

New Brunswick's 'Early Comers': Lifestyles through Authenticated Artifacts, a Research Project

M.A. MacDonald. With comments by R.S. Elliot
The New Brunswick Museum
Saint John

ELLIOT:

One might compare a competent material historian with a chess player who has these traits: the skill to set up a good game plan; patience; and especially daring — since the material history researcher must often venture into uncharted waters. This is certainly the case with the New Brunswick Museum's current project conducted by Mrs. MacDonald. Her project consists of finding and authenticating surviving artifacts which relate to the New England Planters and other Pre-Loyalist English-speakers who came to New Brunswick. Until now, research has been concentrated on the Acadians and the Loyalists, but the English settlers who came to this province in the 1750s, 60s and 70s have received comparatively little attention.

As we are all aware, written records for these Early Comers are relatively scarce and this is where material culture research can help fill the void. For the material historian an authenticated artifact is as valid as a written document for building historical information, and in some cases much more revealing. However, many of the so-called Planter artifacts, although cherished by their owners, are not in fact verified Early Comers material. In the New Brunswick Museum project, Mrs. MacDonald is working on the authentication of a large number of specific pieces to verify or refute the owner's claims. Here the analytical expertise of others outside the discipline of history must be used for basic tests of an artifact's authenticity. For example, the microscopic analysis of wood might be used to help verify or refute the oral tradition that a particular article was made in Westmorland County, New Brunswick, or chemical analysis of original paint fragments might be conducted to reveal whether the compound is characteristic of a given region or time period. This sort of hi-tech analysis is beyond the usual expertise of a historian.

Beyond doubt, the most difficult part of the New Brunswick Museum's project is this authentication of the individual specimen. Consider, for instance, the *Hazen Powder Horn* and *Kimberly Powder Horn* (Illustrations 1 and 2). The two powder horns are both of the correct period and both carry a date: the Kimberly Powder Horn is inscribed with the year 1757; the Hazen Powder Horn is dated 1761. In both cases the inscribed decorations are appropriate to the mid-eighteenth century; however, the 1757 specimen cannot be used in this project because its provenance is not



1. Hazen Powder Horn

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



2. Kimberley Powder Horn

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

verifiable. The other powder horn was owned by William Hazen of Simonds, Hazen and White trading company and has a continuous history in the Hazen family. Its silver mountings were added by a mid-Victorian descendant.

It is hoped that the careful authentication of artifacts like these will build a three-dimensional document base that historians can employ with confidence, thus shedding light on the lifestyles of the Planters and New Brunswick's other English-speaking Pre-Loyalist settlers.

MacDONALD:

At the outset, I should emphasize that this is work-in-progress. My most recent field trip took place only a few weeks ago in October 1987 and the slides of those artifacts were just received last week. All artifacts that have been photographed have survived the early stages of investigation, but the final studies are still in progress. In particular, the essential wood analysis has not yet been done.

It is regrettable that a study such as this one was not undertaken earlier. Most of the articles brought here by the Early Comers (as the Loyalists called them) in the quarter century between the late 1750s and 1783, have already vanished beyond recall. They were discarded by their owners as worn out or out-of-date, or else, more recently, removed from New Brunswick by dealers from the United States and Upper Canada — where they instantly became New England or Ontario antiques. Out of every ten artifacts that are said to have belonged to the Pre-Loyalist English-speaking settlers of New Brunswick, eight or nine have had to be eliminated — some because they were obviously wrong, others because there was no verifiable provenance.

Fortunately a few families have cherished the material possessions of their Pre-Loyalist ancestors. Centres particularly rich in such artifacts include the Sheffield-Maugerville area, Saint John and nearby localities, and the Chignecto Isthmus-Sackville-Fort Beausejour region. The discoveries range through maps and legal documents to chairs, tables and clocks, portraits, silver, china and personal military items. Before this project is concluded I hope that a few more will come to light.

The Hazen powder horn with its illustrated cities, wild animals, mottos and coat of arms, is a particularly fine example of map horns made for service during the Seven Years' War. It gives us insights into the geography and the life-styles of the day. Another significant artifact from the period is this *ceramic milk pan*, or platter, from the excavation site of the trading post of James Simonds, William Hazen and James White (Illustration 3). These three partners, including the owner of the powder horn, came from Newburyport, Massachusetts, to establish a trading post on Portland Point, at the mouth of the St. John River. This post played a major role, not only in supplying up-river settlers, but in the midst of crucial incidents



3. Simonds, Hazen and White Milkpan

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

— raids, Indian uprisings and the establishment of Fort Howe. The milk pan belongs in the category of redware, natural coloured reddish clay decorated with light-coloured slip which turns yellow in the burning. It very likely came from Newburyport, where a potter's dump of that era has yielded similar material.

The *oil portrait* shown in Illustration 4 is also connected with the Simonds, Hazen and White trading company. It is of *Elizabeth Hazen*, daughter of William Hazen, who married Loyalist Ward Chipman. She and her husband went to Boston to be painted by the famous Gilbert Stuart who produced, among other notable works, the definitive portrait of George Washington that appears on the American dollar. We have the original invoice for Elizabeth and her husband, dated 1817. It details, in copperplate handwriting, a total cost of \$236.00, including the frames. This portrait, of course, was painted after the period of immigration, but it depicts a Pre-Loyalist person, towards the end of an eventful life. It is not an outstanding Gilbert Stuart, but the features are lively and well-observed, with effective execution of the lace cap and tie. This portrait, and the three following, are in the collection of the New Brunswick Museum.



