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HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS IN PORTSMOUTH, NEW
HAMPSHIRE, 1750-1775.

University of Delaware, M.A., 1972
Fine Arts

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HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS IN PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
1750-1775

by

Elizabeth Adams Rhoades

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 1972

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Acknowledgments

No thesis is entirely the product of one person alone. I owe a great deal of gratitude to many people, without whom this thesis could not have been written.

The staffs of the New Hampshire Archives and of the Rockingham County Probate Office were most helpful during the research for this thesis, as were the staff members of the New Hampshire Historical Society, particularly Mrs. Norbert Lacy, the manuscripts librarian. I would also like to thank Mr. Charles S. Parsons, who supplied much useful information.

A special note of thanks must go to James L. Garvin, Chief Curator of Strawberry Banke, Inc., who suggested the topic for this thesis and was unfailingly encouraging. The staff of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, and especially Mrs. George H. Bullen, who typed this thesis, provided much help and encouragement during the research and writing of the thesis. Finally, I am most grateful to Dr. E. McClung Fleming, who read and reread rough drafts of the chapters and gave me much valuable criticism, particularly on statistics!

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Introduction

In the last few decades there has been a growing interest in American furnishings, stimulated by the opening of historic preservation and restoration projects such as Colonial Williamsburg, of decorative arts museums such as Winterthur, of scores of historic house museums, by period room exhibits in major art museums, and by the growth of the antiques movement. Many handsome books on American furniture have been produced, but very few studies have tried to recreate accurately the interior of an eighteenth-century house. Abbott Lowell Cummings' Rural Household Inventories is a notable exception. There is an interest in and a need for exact information on how the houses were furnished, but the information itself is largely lacking.

Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is fortunate in having a large number of eighteenth-century houses still standing and a group of citizens active in the movement for their preservation and restoration. Strawberry Banke, Inc., was founded in 1957 to preserve a whole area of old Portsmouth, and this interest has spread to other parts of the city. Besides Strawberry Banke, there are seven restored houses open to the public. Although the architecture of the region

has long been recognized as being among the finest in New England (John Mead Howells' Architecture Along the Piscataqua is the major work on the subject), the decorative arts associated with that architecture have been virtually overlooked, and almost nothing is known of the furnished interior of the eighteenth century.

The years 1750-1775 were chosen for this study because Portsmouth was a major commercial center in those years, indeed, the only one in northern New England. It was during this period that some of the finest houses, such as the Thomas Wentworth house (1760), were built. However, we know almost nothing about what sort of objects could be found in a house of this period. I know of only two studies of eighteenth-century Portsmouth furniture. One is Robert E. P. Hendrick's Winterthur thesis, "John Gaines II and Thomas Gaines I, 'Turners' of Ipswich, Massachusetts," but John Gaines, who worked in Portsmouth, died before 1750. A second is James L. Garvin's article, "Portsmouth and the Piscataqua: Social History and Material Culture," in Historical New Hampshire (Summer, 1971), which makes a brief mention of eighteenth-century furnishings. As more of the mid-eighteenth-century houses are restored and opened to the public, a study of the furnishings in Portsmouth at this period becomes increasingly important.

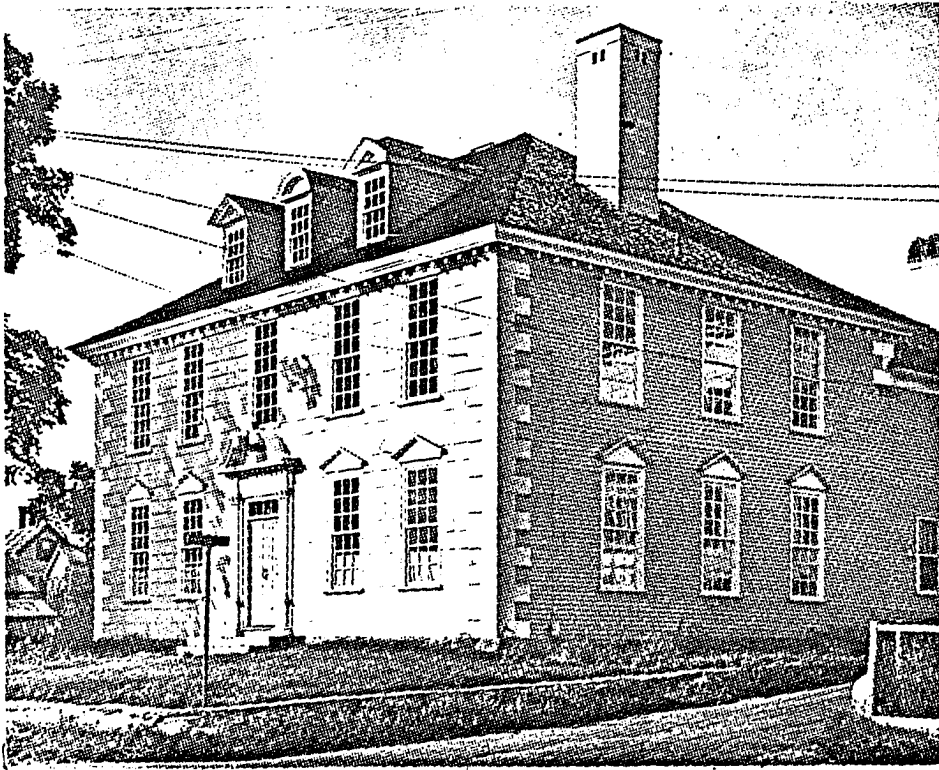


Figure 1. The Thomas Wentworth house, Portsmouth, built 1760 by Madam Mark Hunking Wentworth for her son, Thomas. Photo: Douglas Armsden.

Any study of household furnishings should ideally begin with documented extant objects. Boston, Salem, New York, and Philadelphia all have a body of known furniture which can form the basis of a study of furnished interiors. Unlike these cities, however, Portsmouth has no such body of documented furnishings. Cabinetwork of this town has always evaded identification, with the result that we know almost nothing about the furniture produced here before 1790. In addition, most of the furnishings belonging to the old families have been dispersed. Research for this thesis produced only four objects proven to have been owned in Portsmouth between 1750 and 1775: a dressing table which belonged to Major Samuel Hale, a tea table belonging to William Whipple, and silver candlesticks with snuffers and tray with the initials of Daniel and Sarah Warner. The present furnishings of the Portsmouth houses open to the public are mostly suppositions. This lack of documented objects accounts for the few photographs in this thesis.

For this reason, the subject of the thesis has become Portsmouth furnishings from 1750 to 1775 as revealed by written records. Those which can provide information about household furnishings include probate inventories, merchants' account books and invoice books, letter books, and newspaper advertisements.

The main body of written records which document furnishings are the 246 household inventories which are filed with the probate records in the New Hampshire Archives, Concord, and in the Rockingham County Probate Office, Exeter. There are also two excellent inventories which were not taken for probate purposes. John Fisher, an Englishman and brother-in-law of Governor John Wentworth, filed a 1778 inventory of the furnishings of his Portsmouth house with the Commission for enquiring into the Losses and Services of American Loyalists, which met in London in the 1780's. The wealth of descriptive detail in this inventory is unexcelled. The other inventory is that of Samuel Moffatt, a merchant. His estate was inventoried in 1768 after it was attached for debt. Again, the detailed descriptions of the furnishings are most useful. It should be noted here that the inventory preserved for Governor John Wentworth is for his house in Wolfeborough. It has been used in this thesis because John Wentworth was a native of Portsmouth and because the house was the first to be built in Wolfeborough. As a result, it may be presumed to reflect a Portsmouth taste.

Inventories of 1750-1789 were studied for this thesis, because men who had furnished their homes before 1775 did not necessarily die until some years after that date. The year 1789 is the cut-off date because inventories of 1790 and later reflect the post-Revolutionary prosperity of Portsmouth,

which allowed people to purchase new (and new style) furnishings for their homes. By the same token, inventories of the 1750's may actually represent earlier fashions. Thus, the inventories of this decade have not received as much emphasis as those of the later period.

Of the 248 Portsmouth inventories preserved from this forty-year span, seventy-five were taken whole for careful analysis, and notes were made on the rest. The seventy-five were more extensive and contained more detailed descriptions of the furnishings. Among these were thirty room-by-room inventories. These seventy-five inventories represent mostly the middle and upper classes, because few of the poor rated on the dignity of a probate inventory, and the appraisals of those that did are usually marked by a paucity of descriptive detail. Those selected for study and analysis may be broken down by classes as follows: wealthy class (merchants) - 26, middle class (shopkeepers, craftsmen, ship captains) - 43, lower class (seamen, laborers) - 6. This thesis will concentrate by necessity on the furnishings of the middle and wealthy classes. The information for the houses of the poor is simply not adequate.

It should be noted that inventories have certain serious limitations. Inventories in general are lacking in consistent and specific descriptions. Individual appraisers listed objects according to their own interests and knowledge,

and thus the descriptions vary tremendously. For example, in Portsmouth, Thomas Martin, as a shopkeeper, was interested in textiles and therefore, as an appraiser, was always careful to describe the upholstery and bed hangings. Another man appraising the same house might neglect entirely to mention these items. The appraised values of the furnishings vary according to the inclination of the appraisers, as well. One can also not be sure that some furnishings were not removed from the house by the family before the appraisal. Certain items, such as family portraits, are conspicuously absent from inventory descriptions. In view of these limitations, supplementary material must be used to create a complete picture. Therefore, this is not an "inventory study" in the usual sense of that term.

Account books, invoice books, and letter books can supplement inventories in several ways, giving information on manufactures, imports, and current prices, as well as personal preferences. Most of the documents in these categories pertaining to Portsmouth in the mid-eighteenth century are preserved in the New Hampshire Historical Society, or the New Hampshire Archives in Concord. Unfortunately, these have survived only in small numbers. No Portsmouth cabinetmaker's account book is extant, while there are only six merchants' ledgers and day books and three letter books.

The most complete commercial papers are those of John Moffatt. His records for the period after 1750 include his Waste Books (day books) for 1750-1751, 1752-1753, and 1763-1770, his Ledger for 1755-1758, and the Invoice Book (of English cargoes consigned to him) of 1737-1755. John Marsh's Invoice Book is also preserved, as well as his Ledger. The two books cover the years 1768-1775. The partnership of William Rhodes and John Parker is recorded in their Journal (day book) of 1763-1768 and Ledger of 1763-1772. The Langdon family papers contain some of the correspondence and accounts for 1760-1775 of Woodbury and John Langdon, who became very wealthy and powerful merchants after the Revolution. There are a few accounts of smaller shopkeepers who bought their goods from other merchants, rather than importing directly from England. These are the receipt book of 1758-1767 of Charles Treadwell, an invoice book of Samuel Hale (Jr.) of 1764-1772, and the account book (1752-1755) of an unidentified storekeeper, all three of which are in the Downs Manuscript Library at Winterthur. These documents are more useful for the study of smaller furnishings, such as ceramics or textiles, because none of these men dealt with furniture. In most cases, furniture was bought directly from the cabinetmaker or imported on a special order from Boston or England. Since very few personal records have survived, we can only guess at this practice in Portsmouth.

Of the three letter books, two were of merchants. George Boyd's letters of 1773-1775 describe his shipbuilding and lumber business, as well as give lively comments on the social scene. Peter Livius' letter book of 1764-1766 deals with his family and business affairs, while most of Governor John Wentworth's correspondence (1767-1775) is official in nature. A few personal notes do creep in, however, and we get a glimpse of some of the Governor's plans for his two houses.

Another source of information for furnishings is advertisements in the New Hampshire Gazette, preserved in the Portsmouth Athenaeum. The first issue was published on October 7, 1756, and the merchants of the area were quick to insert small notices of what they had in stock. The notices were indeed small; the newspaper was, at times, only two pages in length, and space for advertisements was severely limited. Most of the advertisements consist of simple lists of wares available in shops or notices of vendues and legal actions. Descriptions of furnishings, particularly of furniture, are largely missing from these brief notices. A few craftsmen, such as upholsterers and silversmiths, advertised their services, but only one cabinetmaker's advertisement appeared before 1775. Most craftsmen apparently felt it unnecessary to advertise; in a small community like Portsmouth they were well-known. Only a man

who was newly arrived in town needed to advertise himself.

Two problems arose during the study of values of household furnishings. First, because of the constant fluctuation of the currency, no meaningful division of the inventories by amount has been possible. Second, it is difficult, if not impossible, to compare furniture values of different years.

In 1749 Massachusetts currency (on which New Hampshire depended, for the most part) was revalued to bring under control the inflation caused by successive issues of paper money. The new "lawful money" was reduced by about seven and a half times from what the "old tenor" had been.¹ New Hampshire continued to reckon in old tenor until about 1765, when lawful money became the standard in inventories and accounts. The rate did not remain fixed, however, as inflation caused the currency to depreciate throughout the period. For example, in 1766 Sarah Frost's estate was appraised at £14571 old tenor or £728:11 lawful money, a reduction by a factor of just over twenty. The few other cases where equivalents were given indicate varying amounts of inflation, but none were at the fixed exchange rate of seven and a half.

Rampant inflation was characteristic of the Revolutionary era. Prices were forced up to the point that

James Stoodley's house in 1780 was valued at £24,000 when it might normally be appraised at £300 or £350. The sale of some of John Wentworth's effects in April, 1780, brought 26190 in inflated currency, which was equal to £654:15 in lawful money.² After the Revolution the currency returned to a level near the original value of lawful money. A complete study of eighteenth-century currency in New Hampshire is needed before comparative values can be established.

The material for this thesis was approached in two ways. First, each type of furnishings was treated separately with some attempt to differentiate between the possessions of the wealthy and middle classes. One chapter treats furniture, while another deals with the smaller furnishings. Second, the room-by-room inventories were analyzed to determine some sort of pattern for the furnishing of the various rooms of the houses. The last chapter is a description of one house with an unusual amount of documentation concerning its furnishings during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. This house belonged to Samuel Moffatt and was the most elaborate house in Portsmouth when it was built. It may be considered as an example of the standard which many tried to equal in furnishing their houses.

Notes on the Introduction

1

See for a complete discussion William B. Weedon, Economic and Social History of New England 1620-1789 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), II, 674-677. (The following guides have been used for footnotes and bibliography in this thesis: The MLA Style Sheet, second edition; Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers, third edition, revised; "Winterthur Publications: "Suggestions for Authors.")

2

Rockingham County Probate Records, #4600, County Building, Exeter, New Hampshire.

Chapter I

The Portsmouth Environment 1750-1775

Portsmouth is frequently considered to have been a Puritan settlement, much like that of Massachusetts Bay. However, profit, not religious freedom, was the major motive in the founding of the town in 1630. Portsmouth was established by John Mason's Laconia Company with the purpose of making a fortune in the fishing trade and, if possible, of seeking valuable minerals in the hills of New Hampshire. During the period of New Hampshire's rule by Massachusetts in the second half of the seventeenth century, the zealous Puritans tried to convert their northern neighbors, but with little success, as Nathaniel Adams relates in the Annals of Portsmouth:

A reverend divine, preaching against the depravity of the times said, "you have forsaken the pious habits of your forefathers, who left the ease and comfort which they possessed in their native land, and came to this howling wilderness to enjoy without molestation the exercise of their pure principles of religion." One of the congregation interrupted him; Sir, you entirely mistake the matter; our ancestors did not come here on account of their religion, but to fish and trade.¹

Fishing and trade continued to be the main business of this port on the Piscataqua River throughout the colonial period. This emphasis on shipping created an outward-looking town which turned its attention to the sea rather than to the lands in the interior of New Hampshire. As the major port north of Boston, Portsmouth became a town of importance both politically and commercially. When New Hampshire was made a separate province in 1679, Portsmouth was designated the capital. As such, it was the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor during the period when the Royal Governor was shared with Massachusetts, and after 1741, the residence of the Royal Governor. During the third quarter of the eighteenth century Portsmouth was the center for the political and social activities which always surrounded the governor of a province.

Portsmouth was a small town compared to Boston, but the population grew steadily. The first official census of New Hampshire in 1767 shows that Portsmouth had a population of 4466, including 187 slaves.² In 1775 the population had risen only to 4590,³ a rate of growth smaller than in most American cities. In the same year Boston's population was 16,000, and New York's was 25,000.⁴ Portsmouth ranked about fifteenth in population in colonial America, behind such cities as Newport (11,000), New Haven (8295), Salem (5337), and Hartford (4881).⁵

As might be expected, nearly half of the townspeople were traders or mariners, and many combined both occupations. Another section of the population was skilled workers who built and repaired the ships and supplied some of the fine household goods demanded by those who wished to display their wealth.

The commerce of Portsmouth was almost wholly directed toward shipbuilding and shipping. Merchants such as George Boyd not only built ships in their own yards but filled them with cargoes as well. In a letter of 1773 to a friend in London, Boyd described his present state of business: "I am still largely concerned in the ship way...I have seven sails of new ships now on the stocks. I would gladly get one built for you..."⁶ Boyd's cargoes were mainly timber, as were those of most other shippers in the area. Samuel Gerrish, for example, had a large business with Antiqua to which he exported lumber almost exclusively. Lumber was the major commercial product of New Hampshire at this period.

Household furniture may have been used as part of venture cargoes on a fairly regular basis. Mabel Munson Swan refers to a British Customs Report for the year 1771 which shows that more house furniture was exported to the West Indies from the Piscataqua than from any other port in the colonies.⁷ A survey of the extant ledgers of Portsmouth in the period 1750-1775, however, fails to reveal any sign of

such trade, and the clearest reference to these cargoes is in John Moffatt's ledger for 1733, when John Gaines was credited with "3 doz chairs Sent in y^e Sloope to Nfland @42/." ⁸ Similar entries for John Gaines at other times show that this must have been a regular practice for him. As yet there is no solid evidence to indicate what other cabinet-makers were engaged in this trade.

Whatever the cargoes of the outward-bound ships, it is certain that incoming ships were bringing in quantities of household goods, as well as medicines, foodstuffs, fabrics, and other products. A large part of these cargoes arrived from the West Indies and England, although the coastal trade was brisk. Besides voyages to other British ports, contemporary account books record ventures to such places as Cadiz, Barcelona, and Africa. Since trade with America legally had to be channeled through England, however, there is no evidence of how much produce of these other countries finally arrived at Portsmouth.

Credit in Portsmouth, as in the other coastal cities, depended largely on trade, particularly with England. Merchant houses of Bristol and London acted as bankers for their American clients, as well as wholesale retailers. Peter Livius came to Portsmouth in the 1760's to set himself up as a landed gentleman but discovered that it was nearly impossible to do so without also having some mercantile

interests. He described his position in a letter of 1764: "Before I came to this Country I had determined not to embark in trade on any account but to apply myself wholly to the Improvement of the Landed property I have here. but on a nearer examination I find it Impracticable to prosecute the one to any advantage without being concern'd in the other..."⁹

A trading economy meant a great deal of dependence on conditions in England. In comparison with Boston, which traded extensively with the interior towns, Portsmouth traded far more with lands beyond the sea. Its dependence on England for credit was perhaps one of the reasons that Portsmouth never entered into a non-importation agreement until after 1770, when other American cities had such agreements several years earlier. Right up to 1775 Portsmouth clung to moderate peaceful means of resistance against British policies, and then it was men from the interior towns which forced open rebellion upon the province.

Portsmouth's economy always suffered from the wars fought in North America, despite persistent reports that privatering was profitable. Andrew Burnaby, an Englishman who travelled in America in 1759 and 1760 and saw very little that he liked, remarked rather contemptuously that "New Hampshire...has grown rich during the war, by the loss of its own vessels, they having been commonly insured above value."¹⁰

The uncertain state of the currency in New Hampshire, however, meant that every war loss was serious, if not disastrous. Inflation was a constant threat, and war only made it worse, as Portsmouth's merchants well knew. Portsmouth's political conservatism may be explained in part by economics.

In religious matters, Portsmouth citizens were not as serious as their descendants have often pictured them. Mrs. Arthur Browne, wife of the Anglican minister, reported in 1771 that "the People here at present are busily employed in preparing entertainments for the Governor and appear to be in greater anxiety to get some nice rearaty than for a pleace in Paradiice."¹¹

Although there were many who were devout of course, some, at least, resented the time-consuming services on Sunday. George Boyd complained vigorously about them: "I am Oblig'd to attend publick service twice a day [on Sunday], for every Sunday a man stays from publick Service it is ten guneas out of Stock & I want to same them guineas for a particular Use when I get the other side of the water."¹² it is likely that many others agreed with him; particularly if the fine were really in guineas!

Congregationalism was the dominant sect in Portsmouth during the eighteenth century, with two meeting-

houses to serve the town. The ministers of these two churches were usually graduates of Harvard. The Church of England was a small but important domination. Although the Notitia Parochialis of 1744 listed only seventy "Actual Communicants."¹³ all the wealthy families - Wentworth, Atkinson, Warner, Meserve, and Livius among others - were members. The minister there was Arthur Browne, an Irishman who was a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Other sects appeared and flourished for a time, but usually they had few followers and many detractors.

