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HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS IN SOUTHERN VERMONT
1780 - 1800

BY
Janet R. Houghton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

June, 1975
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PREFACE

The mention of Vermont suggests, to many twentieth century Americans, scenic rural landscapes and quaint villages: an appealingly static society, reflecting the essence of New England's colonial past. In fact, Vermont is a newcomer to New England history. When Massachusetts first established a military outpost in the wilderness of southern Vermont, there were already families in Boston who could reckon back their local ancestry over a hundred years. The story of Vermont's settlement resembles that of Kentucky and Tennessee, with good reason; all three areas were frontier lands, developed concurrently by settlers from the old original colonies. Vermont's nostalgic charm is republican, not colonial.

Very little has been written about the decorative arts in Vermont, and little is known of the region's early cultural life. Vermont possessed no major cities, no dominant item of trade, no cohesive geography; it remained an isolated rural region where decorative tastes, like so much else, had to be imported. Yet the state's early history is filled with energetic, ambitious people, who obeyed no authority but their own in matters of politics or religion.
It has seemed worthwhile to study their domestic life: to discover, if possible, more about such independent households by the way in which they were furnished.

Many people have given help and encouragement to this project since its inception. In particular I would like to thank Mrs. Jean Cate and Mrs. Laura Abbott of the Vermont Historical Society; Mr. Richard Carter Barret and Mr. Eugene Koshe of the Bennington Museum, for their generosity in sharing their time and expertise in the midst of busy schedules. Miss Jacquelyn Oak of the Shelburne Museum and Mrs. Nina Mudge of the Sheldon Museum in Middlebury were very courteous in opening their research collections to me, and provided valuable help. I am especially grateful to Miss Nancy Richards of the Winterthur Museum for her patience and encouragement in advising this thesis; many times her enthusiasm rekindled my own, and gave fresh vigor to the work.
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INTRODUCTION

Before white settlement began in northern New England, Vermont was a true wilderness. Lying between Lake Champlain and the upper Connecticut River valley, the region served as a useful buffer zone between the English colonies on the Atlantic seacoast and the French along the St. Lawrence. Indians used the mountainous, forested land as a hunting ground; raiding parties passed through it during the colonial wars; but Vermont remained an empty wasteland well into the eighteenth century.

The first permanent settlement in Vermont was established at Fort Dummer (now Brattleboro) in 1724, to defend the fringes of Massachusetts settlement against attack from Canada. Further settlement was delayed by continuing war with the French, but after 1760 opening of the region to civilian pioneers began in earnest. By that time Benning Wentworth, colonial Governor of New Hampshire, had begun laying out townships and granting land on the frontier.

New Hampshire's legal right to make such grants was doubtful; New York had a much stronger claim to the land west of the Connecticut River. However, by the time New York
Fig. 1. General Map of New England, Detail Map of Southern Vermont
had successfully defended its case in London, the damage was
done: Wentworth had granted over 125 townships in the dis­
pputed territory, and New Hampshire titles had been sold to
thousands of speculators and settlers.

From 1764 until 1791, the question of jurisdiction
over the "New Hampshire Grants" remained unresolved, prompt­
ing legal quarrels, political disputes, and open border
warfare. At first New York attempted to control her holdings
by sending surveyors and civil officers into the region.
The established settlers, who held New Hampshire titles,
drove the officers out with threats and destroyed the prop­
erty of any New Yorkers hardy enough to attempt a homestead.
The Revolutionary War reduced but did not eliminate land
grant agitation; more important, the war demonstrated both
the Grants' vulnerability to attack from Canada and their
potential military value as a wedge between New England and
New York. Because of its strategic location, Vermont was
able to declare its independence in 1777 and negotiate terms
of peace with both the British and Americans simultaneously.
Resolution of the political and territorial disputes finally
came in 1791, when New York's land claims were abandoned,
and Vermont was admitted to the Union as the fourteenth
state.\textsuperscript{1}
Despite the uncertain status of their land titles, settlers poured into Vermont throughout the late eighteenth century. They came primarily from Connecticut and Massachusetts, and they often came in community groups.\textsuperscript{2} The settlers left their homes for a variety of reasons: economic hardship and overpopulation in the established colonies were important incentives. Religion occasionally influenced the decision to pioneer; the aftershocks of the Great Awakening were still cause for schism in some New England churches. Simple restlessness was apparently a factor; periodic "removes" were commonplace for many New Englanders. Cases have been recorded of pioneers entering Vermont only after founding two or three other homesteads elsewhere.\textsuperscript{3}

Once he had decided to buy a right of land in Vermont, a settler's choice of location was limited by geography. Vermont is divided down its length by a high natural barrier, the Green Mountains. East of the mountains, the Connecticut River flows south toward Northampton and Hartford. On the west, Lake Champlain empties northward into the St. Lawrence, and the Hudson River leads south to Albany and New York. Passes across the barrier mountains were few and rugged; as a result, early settlement followed the lowlands on either side of the state. "Eastside" and "Westside" became proverbial terms for the isolated and mutually suspicious societies on either slope.\textsuperscript{4}
The Green Mountains divide Vermont into two parts, of which, in the southern part, the respective inhabitants almost regard each other as foreigners. Their intercourse is small.... 5

...many places on (the mountains) have been so much neglected by new settlers, that travelling across them has been a matter of great difficulty. In the southern half of the State, going "over the mountain," is a phrase peculiarly appropriated to passing from one side of the State to the other; in the northern part this is not so well understood. 6

The communities in southern Vermont were the first in the state to be settled, the first to prosper, and the first to be affected by the northward retreat of the wilderness. Between 1780 and 1800, these earliest frontier settlements matured. Gradually losing their tumultuous, pioneer character, the oldest communities acquired more stable social and political institutions. By 1800, the little Republic was a federal state; southern farmlands were fully settled, and a turnpike across the state's mountain barrier was about to alter the isolation of east from west. Soon after 1800, the first hints of economic decline appeared, as population in the southernmost towns began to shrink and the agricultural boom deflated. 7

Information about household furnishings in the pioneer settlements is scarce. Very few documented examples of eighteenth century furnishings from Vermont homes have

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survived. The principal sources for data about household objects are probate records—wills and estate inventories—and newspaper advertisements. Both sources can be rich in useful evidence, but each has inherent drawbacks. Probate inventories may be biased by the special abilities of the appraiser, who tended to describe in greatest detail those items he best understood. A household's heirloom objects, the best and oldest possessions, might not be recorded in a will or inventory, because their distribution had been completed before the owner's death. Limiting the examination of inventories to a specific period also distorts the results somewhat, since young men furnishing their homes at mid-century often lived well into the following century, and carried the record of their possessions to a much later inventory date. Most important, probate records provide little information about the household possessions of the poor and isolated, who had little opportunity to acquire estates or record them at court. Newspaper advertisements can be misleading; some established merchants and craftsmen who were well known to their communities apparently felt no need to advertise in print, and so passed unrecorded.

An early Vermont householder had four options when furnishing and equipping his home. He could bring objects with him from his former location; make necessary items on the spot; buy local goods; or import items from outside the
boundaries of the state. Some decorative objects came to Vermont with the pioneers, although the difficulties of the journey must have discouraged transport of all but the most precious and essential goods. Furniture could be individually made or locally purchased, particularly the simpler utilitarian forms. One writer describing basic native industries included furniture making among them:

Few manufactures are carried on, except those which are essential to the subsistence of civilized society; such as the domestic branches of spinning and weaving, the productions of saw and grist mills; the works of the carpenter and blacksmith, in buildings, farming tools & etc. cabinet making, tanning and shoemaking....

Depending on his location, the settler's import-export trading could be conducted along one of several routes. Residents of the Eastside sent their farm produce — grain, potash, lumber, furs, and maple sugar — overland to Boston on wagons, or down the Connecticut River to Hartford on flatboats. On the Westside, such commodities went by road to the Hudson River ports of Albany, Troy and Lansingburgh (now Pleasantville, New York). Both areas sent livestock overland to the most profitable markets: Boston or Hartford from the east, New York or Montreal from the west.

In return for their produce, the frontier settlements received liquors, spices and fabrics; window glass, paints
and hardware; and luxury goods of all sorts.\textsuperscript{10} By the
1780's, much of this import-export trade was conducted by
the local Vermont merchants, who acted as agents for their
neighbors. Hard money was scarce, paper money was heavily
inflated, and barter was the common form of payment. "Reck-
oning up accounts" was a vital and practically universal
skill.