4. Elizabeth Hazen Ward

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

Illustration 5 represents another Pre-Loyalist — *Elizabeth Peabody*, the daughter of Captain Francis Peabody, who colonized Maugerville. She married James White, one of the original partners. From the style of the dress, this portrait was done in the late 1820s or early 30s. It is a good commercial portrait, probably by a New England artist. The style of execution does not suggest any of the handful of painters who were active in the Maritimes at this time.

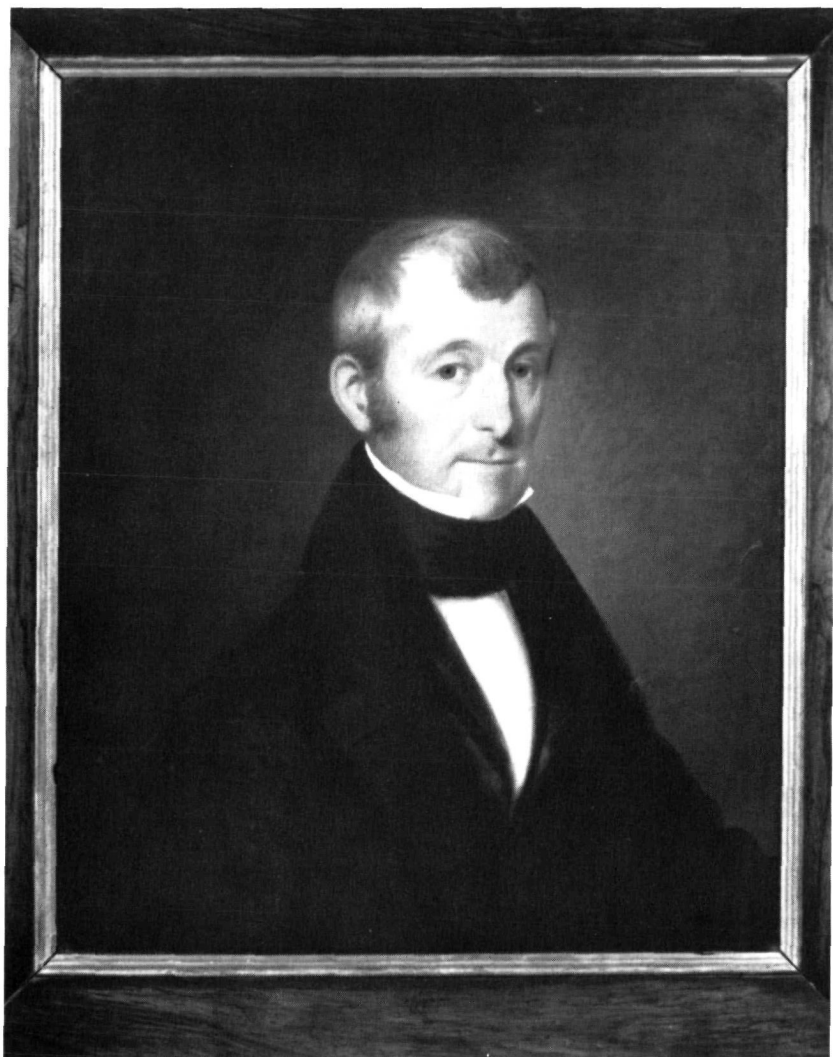
Illustration 6 depicts her son, *James White, Jr.* As a small child he watched the Loyalists land, and later became high sheriff of St. John



5. Elizabeth Peabody White

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

County. This portrait, too, is well executed by a painter with a high degree of skill. His sister, *Mary Elizabeth White* appears in Illustration 7. She became the wife of Nathaniel DeVeber, high sheriff of Queens County. These three portraits of a mother and her two children are probably by the same hand — certainly the mother and daughter are. All three strike the



6. James White Jr.

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

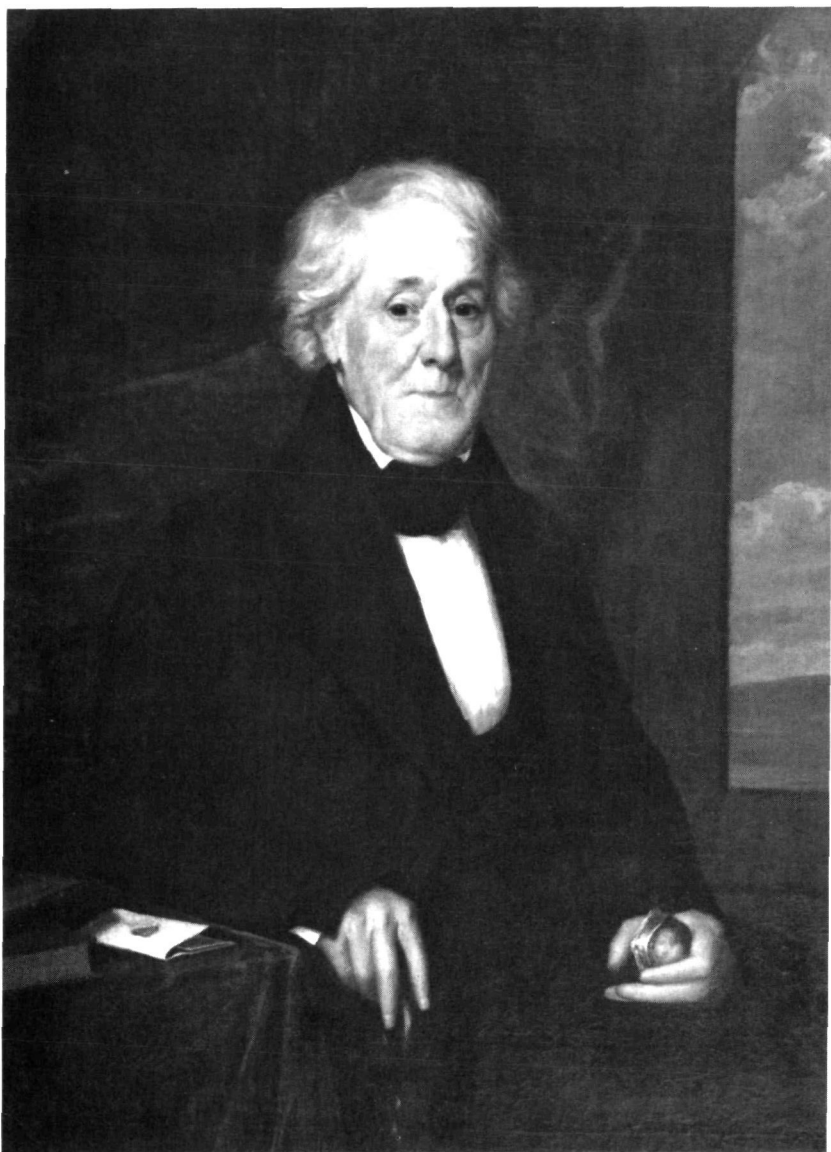
onlooker as strongly individualized characters, but the artist, whoever he was, did not sign these canvases. There are several likely candidates for the painter — or possibly painters — and the matter will soon be investigated.