Portsmouth tended to look askance at other sects, such as Quakers, with the half-humorous scorn of Yankees for anything "foreign." George Boyd wrote Joshua Howell in Philadelphia that "Messrs. Barcklay, Fisher, and Dimsdell on their tour has been at my house...they are fine hearty quakers as ever I was acquainted with, I expect friend fisher will soon be down here. he has fell in love with one of our girls here, so I expect we shall have a mixed breed."¹⁴

Despite its native caution Portsmouth was known for its hospitality and the courtesy of the inhabitants. William Winterbotham in his description of America characterized Portsmouth as a place of "as much elegance and politeness of manners as in any of the capital towns of New-England. It is often visited by strangers, who always meet with a friendly

and hospitable reception."¹⁵ Since Winterbotham never visited this country and admitted that he had to rely on other sources, we are not able to determine exactly from whom he took this estimate. However, he was not alone in his opinion. Other writers mention this same reputation for courtesy. Timothy Dwight, the President of Yale College, observed during his trip to Portsmouth in 1796 that the manners of the townsmen were "of a polished, pleasing character."¹⁶ Five years later the Rev. William Bentley of Salem recorded in his diary that Portsmouth "still preserves its reputation for hospitality to strangers, and no town in New England ever was come in competition with it."¹⁷

Unlike the other towns in New Hampshire, Portsmouth in the third quarter of the eighteenth century had a clearly marked social stratification. Among the inhabitants were most of the wealthy of the province and also most of the very poor, although there were few who were destitute. This situation was, of course, not uncommon to other colonial cities, particularly provincial capitals.

The aristocracy of the town was made up mostly of the rich merchants and their families, and it centered around the very powerful Wentworth family. This large and diverse clan produced in three successive generation a lieutenant-governor of Grenada. They made their money in trade and were allied with virtually every important family

in New Hampshire and with not a few families in Boston and Salem. These family alliances proved embarrassing for Governor John Wentworth when every man on his Council except one was related to him, and the matter was brought to the attention of the Board of Trade during a dispute over land grants.

These wealthy and powerful families with their fine houses strove to equal the elegance of Boston or Philadelphia and, in some measure, were successful. Governor John Wentworth ordered a "one horse chair" from Philadelphia decorated in a way which must have made the provincials stare. It was "to be painted the lightest Straw Color and gilt Mouldings with my Crest and Cypher as on the Seal of this Letter Inclosed in a plain Oval without the least Ornament and rather in a small compass."¹⁸ Wentworth had spent several years in England and desired to emulate his distant cousin, the Marquis of Rockingham. He even went so far as to import domestic servants from Yorkshire.

Although most of the Portsmouth gentlemen were not as socially ambitious as John Wentworth, they did admire the fashions in Boston, particularly in portraiture. Joseph Blackburn found enough demand for his services as a limner to take up residence in Portsmouth between 1759 and 1761. During that time he painted at least twenty portraits of the finest families in Portsmouth, including several members of the Wentworth and Warner families.

Blackburn was not the first portraitist to paint Portsmouth subjects, but he was the most prolific. John Greenwood painted several portraits in Portsmouth about 1750 and probably visited Portsmouth for that purpose.¹⁹ John Singleton Copley painted between fourteen and twenty portraits of Portsmouth citizens, although most of these were probably executed in Boston. He did, however, come to Portsmouth to do the pastel of Governor John Wentworth in 1769. Certainly Portsmouth people were as eager as Bostonians to have their likenesses preserved for posterity.

Although some of the more sober townspeople may have frowned upon the seeming extravagances of the wealthy, there appears to have been ample support for the Assembly House in which dancing parties were held on a regular basis. Portsmouth even supported a French dancing master for a time, before he ran off to Philadelphia without paying his debts.²⁰

The town was not lacking in educational facilities for the sons of gentlemen. Besides the rudimentary schooling received by most boys, there was a Latin School headed first by Samuel Langdon, later to be President of Harvard College, and then by Major Samuel Hale, like Langdon a graduate of Harvard in the class of 1740 and a veteran of the Louisburg campaign of 1745. Major Hale was responsible for sending boys from Portsmouth to Harvard for nearly forty years.

In 1750 some of the townspeople formed a Social Library to further the intellectual pursuits of adults. The list of the Subscribers contains representatives of virtually every prominent family in the town. The Library was active throughout the last half of the century and was the direct precursor of the Portsmouth Athenaeum, which is still in existence.

The political conservatism of Portsmouth extended into the social sphere. Although the wealthy imitated the fashions of Boston, there was still much prejudice against such pastimes as gaming and dramatic performances. In 1762 a proposal to build a theater in Portsmouth caused such great controversy that the matter was brought to the attention of the Assembly. Petitions were circulated, and since the signers of the petition against the theater were far more numerous than those in favor, the Assembly voted to "discountenance & deny all such proposals at least at this time."²¹

Although John Wentworth declared that Portsmouth was a "dull place for cards; I have not won enough lately to pay the postage of a letter,"²² gaming was apparently too prevalent a practice for the town fathers. In 1774 it was voted in Town Meeting "that the Town bear Testimony against the common Practice of playing at Billiards & Cards, & also that they disapprove of every other Species of Gaming and

Dissipation..."²³ John Adams was inclined to agree with John Wentworth in his opinion of the stuffiness of Portsmouth, however: "By accidentally taking this new rout, I have avoided Portsmouth...I should have seen enough of the Poms and Vanities of that little World, Portsmouth If I had gone there, but Formalities and Ceremonies are an abomination in my sight."²⁴

The social life in Portsmouth was abruptly cut off by the Revolution. Although the town had occasionally felt the rumblings of the coming troubles, open rebellion was not a Portsmouth idea but a movement by the interior towns of Exeter, Dover, and Londonderry where less dependence was placed upon the sea and the trade with Britain. When independence came, the prominent men of Portsmouth were placed in the position of deciding to break all ties with their familiar business connections or to remain loyal to Britain and thus risk proscription by the new government. The merchants were divided: some fled to Nova Scotia or the West Indies leaving everything behind, while others remained and declared their allegiance to the Continental Congress, however, reluctantly. Many of the latter refused to sign the Association Test of 1776 to declare their support of the rebels, but preferred to remain as neutral as possible. Only about one quarter of the merchant class were either Tories or reluctant patriots, however. Others, like Joshua Wentworth and John Langdon, became prominent in the rebel government.

It is interesting that in many cases it was the craftsmen in Portsmouth, like those in Boston, who took the initiative in the resistance against the Stamp Act as well as the Revolutionary affairs. Three of the most prominent were George Gaines, Samuel Drowne, and Joseph Bass, a joiner, a silversmith, and an upholsterer, respectively.

Although Portsmouth still contains many houses of architectural distinction, the appearance of the town was radically altered by several great fires, the most destructive of which took place in 1813. At that time the whole central section was wiped out, although such fine houses as the Warner House (1716) and the Langdon House (1782) were spared. Since that time many other houses have been razed to make room for commercial buildings, or, most recently, in the name of urban renewal. We must therefore depend on contemporary descriptions to help us visualize the town between 1750 and 1775. Andrew Burnaby, predictably, sniffed at Portsmouth as being "an inconsiderable place, and chiefly built of wood."²⁵ George Washington agreed with this opinion,²⁶ but the Marquis de Chastellux, who visited Portsmouth in 1782, remarked that "all those houses I saw at Portsmouth are very handsome and very well furnished."²⁷ Certainly houses like Nathaniel Adams', Theodore Atkinson's, and Mark Hunking Wentworth's, which are now gone, as well as such extant houses as Jonathan Warner's or John Wentworth's were

elegant enough to testify to the truth of the Marquis' observation.

No writer praised the town in general as being pretty. It was considered to be rather dirty, and Timothy Dwight commented on the contiguity of many houses and wondered that there had not been disastrous fires.²⁸ (This was before the fire of 1813). There were, however, many fine houses in the town built after 1750, when some of the newly-affluent wished to have some tangible sign of their wealth. The Moffatt house, for example, was built by John Moffatt in 1763 as a showplace for his son, Samuel. The rooms are spacious with beautiful panelling and cornices. Fine carving is a feature of many houses in Portsmouth at this period and was probably executed by the master carvers, the Deerings of Kittery or William Lewis of Portsmouth. These men may also have been responsible for turning the elaborate stair balusters, which, in sets of three, are a characteristic of many Portsmouth houses. Photographs of houses which have been destroyed and extant houses prove that the architecture of the middle of the eighteenth century was pleasing, it not majestic, but it certainly cannot be termed "inconsiderable."

The fine houses which were built after 1750 were filled with elegant furnishings to enhance the status of their owner. The house and furnishings together were to

serve as an indication of the owner's great wealth and position. Most of the furniture was probably made in the town, even though Portsmouth craftsmen of the eighteenth century are an unknown quantity, with the exception of John Gaines, who died before the middle of the century. Although a search in the records will produce a list of craftsmen's names, their work is almost entirely anonymous.²⁹ There is not a single piece of signed or properly documented Portsmouth furniture of the eighteenth century, except for a set of four chairs by John Gaines which are now in the Warner House.

Silversmiths advertised more frequently than cabinetmakers, but almost as little of their work is known. Some spoons and an occasional piece of hollow ware are all that are identified as Portsmouth work. The best-known silversmith is Samuel Drowne, to whom a number of articles in silver can be attributed, but others, like John Nelson and Clement Jackson, Jun., are merely names.

"That little World, Portsmouth" was, then, a small town, conservative both politically and morally, though less Puritanical in religion than Boston. Dependent on English commerce and credit because of its shipping economy, the town was strongly pro-English for the majority of the period 1750-1775, partly because the population was mostly of English stock with loyalties to the mother country and

partly because the lower and middle classes were more quiescent than in Boston. There was little radical leadership among the professional men, who remained firmly loyal to the Crown until the very end of the period. However, as 1775 drew near and revolt became inevitable, Portsmouth was drawn into the general uprising, urged on by the more radical patriots from inland New Hampshire.

As in other American cities, the wealth which the shipping industry brought in created a small but socially ambitious gentry which sought status in the building of substantial houses and the purchase of fine furnishings. Although the social life of Portsmouth was on a much smaller scale than that of Boston or Philadelphia, the wealthy strove to imitate the gaiety of those cities. Fire and time have destroyed many of the fine houses and dispersed most of the furnishings, but enough evidence remains to reveal the sophistication of the town. The wealthy merchants wanted to create a "little Boston" in the "howling wilderness" of New Hampshire, and the record of their household furnishings is one measure of the degree of their success.

Notes on Chapter I

- ¹ Nathaniel Adams, Annals of Portsmouth (1825; rpt. Hampton, N. H.: Peter Randall, 1971), p. 94.
- ² Provincial Papers, Documents and Records Relating to the Province of New Hampshire, ed. Nathaniel Bouton, VII (Nashua: 1873), 168.
- ³ Ibid., p. 765.
- ⁴ Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 217.
- ⁵ Ibid., pp. 216-17.
- ⁶ George Boyd, Letter Book, July 5, 1773, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.
- ⁷ Mabel Munson Swan, "Coastwise Cargoes of Venture Furniture," Antiques, 15 (April, 1949), 279.
- ⁸ John Moffatt, Ledger 1725-1750, entry for 1733, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.
- ⁹ Peter Livius, Letter Book, January 9, 1764, pp. 6-7, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.
- ¹⁰ Andrew Burnaby, Travels Through North America 1759-1760, ed. Rufus Rockwell Wilson (New York: A Wessels Co., 1904, rpt. of third edition of 1798), p. 149.

11 Quoted in Mary Cochrane Rogers, Glimpses of An Old Social Capital: Portsmouth, N. H. (Boston: printed for the subscribers, 1923), p. 51

12 George Boyd, Letter Book, November 1, 1773.

13 Quoted in Rogers, p. 26.

14 George Boyd, Letter Book, September 24, 1773.

15 W. Winterbotham, An Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States and of the European Settlements in America and the West Indies (London: 1794), II, 104.

16 Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, ed. Barbara Miller Solomon (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), I, 313.

17 William Bentley, The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., II (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1907), 390.

18 John Wentworth, Letter Books, July 17, 1767, I, 16, New Hampshire Archives, Concord, N. H.

19 Provincial Papers, XVIII, 406.

20 George Boyd, Letter Book, September 24, 1773.

21 Provincial Papers, VI, 831.

22 Quoted in Lawrence Shaw Mayo, John Wentworth: Governor of New Hampshire 1767-1775 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), p. 61.

23 Town Meeting, December 8, 1774, Portsmouth Town Records, City Clerk's Office, Portsmouth, N. H.

24

John Adams, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, ed. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), I, 355.

25

Burnaby, p. 146.

26

George Washington, The Diaries of George Washington 1748-1799, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1925), IV, 45.

27

Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782, tr. Howard C. Rice, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), II, 487.

28

Dwight, II, 311-312.

29

At the time of writing, Donna-belle Garvin is doing extensive research on Portsmouth Craftsmen.

Chapter II

Furniture of Portsmouth Houses

The scarcity of known Portsmouth-owned furniture of 1750-1775 makes the subject of this chapter difficult to treat. Portsmouth cabinetmakers apparently failed to label their furniture, and this furniture seems to be nearly indistinguishable in style from that of northern Massachusetts, perhaps because of the continuous cultural and material interchange between Portsmouth and that area, particularly Newburyport. Advertisements for furniture in the newspaper are seldom helpful because auction sales were the most common way of selling furniture, both new and old. A typical notice in the New Hampshire Gazette of May 24, 1765, advertises a list of furnishings "to be sold at the Vendue House" and ends by saying, "Any person inclining to enlarge the Sale, Goods will be received in at Three o'clock." Because cabinetmakers seldom advertised their wares in the newspaper, it may be presumed that they availed themselves of the opportunities offered by these vendues, when they had furniture left on their hands.

In view of the lack of extant furniture, we must depend on descriptions of furniture in household inventories, a few advertisements, and some letters. This chapter will analyze the furniture of Portsmouth houses as described in the available records, which tell us something about types of furniture but little about the stylistic characteristics of the furniture.

1. Chairs and other seating furniture

Portsmouth houses were notable for the large number of chairs which they contained. Ten or twelve chairs to a room was not at all uncommon, even for bedchambers. It seems very strange to us that so many chairs should have been necessary, but it is possible that they were lined up around the walls and considered as part of the room decoration, as in England.¹ Little other explanation can be found for the twenty-one chairs listed in James Clarkson's parlor² or the fifteen chairs in his "setting room." In the parlor were "19 Leather bottomed Chairs," "1 round chair," and "1 Easy Chair," while the setting room contained "1 Leather easy Chair" and "14 Leather bottom Chairs." There were seventeen "flagg bottom" chairs in the kitchen! This example is admittedly extreme, but other cases show that this was not unique. For example, John Marsh had "16 mahogany hair bottom Chairs" in the parlor chamber, and James Hickey's modest house contained thirty-five chairs.

Many terms were used to describe the different types of chairs, and most of these specified the use or material of the chair. However, some determination of the style also can be made from these descriptions. For example, "mahogany Fan Back Chairs with Leather Bottoms" advertised in 1769³ must certainly be in the then fairly-new Chippendale style.

The generic term "armchair" described many different chairs. Sets of chairs commonly contained several side chairs and two armchairs, or simply several armchairs. These sets were found in almost every room of the house. John Fisher owned "6 Mohogany Carved arm chairs with crimson Damask Cushions," and his brother-in-law Governor Wentworth had "8 Mahogany Chairs with Arms, with Damask Bottoms & Backs, with Trucks & Cloth covers." The trucks seem to have been some sort of apparatus for moving and storing the chairs. William Whipple owned similar chairs ("Arm'd Chairs with backs & bottoms cover'd"), which may have been the same as the "12 Mehogany French Easy Chairs" owned originally by his brother-in-law, Samuel Moffatt.

Styles of chairs which had been popular in the early part of the eighteenth century persisted in Portsmouth. Chairs with cane backs and seats and bannister-back chairs, normally associated with the first quarter of the century, may be found in many houses well into the 1780's. Even such wealthy households as Judge John Wentworth's in 1774 and John Moffat's

in 1786 used "cain chairs" as bedchamber chairs. Other houses placed such chairs in the front rooms. Ann Slayton, who kept a tavern, had in 1757 some of the "best sort of cain chairs." The nine references to cane chairs were spread throughout the period, although with a concentration in the 1750's. Bannister back chairs were apparently equally valued. Joseph Buss, a joiner who died in 1756, had "8 banester back chairs" worth £8 old tenor, and Nathaniel Sargent, a physician with a fairly substantial estate, in 1762 owned both black and brown bannister-back chairs worth an average of £2 each, again in old tenor. The high valuations put on these chairs mean that they were considered to be very good chairs. These were the only two references to this type of chair.

Easy, or wing, chairs were placed in bedchambers almost without exception. Very few instances of easy chairs in parlors appeared, and it is probable that these were lolling chairs or "French chairs" like those illustrated by Thomas Chippendale in The Gentleman & Cabinetmaker's Director (plates XIX-XXIII, third edition, 1762). There are upholsterers' advertisements for easy chairs, indicating the importance of the upholstery rather than the frame. Since relatively little of the frame showed, easy chairs were appraised by their covering. For those who could afford it, the upholstery matched the bed hangings and window curtains (if any), which will be discussed later in the chapter. Less

wealthy households, which could not bear the expense of changing all the textiles in a bedchamber at one time, reupholstered the easy chair only when necessary. Thus, the chair covering and bed hangings did not always match. Most houses used wool or linen upholstery, although houses like John Wentworth's had the luxury of damask chair coverings.

Because of the expense of such chairs, they were relatively scarce in Portsmouth houses. Out of seventy-five houses, only seventeen had any such chairs. It is notable that the number increased as the century progressed. Nine inventories of the 1780's record an easy chair, against four of the 1750's.

Roundabout chairs appeared occasionally in Portsmouth (in thirteen of seventy-five houses). They ranged from the "Round Back Painted Chair" of Addington Davenport to the "roundabout" Windsor chair owned by Samuel Griffith. A "corner chair" is mentioned only once, in William Simpson's inventory of 1755.

The first instance of Windsor chairs in Portsmouth records is in Samuel Moffatt's inventory in 1768. Several such chairs are listed in the hall. After that time, other houses, especially at the end of the period, began to have them. Since they were reasonably inexpensive and durable, they were frequently found in halls and public rooms. James

Dwyer, an innkeeper, had in the "Setting Room" "6 Winsor Chairs" and "1 ditto with a Back" (possibly a comb-back chair).

One supposedly indispensable type of stool or chair was the "close stool" or "conveniency." It is almost impossible to determine the appearance of these commodos, since little description is ever given. Most were probably no more than simple wooden stools fitted with a pan. Others were more elaborate, such as Mark Langdon's "Circle Close Stool Chair." Surprisingly, only eighteen out of seventy-five inventories specifically mention such an item. Perhaps they were not as common as we thought or were simply noted by the appraisers as a "stool" or "chair."

Some chairs, such as chamber chairs or kitchen chairs, are defined only by the room in which they were placed. John Fisher had "8 Nut Chineas fraim Chamber chairs 2 with Arms" (possibly English Chinese Chippendale chairs) and "10 Carved back Mohogony Chamber chairs," but these are exceptional descriptions. Most other references to "chamber chairs" seem to be to much simpler chairs, considering the low valuations given to them. Thomas Penhallow's "9 Chamber Chairs" were valued at only £2:5 in 1784, for example.

Other chairs are indicated only by color - usually black - or by the appellation "old." Then, too, there are "common chairs," which must have been the simplest of chairs

with no pretension to style. It is possible that common chairs were slat-back chairs, although the latter type is occasionally mentioned separately. Josiah Clark, for instance, owned "6 Chairs Black Slits" valued at only 25/ old tenor in 1755, and Benjamin Akerman in 1783 had "6 round Chairs slat back," although the exact nature of these last is uncertain. Akerman's chairs were worth £1:10.

Chairs were made in a variety of woods, as well as a variety of types. The most common wood was apparently maple. Black walnut ran a close second, and mahogany was popular toward the end of the period. Cherry was mentioned in inventories only three times and birch only five times. There was one set of cedar chairs. They belonged to the local blacksmith, Noah Parker. There is no indication whether the set was made locally or imported.

Material for seats or "bottoms" showed even more variety. Almost every imaginable material was used, although flag and leather far outnumbered other materials. Flag was a type of rush, which was easily obtainable in the Piscataqua region. It was popular for seat bottoms throughout the century. The first reference to horsehair was in 1768, in Samuel Moffatt's inventory. It became more common in the 1770's. In order of popularity, the materials for chair bottoms rank as follows: leather (53 inventory references), flag (38), harrateen (12), hair (10), furniture check (5),

damask (5), china (3). Worsted and stuff were mentioned once each. A very few inventories specified chairs with "Bottoms to take out" (Daniel Lang - 1757) or "Shifting Bottoms" (Nathaniel Sherburne - 1758). Since no such references are found after 1758, it seems likely that as slip seats became more common for chairs, they ceased to provoke comment from the appraisers.

Stools are only occasionally part of household furniture (seven of seventy-five houses). Most of these were joint stools, which were probably representative of a style popular at the beginning of the century. Their valuations were consistently low. John Eyre in 1754 had two joint stools worth only 10/, a small sum when his china bowl and six cups and saucers were worth £5.

Probably most of these chairs and stools were made in Portsmouth. There is some documentary evidence of chairmaking in the town during this period. In August, 1770, John Marsh noted in his account book that he had paid Robert Harrold for making "8 Mahogany Chairs." The cost was £9:12.⁴ Joseph Bass sold the same merchant an easy chair.⁵ John Moffatt's Waste Books record the purchases in 1764-65 by Richard Mills, "Chairmaker," of "10 ps. pieces Leather bottoms for Chairs £20" (old tenor)⁶ and of "1 yd. Black Plush £7 O.T.," presumably for the same purpose.⁷ Unfortunately, none of the furniture made by these men can be identified.

A few couches, or daybeds, can be found in houses of the third quarter of the eighteenth century (ten of seventy-five houses). They seldom appear in the parlors, however, but rather in the bedchambers or even the halls. James Stoodley put his couch in the "upper entry," as did Nathaniel Meserve.