The homes which wealthier Vermonters built to re-
ceive such imported goods reflected the maturing character
of the southernmost settlements. The first buildings erected
in frontier Vermont from the 1720's to the 1760's have al-
most all disappeared, and little is known of their appear-
ance. What is known suggests that many were "log huts."\textsuperscript{11}
An exception is the oldest surviving frame house in Vermont,
built by Reverend Jedediah Dewey at Bennington in 1763
(Fig. 2). It is spacious, with large windows, a symmetrical
façade, and carefully executed decorative details: a fore-
runner of the more sophisticated home which were to become
numerous in Bennington by 1800.

Homes, even the most imposing, were more than dwell-
ing places to their early inhabitants. Houses frequently
sheltered working craftsmen, merchants,\textsuperscript{12} professional men,
and paying guests.
...(In Manchester, Vermont) the houses are built of wood, and are elegant and commodious... the best hotel in the place is kept by Doctor Allis; and this... is the custom nearly all over New England, where the most respectable part of the Community are the inn-keepers, and where it not unfrequently (sic) happens that the landlords are men of erudition, independent fortunes, and magistrates. 13

In southern Vermont during the late eighteenth century, Bennington on the west and Brattleboro on the east became the focal towns of the maturing frontier. Each possessed a thriving commercial class, firm trading connections to the great cities of the northeast, and a political or social élite. These two communities will be examined in detail in the chapters which follow, in an attempt to identify their decorative tastes and to define the cultural divergence, if any, of Eastside from Westside.
Fig. 1. The Rev. Jedediah Dewey House, Bennington, 1763.
The sources used in compiling this brief historical sketch of early Vermont were numerous; I am principally indebted to Frederic F. Van de Water's *The Reluctant Republic* (New York: Day, 1941) for the background information given in the first paragraphs.


Van de Water, p. 25.


Dean, p. 6.

The best contemporary account of eighteenth century Vermont's external trade may be found in John Melish, Travels through the United States of America in the Years 1806 & 1807, and 1809, 1810, & 1811... (Philadelphia: the Author, 1815), pp. 320-321.

"Log hut in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the common word for what we call a log cabin... The earliest use we have found of 'hut' for a log structure is in a sketch of Vermont printed in 1797, where one can recognize the common log cabin in an elaborate description of how to build a 'log hut.'" Harold R. Shurtleff, The Log Cabin Myth (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), pp. 21-22. In fact, the term "log hut" is used by the Reverend Nathan Perkins, who kept a journal of his travels through Vermont in 1789; the remark is quoted on page 2 of this thesis.

To cite only two examples of such practices: Benjamin Fasset sold general merchandise "in the north room of his dwelling house" in Bennington, 1795. Fasset's former business partner, a goldsmith, carried on his own trade at home during the same period. Vermont Gazette (Bennington), Feb. 20, 1795.

Bennington, the first settlement on the Westside, was founded in 1761 by six families from Hardwick and Amherst, Massachusetts. More settlers from the same towns arrived later that year,\(^1\) and by 1765 Bennington was the center of a growing agricultural district. The town became the headquarters of organized resistance to New York authority; after 1770 Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys met frequently there to plan escapades against the "Yorkers," as all New Yorkers or their adherents were called.\(^2\) During the Revolutionary War, the area gained a different kind of prominence when a detachment of Burgoyne's troops attempted to seize a military storehouse at Bennington. The British were defeated, in August of 1777; and the Battle of Bennington became the best known Revolutionary event in Vermont -- despite the fact that the battleground was located just over the border in New York state. Bennington was the scene of several formative political assemblies during Vermont's early years, and the town was called the capitol of the independent Republic,\(^3\) though no official capitol was designated until the nineteenth century.
Despite its prosperity and political importance, the Westside was early rumored to be a loose, barbaric district. Ethan Allen undoubtedly contributed much to the Westside's poor reputation. He was a thunderous, hot-tempered man who scandalized conservative New Englanders; colorful blasphemy and violent harassment of Yorkers were not his only sins. In 1784 he published *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, a book which horrified the established New England clergy with its attack on Biblical religion. Ministers were further dismayed by the knowledge that so many Westsiders were unchurched; nineteen of the first twenty-one Congregational societies in the Grants were east of the mountains. The Reverend Nathan Perkins of Hartford, Connecticut, who toured western Vermont in 1789, found little good to say of the Republic or its most famous citizen:

```
Arrived at Onion-river Falls & passed by Ethan Allyn's grave. An awful Infidel, one of ye wickedest men yt ever walked this guilty globe. I stopped & looked at his grave with a pious horror...

Words cannot describe ye hardships I undergo... got lost twice in ye woods already -- heard ye horrible howling of ye wolves. Far absent -- in ye wilderness -- among all strangers -- all alone -- among log-huts -- people nasty -- poor -- low-lived -- indelicate -- and miserable cooks. 6
```

Perkins was not the only observer to remark upon the Westside's shortcomings. John Graham, a Vermont lawyer
writing to an English patron in 1797, phrased his criticism more gracefully:

At Pownal is a Meeting-house, and I am sorry to add, that those who frequent it are rather bigotted, excessively particular, and absolutely wedded to their own forms and ways. This disposition, I fear, is not confined to Pownal alone. 7

By 1780, Bennington township probably contained about two thousand inhabitants; census figures are not available until 1790, when the population stood at 2350.8 The village now known as Old Bennington was the center of activity for the township and surrounding countryside; by 1780, that village may have contained four or five hundred residents. The villagers' significance, however, was out of proportion to their numbers; more than sixty were engaged in commercial trades between 1780 and 1800. Undoubtedly many more left no record of their work in newspapers or business accounts, and cannot now be identified.

The merchants, craftsmen, and professional men who crowded Bennington village appear to have captured much of the Westside's trade. At least fifteen residents were general merchants, an unusual number for so small a community; and a majority of them were lifelong inhabitants, who carried on their businesses for a number of years. There was a
substantial group of craftsmen, producing ceramics, ironmongery, jewelry and fine metalwork, clocks and watches, printed books, and furniture.

Bennington village, busy as it was, was not the only commercial market for Westsiders; at least eighteen merchants and craftsmen are known to have operated in the surrounding towns. Most important, there were the markets of Albany, Troy, and Lansingburgh close by; and the volume of Vermont trade they received was great. Lansingburgh, the nearest of the three, was less than thirty miles away; and market trips could be completed in two days. Canada was also a ready market for livestock and lumber; prominent Westsiders made trips to Montreal on such errands and could bring back Canadian goods without difficulty.

Bennington social life at first revolved around political and legal activities, but later came to reflect an increasing concern with literary education and cultured leisure. Bennington contained both the county-wide civil court and the half-county probate office. Legislatures of both the Republic and the state met in Bennington on several occasions. Stephen Fay's Catamount Tavern was the preeminent meetingplace of the district; every Westsider of consequence spent time there on muster or assembly days.
The church was led by Jedediah Dewey, a Separating Congregationalist from Westfield, Massachusetts, who was trained not as a scholar but as a carpenter. He supervised the construction of the first meetinghouse in Bennington and is said to have built his own home (Fig. 2). Bennington's first newspaper was issued in 1783 by Anthony Haswell, a printer from Springfield, Massachusetts who became one of the most prominent citizens of the Westside. An academy and literary society was incorporated in 1780, and a Friendly Society was founded soon after for the purpose of holding philosophical discussions and collecting a library. By the end of the eighteenth century, Bennington had a high enough opinion of its own sophistication to support a dancing master, several booksellers, a professor of penmanship, and a "singing schoolmaster." 

