

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

In 2024, we've worked hard to review our properties and develop a strategic plan that identifies short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects. We've engaged Architect Boyd Algee to conduct a Building Conditions Assessment report on each of our four buildings. This work has begun. We had an initial walkthrough earlier in the summer and another last week with a team of construction consultants; we started with the Payzant and Card building.

Earlier this year we were informed by an engineering firm assessment that the Payzant and Card building's front end is in sound condition with potential for further development. We were also informed that the back end of the building would need to be removed. The assessment report from Boyd Algee and team will help us determine the best course of action for this work but there is now hope that it can be saved.

Significant structural work is required for some of the buildings. We need to see the full picture before planning, scheduling, and determining funding sources.

We are also mindful that the three walls not re-enforced at the Keillor House require significant work and will be part of our plan, once we receive assessments on the four buildings.

In 2024, we completed much-needed electrical work at the fully rented Bell Inn, which houses four apartments and one commercial lease. We also converted the former Bell Inn Restaurant into a large one-bedroom apartment. We also hired a painting firm that has replaced damaged shingles and clapboarding along with the new paint. It is currently the jewel of the town square.

The Keillor House and St. James Tex-

tile Museums have been bustling with activity since the grand opening in June. There have been several activities and a special mention of the exhibit Soif d’illusion / Illusion of the Self and the Traditional Artistry festival. What a great group of employees and volunteers we have had this year!

We were fortunate to employ Keegan over the winter months to help us apply for grants and other funding opportunities. It is with mixed emotions that we say goodbye to Keegan at the end of this season as he and his wife will be moving to Halifax.

I am proud to announce that our society is becoming more diverse. While we have deep connections to our colonial story, our community is also rich in First Nations and Acadian history. Nicole Porter, a First Nations person, and Bernie LeBlanc and Phil Landry

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KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

Friends of Keillor House – October 6th

Victorian Christmas Dinner – November 30th, December 7th

Connect with us on social media or visit our website to see upcoming special events!

Keillorhousemuseum.com Instagram: @keillorhousemuseum Facebook: keillor-house

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MUSEUM MANAGER'S REPORT

I am pleased to once again to report on a successful summer museum season packed with new visitors and special events, but with the unfortunate caveat that I will soon be stepping down from my role. It has been a wonderful experience and learning opportunity working as Manager/Curator for Keillor House Museum and St. James Textile Museum. My wife and I have made the difficult decision to move to Nova Scotia in pursuit of other opportunities. I hope that the vacant position will be filled by someone with the energy and inspiration to help these phenomenal museums to continue to grow. I will be working with the Board of Directors of the Westmorland Historical Society to ensure that the transition is smooth and that my successor is set up for success.

This has been a busy year, and much was accomplished thanks to the dedication of new and returning summer employees. We have been fortunate enough to receive support from new employment funding organizations, which allowed me to build various positions in support of different museum goals. Our returning employees were Amy Colpitts, Bill Hovey, and Mirren Lithwick, all of whom brought their own strengths to their roles of Curatorial Assistant and Museum Docents. Their familiarity with the museums made it easier to delegate responsibilities and keep our programming running smoothly while also addressing curatorial tasks. Meaghan Barnable joined us as another Curatorial Assistant, working closely with Amy to manage our recent acquisitions and update our digital collections database. Lauren Reid stepped up as the new Textile Museum Assistant, welcoming visitors while creating weaving projects with increasing proficiency. Alelia Miller, a local high school student, distinguished herself with her motivated attitude and provided excellent bilingual interpretation at both museums. Finally, we were extremely fortunate to be joined by Alana Morouney in the role of Textile Museum Specialist. As a knowledgeable and accomplished local artist, she was able to coordinate weaving projects of varying complexity on all of St. James looms, ensuring a thoughtful and consistent workflow with the textile museum's employees. She has helped reintroduce fibre dyeing as an aspect of St. James' interpretation, using the space to experiment with natural local dyestuffs to the delight and fascination of visitors.

The special temporary exhibit *Soif d'Illusion / Illusion of the Self* was Keillor House's most experimental offering of the year. Five acclaimed Canadian sculptural artists, each assigned to a different room in the house, created original artworks to connect with the themes explored therein. The opening event for the exhibit was well attended and many visitors throughout the summer credited the installation for bringing Keillor House to their attention. Many thanks must be given to Guillaume Adjutor Provost, who proposed the project and secured Canada Council for the Arts funding that secured accomplished artists, high quality exhibit texts, and media attention for the project. Among other events Keillor House offered the Traditional Artistry Festival on Sandpiper Festival weekend, seeing an excellent turnout. More are forthcoming, including the ever-popular Christmas Dinners.

It has been a great pleasure and fulfilling challenge to contribute to Dorchester's museums these past two years. I look forward to all that the Westmorland Historical Society will accomplish in the future.

Keegan Hiltz

with their Acadian roots will guide us.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Directors Nicole Porter and Tanya Clydesdale. Pjila'si and welcome!

In closing, we have a lot of work ahead of us. We are prepared to do this correctly in a logical and determined manner. I am proud to be the president of the WHS and I look forward to serving you.

Bonnie Chapman Roy

SHOPPING IN THE EARLY CHIGNECTO: THE FIRST STORES AND STORE-KEEPERS OF WESTMORLAND, SACKVILLE, AND DORCHESTER TOWNSHIPS

IT IS SOMETHING OF A CLICHÉ IN THE HISTORICAL LITERATURE that pioneer families, especially those that lived on the land—in other words, the majority—were largely self-sufficient and so didn't need to run to the store too often. The cliché is true, as far as it goes. The early settlers typically produced most of their own basic foodstuffs—meat, milk, vegetables, eggs, etc.—and made many of their own clothes—sometimes even shoes—as well as soap, candles and many other essential articles of daily life. But, while these were necessary, they were not sufficient to civilized life. In order to fell the forests, plough the fields, dig the dykes, build the houses, barns, mills, etc. they needed many items that were simply not produced in this region, or at least not in the homes of the inhabitants. These included such things as metal tools, hardware, nails, needles and thread, guns, gunpowder, grindstones, and even salt. Other items, while not dire necessities, were certainly desired amenities, among them sugar, spices, molasses, manufactured cloth, combs, cutlery, pottery, dishware and—especially—tea, tobacco, rum, and other alcoholic beverages. (Actually, many *would* have classed tea, tobacco, and rum as dire necessities.) Then there were luxuries such as silks and spices, buckles and bows, ribbons and lace, silverware and candlesticks, clocks and watches, etc. that were no less in demand by those who could afford them.