Another portrait, shown in Illustration 8, depicts *Francis Peabody, Jr.*,



7. Mary Elizabeth White deVeber
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

the founder of Chatham. The artist is Albert Gallatin Hoit, an American who painted in the Maritimes in the 1830s and 40s. His style is more dramatic, more colourful, than that of the three unattributed paintings. It is in Loggie House, Chatham.



8. Francis Peabody Jr.

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

Illustration 9 is a miniature of *William Davidson*. He was a Scotsman from Inverness who established a lumbering colony of fellow Scots on the



9. William Davidson

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

Miramachi in 1766. After one too many Indian and American privateering raids, he moved his people to Maugerville, on the St. John River, returning north after the Revolutionary War. We do not know whether this miniature was painted in Scotland or North America, but it is nicely done.

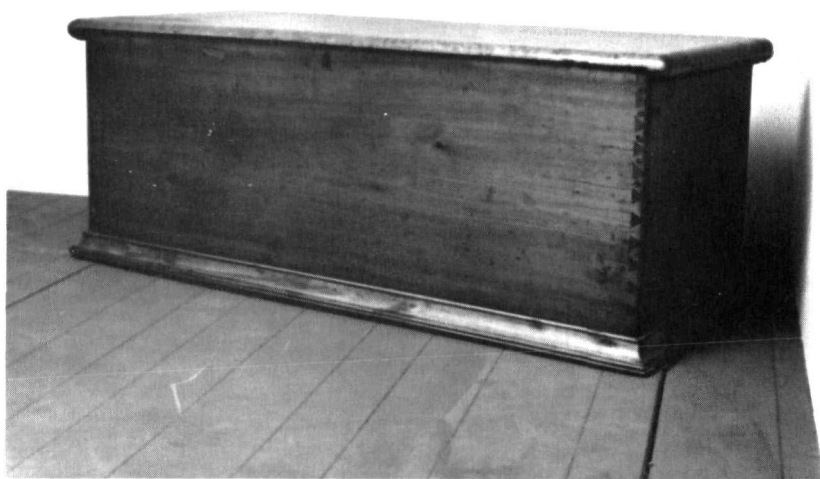


10. Pickard Desk

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

Stylistically it appears to be late eighteenth century. It was a gift to the New Brunswick Museum from the Davidson family.

The *Pickard desk* (Illustration 10) of flame, or curly birch, was reputedly brought to New Brunswick by Moses Pickard. He came from Rowley, Massachusetts, to take up lands on the St. John. This desk, evidently a treasured possession, is mentioned in Pickard's will of 1789, and again in his son's will of 1848. It was acquired for the museum from the family. It is possible that the desk came up from Massachusetts in the 1760s, but the scroll-cut bracket feet, and especially the ogee curve of the base, were stylistically more popular later, 1770-85. The same curve appears on the end pigeonhole arches. The four main drawers are graduated, and their



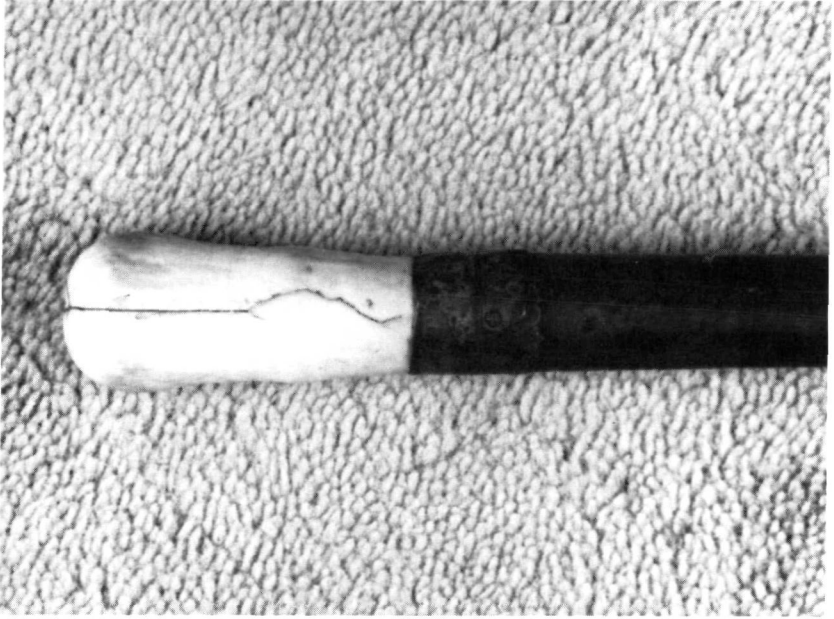
11. Pickard Daver Chest

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

bail handles are replacements. The original pulls were probably of a Chippendale pattern, with flat brass backplates.