Throughout the late eighteenth century Bennington remained the political and economic hub of its district. The town's prominence stemmed both from simple priority of settlement, and from the advantage which residents took in attracting the region's trade. Bennington merchants prospered not only on their neighbors' business, but also by supplying the needs of pioneers passing through the town on their way to newer settlements farther north. It may well have been this extra element of transient pioneer trade which gave Bennington such an air of bustling overflow during these years.
The Bennington homes built during the 1780's and 1790's reflected the increasing concern of the wealthiest residents with status and show. John Graham described the best houses of Bennington as "magnificent and elegant," and even the dyspeptic Reverend Perkins was forced to concede that the natives of Bennington, though "proud -- scornful -- conceited & somewhat polished," were nevertheless "capable of some elegant building."15

Surviving homes of the period reveal that the tastes of the Westside elite favored the Georgian style in a Federal era. General David Robinson's house (Figs. 3 and 4), built in 1795 by a local man named George Deming,16 demonstrates these conservative tendencies well. Its symmetrical and frontal emphasis on the facade, its central pavilion and sharply projecting classical details would have been outmoded in the urban centers of New England by 1795. Isaac Tichenor, a man active in the founding of the Republic and eleven years Governor of the state, built a house outwardly much plainer than his neighbor General Robinson's, yet John Graham in 1797 singled out the Tichenor home for special praise:

...for real taste in Architecture, Mr. Tichenor's wood house is the best laid out and executed, according to the size of it, of any in the County. -- His chimney pieces and hearths are of a beautiful clouded marble, as highly polished as any I have seen in London; and to his further honour be it spoken, Mr. Tichenor assured me that most of these were executed by his own hands. 17
Fig. 3. The General David Robinson House, Bennington, 1795. General view and facade detail.
Fig. 4. The Gen. David Robinson House, gable end detail.
The homes built in outlying towns were often occupied by men as wealthy and influential as the Bennington villagers. The Hubbel home on the Troy Road, built by John Wood in 1768-69 (Fig. 5), compares favorably in its scale and proportions with Reverend Dewey's house in Bennington. Governor Jonas Galusha's home in Shaftsbury (Fig. 6), built circa 1790, was probably designed by George Deming, the same man who later built General Robinson's house in Bennington. Some rural farm homes, such as the Henry house in North Bennington (Fig. 7), went through several alterations during the eighteenth century and acquired a casual, asymmetrical appearance not foreseen by the original builder.

Little is known of the middle and lower class homes in early Bennington, since none have survived. Poorer residents undoubtedly continued to build log cabins long after the first successful pioneers had constructed more elegant homes.

Information about household furnishings in Bennington can be derived primarily from the probate records of southern Bennington County. Bennington village is the center of this district, and the original record books were kept at the courthouse there. For the period 1780 to 1800, forty-nine of the probate cases recorded include personal estate
Fig. 6. The Governor Jonas Galusha House, Shaftsbury, c.1790. General view and facade detail.
Fig. 7. The Henry House, North Bennington, 1769 and 1797. Two general views.
inventories. These inventories date from October 1788 to October 1800; the value of the personal estates concerned ranges from approximately £27 to £5180.\footnote{21} Several inventories at the end of the period used the Federal money standard for the first time; their value ranges from $289 to $5706. Like all such records, the Bennington inventories are not a complete cross-section of the region's households. Rather, they reflect the tastes of the middle and upper classes, and of families living in or near Bennington town.

**Tables.** Description of furniture forms in the inventories is frustratingly brief and vague; any speculations based on such descriptions must be very cautious. For example, the tables most frequently noted in the inventories were simply "square," and even that term is not reliably exact, as the entry "1 square long table" makes clear. Tables were a common item: thirty-four of the households inventoried contained at least one. Several "long tables" were probably for communal dining;\footnote{22} landlord Stephen Fay of the Catamount Tavern owned two. Fay also owned one of the most expensive tables on record, a "large mahogany table square" valued at £4; it was exceeded only by a "round table" at £4.16s., perhaps a mahogany tea table. Pine, cherry, and mahogany were the only woods specified; several cherry tables in a variety of shapes and values were recorded. One "brace" table was mentioned, and an "old table frame;" otherwise
the means of construction were unspecified. No card tables were mentioned, and no finish colors were specified.

Chests. Chests were frequently mentioned in the inventory records, but the word was used ambiguously. It may have meant either a wooden storage piece of some permanence and refinement, or a less durable traveling trunk of relatively little value. Fifty-one chests were listed, ranging in value from a shilling to a pound; most had no specific features to identify their form. A "chest without drawers" was fairly certainly a piece of wooden furniture, as was a "chest with a draw" listed elsewhere. Three colored chests (red, blue, and green) were probably painted wooden furniture as well, judging from their relatively high value. Two "low chests" may have been wooden storage pieces, or dressing tables, of which more will be said in the following section.

Chests of Drawers. Chests of drawers were a commonly owned and yet expensive form. Twenty-eight were listed, appearing in twenty-three households; and the descriptive terms used were quite consistent, "case of drawers" or "chest of drawers" being the most common phrases. Of the pieces listed, a large majority were valued over £1, averaging £3.13s. The minority, eight pieces, averaged only 8s.9d. in value, and must have been significantly less elaborate. Cherry was the only wood specified. Two separate sets of high chests and dressing tables were indicated, and one
dressing table alone. The most expensive piece, a "chest and drawers" valued at £12, was closely followed by a high chest at £10 and its companion dressing table at £8.

Chairs. Chairs were by far the most abundant item in the households examined. A total of approximately 287 chairs of all types were distributed among 34 households. Only forty-five chairs were remarkable enough to be described in some detail; the rest were simply noted as old or new, large or small. Thirty-two "common chairs" were mentioned. The number is deceptive since they occurred in only two households, but the designation "common" is significant since an Albany craftsman selling his chairs in the Bennington area also used that term. The "common chairs" were apparently inexpensive turned forms with rush seats and slat backs; two surviving chairs of this general type are said to have been used in Bennington homes of the period (see below). The "common chairs" inventoried had an average value of only 1s.8d. Ten Windsor chairs were fairly costly, averaging 8s.6d. in value; such chairs were also advertised in the Bennington area by local craftsmen. Three "old banister chairs" were valued at only 3s. apiece, a possible indication of their age, condition, or stylistic currency. Six "great chairs," a distinctly outmoded form, were valued an average of 4s.10d.; one such chair, possibly from a Bennington home, survives (Fig. 8). Another surviving piece,
Fig. 8. Great turned armchair, said to have been used in Bennington during the late eighteenth century. Now in the Bennington Museum. H 41\(\frac{1}{2}\)" W 23", D 18", seat H 13\(\frac{1}{2}\)".
a turned armchair (Fig. 9), is said to have been owned and used by landlord Stephen Fay in the Catamount Tavern. This chair is better designed than the great turned armchair of Fig. 8; the turned elements of the Fay armchair are more sharply defined and the chair's proportions are better arranged. However, both chairs have an attenuated appearance which suggests that they are late examples of their form.

A third surviving chair from the period, a Windsor writing chair owned by Ethan Allen's brother Ira, is very simply made and displays no useful stylistic peculiarities.

The highest value given to any single chair in the inventories was a "great round back chair" owned by Jedediah Dewey and worth 9 shillings. Nothing certain is known of this chair's form, but its relatively low value suggests that few high style, elaborately made chairs were to be found in the leading Bennington homes. The lack of direct references to upholstered seating furniture strengthens this speculation. The mention of a "chair frame" at 2s. might indicate a chair lacking its slip seat, or a frame lacking full upholstery. Even more puzzling is the entry for "one piece of a chair" valued at £1.8s., a remarkably high value.

Bedsteads. Bedsteads appear in more households (36) than any other furniture form. The great majority were listed simply as "bedsteads," with "cord" and "bed" --
Fig. 9. Armchair said to have been owned and used by Stephen Fay, landlord at the Catamount Tavern in Bennington c.1766-1781. Now in the Bennington Museum. H 43", W 24½", D 17", seat H 16½".
rope support and bedding — included. A few were more specifically described, and provide some information about materials and forms. Maple, maple and oak, cherry, and oak alone were the woods specified. Cords were described as flax, and in one surprising instance as "whale sinew" and "sea cow cord." Two bedsteads had square posts; otherwise no details of construction were given.

Other Furniture Forms. Some items such as desks, clocks, and looking glasses occur less commonly in the inventories, but their importance as furniture accessories does merit examination of the existing references. Only five desks were mentioned in the records, and little can be determined about their nature. Three were quite costly, averaging £3.6s.8d. in value. The fourth desk was "old," and valued at only 1s.4d. Age alone should not account for such a low price, and the desk was probably small in size as well. The fifth, called a "writing desk," was valued at 18s.; like the fourth it may have been a lap desk or lady's writing box.

Four clocks appeared in the inventories, the most expensive valued at £8 and the least expensive at £2. Two of the clocks were described as "house clocks," a term whose meaning is not clear: it may indicate a clock in a housing or case, as opposed to a free mechanism without case. One
of the house clocks was also termed "wooden;" further descriptive details were lacking.

