins and Raddall appear to cover the two main periods of building activity at the house. It is a remarkable coincidence that there is a written account of the major alterations, even if the information is incomplete.

In 1947 the main stair was at the back of the house.²⁵ Moving the stair from the front to the back is attributed to Caleb Seely,²⁶ who bought the house from Mrs. Perkins in 1822. The house remained in the same family until Seely's last grand-daughter died there in 1935, when it was sold by the heir to the Queens County Historical Society. Another support for the 1840 date of the stair removal comes from a snippet of wallpaper behind the plaster hiding the attic access hatch in the ceiling. The Gothic Revival pattern of the wallpaper dates from about 1840.²⁷ Of itself this evidence may appear insubstantial, but there is also some oral history to support the 1840 date.²⁸ The dates of the first, second and fourth changes to the stairs are therefore known to the day, while the third is only attributable to a date through oral history which links the removal of the stairs to a girl who died at the age of twenty-three in 1844.

We may find difficulty in our interpretation of the fabric of the house. The cellar walls appear ancient and long undisturbed. The mortar joints in the stone walls of the cellar are not original but were added to deter the rats.²⁹ An apparent lack of foundations can be interpreted from the deformation seen in a 1947 photograph (Figure 9). Apart from the cellar, the house had no foundations when it was first built. In 1982 it was found that the sill was lying directly on the sandy soil.³⁰ There remains a question about the foundations which is still too difficult to answer at present. Was there a foundation in 1766 and was it removed or destroyed in the alterations of 1949?³¹ From the Diary we learn that the construction of the

25 Photograph by Hedly Doty, 1947.

26 Caleb Seely, b. 1787, Saint John, N.B., d. 1869, Liverpool, N.S., a well-known privateer captain and merchant.

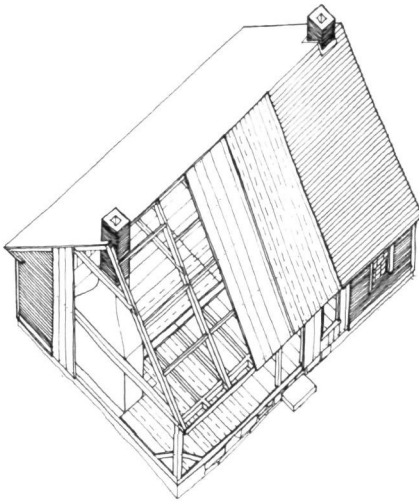
27 Staff of the Nova Scotia Museum.

28 Thomas Raddall, "The Queens County Historical Society, 1929-1959," oral history by Mrs. John Day, 22 April 1949. In searching for the person who was the most likely cause for the stair to be moved, only Caroline Seely fitted the evidence and she died in 1844, aged 23.

29 Diary, II, 5 August 1788.

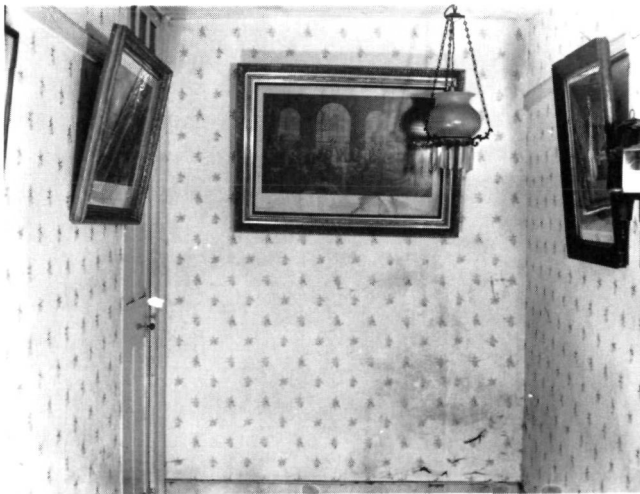
30 Verbal communications from an architect with Government Services.