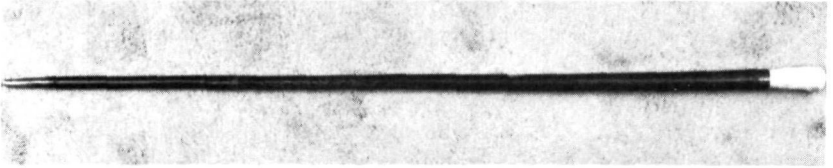
The *Pickard* maplewood dower, or blanket, *chest* (Illustration 11) still has its original handles and hinges, but the bottom rail seems to be a later addition — though not a recent one. The initials MP for Moses Pickard are carved on the ends. It is of a plain and practical design, with strong dove-tailed corners, and rounded edges to its lid. This is also in the New Brunswick Museum.

Still in the Pickard family, though another branch, the *cane* shown in Illustrations 12 a and b is also said to have come from Massachusetts in 1763. In fact, family tradition has it that the cane arrived in America with the original John Pickard, in 1640. It is of reddish wood, with an ivory handle and silver ferrule. Although its very tall and slender shape suggests a mid to late eighteenth-century origin, it may be a seventeenth-century cane. It is certainly an authentic old cane, and has been passed down the generations in the Pickard family, traditionally going to the eldest male in the connection.



12a. Pickard Cane

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



12b. Pickard Cane

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

The Otis *Pickard gateleg table* (Illustration 13) is a fine example of William Mary furniture. The square top is less frequently seen than the oval ones so often illustrated in sale catalogues and furniture reference books. The hinges appear to be original, and the mirror image turnings of the legs and stretchers are as they should be for the period. This maple table has been dated by antique appraisers to 1720-40, and it is likely that it was made closer to the end of that period. It is still in daily use, after some 250 years of well-cared-for life.

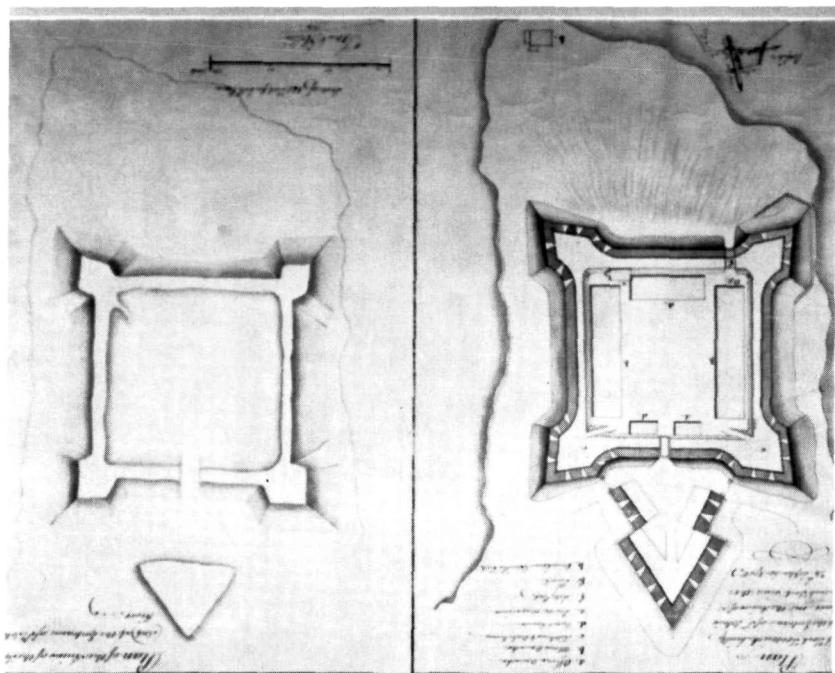


13. Pickard Gateleg Table

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

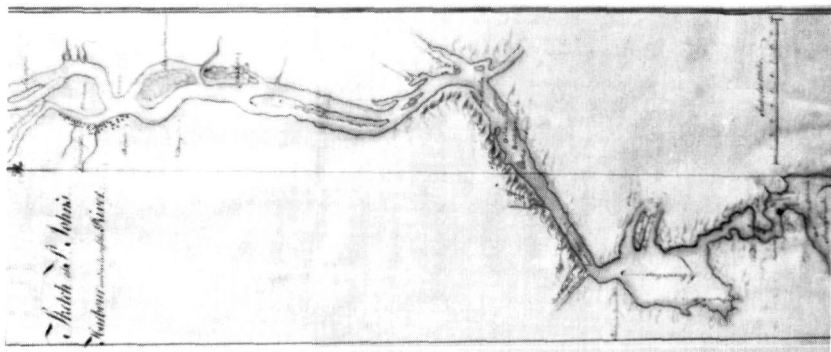
The original maps in Illustrations 14 a and b were done on the spot by *Samuel Holland* in 1758. The first is of *Fort Frederick*, at the mouth of the *St. John River*. It was done for Colonel Robert Monckton, who rebuilt and renamed the ruined French fort in that year. The second map is of the harbour and the course of the *St. John River* upstream as far as Grimross — present-day Gagetown. It shows a number of French place names, such as “Villeray,” “le Grand Baye,” and “Bay of Fundi.” It was done for “Brigadier James Wolfe” and can be found in the New Brunswick Museum’s collections.