Whether necessity, luxury, or something in between, all these things and many others as well had to be imported into a society that was almost completely agrarian. And this meant merchants and storekeepers, who were here even before the first New England settlers arrived following the expulsion of the Acadians. (Although they were even more self-sufficient than their Anglophone successors, Acadians of necessity traded with Louisbourg and New England merchants for certain indispensable items, but it is unclear whether there were storekeepers as such among them.) The first centre of commerce in post-Acadian Chignecto was Fort Cumberland, called Fort Beauséjour by the French. The

garrison of several hundred men and officers had to be provisioned and this was the responsibility of the fort's commissariat, a group of officers and commissioned traders/vessel owners under the command of Joshua Winslow, Commissary General of the British forces in Nova Scotia. Among the traders was John Huston, a former Captain in the Massachusetts regiment that took Fortress Louisbourg from the French (for the first time) in 1745. He was rewarded with an appointment as a Deputy Crown Surveyor, in which capacity he carried out one of the earliest surveys of Sackville Township. He was also elected to represent Cumberland Township in the provincial legislature. No doubt Huston and others of his kind like Senacherib Martyn (whom we met in the February 2024 issue of the *Newsletter* as one of the Chignecto slave owners) brought their wares to the fort where they were distributed to the garrison. But did they also establish or supply retail stores that were later patronized by the New England settlers, who began to arrive in 1762? This is a bit of a vexed question because of the almost complete lack of direct documentary evidence, such as ledgers and other records that would have been kept by the storekeepers. We can, however, make some reasonable surmises based on indirect testimony and the inherent probability of the situation. In his well known *History of Sackville* (Chapter II) our good old standby, W.C. Milner, in describing the lack of security around Fort Cumberland before the arrival of the New England settlers, mentions a transport vessel captured by “the French and Indians” during the night of April 4, 1759. He said it was “loaded with beef, pork, flour, bread, rice, peas, rum, wine, sugar, lemons, beer, shoes, shirts, stockings and other goods laden at Halifax *for the shopkeepers at the Fort.*” This implies that within the fort or its immediate surroundings there were retail stores/shops run by storekeepers who sold goods brought in by trad-

ers like Huston and Martyn that were supplemental to the troops' regular provisions, which surely did not include "wine, sugar, lemons, beer, shoes, shirts, and stockings, etc." Such stores would have been the logical places where the early settlers bought—or traded for—the essential items as well as certain amenities and luxuries they could not produce themselves.

The earliest evidence I could find of dedicated stores serving the Planter farmers comes from a small pamphlet published in 1784 by Thomas Rispin and John Robinson offering information on the Nova Scotia Planters to fellow prospective Yorkshire settlers. After informing their readers that "trade is chiefly carried on by the bartering of their goods...wheat, butter, cheese, beasts and horses, or whatever is convenient for them," R. and R. went on to explain that "there are merchants, *whom they call store-keepers*, who derive great advantage, by supplying them with all sorts of cloths, linen as well as woolen, and wearing apparel; also rum, sugar, molasses, &c. imported from Boston and the West Indies, for which they receive the produce of the country, and export it in return for the merchandize they receive from abroad." Although they do not specifically locate them, the authors seem to imply that by the time they visited here, stores were established in other places besides the fort. A couple of them could very well have been in Sackville, if for no other reason than the inconvenience of travelling to Fort Cumberland over several miles of marsh mud and swollen streams. But the possibility has more substance behind it than the inherent probability of the situation. Milner believed that Sackville's first store was the one kept at Westcock by Stephen Millidge. In the course of researching my book *Stephen Millidge: The Surprising Story of a Sackville Loyalist* (published by the Tantramar Heritage Trust in 2018) I discovered that Stephen was in partnership with his father-in-law, Amos Botsford, who had been granted a retail licence by the General Sessions of the Peace, the bi-annual meeting of the county's Justices of the Peace that acted both as a court of law and the administrative body of local government, in 1791. This was three years before Stephen received his first one in 1794. More-

over, Botsford did not build the store himself but purchased it in 1791 from Jonathan Burnham, who had come as a small child with his Planter parents first to Cumberland and then to Sackville during the 1760s. There is no way of knowing for sure how long the store had been running before Burnham sold it to Botsford, but a good guess would be that it was established sometime in the 1780s. There will be more to say about the Burnham/Botsford/Millidge store later in this article. Leading Yorkshire settler Charles Dixon, who came to Sackville in 1772, was said (by his grandson, James, who wrote a family history and genealogy) to have established a small retail store that he stocked by trading his farm produce at Halifax. But we are given no further particulars.

After explaining that the Planters were forced to buy goods from "the merchants whom they call store-keepers" on a year's credit at no less than one hundred percent interest, Robinson and Rispin went on to say that if other merchants were to move in and break their monopoly, prices could be cut in half. This is what seems to have happened with the influx of Yorkshire, and especially Loyalist, settlers. Within a decade or so of Robinson and Rispin's visit there were enough merchants in the area for them to be in some competition for customers, with a corresponding improvement in prices and the terms of credit. The record of the Westmorland County General Sessions of the Peace reveals that no less than sixty-eight individuals were licensed to retail goods between 1785 and 1809 when the surviving record ends. Others appear to have done so without paying for a licence. True, not all of them were full-time merchants who renewed their retail licence every year. Quite a few were enterprising farmers with surplus meat, cheese, etc. to sell, or astute advantage seekers who stocked up on a few extras from one of the regular merchant for resale to neighbours unable to make the journey to the regular merchant's place of business. In the course of my researches on the Keillors I came across a Dorchester resident who took a considerable quantity of goods on consignment from a Saint John merchant to sell locally. (We will meet the Saint John merchant below.) But quite a number of them *were* full-time merchants in the sense that they kept stores and ledgers recording their sales, which were mostly on credit. But, rather than being able to demand a yearly settle-

ment of the accounts with a usurious one hundred percent/annum interest charge, the new generation of store-keepers had to be content with a much more reasonable six percent interest rate and a prospect of carrying their customers year after year until they could pay up—which some of them never did.