One rare type of furniture in Portsmouth was the sofa. Very few people owned them, and those who did were the very wealthy men who had close ties to England and English styles. Both John Wentworth and John Fisher owned a sofa. Only four are mentioned in all the inventories, all 1770 or after, and all in wealthy households. These sofas were very likely imported, since there was so small a demand for them.

2. Tables and Stands

Next to chairs, tables and stands are the most frequently-mentioned pieces of furniture in household inventories. There was a seemingly infinite variety of tables, ranging from plain kitchen tables to elaborately carved tea tables, from simple unpainted pine to intricate japanning. Stands could be used ensuite with tables, since they were often paired in inventories and advertisements.

Few descriptions of the tables are given beyond indicating what wood was used or, in rare cases, whether they were painted. There are occasional exceptions to this

reticence, however, such as the "Mahogany Filler and Claw Table" advertised at auction in 1769,⁸ or the "3 Leg'd Tea Table" in Samuel Rynes' inventory of 1755.

Of all the types of tables, tea tables were among the most valued. Values ranged from a few shillings to several pounds. Because several beautiful tea tables with arched crossed stretchers have turned up in the Portsmouth area, there is always a hope of identifying one in the documents. This search was successful in only one case in this period. William Whipple, a merchant and a General during the Revolution, owned a "raild Tea Table" valued at 48/ in his 1788 inventory, accompanied by a "raild stand" worth 24/. The table believed to have been Whipple's is now in the Warner house, Portsmouth, but is missing its rail and matching stand (see Figure 2). However, a similar tea table and stand are still privately owned in the city. There are other cases of urn stands accompanying tea tables. John Marsh's inventory in 1778 likewise mentions an urn stand.

One difficulty of studying tea tables in Portsmouth is the confusion between the terms "tea table" and "tea board." A "tea board" is usually considered to be a tray, but there are instances when a table is clearly indicated, such as in Joseph Buss's inventory of 1762: "one Small Tea board and China thereon." Here the tea board is not a tray since the inventory also lists with it a "waiter," which is

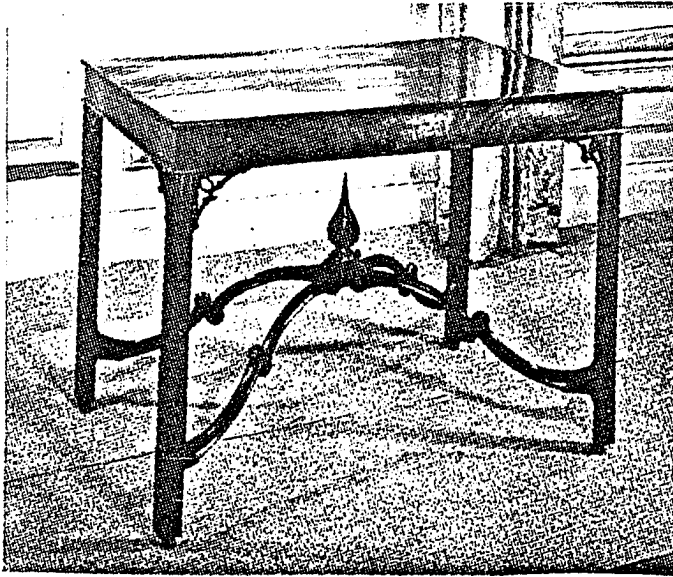


Figure 2. Mahogany tea table owned by William Whipple, now in the Warner House. Photo: Douglas Armsden.

Figure 3. Walnut dressing table owned by Major Samuel Hale. Courtesy, Currier Gallery of Art.



always a tray. After seeing numerous such descriptions, one is forced to the conclusion that a tea table and a tea board were sometimes the same thing. Yet, this practice was not consistent. Nathaniel Adams had in his house a mahogany tea table valued at 25/ and a tea board at 2/6. Considering the difference in value, the tea board may well have been a waiter.

Tea tables were among the most up-to date furniture in any parlor. Even John Drew Seaward, a poor caulker, whose estate was valued at only £28 in 1773, owned a mahogany tea table worth 30/, nearly one-twentieth of his estate. A fashionable tea table was apparently a status symbol in Portsmouth homes. Tea-drinking was a popular pastime, and fashionable equipment was desirable. People had the finest that they could afford in order to have a handsome display in the parlor.

In contrast to tea tables, dining tables were among the rarest types of tables found in Portsmouth at this period. Of the six mentioned, four were made of mahogany, and one was walnut. Governor Benning Wentworth owned what was probably the most elaborate dining tables in the province, characterized as "long dining Tables for large parties," when the contents of the Governor's house were advertised for sale in 1806, thirty-six years after his death.⁹ Needless to say, all the dining tables were owned by the wealthy class.

Despite the strictures against card-playing in the town meeting of 1775, a few card tables appeared in fashionable parlors in Portsmouth. As might be expected, the number of such tables increased toward 1775, perhaps prompting the resolution of the town meeting. John Fisher had "2 Card tables mohogony one carved and one plain." The six men who owned these tables were all members of the merchant aristocracy, such as the Moffatts, Sherburnes, and Meserves. Samuel Moffatt had card tables in both his front and back parlors. Backgammon tables are occasionally mentioned as a special type of table. Presumably these are tables with a backgammon board set into the top. In 1757 Robert Traill advertised as imported from England "backgammon tables compleat."¹⁰ "Compleat" may mean that the playing pieces were included. James Dwyer had "1 Back-Gammon Table &c." worth 12/ in his Best Room. Since he was an innkeeper, he probably kept the table for the amusement of his customers.

Tables with marble tops were known and perhaps even made in Portsmouth, but they were very scarce, as one might expect, because of the necessity of importing marble from abroad or overland from Vermont. John Fisher had both a table and stand made in this way: "1 Marble stand with Mohogony frame" valued at £7:10 and "1 Marble slab wth Mohogony frame" at £6:5. There is no clue as to whether these were imported or were of native craftsmanship. The only other similar table is the "Slate Table" valued at 8/, which Joseph Newmarch

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owned at his death in 1765. In this case, again, the slate top was probably imported.

Among the bedroom furniture one might find a dressing table. "Chamber table" and "toilet table" were also terms for this general type of table. Daniel Jackson's inventory of 1775 specifies "1 Black Walnutt dress^g Table with Daws 15/," and Nathaniel Mendum owned a "Chamber Table with 3 Drawers" valued at 12/. What the difference between these two tables is, if any, is unknown. Toilet tables, however, were never described as having drawers.

Dressing tables may have been made to match chests of drawers, because pairing of these two forms is not unusual in inventories. Samuel Langdon's inventory of 1780 lists "1 Case of Draws & Dressing table £3:12." Addington Davenport had a "Jappand Case of Draws" and a "Jappand Dressing Table, Box & Glass" in his chamber. It seems more than possible that both of these were matched sets. The use of curled maple in one case makes this almost a certainty. Nathaniel Mendum had "1 Case curled Maple Drawers £1:10" and "1 Chamber curld maple Table 3 Drawers 8/."

Dressing tables were apparently normally covered with a cloth, called a "toilet" in many inventories. A typical example is "1 Table Cloath on y^e Draws" in Thomas Wright's parlor chamber or the "Toilet & table" in Arthur Browne's Blue

Chamber. The toilet is often listed as part of the bedroom furniture, no matter where other household linens are enumerated.

The only dressing table known to have been owned in Portsmouth during the third quarter of the eighteenth century was that in the possession of Major Samuel Hale, master of the Latin School. (Figure 3). The table, now in the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, may represent the Portsmouth school of cabinetmaking, although there is no proof. The ownership of the table is documented by family history and by an old chalk inscription on the underside of the long drawer.

There is little trace in the documents of tables with folding leaves. John Fisher's helpful inventory of 1778 is the only place that one finds the term "Pembroke," but it is possible that there was a conscious effort on his part to use terms current in England when he presented his case to the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses of American Loyalists. Whatever the reason, he listed a "Pembrock work table Mohogony £3." He also had a "small Mohogony supper table," which could be the same as a breakfast table, which usually had leaves which folded down. John Grant owned such a table in 1785. Other tables with leaves include the "Oval Table with one Leafe" of Bartholomew Goodwin in 1765, probably the "Corner table" of Nathaniel Peirce in 1763, and the black

walnut tables "Rule Joynt" owned by William Dam in 1775 and Joseph Buss in 1762, both of whom were joiners who probably made the tables themselves.

The plainest and most utilitarian tables were the "pine tables" found in kitchens throughout the period. These were probably very simply-made and may have been left unpainted. Their great frequency in the kitchen (forty-four of seventy-five houses) could mean that they were the same as the "kitchen" tables found in some houses. Nancy Goyne Evans identifies the "kitchen table" in Philadelphia as being made of pine or poplar. Such tables were considered as strictly utilitarian in Pennsylvania, also.¹¹

One type of table, if one can call it that, which turned up in some houses is the "folding board." This sometimes, but not always, was accompanied by a "horse" to support it. A folding board like that of the wealthy merchant Samuel Warner was probably used to expand the size of an existing table top, or with a horse, to make an entirely new one. A long table cloth would have concealed the rough construction.

There are several special kinds of tables or stands which appeared in only a few houses. One of these is the bottle stand. Such an item was likely to be found in only the houses of the wealthy, where a gay social life was cultivated. An examination of the inventories shows us that

this is indeed the case: only a few merchants owned them. However, they can be found in the inventories of stock of at least two shopkeepers, Samuel Griffith and Edward Emerson. Another such stand was the dumb waiter. This three-tiered stand was again an accountrement of entertaining. Arthur Browne, who was one of the most tenaciously English gentlemen in Portsmouth, owned a dumb waiter, but he was virtually the only one who did.

Wash stands are very seldom mentioned. Governor John Wentworth bought a "Wash Stand and Bason" for his house in Wolfeborough, but that is virtually the only case except for the "Wash bench" of Samuel Warner. Night tables are a similar case. John Fisher had one of mahogany "compleat" (probably including commode pan), and John Simes, a painter who died in 1789, owned one. These are the only two references to this type of table.

Sideboards were very uncommon in America before 1790. Therefore, it is surprising to find any at all in Portsmouth, yet John Wentworth and Samuel Warner, both of the merchant aristocracy, owned sideboards. Undoubtedly, these were imported.

Despite the wide variety of types of tables recorded, many more are mentioned only by the wood from which they were made or by their shape...Tables were oval, round, or square. These shapes occur throughout the period and in all economic

levels. "Square" tables were sometimes indicated by measurement, such as four-foot or three-foot tables. Nathaniel Meserve owned, for example, "1 4 ft. & 1 3½ ft. Mahogany Tables" in 1759.

All sorts of woods were used for tables. Maple, mahogany, and walnut were about equally popular, far outnumbering all others except pine. Cherry is found only thirteen times, while birch and oak are found in only a very few instances. The oak tables were probably vestiges of an earlier period, particularly in such cases as Thomas Newmarch's "great Table (oak) oval." Oak seldom appears in a joiner's stock at this period.

From the great amount of table linen advertised in the newspaper and listed in inventories, it is clear that tables were generally covered, particularly for dining and tea. Table carpets were used even as late as 1782 in John Marsh's house. Arthur Browne had something similar in his "Painted Table Canvas." In general, however, table cloths of linen or damask prevailed.

3. Desks

Desks are a difficult furniture form to discuss. No example from a Portsmouth home of this era is known, and few descriptions are given in inventories and advertisements. We

must assume that Portsmouth desks were comparable to those in other areas of New England, notably Massachusetts, which profoundly influenced New Hampshire.

Desks were a fairly expensive type of furniture. Nathaniel Adams bought two desks for £65 old tenor in 1765 from the Portsmouth merchants, Rhodes and Parker.¹² Assuming that £1 lawful money is equal to approximately seven and one-half times that amount in old tenor,¹³ the desks were still worth about £4:4 each, a high price for a piece of furniture but consistent with values given in inventories. Such desks were probably slant-top desks with a full rank of drawers below the writing surface. These particular desks may have been made of walnut, since Adams' inventory of 1769 showed that he owned at least one such desk.

Advertisements are seldom helpful in this area. A notice of a sale at the Vendue House in 1765 states that "Small Chamber Desks" were available.¹⁴ These were probably merely small portable writing desks suitable for use in a chamber. Joseph Adams of Exeter advertised in 1780 "Swil'd swelled and plain front Desks, with Book-Cases and without."¹⁵ Undoubtedly, such desks had been available for a number of years, both in Exeter and Portsmouth, fifteen miles away. The "swil'd front" was either a blocked front or a serpentine front, since that name was applied to both types. We do know that desks were being made in Portsmouth, but we do

not know their descriptions. William Parker, "Cabinet-Maker," advertised in 1767 that he made desks and bookcases,¹⁶ and Michael Whidden, a house joiner who also made furniture, left at his death in 1773 "new desks" and "Stuf fixt for one Desk" in his shop. Brasses for desks were advertised throughout the period, which presumes some volume of business in that area.

Writing desks, particularly of pine, were quite popular in Portsmouth in the third quarter of the century. These desks consisted of a box with a slanted top for a writing surface. The top lifted to allow access to the storage space below. Since they were usually valued at considerably less than 1, they were probably neither new nor elaborate. Of a group of thirteen "writing desks," five were specified as being pine and two as oak.

Desks-on stand were still in current use, although they were out of fashion in most cities by 1750. Benjamin Newmarch, a blacksmith, owned a "writing desk and stand" in 1779, and in 1787 Daniel Fowle, the printer of the New Hampshire Gazette, had "1 old desk & stand." Neither of these men had any claim to fashion, and their possessions were relatively modest. No such desks can be found in the houses of the wealthy.

Of the woods used for desks, maple and walnut were the most common, with all other woods far behind. Cherry,

mahogany, pine, and birch were also used in desks, but only two mahogany desks are recorded, both of which belonged to men styled "gentlemen," John Marsh and Gershom Flagg. The desks were worth £6 and £3, respectively. Surprisingly, since it was a native wood, the rarest wood was birch. Only Thomas Dalling, a mariner, had a desk of this wood. Cherry was nearly as scarce. Only four desks, all inventoried in 1770's, were of cherry. Pine was probably quite common, although it was listed only a few times. Judge John Wentworth owned three pine desks in 1774, but no other house is recorded as having more than one. It must be noted, however, that nearly a third of the inventories did not specify of what wood the desks were made, so little judgment can be made on the basis of numbers of references alone.

The values of desks range from about £1 to a startling £50 in the midst of Revolutionary inflation in 1779. This last was in Nehemiah Rowell's inventory. In general, however, £2 or £3 is the normal value assigned to desks. Variations in value probably indicate the relative elaboration of the desk.

Twenty-one desks and bookcases were recorded in inventories of 1750-1789. Of this number fifteen are not described in any way. The six others were made of walnut (2), pine (2), cherry (1), and curled maple (1). The values vary tremendously. One walnut desk and bookcase was appraised at

£115 old tenor in the inventory of Benjamin Dearborn in 1754:

Such a price was highly unusual, however; £5 or £6 lawful money was far more common. There seems to be no immediate explanation for the high price of Dearborn's desk. Not surprisingly, those who owned desks and bookcases were mostly of the wealthy class. John Fisher, William Whipple, John Moffatt, and Judge John Wentworth all owned one.

4. Bookcases

Bookcases alone were sometimes used in Portsmouth households. Governor John Wentworth had two "Library Cases" for his Wolfeborough house. Monsieur Bunbury, a ship's captain and merchant who married John Wentworth's cousin, owned enough books to need a "Small Glass Case for Books." The only instance of veneering recorded at this time was the "Oak Finnier'd Book Case" of Samuel Appleton. However, most of the townspeople did not own enough books to warrant a separate piece of furniture to hold them.

5. Chests of Drawers

One piece of furniture never seen in any eighteenth-century document in Portsmouth is a high chest. This does not mean that houses in Portsmouth did not have them but that there was no separate term for them. Local terminology did not discriminate among a four-drawer chest, a chest-on-chest, and a high chest. There are only two rather tentative ways

of identifying a high chest in the inventories: appraised value and pairing with a dressing table. For example, Nathaniel Adams in 1769 owned a mahogany "Case of Drawers" appraised at £10, the same value assigned to his eight-day clock. This piece of furniture could be a high chest, judging from its considerable value in relation to other items in the inventory, but this is far from certain. The other method of tentative identification is even less reliable. American high chests of the eighteenth century were sometimes made with matching dressing tables, and thus they might be paired in the inventories. However, this reasoning, while logical, is at best only guess work. Addington Davenport's inventory of 1761 includes a "Jappand Case of Draws" and "Jappand Dressing Table, Box & Glass," which were probably in the same room. This may have been a matched pair of high chest and dressing table, but we can only surmise this.

Davenport's inventory contains one of only two references to japanned cases of drawers. The other is in the 1760 inventory of John Cutt, a wealthy merchant like Addington Davenport. The infrequency of japanned furniture, except for waiters, which may have been imported, seems to indicate that japanning was not a local craft at this time.

Although we cannot presently determine the difference between a chest of drawers and a case of drawers, eighteenth-

century Portsmouth clearly thought of these as distinct forms. The word "case" appears twice as often as "chest," but it is not unusual to find both a case of drawers and a chest of drawers in the same house and even in the same room. In 1776 Mark Longdon's Best Chamber contained "1 Black walnut Case Drawers" worth £2:10, "1 Small ditto £1," and "1 Chest Drawers black walnut 18/." Just what the appraisers meant here is unclear. Joseph Buss in 1762 owned a chest of drawers and a case of drawers, both of which were worth £45 old tenor and both of which were in the parlor chamber, so value cannot be a determining factor. In 1780 an advertisement described "cases of draws" as having "plain & Swell's fronts."¹⁷ A swelled front is almost never seen on a high chest, which fact points to these being four-drawer chests or possibly chests-on-chests. It is not presently possible to identify the chest-on-chest in the documents.

Another form which appears with bedroom furniture is the bureau. In Portsmouth terminology a bureau was apparently some sort of chest of drawers, for they were invariably included with other bedroom furniture. There are only nine bureaus found in the inventories, five of which were made of mahogany, indicating that they may not have been introduced until the 1760's. None are found in inventories of the 1750's.

Chests of drawers do not seem to have been an indispensable piece of furniture. Sixty-two of seventy-five houses had them, and since this group of seventy-five includes a number of fairly wealthy men, one suspects that the proportion among the lower classes would be even smaller. Some rooms contained a dressing table and no other drawer space. The Green Chamber in Samuel Moffatt's house contained only a mahogany dressing table for storage space.

Storage space, especially for clothes, must have been a constant problem, since closets were practically unknown. Many houses had small cupboards beside the chimney where folded clothes and linen could be placed, but these could not have been adequate for large families. Many of the more modest houses used plain wooden chests for storage, the majority of which were probably made of pine, since that is virtually the only wood mentioned in connection with them, although James Nevin, a "Large Mahogany Chest." Almost every house had some sort of chest for storage of clothes or grain. Meal chests are among the most common type of chests and appear in houses of every social class. They were kept either in the kitchen or in the garret, as in Elisha Briard's house in 1773.

Less than half the references to chests or cases of drawers indicate of what wood they were made. Of those that do, walnut occurs almost fifty per cent of the time, while,

it is surprising to find, maple appears only three out of twenty-seven times. Maple has always been considered to be a common wood for chests of drawers in New Hampshire. Perhaps it was so common that advertisers and appraisers did not bother to mention it. Mahogany, cherry, and pine appear three, two, and five times out of twenty-seven, respectively.

6. Bedsteads

Undoubtedly the most expensive item of furniture in a Portsmouth household was the bedstead and its "furniture" or bedding and hangings. In eighteenth-century terminology a "bed" meant a mattress, while the "bedstead" was the frame on which the bed was placed. The bedstead in itself was not the expensive item. John Marsh in 1773 paid Robert Harrold £1:18 for making him a "Bedstead wth a Sacking Bottom," and 14/ for a "do. for a Single Person."¹⁸ Three years earlier Joseph Bass, the upholsterer, had provided Marsh with a "Suit of Curtains & Sundries" from his shop at a total of £6:16.¹⁹ Here the bed curtains obviously make up the major part of the cost and are worth far more than the two bedsteads which Marsh bought from Harrold. This disparity of prices is consistent throughout the period. Textiles were very expensive and were what made beds so valuable.

Bedsteads varied from the very simple pallet bedsteads to the "Mahogany Carved bedsteads" in John Fisher's house. In the vast majority of cases we are not

told what wood was used for the bedstead, but in the few references we do have, mahogany outnumbers walnut, birch, and maple nearly nine to one. The appraisers apparently noted the wood only when its use was unusual. In Samuel Moffatt's inventory we are given a glimpse into the kind of bedsteads owned by the wealthy merchants. The Yellow Chamber contained a "fluted Black Walnut Bedstead" with yellow wool damask hangings. This was clearly the best bedstead in the house, for the other bedsteads were not as elegant as this one. There were a "Black Walnut Plain 4 Post Bedstead," two "Cedar Painted" bedsteads, and two bedsteads of maple, all of which had feather beds. Some four-post bedsteads had decorative posts only at the foot, assuming that the head posts would be covered by the hanging. Such a "bedstead 2 posts Mahogany" was valued at £4 in John Fisher's inventory.

From the various documents one can only occasionally glean an idea of the bedstead's appearance. Frequently, the bedstead is classified by its "bottom." The two predominant methods of supporting the bed were cording, or roping, and a sack bottom. The sack bottom was a heavy fabric such as canvas stretched tightly between the rails of the bedstead. It is possible to determine from the scanty references which of the two methods was more popular.

