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**Winthrop Chandler and the rural gentry of northeastern
Connecticut**

Johnson, Beverly Jean, M.A.

University of Delaware, 1990

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**WINTHROP CHANDLER AND THE RURAL GENTRY OF
NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT**

by

Beverly Jean Johnson

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

August 1990

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WINTHROP CHANDLER AND THE RURAL GENTRY OF
NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the rural elite of northeastern Connecticut and Worcester County, Massachusetts through the portraits of Winthrop Chandler. Portraiture was one way the ruling elite attempted to assert their social position through material objects. Many of the rural gentry of this area commissioned Chandler (1747-1790), a local artisan-painter from Woodstock, Connecticut, to paint their likenesses on canvas. These portraits preserve the images of a self-conscious rural gentry, whose material possessions distinguished them from elites who did not sit for portraits.

To recover the material culture of the portrait sitters, I used probate inventories to document their household furnishings and compared this information to a group of inventories chosen from the highest taxpayers' lists for Woodstock, Connecticut in 1796 and 1807. These two groups of inventories suggest how the economic elite from northeastern Connecticut and nearby rural Massachusetts differed on the proper ways to convey status and power.

The differences were most apparent in the quantity and types of furniture listed in the inventories. In particular, differences between the two groups were noticeable in the ownership of chairs with slip seats, tea tables, desk and bookcases, and silver. The examination of the education, occupation, military, and political backgrounds of portrait sitters and other elites suggests that the ownership of portraits and certain household furnishings was an expression of one's intellectual, professional, and social

background, and not just an economic statement. Taken together this information provides the background for understanding the elite landscape of rural Connecticut and Massachusetts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

WINTHROP CHANDLER AND THE RURAL GENTRY OF NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

In 1770, The Reverend Ebenezer Devotion of Scotland, Connecticut commissioned Winthrop Chandler to paint portraits of himself and his wife in honor of his fifty-sixth birthday. At the time, Chandler was young and just beginning to establish himself as an artisan-painter in Woodstock, Connecticut (Figure 1). His portrait of Devotion depicts an educated clergyman of substantial wealth seated in his library (Figure 2). A graduate of Yale College (1732), Devotion was pastor of the Third Church in Windham (now Scotland), Connecticut. Besides being a prominent minister, Devotion was a local politician, representing Windham in the General Assembly in 1760, 1770, and 1771.¹ Devotion was the first to employ Chandler to paint a portrait and considering Devotion's elite status in Connecticut, his patronage was a significant boost for the aspiring artist. From 1771 until his death in 1790, Chandler went on to paint many of the rural elite in Woodstock, Connecticut, and nearby towns in Windham County, Connecticut, and Worcester County, Massachusetts.

Art historians and scholars of material culture have long known that members of the elite used material possessions, including portraits like those by

¹Robert F. Trent examined Devotion's estate inventory and concluded, "Nevertheless, as a leading intellectual and social figure, Devotion possessed most of the perquisites of elite status, and other elite inventories differ merely in the elaboration or cost of the same fixtures." See Robert F. Trent, "New London County Joined Chairs: Legacy of a Provincial Elite," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* Volume 50 Number 4 (Fall 1985): 29.

Winthrop Chandler, to differentiate themselves from others in the community. Not all of the rural gentry commissioned portraits, however. Individuals who did not commission portraits often possessed estates that were comparable in value to those who sat for portraits yet their consumption habits differed. As we seek to comprehend the world of the rural elite, then, we need to ask more sophisticated questions about how their material worlds differed and why.² This thesis compares the probate inventories of Winthrop Chandler's portrait sitters with those of a group of wealthy men (listed in the highest taxpayers lists of 1796 and 1807 in Woodstock, Connecticut), who, as far as can be determined, did not sit for portraits. The two groups were similar in overall wealth, but diverged in the types of objects they owned. Such differences should remind scholars about the dangers of assuming that all elites behaved in similar ways.³

Similar economic status did not predetermine an equivalent level of material culture. Winthrop Chandler's patrons possessed a more self-conscious attitude toward their possessions than other members of the economic elite. The differences between the two groups were notable in the ownership of portraits, chairs with slip seats, tea tables, desk and bookcases, and silver, although both groups probably could have afforded similar things. This difference suggests that elite status was not defined strictly by economic standards. Education, occupation, military service, and political

²Kevin M. Sweeney asserted that, "Like their English counterparts, aspiring gentry families in eighteenth-century New England sought to put social distance between themselves and their neighbors. . . . In rural New England, as elsewhere in the American colonies, the embrace of genteel culture helped create 'a conscious class of gentlemen united by common standards across colony lines.'" See Kevin M. Sweeney, "Mansion People: Kinship, Class, and Architecture in Western Massachusetts in the Mid Eighteenth Century," *Winterthur Portfolio* Volume 19 Number 4 (Winter 1984): 231.

³The conversion of dollars into pounds was based on the comparison of the pound and dollar values of horses in the inventories. The conversion rate that was determined was one pound equal to three dollars and twenty-five cents.

offices determined the status of a person. These other factors also affected a person's choice of possessions. The elite of Woodstock, Connecticut used objects to display social, intellectual, and economic status, emphasizing that material possessions did not differentiate people on the basis of wealth alone, but separated people along social lines also.

The total number of inventories used in this study is twenty-six. Eleven inventories were associated with portrait sitters, and fifteen inventories belonged to the highest taxpayers of Woodstock, Connecticut, who did not sit for portraits. The fifteen inventories of the non-portrait sitters include eight from the taxpayer's list of 1796 and seven from the taxpayers list of 1807. These inventories are compared in a series of tables and charts in order to illuminate the differences between portrait sitters and non-sitters.⁴

⁴The following is a list of the portrait sitters: Charles Church Chandler, Colonel and Mrs. Levi Willard, Rufus and Hannah Lathrop, Judge and Mrs. Ebenezer Devotion, Reverend and Mrs. Ebenezer Devotion, General and Mrs. Samuel McClellan, Colonel and Mrs. Ebenezer Crafts, Nathaniel Chandler, John Paine, Dr. and Mrs. John Green, Captain and Mrs. Samuel Chandler, Theophilus and Elizabeth Chandler, Dr. and Mrs. William Glysson, Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler, Reverend and Mrs. John Mellen, and Winthrop and Mary Chandler. See Nina Fletcher Little, "Winthrop Chandler," *Art in America, An Illustrated Quarterly Magazine* Volume 35 Number 4 (April 1948). The highest taxpayers in 1796 were Hezekiah Bugbee, Jesse Bolles, Nathan and Rufus Child, William Hammond, David Holmes, William Lyon, William Lyon 2d, Benjamin Lyon, Jonathan Lyon, Jedidiah Morse, Amos Paine, Joseph Peake, William Skinner, and Matthew Bowen. The highest taxpayers in 1807 were Thomas Bugbee Jr., Leonard Bartholomew, Ephraim Carroll, Abel Hosmer & Son, Walter Johnson, Nathaniel McClellan, Ebenezer Skinner, and Henry Wells. See Clarence Winthrop Bowen, *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut* (Norwood, MA: The Plimpton Press, 1926), p. 206. Of the eleven portrait sitters' inventories, ten are for men who actually sat for portraits. The eleventh is Daniel Paine's inventory, who is the father of John Paine, who sat for a portrait at a young age. Besides Daniel Paine's inventory, the inventory of the portrait sitter, Samuel Chandler, John Paine's uncle with whom he lived after the death of his father, is also used as an indicator of the wealth of John Paine and his family. Also, the ten inventories in many instances reflect the wealth of two portrait sitters, that of the man inventoried and his wife. After examining the genealogies of Woodstock families, and the biographical information in Clarence Winthrop Bowen's *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut*, the particular inventories were determined to be the correct ones. The only confusing information was over the identity of William Lyon and William Lyon 2nd. Because of the lack of information concerning William Lyon 2nd, I chose to only include the 1805 inventory which I believe is of the estate of the first William Lyon.