There were at least three craftsmen in Bennington during the late eighteenth century who were capable of making watches and clocks. Jonas Park, "Clock and Watch-Maker from the City of Philadelphia," was in Bennington by 1786, and advertised brass eight-day clocks of his own making. In 1795 three new craftsmen arrived in town: Noble Spencer A. Hill, "from London," and the partners Hunt & Clark. Jonathan Hunt and Horatio Clark probably came to Bennington from Massachusetts; both seem to have been capable clock-makers. No surviving Vermont clocks from these makers are known today.

References to looking glasses are found both in probate records and in the advertisements of local merchants. Unlike clocks and desks, looking glasses were fairly numerous. Such glasses could be "large," the more elaborate type of which seven were found in local inventories, averaging £2.12s.10d. in value. "Small" looking glasses were much simpler and cheaper; twenty-one appeared in inventories, averaging 7s.4d. in value. Many local merchants and a few outsiders sold such items, although their prices are not known. A Lansingburgh merchant advertised "St. Eustatia looking glasses (very low priced);" nothing is known about the nature of such pieces.
Other Household Objects. The advertisements of local merchants and craftsmen help to suggest further details of the household furnishings in Bennington. Many local merchants sold furniture hardware; the quantity and variety of types sold suggests an active local furniture making industry. The hardware available in Bennington included H and HL hinges; desk, table and dovetail hinges; chest, cupboard, desk and drawer locks; and "trimmings" for drawers and desks. "Curtain furnishings" were included in the stock of one merchant, and another advertised "chintzes and callicoes for furniture," which suggests the presence of upholstered furniture even though inventories do not describe such pieces directly.

A good idea of the range of available ceramic wares can be obtained from the merchants' publicity. Creamware, Delftware, "china," red stoneware, and various unspecified stonewares and earthenwares were all available in the area; one Albany merchant sold "Queen's Ware in Crates, and Delph Bowls in Hogsheads." No specific references to oriental export porcelain are given. Some local merchants sold glass drinking vessels, including decanters, tumblers, beakers, and wine glasses; many inventories contained glass bottles, as well as a few drinking vessels valued from one to four shillings apiece.
Bennington's own native ceramic industry, best known for the nineteenth century wares of the Norton and Fenton factories, is said to have begun in 1793 with the utilitarian earthenwares of Captain John Norton's pottery. However, an advertisement from the Vermont Gazette in December 1785 indicates that there was at least one active local potter preceding Norton:

David Haynes respectfully informs the Public... That he has set up the Malting and the Potter's business at his house (in northern Bennington).... where he has for sale, Earthen Ware....

Pewter was the most popular base metal on the market, and all the common household forms appeared in both advertisements and inventories. An iron furnace was established in Bennington in 1785, and many of the kitchen wares sold in the village must have been locally produced. In 1795 one local merchant offered "Hollow Ware, well assorted, on the same terms as at the Furnace." An advertisement for "large iron candlesticks" was the only direct reference to iron double arm candlestands; it is quite possible that they were locally made as well.

Almost every local merchant sold some fabrics, and in a few cases the range of available materials and patterns was very great. Garment fabrics and bedlinens were predominant in merchants' stocks: tablecloths, towels and heavy
utilitarian materials were often listed. In addition, a few references to upholstery and window hangings did occur. Several merchants advertised curtain materials, one specifying his fabrics as "blue, flowered, and red copperplate curtain callicoes."

The inventories provide the best account of household fabrics; domestic linens and hangings were often described in some detail. Blankets, quilts and "coverlids" were the principal bedcoverings, and tended to be highly valued. Woolen blankets - checked, striped, "floured at the corners" - were fairly inexpensive, averaging 7s. each; quilts and coverlids were more costly. Quilts were often made of calico and averaged 15s. in value. Coverlids, the most numerous and expensive form, were usually made of woven wool and could cost as much as £6. Occasional references to "rose blankets" and "rose coverlids" are a mystery; the term apparently refers to fabric type, not color. Diaper tablecloths and towels were often mentioned, and a few "ruggs" or "rug coverlids" appeared. References to window and bed hangings appeared in several inventories; calico was the most common material specified. Elnathan Hubbel's estate in Bennington included a "set of head curtains & valance blue & white callico" at 15s., a "full set of bed & window curtains containing 27 yards" at £4.1s., a "set of green worsted curtains of 18 yards" at £2.5s.28
Area Craftsmen. Few furniture craftsmen in the Bennington area left any record of their activities; and no labelled or firmly attributed pieces of locally made furniture from the eighteenth century have survived. Not until the end of the century were any local craftsmen willing to call themselves cabinetmakers; most were known simply as chairmakers or joiners.

Ethel Bjerkoe, in her directory of The Cabinetmakers of America, lists a craftsman named William Weaver, who apparently lived and worked in Bennington after 1773. Weaver was born May 23, 1736 at East Greenwich, Rhode Island. His family moved to nearby Coventry in 1747; and in 1773 Weaver came to Bennington. During his stay in Coventry, Weaver "led an active life being a house-carpenter, a cooper, and a shop-joiner." Nothing is known of his later life in Bennington; but it is probable that he continued his woodworking trades in Vermont.

Isaac Sage was a cabinetmaker located in Bennington about 1798. Nothing certain is known of his family; but he may have been related to Moses Sage, a merchant and prominent resident of North Bennington. Cabinetmaking was apparently unprofitable or unsatisfying to Isaac Sage, for in August of 1800 he advertised his services as a mail carrier between Bennington and Brattleboro. The post route
"over the mountain" required two or three full days out of a week to cover. Sage offered to run private errands along the route and "to perform all duties as a post rider, without attention to the jarring (sic) politics of the times."\textsuperscript{31}

By December of the same year another man was advertising the same route, which suggests that Sage had abandoned his brief career as a mail carrier.

Clark Harwood is the only other local furniture craftsman about whom some background information is known. He was born about 1760 in Amherst, Massachusetts and brought to wilderness Bennington with the first settlers in 1761.

Grandson of Bridget Harwood, a prominent founder of the town, he probably grew up on the family homestead just south of Bennington village. In 1785 Clark Harwood advertised in the local newspaper for an apprentice to the craft of making "Dutch" spinning wheels, and hinted that he also made chairs and other turned articles at his shop in Bennington. By 1796 Harwood had moved several times, and was located in Dorset, a town on the northern border of the county twenty-five miles away. By that time he had advertised his services as a maker of joiner's moldings and planes, window sashes, and as a bookseller. He is notable as the only local craftsman whose family connections were with the established upper class.
Amasa Elwell and Ralph Pomeroy were chairmakers, located in Bennington village during the late 1790's. Elwell made Windsor and "dining" chairs; Pomeroy was a house and sign painter who advertised Windsor chairs. Shubael Babcock was a maker of spinning wheels in Shaftsbury circa 1796; his shop is now gone but some of his wheels have survived in private hands. Aaron Deming, a house and shop joiner who advertised for a runaway apprentice in 1795, may have been related to the builder/architect George Deming; Aaron's estate inventory of 1804 contained a large number of common and Windsor chairs.

The only outsider advertising his furniture craft in the Bennington area was James Chestney, of 72 Market Street in Albany. In 1798 he advertised "Common," Windsor, and "Fancy, or Cottage chairs" in the Bennington newspaper, the Vermont Gazette. He further advertised "chairs made to order on the smallest notice," and sold garden seeds. His Bennington advertisement was not illustrated, although a 1797 Albany ad does illustrate his common and Windsor chairs, as well as a "fiddle back" type.

Just after the turn of the century, a craftsman appeared in Manchester, Vermont who embodied a new elegance and sophistication in the local furniture market. Confidently calling himself a cabinetmaker, Curtis Murphy announced the
opening of his shop and listed his wares in some detail. He apparently specialized in cherry furniture, and could provide secretaries, bureaus, breakfast and card tables, sideboards, clock cases etc. "in the newest Fashion." Such craftsmen were to become more visible as the nineteenth century advanced, and the decorative tastes of the old frontier changed.
FOOTNOTES


4 The full title reads Reason the Only Oracle of Man, or a Compendious System of Natural Religion. Alternately Adorned with a Variety of Doctrines Incompatible to It; Deduced from the most Exalted Ideas which we are able to form of the Divine and Human Characters, and from the Universe in General (Bennington, Vt.: Haswell & Russell, 1784).