The earliest ledgers from a Chignecto retail store that my researches turned up were those of *Richard Lowerison*, a Yorkshire immigrant who first settled with his family on the Petitcodiac River near Moncton. According to a story his great-grandson told Howard Trueman, repeated in the latter's well known *The Chignecto Isthmus and its First Settlers*, he left there because of raids during the Eddy Rebellion of 1776 and bought a farm just west of Fort Cumberland. A man of some means, he soon partnered with a Halifax cattle dealer named Reese to send droves of beef cattle to the Halifax market over the same road to Partridge Island and from there to Windsor by ferry—and from there to Halifax, again by drovers—that William Trueman used, as described in the February 2023 issues of the *Newsletter* (“The Trueman Family Fonds at Mount Allison”). Unfortunately, Reese turned out to be a rotter, “running away with the proceeds of three droves of cattle, leaving Mr. Lowerison accountable for the cattle with no cash on hand to meet the bills.” The shock permanently affected his mind but not enough to prevent him from establishing a small retail store on the farm in an effort to make up his losses. Proof that it was indeed a retail store may be found in the only survivor among a series of account books that he kept to record transactions with his customers. The story of how it survived is worth telling as it illustrates one of my favourite themes: that the writing of history is utterly dependent upon the survival of records, and the survival of records has its own history that is just as liable to flukes and accidents as any other history.

The hero of the story is the late Régis Brun, a long-time, and highly respected, associate of the Centre d'études acadiennes at the Université de Moncton. During the summer of 1966 Régis was boarding at a farm near Mount Whatley that had once belonged to the Lowerisons. One day during dinner, Mrs. Hicks, the wife of the then owner, mentioned some-

thing about some old books in the attic of the historic farmhouse and invited him to have a look. There he found a “treasure trove” of Richard Lowerison's ledgers dating from 1782 to the 1830s. She offered to give him one, and he chose the oldest. Immediately realizing its value, he donated it to the newly founded Musée acadien and had it in mind to acquire its companions until he learned that since his stay at the farm they had all been taken out of the attic and burned. The new patriarch of the household apparently didn't like snoops, especially if they were egg-headed academics. Today, even the farmhouse is gone. Although the only surviving account book covers only a short period, it is an extremely valuable record, as it offers a snapshot of the buying habits of a very considerable portion of the families living in the vicinity of Fort Cumberland, as well as a very clear impression of the scope of business carried on by a typical retailer at that time. The complete set would have been a ‘pearl of great price’ for local history.

The surviving ledger for the years 1782-1789 includes the accounts of 173 customers, many of whose names are still familiar in these parts: Bulmer, Chapman, Fillmore, Harper, Patton, Siddal, Trueman, Keillor, etc. A good idea of the range of goods Lowerison sold may be gleaned from the accounts of John Keillor and his nine-year old brother, William, a fair bit of them bought for their widowed mother, Mary Thompson Keillor. (This was before John married Betsy Wheldon and moved over to Dorchester.) John purchased everyday staples such as tea, soap, sugar, starch, knives and forks, shingle nails, a pair of shoes, and three awls. But he also bought luxuries such as garters, ribbon, lace, and silk (no doubt for his mother) as well as bluing (for whitening laundry), a penknife, and a horn comb. William's account (opened no doubt so that he could shop for his mother) included, besides everyday items such as linen, sugar, rope, nails, and tea, a number of more exotic goodies like nutmeg, currants, gartering, sleeve buttons, silk, and a pair of shoe buckles. Each of them also bought a small amount of rum, again most likely for their mother, who apparently liked a little nip on occasion. Rum was also on the shopping list of many, although not all, of Lowerison's other customers. So, too, were, besides the items they

bought in common with the Keillors, gunpowder, molasses, tobacco, indigo (for dyeing cloth), wool, writing paper, beef and mutton, hats, handkerchiefs, and even a “marsh spade.” Lowerison’s stock was pretty typical of what I found in the surviving records of the other early stores. In order to avoid tedious repetition, when we come to them I will emphasize items that were different from those offered by Lowerison or unusual in any of the stores. By the end of the article you should have a pretty good idea of the range of goods available, if not always easily available, to the early post-Acadian inhabitants of the Chignecto.

Richard Lowerison died in 1825 at age 84, having served the Fort Cumberland community well as a provider of goods that could not be produced in the home. Strangely enough, he never took out a retail licence. Or if he did it is not mentioned in the record of the General Sessions of the Peace, which it should have been if he had either done so or been fined for failing to do so. Yet, we have the ledger recording the accounts of 131 of his customers for the years 1792-1789 and Régis Brun’s word that he personally saw further Lowerison ledgers from the 1830s. (Did one of his sons take over the store?) This seems like pretty good evidence that he ran a regular retail store and was not simply one of those who occasionally and opportunistically sold goods to their neighbours. I can’t explain the lack of evidence that he ever paid for a retail licence, but I comfort myself with the thought that there are a lot of things that even historians can’t explain.