31 There is no reference to the lack of foundations in Raddall only the description of the sills



7. The cladding of the Simeon Perkins House.

Both the roof slopes and the walls are covered with vertical boards. It is a single layer on the walls and a double layer on the roof, but thinner. The roof surfaces were shingled whereas the walls were clapboarded. The walls at the lower level were plastered from the start, but the upper level walls and underside of the roof sheathing appear to have merely been wallpapered; neither wall being good thermal insulation.



8. The entry in 1947. The space to the right is now occupied by the stair rebuilt in 1949.

extension was delayed when there appeared to be an imminent withdrawal of soldiers from the garrison.³² Simeon Perkins used the soldiers as labourers to earn their keep.

It is not too difficult to interpret the architecture when the information is both written and the existing fabric can be examined, but how do we interpret the life which went on inside the house? It is this aspect of interpretation that is probably most required by society; yet is the most difficult to access.

On 11 January 1792 Simeon Perkins wrote: "...my Office room chimney took fire & Burn with great rage, and I was Very Apprehensive the chimney would Bust, in which case I expected the House would be in great danger. We put water & Salt into the fire & took out ye Pipe of the stove in the chamber and poured water in there which deadened the fire...."³³ Though covered over in 1978, the stove pipe thimble was still visible in a 1947 photograph,³⁴ which does strongly suggest the location of both the office, parlour and bedroom. Lucy Perkins fell into the kitchen fire at the age of three but lived to make a beautifully executed sampler at the age of twelve.³⁵ On 28 April 1800 the old brick domed bake-oven next to the kitchen fireplace was removed to make a closet.³⁶ The springing of the brick dome can still be seen to this day. Life in the late eighteenth century was remarkably like our own in that maintenance, accident, skill development in children and alteration are as common today as they were then. But there were also noticeable differences.

Once Simeon Perkins remarried, the household grew to seventeen people requiring more space and generating the first extension built in 1781.³⁷ The kitchen remained the same size and a keeping room was added along with two bedrooms.³⁸ The east chimney was entirely dismantled and rebuilt beyond the original end wall of the house. The joints in the floor boards upstairs still show the location of the original chimney. A previous interpreter was fooled by the appearance of the hood over the upstairs fireplace. He interpreted it to be of metal,³⁹ presumably from a photograph

being replaced. It is a shame that the sills were not better installed in 1949 as they are still susceptible to rot.

32 Diary, II, 29 June 1781.

33 Diary, III, 11 January 1792.

34 Photograph by Hedly Doty.

35 Diary, II, 27 March 1783. The Sampler is located in the Elizabeth B. Perkins Museum, York, Maine.

36 Diary, IV, 28 April 1800.

37 Diary, II, 20 June 1781 and following.

38 One bedroom was on the main floor and the other, initially called the garret, was only accessible through another bedroom.

39 Parks, report by John Stevens.



9. The north front in 1947. Note the horizontal window and plumbing stack on the east end, (left hand side) and the Victorian Gothic Chimney Pots. The overall deformation of the house can be seen by the drooping ends.

and because of its colour and shape, whereas it is merely painted plaster over brick. This example serves as a warning to first assess the accuracy of the facts and then check out the interpretation against all the available evidence.

Board cuts in the main roof show where the chimney was first positioned. Simeon Perkins wrote that he called in a “chimney doctor”⁴⁰ for this chimney, but later photographs suggest the “doctor” was unsuccessful in his cure because Gothic Revival style chimney pots were added during the latter half of the nineteenth century and were still in place in 1947.⁴¹

The corner post of the original house is visible in the north-east corner of the keeping room and the corner post in the extension of 1781 can be seen

40 Diary, III, 14 May 1792.

41 Photograph by Hedly Doty, 1947.

in the chamber, the former without diagonal braces but still showing mortise joints. The interpretation is that the original corner was braced, but as the extension required access, and the door opening conflicted with the corner brace, then the brace was removed. Unlike the outside of the house where no particular aesthetic concern was expressed over the showing of joints at the point of the addition, inside, the now redundant second diagonal brace was also removed for seemingly aesthetic reasons.