5 Van de Water, p. 25.

6 Nathan Perkins, A Narrative of a Tour through the State of Vermont from April 27 to June 12, 1789 (Woodstock, Vt.: Elm Tree Press, 1920), pp. 24, 18.

7 Graham, A Descriptive Sketch of the Present State of Vermont, p. 38.


9 Graham, pp. 35-36.

10 Abel Allis was a Manchester physician who sold pharmaceuticals received "immediately from Europe, by way of Canada" in the summer of 1788 (Vermont Gazette V:253). His next-door neighbor Col. Stephen Keyes was reported to be "in Canada, rafting lumber" in the spring of 1789 (Perkins, p. 14).
The Canadian legislature formally opened its borders to trade with the United States in 1788. Donald Creighton, The Empire of the St. Lawrence (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1956), pp. 103-105.


12 John Spargo, Anthony Haswell: Printer-Patriot-Ballader (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1925), p. 35.

13 For information on the academy and literary society, see An Almanack, and Register, for the State of Vermont; for... 1794... (Walpole, N.H.: Thomas & Carlisle, 1974), pp. 14-15. For information on the Friendly Society, see the Account Book of the Friendly Society, circa 1781-1790, now in the Rare Book Collection of the Wilbur Library, University of Vermont.

14 Vermont Gazette, April 1797, December 1798, and March 1785. See also John Jenkins, The Art of Writing, Reduced to a Plain and Easy System, on a Plan entirely new, in seven books (Cambridge, Mass.: the Author, 1813), pp. ix, xix.


17 Graham, p. 35. Tichenor was known to his neighbors as "Jersey Slick," a man with a "peculiar talent for commending himself to the favor of others." Abbie Maria Hemenway, The Vermont Historical Gazetteer... (Burlington: the Author, 1868), Vol.1, p. 175. It may be that Tichenor's stoncutting abilities were somewhat self-exaggerated.


19 The Henry house was built in 1769 by General Ebenezer Walbridge; it was originally square, with a central chimney, small hall and narrow winding stair. In 1797 the house was remodelled: end chimneys replaced the central chimney, a straight stairway was installed, and a large wing added.

20 One such log cabin built in 1783, the Jedediah Hyde house, survives on the far northern border of the state. See Congdon, Fig. 13 and pp. 17-18.

21 One extreme case, an estate valued at only £9, was apparently the property of a dependent female.

22 For Abbott Lowell Cummings' remarks on long tables, see his Rural Household Inventories, p. xvi.

23 Benno Forman of Winterthur has suggested that such a chair may be a banister back type with a so-called "sunburst" crest. Elizabeth Rhoades, in her Portsmouth research, quotes a 1761 inventory listing a "round back painted chair" and speculates that it may be a roundabout or corner chair. Rhoades, Household Inventories in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, pp. 36, 155.

24 For data on each of the named clockmakers, see Lilian B. Carlisle, Vermont Clock and Watchmakers, Silversmiths, and Jewelers, 1778-1878 (Burlington: dist. by the Stinehour Press of Lunenberg, Vt., 1970), pp. 223, 164, 174.


26 Vermont Gazette, December 1785. David Haynes was probably the son of a namesake who settled in Bennington in 1768 and died in 1776.

27 The founder was George Keith. Hemenway, Vol.I, p.139.

28 For Abbott Lowell Cummings' remarks on bed and window fabrics, see op. cit., pp. xxxii-xxxiii.


31 Federal Galaxy (Brattleboro), October 18, 1800; Vermont Gazette, August 25, 1800.

32 I am indebted to Mr. Bob Matteson of Bennington for this information.

33 Cheney's Albany ad is illustrated by Nancy Goyne Evans of Winterthur in the "Collectors' Notes," Antiques, 106:6 (December 1974), p. 1033. The ad is also partially illustrated in Dean A. Fales, Jr., American Painted Furniture 1660-1880 (New York: Dutton, 1972), Fig. 152, p. 91.

34 The Ploughman (Bennington), September 14, 1801.
THE EASTSIDE: BRATTLEBORO AND GUILFORD

Although the Westside claimed preeminence in the founding of Vermont's Republic, the settlements on the Eastside had an older history, and a vital part to play in the turbulent beginnings of the state. The settlement at Fort Dummer, founded in 1724, was the nucleus of the Eastside's development during the mid-eighteenth century. Settlers came up the Connecticut River from south central and western New England, and gradually filled the fertile lowlands of the southernmost townships: Hinsdale (now Vernon), Guilford, Brattleboro, Dummerston. By the time the first settlements were planted on the Westside, Eastside pioneers were already well established.

If the Westsiders had a reputation for ungodliness the Eastsiders were scarcely better, though their notoriety stemmed from political, not religious nonconformity. For a variety of reasons, many Eastsiders were inclined to favor New York's land claims when resistance to that authority began in the west; and throughout the 1770's the southeastern corner of Vermont was a haven for rebellious Yorker sympathizers. The Revolutionary War and the threat of British invasion briefly united east and west; but after the
immediate danger was past the many factions took up their head-cracking quarrels with renewed energy.

Guilford was one of the most independent towns in a state known for its fierce nonconformity. When Vermont declared its independence in 1777, Guilford declined to join the new Republic, and established its own independent authority at the township limits. Such Yorker adherents as Charles Phelps of Marlboro petitioned the New York governor for military aid, and published countless propaganda leaflets attacking the legitimacy of Vermont's new government.

The Republic's response to such verbal and physical uproar was to send riot troops to the Eastside, under the formidable leadership of Ethan Allen. A force of 150 men were recruited in the Bennington area, and in September of 1782 they marched "over the mountain" into Guilford and Brattleboro, Allen bellowing that "unless the inhabitants of Guilford peacefully submit to the authority of Vermont, I will lay it as desolate as Sodom and Gomorrah, by God!" Like so many of Vermont's early civil crises, this one passed without serious bloodshed, and by 1786 the Yorker rebellion in Guilford had been abandoned.

Despite such factional disruptions, Guilford and Brattleboro were the centers of commerce on the Eastside between 1780 and 1800. Guilford, with 2422 inhabitants
by 1790,7 was the largest town in the state; yet it contained no single unifying village to attract a professional and mercantile class. By 1800 Guilford was losing in population, and the leadership of nearby Brattleboro was strengthening. Brattleboro was better located on the river, and possessed several excellent sites for mill dams; the town's East Village (now the center of Brattleboro's business district) rapidly assumed commercial superiority in the area after 1790.8

Due to the infrequency of early newspaper publication in the Brattleboro area, less is known about the commercial activities of the Eastside than of the west. However, some observations can be made from existing data. Twenty-six merchants and craftsmen in Brattleboro left some record of their work; six in Guilford and seventeen from the surrounding countryside have also been identified. A significant number, but not a majority, were general merchants; and the rest were engaged in various skilled trades such as blacksmithing and milling.

Livestock, lumber and peltry were the predominant items for export in the region's early years; and such related activities as weaving, tailoring, hat and shoemaking were widespread. The trading habits of the Eastside were directly affected by the presence of the Connecticut River.
Because there was no thirty mile land carriage necessary to reach the river, a busy water trade quickly developed around Brattleboro, and a few men made their fortunes from river commerce.

John Holbrook, one of the most prominent residents of Brattleboro, is an excellent example of a successful river merchant. Trained as an engineer and surveyor, Holbrook came to Vermont about 1783. He settled in Newfane, and worked as a merchant there.

From Newfane, where he had a share in a small general store, Mr. Holbrook took his produce and articles of barter on pack horses over a bridle path defined by marked trees along the West River Valley, down through Brattleboro, then unsettled, to Greenfield (Massachusetts), where they were exchanged for dry goods and groceries... After accumulating his first $1000, he moved to Brattleboro....

Here he became successful in importing goods from the West Indies, all the way to Brattleboro by water. His goods came by shipping to Hartford, Conn., and from there by flatboats up the river to this place, and we learn he was the pioneer of this method of freighting to Brattleboro....

Flatboat trading on the upper reaches of the river was not easy, and it was not always profitable. The trip downstream was relatively swift and non-strenuous; but the upstream carriage required time-consuming effort, portages around rapids, transferral of goods from boat to boat.
Downstream freight rates doubled on the return trip.\textsuperscript{11} John Holbrook owned the largest flatboat on the river, carrying twenty-four tons; but it was useful only at "boating pitch," when the rains of spring and fall swelled the river to a navigable depth above Enfield Falls in Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{12} With all these drawbacks, it is not surprising that a significant portion of the Eastside's trade went overland to Boston.