The *notebook* found in Illustration 15 comes from another Pre-Loyalist family which has conserved its past. Started in 1764, at *Hawnby Hall*, Yorkshire, it would be continued by its owner, *William Chapman*, in Canada a decade later. The Chapman family settled in the Chignecto area of what was then Nova Scotia. William Chapman used it from 1776-77 to record the names and wages of the men of the district as they reconditioned *Fort Cumberland* to withstand the anticipated attacks of revolutionaries from the south. Among the names that appear are Chapman, Trueman, Anderson, Wood and Brown — “Carpenters in the King’s work at fort



14a. Fort Frederick

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



14b. St. John river

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

July 4 th paid to Carpenters		July 19 th paid to Carpenters	
Will: Chapman	9 5 9	Will: Chapman	1 0 0
Will: Chapman Junr	1 0 0	Will: Chapman Junr	1 0 0
Tho: Chapman	1 0 0	Tho: Chapman	1 0 0
Will: Wood	1 0 0	Jo: Anderson	1 0 0
Jo: Anderson	1 0 0	Sam: Freeman	1 0 0
Sam: Freeman	1 0 0	Geo: MacLarence	1 0 0
Jon: Besto	1 0 0	John Willoson	1 0 0
Geo: MacLarence	1 0 0	Will: Brown	1 3 4
John Willoson	1 0 0	Will: Wood	0 15 0
Henry Mattem	1 0 0		
July 27 th Receipts of Settlement Bale for the years of the Carpenters 8 8 0		August 13 th Receipts of Settlement Bale for the yance of the Carpenters in the Kings work at Fort Comberland 10 0 0	

15. Chapman Notebook

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

comberland." They seem to have been paid about a pound a week. The notebook is at Fort Beausejour, the old French, and now the modern name of old Fort Cumberland. In addition to this record book, the Simonds, Hazen and White account books have also survived, as well as numerous deeds and grant documents.

Now we come to several artifacts from the collections in Fort Beausejour. Robert Elliot, who has published on aspects of military history, will comment on the next two items.

ELLIOT:

The *Goodwin drum* (Illustration 16) was passed down through that family from Enoch Goodwin who was a drummer boy at Fort Cumberland. The authentication or dating of such objects may be accomplished by several methods. Stylistic analysis reveals that this instrument's proportions and construction conform to like drums employed during the mid to late eighteenth century, while infrared photography may reveal an underlying crest or inscription obscured by the present crest and cipher of



16. Goodwin Drum

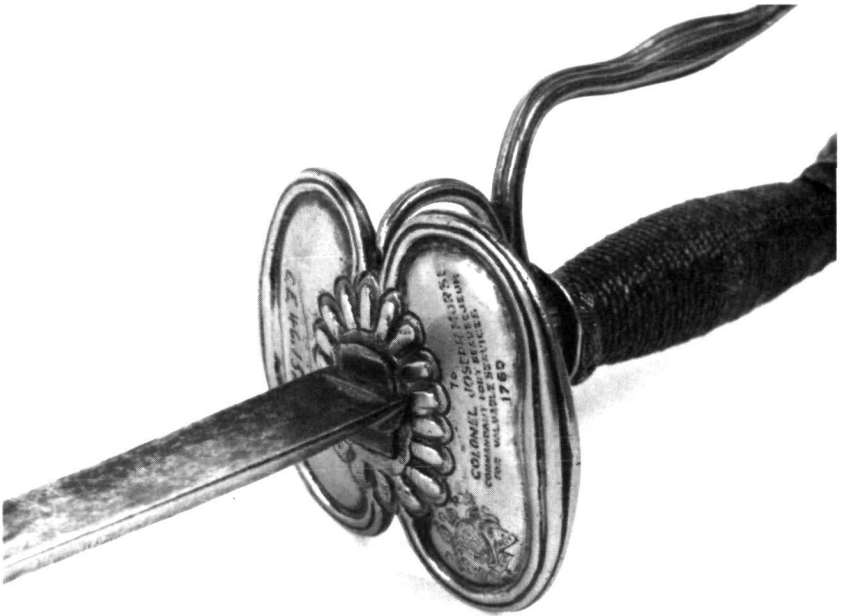
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

King George III, and the inscription of the 2nd Battalion of the Westmorland County militia. Chemical analysis of pigment layers may also indicate paints of different ages. However, we are also faced with difficulties due to the artifact's alteration history. For instance, drum heads would have been replaced on a regular basis. On this particular example, the rope is an obvious replacement, as are the leather ears.



17a. Morse Sword

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



17b. Morse Sword

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

The officer's *sword* (Illustrations 17 a and b), said to have been the property of *Colonel Joseph Morse*, illustrates other problems which hamper authentication. Clearly labelled as a presentation piece, the



18. Morse Chair

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

sword's configuration conforms to officers' swords used during the Seven Years' War, despite the fact that the British Military did not adopt a set pattern until the end of that century. The inscription is most certainly of a date later than 1760, since the lettering is not characteristic of the period

and the engraving cuts too deeply into the metal. The off-centre positioning of the Royal Coat-of-Arms also appears to indicate that it too was a later addition. It should also be noted that Fort Beausejour was known as Fort Cumberland by 1760, and yet the inscription provides the older name.

MacDONALD:

Another item of Morsiana is a maple, rush-seated *ladder-back chair* (Illustration 18). A plaque placed on the chairback by descendant Sir Frederick Williams-Taylor (probably the same man who had the inscription put on his ancestor's sword), says that Colonel *Morse* (1721-1770) used the chair at the fort. Morse was granted land in the area in 1764. The tale that goes with the chair is an excellent example of the pitfalls of family tradition. Colonel Morse is said to have been some seven feet tall, thus accounting for the height of the seat from the ground. But the proportions of the chair are quite wrong for the accommodation of such a big man, and furthermore there is no trace of this unusual height in records, nor of Morse having been commandant of the fort, as stated in the spurious inscription on his sword. In fact, this most probably is an accounting chair, made to fit under a high desk. Morse served as commissary officer in his previous post at Fort Oswego, and as such had much to do with accounts. The chair is a strange piece, with unusual stretcher turnings for the 1760s, and for which an Acadian influence has been suggested, and the painted leaf design on the back splats is a later addition.