Interpretation may require physical effort, discomfort and diligence. A number of interpreters have looked at the house but failed to crawl into the eaves closet of the middle bedroom, where the inside of the original end wall can be viewed, or into the closet in the east bedroom where on the other side of the same wall can be found the original wall cladding from 1766 (Figure 10).⁴² This portion of cladding suggests that the front of the house still retains its original clapboard finish after 220 years.⁴³

Further subtle but important data may radically alter our impressions. The extension of 1781 included the new kitchen with its fireplace built the same year, whereas the staircase built in the same room dates from a year later, 1782.⁴⁴ It would be impossible to discern the different dates from the building alone, but from the Diary we learn both that it was built later and by whom. In his reference to it Simeon Perkins notes the name of the builder, Mr. Bangs, who not only built ships for Simeon Perkins, but also built the stair as though it were in a ship.⁴⁵ The remarkable comparison to a ship's companionway becomes understandable with the Diary references, and thus improves the architectural interpretation.

By 1792 Simeon Perkins decided the house was too small and a second extension was required. A large rock blocked development to the east so it was expedient to add the new wing on the south, turning the plan into a T-shape.⁴⁶ The extension is built virtually as a new building adjacent to the existing one with an unsatisfactory connection. From a careful inspection of a measured drawing of a section (Figure 11) the two buildings appear to be simply butted together, leaving a badly designed valley roof gutter, which is both a rain and snow trap.⁴⁷ The valley is remarkable for its state

42 Why this small area of clapboarding has remained is interesting, and must stem from the saving of unnecessary labour rather than from a need to leave historical clues.

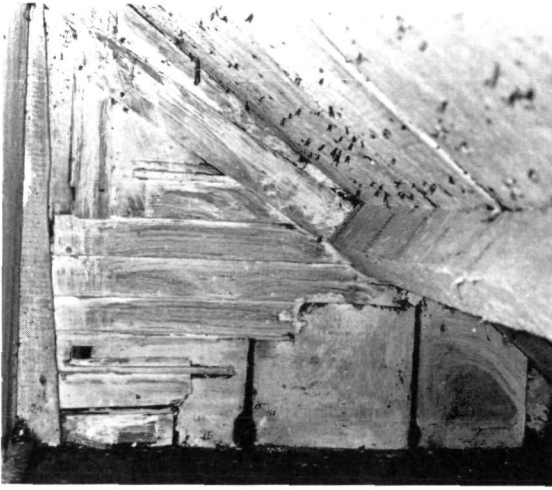
43 Observation after comparing the materials and the dimensions of the two areas of clapboarding.

44 Diary, II, 6 August 1781 and following; 4 October 1782.

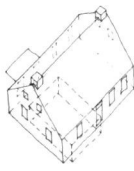
45 The rise of each step is higher than the going of each tread, it is narrow, and at the level of the floor above the girt in the end wall has been reduced in width to allow easier passage up the stair.

46 Diary, III, 5 June 1792.

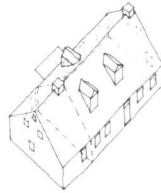
47 Signs of consistent and considerable water staining are visible in the roofspace, as are traces of creeper which in 1947 covered the roof.



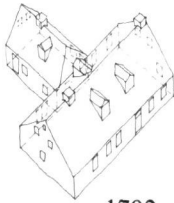
10. Clapboarded gable wall from 1767. This is definitely original as it was left untouched when the 1781 addition covered it over. The vertical boarded wall can be seen with mice holes gnawed at floor level. These original clapboards match those on the front or North elevation which supports the idea that the front is still the original cladding.