"Boston was a more attractive market than Hartford, because it stood directly on the open sea. Vermont produce could be loaded into wagons, carried to Boston, and shipped overseas with only one transferral from vehicle to vessel; the same was true of the return voyage. However, overland transport was slow, and the roads like the rivers were only seasonally useful; spring mud and summer ruts made wagon travel rough on goods and passengers alike. Whatever their choice of a market, the Eastsiders' trading activities were apt to be more complex and time-consuming than those of the Westside; and luxury goods were accordingly more difficult to obtain.

Unlike Bennington, neither Brattleboro nor Guilford ever possessed widespread political influence. The Windham
County seat was Newfane, and the probate courts were located in Marlboro and Westminster. With the exception of Guilford's rebellion, little of statewide political consequence took place in either town during the late eighteenth century.

The first church in Brattleboro was built on a hill above the West Village. When a new church was constructed below the hill in 1785, local merchant G.H. Hall supplied glass, white lead, sugar and rum to assist and encourage the builders. The Eastside lagged behind the west in its development of educational and social organizations, despite the Eastside's older history. Windham County contained the state's fourth literary academy, founded in 1791; the first academy in Bennington was begun in 1780. The Eastside's Second Medical Society was founded in 1794, ten years after the first in Bennington. Brattleboro could support a private library by 1799, but Bennington's Friendly Society had been organized almost twenty years before. The first Eastside newspapers were not begun until 1797, fourteen years after Anthony Haswell's arrival in Bennington.

It is undeniable that surviving records do not reflect the whole range of Eastside activities; yet the existing data does suggest a society not tightly centered on a single village as at Bennington. Furthermore, the trading habits of Brattleboro and Guilford were more diverse than
those of Bennington, and tended to disunite the commercial life of the Eastside. However, like their western counterparts, Eastside towns experienced the waves of immigrants passing through on their way north; and the established settlers profited whenever they could from the pioneer trade.

Eastside architecture is difficult to analyze because so few examples of eighteenth century homes survive. The industrial prosperity which built the East Village also doomed the oldest houses to destruction when Brattleboro became a stylish Victorian mill town. The last major eighteenth century home in the town was demolished in the 1950's.

This house, called the Hayes Tavern, was the principal public lodging-place in the West Village, and became the eastern terminus of the Bennington-to-Brattleboro turnpike. It was built in 1789 by Rutherford Hayes, grandfather of the nineteenth President. Hayes was a blacksmith from Bramford, Connecticut, who built his house to serve as a tavern. The building was brick, with a hipped roof and two inside end chimneys; its symmetrical facade was very plain, with only a simple rectangular transom and side lights at the entry door. However, the interior boasted a wide
entry hall running through the house, full pine panelling in
the principal rooms, and an upstairs ballroom said to have
been "the largest one in that section of the state."19

The principal surviving eighteenth century house
on the Eastside is the Jonathan Hunt home (Fig. 10), built
overlooking the Connecticut River about 1780.20 Hunt was
an early settler on the Eastside, arriving from Northfield,
Massachusetts in 1758. His wood frame farmhouse, like the
Hayes tavern, is outwardly plain and inwardly elegant. Its
large central chimney, tiny entry hall and winding central
stair recall the Dewey and Henry houses in Bennington. How­
ever, the treatment of the principal rooms in the Hunt house
is elaborate and sophisticated. The north parlor contains
full height fielded pine panelling with fluted pilasters on
either side of the fireplace; the south parlor and chambers
above are also elaborately panelled.21

As in Bennington, little is known about Eastside
middle and lower class homes. However, one characteristic
which the smaller surviving Eastside houses share is the
dominant, low-pitched gable roof which reduces the front
façade to a single story in height (Fig. 11). Frequently
the only decorative element used in such designs was a sim­
ple fanlight over the entry door; and although such houses
are occasionally seen on the Westside, they are much more
common on the east.
Fig. 10. The Jonathan Hunt House, Vernon, c.1780.
Fig. 11. Two Houses, Dummerston, c.1790-1800.
Although there are fewer detailed inventories (32) surviving from the Eastside than from the west, they represent a similar range of total values and a similar terminology. The Eastside inventories date from August 1781 to November 1800, and vary in total value from £18 to £1341, and from $132 to $6541. The inherent limitations of the records have been discussed; in Brattleboro and Guilford the geographic bias assumes particular significance since neither town was a probate court site.

**Tables.** The Eastside inventories, like those of Bennington, tend to be vague and unsatisfying in their description of individual furniture items. Fifty-one tables and stands of all kinds appeared in the inventories, distributed among twenty-three households. The most expensive table in the records was a "square cherry fall table" valued at £1.4s.; it was also the only table whose material was specified. Only two oval tables were mentioned, at 5s. and 9s., but "oval," like "square," may not be a wholly trustworthy indicator of shape. One interesting entry referred to a "scaloped table" valued at 6 shillings. It would be tempting to identify such a piece as a Philadelphia "pie-crust top" tea table, were it not for the relatively low price inappropriate to such an elegant form. A more likely candidate for such description would be a William and Mary style dressing table with a scalloped skirt and/or top.
Chests. Thirty-two chests of various types were distributed among twenty-two inventories. The most expensive pieces were two separate chests "with 1 draw," one valued at 10s. and the other at $2.33. Cherry and pine were the only woods specified, and red the only finish color. Four of the chests contained one drawer, and were probably of the permanent storage type defined in discussion of the Bennington inventories. Five "low chests," judging from their inexpensive values and the occasional mention of a lock and key, were probably storage pieces rather than dressing tables.

Chests of Drawers. Twenty-two chests of drawers were found among seventeen households; most were fairly expensive, averaging £1.4s.7d. in value. Four pieces, the most expensive, were valued at either £3 or $10. Only one "low" and one "high case of drawers" were mentioned, valued at £1 and £3 respectively. One peculiar item was a "highlow case of drawers" valued at 10 shillings.

Chairs. Like Bennington, Eastside households contained a large number of chairs: more than 171 in 23 households. Several estates had large numbers of chairs (two included 15 chairs, one 16, one 24), and the owners of such estates were prominent community leaders like Colonel John Sergeant of Brattleboro and his brother Thomas. A number of the chairs were described in some detail. "Common chairs"
were one type familiar from Westside inventories, and were generally inexpensive. Several Windsor chairs were mentioned; three "great chairs" and two "arm chairs" were also listed. Six chairs "with bannister backs," like those in Bennington, were probably examples of a widespread eighteenth century form employing split spindles in the high back supports. One of the most intriguing entries listed two "Philadelphia chairs" valued at 15s.; nothing is known of their form or the reason for such a name.

No woods were mentioned in any chair accounts; and the only finish color specified was green. The green chairs presented an interesting problem; they occurred in three separate households and suggested by their similarity that a local craftsman may have been responsible for all three groups. Charles Evans of Brattleboro owned at his death in 1790 "8 green chairs 2s.8d.; 3 large ditto 12s.; 4 common ditto 9s.8d." Samuel Ward of Guilford owned at his death in 1798 "1 large green chair 6 common ditto $3" and "3 green dining ditto 75¢." In addition, in June of 1798 a public sale was advertised for "articles of household Furniture, of Mrs. Lydia Jones, late of Hinsdale (Vernon), deceased;" the sale included "leather bottomed, and green Windsor chairs."22

An entry for "2 chairs & 2 peices (sic) £1.6d." recalls the reference to a "piece of a chair" listed in Bennington
at £1.8s. Could these entries indicate side chairs with expensively upholstered slip seats or "pieces?"

**Bedsteads.** Like Bennington, very little detail is given in Brattleboro and Guilford inventories about beds and bedsteads. Fifty-four bedsteads were mentioned in twenty-three households, most without any descriptive remarks. An entry for a "press bed bolster" suggests the presence of a convertible bed, to be raised and concealed behind wall curtains during the day. Mention of a "swing bedstead" is puzzling, and no explanation for such a term is known.