Illustration 19 shows a piece of *Colonel Morse's waistcoat*. Although incomplete, it does not give the impression of a garment that would fit a seven-footer, even a frail one. But this is one of the few Pre-Loyalist textiles on hand. The silk damask fabric is of a design correct for mid eighteenth-century tastes, which favoured moderately small flower and leaf patterns.

The *Morse goblet* (Illustration 20), of silver and also located at Fort Beausejour, might have belonged to the colonel, as claimed. The classical shape and the beading are appropriate for the period, especially if this is a plated English piece. Specialized examination is in order here also.

The *Trueman glass decanter* (Illustration 21) and the *china* (Illustration 22), also demonstrates the hazards of crediting tradition. They are said to have come to this region with the original Yorkshire settlers, in the 1770s, but although they are early pieces, they were probably acquired by the second generation sometime after 1783. The handsome decanter dates to at least 1800 and more probably is early Victorian. The *teapot plate* and drum, or cylinder, *cup* are very attractive with their blue and gold decoration, but they too are later than 1783, and belong to the early part of the nineteenth century. The china has no markings.

An authentic and unusual timepiece (Illustrations 23 a and b) is one of a



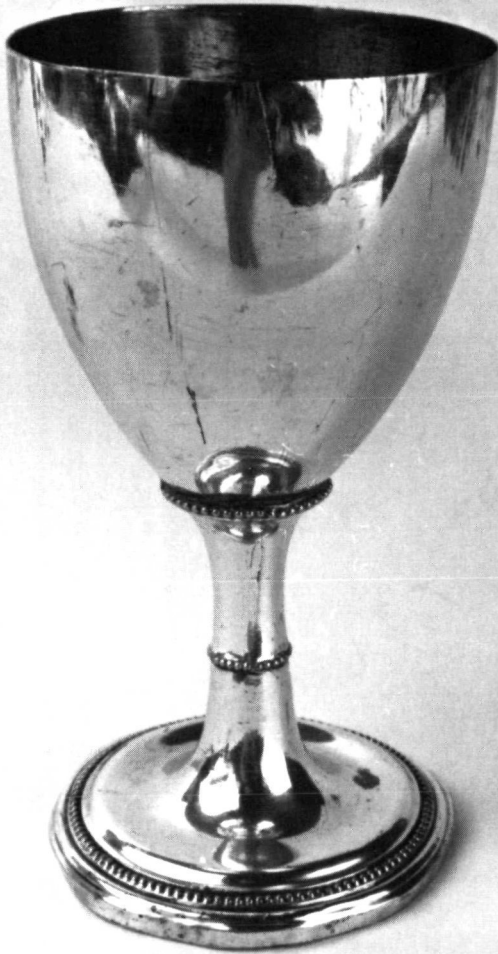
19. Morse Waistcoat

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

group of tall case clocks which have survived from Pre-Loyalist times. This is the *Trueman clock*, whose brass face and works came from Yorkshire in 1774, with the William Trueman family. The case was made after their arrival in the Chignecto area. There are cherub heads in relief on the spandrels, Roman numerals for the hours, and the lower dial is inscribed with the maker's name: "R. Henderson, Scarborough." This is a listed Yorkshire clockmaker; his dates are 1678-1756. Several other Henderson clocks have been noted and described elsewhere.

This is an unusual clock because it was made with only one hand. They were not uncommon in rural districts because, in country life, the precise moment of time indicated by the second hand was seldom needed. These were less expensive pieces than two-handed, chiming clocks, and those with such added touches as moon phases and rocking ships. A similar one-hand clock is in the York Castle museum.

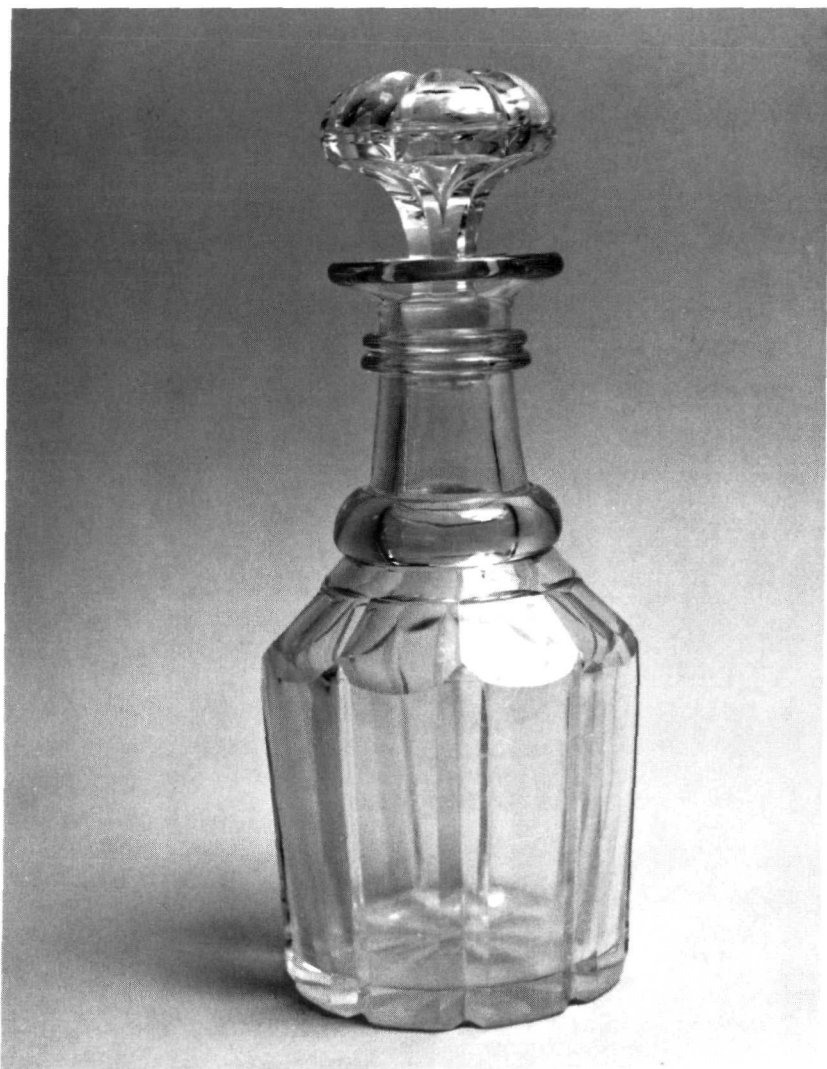
The case has a hood with slim turned pilasters which frame the clock face, and complex cove moldings which are echoed at the base. The door