William Whipple's inventory mentions a "Camp bedstead & Curtains," but this is the only specific reference to the

field bedstead, also called the "truckle" or "under bed," of which ten were listed in the inventories. In the days of many children and few bedrooms, these must have been very useful, particularly for men like David Horney, whose inn had to accommodate a varying number of people. He had one in the Kitchen Chamber, where there were also two other bedsteads. Another space-saver was the "turn-up bedstead," which folded up against the wall when not in use. A few appear in Portsmouth houses. David Horney, as we might expect, owned one, but so did the wealthy merchant, Nathaniel Meserve. Clearly, usefulness, not fashion, dictated the ownership of such a bedstead. Noah Parker even had a recess called a "Bed Press" in his South Back Room to conceal his turnup bedstead during the day. Cradles were, of course, a common item in any house with children and could appear in any room of the house. Elisha Briard's "cradle bedstead" was in the sitting room, while Nathaniel Meserve's had been relegated to the kitchen chamber. Again, convenience rather than fashion dictated the placement of the cradle.

7. Bed Hangings

Bed furniture is a subject too complicated to be more than briefly sketched here. In the absence of good descriptions in the household inventories, we are fortunate in having some upholsters' advertisements. In 1763 Henery [sic] Golden, "Upholsterer from London," advertised that he

made bed or window curtains "Festoons, Drapery, or Venecian" and beds in the above Form.²⁰ "Festoon" curtains were made to gather up in swags by use of cord running diagonally across the back. "Venetian" curtains were drawn like Venetian blinds and were gathered in loose folds at the top.²¹ The local demand for these elaborate styles of bed-curtains is uncertain, for Henery Golden did not remain in Portsmouth long. Another upholsterer, Joseph Bass, advertised from 1764 on. In a notice of 1765 he stated that he had just imported "Very handsome made Chaney China, a woolen fabric⁷ and Linsey Woolsey Curtains."²² It is interesting to note that bed hangings were imported from England ready-made. However, Bass was ready to make such things "in the genteelest and neatest Manner, at the Shortest Notice," if the customer wanted a local product. He also stocked "Tassels & Cord for Curtains," if desired.²³ That style was an important factor in the sale of bed hangings is indicated by Bass's assertion that the curtains were "made in the newest Fashion."²⁴ The upholstery business did not keep Bass busy enough, however, for like many other craftsmen, he sold other items in his shop, notably garden seeds and looking glasses.

A number of fabrics were popular for bed furniture, particularly woolen fabrics. Harrateen, china, camlet, and worsted damask, all woolen materials, are found over and over again in household inventories. Cotton and "calico" run a

close second, particularly if the inventory was taken in the summer months. Many households changed the weight of the bed hangings in the summer and winter. The heavy wools were likely to appear in the bedrooms in the winter when warmth was an important matter. In summer cotton was far cooler and easier to keep clean.

Since almost all textiles had to be imported, they were used until they fell apart, because of the expense. John Drew Seaward in 1773 owned "a Suit blue linsey-woolsey curtains, 1 do. red china both moth eaten." Despite their poor condition the curtains were still valued at 30/. Since the whole estate totaled only £28, these bed curtains represent a sizeable portion of it.

China and harrateen, the most common woolen fabrics, are found in red, blue, and green. One advertisement for china even differentiated between red, scarlet, and crimson.²⁵ A bedchamber was often done in one color, as in Nathaniel Meserve's house. The bed in the West Front Chamber was dressed in green china, while the six maple chairs had green china bottoms. The room opposite was similarly done in blue.

Embroidered bed hangings were very rare. Nathaniel Meserve's "work'd Linen Curtains & Valiens" are the only certain reference to this type of curtains.

Of the cotton fabrics, calico and check were the most often mentioned. Furniture check did not become popular much before the 1760's. Samuel Moffatt, always a fashion leader, had a room dressed in green furniture check: bed, window curtains, and chair coverings. Although blue and white are generally considered to be the most common color combination, not a single Portsmouth appraiser mentioned blue. However, some inventories specify only "check," so perhaps these hangings were blue and white. Red and green are the only colors listed. Samuel Appleton in 1769 had in the parlor chamber "1 Suit Red & White furniture check Curtains" worth £2, more than twice the value of the bedstead. An advertisement of 1774 indicates that green, blue, yellow, and crimson checks were available.²⁶

Calico bed curtains are found throughout the period, ranging from Nathaniel Meserve's blue calico and purple calico curtains to Nathaniel Adams's red and white curtains. Addington Davenport had a bed dressed with "Blue & White Callico Curtains." This particular color of calico may refer to resist-dyed cotton, as suggested by Abbott Lowell Cummings.²⁷

Copperplate printed cotton is a fabric which was often used after the Revolution for bed hangings and rarely before that time.²⁸ However, it did appear in a very few Portsmouth houses before 1775. The first occurrence of this

fabric in the documents is the "1 ps. red Copper plate" at 42/ old tenor in the Journal of Rhodes and Parker on October 3, 1766. The first evidence of its use for bed furniture is in the 1769 inventory of Nathaniel Adams, whose mahogany bedstead had copperplate curtains and a copperplate counterpain. The room also had copperplate window curtains and a copperplate covering for an easy chair. (It should be noted that, when there were any, window curtains were made to match the bed hangings.) This type of fabric appears again only in the 1780's in the inventories of Thomas Dalling and John Hart, both mariners. No colors were specified. However, Joseph Bass's advertisement of October 21, 1774, offers a choice of blue, red, and purple Copperplate Furniture." Such bed furniture would not be within the reach of the poor, however, because of the high cost.

8. Looking Glasses

Looking Glasses are much less of an unknown quantity than other furniture in eighteenth-century Portsmouth, since most, if not all, were imported and are thus described in shop advertisements and shipping invoices. Despite the rather high values placed on them (30 old tenor during the 1750's was not unusual), virtually every house had at least one. A random survey of fifty inventories shows that the average number per house was two or three. As might be expected, the richer men had more. John Moffatt, for

example, had eight in two houses, and Gregory Purcell, a prosperous shopkeeper and ship's captain, had five. Parlors and bedchambers were the rooms likely to have a looking glass on the walls.

The best description of a looking glass in Portsmouth is the one given by Peter Livius when ordering from Bristol, England. Newly arrived from England in 1762, he was naturally anxious to furnish his house in the style which he believed befitted an English gentleman. In the "Memorandum of a Note deliver'd Mr. Samuel Moffatt to send to his friend at Bristol" Livius ordered

a looking Glass with a Mahogany Frame;
the Ornament decently Gilt, but not Gaudily:
the height of the Glass & Ornaments Six feet
& a half: the breadth of the Glass something
more than the usual proportion...²⁹

This must have been truly magnificent in Portsmouth eyes! In style it probably resembled the "2 Mahogany Fram^d Looking Glasses Gilt Inside and Shells" imported from London at £4 each by John Marsh in 1771.³⁰

Walnut-framed looking glasses appear to have yielded their place in popularity to mahogany-framed glasses around 1770, although walnut frames were to be found for the rest of the century. However, in the 1750's this was the predominant wood used for frames. In 1750 John Moffatt imported "12 glasses in walnut frames" worth £12:03. The agent added a

note that "the above are from 1-to-2 foot wide & Sorted,"³¹ indicating that they were of a fairly good size. In July of the next year Moffatt charged £24 for one looking glass,³² but one hopes that he was not making such a large profit from these particular glasses! The difference between English and New Hampshire currency is probably reflected in the prices, also.

There are numerous advertisements for looking glasses during the years 1757-1775. They were sold by most shopkeepers, including Joseph Bass whose advertisements from 1765 offer a variety of looking glasses. On November 29, 1765, he advertised

a good assortment of looking glasses,
consisting of sconce, pier, and dressing
glasses in black walnut & mahogany frames.

This is about as wide a choice as found anywhere in Portsmouth, although he did not include gilt-framed glasses, which were also sold in this period. Daniel Wentworth advertised a "gilt frame looking glass with sconces" in 1761,³³ and Daniel Sherburne owned two gilt glasses, one of which was a "large Gilt & flour'd Looking Glass" valued at £7:10 in 1779. However, it is probable that "gilt frame" looking glasses usually referred, at least before the 1770's, to a glass with a wooden frame, partially decorated with gilt. "Looking glasses plain & gilt" advertised in 1757 indicate

this difference.³⁴ Samuel Griffith's shop inventory of 1773 includes "2 plain Frame black Walnut Look^g Glasses" and "1 Gilt inside Do."

In bedchambers dressing glasses were frequently included among the furnishings. These glasses sometimes were on a frame with drawers. Joseph Bass advertised such a looking glass in 1771.³⁵ Presumably the more elegant and elaborate looking glasses were used as decorations in parlors. Finer houses had pier glasses or chimney glasses, sometimes with candlearms. William Whipple, who lived with his father-in-law, John Moffatt, had both a pier and a chimney glass, while Mehetable Odiorne owned two chimney glasses with sconces.

Occasional remnants of an earlier style are seen in the few looking glasses with japanned or lacquered frames. Addington Davenport owned one in 1761, as did Mary Nutter in 1761 and Joseph Buss in 1762. No such glasses are advertised in the New Hampshire Gazette.

An intimation of a new style can also be discerned in looking glasses in Portsmouth. Jacob Sheafe, jun., advertised in 1774 that he had a

small Assortment of English Goods (among which are some of the newest fashion'd Oval Looking Glasses).³⁶

This may be the first sign of the neo-classical style in Portsmouth, for oval was a popular shape of neo-classical glasses.

9. Clocks

No Portsmouth clock of the third quarter of the eighteenth century is known despite the comparative frequency of clock- and watch-makers' advertisements in those years. Twenty-five clocks are mentioned in household inventories of 1750-1789, only five of which are listed as "eight-day" clocks. Thus the number of tall-case clocks in Portsmouth at this period was probably very small. Thomas Wright owned "One Handsom Eight Day Clock" appraised at £50 old tenor in 1754, twice as much as his "Large Looking Glass." When John Moffatt died in 1786 he left a "House Clock" worth £15, which was presumably of the same type, judging from its high value. Such descriptions are rare, however, since most inventories merely mention "a clock."

Advertisements are more helpful than inventories for descriptions. In 1758 "A Good Repeating Clock, with a Japan Case, almost New" was offered for sale.³⁷ Such a clock was almost certainly not made in Portsmouth and may well have been English. Another clock to be sold in 1762 was a "new Eight Day Clock which shews the Day of the Month, Hours, Minutes, and Seconds."³⁸ Both of these clocks were advertised by private individuals, not clockmakers.

Watches were more common than clocks in Portsmouth households, prompting a number of watch- and clockmakers to settle there. In 1757 John Doane from Boston³⁹ and in 1758 Samuel Aris from London⁴⁰ advertised that they were ready to receive orders or repair work. Indeed, repair work must have formed a large part of the clockmakers' business. A rivalry between two such craftsmen, John Simnet and Nathaniel Sheaff Griffith, led to an acrimonious debate in print centering on their repairs to watches. The feud continued for nearly two years until in 1770 Simnet gave up and moved to New York. Griffith was left to repair the watches and clocks of those Portsmouth citizens who wished to know the time.

10. Woods

The largest business in colonial New Hampshire was lumber. Tall pine trees were specially cut for use as masts in the ships of the Royal Navy, while smaller pines and other trees, such as birch, maple, and oak, were cut and regularly shipped out to England or the West Indies. Men like George Boyd and Nathaniel Meserve made their fortunes in this business. Some of this lumber found its way into English cabinetmakers' shops. George Boyd sent a cargo of black birch to England on speculation in 1774:

there is some black birch Loggs suitable
for your Cabbinet makers & is almost equal to
Mahogany & in a year or two after it is Work'd
looks as well...⁴¹

Local cabinetmakers made use of both native and imported woods. Lists of stock left in the shops at their owners' deaths reveal what sort of wood was being used for furniture. In Joseph Buss's shop in 1762 there was maple and pine, as well as imported mahogany, while Richard Shortridge left "Quantity of pieces mahogany" along with unfinished furniture in 1776. Mahogany began to be imported and used regularly in the 1760's.

Of the native woods, maple and pine were probably the most frequently used for furniture. We cannot be certain, because estate appraisers tended to note the unusual rather than the usual. However, we can identify some trends in what woods were popular. Maple and pine appear throughout the period for both utilitarian and fine furniture. Until about 1765 black walnut was used for the best furniture. Gradually this was replaced by mahogany, available to Portsmouth craftsmen through trade connections with the West Indies. Mahogany was first used for tables, and it was not until nearly 1770 that chairs were made of this wood. Cherry and birch do not appear before the 1760's and, again, were used first for tables. By 1770 mahogany and cherry had replaced walnut as the predominant woods for fine furniture.

By way of summary, we can safely conclude that most of this furniture was made in Portsmouth. There was apparently a flourishing furniture business, even though we

know almost nothing about its products. With numerous cabinetmakers in town, it made little sense for a person to import furniture from Boston or England, unless he wanted something special which could not be made locally. A man of moderate means would not be able to afford the expense of imports, so it is only in the houses of the wealthy that we should look for imported furniture.

We do know that John Wentworth imported furniture for his Portsmouth house.⁴² He was newly-returned from England and wished to make a grand display in his hometown. Elegant imported furnishings were one way to accomplish this. It is likely that other wealthy men had had the same idea. The sofas and sideboards, which appeared so seldom, were probably imported, perhaps even from England. Merchants, who had commercial ties with Boston and travelled there frequently, also probably brought back furniture from that city. Items such as card tables and dumb waiters, which were in so little demand in Portsmouth, may well have been brought from Boston.

Inventories reveal a distinct difference between furniture in the houses of the wealthy and that in the houses of the middle class. The difference is not always in the types of furniture owned, although certain items such as card tables and bottle stands appeared only in the houses of the wealthy. The materials used frequently reveal the status of the household. Merchants like Nathaniel Peirce or John

Moffatt could afford a large amount of mahogany furniture, while men with smaller incomes had mostly walnut or maple furniture with, perhaps, an occasional mahogany table or stand. The same standard applies to looking glasses and bed hangings. The wealthier the household, the richer and more elaborate the frame of the glass or the textile used for the hangings. A rich man could also afford more of the expensive furniture, like gilt looking glasses or mahogany tea tables. John Moffatt, for example, owned eight looking glasses, when most men had two or perhaps three.

The inventories have provided some information about the placement of furniture, at least as far as in what room some objects were placed. An easy chair is never found in a parlor; it is always in a bedchamber. In a similar manner, a high chest was never part of the parlor furnishings. Chests of drawers were always placed in bedchambers also. Looking glasses may be either in chambers or in parlors. The elaborate glasses were meant as decorations in the parlors and they were seldom hung in a hall or entry.

In addition to increasing our knowledge of the difference between the furniture of the wealthy and middle classes and the placement of furniture by rooms, the written records consulted give us rather specific information about such topics as the number and great variety of chairs, the materials used for chair bottoms and for bed hangings, the

wide range of tables owned, and the attention paid to looking glasses and the few clocks found in Portsmouth homes. Valuable information has also been obtained concerning the range and relative popularity of woods used for furniture in Portsmouth.

Although we know little about the actual appearance and manufacture of Portsmouth furniture, the situation is not as bleak for smaller furnishings. Many of these items were imported on speculation and were thus amply documented by account books and advertisements. These small furnishings, to be discussed in the next chapter, can give us a better insight into the appearance of Portsmouth homes of the mid-eighteenth century.

Notes on Chapter II

1

See P. K. Thornton, "Room Arrangements in the Mid-eighteenth Century," Antiques 99 (April, 1971), 558.

2

The inventories analyzed or quoted for this survey are listed in Appendix I. Please refer to this Appendix for information concerning the sources of the inventories.

3

New Hampshire Gazette, November 3, 1769. (Hereafter cited as NHG.)

4

John Marsh, Ledger, account of Robert Harrold, August 28, 1770, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

5

Ibid., account of Joseph Bass, September, 1770.

6

John Moffatt, Waste Book, May 3, 1764, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

7

Ibid., September 19, 1765.

8

NHG, November 3, 1769.

9

Portsmouth Oracle, August 30, 1806.

10

NHB, November 18, 1757.

11

Nancy Goyne Evans, "Unsophisticated Furniture Made and Used in Philadelphia and Environs, ca. 1750-1800," in Country Cabinetwork and Simple City Furniture, Winterthur Conference Report 1969, ed. John D. Morse (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1970), pp. 153-155.

12
Rhodes and Parker, Journal, p. 63, New Hampshire
Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

13
"Old Tenor Table," printed in Boston, 1750, by
Rogers & Fowle, in Collections of the New Hampshire
Historical Society, (Concord: Jacob Moore, printer, 1824),
I, 273.

14
NHG, May 24, 1765.

15
NHG, June 24, 1780.

16
NHG, May 15, 1767.

17
NHG, March 25, 1780.

18
John Marsh, Ledger, account with Robert Harrold, June
and July, 1773.

19
Ibid., account with Joseph Bass, September, 1770.

20
NHG, July 29, 1763.

21
Florence M. Montgomery, Printed Textiles: English
and American Cottons and Linens 1700-1850, A Winterthur Book
New York: Viking Press, 1970), pp. 69-70.

22
NHG, April 4, 1765.

23
NHG, March 10, 1775.

24
NHG, October 21, 1774.

25
NHG, November 18, 1757.

26
NHG, October 21, 1774.

27 Abbott Lowell Cummings, Bed Hangings (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1961), p. 17.

28 Ibid., p. 23.

29 Peter Livius, Letter Book, February 6, 1764, p. 25, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

30 John Marsh, Invoice Book, April 30, 1771.

31 John Moffatt, Invoice Book 1737-1755, No. 113, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

32 Moffatt, Waste Book, July 3, 1751.

33 NHG, January 16, 1761.

34 NHG, November 18, 1757.

35 NHG, December 27, 1771.

36 NHG, August 26, 1774.

37 NHG, March 31, 1758

38 NHG, June 25, 1762.

39 NHG, April 22, 1757.

40 NHG, January 5, 1758.

41 George Boyd, Letter Book, January 7, 1774, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

42 John Wentworth, Letter Book, 1767, I, 35, New Hampshire Archives, Concord, N. H.

Chapter III

Other Furnishings of Portsmouth Houses

There are far more documents describing such wares as ceramics, glass, and pictures than furniture in Portsmouth. Smaller objects were more frequently imported and appear in invoice books and account books in large numbers. With the exception of most of the silver, the majority of objects discussed in this chapter were imported from abroad and were valued accordingly. Since they did have considerable value, the descriptions of these objects are often very revealing and can permit a fairly certain identification.

1. Ceramics

With the possible exception of textiles, ceramics were probably the largest category of imports into Portsmouth in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The only ceramic which could have been produced locally was a crude earthenware, which may be the "New England ware" found in some shop inventories. All other types of ceramics except this crude earthenware had to be imported, usually from England. Chinese and other Oriental wares came via

England. Advertisements for imported ceramics abound at this period, and inventories of shops are a good guide to what taste appealed most to the public.

Some types of earthenware were the cheapest ceramics available. In 1762 Jonathan Warner was advertising "Earthen ...by the Hogshead and Crate,"¹ and this ware frequently bought in these amounts. Very little description is ever given of earthenware in either inventories or advertisements, yet very occasionally the document will specify what type of decoration was used. Samuel Griffith was selling "Spotted Earthen Poringers" in 1773, according to his inventory. Yellow earthenware, probably of English origin, was a common type on the Portsmouth market, since there are numerous advertisements for it. Jonathan Warner advertised "common yellow Ware"² in 1762, and in 1767 Peirse Long had for sale "yellow Earthen Ware."³ Yellow earthenware appears in inventories of every decade of this study, in both modest and wealthy houses. Nathaniel Mendum, a joiner, owned some, as did William Whipple the merchant.

A few references to blue and white earthenware are found. Elizabeth Newmarch, for example, owned "4 blue & white earthen" plates in 1767. Since none of the references are found in conjunction with delft, it is possible that blue and white earthen is the same as delft.

Although earthenware was the common crockery in the households, it was sometimes used as a decoration, particularly in the earlier period. Both Sarah Odiorne in 1752 and Thomas Newmarch in 1761 put earthenware objects on the "mantletree." It was often displayed in corner cupboards as well. John Pendexter thought enough of his earthenware to mend it carefully, because his inventory includes "a piell of Mended Earthen Plates & Bowls ~~£~~6" (old tenor).

Delft, or "delph," as it was invariably called in Portsmouth, was very popular during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Edward Emerson, a shopkeeper, bought large quantities of delft from Rhodes and Parker, local merchants and importers, in the 1760's. He generally bought it by the hogshead and apparently had no trouble selling it within a short time, as the Journal of Rhodes and Parker indicates by its frequent entries of sales of this ware to Emerson. Emerson was not the only merchant to sell large amounts of delft. Advertisements show that it was a common type of stock until the 1770's when creamware replaced it in popularity.

Inventories show the range of forms which were available in delft. Plates, bowls, cups and saucers, salad plates, patty pans, butter dishes, and punch bowls were among the common forms in Portsmouth houses. Very little description is given of the decoration on the ware, however.

Edward Emerson's shop inventory specifies blue and white delft, including three and a half dozen plates and fifty-two "Setts...Cups & Saucers." Blue and white also appears in some household inventories. Nathaniel Mendum, for example, owned "5 Delph blue & White" plates worth 4/ in 1771, but most appraisers merely lumped everything together simply as "delph."

Delft appeared in houses of every social class. Nathaniel Mendum, a joiner, owned delft, but so did Peirse Long, a wealthy merchant, and Rev. Arthur Browne, the Anglican pastor. By the late 1770's and 1780's, however, delft began to disappear from inventories to be replaced by stoneware and creamware.