**Other Furniture Forms.** A few uncommon items which deserve discussion were mentioned in the inventories. Four desks and a desk & bookcase appeared; their values varied, averaging £1.10s. Looking glasses were in widespread use, appearing in eleven households. Curiously, they seemed to fall into price groups distinguished by the type of currency: the majority averaged 4s.7d., a relatively low value, and the rest were fairly expensive at $2.50. A Halifax merchant's 1798 advertisement for "walnut framed and Dutch looking glasses" provides the only clue to materials and forms; both of these types can probably be classed with the smaller and less expensive forms predominating in the inventories. Three cupboards were listed, a form almost
unknown in Westside records; their prices varied, including one "cupboard and furniture" valued at £1.15s. Mrs. Lydia Jones' estate sale contained a desk and several looking glasses; and in a moment of apparent financial difficulty the Brattleboro newspaper editor, Benjamin Smead, offered for sale his "new Writing Desk, Elegantly constructed on a novel plan."  

Only two clocks appeared in all the records. One belonged to William Bullock of Guilford; it was called a "house clock," echoing the term found several times in Bennington inventories. The second clock belonged to Colonel John Sergeant. This clock was not described in any way, but was worth an astounding $30, the highest value for any single item recorded on either side of the mountains.  

There were several clockmakers in the Brattleboro-Guilford area during the late eighteenth century, and it is surprising that so few clocks appeared in estate inventories. Samuel Bemis was established in Westmoreland, New Hampshire by 1797. Mentioning his prior career in Boston and other "popular" Massachusetts towns, he advertised eight-day clocks of his own making. Nothing further is known of Bemis or his work, although other clockmakers with the same family name have been identified.
Asahel and Russel Cheney, sons of Connecticut clockmaker Benjamin Cheney, both worked in Putney in the late 1790's. None of the brothers' Putney work is known, although several clocks made by Asahel in Massachusetts have been identified. Asahel advertised in Putney in 1798, not specifying any clocks as his own handiwork, but offering for sale musical, alarm, moon, plain eight-day and thirty-hour clocks.

**Other Household Objects.** Additional information about decorative accessories in Eastside homes is scanty, and has been derived from both newspaper advertisements and inventories. "Blue edged & painted earthenware" is the only specific type of ceramics mentioned in advertisements, but it must be assumed that other varieties were also sold in the area. Local inventories mention earthen and stonewares, creamware, Delftware, and "china." Glass, both advertised and inventoried, included the full range of wares found in Bennington, plus some interesting oddities: hourglasses sold by the merchant in Halifax, a glass mustard pot and salt cellar owned by Thomas Sergeant.

As on the Westside, many fabrics were advertised by Brattleboro area merchants; and some specialized fabric terms such as "fearnought," "gurrah," and "taboreen" were found exclusively in Eastside advertisements. Local inventories
contained the normal range of woolen blankets, coverlids, and hangings, including a pair of "copper plait" curtains valued at 15 shillings. Two rare references to possible floor coverings appeared in the inventories: one "table and oil cloth" listed at $4, and one "rag rugg" in another household at 2s.6d.

A large variety of metals were available in shops and homes, although pewter was not so prominently advertised as on the Westside. Ironware was abundant in local shops; every form from kettles to andirons was sold. Tinware was advertised in several stores, as were gold, silver, and plated wares. The local trade in such varied items is well demonstrated by the accounts of Abel Duncan. Duncan was apparently a tradesman and general merchant in Dummerston; he purchased some items from the larger merchants in Brattleboro and resold them in his own area. His purchase accounts in 1803 included an iron pot from G.H. Hall; crockery and glass tumblers from the Houghton brothers; and drawer handles, spoons, and a brass kettle from John Holbrook.28

Area Craftsmen. Surprisingly, no furniture craftsmen in Brattleboro or Guilford advertised their work in local newspapers; but several craftsmen from the surrounding area have been identified. The only cabinetmaker was Nicanor Townsley, who had set up his shop in Walpole, New Hampshire.
by 1797 and advertised an elegant stock of forms:

...Side Boards of different figures; Sofas; Secretaries; swelled or plain Desks and Bookcases; inlaid or plain Card Tables; Framed Chairs of any kind; inlaid or plain Tea Trays; and every other kind of Cabinet Work, which is wanted in the country....29

Townsley's Walpole neighbor Stephen Prentiss, Jr. advertised his services as a chairmaker and painter in the same year, but did not describe his wares.

Those joiners and related craftsmen who worked in the Brattleboro area have been identified only by inference, in probate entries and account books. James Mann was probably a spinning wheel maker and turner about 1797–1803; he is mentioned in Abel Duncan's Dummerston accounts. William Ramsey was also a wheelmaker who advertised in Walpole in 1797. Alexander Hathan, Jonathan Childs, and Levi Goddard all were credited in area probate accounts as coffin-makers, which would suggest that they were capable of general cabinet work. Levi Goddard's own estate inventory of 1830 lists woodworking tools, benches, and wheel-making equipment, strengthening the speculation that he was a shop carpenter and turner.
FOOTNOTES

1 Rosenberry, Migrations from Connecticut prior to 1800, pp. 115-116.


3 One such pamphlet, attributed to Phelps, was entitled "Vermonters Unmasked; or some of their evil Conduct made manifest, from Facts too glaring to be denied, and many of them too criminal to be justified... by a Citizen of the United States." (New York: n.p., 1782).

4 Including Timothy Follett, Bennington goldsmith. Carlisle, Vermont Clock and Watchmakers, Silversmiths, and Jewelers, p. 139.

5 Van de Water, p. 304.

6 Ibid., pp. 316-317.


8 Wilson, pp. 23-24. Two incidents typify the changing status of each town. James and Edward Houghton, established general merchants in Guilford, opened a second store in the East Village in 1796. Royall Tyler, prominent author and lawmaker, lived in Guilford for ten years, then moved permanently to Brattleboro in 1801.


12 For remarks on Holbrook's flatboat, see Cabot, Vol.I, p. 233. For a definition of "boating pitch," see Kirkland, p. 68.

13 Burnham, p. 61.

14 An Almanack, and Register, for the State of Vermont; for... 1794..., pp. 14-15; Zadock Thompson, History of the State of Vermont... (Burlington: Smith, 1833), p. 143.

15 Thompson, p. 167.

16 Federal Galaxy, November 26, 1799; Account Book of the Friendly Society of Bennington.


20 Congdon, Fig. 83 and p. 99. Today Hunt's farmhouse overlooks a nuclear power plant.

21 The panelling is illustrated in Congdon, Figs. 84 and 85, pp. 100-101.

22 Federal Galaxy, June 19, 1798.

23 I am indebted to Benno Forman of Winterthur for this explanation.
The only Westside reference to a cupboard occurred in Dr. Jonas Fay's Bennington accounts, which contained an 1804 notation on the making of a cupboard in payment for a debt. Jonas Fay, Account Book, 1781-1809, p. 139. Now in the Vermont Historical Society Library, Montpelier, Vt.


Palmer, Plate 56; Penrose R. Hoopes, Connecticut Clockmakers of the Eighteenth Century (Hartford: E.V. Mitchell; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1930), Plate 47.

The Argus, September 15, 1798.

Abel Duncan, Account Book, 1797-1803, now in the Vermont Historical Society Library, Montpelier, Vt.

CONCLUSION

It has long been said that there existed a divergence of opinions, behavior and tastes between the Eastside and the Westside in Vermont's early years. Too often that divergence has been oversimplified, as a split between conservative orthodoxy on the east and liberal high spirits on the west. However, the effect of the data gathered here has been to demonstrate that no such easily defined divergence existed.

There were indeed significant differences in the traveling patterns, commercial life, and political ideals of the two regions; such differences were seen and commented upon from the earliest years of the state's existence. But if "conservative" and "liberal" are the traits commonly attributed to Eastside and Westside, the aesthetic and cultural record does not support such labels.

Westside architecture was perceptibly conservative at the end of the eighteenth century, despite the region's supposedly liberal tendencies. The best Bennington area homes were Georgian in scale, in proportion, in treatment of facade and exterior details. By contrast, the surviving
Eastside homes reflect no single dominant architectural style: they are plainer and less ambitious in exterior design. Admittedly, history has not been kind to the Eastside; arbitrary events have limited the number of documents and artifacts surviving in that area. Yet the tone of early Eastside history, more than the west, is hectic, fluid, changeable: typical of unstable pioneer societies where settlers come and go frequently, unwilling or unable to build enduring, conspicuous estates.