20. Morse Goblet

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

has butt hinges of eighteenth-century pattern, one plate of which is visible. This is a plainer copy of a classic design of the period, made of local wood — perhaps by one of those carpenters who worked on the fort. Tradition



21. Trueman Decanter

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

has it that the wood is “hackmatack” — tamarack or larch — but this is yet to be tested. The Trueman family still owns it.

Illustration 24 shows one of three black painted, seven-spindle *Windsor chairs*, all with saddle seats in a shield shape. They are also *Trueman*



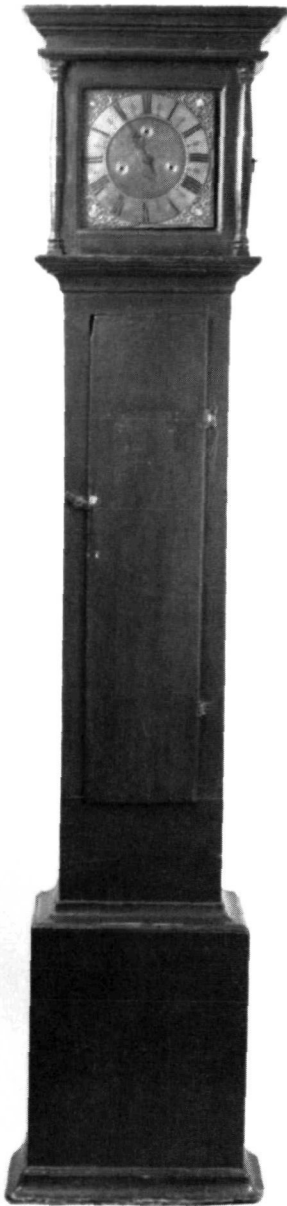
22. Trueman Teapot Plate, Cup

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

furniture, and are a puzzle as to place of origin and date. The stretcher shapes, especially, suggest a date later than the 1780s, and an American origin, possibly Rhode Island, not England. The chairs are said to be acquired from another family of Yorkshire settlers who went back to England. Wood analysis should indicate the country of origin.

A *corner armchair*, or roundabout, also reported to have arrived from Yorkshire with the family is shown in Illustration 25. The seat has been renewed, and the chair once had a high comb with crest rail, at the back, already removed when it left England. It is vernacular furniture, a simple version of transitional Chippendale, with scrolled arms and straight Marlborough-style legs and stretchers. Here, too, we need to establish the country of origin. The stocky, sturdy design does indeed suggest an English source.

Prospect Farm (the original Trueman house) is the subject of the painting found in Illustration 26. It was constructed of Tantramars Marsh mudbrick, in the late eighteenth century. The painting was done in 1917 by Dr. Elizabeth Macleod of Mount Allison University, and that same year



23a. Trueman Clock

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



23b. Trueman Clock (detail)
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

the house was demolished, because of constant shifting and cracking problems.

Illustrations 27 a and b show the Chapman house, also made of local brick, which still stands. Yorkshireman William Chapman built it on his



24. Trueman Black Windsor Chair
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

farm which now straddles the border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The house dates from 1779 and is lived in today by Chapman descendants. Many design similarities mark these two houses, which probably echo the comfortable type of dwelling to which these prosperous tenant-farmers were accustomed in England. Although the execution of



25. Trueman Corner Armchair
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

the brickwork is rough, the design of the stone and brick detail above doors and windows is skillful and well-balanced.

Another inheritance from the *Chapmans*, the works of this *clock* shown in Illustration 28 also came out with William Chapman. The softwood



26. Trueman House — Prospect Farm
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

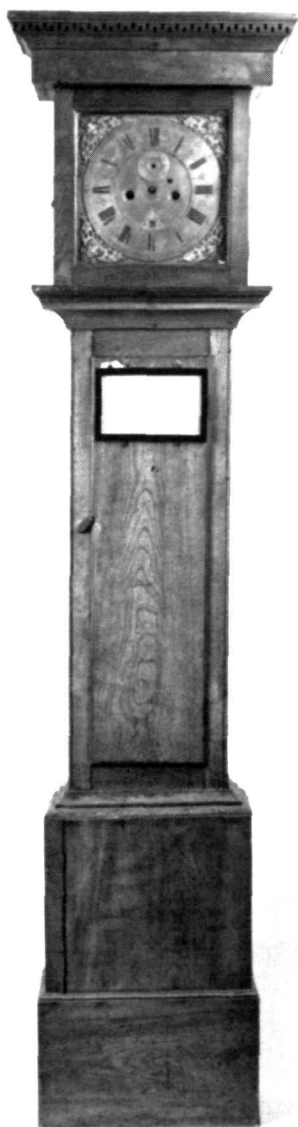


27a. Chapman House
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



27b. Chapman House (detail)
(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

case, with its fine dentil decoration on the bonnet top, is reputed to have been made on arrival here, and Peter Etter, a skilled craftsman at Fort Cumberland, who dealt in clocks and watches, is thought to have had a hand in its construction. The brass works are inscribed "Jos. Phillips, New York." This maker is listed as being active 1713-35.