Stoneware was a collective term for several types of ceramics, all of which are basically stoneware, although they had different popular names. Advertisements for stoneware appear through the entire quarter-century in several colors and decorations. In 1766 Richard Champney advertised "Blue, White, and Brown Stone Ware."⁴ Black stoneware was also available. "White stone ware" was probably the same as the thinly-potted salt-glazed ware and represents almost a third of the stoneware listed in household inventories. The thin potting of the salt-glazed ware appealed to the average man who only had the heavier earthenwares otherwise.

Large amounts of stoneware were imported from England during this period. Neal McIntyer advertised in 1766 that he had a "variety of Blue, White, Brown, Green Gilt and Black Gilt Stone Ware" available.⁵ John Moffatt imported quantities of this ceramic in his ships, and he then either sold the stoneware directly or supplied it to small shopkeepers. A typical such cargo for Portsmouth was loaded at Bristol in August, 1754. The following is a portion of the invoice.

4 Tierces Stoneware		
6 doz. tea dishes	2/	
6 doz. saucers	2/	
5 doz. tea dishes	Sprigg'd with	
	blue @ 2/3	
5 doz. saucer do.		
5 doz. best quart mugs	4/6	
4 doz. pint do.	2/3	
4 doz. half pint do.	1/1½	6

Tortoisesshell ware and the wares in fruit or vegetable shapes were also to be found in Portsmouth homes. Tortoisesshell glaze was developed in the 1740's by Thomas Whieldon, but the only advertisement for such ceramics in Portsmouth was in 1773 when a Boston merchant who hoped to capture some of the Portsmouth trade listed it in his notice in the New Hampshire Gazette.⁷ Tortoisesshell ware had appeared in Portsmouth houses at least as early as the 1760's, however. Elizabeth Newmarch in 1767 had "5 Tortoise Shell plates 2/6." Edward Emerson and Samuel Griffith both sold this ceramic as well as the more unusual "Colliflower" dishes. Griffith had on hand at his death in 1773 both "colliflower"

plates and cups and saucers. Other fruit shapes were also available. Edward Emerson had an "apple" teapot, and Samuel Griffith had in stock a "Mellen Saus Boat 6/." The few references to both tortoiseshell and fruit-shaped dishes appear in the 1760's and early 1770's only.

Creamware, or "Queen's china," to use a contemporary term, became popular in the 1770's. The first reference to this tableware in Portsmouth is in the inventory of Samuel Warner in 1771. He owned "1 Water pot of Queens Chany, 1 Coffee Pot, 2 Tea Ditto, 1 Sugar dish, 1 Cream Pot of ditto." The first advertisement for this china appeared in the same year. Thomas Martin stocked it in his shop and advertised it as both "Cream Color'd China"⁸ and "Queen's color."⁹

Like delft, creamware was owned by members of every social class. Arthur Browne and Peirse Long, representing the wealthy class, owned some, as did men of more moderate means, like Richard Shortridge, a cabinetmaker who died at Crown Point in 1776. James Stoodley used a small amount of creamware in his tavern. The creamware is only part of the great variety of ceramics he owned, ranging from delft to enamelled china.

"China" and porcelain, either English or Chinese, were the most soughtafter and valuable ceramics in Portsmouth. "China" was costly but represented status, so

every householder tried to have a few pieces of it, if possible. One hundred and sixty-two inventories list "china" among the household furnishings. "China" does not necessarily indicate a type of porcelain, however. "Queen's china" is creamware, as is "green china."¹⁰ Scattered instances of "green china" are found in Portsmouth documents. Edward Emerson and Samuel Griffith both sold this green-glazed creamware in their shops, but only four inventories specifically mention this ware. By 1775 "green china" was out of fashion in most cities, (Wedgwood discontinued it about 1766)¹¹ and Portsmouth was apparently no exception. Samuel Griffith's shop inventory of 1773 is the last reference to this ceramic.

A good example of the range of ceramics available at the end of the period is the advertisement of Ebenezer Bridgham, a Boston merchant who inserted the following notice in the New Hampshire Gazette of August 20, 1773:

Crockery Ware - Consisting of almost every Kind of China, Glass, Delph, cream color, white, blue and white, black, brown, agot, tortoise, mellon, pine apple, Fruit Patterns, enamel'd and many other Kinds of Flint Ware. - A few compleat Table Services of very elegant printed and printed and gilt Ware.

It is likely that most of these wares were used in Portsmouth houses but, as far as china is concerned, since 110 of the 162 inventories which mention china give no

further description, our specific knowledge of the range of china in Portsmouth is limited to scattered references.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate Chinese and English products in Portsmouth as this time. Four inventories do specifically mention "English china." Samuel Griffith had "6 English China plates 4/" and "6 Eng.^{sh} China [cans] blue & w^t. & 2 Small D^o 1/8" in his stock in 1773. John Fisher had "1 Tea Sett black and white English pencil £3:10." This was probably transfer-printed Worcester porcelain. Samuel Moffatt also owned a set of "Pencil'd English China.

Barbara Gorely Teller in her article, "Ceramics in Providence 1750-1800," has stated that "burnt china" was always a term for Chinese porcelain.¹² Seventeen inventories mention burnt china: five in the 1760's, five in the 1770's, and seven in the 1780's. This china appeared in every social class, although in varying amounts. Again, both Arthur Browne and Nathaniel Mendum owned it. However, the rich merchants owned far more porcelain than the lower classes.

Mrs. Teller has declared that "blue and white china" was probably also of Chinese manufacture.¹³ This may not always be true, since some English porcelain did appear in Portsmouth, and blue and white decoration was common on English wares of this period. John Moffatt imported a

quantity of "Blew & White dishes" in 1752 and 1753, but the invoices give no clue to the origin of the dishes.¹⁴ Most merchants who sold china advertised blue and white at one time or another, but only fourteen household inventories list it, again not before the 1760's. Much the same people who owned burnt china owned blue and white china, perhaps indicating a similarity between the wares. We can identify one set of blue and white china as definitely Chinese. John Fisher owned "2 pint Nankeen china blue & white" dishes worth 1/6 each. "Nankeen" was presumably the ware of the same name from China, although 1778 is an early date for it in America.

Enamelled china may also be Chinese, or possibly enamelled creamware or stoneware. Again, it was available in Samuel Griffith's shop, but only the fairly well-to-do seem to have owned it. There are only eight inventory references to enamelled wares.

Fine ceramics were clearly a status symbol and a much-desired possession in Portsmouth. Even the lower classes tried to acquire a few pieces. They were displayed on the tea table or in a corner cupboard, as much a part of the room decoration as the furniture. They were never kept in the kitchen, as earthenwares were, and were not discarded unless broken beyond repair. References to cracked or broken china abound in the inventories, and John Davenport, a goldsmith, advertised that he performed "China-Mending...in

Filmed as received
without page(s) ⁸⁵_____.

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Wine glasses were one of the most common types of glassware in Portsmouth. John Moffatt imported eleven dozen "common wine glasses" in 1754¹⁶ and five dozen decanters to use with them. Rhodes and Parker's Journal records many sales of wine glasses, particularly to Peter Livius, who must have been reselling them elsewhere, since he could not possibly have used the large numbers of glasses which he bought.

Wine glasses were sometimes described as being "single-flint" or "double-flint." Joseph Whipple advertised both types in 1759,¹⁷ and Samuel Griffith had "Flynt Wine Glasses" in his shop in 1773. These were presumably made from the English glass which contained one or two gatherings of flint. Double-flint glass is heavier than single-flint.¹⁸ John Fisher, always one to own the very best, had "3 Doz Shot stone best double flint ground wine Glasses," as well as "4 plain Double flint quart decanters."

Decanters were usually found with wine glasses, but, again little description is given, beyond an occasional note whether the shape was square or round. Samuel Griffith did have, however, a "Glass Decanter wth pewter Handle Broken."

Other drinking vessels were as popular as wine glasses, and perhaps more necessary. Cans, mugs, tumblers, beer glasses, water glasses, and beakers were all used, but

in varying numbers. Cans and mugs appeared most frequently, but tumblers were close behind. William Whipple owned three dozen tumblers but this number was unusual.

Salts were apparently very common glass articles in Portsmouth. Samuel Griffith, for instance, had in stock at his death "126 Glass Salts." Inventory references to this form are almost as numerous. The mustard pot was an occasional companion of the salt. Samuel Griffith sold mustard pots also, but in far smaller numbers. Salt was a necessity mustard was not!

Cruets and castors were often part of a condiment set. Edward Emerson's "1 pair vinegar Cruets" valued at 3/ (old tenor) was a typical set, but some households owned more, and more elaborate, cruets. For example, Thomas Penhallow owned forty-four cruets, half of which were engraved.

The most useful type of glassware was undoubtedly bottles. Large numbers of them can be found in inventories. Mehetable Odiorne had forty-seven, and Nathaniel Meserve kept in his east room "8½ Doz. bottles £17, 17 small square bottles 90/, & 2 Quart ditto 90/." Such numbers are not unusual or unexpected, since most families had to preserve their own food and needed containers for it.

Decoration of the glassware was seldom mentioned. Possibly most of the glass was clear, although Joseph Frost's inventory of 1765 specifically lists "2 Blew Glass Cans" worth 1/. No other colors were mentioned. Engraved glass was found in some of the finer houses. As noted above, the wealthy merchant Thomas Penhallow had engraved cruets. Samuel Griffith's shop stocked "7 glasses Flower'd 4/," which were probably engraved with a flower design. Painted glass was mentioned only twice. Again in Griffith's shop were "2 painted Glass quart Mugs 1/6," and Monsieur Bunbury in 1772 possessed "4 painted Glass Mugs 4/."

3. Silver

Silver and pewter, especially the former, were valuable assets of a Portsmouth household. Silver was considered to be the most valuable possession a man could own and was thus carefully included in an inventory, although not all inventories list the forms separately. Silver is also the only type of furnishings which one can find mentioned specifically in a Portsmouth will. Samuel Sherburne, for example, bequeathed in 1765 to two of his relatives his "Silver Teakittle Lamp and Stand" and "pair of Silver Butter Boats so Called."¹⁷

The amount of silver in a house varied, of course, according to the wealth of the owners. The smallest amount might be only one or two spoons, while the rich merchants

owned large amounts of plate, in one case as much as 271 ounces. This was Nathaniel Meserve, who died at Louisburg in 1758. It is worthwhile to quote the list of his plate here, to show what sort of silver might be owned by a very wealthy man. He owned the following:

- 1 Silver Mustard Box & Pepper do.
- 1 Powdered Sugar Box
- 1 doz. Tea Spoons & Tongs
- 2 Butter Boats
- 9 Spoons
- 1 Scoop Spoon
- 1 Punch Ladle
- 1 Sugar Dish & Cover
- 1 pr. Cans
- 1 large Bowl
- 1 Small Do.
- 1 2 Quart Tankard
- 1 Punch Bowl wth Cover & 2 Handles
- 10 Tea Spoons & ps /pieces?

All this weighed 271 oz. 2 dwt. 12 gr. and at the price of £6:5 old tenor per ounce was valued at £1694:10:7. No one else except William Whipple owned nearly as much plate. The average amount to be found in a home was between ten and forty ounces of silver, although there were some houses which had no silver at all.

The price of silver varied. The standard price per ounce was 6/8 lawful money but different valuations could be found. Joshua Feirce's silver was rated in 1767 at 120/ lawful money per ounce and Jotham Odiorne's silver the year before was figured at £6:13 old tenor. Beginning in the late 1760's, however, and straight through the 1780's, the 6/8

valuation was standard.

There were silversmiths in Portsmouth, although they had to repair watches or run shops in order to support themselves, since they did not have enough business making silver. There were six silversmiths who advertised between 1757 and 1775. Only one, Clement Jackson, jun., listed the silver forms which he was prepared to make. He advertised "Tankards, Coffee Potts, Cans, Tea Potts, Cream Potts, Porringers, Pepper Casters, Saults, Punch Ladles and Strainers, Spout Cups, Snuff Boxes, Spoons, Child's Whistles, and Sword Hilts."²⁰ One wonders how many of these he was called upon to make. None of his work is now known, and most other Portsmouth holloware has suffered the same fate.

Local citizens obtained some of their silver from Boston craftsmen. Daniel Warner, who died in 1779, bought a pair of candlesticks and snuffers with a tray from John Burt of Boston. The silver is now at Winterthur. (Figures 4 and 5). It is highly unlikely that these were the only pieces of Boston silver in Portsmouth households, but none of the records give the names of the silversmiths who made the silver listed in the inventories.

The whereabouts of almost all the silver of Portsmouth houses are unknown, except for some spoons. However, an article in the December, 1937, American Collector,

Figure 4.

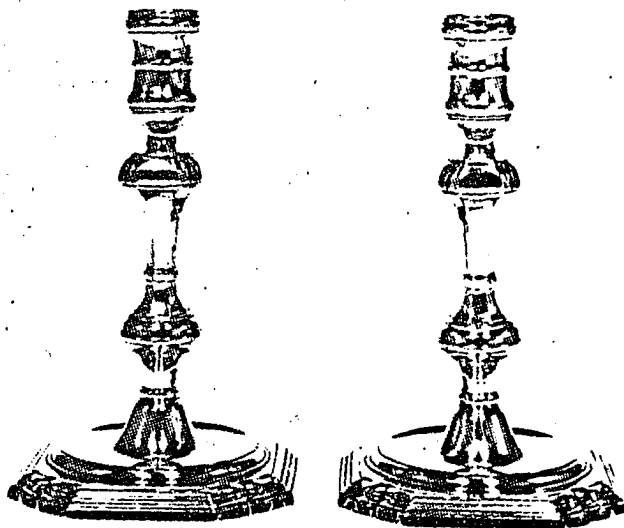
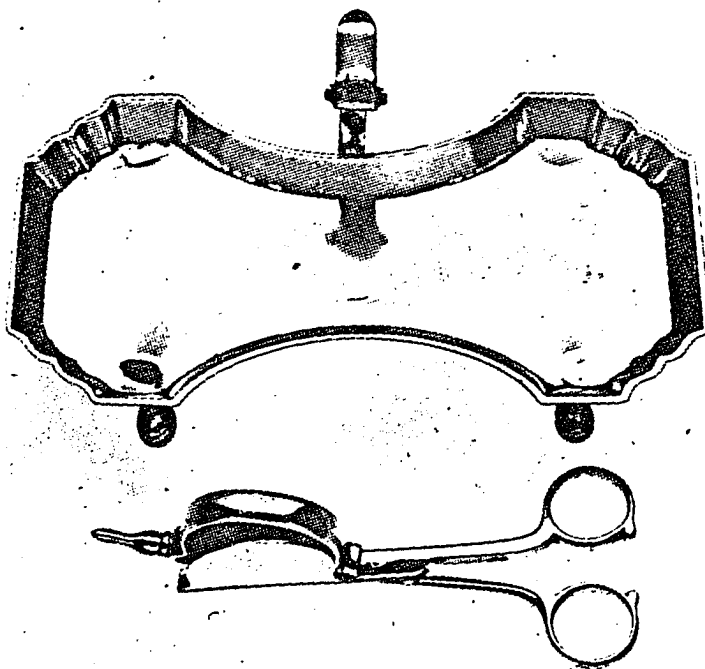


Figure 5.



Silver candlesticks and snuffers made by John Burt of Boston for Daniel Warner of Portsmouth.
Courtesy, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.

described nineteen pieces of silver owned by Captain Tobias Lear. Among these were four teaspoons made by Samuel Drowne of Portsmouth. Other items included a can by Daniel Rogers of Newport, and salts, casters, a creamer, and six tablespoons, all by London silversmiths. Unfortunately, Stephen Decatur, the author, does not note the weight of the silver. It would be interesting to know what part this would be of the $59\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of silver which Lear owned at his death in 1781.

Silver-plated objects were rare in Portsmouth. A few pairs of plated candlesticks were used, and Thomas Penhallow owned a "Plated Tankard & 1 pr. Cans" valued at £3 in 1784.

4. Pewter and Cutlery

While silver was measured in ounces, pewter was figured in pounds. Portsmouth households seem to have used a prodigious amount of pewter: seventy-five pounds of it per house was not uncommon. Values fluctuated according to the age of the metal, and inventories frequently made a distinction between old and new pewter. John Marshall, a boatbuilder, owned in 1784 "1 doz. New pewter plates 18/, 74 lb. Pewter dishes & plates @ 15^d £4:12:6, 48 lb. old do. @ 1/ £2:8:6." Old pewter was worth comparatively little.

Portsmouth did have one pewterer. James Gooch advertised his wares in 1756 and 1757, although we know that he was working as early as 1753. He claimed that he could "supply New Pewter...cheaper than they can get in Boston."²¹ However, Gooch was not able to hold out against the flood of imports. Pewter was routinely imported from England and sold in Portsmouth shops. John Moffatt, Woodbury Langdon, and Rhodes and Parker all stocked it. One inventory even specified "London hamer'd Pewter." This was in the house of Nathaniel Tuckerman who died in 1755.

All sorts of items were made of pewter, including bed pans. The most common forms were, however, "dishes, plates, basons, Porringers, Spoons, and Mugs" as advertised in the New Hampshire Gazette of April 22, 1763. The pewter was usually kept in the kitchen, as in Joseph Buss's house, where there were "8 3/4 doz pewter plates!" This placement in the kitchen marked pewter objects as strictly utilitarian and not for show. Tablewares on display were kept in the parlors.

One type of tableware which was invariably imported was cutlery. Sets of cutlery consisted of knives and forks. Spoons were made separately and seldom matched the other two utensils.

In 1757 an advertisement listed "a good assortment of London, Sheffield, and Birmingham cutlery."²² This is an

unusual instance, however. Most sets of cutlery are mentioned only in reference to the type of handle. Several materials were used for handles. Silver, of course, was the most valuable, and only a few merchants like Nathaniel Meserve or Daniel Warner could afford them. Ivory-handled knives and forks were popular, both white and stained green. Samuel Moffatt owned three dozen of each. Buck handles also appeared occasionally. Judge John Wentworth and Daniel Peirce both owned such sets. Samuel Hall, Jr., who ran a shop, bought quite a bit of cutlery from Boston merchants between 1764 and 1772. The handles were either of bone or buck. Apparently, these two materials were most commonly used for knife handles in Portsmouth. A more accurate survey is impossible, since the large majority of the inventories list only "knives and forks."

Knife cases were used with the cutlery, although not invariably. Gregory Purcell, for example, kept his knives and forks in a shagreen case. These cases were probably not uncommon, but again, most inventories do not mention the material from which they were made. Tobias Lear owned the only knife case listed as being of mahogany.

5. Carpets

Floor carpets were definitely a luxury in Portsmouth. Less than half the houses had them, and then, usually only

one. The earliest advertisement for carpeting was in 1761 when Robert Traill had for sale imported "carpets for floors."²³ By 1766 Samuel Griffith was advertising "Floor, Hearth Cloathes,"²⁴ but he was one of the few shopkeepers who stocked such items.

Very little description of carpets is ever found in any of the Portsmouth documents. However, Peter Livius did order a carpet from England which he carefully described:

a Carpet of the Axminster Manufactory of twenty feet by ten feet the principal Ground to be a very dark Color & the price not to exceed twenty guineas: I shall want the Carpet before the end of September next; As it is designed for a Specimen of what they can perform & is to cross the Sea, particular Care must be taken in the package that the Colors may not be impair'd.²⁵

This is the only record of an Axminster carpet in Portsmouth at this period.

Three or four other types of carpets were specified in the documents, most of which were not made in America. Oriental carpets were very scarce but not unknown. Samuel Moffatt owned five "Persia carpetts," which varied from nine feet by four feet to sixteen feet by four feet. Three of these were in bedchambers and the others in the front parlor and hall. Samuel Moffatt's were the only "Persia carpetts," but close to it were the "Turkey Carpets" in the houses of William Parker and John Fisher. These were

valuable items, worth £14 and £15, respectively.

English carpets were represented by either Scotch or Wilton carpeting. John Fisher owned the only recorded Wilton carpets, noted as "4 small Wilton carpets for bed sides" valued at £6. He also possessed "scotch" carpeting for the be chamber and the entry at a total value of £25. Peirse Long and Monsieur Bunbury, both of whom ranked among the wealthy, were also owners of Scotch carpets. Few except the rich could afford large imported carpets, and no house except Samuel Moffatt's had as many as five.

The floor coverings owned by Samuel Griffith are more typical of the modest houses. He had an "old Homespun Carpet 8/" and a "painted Canvas Carpet 10/." These were probably both local products, since there were painters like Thomas Warren, who advertised that he painted carpets.²⁶ Some of the wealthier men owned this type of floor covering, as well. Gregory Purcell, for example, had a "Canvas Floor Cloth" in the hall.

A very small number of houses had stair carpets. Only four are recorded, all from the wealthy class. It must be noted in this discussion, however, that more than half the carpets recorded are noted as "carpets" with no more description than that. A good share of these were called "old," indicating that carpets were kept and handed down as valued possessions.

For those who could not afford carpets at all, an alternative was available. Thomas Warren advertised that he could paint "Floors in Imitation of Carpets, in the newest Fashions."²⁷ Since no painted floors have survived in Portsmouth, we do not know how many such commissions he had.