Another Yorkshire immigrant who *did* pay for a retail licence (no less than eight times between 1791 and 1809—they were only valid for a year) was *William Wells*. Back in Yorkshire he had been a mason and bricklayer as well as one of the early converts to Methodism inspired by the sermons of John Wesley himself. One fruit of his conversion was the Methodist chapel he built in his hometown of Thirsk. Among the more prosperous ‘Yorkies’ who arrived in the Chignecto beginning in 1772, he purchased a fertile farm at La Coupe and proceeded to raise a large family that included two sons, William Junior and George, who partnered with him in running a retail store and a blacksmith shop. Exactly how his previous experience as a stonemason and bricklayer aided in these enterprises

is unclear, but it’s a reminder of how adaptable and resilient these early settlers were. As in the old country, Wells played a prominent role in the local Methodist movement, as did his close friend, neighbour, and fellow Methodist, William Trueman of Point de Bute. Trueman’s grandson, Howard, the author of *The Chignecto Isthmus and its First Settlers*, which has preserved so much of the area’s early history, tells us that Wells “enjoyed a special gift in prayer, and not infrequently, in the absence of the minister, read the burial service over the dead.”

There is no way of knowing exactly when Wells established his retail store, but it was no doubt some time before he took out his first retail licence in 1791, the year the Westmorland County General Sessions of the Peace began to issue them. Before 1784, when New Brunswick was created as a separate province, the Cumberland County General Sessions may have issued him a licence, but no record of it has survived. A greater likelihood is that, like other merchants before 1791, he simply retailed without a licence.

The only record of his retail business is a single ledger detailing his transactions with 117 customers from 1810 to 1822 (handled by his sons after his death in 1819) that somehow survived to make its way into the Mount Allison University Archives. (I don’t know how it got there.) Most of his customers were from the Point de Bute area: John and Richard Dobson (William was married to a daughter of neighbour George Dobson), Thomas Chapman, George Chapple, Stephen Ward, Jeremiah Brownell, William Oulton, William Copp, Charles Bulmer, Jonathon Rayworth, etc. But at least one of them, John Anderson of Shemogue, was “from away.” In perusing the items bought by Wells’ customers I could not help noticing the substantial portion that consisted of liquor. This would not be surprising in a notoriously hard-drinking society (an early New Brunswick historian calculated that in 1824 enough hard liquor was imported into the province to supply every male over age sixteen with nearly twenty gallons), except that William Wells was a fervent follower of John Wesley, who demanded strict moderation in matters of the bottle, and complete abstinence for those seeking the perfection of Christian life. Whatever

Wells' own drinking habits were—and they were most likely as moderate as those of his friend and brother in Christ, William Trueman—he had no compunction in selling considerable quantities of rum and spirits. It may have bothered his conscience somewhat, but I suppose the alternative would have been to see his customers go elsewhere to shop for necessities. Anyway, even if he had refused to sell it, liquor was available almost everywhere. The Westmorland County General Sessions issued considerably more tavern licences than it did retail ones.

On a more sober note, as WHS Research Associate Judith Rygiel informed us in her very interesting article on the social history of buttons (February 2018 issue of the *Newsletter*), almost half of Wells' customers purchased buttons. Some of the buttons in his stock were very fancy and expensive. They included seven dozen glass buttons of a kind recently developed by British button manufacturers to feed the latest fashion rage. When it came to fashion, the Point de Bute ladies evidently didn't wish to be left behind.

Besides many of the same goods imported by Lowerison, Wells stocked a number of other items that I haven't yet mentioned. One of them was 'cotton wool', another name for raw cotton. Since he sold it only in small quantities, and sheep's wool and linen were the only materials of local cloth weaving, I assume it was used for dressing wounds, applying liquids and creams, etc. or possibly as stuffing for dolls, quilts, etc.

Another item that showed up frequently in the surviving Wells ledger, actually more frequently than cotton wool, was almanacs. Still published today (for example *The Farmer's Almanac*) almanacs were an important source of practical information for 18th and 19th century farmers. In addition to a calendar, they offered tables of the phases of the moon, tide tables, planting dates for various crops, practical farming advice, and lists of public holidays as well as famous events that happened on each date of the past. If Wells stocked the *New Brunswick Almanac and Register*, which he may very well have done, there was the added bonus of lists of the chief officers of the provincial government and county militia, the Justices of the Peace, the roll of barristers and attorneys, etc.

Like other storekeepers of the day, Wells also sold the odd 'spelling book', chiefly to families that had young children in school. Much more than the name implies, spelling books were used to teach children to read. They generally included a "syllabary" (ba, be, bo, boo, etc.), a brief grammar, a dictionary of useful words, and selected readings. They also offered recipes for making ink and instructions for writing, while the selected readings were intended, in the words of one of the popular versions, to be "not only diverting to the Mind, and improving to the Morals, but a great Help to prevent Youth from falling a Sacrifice to the common Temptations of Life, and their own unguarded Passions." To judge by the frequency in which it appears by name in the ledgers of the merchants I have seen, the most popular spelling book in the Chignecto was Thomas Dilworth's *A New Guide to the English Tongue*. As we might expect from an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Dilworth's syllabary taught learners to begin by constructing simple but pious sentences using three-letter monosyllabic words: "Who is God but our God?" Then came monosyllabic words of four letters: "Hold in the Lord and mind his word," etc. When the lists of polysyllabic words were mastered young minds were ready to be edified with brief moral sayings in prose or verse: "A wise man values no possession more than virtue, because it is the fountain of all public and private happiness." Advanced pupils were then treated to short fables illustrating moral maxims such as 'honesty is the best policy', 'one good turn deserves another', 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush', etc. My favourite is the one cautioning us not to waste our charity on the unworthy: "Throw a crust to a surly dog and he will bite you."

Another early Chignecto merchant and presumed storekeeper was *Amos Fowler*. A native of Westchester County, New York, he probably came to Fort Cumberland as a Loyalist refugee about the same time as his fellow former Westchester denizen, Gideon Palmer, although, unlike Palmer, he was not a veteran of DeLancey's Brigade. He appears, rather, to have been a vessel owner who seized the opportunity to give the established commissariat traders a little competition by bringing in supplies for the settlers.