In *Connecticut Society in the Era of the American Revolution*, Jackson Turner Main concluded that in Connecticut, ". . .property worth £2,000 clearly placed one in a highly select group."⁵ The total wealth, as listed in estate inventories, indicates that both the portrait sitters and non-sitters were wealthy (Table I). The top ten inventories were appraised at a value exceeding £2000, and the top five inventories were valued well over this amount. For the estates exceeding two thousand pounds in value, more belonged to portrait sitters than non-sitters (six in comparison to four), suggesting that the sitters were wealthier than the non-sitters. Many of the non-portrait sitters' estate values, however, were close to two thousand pounds in total, encouraging their inclusion in the economic elite also. For instance, the non-portrait sitters' estates listed from twelfth to sixteenth were all worth more than £1000, but less than £1500, indicating that they were also economically well-off. Although a few of the portrait sitters were wealthier than the others, in general, the portrait sitters and non-sitters had similar economic backgrounds.

To determine whether there were any dissimilarities in the distribution of wealth within the estates, the inventories were ranked by the total pound amount of personal estate, including any cash and notes (Table II). This comparison exhibited a similar pattern as did the ranking of total wealth values, with six out of the top ten estates belonging to portrait sitters, including the top four. The first three estates listed were of portrait sitters whose personal estates with notes were appraised at a much higher value than the other portrait sitters and non-sitters. For most of the men from both groups, the value of personal estate was under one thousand pounds. The top

⁵Jackson Turner Main, *Connecticut Society in the Era of the American Revolution* (Hartford, CT: The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1977), p. 50.

Table I
Total Wealth based on Inventory

Name†	Inventory Date	£	S	d
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	8584	11	10.75
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	6543	14	7.5
<i>Samuel McClellan*</i>	1807	4867	1	7
William Lyon	1805	4546	19	0
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	3522	19	10
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	2540	10	0
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	2171	6	7
Abel Hosmer	1814	2103	5	2
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	2076	2	11
Henry Wells	1823	2068	5	2
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	1838	3	0
Ephraim Carroll	1812	1482	2	0
Jonathan Lyon	1830	1459	13	10
Benjamin Lyon	1807	1188	13	0
Walter Johnson	1825	1174	11	10
Joseph Peake	1800	1117	5	10
Matthew Bowen	1806	911	1	0
Thomas Bugbee	1845	904	9	5
John Green	1799	896	6	2
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	696	17	5
William Skinner	1807	679	2	10
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	595	3	8
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	385	11	0
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	368	0	2
David Holmes*	1832	299	16	0
<i>Daniel Paine*</i>	1777	204	7	0

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

* No real estate listed in the inventory.

Table II
Personal Estate, including cash and notes

Name†	Inventory Date	£	S	d
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	6031	11	3.5
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	5407	11	10.75
<i>Samuel McClellan</i>	1807	4867	1	7
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	1442	19	10
Henry Wells	1823	876	15	9
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	805	12	0
William Lyon	1805	589	17	7
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	556	2	11
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	510	16	5
Ephraim Carroll	1812	383	8	7
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	309	17	10
David Holmes	1832	299	16	0
Joseph Peake	1800	286	1	10
Benjamin Lyon	1807	234	0	0
Jonathan Lyon	1830	212	15	2
<i>Daniel Paine</i>	1777	204	7	0
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	200	3	8
Abel Hosmer	1814	189	13	7
John Green	1799	185	4	0
William Skinner	1807	145	4	2
Thomas Bugbee	1845	142	4	0
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	139	0	2
Walter Johnson	1825	137	4	10
Matthew Bowen	1806	111	1	0
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	68	0	2
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	12	4	5

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

three estates included more notes and notes of greater value partially explaining why these personal estates were appraised at a much higher amount. To get a better reflection of tangible ownership, one has to look at the personal estate, excluding cash and notes (Table III).

The portrait sitters, Samuel McClellan and Levi Willard had personal estates, excluding notes, which were still of much greater value than the rest of the portrait sitters and non-sitters. Samuel McClellan's personal estate was appraised at £4867, and Levi Willard's was valued at £1600 less. All the other personal estates examined were worth less than six hundred pounds, revealing the high amount of liquid capital owned by both McClellan and Willard. Again six out of the top ten inventories ranked by personal estate, excluding notes, were for portrait sitters, suggesting that some of the sitters had a personal estate of greater value than the non-sitters.

Overall then the portrait sitters had a personal estate of greater value than the non-sitters, but does this imply that the non-sitters had more of their wealth invested in real estate? To determine this the inventories were ranked according to the amount of real estate listed in them (Table IV). It is this list which does show a slight difference from the previous results, with only five inventories belonging to the portrait sitters ranked in the top ten. Also, for the first time, the top ranked inventory was of a non-sitter's, William Lyon, whose real estate was valued at £3597. In the second ten of the list, only two inventories belonged to portrait sitters, and in the remaining three that list real estate, two inventories were for portrait sitters. This information hints at the possibility that at least some of non-sitters had more of their total wealth tied up in real rather than personal estate.

Table III
Personal Estate without notes

Name†	Inventory Date	£	S	d
<i>Samuel McClellan</i>	1807	4867	1	7
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	3297	6	0
William Lyon	1805	589	17	7
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	570	13	7.75
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	519	4	4
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	510	16	5
Henry Wells	1823	377	18	2
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	330	10	0
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	309	17	10
David Holmes	1832	299	16	0
Joseph Peake	1800	286	1	10
<i>Daniel Paine</i>	1777	204	7	0
Abel Hosmer	1814	189	13	7
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	186	6	10
John Green	1799	185	4	0
Ephraim Carroll	1812	158	16	7
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	146	4	0
William Skinner	1807	145	4	2
Thomas Bugbee	1845	142	4	0
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	116	2	2
Benjamin Lyon	1807	113	5	0
Matthew Bowen	1806	111	1	0
Walter Johnson	1825	110	7	5
Jonathan Lyon	1830	81	6	2
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	68	0	2
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	12	4	5

†Portrait sitters are in italics.

Table IV
Real Estate

Name†	Inventory Date	£	S	d
William Lyon	1805	3957	1	5
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	3177	0	0
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	2080	0	0
Abel Hosmer	1814	1913	1	2
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	1734	18	0
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	1660	10	2
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	1528	5	5
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	1520	0	0
Jonathan Lyon	1830	1246	18	7
Henry Wells	1823	1191	9	5
Ephraim Carroll	1812	1098	13	5
Walter Johnson	1825	1037	7	2
Benjamin Lyon	1807	954	13	0
Joseph Peake	1800	831	4	0
Matthew Bowen	1806	800	0	0
Thomas Bugbee	1845	762	5	5
John Green	1799	711	2	2
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	557	17	5
William Skinner	1807	533	18	7
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	512	3	4
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	395	0	0
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	373	6	7
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	300	0	0
David Holmes*	1832	0	0	0
<i>Daniel Paine*</i>	1777	0	0	0
<i>Samuel McCiellan*⁶</i>	1807	0	0	0

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

* No real estate listed in the inventory.