On both the Eastside and the west, household goods were scanty and crude by the standards of more cosmopolitan areas. However, despite the meagerness and inherent distortions of documentary evidence, households on both sides of the mountains can be said to have possessed two sorts of furnishings: simple, locally made utilitarian goods with few stylistic pretensions; and imported pieces in conservative or outmoded styles. Prominent homes in both regions contained banister back and great turned chairs; Delft bowls were advertised in Bennington as late as 1785, and walnut framed looking glasses were available on the Eastside in 1798. Not until the very end of the century did any furniture craftsmen advertise such stylish forms as sideboards, bureaus, and veneered work; and almost no such pieces appeared in the inventories of either region.
Conservative habits on either side of the mountains were not the only factors unifying east and west. References to the use of cherry appeared in a variety of items, from bedsteads to tables and chests. Cabinetwork in cherry was apparently common throughout southern Vermont, and should lay to rest the persistent notion that all eighteenth century cherry furniture was made in Connecticut.

Despite these similarities, it is important to admit that the Eastside and Westside did not share all their decorative principles. One aspect of the pioneers' environment which has not yet been discussed was the most enduring, conscious expression of their aesthetic standards: funerary art. New England is well known for its distinctive grave-stone carvings, and frontier Vermont no less than the neighboring states had an active population of stoncutters providing monuments for each village cemetery. Unlike household goods and even houses themselves, the earliest of these stoncarvings have survived in situ in fairly large numbers; and their characteristic designs concisely reflect the differing tastes of east and west.

Fortunately, a few of the individual stoncutters who worked in eighteenth century Vermont are known today. One was Zerubbabel Collins, a son of Connecticut stoncutter Benjamin Collins. Zerubbabel inherited his father's trade
and tools, and in 1778 left the family farm for Shaftsbury, Vermont. A few examples of his early work still survive in Lebanon and Norwichtown, Connecticut, but the majority stand in the cemeteries of Old Bennington and Shaftsbury (Figs. 12, 13, 14).

Collins was apparently the leading member of a group of artisans all working in a single distinctive style. Unlike most New England headstones of the early period, monuments in this style were carved from white marble, not slate. Much of the marble used must have come from quarries in northern Bennington and Rutland counties, first effectively opened in 1785. The stones used by Collins were oddly shaped, each with a large semicircular field at the top, deeply scalloped at the shoulders where the rectangular portion of the stone began. The carved designs featured balanced floral forms, with a winged head in the center and occasionally a motto arching above. The carving was in low relief, sure and sophisticated; and the overall effect was not at all like the stark incised slate designs found elsewhere. Both Zerubbabel and his father are said to have been trained not only as stonemasons but also as cabinetmakers; and it has been suggested that the floral motifs in the son's designs were inspired by furniture designs or the patterns of oriental chintzes.
Fig. 12. Headstone of Nathan Clark Sr. (1718-1792), by Zerubbabel Collins. Old Bennington Cemetery.

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Fig. 13. Headstone of Lt. James Breakenridge (1721-1783), by Zerubbabel Collins. Collins was paid £7.10s. for the stone in 1786 (Forbes, p. 111). Old Bennington Cemetery.
Fig. 14. Headstone of Henry Walbridge (1744-1777), by Zerubbabel Collins. Old Bennington Cemetery.
Other stonecutters in the Bennington area apparently imitated Collins' work, or were trained by him. The man responsible for Reverend Jedediah Dewey's headstone was Josiah Manning (Fig. 15). Manning was from the same area of Connecticut as Collins, and may have been a friend who accompanied Collins into Vermont. He cut Dewey's headstone about 1778, and signed it with his initials, but only remained in the Bennington area for "a year or two" before returning to Connecticut.5

Arlington, just north of Shaftsbury, supported a stonecutter who signed his works "EC;" he may have been a relative of Collins or a colleague trained in his shop.6 Old Bennington cemetery contains a few stones not the work of Collins, but of someone with a more linear, unsophisticated style struggling to achieve the Collins effect (Fig. 16). The distinctive white stones Collins and his followers produced were popular, and many of the men whose household inventories survive for study today, rest beneath Zerubbabel's cheerful foliate designs.

On the Eastside, cemetery memorials were markedly less elegant. The late eighteenth century headstones of the Brattleboro-Guilford area are crude by comparison with Collins' work, and are of a different style and technique altogether. Eastside stones, like the majority in northern
Fig. 15. Headstone of Rev. Jedediah Dewey (1714-1778), by Josiah Manning. Old Bennington Cemetery.
Fig. 16. Headstone of Samuel Sherwood (1732-1788), maker unknown. Old Bennington Cemetery.
New England, were made of slate. There was slate available in the Dummerston area from an early date; Timothy Dwight stated in his journals that the Dummerston quarry was one of only two operating in New England. Most Eastside stones were simple rectangular forms with semicircular tops, and smaller semicircles at the shoulders. This shape was quite consistent despite the wide variety of carving styles, and the stones may have been precut at the quarry.

In some stones, such as those in the Old North Cemetery at Guilford, the decorative elements were the same as those used by Collins: a semicircular field containing foliate designs and a winged head. However, the incised carving of the Eastside stones was generally either very broadly or very tightly executed (Figs. 17 and 18), and the designs lacked sophistication or technical fluency. Some stones in both Guilford and Brattleboro were executed with an emphasis on geometric, architectonic motifs (Fig. 19). A few late century stones did reflect the new trend toward classical imagery; Timothy Larrabee of Guilford was buried in 1798 under a tentatively Federal style stone. Its delicate urn in a scalloped field was carved on a stone of the standardized eighteenth century shape.

The most ambitious stone surviving on the Eastside is that of Colonel John Sergeant (Fig. 20). It possesses
Fig. 17. Headstone of Levi Stowel (1759?-1776), maker unknown. Old North Cemetery, Guilford.
Fig. 18. Headstone of Elnor Weld (1730-1799), maker unknown. Old North Cemetery, Guilford.
Fig. 19. Headstone of Louis(e) Stevens (?-1793), maker unknown. Old North Cemetery, Guilford.
Fig. 20. Headstone of Col. John Sergeant (1732-1798), maker unknown. Sergeant's Flats Cemetery, Brattleboro.
the familiar simple shape, elaborated by an added semicircle at the top. The carving is light, precise, and much more confident than that of any contemporary stone from the area. The motifs are unusual: a tree in the upper field bears what seem to be heraldic devices. The style of letter cutting is elaborate and varied, and the text is flanked by a mechanically designed pattern which echoes the foliate borders of other stones.

Colonel Sergeant's stone may have been designed by the only known Eastside stonecutter, Henry Locke. In May of 1798 Locke advertised his services as a gravestone cutter in the Brattleboro newspaper. His shop was located at Josiah Arms' tavern north of the village, and if business should be slow he offered to work at "Brick Laying and Plaistering." Less than three months later Colonel Sergeant died, and was buried in the cemetery at Sergeant's Flats, only two miles from his friend Josiah Arms' tavern. The possibility that Locke designed the Sergeant stone is strong.

Even at its most elaborate, Eastside stonecutting never approached the sophistication or stylistic unity of the Westside examples. Like so many other aspects of Eastside life, the stone monuments were diverse, awkward, unambitious. At the end of their lives the householders of
both regions revealed their decorative tastes in the estates they left and in the stones commissioned to mark their graves. Despite the broad similarities born of frontier isolation, East and West were different cultures, and in the end they did not meet.

It is important to stress, at the close of this study, that no unusual new discoveries were sought as a product of this research. A few craftsmen previously unknown or unnoticed have been introduced; a few unexpected notes about Vermont's earliest decorative tastes have been presented; but the bulk of the information given here will surprise no one familiar with New England's eighteenth century art and history. A great deal has been written in recent years about the decorative arts of the earliest colonial societies, and about the arts and culture of America's first great cities. Relatively little has been said about the less glamorous and less consistent cultural life of the frontier; and it is as a study of one of the first frontier environments that this investigation of Vermont households should have value. The scarcity of documents and surviving artifacts in Vermont is limiting, but not unusual; this brief survey could be strengthened by further research in neighboring areas and periods. Hopefully such research will be undertaken by others in the future.
FOOTNOTES


3 The first quarry was near Mount Aeolus in Dorset, and was opened by Isaac Underhill. (Vermont Division of Historic Sites).

4 Forbes, pp. 110-111.

5 Forbes, pp. 105-106. The initials have been partially obliterated by the remounting of the stone.


8 Federal Galaxy, May 8, 1798.
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APPENDIX 1
INVENTORIES EXAMINED OR QUOTED: BENNINGTON

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## APPENDIX 2

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