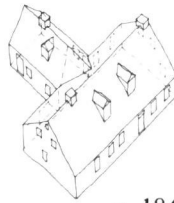
1766



1781



1792



c. 1840

11. Phases of construction:

1766 Initial construction, completed in 1767,

1781 First addition, at the near end, with new chimney,

1792 Second addition at the rear,

c 1840 South facing dormer window removed and the valley gutter filled in.

of preservation and shows that the roof valley was finally covered-over and also made water-tight at a later date.⁴⁸ What remains under the roof is the original roof slope from 1766 which has a few remaining shingles adhering to it, and the steep slope of the 1792 roof which has plenty of shingles still nailed in place. What is not initially visible to the casual observer is that the gaps between the horizontal sheathing boards are covered, not with birch bark, but with strips of thin canvas.⁴⁹ These appear to have been cut from somebody's discarded canvas trousers.

Interpretation of where people slept is difficult because the Diary is vague in this area. It is quite conceivable that Frank,⁵⁰ a black slave, might have lived in the attic over the kitchen, and the black couple, Anthony and Hagar,⁵¹ might have lived there too. In either case, the thin walls meant the thermal comfort would have been similar to living in a contemporary tent and therefore a trifle rugged for everyday life. But thermal comfort was no better in the furnished part of the house where the owner and his family lived. On 28 January 1800 Simeon Perkins wrote: "My ink has been froze the most of the day on the table near the fire."⁵²

Returning to the valley between the two roofs, why was it kept? The answer appears to have to do with the south facing dormer window which has since been removed from the middle bedroom. Cuts in the sheathing on the original roof slope can still be seen where the dormer was located.⁵³ We know from the Diary that in 1804, seven-year-old Mary was standing at the window when it was hit by scaffolding blown off the roof and chimney of the second extension roof and was in "Some danger." We do not know the date when the window was removed, except that if Simeon Perkins had it removed he probably would have recorded it. What is curious to the twentieth-century interpreter is that if the extension had been built just a few inches to the west, then the dormer need not have been in conflict with the extension roof, forcing the use of the valley, and the

48 No date can be given for the alteration. Few nails are visible but the saw marks in the wood sheathing are of later rather than earlier date. It is possible that the roof was completed in the 1840s along with the changes to the staircase position, but there is no particular connection between the two.

49 Although Raddall refers to finding birch bark under the shingles, this use of canvas suggests a different attitude to construction and possibly may relate to the use of soldiers to do the building work.

50 Diary, I, 12 July 1777. Jacob, aged 10 or 11 cost £35, and was renamed Frank. He died 22 June 1784.

51 Diary, Anthony and Hagar came to Liverpool from Shelburne, Diary, II, 20 December 1783.

52 Diary, II, 29 January 1780.

53 Visible in the space between the two early roofs, and also clearly visible from inside the bedroom.

resultant rain leaks, snow collection and water stains would have been prevented.

Hasty interpretation can cause long-lasting problems. When Thomas Raddall read the Diary to assist in the restoration work in 1949, he was presumably reading from the then existing typewritten manuscript. Four of the five volumes of the Diary had not yet been published. Where Raddall read "office"⁵⁴ he interpreted it as though there was only one 'office' and thought it was located in the house. In the comfortable to read, printed Diary, complete with introductions, indexes and so on, it is easier to come to the conclusion that at least four "offices" are being referred to, only one of them in the house. It also appears that there were two parlours, both of them in the house.⁵⁵

Raddall appears to have incorrectly interpreted the Diary references and concluded the wrong room to have been painted green. But this does not preclude the room now painted green from having been that colour at some time during its lifetime; it simply suggests that the facts should have been interpreted differently in 1949.⁵⁶ It so happens that in the room next door a scrap of wallpaper was found which not only suggests that a different room should have been painted green but also that it should have been a different shade of green.⁵⁷

It is easy to see when mistakes have been made if the original information is available for re-interpretation, but if the green paint is missing from the parlour, then also missing is the standard piece of eighteenth-century parlour equipment, the built-in corner cupboard. Which corner was it in and what did it look like? With so much alteration in the site and surroundings other questions might be put; for example, where were all the out-buildings located, and what was their size and shape, orientation and use? Although it is possible to be quite definite about the sequence of addition to the house (Figure 12), not all the dates are known for the individual stages. When were the shutters put on? The most likely date is after 1830, but there is no written data to help us here.