⁶In his last will and testament, Samuel McCiellan referred to deeds of land that his sons already possessed, indicating that he had already legally distributed his land prior to his death. Land was therefore absent from his estate inventory.

This conclusion is reinforced by the difference in the percentage of the inventory's total value held as real estate for the two groups (Table V). Nathaniel Chandler, who was a portrait sitter, had the highest percentage (97%) of real estate. This result is consistent with the fact that Nathaniel Chandler's inventory, which listed the least amount of personal estate, mentioned that he owned his personal possessions in common with another person. This resulted in his personal estate being valued very low, making his real estate holdings a large percentage of his wealth. The next six inventories listed were of non-portrait sitters, however, with estates which had between 84% and 91% of their total value in real estate. Although some of the portrait sitters did have a high percentage of real estate, overall in the group whose real estate value was between 70% and 80% of their total estate worth, the non-sitters outnumbered the portrait sitters. Also, the four with the lowest percentage of real estate value, excluding those inventories without real estate listed, included three portrait sitters. The non-portrait sitters had a greater percentage of their total estate value invested in real estate, suggesting that possibly more of the non-sitters made their economic livelihood from the land. The farm utensils and stock listed in the inventories, however, reflect that many of the portrait sitters and non-sitters farmed their land to some degree. The reason why the non-sitters tended to have a higher percentage of their estate invested in real estate was because they did not purchase as many personal possessions as the portrait sitters.

Probate inventories indicate that the portrait sitters were more likely to have a higher percentage of their wealth invested in personal estate, but why was this so? When examining the personal backgrounds of the individuals in the two groups, the disparity in the occupations and educations of the portrait sitters and non-sitters provides a possible explanation for the difference in the ownership of personal estate.

Table V
Percentage of the total estate which is real estate

Name†	Inventory Date	Real Estate (%)
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	97
Abel Hosmer	1814	91
Walter Johnson	1825	88
Matthew Bowen	1806	88
William Lyon	1805	87
Jonathan Lyon	1830	85
Thomas Bugbee	1845	84
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	83
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	82
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	80
Benjamin Lyon	1807	80
John Green	1799	79
William Skinner	1807	79
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	76
Ephraim Carroll	1812	74
Joseph Peake	1800	74
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	73
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	68
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	66
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	59
Henry Wells	1823	58
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	37
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	8
<i>Samuel McClellan</i>	1807	0
David Holmes	1832	0
<i>Daniel Paine</i>	1777	0

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

Tables VI and VII compare the occupations and educational backgrounds of portrait sitters to non-sitters. These two tables only list the men who were educated or whose occupation is known, although the comparison included the people who did not have inventories, thus expanding the comparison groups to sixteen portrait sitters, and twenty-one non-sitters.⁷

When studying the list of occupations for the portrait sitters and the non-sitters, it becomes apparent that the portrait sitters were mostly professionals and the non-sitters were craftsmen. The portrait sitters were lawyers, physicians, merchants, and ministers, whereas the non-sitters were tanners, blacksmiths, masons, potters, etc. In *The History of Woodstock*, Clarence Winthrop Bowen describes some of the businesses which were operated by the non-portrait sitters in Woodstock. For example, Jesse Bolles was a tanner. According to Bowen, he made "elegant American boots." William Hammond was a mason and Bowen asserts that Hammond built most of the brick houses in Woodstock. Joseph Peake was a carpenter and cooper and Bowen mentions that Peake repaired the stocks and whipping post in 1785 for one pound and six shillings. Thomas Bugbee was a potter, whose kilns had a capacity of 5000 pieces a year. One-half of this capacity was used to make milk pans. As all this suggests, many non-portrait sitters held jobs where they produced a tangible product or provided a valuable service to be purchased by other town members. The portrait sitters were merchants involved in trade, or were doctors, lawyers, or ministers, rather than artisans.

⁷The following biographical information was compiled from Clarence Winthrop Bowen, *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut, Vols. I-VIII* (Norwood, MA: The Plimpton Press, 1926). The information concerning the portrait sitters was also reprinted in Nina Fletcher Little, "Winthrop Chandler" in *Art in America, An Illustrated Quarterly Magazine* Volume 35 Number 2 (April 1947), pp. 75-168.

Table VI
Occupation

PORTRAIT SITTERS

Name	Inven- tory Date	Occupation
Winthrop Chandler	1790	limner
William Glysson	1793	physician
Ebenezer Crafts	1810	tavern owner, mercantile business
John Mellen	1808	minister
John Green	1799	physician
Nathaniel Chandler	1801	lawyer, engaged in trade
Samuel Chandler	1790	tavern owner
Rufus Lathrop	1805	businessman
Judge Ebenezer Devotion	1829	associate-judge of the County Court
Theophilus Chandler	1816	land surveyor, carpenter
Reverend Ebenezer Devotion	1771	minister
Reverend Thomas Chandler	1790	minister
Samuel McClellan	1807	merchant, importer
John Paine	1846	farmer, manufacturing company
Charles Church Chandler	1787	lawyer

Table VI
Occupation Cont.

NON-PORTRAIT SITTERS

Name	Inven- tory Date	Occupation
Jesse Bolles	1836	tanner, shoemaker, Steward of Brown University
Matthew Bowen	1806	saddler, storekeeper, surveyor
Hezekiah Bugbee	1826	blacksmith
Rufus Child	?	studied medicine, ?
William Hammond	1861	mason, clerk, watchmender
David Homes	1832	saw miller
Benjamin Lyon	1807	blacksmith
Jedidiah Morse	1819	surveyor of highways, lister, constable, collector of excise, town clerk
Thomas Bugbee	1845	potter
Ephraim Carroll	1812	physician
Abel Hosmer	1814	shoemaker, miller
Nathaniel McClellan	1863	farmer
Joseph Peake	1800	carpenter, cooper
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	blacksmith

Table VII
Education

PORTRAIT SITTERS

Name	Inven- tory Date	Where
Charles Church Chandler	1787	Harvard, 1763
Reverend Ebenezer Devotion	1771	Yale, 1732
Judge Ebenezer Devotion	1829	Yale
Nathaniel Chandler	1803	Harvard, 1768
Reverend John Mellen	1807	Harvard, 1741
Ebenezer Crafts	1810	Yale, 1759; Harvard, Hon. MA 1784
Reverend Thomas Chandler	1790	Yale, B.A. 1745, M. A. 1747; Oxford, M. A. 1753, S. T. D. 1766; King's College (Columbia), M. A. 1758, S. T. D. 1761.