W.C. Milner had information that in 1795 he “ran a vessel to Saint John and dealt with goods required by the settlers.” Four years before that he received one of the first retail licences to be issued by the Westmorland County General Sessions of the Peace. More significantly, he was also one of those who renewed it every year thereafter, at least until 1809 when the surviving record ends. Clearly, he intended to put down roots in the community and in 1788 he secured them by marrying John Keillor’s younger sister, Ann. He later bought the original Keillor farm located on what is still sometimes called Fowler’s Hill from John’s brother, Robert. When Ann died tragically young in childbirth, he married the widow of Peter Etter of Etter Ridge, but he and Ann’s children maintained close relations with their Keillor and Trueman relatives. (William Trueman II was married to John Keillor’s older sister, while William’s mother was a sister of John’s mother. William’s oldest daughter, Sarah, married Fowler’s nephew, Gilbert Lawrence.) This family connection may explain why John was one of Fowler’s customers long after he had moved over to Dorchester, and it’s lucky for this article that he was. In the course of researching my book *In Search of John Keillor: A Historian’s Odyssey* I discovered a series of statements of account, probably collected by W.C. Milner, that Amos Fowler sent to John Keillor dating from February 1789 to March 1799. Although unfortunately not the account books themselves—which would have contained the accounts of all of Fowler’s customers—they are certain evidence that Fowler ran some kind of retail store. But, before turning to the question of where it may have been located, let’s examine some of the items John bought from Fowler, as they add detail to the picture we are building up of the surprising range of goods available to the early Chignecto settlers. The list, which is by no means exhaustive, included: a large quantity of fancy fabrics such as baize (a coarse green material resembling felt), Cambric (fine white linen), flannel, fustian (thick twilled cloth, usually dark), Osnaburg (coarse cotton, used for draperies, etc.), silk, Russian duck (a fine white linen canvas), and Ticklenburg (a coarse mixed linen fabric). There was also indigo for dying as well as various

sewing needs like needles, thread, pins, ribbons, and even patterns for making vests. Condiments and other foodstuffs included cinnamon, mustard, nutmeg, raisins, salt, saltpeter (for curing meat or possibly for making gunpowder) sugar, tea, and vinegar. Then there were household furnishings such as a bed cord (to support the mattress), blankets, bluing (for whitening laundry), brimstone or sulfur (used as a fumigant as well as in gunpowder), brushes, chamber pots, a cream pot, rope, flints, forks, iron pots, knives, mugs, plates, spoons, and tablecloths. Among the personal items were combs, gloves, hats, cotton handkerchiefs, shawls, shoes, and imported soap (most likely from the United States where it had been manufactured commercially since the seventeenth century). Other miscellaneous items included a bellows (for starting fires in the open hearth), a cod line, a pair of compasses, a currycomb for grooming horses as well as a horse collar, scythes and files for sharpening them, a jackknife, a lantern, and a pair of snowshoes. Finally, there were a number of luxuries, namely a black silk handkerchief, several ivory combs, tumblers, wine glasses, decanters, some cordial, and chocolate (for making the drink; chocolate candy was not invented until 1849). Owing to merchants who, like Fowler, had access to New England goods, aspiring Chignecto gentlemen like John Keillor, who was pumping for an appointment as a Justice of the Peace, could lead surprisingly sophisticated and comfortable lives.

Given the bulkiness of some of these items, one has to wonder whether Keillor went all the way over to Westmorland Township to shop for them. From the number of times he renewed his retail licence, it seems more than likely that Fowler had a permanent store and store house somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Cumberland, although I found no direct evidence of it. But there is another possibility that doesn’t exclude a store. As the owner of what was very likely a small schooner or a sloop, Fowler could very well have carried goods over to Dorchester by water and sold them from the vessel. We know for sure that a Saint John merchant by the name of William Harper was regularly doing this at the same time Keillor was buying his stuff from Fowler. There will be more to say about William Harper below.

As detailed in the June 2024 issue of the *Newsletter*, there were two other exiled Loyalists who took to merchandizing after arriving in the Chignecto, Titus Knapp and his partner, Gideon Palmer. Although Palmer outranked him during their service in the Westchester Refugees corps of DeLancey's Brigade, Knapp, who came from a wealthy family, was the senior partner in the store business. It was he who took out a retail licence almost every year from 1789 when they were first issued down to 1809 when the surviving record of the General Sessions of the Peace ends, while Palmer was never a recipient. The only documentary proof that Gideon was ever a partner is an entry in the record of the Westmorland County Inferior Court of Common Pleas that in 1789 "Palmer & Knapp" won a judgment against a defaulting debtor. The partnership was most likely dissolved about 1794 when Palmer moved to Dorchester. None of their business records have survived, so we know nothing specific about the goods they sold, or where they imported them from, but the stock must have been pretty substantial. Probate records show that Knapp died as one of the wealthiest men in Westmorland County.

As in the case of Amos Fowler, there is no direct documentary evidence of the location of the Palmer-Knapp store, nor was it mentioned by the Knapp descendant who wrote the article from which Howard Trueman derived what little information he had on Gideon Palmer. Helen Petchey, whose work on the Palmers was also mentioned in the June issue, wrote that soon after he arrived at Fort Cumberland in 1783 Palmer "began to operate a store with Coronet Titus Knapp...Palmer and Knapp lived as neighbours, *the store between them*, at Green Hill, Westmorland Point." (Today it is better known as Mount Whatley.) I don't know where Helen got her information, but it is plausible enough. There may even be some corroboration if Al Smith's article on Yorkshire immigrant Christopher Harper (*The White Fence* April 2010) is correct, that soon after arriving in the Chignecto in 1775 he "built and operated a store on the property" he had purchased from John Huston. As you will no doubt remember from the June issue, Gideon Palmer married one of Harper's daughters about 1785. As Harper's son-in-law he may have gotten the use of the store for himself and Knapp. After he acquired his father-in-law's farm at a sheriff's sale in 1789 perhaps they

owned it jointly until their partnership was dissolved. If so, we could locate the Palmer-Knapp store on the former John Huston-Christopher Harper farm, just over the hill northeast of Fort Cumberland. But I speculate.