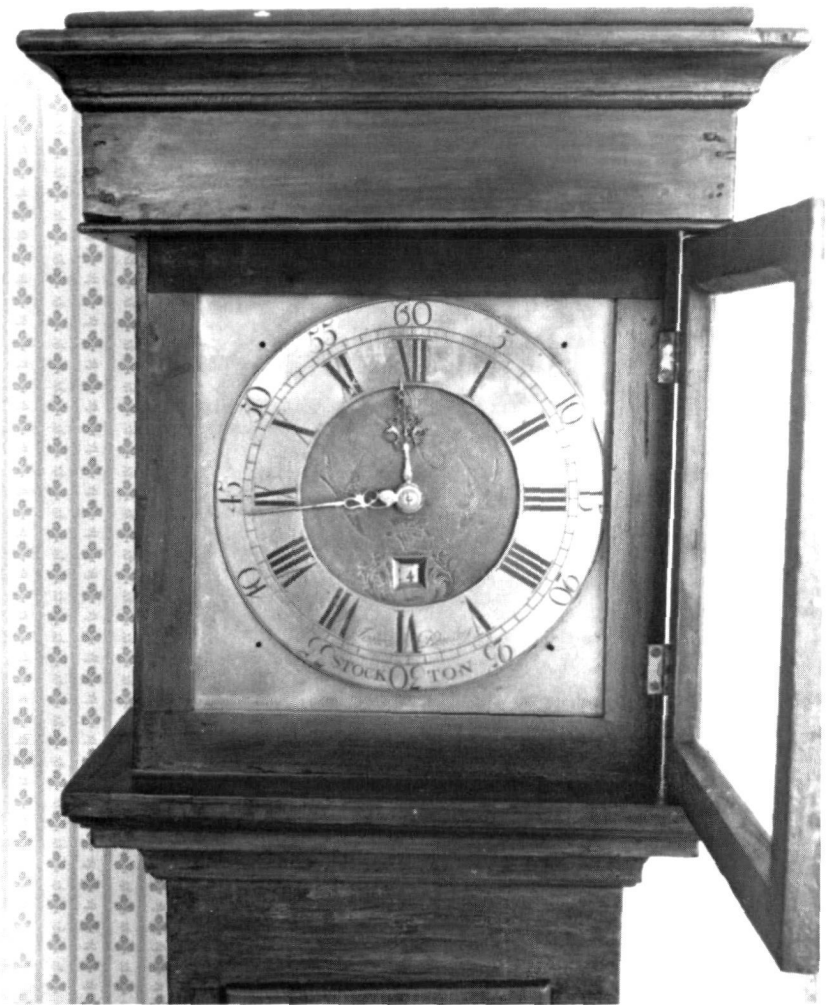
28. Chapman clock

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



29a. Dixon Clock

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)



29b. Dixon Clock

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

The clock in Illustrations 29 a and b is still with the family in Sackville. *Charles Dixon*, Yorkshireman, brought it out in 1772, and again the case, similar in construction to the others, was locally made. Its brass face is inscribed “John Bentley, Stockton,” for Stockton-on-Tees. There are several reference listings for a John Bentley, clockmaker, in this region in the mid to late eighteenth century. The decorated spandrels on the clock

face are missing, but the clock has both its hands and actually works — which is more than either of the others do.

Finally, Illustration 30 depicts the *Keillor armchair*. John Keillor and his family arrived from Yorkshire in 1772. Some of the construction details of this chair — squared Marlborough legs and stretchers, solid, sturdy shape and scrolled arms — are similar to the Trueman corner armchair, but this is a more elegant design, whose pierced back splat and crest rail are simplifications of patterns originating in Thomas Chippendale's *Gentlemen's and Cabinet-Maker's Directory*, which appeared in 1762.



30. Keillor Armchair

(Courtesy of New Brunswick Museum)

The chair has been much restored, with the seat replaced, and probably legs cut down. One family story is that the Keillor group travelled the arduous overland route from Halifax to the Sackville region, taking this one chair with them. The rest of the furniture went around by sea but was wrecked before reaching its destination. This, they say, was the only original piece they had left. The armchair is now in Keillor House, Dorchester, New Brunswick.

As can be seen from the examples shown, the authentication of such a wide variety of objects involves many fields of expertise — and there are many more artifacts under study than those shown here. For instance, a simple plank-top trestle table from New England, a Moncton-area pod auger from the Pennsylvannian-Dutch immigration, a lock from the Jemseg fort, several more clocks, two beautiful Queen Anne tables and a Paul Revere silver ladle.

Technical work on all this material is continuing and will proceed by research in libraries, by seeking the opinions of experts and by examination of comparable pieces in the northern United States. We would welcome any suggestions on solving the problems of authentication, and would also be glad to learn of any other surviving artifacts of these Pre-Loyalists English-speakers — New Brunswick's Early Comers, many of whom were New England Planters. We envisage several forms of publication, and by the time this project concludes we hope to have placed a solid segment of this exciting but neglected era in our history firmly on the record.

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