NON-PORTRAIT SITTERS

Name	Date	Where
Rufus Child	?	Brown

Considering that in the eighteenth century it was still possible to become a professional without a college education, there was a significant distinction between the education of the portrait sitters and non-sitters (Table VII). A portrait sitter was more likely to be college educated, which probably encouraged him to pursue an occupation in the professional realm, rather than a trade. Seven out of the sixteen portrait sitters attended college, primarily Harvard and Yale. Reverend and Judge Ebenezer Devotion, Ebenezer Crafts, and Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler attended Yale. Charles Church Chandler, Nathaniel Chandler, and Reverend John Mellen went to Harvard. Both Ebenezer Crafts and Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler received advanced degrees. Crafts received an honorary Masters from Harvard. In all, Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler received a M. A. in 1747 from Yale, a M. A. from Oxford University in 1753, a S. T. D. from Oxford in 1766, and finally a M. A. in 1758 and a S. T. D. in 1761 from King's College (Columbia).

In *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut*, Bowen cites the manuscript of Isiah Thomas of Worcester, which mentioned that Charles Church Chandler was ranked third in social standing in a class of thirty-nine at Harvard in 1763. In *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, Chandler was listed as fourth in seniority out of a class of forty-one. Some of the men in Chandler's class did not graduate, explaining why Bowen remarked that he was third. Also in *Sibley's*, Nathaniel Chandler was listed as fourth in seniority in a class of forty-eight, and John Mellen, was twenty-seventh out of a class of twenty-eight. In the biographical sketches included in *Sibley's*, Clifford K. Shipton relates that Mellen and another classmate were reprimanded for drinking rum at public worship. Also, Mellen was regarded as a charity scholar because he received aid from the Hopkins Fund, which was set up to educate at Harvard the first male child born in Hopkinton. Shipton concludes that these two reasons were probably why

Mellen was ranked at the bottom of his class at Harvard, indicating seniority was based on a family's estate and dignity. Bowen also mentions that at Yale, Colonel Ebenezer Crafts was eighteenth in social standing in a class of forty-nine and the Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler was seventh in a class of twenty-seven.⁸

Only one of the twenty-one non-portrait sitters attended college. Rufus Child was a student at Brown University and was studying medicine at North Woodstock before the Revolution. Child's stepfather, Paul Tew, Esquire, asked the Governor of Connecticut, in a letter dated 1779, to excuse Rufus from the Revolution. In Bowen's *The History of Woodstock*, Child was listed as a Revolutionary soldier, however. It is not known what he did after the war.

Although I have concluded that the portrait sitters were more educated than the non-sitters, this does not mean the non-sitters were not interested in learning. Examining the libraries of the rural gentry of northeast Connecticut resulted in a slightly different conclusion than expected (Table VIII). Reverend Ebenezer Devotion and his son, Judge Ebenezer Devotion, had libraries worth the most in value and also largest in the total number of books. Reverend Devotion had 329 books in his library, including 230 pamphlets that he owned. The total worth of his library was just over thirty-nine pounds. His son Judge Ebenezer Devotion had 86 books in his library, worth approximately fourteen pounds. Only seven libraries listed the books in detail, rather

⁸Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates Volume XV, Biographical Sketches of those who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1761-1763 with Bibliographies and Other Notes* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1970), p. 348.; Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates Volume XVII, Biographical Sketches of those who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1768-1771 with Bibliographies and Other Notes* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1975), p. 1.; Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates Volume XI, Biographical Sketches of those who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1741-45 with Bibliographies and Other Notes* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1960), pp. 2, 40.

Table VIII
Books / Library

Name†	Inven- tory Date	£	S	d	#
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	39	1	6	329
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	14	3	5	86
Ephraim Carroll	1812	8	4	0	
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	6	14	2	42
Joseph Peake	1800	4	19	2	
Abel Hosmer	1814	4	16	0	
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	4	14	7	25
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	4	0	0	
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	3	8	4	35
Henry Wells	1823	2	2	7	
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	2	0	0	
Ebenezer Skinner	1837	1	17	5	
<i>Samuel McClellan</i>	1807	1	6	7	
Walter Johnson	1825	1	4	0	
Leonard Bartholomew	1814	1	3	0	
David Holmes	1832	1	0	9	
Matthew Bowen	1806	0	16	0	
Jonathan Lyon	1830	0	14	7	7
William Lyon	1805	0	10	7	
Benjamin Lyon	1807	0	7	2	
Thomas Bugbee	1845	0	2	7	2

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

than in a lump sum. As already stated the two Devotions had the largest libraries, followed by Levi Willard with forty-two books, Charles Church Chandler with thirty-five, Rufus Lathrop with twenty-five, Jonathan Lyon with seven, and finally with Thomas Bugbee who owned two Bibles.

A surprise, however, was the non-sitters who had libraries of greater value than some of the portrait sitters. For instance, Ephraim Carroll had a library worth over eight pounds. Since Carroll was a doctor, possibly he owned many medical texts. Others with valuable libraries were Joseph Peake, Abel Hosmer, and Henry Wells. The occupation of Henry Wells is unknown, but Abel Hosmer was a shoemaker and miller and Joseph Peake was a carpenter. It seems unusual that these two would own many books. A few others from the taxpayers' lists, who were also laborers, had substantial libraries. Although in his inventory only seven shillings worth of books were listed, Benjamin Lyon, a blacksmith, had bequeathed fifty pounds for Bibles and sundry tracts which laid the foundation for the United Lyon Library in Woodstock. It appears that although these men were not college educated, they did attempt to improve themselves through reading, as did other gentry. Unfortunately, none of the inventories of the non-sitters detailed the types of books they had in their libraries. All the detail listings were for the portrait sitters. These libraries primarily contained Bibles and other theological tracts, histories, geographies, and law books.

Besides occupation and education, two other factors, military and political positions, also indicate a social difference between the portrait sitters and non-sitters. Both portrait sitters and non-sitters, served in the French and Indian War or the Revolution, or were commissioned officers in peace time. For the portrait sitters, twenty-five percent served as officers in the militia, and one person served as an

enlisted soldier (reflecting 6%). For the non-sitters, thirty-eight percent served as officers, and fourteen percent were enlisted soldiers. Although the non-sitters had a slightly higher percentage of officers, none of them had as distinguished military careers as Captain Samuel Chandler and Captain Samuel McClellan, who were considered two of the Revolutionary war heroes of Woodstock, Connecticut.

Samuel Chandler was the Captain of the Eleventh Company, Eleventh Regiment of Connecticut Militia during the Revolution. In his portrait, Chandler was painted in a military uniform and in the background of the portrait there is a view of a battle scene in reference to his role in the Revolution (Figure 3). Samuel McClellan served as an Ensign and a Lieutenant in the French and Indian War. During his Revolutionary War career, he rose from a Major in the Connecticut Militia in 1775 to a Brigadier General in 1784. In Connecticut he was a local Revolutionary War hero, best known for advancing £1000 out of his own estate in 1778 to pay the salaries of the men under his command. Other military officers for the portrait sitters include, Colonel Ebenezer Crafts and Colonel Levi Willard. Ebenezer Crafts was a Captain of a Massachusetts cavalry company during the Revolution. In 1785, he was commissioned First Colonel of a Worcester County regiment of cavalry, an office he held until 1791. His regiment marched in 1786 to Western Massachusetts to help suppress Shay's Rebellion. In 1745, Levi Willard was an Ensign of the First Company of the 4th Massachusetts Regiment. In 1771, he was Lieutenant Colonel of the Second Regiment of Militia in Worcester County. Willard was thought to be a British sympathizer, but died before being called to active duty in the Revolution. Some of the portrait sitters were Tories, including Nathaniel Chandler. Chandler was one of the "18 Country Gentlemen" who addressed Governor Gage on his departure in

1775. During the revolution, Nathaniel Chandler was a loyalist, and he joined a volunteer corps, which he commanded in the British Service.