6. Lighting Equipment

Candles were, of course, the major source of artificial light in eighteenth-century Portsmouth. Candlesticks abound in the records and range from simple tin candlesticks to elaborate cut-glass holders. Candles are less frequently found in inventories, and apparently it was uncommon for a household to keep a large supply on hand. They were readily available in the shops, although good tallow candles were expensive. In 1761 Joseph Barrell advertised "Choice Tallow Candles" at 22/ (old tenor) per pound.²⁸ In 1763 "Choice mould candles" sold for 22/ for a half dozen.²⁹

Brass candlesticks were a standard household possession. A survey of the inventories reveals that three to five brass candlesticks was average for a house and that they, along with other lighting fixtures, if any, were kept in the kitchen. Only the most ornamental candlesticks or lamps were placed in the front part of the house. Few houses had more than six or eight candlesticks.

Candlesticks varied in value, but since little description was ever given, it is difficult to determine their appearance. Of course, brass candlesticks were more expensive than those of iron or tin, but variations in price within the same type must indicate differences in size or elaboration. Only one inventory, that of William Parker in 1782, specifies the sizes of the candlesticks. In his kitchen were "1 pr. tall Brass Candlesticks 12/," and "1 pr. small ditto 4/," as well as "1 pr. large steal Candlesticks 12," the only reference to candlesticks made of steel.

Merchants imported large numbers of candlesticks from England. John Moffatt's invoice book reveals that the local demand was great enough to warrant one shipment of "60 pr. candlesticks, 5 pr. pattern do. @ 6/ & 6 pr. do @ 5/6, 18 Snuffers and stands @ 4/6," and "6 pr. flat candlesticks @ 4/, 3 pr. do. @ 4/6, 3 pr. do. @ 5/."³⁰ This shipment was not unusual, and such numbers are repeated in other invoices.

Elegant decorative candlesticks of silver plate or cut glass were used, but in very small numbers and only in the houses of the wealthy. John Fisher, William Whipple, and Peirse Long owned "plaited" candlesticks, but these are the only recorded examples. Fisher and Long also owned glass candlesticks, but this type was as rare as plated candlesticks, even though Jacob Treadwell stocked them in

his shop.³¹ The only solid silver candlesticks recorded in Portsmouth at this period were the paid made by John Burt for Daniel Warner.

Candlesticks were useful indoors, but outdoors lanterns were needed. Not surprisingly, lanterns were usually to be found in the front entry where they were readily available. Some houses also kept lanterns in the kitchen. Lighting fixtures were routinely stored in the kitchen, where they could be lighted at the fire and then carried to the room which was to be illuminated.

One occasionally finds a lamp in an inventory, but these are almost never further described. It is likely that these were small oil lamps, or "Betty" lamps. Nathaniel Meserve, however, owned seven "glass lamps" worth £2 (old tenor) each, an unusually high valuation. These were kept in the "West Front Room" and the "West Front Chamber," so they were clearly decorative as well as functional. We can only guess that they may have been a type of oil lamp. Whale oil was not unknown in New England in the eighteenth century, and it is possible that these were very early whale-oil lamps. They are, however, an exception, and candles remained the customary method of lighting Portsmouth houses.

7. Fireplace Equipment

Every house had some tools for use at the fireplace, their elaboration depending on the wealth of the household.

Virtually every inventory mentions andirons (also called "handirons" or "dogs") and a set of shovel and tongs. These are seldom described in any way beyond an occasional mention of brass or iron as the material from which they were made.

As indicated by advertisements and account books, fireplace tools were generally imported from England by the merchants and then dispersed among the smaller shopkeepers. They were relatively expensive, as one can see by the purchase made by Samuel Hart from John Moffatt in 1763:

"1 Long handle brush 60/, 1 pr. fine polish'd Shovel & Tongs 14, 1 hearth brush 50/" (all prices in old tenor).³² One of the few examples of a description of andirons is in the 1771 invoice of a London merchant's shipment to John Marsh: "1 pr. n^t. neat? Iron Dogs wth Brass Tulip Heads 15/6."³³

Thirty out of a group of seventy-five households had bellows among their fireplace equipment. Apparently, they were not considered necessary. Portsmouth has always had more trouble putting out fires than starting them!

Warming pans were another fairly unusual type of equipment. Again out of the seventy-five houses, only thirty-two owned such an item. Other families may have preferred to use hot bricks instead, but certainly John Moffatt thought that there was enough demand to import in one consignment '12 brass warming pans"³⁴ and in another

"1 Cask warming pans, 16 Black do., 8 Bright do."35 When a house did have a warming pan, it was kept in the kitchen where it could easily be filled with coals from the fireplace.

One kitchen utensil which could be considered as part of the kitchen fireplace equipment was a jack. The jack worked on weights and turned the spit in front of the fire to roast the meat evenly. These were definitely a luxury, since few houses had them (only nineteen out of all the houses). Taverns like David Horney's found a jack useful, but most smaller families did without one, mainly because of expense. One of the most expensive items in the kitchen of Horney's tavern was his "Iron Jack with a Brass Front £15."

8. Pictures

Some rooms of Portsmouth houses contained a large number of pictures, ranging from oil paintings to simple pictures without frames. For example, Nathaniel Meserve's upper entry had on the walls "21 Metzitinto Pictures" valued at £63 (old tenor)! The entry below contained "11 Fram'd Prospects £11."

The pictures were apparently mostly of three types: prints, reverse paintings on glass, and maps. These are the three kinds most frequently mentioned in inventories and account books, although the many times when only "pictures" are listed could cover other types.

Mezzotints and other prints were highly prized possessions. Thomas Newmarch's one "massy Tinto picture" was carefully recorded as hanging in his front room and as being worth £1, as much as his "Small Looking Glass." The subjects of these prints are mentioned a few times, so we may have some small idea of what type of pictures Portsmouth people liked. Nathaniel Adams had "8 Metzetinto Scrip^{re}. pieces @ 6/ " in 1769, and in 1784 John Sloper's inventory mentioned "6 Prints of Saints 3/," but these were the only Biblical subjects recorded. Famous men were a popular subject. Samuel Langdon's "Picture of J. Wilkes Esq." in 1773 and Edward Emerson's "1 Pitt's Picture" of 1769 were both probably prints, as Tobias Lear's "picture of a Son of Liberty" may have been. The fact that the subjects of these pictures were recorded may mean that the patriotic content of the pictures gave more value to them.

More valuable than were the paintings on glass. One can find them in the invoices of shipments from England. John Marsh in 1769 received from Lane, Son and Fraser "12 Glass Paintings Season &c. £3."³⁶ The listing probably indicates that this included a set of allegorical paintings of the four seasons, a subject popular at the time. They were not inexpensive. Addington Davenport's "5 Small Pictures Painted on Glass" were appraised at £1 (old tenor) each in 1761, and ten years later "18 Glass Paintings" were consigned to John Marsh at 5/ each.³⁷

Another type of picture, if one can call it that, was a map. Maps were used as decorative wall hangings as well as useful guides. Appraisers were more inclined to mention the areas covered by maps than the subjects of pictures, so we have some idea of the range of maps found in Portsmouth houses. Arthur Browne had in his back parlor a map of "Maryland and the Jerseys," and being an Irishman and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, a "Map of Dublin College" in his front parlor. Other British maps and views could also be found. William Parker had one of the Counties of England, and Samuel Rynes, a rigger, had a "Map of the Royal Hospital of Chelsea." American maps were not neglected, however. William Parker had a map of America and Nathaniel Peirce one of "Northamerica," while Daniel Peirce owned "Maps of the World." These maps were sometimes hung in the entry as well as in the front parlors.

Although we know of several portrait painters who worked in Portsmouth, it is almost impossible to identify their work in household inventories. For example, there are several portraits of members of Arthur Browne's family, but there is not a trace of them in his inventory, unless they are included among the "framed pictures." Joseph Newmarch's inventory does list "1 family Picture," but this is the only specific mention of a family portrait. Nathaniel Mendum in 1771 owned "1 Picture of Mr. Tugood," which may be a portrait, since there was a Tugood family in Portsmouth. The two

Governors, Benning and John Wentworth, both had portraits of the King and Queen, probably for official reasons.

Virtually every house in Portsmouth had at least a few pictures on the walls. Since they were more often than not used in large groups, such as John Marsh's sixteen in the parlor and fifteen in the dining room, it is clear that they were meant to be an important part of the decorative scheme.

In contrast to furniture, almost all the furnishings discussed in this chapter were imported. Portsmouth never developed other crafts to the same extent as cabinetmaking. Advertisements and invoice books show that most smaller furnishings were consistently imported from England. Even when a local craftsman could offer products, imports usually overwhelmed him. Such was the case with James Gooch, the pewterer. English and Boston pewter was so plentiful and cheap that he could not compete. For other crafts, such as silversmithing, the local demand was so small that the craftsmen usually had to do other things to support himself. Samuel Griffith, the shopkeeper, was a goldsmith by trade, but keeping a store was more profitable. Other objects like glass, fine ceramics, or carpets could not be made locally and had to be imported from England.

Because most of these furnishings were imported, they were expensive. Many of them were in the category of luxuries. We have seen how few men had carpets in their

houses, for example. The inventory valuations show that objects like fine "china" or glass candlesticks were among some of the most expensive items in a room and were highly prized. The wealthier the household, the more of these "luxuries" could be found there.

A study of the inventories has given us a good idea of the placement of some of these smaller items. The most striking difference from modern practice is the fact that virtually all lighting devices were kept in the kitchen. The small number of candlesticks in most houses precluded the possibility of lighting more than two rooms at any one time. Pewter was also kept almost exclusively in the kitchen. These utilitarian objects were not displayed in the parlor, as were the fine ceramics, which were as decorative as useful. In addition to emphasizing the importance of imports and luxuries, the records bring out the widespread use of ceramics and the great range of ceramic forms and decoration; the special place of silver in a man's possessions; the large quantities of pewter normally found in a house; and the popularity of prints, paintings on glass, and maps.

It is in studying the smaller objects of the houses in Portsmouth that one realizes the importance of the trade with England. Since most of these objects were imported, and few householders were willing to be without fine ceramics, brass candlesticks, or even bed curtains, commerce with

England assumes a large part in the consideration of the decorative arts of Portsmouth homes. This dependence on England for household objects may well have contributed to Portsmouth's reluctance to make a complete break with the mother country. Not only would businesses fail, but it would be hard to supply even everyday household items.

Notes on Chapter III

¹
New Hampshire Gazette, September 3, 1762. (Here-
after cited as NHG.)

²
NHG, February 12, 1762.

³
NHG, November 13, 1762.

⁴
NHG, July 11, 1766.

⁵
NHG, August 1, 1766.

⁶
John Moffatt, Invoice Book 1737-1755, No. 160,
New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

⁷
NHG, August 20, 1773.

⁸
NHG, May 31, 1773.

⁹
NHG, July 5, 1773.

¹⁰
Barbara Gorely Teller, "Ceramics in Providence
1750-1800," Antiques, 94 (October, 1968), 573.

¹¹
Robert Charleston, ed., World Ceramics (New York:
McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 271.

¹²
Teller, p. 572.

¹³
Ibid.

- 14 John Moffatt, Invoice Book, Nos. 132 and 149.
- 15 NHG, August 22, 1775.
- 16 John Moffatt, Invoice Book, No. 160.
- 17 NHG, August 31, 1759.
- 18 Sidney Crompton, English Glass (New York: Hawthorn, 1967), p. 40.
- 19 New Hampshire Provincial Probate Records, XXIII, 382, New Hampshire Archives, Concord, N. H.
- 20 NHG, August 13, 1762.
- 21 NHG, July 22, 1757.
- 22 NHG, November 18, 1756.
- 23 NHG, April 24, 1761.
- 24 NHG, August 8, 1766.
- 25 Peter Livius, Letter Book, February 6, 1764, p. 64, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.
- 26 NHG, February 10, 1775.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 NHG, November 20, 1761.
- 29 NHG, March 11, 1763.

30 John Moffatt, Invoice Book, No. 113

31 NHG, October 21, 1768.

32 John Moffatt, Waste Book, December 23, 1763,
New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

33 John Marsh, Invoice Book, May 15, 1771, New
Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

34 John Moffatt, Invoice Book, No. 113.

35 Ibid., No. 160.

36 John Marsh, Invoice Book, January 31, 1769.

37 Ibid., May 15, 1771.

Chapter IV

The Rooms of Portsmouth Houses

Having surveyed the furnishings of Portsmouth houses by categories, it will be useful now to consider how these furnishings were distributed among the main rooms of the house. Inventories of the period 1750-1789 include descriptive room-by-room listings of thirty-one houses. A comparison of these inventories yields valuable information on the use of rooms of Portsmouth houses and the furnishings placed in them. This study has broken the rooms down into six categories: parlors, dining rooms, bedchambers, entries and halls, kitchens, and shop rooms.

1. Parlors

"Parlor" was only one name of several used for the general living room of the house. Equally popular was the term "setting room," while "best room," "front room," "lower room," and "keeping room" also appeared with some regularity. In general, the terms had little difference in meaning, although it is possible that a parlor was considered to be more formal than a setting room. Two houses had both rooms

(James Clarkson and Gregory Purcell), and in both cases, the parlor held the more expensive and up-to-date furniture. Gregory Purcell's front parlor was decorated with "red & white Window Curtains & 2 Squabs...1 Carpet," while his setting room contained none of these luxuries. In other houses "setting room" was simply the term used instead of "parlor."

Some houses used the old-fashioned terms of "keeping room" and "hall." Judge John Wentworth, who died in 1774, had both a keeping room and a hall in his house, even though these were very out-dated names for rooms by this date. The keeping room was more up-to-date and elaborate than the hall, which contained less and older furniture, although it was here that his seventy-two ounces of silver were kept. The only other house with a keeping room was that of Sarah Odiorne, who died in 1752, but it is definitely considered as being inferior to her "best room," which contained all the elegant furnishings of the house. Other "halls," "front rooms," and "best rooms" were furnished in a manner typical of parlors and appear to have differed from them only in terminology.

The uses to which a parlor was put were many and diverse. It was certainly a "setting room" in the literal sense, since chairs and other seating furniture had a prominent place in the room. The fact that almost all these

rooms had fireplaces encouraged their use in all seasons, of course. Collections of books were also usually kept in this room.

Since very few houses had designated dining rooms, the parlors were generally eating rooms as well as sitting rooms. Most of the good ceramics and glass in the house were kept here, and there was usually an ample number of tables to set dishes and cutlery out for a meal. Fully twenty-eight of the thirty-one houses kept tableware in the parlor. Apart from the regular meals, parlors could be set up for tea. Tea tables and tea equipment were standard furnishings of the parlor, and even in the poorer households, the parlor usually contained a few cups and saucers, if nothing more than that. Tea china was frequently displayed on the tea table all the time, as in Samuel Moffatt's house, where "1 Sett Pencill'd English China Cups & Saucers & 2 Teaboards" held a central place in the "back parlour."

Twenty-one of the thirty-one houses had at least two parlors, and four of these had three. One house - Daniel Jackson's - had no parlor at all and appears to have been unfinished at the time of his death. Of the houses with more than one parlor a definite difference between the rooms is evident. One room was apparently the "best" room and contained the newer and more stylish furnishings. For example, in Samuel Moffatt's house in 1768 the newer mahogany

chairs and tables were placed in the front parlor, while the back parlor held the black walnut furniture. This practice was fairly consistent in all the houses, and more elaboration in the wall decoration was quite standard. Gregory Purcell's house is still standing, and the relative elegance of the rooms can be traced in the woodwork as well as in the furnishings. His front parlor with the red and white curtains is more elaborately panelled than either the second parlor or the setting room and is also the only room of the three to have window seats.

Of the thirty-one houses there were a total of fifty-five parlors, and in these rooms a great range of furnishings was to be found. Chairs and tables were the most common furniture, of course, and although the numbers vary, six to eight chairs and two or three tables were average for most parlors. About half of the rooms contained a desk of some sort, whether a writing desk or a desk and bookcase. The majority of the parlors (about eighty percent) contained at least one looking glass, which was often the most expensive item in the room.

Twenty-eight of the houses had ceramics in at least one parlor, and several had it in both. Only eleven inventories list the silver among the parlor furnishings, however, although this may be misleading, because the appraisers often considered the silver in a category separate from other furnishings.

Only seven houses had any lighting devices in the parlors, and these were generally for show, as were Samuel Moffatt's plated candlesticks or Gregory Purcell's glass candlesticks. Other lighting equipment was always kept in the kitchen and distributed to the other rooms when needed.

Few households could afford the luxury of a carpet or clock in the parlor. While six houses had carpets in at least one parlor, only as wealthy a man as John Moffatt could afford to have carpeting in both the front and back parlors. Similarly, only eight parlors held clocks.

About half of the parlors contained pictures. The practice often seems to have been to display a large number of pictures in one parlor and none in the other. Although the number of pictures in a room fluctuated, the average parlor contained six or seven.

By 1750 the practice of having a bed in the parlor was out-dated, but four families still clung to the older custom. It should be noted that none of these families was of the top social and economic rank, and those with any pretensions to fashion would have done away with this usage of the parlor long before.

2. Dining Rooms

Only two of the thirty-one houses had "dining rooms." These were in the houses of Daniel Jackson (1775) and John

Marsh (1782). Very little distinguishes these two rooms from the parlors of any other house. In fact, there seems to be no real reason for John Marsh's room being called a dining room at all, since it contained no table china or glassware, all of which was kept in a closet in his parlor. The room did have a "large mahogany Table" which could have been used for dining, but dishes would have had to be brought in from the next room. The appraisers were apparently not really satisfied with the term "dining room," either, since the bedchamber over this room is called the "setting room chamber."

Daniel Jackson's house contained no parlor at all; therefore, the dining room must have combined the purposes of the two rooms. Certainly the furnishings of the room fit the scheme of a parlor: it contained six chairs, three tables, one looking glass, china, delft, and glass. Perhaps Jackson may have intended this room to be strictly a dining room and the "unfinished room" to be the parlor, but since the house was obviously not completed, we can only guess at his intentions.

3. Bedchambers¹

Since most houses contained two or more bedchambers, it was necessary to give them identifying names. Several methods were used. One was to name the chamber for the room directly below it on the ground floor. The "parlor chamber"

was thus above the parlor and the "kitchen chamber" above the kitchen. Points of the compass were also used to name the rooms, as in the "northwest chamber" or the "southeast chamber." In another method, Samuel Moffatt named his chambers after the dominant color of the decoration. The "Green Chamber" had hangings of green and white check, and the "Yellow Chamber" had wallpaper and upholstery of yellow.

It is sometimes possible to determine the relative elaboration of the chamber by its name. The "parlor chamber" was usually the "best" chamber, and surviving houses prove that this bedchamber was often more elaborately panelled than the others. The front bedchambers were more likely to have fireplaces than those at the back of the house and could thus be used for upstairs sitting rooms. Unheated bedchambers frequently contained only a bed and bedstead.

Furnishings of bedchambers varied considerably, from the elaborate to the very simple and basic. Variations occurred within the houses themselves, also, since the "best chamber" usually was more luxuriously furnished than the "kitchen chamber" or "back chamber."

Of the thirty houses there were 102 bedchambers, three of which contained no bed at the time of the appraisal. Since they were all called chambers, we must assume that these three were originally intended as bedchambers. Most of the chambers

contained one or two beds, but a tavern like David Horney's, which needed sleeping space, put two or three beds in a chamber.

Other furnishings of the bedchambers varied considerably, and there are no constants. Sixty-seven chambers contained chairs, and in these rooms six or seven chairs were average. Fewer chambers (thirty-six) held a table, and twenty-one had a dressing table.

Chests of drawers were far from necessary for a bedchamber. Only thirty-seven chambers had any sort of case or chest of drawers, and in these rooms one was the rule. Sometimes a bedchamber without a chest of drawers had one or two chests, but again, this is not always true. Storage space was clearly at a minimum, even though fifteen houses stored household linen in a bedchamber.

In a similar manner, looking glasses and dressing glasses were also not considered to be necessary. Less than half the bedchambers contained either type of glass, and five houses had none at all in any of the chambers.

We usually think of close stools as an indispensable part of bedchamber furniture, but only eight of the thirty inventories list even one in a bedchamber. It appears that such chairs or stools were less common in Portsmouth houses than supposed, unless the appraisers listed them simply as

"chairs," thus making them indistinguishable in the inventories.

Not surprisingly, carpets and pictures were scarcer in bedchambers than in parlors. Only nine chambers had carpets, and nineteen had pictures on the walls. Few of these nineteen rooms had less than five or six pictures, again indicating the trend toward groups of pictures rather than pictures hung singly. The scarcity of such decorative features shows that, in general, only the wealthier households could afford to lavish money on luxurious appointments for bedchambers. Most houses concentrated on providing warmth and comfort for sleeping and largely neglected other aspects of decoration.

Much has been written on the subject of bedchambers in colonial America as rooms for entertaining. For example, Samuel Sewall noted in his diary on September 15, 1702, "Mr. Nehemiah Walter marries Mr. Sam¹. Sewall and Mrs. Rebekah Dudley, in the Dining Room Chamber about 8 o'clock."² In Portsmouth by 1750, however, there is very little evidence for this type of social activity in bedchambers. The numbers of chairs and tables certainly suggest that they could have been used as sitting rooms by the family, but the lack of ceramics and glassware clearly indicates that entertaining was not done here but in the parlors where the necessary equipment was kept.

4. Entries and Halls

Entries and halls are not always listed separately in inventories, and considering their small size in many surviving houses, some may have been left virtually unfurnished. However, fourteen of the thirty-one houses do list the entries and their furnishings. Three of these list both the front entry and the upper entry.³ The only house among the fourteen with a large entry was Samuel Moffatt's. His "hall" takes up nearly a third of the first floor and really constitutes a room. This is an unusual case, however, and most of the entries and halls are quite small.