There is even less evidence of its location, but for a brief time there was another store in the vicinity of Fort Cumberland about this time. Howard Trueman found out through an interview with a member of the Hewson family that the mother of James Hewson, who clerked for Palmer and Knapp, "taught school and ran a small store with a Miss MacMonagle as a partner." Soon afterwards, however, the partnership was dissolved and the Hewsons bought a nice farm from Spiller Fillmore, located at La Coupe near that of William Wells. Later, James's wife, Jerushia, ran an inn and tavern in the farmhouse.

Probably the most important merchant and storekeeper of this region during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was the *William Harper* mentioned above. Like Low-erison and Wells, he was a Yorkshireman, but he was not part of the Yorkshire emigration to the Chignecto. Instead, he joined the British navy at a young age and in 1783 found himself serving on a transport ship carrying Loyalist refugees from New York to Saint John. Among them was a young lady who took his fancy. Upon completing his service he returned to Saint John to marry her and soon afterwards set himself up as a merchant. In due course his business flourished from local patronage, but, being of an enterprising nature, he decided to expand it by purchasing a nimble little schooner—which he called *The Weasel*—able to slip in and out of small coves and inlets in order to bring trade goods to the growing communities around the Bay of Fundy and along the Petitcodiac and Memramcook rivers. By 1796 he was regularly visiting Horton, Minudie, Sackville, and Dorchester, and also making occasional trips to Windsor, Passamaquoddy and even Boston to replenish his stock. At first his main store was in Saint John but when on his travels he appears to have retailed his goods

from *The Weasel*. Business in the Chignecto-Memramcook area flourished to the extent that in 1809 he left Saint John permanently and established both a residence and a new store on the banks of Hall's Creek at the Bend of the Petit-codiac. The good news spread quickly and the store soon became a beloved institution in the village of Moncton and surrounding area. It was destroyed by fire in 1832 but three ledgers were rescued from the flames to provide us with the fullest surviving record of any of this region's early merchants. The reason they did so was because they came into the loving hands of his great-granddaughter, Helen Harper Steeves, who used them to write a very interesting book, *The Story of Moncton's First Store and Storekeeper: Life Around 'The Bend' a Century Ago*, published in 1924. At some point the ledgers were acquired by the Webster Collection, now in the Mount Allison Archives, and the Musée acadien at the Université de Moncton. Containing some five hundred different accounts, they are a goldmine of information on the buying habits of early Chignecto inhabitants ranging in socio-economic status from members of the elite such as Charles Dixon and Amos Botsford of Sackville and John Wheldon and William Black of Dorchester, to prosperous yeoman farmers like Nehemiah Ward and John Fawcett of Sackville, to men of modest means like Comfort Killam and Ebenezer Cole of Dorchester. They also reveal a good deal about Harper's business practices and by extension those of other early Chignecto merchants.

Like other merchants of the day, Harper sold most of his goods on credit and charged simple (not compounded) interest on the outstanding balance at the rate of 6% per annum for as long as the account remained unsettled, which was at the customer's discretion. Some of them had an outstanding balance year after year. As a result Harper did not die an outstandingly rich man. All reckoning was done in the pounds, shillings, and pence of New Brunswick currency, which was purely notional, as the province did not mint or print its own money at that time. Cash was paid in whatever currency the customer may have had, whether British sterling, American dollars, Spanish/Mexican doubloons, etc., all of which had a standard value

expressed in New Brunswick currency. This must have been a considerable bother for the merchant to calculate, even those who were good at arithmetic. Not many today could do it without a calculator. But, while cash payments were not uncommon, most were in kind. These, too, had to be evaluated, although many items were reckoned at a standard value, even if, like wheat, that could vary from year to year. No wonder many statements of account ended with the proviso "errors excepted." Some idea of the ratio of cash to kind in making payments may be gleaned from the accounts of Charles Dixon of Sackville and his son, Charles Dixon Junior, in 1797. Dixon, who was wealthy enough to be able to afford two pairs of expensive imported white blankets decorated with a compass rose, paid with a small amount of cash and quantities of pork, butter, flour, poultry, cheese, potatoes, and wood. Junior paid no cash but brought Harper mutton, pork, potatoes, butter, hay, and some bacon. He was also given a credit of seven shillings and six pence for lending Harper a horse on two occasions, one of them to see a physician.

Besides extending credit, Harper and other merchants offered primitive banking services. As far as I know, they did not accept deposits, but they often made small cash loans—subject to the same interest charges as other goods—and also paid out cash to those presenting an order from one of their trusted customers, which was of course debited from the customer's account.

Besides retailing from the deck of *The Weasel*, Harper stocked the stores of local storekeepers and gave out goods on consignment for others to sell. An example of the latter would be the £218 worth of "sundries" such as spirits, tea spoons, mustard, hat covers, etc. that he left with John Chapman of Dorchester to sell. Chapman presumably took a commission when he did so. An example of the former would be the order of Edward Barron for his store at Minudie. As mentioned in the article on Barron that appeared in the September 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*, the order included bleached bed sheets, Irish linen, corduroy and other fabrics, small knives, nails, files, and other essential items. During the Eddy Rebel-

lion of 1776 Barron's store was ransacked of "thirty beaver hats, two guns with 200 flints and forty pounds of gunpowder, tools, snowshoes, and many other items." These could not have been brought in by Harper, as he was still serving in the British Navy, but they add to the picture of the kinds of goods available even in relatively remote locations of the early Chignecto.