Seven of the twenty-one non-portrait sitters were officers, and four were enlisted soldiers. William Lyon was a French and Indian War and Revolutionary War veteran. He was a Lieutenant in a company at Cambridge, a Captain in a regiment in Rhode Island, and was at Trenton and the Hudson River Campaign. Benjamin Lyon was a Captain in the Revolution, as was Joseph Peake, Hezekiah Bugbee, and Matthew Bowen. David Holmes was in the militia in the nineteenth century, listed as a Major in 1801 and a Lieutenant Colonel in 1811 and Jonathan Lyon was a soldier in the Revolution and was later listed as a Major in 1811, on the eve of the War of 1812. Although many of the non-portrait sitters were officers, their participation in military campaigns was not as well documented as some of the portrait sitters.

Participation in local and particularly state government, was another indicator of status in the eighteenth century. Amongst the portrait sitters, sixty-three percent were involved in politics, and for the non-sitters, only twenty-four percent held political offices. Primarily the men were town selectmen, members of the General Assembly, or Justices of the Peace. For the portrait sitters, General Samuel McClellan represented Woodstock in the Connecticut Legislature in 1775, and Captain Samuel Chandler represented the town in the Legislature in 1780. In Windham (now Scotland), Connecticut, Reverend Devotion represented the town in the General Assembly in 1760, 1770, and 1771, and his son Judge Devotion represented Windham in the Assembly in 1775, while being an associate-judge of the County Court. In Massachusetts, Theophilus Chandler represented Petersham in the General Court in 1769. Dr. John Green was a committee member to review the acts of British

Parliament in 1774, a representative for Worcester in the General Court in 1777, and a Selectman in 1780. Colonel Levi Willard was a Collector of Excise for Worcester County in 1760, and was also a Justice of the Peace. Colonel Ebenezer Crafts obtained a charter for the town of Craftsbury, Vermont in 1781. Settlement began there in 1788, although Crafts did not move to Vermont until 1791. In Craftsbury, Colonel Crafts was prominent in town affairs, representing the town in the legislature in 1792.

Charles Church Chandler had the most distinguished political career out of all the portrait sitters (Figure 4). Chandler was a prominent Whig in Woodstock. He was on the local Committees of Correspondence prior to the Revolution. He represented Woodstock in the General Court in 1775. Chandler was later in the Connecticut Legislature in 1779-80, and 1783-84, being in nomination for assistant in 1784. He was also a Judge of Probate. Finally, Chandler was elected to the Continental Congress, but he died before taking the oath of office. Lastly, John Paine, a sitter who had his portrait painted when he was ten years old, also became involved in politics. Paine was a local farmer, and later was part owner of the Woodstock Manufacturing Company. Politically, Paine was several times a member of the State Legislature, Justice of the Peace, and a Judge of Probate. He was also a strong abolitionist, and his house was a station on the Underground Railroad.

Only five of the non-portrait sitters were involved in politics. Primarily, the non-sitters served in the General Assembly. William Skinner was in the Assembly in 1776, Jesse Bolles was in office from 1789 to 1791, and Ebenezer Skinner from 1805 to 1808 and from 1818 until 1820. Nathaniel McClellan was also in the General Assembly, from 1811 until 1812, as well as being a Justice of Peace. In Woodstock, Deacon Jedidiah Morse was a surveyor of highways for six years, lister for seven

years, constable for three years, collector of Excise for two years, selectman for eighteen years, member of thirty-one assemblies of the State Legislature, town clerk for twenty-seven years and six months, and Justice of the Peace for Windham County for twenty-seven years. Although the non-sitters held similar political offices as the portrait sitters, not as many of them became involved in the ruling of the town and state governments.

When examining the religious backgrounds of the two groups, only three men, all non-portrait sitters, were listed as deacons of the church. Jesse Bolles was deacon of the Baptist Church. He left Woodstock in 1803 to become Steward of Brown University, a position he held until 1812. William Skinner was a Deacon of the First Church in Woodstock for forty-three years. Skinner's inventory is the only one of the three deacons that still survives. Skinner's total wealth was only approximately £679, reinforcing Jackson Turner Main's conclusion that wealth was not a significant factor in determining who would become deacons. Finally, Jedidiah Morse was also a deacon in Woodstock. Morse is also the only person from the highest taxpayers' lists for whom a portrait is known to have been done. Samuel F. B. Morse painted his grandfather, Deacon Jedidiah Morse in 1819, when Deacon Morse was ninety-three years old. Since Deacon Morse's inventory does not exist, his material wealth cannot be determined. It is known that his son, Reverend Jedidiah Morse, attended Yale, and was to become known as the father of geography, because of the books he published on the subject. The grandson, Samuel F. B. Morse, became a successful painter and inventor. Main asserts that the position of deacon within the church and larger

community was one of honor rather than power. Although only non-portrait sitters were deacons, this honor did not necessarily position a person within the elite.⁹

The examination of the occupational and educational backgrounds of the portrait sitters and non-sitters, in conjunction with the analysis of their military, political, and religious roles in the community implies that the portrait sitters were more likely to be college educated, to work at a profession, and to hold higher military and political offices. This type of background in most instances translated into a larger social role in the community. Because of this background, the portrait sitters were probably the social elite of the towns as well as the economic elite. The portraits they commissioned Winthrop Chandler to paint were, then, an expression of their social standing and not just their economic status, partially explaining why the other economic elite did not have their portraits painted also. The social elite wanted to display the attributes they conceived as valuable. One way to assert one's status in the eighteenth century was by commissioning a portrait.

The portraits painted by Winthrop Chandler in and of themselves exhibit the socio-economic status of the sitters. Within the portraits, however, Chandler used artistic conventions to suggest that the sitters were well-educated and professionals, two of the characteristics specific to the type of elite who chose to self-consciously assert their status through material objects. In "Reading Eighteenth-Century American Family Portraits: Social Images and Self-Images," Margaretta Lovell asserts that portrait painting was a "testament to the patron's wealth and refinement."¹⁰ The

⁹Main, p. 46.

¹⁰Margaretta M. Lovell, "Reading Eighteenth-Century American Family Portraits: Social Images and Self-Images" *Winterthur Portfolio* Volume 22 Number 4 (Winter 1987), p. 1.

depiction of particular material objects in portraits symbolized the social background of the sitter, emphasizing the refinement of the sitter and not just their wealth.

In his portraits, Chandler often alluded to the education of his sitters through the depictions of libraries or books. Chandler painted three of his patrons seated in libraries, including Reverend Ebenezer Devotion, Mrs. Samuel Chandler, and Charles Church Chandler. In five of his portraits, Chandler portrayed the sitter with books. One other reference to education was the desk that appeared in Judge Ebenezer Devotion's portrait. Also, military status and mercantile activities were alluded to in two of Chandler's portraits. Not all of Winthrop Chandler's portraits included material references to wealth and social status, however. Many of his portraits depicted just the head and shoulders of the sitter who were painted within an oval background. So although a portrait may depict social attributes, it still is important to remember that the ownership of the portrait itself was a significant symbol of elite status in the community, one way that a member of the elite could express his gentry status to others. What the elite was trying to exhibit was something less tangible than actual wealth. It had more to do with one's education, type of occupation, and political standing, rather than money alone. The evidence suggests this conclusion is valid for the commissioning of portraits, but does it hold true for other types of objects?