Furnishings of the entries varied considerably, but this is another favorite place for chairs. Samuel Moffatt's "hall" had sixteen in it, but the average number was six. Three houses specifically mention Windsor chairs in the entry (Samuel Moffatt, Monsieur Bunbury, and James Stoodley). This durable type of chair would have been practical in an entry, and there is evidence in the inventories not divided by rooms that other houses besides these three followed the practice.

About half the houses had either a table or a stand in the entry, but far more important were the leather fire buckets. Each house was required by law to keep at least two, and it appears that at least seventy-five percent of the

households put them near the front door where they would be available in an emergency. Perhaps it was for the same reason that more than half the houses kept a lantern at the front entrance.

A hall and stairwell were frequently decorated by pictures and maps. More than fifty percent of the houses in this group followed the custom of hanging pictures here. Not many householders went to the extreme that Arthur Browne did, however. His entry contained sixty-five pictures and twenty maps! The walls of the entry and stairs must have been covered! Elsewhere, the number of pictures and maps ranged from one to twenty.

The "upper entries" were furnished in approximately the same manner as the lower halls, although fire buckets and lanterns were not placed there. Three of the fourteen houses had a couch in the upper entry, which seems rather strange in the modern ear, but the indications from other inventories are that this was not an unusual practice in Portsmouth.

5. Kitchens

It is not the purpose of this thesis to consider all the diverse kitchen utensils in use in the eighteenth century. Instead, this discussion will confine itself to the furniture to be found in Portsmouth kitchens.

By the time that appraisers reached the kitchen of a house being inventoried, the multiplicity of items to be recorded must have daunted them somewhat, because descriptive phrases are few. The most frequent epithet applied to kitchen furniture was "old," implying that when furniture became old or perhaps a bit dilapidated, it was moved to the kitchen where beauty was not important. This is certainly true of ceramics, because the fine china was generally put on display in one of the parlors, while the useful but less attractive earthenwares were kept in the kitchen. Only two of the thirty-one houses had any fine ceramics in the kitchen, and the amounts in these two cases were very small. Pewter was normally to be found in the kitchen, however. Twenty-seven of the thirty-one inventories include sizeable amounts of pewter among the kitchen furnishings.

Two-thirds of the kitchens contained chairs, and of those that did, six or seven chairs was the normal complement. The only descriptive words applied to these chairs were "old," "kitchen," or very occasionally, "flag-bottomed." Although most kitchens (twenty-five out of thirty-one) had in them two or three tables, descriptions are again scarce. Apparently, one of the most common types of tables for a kitchen was a "pine table," probably of a very simple design. Twelve of the kitchens had at least one pine table and usually two or three. Such tables can also be found in other inventories

with kitchen furnishings and very seldom elsewhere in the house. These were strictly utilitarian tables for the kitchen.

The thirty-one inventories were practically unanimous in including candlesticks among kitchen furnishings. Twenty-nine houses kept virtually all their lighting devices in the kitchen, and the percentage is undoubtedly as high for all houses in Portsmouth, since the same indications appear in all the inventories. Seven or eight candlesticks were average, although one house had as many as twenty-two. Most of these candlesticks were brass, but tin and iron sticks were listed as well, but in smaller quantities. A large number was not needed, since usually only one room was lighted at a time.

There were variants in kitchen furnishings, of course, (five kitchens contained desks). In general, however, the kitchen was regarded as a utilitarian room furnished with an eye only to its purpose and not to beauty.

6. Shop Rooms

Quite a number of houses in Portsmouth were more than just living quarters. One or two rooms were sometimes given over to shops or workshops. Richard Shortridge, for example, had his cabinetmaker's workshop in a front room of his house on Deer Street, as did Joseph Buss and Mark Langdon.

More common than workshops are the small retail shops. A widow or a sailor too old for the sea often turned to shopkeeping as a means of supporting themselves. These shops generally carried the same types of merchandise: fabrics, some clothing, hardware, ceramics, and foodstuffs, such as tea or sugar. Unfortunately, the inventories tell us little about the appearance of the shops, the appraisers usually being content with a list of the shop goods alone. Very little furniture is ever listed, and it appears that such shops contained only the base essentials for the storage of the stock. One inventory (Thomas Wright's) lists "Sundry Nalles in the Counter Draw," indicating that this shop had a counter, probably built-in, since a counter is not mentioned among the furniture. Probably built-in shelves and counters formed the main furnishings of these small shops.

These were only the very small businesses. The wealthy merchants, who traded directly with England and had a large volume of business, had separate buildings for their shops and warehouses for storage of their goods. Their houses were strictly living quarters, into which business seldom intruded.

7. Wall Decoration

The wall decoration of Portsmouth houses is a subject about which little is known. It is not within the scope of

this thesis to treat this area fully, but it is possible to suggest the setting in which the furnishings were placed. The elaboration of the decoration varied, of course, according to the use of the room and the wealth of the household. A front parlor naturally received more attention than a back bedchamber.

Carved wooden panelling was a major attraction of many Portsmouth houses. Surviving examples, such as the Moffatt House (1763) and the Wentworth-Gardner House (1760), suggest the heights to which the native carvers could rise, but there are many fine examples of simpler panelling in smaller houses. There was enough demand for carver's work to support several craftsmen. The Dearing family of Kittery was especially prominent in this art, and there were several generations of carvers in this one family. The Waste Books of John Moffatt mention purchases by William and Ebenezer Dearing, both listed as carvers, in the 1750's and 1760's. References to other carvers can also be found in contemporary documents. For example, William Lewis, "carver," made purchases from both John Moffatt and an unidentified storekeeper whose account book is now at Winterthur.

Surviving houses suggest that in Portsmouth the normal practice was to panel the fireplace wall and to plaster the other three. Sometimes a corner cupboard was included among the carved decoration of the room. Inventories

at the beginning of the period 1750-1775 usually listed the corner cupboard as part of the furnishings, but later it was apparently considered to be part of the architecture, for such cupboards were seldom mentioned. Eight corner cupboards were listed in inventories of the 1750's, but only one each in the 1760's and 1770's and none in the 1780's.

Panelled and plastered walls were seldom left plain. Paint and wallpaper were plentiful in Portsmouth. The inventory of Joseph Simes, a painter who died in 1780, gives us an idea of what range of colors was available. His "Stock in Trade" included paints in the following colors: "Spanish White, Spruce Yellow, Stone Yellow, Ivory and Lamp Black, Venitian Red, Blue black, Umber, India Red, Prussian blue, Vermillion, King's Yellow" and plenty of "verdigrease" to make green. Joseph Simes was mainly a house and ship painter, so it is safe to assume that most of these paints were used on the exteriors and interiors of local houses. Restoration work in Portsmouth has proven that strong colors were favored in eighteenth-century houses. For instance, the John Clark House (1750) at Strawberry Banke was painted inside and out a deep brick-red, and the Moffatt House had at least one chamber of deep mustard yellow.

Wallpaper was surprisingly abundant in Portsmouth, considering the expense of importing it from England. There are numerous advertisements for "paper hangings," the first

appearing in 1759 and continuing with some regularity through 1775. Henery Golden and Joseph Bass, the upholsterers, both advertised that they papered rooms, and Joseph Bass normally included paper hangings among his wares for sale. It is in one of his advertisements that we find one of the few descriptions of wallpaper. In 1766 he announced that he had "a Fine Assortment of Gothic Paper Hangings for Rooms. Much Cheaper Than Any Other Ever Sold in this Town."⁴

Paperhanging was not confined to the upholsterers. Joseph Simes' inventory includes "34 rolls paperhangings," indicating that he combined painting and papering. George Gains, a sometime joiner, testified in a deposition in 1758 that he had papered a room for Joseph Buss.⁵ It is interesting to note that a joiner like Joseph Buss, with fairly moderate means, was able to afford wallpaper.

John Wentworth wanted elegant paper for his houses and turned to Boston merchants to supply it. A letter of 1767 to Joshua Winslow, Jr., from the Governor's secretary reveals that Wentworth ordered contrasting borders for his wallpapers:

I return to you by order of his Excellency the Governor two Rolls of paper and border which does not suit him. In the same Bundle is another Roll as a Pattern and to which he desires you will add five rolls more to make in all Seven with border (Including what he had) sufficient to surround them.⁶

This paper was intended for his Portsmouth house, but he later ordered wallpaper for the Wolfeborough house. His inventory for that house includes "3 large roles of Damasc Paper, & 3 small D^o. Bordering & trimmings for a large Room," which sold for £587 in inflated Revolutionary currency.!⁷

The rooms of Portsmouth houses were furnished and decorated in a way which reflected not only their purpose but also the status of the owner and the mercantile nature of the town. The pattern set by the 1750's persisted through the Revolution with few changes. It was not until the 1790's that different styles began to make radical changes in the furnishing of Portsmouth houses.

Notes on Chapter IV

1

Only thirty houses have been used for the consideration of bedchambers, since Gregory Purcell's inventory does not list the chambers individually.

2

Samuel Sewall, Diary, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, fifth series, VI (Boston: published by the Society, 1879), 65.

3

These are Nathaniel Meserve (1759), Nathaniel Peirce (1763), and James Stoodley (1779).

4

New Hampshire Gazette, July 11, 1766.

5

Probate Records of the Province of New Hampshire, State Papers Series, ed. Otis G. Hammond, XXXVI (published by the State, 1938), 295-96.

6

John Wentworth, Letter Books, September 8, 1767, I, 37, New Hampshire Archives, Concord, N. H.

7

Prices at Vendue for Accot. of Mess^{rs}. John & Andrew Cabot, Beverly Historical Society, Beverly, Mass. (Copy in the Wentworth Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society, N. H.)

Chapter V

The Moffatt House

One Portsmouth house emerges from the period 1750-1775 with an unusual amount of documentation of its furnishings. This is the Moffatt house, built in 1763 by Captain John Moffatt and given the next year to his son, Samuel, as a wedding present. The house is an architectural gem and features fine panelling and carving throughout. Legends of the area say that it was the finest of its day. Both architecturally and decoratively, it was a showplace of the late eighteenth century in Portsmouth.

John Moffatt had come to this country early in the century and after marrying into one of the prominent families of the area, became a very successful merchant. His son, Samuel Cutt Moffatt, was sent to Harvard, from which he graduated in 1758. He was then set up in business by his father and promised to be a brilliant success. At the time of his marriage in 1764 to Sarah Catherine Mason, the daughter of the erstwhile proprietor of the Province, Peter Livius said of him that he was "as good sort of Man as I almost ever met with."¹

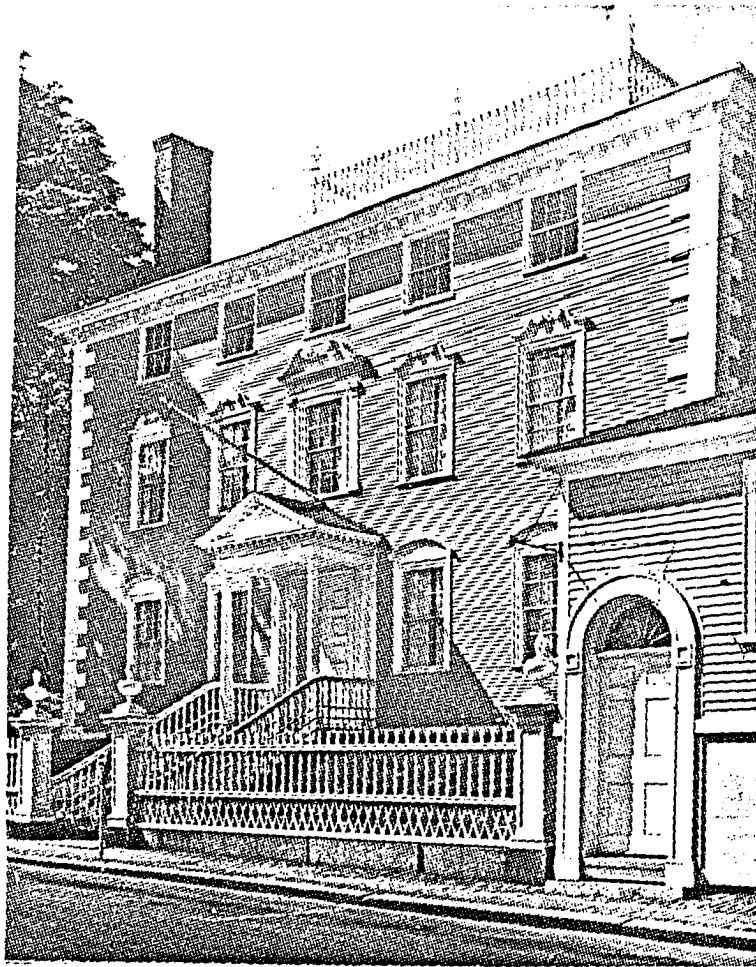


Figure 6. The Moffatt House, Portsmouth, built in 1763 by John Moffatt.
Photo: Douglas Armsden.

Within four years in 1768, however, accused of mishandling business transactions and burdened with debt, Samuel fled to the West Indies to escape prosecution. He remained there until his death in 1780. In order to salvage as much as possible from the estate of his father, John Moffatt, brought suit the same year for non-payment of three notes which he held, and in June, 1768, the goods belonging to Samuel were sold at public auction for a very small sum. This proceeding was viewed with great bitterness by Samuel's chief creditor, George Meserve, who never received any compensation for his loss. Writing to one of his own creditors in England, he reported, "Old Mr. Moffatt seems to be determined to hold every thing belonging to his Son & thereby exclude you & me every other Creditor."²

George Meserve recorded that John Moffatt had built his son "a Handsome House [and] furnished it elegantly."³ The elegant furnishings, although possibly paid for by John, reflected Samuel's tastes and shows him to have been an exponent of the newest fashions. They are recorded in the inventory taken for the Court in March of 1768 because of the suit and in the account of the sales at the Public Vendue in June of that year.⁴ At this Vendue all the household furnishings were sold in room lots, apparently to men acting as agents for John Moffatt, since much of Samuel's furniture appears in John's inventory eighteen years later. The house itself still belonged to John and was thus not endangered.

Although the 1768 inventory contains some marvelous descriptions, it does not include possessions which could conceivably be considered as family heirlooms or property. As a result, no silver was included, nor were any of the family portraits to be found. Presumably, these were turned over to Samuel's father. The first inventory does list a "pr. Plated Candlesticks," but by the time of the sale these had been removed and may possibly reappear as the "pr. Silver plated Candlesticks" in John Moffatt's inventory.

After the court case, John Moffatt, by then a widower, moved into the house and was joined soon after by his daughter and her husband, General William Whipple, a leading merchant and Signer of the Declaration of Independence. Whipple and his father-in-law both died in 1786, and their inventories are preserved, giving a good picture of the house as it appeared eighteen years after the flight of its first occupant in 1768.

The fact that William Whipple had a fairly substantial amount of furnishings to be appraised after his death indicates that he brought things with him to the Moffatt house. The house as it stood in 1786, then, held a mixture of Moffatt and Whipple furniture. John Moffatt's inventory, like his son's, is a room-by-room inventory and gives us a good idea of what changes were made in the house during his occupancy. Whipple's inventory was not divided

by rooms, but since some of his possessions were included by mistake in John's inventory and were noted as such in his own inventory, we can determine that the Whipple furnishings were scattered throughout the house.

In the eighteen years between Samuel's departure and John's death, the furniture of the Moffatt house did not remain stationary. Although John managed to retain or buy back most of Samuel's furnishings, as in any other house they were moved from room to room to suit the owners' convenience or to accommodate new decorative ideas. It seems clear, however, that the second owners were more interested in convenience than in decoration, since some of the rooms as listed in the later inventories appear to lack the elegance of the house under Samuel Moffatt.

Samuel's front parlor in 1768 was a very up-to-date room with its mahogany hair-bottomed chairs, the first known to be in Portsmouth. Other furnishings included a mahogany stand, "3 ft. 10 In. Diam^r.", a card table, a "Persia" carpet fourteen feet by four feet, and a large assortment of glass and ceramics. The carpet was unusual because of its size. Very few in Portsmouth at this time could have afforded such an expensive floor covering, and Samuel, as the son of the town's wealthiest merchant, must have been envied by other would-be fashion leaders.

By 1786, under John Moffatt, the front parlor had lost some of its elegance. The eight hair-bottomed chairs were gone and had been replaced by nine of the more common leather-bottomed chairs (or perhaps only the seats had been changed). The room contained also a windsor chair, which would have looked very much out of place in Samuel's parlor. Some of the ceramics had also been removed, as had the carpet. William Whipple's inventory does list a carpet which may have been in this room, but its valuation of 20/ does not appear to be enough for a carpet of the size stated in the 1768 inventory.

We do not know where Samuel kept his silver, but in 1786 the front parlor contained 213 ounces of silver plate, all belonging to William Whipple and including "Tankards, Cans, Coffeepot & Spoons." The silver must have been the main showpieces of the front parlor, which also held two pairs of silver-plated candlesticks, one pair belonging to each man.

Samuel Moffatt's back parlor was definitely second-best as far as furnishings went. There was less furniture, and there was no elegant "Persia carpet" in this room. The chairs were black walnut instead of mahogany and had leather bottoms rather than hair. Apparently, the room was used for tea, if not for other meals, because there was "1 Sett Pencill'd English China Cups & Saucers."

John Moffatt made far more of the back parlor than his son. His chairs were "12 large Mahogany chairs cov^r with furniture check," and he had a cherry table (probably the same one Samuel had) and a mahogany table. The room boasted a carpet worth 6, a large sum which could possibly indicate one of the "Persia carpets" owned by Samuel Moffatt. Of interest to modern students is the fact that it was in this room that William Whipple's "railed tea table" (Figure 2) and "rail'd stand" stood, along with a "sett of china" (the "Pencill'd English China?"). The furniture in John Moffatt's back parlor was certainly finer than that in his front parlor, the inference being that the room received more use than it did in Samuel's time.

One of the greatest changes in the appearance of the house between 1768 and 1786 was in the hall. The hall is the size of a large room, and Samuel Moffatt furnished it accordingly. It contained sixteen chairs: six "Leather Bottom Cherrytree," six "Cherrytree Windsor," and four "Leather Bottom Black Walnut" chairs. There was also a mahogany table "4½ feet Long" and another "Persia" carpet, this one nine by four feet. The stairs were carpeted as well. By 1786 the appearance of the hall had undergone some changes. The "Persia" carpet was gone, as were the tables and most of the chairs. The hall now contained only five leather-bottomed chairs, two carpets (one large, one small), and a

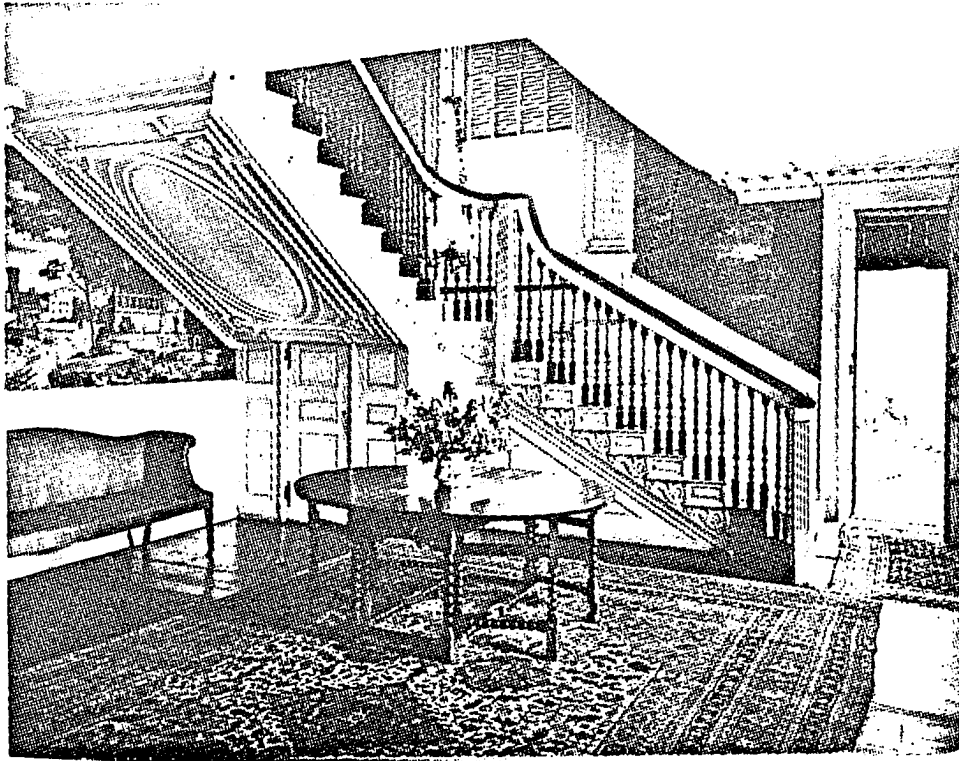


Figure 7. The hall in the Moffatt House.
Photo: Douglas Armsden.

couch. John had added window curtains, however, a decorative feature not used by Samuel.

Directly over the hall on the second floor is a long, narrow room called the "hall chamber" in Samuel Moffatt's inventory and the "long chamber" in his father's. The room appears to have been used as an upstairs sitting room in 1768, since it contained only "12 Mahogany French Easy Chairs." Neither the inventory nor the account of the sale lists any other furniture for this room, and it was apparently seldom used, except perhaps for admiring the view of the river from its windows. By 1786, however, this room had been turned into a bedroom with a common bedstead with furniture check curtains. Rather surprisingly, the room contained a "fire skreen" (there is no fireplace) and a card table!