If William Harper was probably the most important trader/storekeeper in the early Chignecto after the arrival of the Loyalists, the one we know most about was undoubtedly Stephen Millidge of Sackville, who was also the High Sheriff of Westmorland County, the Deputy Crown Surveyor whose 1792 survey of Sackville resulted in the magnificent plan of the township that now graces a wall in the Boultenhouse Heritage Centre—and also a Loyalist. As mentioned above near the beginning of this article, W.C. Milner thought that Stephen ran the first store in Sackville Township, but my research on Millidge showed that he operated it in partnership with his father-in-law, Amos Botsford, and that Botsford bought it from Jonathan Burnham. While it is not absolutely certain that Burnham sold Botsford a retail store, as opposed to a storehouse (the deed of sale mentions only "the store at Westcock Landing with all my right to the land on which the same stands"), a chance remark in a letter to his son, William, who was studying at Yale University, leaves no doubt that Amos operated it as a retail store. By way of illustrating all the hard work he had done and the sacrifices he had made to put his somewhat extravagant heir through college and launch him on his law career, Amos mentioned that "after being upon my legs the whole day, [I] have travelled weary from Harrison's down to the store at evening to sell a paper of pins or a pound of Tobacco." No doubt this played on William's heartstrings but soon afterwards Amos, who was a very busy man, seems to have turned the management of the store over to his son-in-law, and it was Stephen, not Amos, who then took out the retail licence every year until his death in 1803. But there was also another manager of the Millidge store, Stephen's wife and Amos' daughter, Sally. And her role was not a minor one. A series of letters Stephen wrote to her show that she ran the

store when he was away on his Sheriff's and/or Crown Surveyor's business, which was often, and that she had a good deal to say in their affairs even when he was home. After his tragically early death of a stroke in 1803 Sally took out the retail licence in her own name (as 'Sarah Millidge & Co.') until her own tragic demise in a boating accident in 1807.

Given all his other activities as a member of the provincial government as well as the leading office holder of the county (such as Registrar of Deeds and Wills), Amos Botsford probably did not own a vessel himself but most likely purchased stock for the store from traders like William Harper, Amos Fowler, Titus Knapp, and others who did. But Stephen needed to expand the business because his earnings as Sheriff and Deputy Crown Surveyor were insufficient to keep Sally in the style they both thought she deserved, and for this they needed a vessel of their own. Stephen bought a half interest in a schooner built by Elijah Ayer of Dorchester Island and skippered by Ayer's brother, Thomas. By 1794 the *Boyne* was regularly taking grindstones and gypsum to Boston, Eastport, and other American ports and bringing back an amazing array of goods for the store at Westcock Landing. In case you don't know where Westcock Landing was, it was near the big red house just off Hospital Loop Road originally built by Blair Botsford and now in the Fisher family. Here it is, together with some more familiar landmarks, on a satellite image kindly prepared by Paul Bogaard.



As an added bonus I can even tell you what colour it was. After Sarah's death, her brother, William Botsford, bought it at a public auction. The deed of sale described it as "that certain red store or building situate...at Westcock."

As in the case of Fowler and too many of the other early Chignecto storekeepers, no account books or ledgers of the Millidge store have survived. But we do have two documents that give a very good idea of the kind and range of goods available to Sackville shoppers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Stephen's estate inventory lists a large number of articles clearly associated with the store (personal household items are listed separately). Also enlightening is a complete statement of account preserved in the New Brunswick Museum (again probably thanks to Milner) that he sent to John Keillor of Dorchester for the years 1802-1803 listing all the goods he sold him during that time. A lot of them could also be found in the account books of William Harper and other merchants of the time, but the Millidge stock seems to have been a bit more upscale than most. The following is a somewhat abbreviated and edited list. If you nonetheless find it tedious to read through, just run your eyes over it to get a general impression.

From Stephen's estate inventory: sleigh whips, "common bridles," double reined bridles, a double reined steel polished bitted bridle, spelling books, candlesticks and snuffers, boxes of window glass, wool cards, cotton cards, reams of writing paper, Wedgewood plates, fish dishes, "puddin" dishes, needles, tureens and ladles, root dishes, salad dishes, fruit dishes, butter boats, pickle dishes, copper cups, tea pots, salt pots, pitchers of various colours, white pint mugs, goblets, mason's trowels, plastering trowels, chest hinges, butt hinges, a shoemaker's hammer, shoemaker's pincers, nail hammers, thumb latches, nippers, chest locks, padlock, scissors, shovels, griddle irons, skillets, bake pans, tea kettles, half-pint tins, sickles, fabrics of various kinds, (including scarlet broad cloth, corduroy, Marseilles, dark broad cloth, calico, serge, buckram, cambric, muslin, etc.), paper hanging, silk twist, ribbon, lace, thimbles, shoe buckles, a tobacco box, cotton stockings, ink stands, yarn stockings, mittens,

knitting needles, silver buttons, saddler's webbing, soap, sole leather, hats, Indian blankets, moccasins, striped flannel, halters, allspice, shot, fig tobacco, regular tobacco (174 pounds), nails of various sizes, bush scythes, corn, spirits (92 gallons, no less), salt, superfine flour, rye flour, barrels of pork, flax, regular tea (177 pounds), Souchong tea (66 pounds)....

To John Keillor 1802: a set of china bought from Mr. Mowbray, a merchant of Eastport, Maine, bulk iron, shawls, gauze, wool cards, a comb, a scythe, spirits, nails, cotton cloth, Souchong tea, regular tea (Bohea), various fabrics including flannel, silk, satin, serge, chintz and Marseille, an awl blade, needles, a shoe hammer, indigo, a bed tic, blankets, handkerchiefs, sheeting, vest patterns, a ladies hat, putty, a dictionary, pencils, bridle, a ladies saddle, a spade, salt, bush cranberries, buttons, silk twist, mustard, a decanter, wine glasses, tumblers, vinegar, a large bowl, a shawl, a trowel, a pen knife, allspice, pepper, rye, fine flour, leather, 344 pounds of honey (for resale)...