By examining the other material possessions of the portrait sitters and non-sitters, as listed in the estate inventories, we can determine what other types of objects encoded this social meaning. In nineteen of the twenty-six inventories in this study, the personal estate was described in enough detail to determine the type of household furniture a person owned. Of the nineteen inventories, eleven are portrait sitter's inventories, and eight are inventories of non-sitters. These inventories suggest that

household furnishings, particularly furniture, was another way in which the portrait sitters displayed their wealth and social status (Table IX).

The inventories revealed the quantity of furniture owned by each individual, which was averaged to determine the mean amount of each furniture form a typical sitter or non-sitter owned (Table X). The data in Table X is even more meaningful when compared to documentation gathered by Kevin M. Sweeney in his article, "Furniture and the Domestic Environment in Wethersfield, Connecticut 1639-1800." According to Sweeney, the average inventory in Wethersfield, Connecticut from 1761 to 1800 included three beds, two sets of chairs (twelve total), three to four chests, including a chest of drawers and possibly even a case of drawers or bureau, three to four tables, one to two looking glasses, and possibly a stand.¹¹ In comparing this information to Table X, it becomes apparent that both the portrait sitters and the non-sitters inventories suggest that they were above average in wealth, primarily in the wealthiest twenty percent. Although both the portrait sitters' and the non-sitters were wealthy, there were some notable differences in the material culture of the two groups.

The most striking difference between the average inventories of portrait sitters and non-sitters were the amounts of chairs and tables listed. On average, portrait sitters had twenty percent more chairs than the non-sitters. According to Kevin M. Sweeney, turned chairs made up the largest percentage of chairs listed in Wethersfield inventories from 1761-1800. In the Wethersfield inventories Sweeney asserted that chairs referred to as, slat-back, plain, common, or white chairs, worth between one and two shillings, were probably turned chairs. In the portrait sitters' / non-sitters

¹¹Kevin M. Sweeney, "Furniture and the Domestic Environment in Wethersfield, Connecticut 1639-1800," Robert B. St. George, ed., *Material Life in America 1600 -1800* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p. 283.

Table IX
Furniture Breakdown of Inventories

Name†	In- ven- tory Date	Beds	Chairs	Tables	Trunks / Chests	Chest or Case of Draw- ers	High Chest
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	11	47	11	5	3	0
<i>Levi Willard</i>	1775	4	33	10	11	2	0
<i>Samuel McCiellan</i>	1807	7	58	12	4	3	0
<i>Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	4	25	5	1	1	1
<i>Rufus Lathrop</i>	1805	6	36	14	6	3	0
<i>Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1771	7	34	6	5	2	0
<i>Henry Wells</i>	1823	7	21	6	1 (?)	1 (?)	0
<i>Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1829	7	41	10	4	3	0
<i>Ephraim Carroll</i>	1812	6	18+	6	1	2	0
<i>Jonathan Lyon</i>	1830	4	23	4	1	1	1
<i>Benjamin Lyon</i>	1807	3	21	4	3	1	1
<i>Walter Johnson</i>	1825	5	40	3	2	2	0
<i>Thomas Bugbee</i>	1845	7	33	6	2	3	0
<i>John Green</i>	1799	6	32	9	3	2	0
<i>Samuel Chandler</i>	1790	7	19	5	0	2	0
<i>Nathaniel Chandler</i>	1803	2	8	2	0	0	0
<i>Hezekiah Bugbee</i>	1826	5	16	2	2	1	0
<i>David Holmes</i>	1832	4	27	2	3	1	0
<i>Daniel Paine</i>	1777	5	12	4	1	3	0

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

Table IX
Furniture Breakdown of Inventories cont.

Name†	In- ven- tory Date	Desks	Desks and Book- cases	Stand	Couch / Sofas	Looking Glasses	Clocks
<i>Charles Church Chandler</i>	1787	1	1	1	1	3	0
<i>Levi Willard Samuel</i>	1775 1807	1 1	1 0	3 2	1 1	3 4	1 1
<i>McClellan Theophilus Chandler</i>	1816	0	1	2	0	3	1
<i>Rufus Lathrop Reverend Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1805 1771	0 1	1 0	3 0	0 0	7 4	0 1
<i>Henry Wells Judge Ebenezer Devotion</i>	1823 1829	1 2	0 0	0 2	0 0	2 4	1 1
<i>Jonathan Lyon Benjamin Lyon Walter Johnson Thomas Bugbee John Green Samuel Chandler</i>	1830 1807 1825 1845 1799 1790	1 1 0 1 0 1	0 0 0 0 1 0	1 1 2 2 4 0	0 1 0 0 0 0	2 2 3 3 2 1	0 0 1 1 1 0
<i>Nathaniel Chandler Hezekiah Bugbee David Holmes Daniel Paine</i>	1803 1826	0 1	0 0	0 2	0 0	0 3	0 0
	1832	2	1	3	0	2	1
	1777	0	0	1	0	2	0

† Portrait sitters are in italics.

Table X
Average Inventory

	Beds	Chairs	Tables	Trunks / Chests	Chest or Case of Draw- ers	High Chest
Portrait Sitters	6	31.4	8	3.6	2.3	.09
Non-portrait Sitters	5.1	24.9	4.1	1.5	1.5	.25
	Desks	Desks and Book- cases	Stands	Couches / Sofas	Looking Glasses	Clocks
Portrait Sitters	.64	.45	1.6	.27	3	.55
Non-portrait sitters	1	.25	1.5	.25	2.38	.63

inventories the reference to kitchen chairs most likely corresponds to similar turned chairs as Sweeney found in the Wethersfield inventories. Eleven inventories included a reference to kitchen chairs, primarily referring to a group of six to fifteen chairs, at a value of one to two shillings each. Three inventories also referred to common chairs, worth approximately one and one-half to four shillings each. There were nine references to chairs, which bear no descriptive adjective, but by their value were also probably turned chairs. In all seventeen inventories included a reference to chairs, probably turned, worth from one to four shillings. Windsor chairs worth between two and six shillings were referred to in eight inventories. Three inventories mentioned dining chairs, which according to Robert F. Trent, were probably also windsor chairs.¹²

Kevin M. Sweeney asserted, "For those who could afford them, a set of crooked-backed frame chairs with rounded or bowed crests and rush seats served as the best chairs in the house."¹³ Three of the portrait sitters inventories referred to "flag bottom chairs." Levi Willard's inventory referred to eight "flagg bottomd" chairs at four shillings each, and Samuel McClellan's inventory listed ten flag bottomed chairs total. In his portrait, McClellan was actually seated in a rush bottomed Chippendale side chair (Figure 5). The appearance of this type of chair in a portrait suggests the quality and status attached to this form by the gentry. Finally, in Rufus Lathrop's inventory there was a reference to six cherry flag bottom chairs, worth two pounds total.