54 A number of references may be cited, but there are also a number of terms employed over the years, including, office, office room, and counting room, as well as a number of locations, including the waterfront, the store, an office on the street as well as in the house.

55 Perkins refers to both the "Parlour," "small Parlour," "back Parlour," and "great parlour," by which he refers to the original parlour and the conversion of the second kitchen into what we call a 'family room.'

56 Raddall, 14 June 1948.

57 Raddall refers to the colour as "queer dark green paint" and also as "Williamsbury blue" (sic). There is some confusion not only as to the colour and the room but also to whether it was woodwork or wall that was being painted. Perkins clearly states on 19 June 1793 that he was having the woodwork in the "small parlour and keeping room" painted blue.

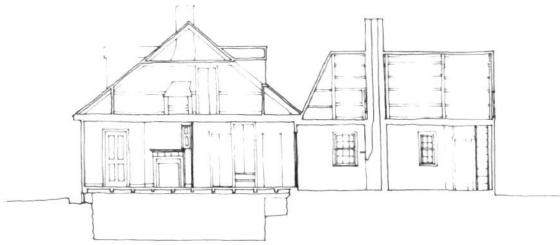
Any interpretation can be altered in the light of new evidence. The present interpretive position has been arrived at after much help from others, especially those at the Nova Scotia Museum who have patiently taught an architect to begin to deal with history.

What was it really like to be a Planter? The furrowed brow in Simeon Perkins' portrait was come by honestly. In one year he lost no less than five ships, either to storm or privateer. He watched his boyhood friends become generals and state governors, and some just plain rich businessmen, while he pioneered in Nova Scotia, dutifully carrying out his civic responsibilities, coping with the vagaries of war, and bringing up a family in a relatively isolated frontier fishing village. In 1947 a photograph (Figure 13)⁵⁸ of the outside of the house shows it to have been unpainted for a considerable time, with stains, rot, deterioration of window putty and collapsing foundations; in general appearance close to being derelict. In contrast we see the house today with its thick glossy bright white paint, pristine landscape and close cut grass. Which is the more accurate interpretation of the house in Simeon Perkins' time? The accurate interpretation has to be the shabby one. Perkins records for us the description of the house in 1803⁵⁹ when the shingles were falling off the roof, having never been painted in *thirty-seven* years.

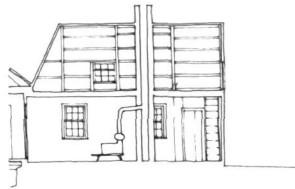
We may not think this interpretation very nice, even if it is true. We may never have the courage to re-interpret the outside of this house to make it 'real shabby' because of the tourists, but we make a mistake if we fail to see the hardy, fallible, tough, courageous and often poor people that we now call Planters out of context. It seems that Simeon Perkins never knew he was a 'Planter,' but we can thank him for being one, for keeping a diary and for building a house and for the significant contribution he made to establish this Nova Scotia.

58 Photograph by Hedly Doty, 1947.

59 Diary, IV, 26 July 1803.



1792



After 1803

12. Cross Section.

Initially built in 1792, the valley gutter was formed by building simply and making the least effort. Retention of the south facing dormer window suggests that Bedroom 2 may have been divided at this time.

A cast iron stove was installed between 1803 and 1847, with the expectation that it was not put in before 1812 as there is no Diary entry for it, and it is unlikely that it was put in after 1900.



13. Perkins House. Government Services 1261.