The back parlor chamber or the "Yellow Chamber" remained virtually unchanged by John Moffatt from the way it was left in 1768. The woodwork was painted a strong yellow, and all the hangings and upholstery were of yellow worsted damask. The "fluted Black Walnut Bedstead" was dressed with yellow damask hangings and a silk quilt. There were six "Yellow Damask Cover'd Chairs" and one easy chair similarly covered. The three window curtains and "window squabs" were likewise of yellow damask. A "Persia" carpèt, sixteen by four feet, was on the floor. The effect must have been overwhelming to a visitor seeing the room for the first time!

John Moffatt made very few changes in this room beyond adding two more yellow chairs and removing the dressing table. Like his son, he apparently had a fondness for this color, since the long chamber was also mustard yellow!

The Yellow Chamber was clearly the master bedroom in Samuel Moffatt's house, for none of the other chambers could equal its elegance. The front parlor chamber or "Green Chamber" was handsome but simpler than the room across the hall. The bedstead here was cedar-painted with green check furniture. The six chairs had green check coverings, and the window curtains were of the same material. This room, like the "Yellow Chamber" boasted a dressing glass and table and a "Persia" carpet, this time ten by four feet. John Moffatt apparently did little with this room, for he removed the bed, replacing it with a "small...bedstead & covering." The dressing glass, chairs, window curtains, and carpet were all removed. One wonders if perhaps Samuel's bed may not have been put in the long chamber, since the two seem to correspond. The paucity of furniture for this room in John's inventory raises the possibility that some of William Whipple's furniture was in this room. The "Mahogany bestead, 1 Bed, furniture check Curtains, rod & rails compleat" may well have been placed here, since it is the only bedchamber in John's inventory to lack a large bedstead. Perhaps the mahogany bureau also listed in Whipple's inventory was placed in this room.

The kitchen chamber in Samuel Moffatt's house was as elegant as the other bedchambers, perhaps even more elaborate than the "Green Chamber." The inventory is very descriptive of the furniture in this room. The bedstead was a "Black Walnut Plain 4 Post Bedstead" with a "Sett Chints Curtains." There were two looking glasses, one with a walnut frame, the other of mahogany. There was also a walnut case of drawers, the only chest of drawers to be found in the house. This bedchamber had the great convenience of having a "Mehogany Stool Chair," again the only one in the house. Six cherry chairs (perhaps mates of those in the hall), a table and toilet, and another "Persia" carpet, twelve by four feet, completed the room's furnishings. It must have been a handsome room, indeed.

When the room was again inventoried in 1786, there had been a change, and it was no longer the stylish chamber that it had been. The bed was now a common bedstead with red furniture check curtains. The case of drawers was gone, as were the cherry chairs, the stool chair, and the looking glasses. The room now held five cane chairs, two "common desks," and a round table. It was apparently used for storage of linen, since the inventory lists eighteen pairs of sheets, twelve blankets, and two quilts. It seems doubtful that the room was used much, even if some furniture belonging to William Whipple was put here. The Whipples had

no children, so only three bedchambers would have been in constant use. These were occupied by Mr. Moffatt, the Whipples, and Samuel's daughter, Mary Tufton Moffatt, who lived with her grandfather.

The third floor of the house contains bedchambers which, despite their fireplaces and fine carved woodwork, were apparently used only as servant's quarters. Perhaps they were intended to be used as a nursery, but neither Samuel nor John had need of extra nursery space. We do not know exactly how these rooms were furnished, for neither inventory divides them into separate rooms but simply lists "Upper Chambers." In Samuel's time the furniture was mainly maple and pine, and John placed here such simple furniture as common bedsteads and flag-bottomed chairs. Clearly, these were not bedchambers for the family.

Once a comparison of the inventories has shown that considerable changes were made in the furnishings of the house between 1768 and 1786, the question of what happened to some of Samuel's furniture arises. It is probable, of course, that some of this furniture does appear in John's inventory but it not identifiable because of the lack of description. However, a few things, such as the walnut case of drawers, cannot be identified even tentatively and must therefore have been removed from the house. Several explanations present themselves as possible solutions to the problem.

Since friends of John Moffatt bought most of the furnishings at the sale in 1768 and many of these objects were put back into the house, it has been assumed that these men were acting as agents of John. It is possible, however, that there may have been some agreement whereby they may have kept some of the furniture which John did not want. It must be remembered that John had a fully furnished house on Buck Street, and he may conceivably have wished to bring some of his own possessions to the house on Market Street. When the William Whipples moved into the house, they certainly brought some of their own furniture, and some of Samuel's belongings may have been removed to accommodate the new furnishings. Normal wear and tear may also have accounted for the loss of some of the furniture.

John Moffatt's inventory presents another possibility. Two houses full of furniture were appraised - the Buck Street house and the Market Street house. The inventory refers to the "House...now improv'd by his daughter Moffatt in Buck Street." "His daughter Moffatt" could only be Mrs. Samuel Moffatt, returned to Portsmouth after the death of her husband in 1780. John Moffatt may well have let her have some of the furniture which had been hers as a bride, although this cannot be proven from the inventory. However, the fact that John had sixty-one ounces of silver plate in the Buck Street house might indicate that Samuel's silver had been lent to his widow.

The two inventories of the Moffatt house have great importance in the study of Portsmouth household furnishings because they reveal two different attitudes toward furnishing a house: first, a striving toward elegance and status and second, an interest mainly in comfort and convenience.

Samuel Moffatt was clearly determined to have the newest and finest furniture in his house. A beautifully furnished house could add status to the young merchant who had just married John Tufton Mason's daughter. As the son of the town's wealthiest citizen, he could well afford to buy such things as five "Persia carpetts" or enough yellowworsted damask to dress an entire room. Samuel wanted to make his house a showplace, and he succeeded.

By 1786 the showplace of the 1760's had become perhaps a more typical house of the period: a home arranged for convenience rather than display. John Moffatt wanted a house that was comfortable, and he was not as interested in room arrangements and color schemes as his son. He moved furniture around without regard to style or color and even converted rooms to other uses. What had been Samuel's upstairs sitting room became a bedchamber, for example. Haphazard arrangements were acceptable as long as they suited John's convenience.

Of the two attitudes toward furnishings, John's was more common than Samuel's. Inventories show that most

householders arranged their houses with little regard to elaborate schemes of interior decoration. Showplaces such as Samuel's house were the exceptions to the rule of convenience and comfort.

Notes on Chapter V

¹
Peter Livius, Letter Book, February 6, 1764, p. 18,
New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N. H.

²
Letter of George Meserve to W. Gravenor, November 28,
1768, Meserve Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society,
Concord, N. H.

³
Letter of George Meserve to J. S. Kymer, 1770,
Meserve Papers.

⁴
New Hampshire Provincial Court Cases, No. 25135,
New Hampshire Archives, Concord, N. H.

Conclusion

Sixty miles north of Boston, Portsmouth was in an isolated position. It stood on the edge of the forests of northern New England and was the northernmost town of importance in colonial America. Unlike Philadelphia, it had no populated hinterland to the north and west. The population in New Hampshire and in Maine was sparse at best and provided no large market for goods which passed through Portsmouth. However, although Portsmouth was a small town (one-quarter the size of Boston in 1775), it did not lack a certain amount of sophistication.

The wealthy merchant-importers dominated the economic life of Portsmouth. These men controlled the shipping and trade with other coastal cities, the West Indies, and England. They built the ships, filled them with lumber and fish, and imported on the return voyages goods which were not produced locally, among which were almost all household furnishings except furniture and silver. Most men of the town were involved with this shipping in some capacity and thus were dependent on the merchants for their livelihood.

By 1750 a few families had established themselves as the leading families of the town, but this was by no means an exclusive circle. Money was the major factor in determining who entered the group. Peter Livius arrived only in 1762 but was immediately accepted because of his wealth. By 1767 he was a member of the Council of the Province. George Boyd is another example. He was a small businessman until 1768, when he acquired the property of another merchant who had disappeared. From that time he was very rich and a leading member of the merchant aristocracy.

Like the wealthy everywhere, the Portsmouth gentry wished to acquire physical symbols of their success. One way in which status was achieved was by purchasing luxurious furnishings. The small number of rich merchants who could afford to do so emulated the sophisticated style of life which they saw in Boston and other cities, although on a smaller scale.

Although hampered by the lack of documented objects, a study of household furnishings in Portsmouth through written records has produced some important knowledge about the furnishings which the citizens had in their homes. Inventories, newspaper advertisements, account books, and invoice books have given us useful evidence of Portsmouth furnishings. We now know what types of furniture and what range of woods used for that furniture were to be found in

Portsmouth houses, as well as the contemporary terms for furniture forms. The records were also most descriptive about what textiles were used for upholstery and bed hangings. From the inventories we have learned something about the status of such forms as tea tables and clocks and about the reliance on candlesticks for artificial lighting. We have also learned how the various rooms of the houses were furnished. The importance of the trade with England was emphasized by the study of the smaller furnishings, almost all of which came from England. Even though the records are largely silent about wall decoration, it has been possible to gain some idea of how rooms were decorated, particularly in the use of wallpaper and some paint colors and in the grouping of large numbers of pictures. Finally, we have been able to make some differentiation between the furnishings of the modest houses of the craftsmen and shopkeepers and the more sophisticated houses of the wealthy merchants. Household inventories show that the small number of houses of the wealthy class were filled with the newest and most elegant furnishings and that the majority of houses were provided with more utilitarian furnishings of modest value and pretense.

It is hoped that more sources of information about Portsmouth furnishings will come to light and that other studies of this subject will be undertaken. In the meantime,

it will be possible, on the basis of the records here investigated, to furnish a Portsmouth house of the third quarter of the eighteenth century with a greater degree of certainty than before.

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Appendix I

Inventories Analyzed or Quoted in this Thesis

- Key: L.M. - lawful money (all amounts in pounds)
 C.T. - old tenor (all amounts in pounds)
 NHPPR - New Hampshire Provincial Probate Records, in
 the New Hampshire Archives, Concord.
 RCPR - Rockingham County Probate Records, in the
 County Building, Exeter.
 * - included among the seventy-five inventories
 selected for careful analysis.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
Nathaniel Adams merchant	1769	£749:6:8½ O.T.	NHPPR 25:396 *
Benjamin Akerman tanner	1783	£3627:3:3	RCPR 27:349
Samuel Appleton captain	1769	£108:2:11 L.M.	NHPPR 25:426 *
John Ayers gent.	1764	£10111:6:10 O.T.	NHPPR 23:374 *
John Ayers blacksmith	1770	£81:5:2 L.M.	NHPPR 25:448 *
Thomas Bell esq.	1774	£7389:0:9½ L.M.	RCPR #4075 *
William Bennett joiner	1768	£2174:11 L.M.	NHPPR 25:63
Elisha Briard (unknown)	1773	£389:15:1½ L.M.	RCPR #3999 *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
Arthur Browne Anglican minister	1773	£823:13:9 L.M.	RCPR #4026 *
Hannah Bunbury widow	1783	£1130:4:1	RCPR #4923 *
Monsieur Bunbury sea captain	1772	£580:17:10	RCPR #4896 *
Joseph Buss joiner	1756	£2646:1 O.T.	NHPPR 19:581
Joseph Buss shopkeeper and joiner	1762	£36798:0:6 O.T.	NHPPR 22:390 *
Josiah Clark (unknown)	1755	£1328:5:6 O.T.	NHPPR 19:173
James Clarkson tanner?	1780	£2099:8:5 L.M.	RCPR #4652
John Crown (unknown)	1767	£98:4:15 L.M.(?)	NHPPR 24:356 *
John Cutt gent.	1760	£7234:0:1 O.T.	NHPPR 20:369
Thomas Dalling mariner	1785	£636:8:11	RCPR 28:269
William Dam chairmaker	1755	£480:18 O.T.	NHPPR 19:449
Addington Davenport merchant	1761	£9368:13:1 O.T.	NHPPR 22:146 *
Benjamin Dearborn doctor?	1755	£1921:12:9 O.T.	NHPPR 19:333
James Dwyer innkeeper	1777	£1356:9	RCPR #4374 *
Edward Emerson mariner and shopkeeper	1769	£282:12:10 L.M.	NHPPR 25:386 *
John Eyre (unknown)	1754	£456:5:6 O.T.	NHPPR 18:649

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
John Fisher esq.	1778	£817:2:6 L.M.	Loyalists of N.H. 2:601 *
Gershon Flagg gent.	1783	£396:10:9	RCPR #4884 *
Daniel Fowle printer	1787	£182:9:4	RCPR 29:140
Joseph Frost esq.	1769	£3545:13:6½ L.M.	NHPPR 25:338 *
Samuel Frost captain	1765	£15837:10 O.T.	NHPPR 23:501 *
Sarah Frost widow	1766	£14571 O.T.	NHPPR 24:169 *
Bartholomew Goodwin mariner	1765	£5118:15 O.T.	NHPPR 23:386 *
John Grant mariner	1785	£330:11:5	RCPR 28:120
Samuel Griffith shopkeeper and goldsmith	1774	£1774:6:8 L.M.	RCPR #4080 *
John Hart mariner	1785	£243:1:4	RCPR 28:318
James Hickey (unknown)	1785	£711:2:4	RCPR 28:267
Charles Hight (unknown)	1761	£9022:10:6 O.T.	NHPPR 23:537 *
Michael Hooker mariner	1764	£1486 O.T.	NHPPR 23:176
David Horney innkeeper	1757	£4928:1:0 O.T.	NHPPR #2234 *
Hannah Horney innkeeper	1764	£5693:12:6 O.T.	NHPPR 23:359 *
Daniel Jackson blockmaker	1775	£884:2:5 L.M.	RCPR #4156 *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
Mary Jackson widow	1763	£1699:0:1 O.T.	NHPPR 23:97 *
William Jones caulker	1761	£2045:1:0 O.T.	NHPPR 22:218 *
Daniel Lang mariner	1757	(no total)	NHPPR 20:315
Mark Langdon joiner?	1776	£508:17:11	RCPR #4232 *
Samuel Langdon 3rd mariner?	1773	£120:17:6 L.M.	RCPR #3979 *
Samuel Langdon gent.	1780	£1931:19	RCPR #4609 *
Tobias Lear mariner	1752	£7893:9:8 O.T.	NHPPR 18:241 *
Tobias Lear mariner	1782	£3384:3:8 L.M.	RCPR #4753 *
Thomas Lewis mariner	1788	£65:11:8	RCPR 29:214
John Ley mariner	1772	£93:2:4 L.M.	RCPR #3928 *
Peirse Long merchant	1789	£1681:17:5 1/4	RCPR #5442 *
Stephen March blacksmith?	1773	£1192:9:7 L.M.	RCPR #3921 *
John Marsh merchant	1782	£625:6:11 L.M.?	RCPR #4765 *
John Marshall boatbuilder	1784	£782:9:3	RCPR #4979 *
Nathaniel Mendum joiner	1771	£3362:12:8½ L.M.	RCPR #3869 *
George Meserve merchant	1789	£558:0:6	RCPR #5404 *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
John Meserve ropemaker	1760	£4660 O.T.	NHPPR #2532
Nathaniel Meserve merchant	1759	£40348:9:6 O.T.	NHPPR 21:152 *
John Moffatt merchant	1786	£13457:18:2	RCPR #5173 *
Samuel Moffatt merchant	1768	(no valuation)	NH Provincial Court Cases #25135 *
James Nevin collector of customs	1769	£641 L.M.	NHPPR #3577
Benjamin Newmarch blacksmith	1779	£721:11	RCPR 25:299
Elizabeth Newmarch (unknown)	1767	£43:2:4 L.M.	NHPPR 24:329 *
Joseph Newmarch esq.	1765	£492:7:6 L.M. ?	NHPPR 24:71 *
Thomas Newmarch gent.	1761	£3009:6 O.T.	NHPPR 22:246 *
Mary Nutter (unknown)	1761	£3713:16 O.T.	NHPPR 2298 *
Benjamin Odiorne mariner	1768	£168:5:3 L.M.	NHPPR 25:329 *
Jotham Odiorne merchant	1766	£5831:1:10 O.T.	NHPPR 24:133 *
Mehetable Odiorne (unknown)	1789	£2930:13:3	RCPR #5412 *
Sarah Odiorne widow	1752	£3352:10 O.T.	NHPPR #1703 *
Noah Parker blacksmith	1787	£295:12	RCPR #5298 *
William Parker esq.	1782	£1067 L.M. ?	RCPR #4736 *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
Daniel Peirce esq.	1775	£3276:12:9 L.M.	RCPR #4067 *
Joshua Peirce esq.	1767	£2205 L.M.	NHPPR 24:419 *
Nathaniel Peirce merchant	1763	£13627:8 O.T.	NHPPR 22:529 *
John Pendexter (unknown)	1761	£9725:3:1 O.T.	NHPPR 22:36 *
Thomas Penhallow merchant	1784	£146:10:4½	RCPR #5047 *
John Phillips (unknown)	1768	£130:14:9 L.M. ?	NHPPR 25:306 *
Gregory Purcell merchant	1777	£2075:14 L.M.	RCPR #4287 *
Nehemiah Rowell (unknown)	1779	£3559	RCPR 25:330
Daniel Robinson mariner	1762	£6039:18 O.T.	NHPPR 22:302 *
Samuel Rynes rigger	1755	£4561:15 O.T.	NHPPR 19:419
Nathaniel Sargent physician	1762	£11619:12:9 O.T.	NHPPR 22:429 *
John Drew Seaward caulker	1773	£28:2:9 L.M.	RCPR 22:210
Daniel Sherburne merchant	1779	£2391:9 L.M.	RCPR #4529 *
Nathaniel Sherburne shopkeeper	1758	£7662:16:10 O.T.	NHPPR 20:437
Samuel Sherburne (unknown)	1760	£7494:5 O.T.	NHPPR 22:33
Richard Shortridge joiner	1777	£839:11:6	RCPR #4326 *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source</u>
John Sloper yeoman	1784	£ 31:13:6	RCPR 27:516
Joseph Simes painter	1781	£ 1858:14:10	RCPR #4596 *
William Simpson innkeeper	1755	£ 2790 O.T.	NHPPR 19:200
Ann Slayton tavern-keeper	1757	£ 6442:4 O.T.	NHPPR 20:120
Robert Stockle mariner	1766	£ 9082:16 O.T.	NHPPR 24:327 *
James Stoodley innkeeper	1780	£ 95130:0:3 1/4	RCPR #4586 *
Nathaniel Tuckerman (unknown)	1755	£ 8982:4 O.T.	NHPPR 19:374
Daniel Warner merchant	1779	£ 17587:6:1	RCPR 25:15
Samuel Warner captain	1771	£ 216:11:7 1/4 L.M.	RCPR #3997 *
John Wentworth judge	1774	£ 507:13:5 L.M.	RCPR #3977 *
John Wentworth Governor	1780	(no valuation)	RCPR #4600 *
Michael Whidden joiner	1773	£ 194:10:6 L.M.	RCPR #3995 *
William Whipple merchant	1788	£ 928:9:6	RCPR #5176 *
Moses Wingate captain	1769	£ 486:6 L.M.	NHPPR 26:79 *
Thomas Wright shopkeeper	1754	£ 5089:10 O.T.	NHPPR #2194 *

Appendix II

Terms Used for Furnishings in Portsmouth Household Inventories 1750-1789.

N. B. No attempt has been made to list every term which appears in the inventories. This list represents the most commonly used terms for furnishings.

1. Furniture

Bedsteads

corded	turnup
sack	camp
canvas	truckle
common	under
green	pallet

Beds

feather
flock

Bed furniture - vallens, tester, curtains

china	cotton
callico	damask
camblet	harrateen
copperplate	linsey-woolsey
check	work'd linen
chintz	striped

Bureau

Chairs

types - armchair	windsor
cane	bannister
chamber	slat-back
common	roundabout
corner	framed
easy	stool
great	high-back
kitchen	old

bottoms -	check	damask
	leather	stuff
	flag	worked
	hair	plush
	china	Rhine
	harrateen	

Case of drawers

Chest of drawers

Chest

pine
old
meal
tea

Clock

eight-day
house
timepiece

Couch

Cradle

Cupboard

corner
pine

Desk

writing
deak and bookcase

Looking glass

walnut-frame
mahogany-frame
gilt-frame
Jappanned-frame
pier glass

chimney glass
Dutch looking glass
dressing glass
chamber looking glass

Settle

Sideboard

Sofa

Stand

tea
wash

bottle
urn

Stool
 joint
 close (or stool chair)

Table	breakfast	kitchen
	card	night
	chamber	Pembroke
	dining	tea
	dressing	toilet

Tea board

Trunk

II. Ceramics

Earthenware
 yellow
 white
 blue and white
 New England

Delft

Stoneware	
blue and white	brown
white	black
white flint	frosted

China	
burnt	English
blue and white	green
cauliflower	pencilled
cream colored	Queens
enamelled	tortoise

III. Glassware

Decanter	Jelly glasses
Wine glasses	Cruets
Cans	Salts
Tumblers	Double flint
Beer glasses	Single flint

IV. Silver

Spoons

Tankard

Cans

Tongs

Tea pot

Salver

Porringer

V. Cutlery

Silver

Buck

Ivory

green
white

VI. Carpets

Scotch

Stair

Turkey

Painted canvas

Persia

Wilton

Bed side

VII. Lighting

Candlebox

Candlesticks

brass
iron
tinglass
plated
sticking

Candlemold

Lamp

shade

Lantern

glass
tin

VIII. Heating

Bellows

Fender

Warming pan

Handirons

Shovel and tongs

IX. Pictures

Mezzotinto

Unglazed

Print

Framed

Glass

Old

Glazed

Maps