¹²Information from a conversation with Robert F. Trent.

¹³Sweeney, pp. 283-84.

One of the most expensive types of chairs would have been chairs with slip seats. In Wethersfield, only three percent of the chairs recorded in the inventories from 1761 to 1800 were chairs with slip seats. Six inventories, all portrait sitters, described leather bottom chairs with six and eight chairs in each household. Levi Willard had fifteen examples, eight leather bottom chairs, six high leather bottom chairs, and one leather bottom great chair. Rufus Lathrop's inventory recorded eight leather bottom chairs made of cherry. These chairs may have been chairs with slip seats of leather, or the more expensive option of chairs with leather upholstered over the rail, as seen in Reverend Devotion's portrait (Figures 1 and 6).

Other slip seat chairs mentioned are the "seven workd bottom chairs," worth three pounds, listed in Samuel Chandler's inventory. Worked bottom probably referred to a crewel embroidered or canvas worked slip seat. Lastly, other possible references to chairs with slip seats were: "8 mahogy chairs" owned by Charles Church Chandler, "6 red bottomd chairs" in Levi Willard's estate, 6 cherry chairs listed in Samuel McClellan's inventory, and possibly 6 black walnut chairs owned by Rufus Lathrop. It is important to note that all the references to slip seat chairs were in the inventories of the portrait sitters. In her portrait, Mrs Ebenezer Devotion, Jr. is seated in a Chippendale side chair, which has a similar crest rail as a chair from Norwich, Connecticut, dating from 1770 to 1780 (Figures 7 and 8) A Chippendale slip seat chair appeared in the Portrait of John Paine, reinforcing the connection between the ownership of more expensive chairs to portrait sitters (Figures 9 and 10). In Wethersfield, references to easy chairs were rare, and this is also true in these inventories. Only one estate mentions an easy chair, and that was Levi Willard's. The easy chair was valued at two pounds thirteen shillings, and four pence.

Five couches or sofas were mentioned in the inventories. For the portrait sitters, Charles Church Chandler, Levi Willard, and Samuel McClellan owned a couch, and for the non-sitters, Benjamin Lyon owned a couch, and Ephraim Carroll had a sofa. The four references to couches were probably what we today consider day beds (Figure 11). Ephraim Carroll's inventory indicated a "sopha," and probably referred to what we think of as a sofa today (Figure 12). This sofa was not appraised at a higher value than the couches, but since it was a more "fashionable" or "modern" form, it probably was considered more luxurious than a daybed. Carroll died later than the other men, suggesting why he may have owned a sofa rather than a daybed. Both Chandler and Willard died before the end of the eighteenth century and sofas were very rare prior to the first decades of the nineteenth century. The daybeds still would have been owned by wealthy families and could suggest the genteel status of the owners. Three of the daybeds were owned by portrait sitters, and one was owned by a non-portrait sitter, Benjamin Lyon. Carroll, who owned the sofa, was a non-portrait sitter also.

The portrait sitters also had almost twice as many tables as the non-sitters, eight tables in comparison to 4.1. Sweeney found that, "Tables continued to be the most sensitive barometer of changing fashions, status, and living standards."¹⁴ In the time period, 1761-1800, he found that tea tables were still not common in Wethersfield. Amongst the nineteen Woodstock inventories, only seven inventories specified a table as a tea table, accounting for ten tea tables total. The value of the tea tables ranged from two shillings and seven pence to sixteen shillings. Most often the table was described solely as a tea table, but some other adjectives were used also, such as "1 round pine

¹⁴Sweeney, p. 285.

green tea table," "1 4-foot cherry tea table," "1 4-foot pine ditto," and "one round tea table." It is significant to note that all the tea tables listed belonged to the portrait sitters. John Chandler, a cousin of the artist Winthrop Chandler, was documented as the owner of the tea table which appears in Figure 13.

In her article, "Tea-Drinking in Eighteenth-Century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage," Rodris Roth states that in the first half of the eighteenth century, tea drinking was only available to the wealthy, but as the century progressed, tea drinking became a more common phenomenon. Roth suggests that

Tea furnishings, when in use, were to be seen on rectangular tables with four legs, square-top and circle-top tripods, and Pembroke tables. Such tables were, of course, used for other purposes, but a sampling of eighteenth-century Boston inventories reveals that in some households all or part of the tea paraphernalia was prominently displayed on the tea table rather than stored in cupboards or closets.¹⁵

The scarcity of references to tea tables in Sweeney's study and the lack of examples in this thesis suggests that in Connecticut, to own a table solely designated as a tea table was still a luxury. The tea table, as was the social partaking of tea, was a sign of status and wealth in the community.

Although only the portrait sitters owned tea tables, it seemed inconceivable that they would be the only ones who owned teawares. An examination of the inventories, searching for teapots, tea kettles, and cups and saucers, indicates that both groups owned teawares. For the portrait sitters group, seventy-three percent owned a teapot, and ninety-one percent owned a tea kettle. For the non-sitters, seventy-five percent owned a teapot, and similarly, seventy-five percent owned a tea kettle. Each

¹⁵Rodris Roth, "Tea-drinking in Eighteenth-Century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage," Robert B. St. George, ed. *Material Life in America, 1600-1860* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p. 447.

household had between one and six teapots. The most common description was of a black tin teapot, but there were also ones made of ceramic, either made of local earthenwares or imported from England, and one pewter teapot. The value of the teapots ranged from a little over one shilling up to ten shillings each. None of the descriptions and the values of the teapots made them stand out as extravagant purchases. Often the black tin teapot was more expensive than the ceramic counterpart. Tinware was very popular in Connecticut in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and probably explains the frequency of this type of teapot. Most owned between one and three teapots, but some did own more. Jonathan Lyon had four teapots, Walter Johnson, and Reverend Ebenezer Devotion each owned five teapots, and Charles Church Chandler owned six teapots.

The references to tea kettles suggested that most households owned one metal tea kettle, although a few inventories listed two tea kettles. The price range of these tea kettles was from one shilling each to ten shillings, probably indicating the use of either iron or copper. The percentage of the non-sitters who owned teakettles was seventy-five percent which was the same percentage as teapot ownership, although it was not the same seventy-five percent owning both. The portrait sitters' group had a marked increase of tea kettle ownership (91%) over teapot ownership (73%). I am unclear why there is such an increase.

The biggest difference between the two groups was in the ownership of cups and saucers. For the portrait sitters, sixty-four percent owned cups and saucers, whereas only fifty percent of the non-sitters did. Of the listed cups and saucers, the value range was from two shillings to approximately six shillings for a set of six cups and saucers. It is not always discernable how many cups and saucers a person owned,

but between six and twenty-five cups and saucers was common. It seems probable that others owned tea cups and saucers, but they were not distinguished as separate from the other dishes, which were often valued in a lump sum.

In regards to other types of tables, Sweeney found that dressing tables became more common in Wethersfield after 1760, although most references to such tables were in the inventories of the wealthiest twenty percent (Figure 14). Only two inventories, that of the portrait sitters' Charles Church Chandler and Rufus Lathrop mentioned dressing tables. In Chandler's inventory there is listed "1 cherry dressing table," worth one pound five shillings, and "1 black walnut dressing table," worth three shillings. Rufus Lathrop's inventory listed "1 dresg mahogy table" worth one pound six shillings and seven pence. Both the cherry and mahogany dressing tables would have been considered luxurious items, in both their form and the wood used, indicating the high social status of both Chandler and Lathrop.