This should be enough to suggest that the Millidge store did quite a substantial business. It appears to have been the only store in Sackville Township until William Crane established one at the mouth of present-day Lower Fairfield Road before moving to Crane's Corner after it burned down. Speaking of Crane, Milner quotes John Palmer, a Dorchester centenarian born in 1789, who remembered that the first time he saw him was at Millidge's store, which seems to imply that he was working there as a clerk. But the story of William Crane and his stores would require another whole article, so I must pass over it here.

Finally, we turn our gaze to Dorchester. Since Anglophone settlement there only got seriously underway in the last decades of the 18th century, it's not too surprising that dedicated retail stores also came somewhat later than in Westmorland and Sackville Townships. William

Harper seems to have retailed from the deck of *The Weasel*, which was probably tied up near Dorchester Island, and we know that he left goods on consignment with prominent dairy farmer John Chapman, who probably sold them from his house. But this was probably only informally and occasionally, as Chapman never took out a retail licence. Another successful farmer who sporadically sold goods to his neighbours was our own *John Keillor*, as did his Westmorland brother-in-law, William Trueman of Point de Bute, Yorkshire men all. By the early years of the new century John was beginning to enjoy a new-found prosperity and social prestige that would soon lead to his appointment as a Justice of the Peace. His farming operations were going well enough that he was able to ship butter, oats, salted beef, and other farm produce to two leading Saint John merchants, Stephen Humbert and Thomas Millidge (Sheriff Stephen's brother). From them he received goods that were not produced locally, which he then sold to Dorchester people who had probably ordered them through him. Much of the large quantity of rum was probably re-sold to his brother, Robert, the county Jailer who also ran a tavern in the newly-built courthouse and jail. The iron was most likely sold to local blacksmiths, the most prominent of whom was his son-in-law, David Chapman. In 1804 Keillor received a number of saddles from Humbert on credit and reported back to him that he had sold two of them and would he please take the payment out of the fifty bushels of oats he had just sent him? The 344 pounds of honey he bought from Stephen Millidge in 1803 and the two barrels of leaf tobacco from Amos Fowler in 1799 were probably also for resale to the locals.

By 1807 there is evidence that Keillor was keeping smaller items in stock, which may have been the beginning of a retail store. In that year James Watson of Moncton asked him to procure five yards of wide black ribbon for trimming ladies silk hats. By 1809 it was official. John took out a retail licence from the General Sessions of the Peace but he did so not just in his own name but in that of 'Keillor and Smith', indicating that he had a partner in the business. W.H. Smith was a Methodist preacher and also a brother of Dr. Rufus Smith, the most prominent and popular physician in the Chi-

gnecto at that time. The only other direct evidence of the existence of 'Keillor and Smith' lies in a collection of papers in the Mount Allison University Archives relating to the settlement of the estate of Josiah Wood, Robert Keillor's successor as courthouse tavern keeper. Wood also ran a fulling mill leased from Gideon Palmer. 'Keillor and Smith' appear on a list of some thirty creditors to whom the estate owed money. Since no account books of 'Keillor and Smith' have survived, we can only guess what the 'firm' may have retailed. The fact that it was a partnership suggests that it was probably somewhat larger than most of the "mom and pop" operations that seem to have been springing up at this time (no less than twenty retail licences were granted by the December 1808 General Sessions, along with twenty-four tavern licences). But it is highly unlikely to have been in the same league as Harper's enterprise or the Millidge store. It may, however, have had a longer life. In 1836 John Keillor's younger son, Thomas, the one who inherited Keillor House, formed a partnership with his nephew, William Keillor Chapman (David Chapman's son) called 'Keillor and Chapman'. It was a general store that emphasized groceries but it may also very well have been a continuation of Keillor and Smith. It lasted until Thomas' marriage to Mary Jane Moore in 1851.

Besides John Keillor's establishment there were at least two other places where Dorchester folk could shop by the early years of the 19th century. One of them was at the tavern in the courthouse. As detailed (if that's the right word; the details are scanty owing to the lack of surviving records) in the June 2021 issue of the *Newsletter*, besides running the tavern and inn, *Josiah and Sarah Wood* sold fabrics, condiments, tea, sugar, tobacco, straw hats and other notions on the side, although without a retail licence.

There was also a dedicated retail store on Dorchester Island that was established some years before Keillor and Smith. It was run by *Benjamin Wilson*, a Methodist lay preacher, Justice of the Peace and (briefly) a member of the provincial legislative assembly. Originally from Virginia where he had been recruited by William Black, the founder of Methodism in the Maritimes, he married a daughter of Squire Charles Dixon of

Sackville and formed a business partnership with one of her brothers to ship oats, pork, beef, butter, cheese, staves, skins and other products of the Chignecto to prominent Shelbourne and Halifax merchant Robert Barry. With Barry's help he was able to buy Amos Botsford's grand stone mansion on Dorchester Island from Elijah Ayer in 1802 and convert it into a tavern and general store. As with the other Dorchester stores, few details about the Wilson store have come down to us, but the record of the General Sessions of the Peace shows that Benjamin took out a retail licence in 1801 and again in 1809. In 1812, perhaps because he still owed money to Barry, the house was briefly put up for sale. The newspaper ad stated that "the house contains on the first floor a large kitchen at one end and a store at the other." However, it was not sold at this time, and Wilson continued in business. In his popular book *Dorchester Island and Related Areas* (1986) Reg Bowser, then a prominent member of the WHS, stated that "Wilson sold many goods in his store brought in from Halifax, Saint John, and American ports." One of his daughters married James Sayre Junior of Dorchester Island and it is thought that the couple took over the store after Wilson was drowned in 1824 in a storm during an attempted crossing to Prince Edward Island. James Sayre Jun. died in 1858, but whether he and Susan were still running the store at that time is unknown.

What all these early merchant-storekeepers had in common was an enterprising spirit and a determination to provide more for themselves and their families than could ordinarily be wrestled from the soil or the forest. In so doing they not only created prosperity for themselves, but made civilized life in their communities both possible and more comfortable than it would otherwise have been. Whether or not they always showed it by paying their bills on time, as settlers of a pioneer land, their customers owed them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Gene Goodrich



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