The analysis of the chairs and tables listed in the inventories suggest that the portrait sitters had a greater material wealth than the non-sitters. This conclusion is supported by other differences in the inventories, such as the number of chest or case of drawers each group owned. On average the portrait sitters owned 2.3 chests of drawers, and the non-sitters owned 1.5 chests of drawers. The portrait sitters owned almost thirty-five percent more chests of drawers than did the non-sitters. The non-sitters, however, were more likely to own a high chest of drawers. Two out of eight of the non-sitters owned a high chest, whereas only one out the eleven portrait sitters owned a high chest.

There are thirty-six chest of drawers / case of drawers / bureaus listed in the inventories. Nineteen of these case of drawers were worth under one pound. Of the

remaining seventeen, nine were worth between one and two pounds, four between two and three pounds, two between three and four pounds, and two between four and five pounds. Of the four listed at a value between two and three pounds, three cases of drawers belonged to three portrait sitters, and one bureau belonged to Walter Johnson, a non-portrait sitter. All of the four cases of drawers valued over three pounds belonged to portrait sitters. Cabinetmakers from Norwich, Connecticut were one possible source for chest of drawers. Figure 15 is of a Norwich chest of drawers with the popular shell carving. Three high chests are listed in the inventories. The "drawer high" owned by Benjamin Lyon was valued at seventeen shillings and ten pence and the "high chest" owned by Jonathan Lyon was valued at only two shillings and seven pence. The extremely low values of these two objects makes one question what they actually were. The high case drawers owned by Theophilus Chandler, on the other hand was worth two pounds thirteen shillings and five pence, still a relatively low value, but much closer to what would be expected for a high chest. In Samuel McClellan's house, there was a high chest built directly into the wall, which still exists (Figures 16 and 17). Although his inventory does not list a high chest, he obviously did own one. The high chest was probably not mentioned in his inventory because it would have been considered a part of the architecture. Another possibility is that the "case draws" worth over two pounds in McClellan's inventory was referring to the built in high chest. Also, it may be possible that in the other estates, the more expensive chest of drawers were actually high chests.

The references to desks in the inventories indicate that the non-sitters were more likely to own one than someone from the portrait sitters group. After 1760 over

one-third of the estates in Wethersfield had a desk listed. Sweeney concludes,

While most estates ranked in the wealthiest 10 percent of those probated had a desk, ownership of this furniture form became well distributed throughout all but the lowest stratum of society as time went on. Still, the desk was regarded as both a work surface and a statement of status, suggesting both literacy and economic pursuits that involve written records and accounts.¹⁶

The non-sitters had thirty-six percent more desks listed. Of the fifteen desks listed, all were worth under one pound except for four. Samuel Chandler owned a desk worth one pound ten shillings, Charles Church Chandler owned a desk worth one pound, Reverend Ebenezer Devotion owned one worth one pound five shillings, and Levi Willard owned a desk worth two pounds eight shillings. Although a non-sitter was more likely to own a desk, a portrait sitter was more likely to own an expensive one. In his portrait, Judge Ebenezer Devotion is depicted leaning on a slant-top desk while writing in his ledger (Figure 18). The desk that appears in his portrait is similar to the Connecticut made desk in Figure 19. Amongst the portrait sitters' group five inventories listed desk and bookcases, in comparison to only two out of eight inventories for the non-sitters (Figure 20). The portrait sitters had forty-five percent more desk and bookcases listed. Sweeney asserts, "The combination desk-and-bookcase provided an even more powerful statement of economic status, learning, and possible commercial pursuits."¹⁷ The desk and bookcases recorded in the inventories were worth from sixteen shillings to four pounds and sixteen shillings. Considering the occupations of the portrait sitters, along with their desire to display their social status, it seems logical that they would have more desks and bookcases than the non-sitters.

¹⁶Sweeney, pp. 284-85.

¹⁷Sweeney, p. 285.

Overall there were twenty percent more looking glasses in the portrait sitters' inventories than there were in the non-sitters' inventories, another indicator of their higher material wealth. The ownership of clocks was not common during this time period, although some of the inventories included references to them. Six out of eleven portrait sitters' inventories listed clocks in comparison to five out of eight references to clocks in the non-sitters' inventories. This comparison is quite close, with the the non-sitters owning thirteen percent more clocks. The clock shown in Figure 21 was owned by Samuel McClellan and is attributed to the clock maker, Peregrine White. One other type of object listed in the inventories that would suggest wealth and status was one reference to a sideboard. Judge Ebenezer Devotion owned a sideboard appraised at approximately four-and-one-half pounds. Sideboards did not become popular until the early nineteenth century, and since Judge Ebenezer Devotion died in 1829, he must have bought his sideboard when it first became fashionable. The sideboard was used in the dining room for the storage and display of one's china during dinner parties, and to own a sideboard indicated the genteel background of Judge Devotion.

In his Wethersfield study, Sweeney determined that the use of wood was also a significant factor in determining the value and social meaning of an object. Mahogany was considered the most expensive and luxurious wood because it was imported. Cherry, although found locally, was considered next in highest value.¹⁸ Seven inventories actually mentioned the wood used for some of the furniture. Within one inventory there were often references to the same object made out of different woods which exhibited the different values associated with each wood. For example,

¹⁸Sweeney, p. 286.

in Nathaniel Chandler's inventory, there was a reference to a "4 foot chery tea table" worth thirteen shillings and five pence, and a "4 foot pine ditto," valued at only five shillings and five pence. Similarly, Theophilus Chandler's inventory listed "1 candlestand pine" appraised at two shillings and seven pence, and "1 cherry candlestand," worth five shillings and five pence.

The types of wood mentioned in these seven inventories were pine, maple, black walnut, cherry, and mahogany. Only two of the inventories described the wood for most of the furniture listed, and they are the only two inventories that mentioned mahogany. The inventories of Charles Church Chandler and Rufus Lathrop were very detailed and were a good source for the range of furniture woods found in Connecticut households. Both owned furniture of a variety of woods, from pine to mahogany. Chandler's inventory listed "8 mahogy chairs," which would have probably been used in his best parlor, in order for them to be seen by all visitors. Of the mahogany objects he owned, Lathrop's inventory described, "1 light mahogy stand table," "1 mahogy (dark stand & table)," "1 mahogy stand," "1 dresg mahogy table," "1 large mahogy table," "1 mahogy table & damd leg," "1 square mahog table," and "1 mahogy case of drawers." To own this much expensive mahogany furniture was indicative of Lathrop's wealth, as well as his good taste, emphasizing his gentry status.

Besides portraits and furniture, there were other ways to display gentry status through material objects. Thirteen inventories mentioned silver, although the rural gentry did not own much silver overall. The primary references to silver were to spoons, or knee and shoe buckles. The other silver references were what differentiated the portrait sitters from the non-sitters. General Samuel McClellan owned a silver mounted sword worth three pounds four shillings. This sword suggests extravagance,

as well as symbolizes McClellan's heroic military career during the Revolution. Reverend Ebenezer Devotion owned a silver tankard, and Charles Church Chandler owned a silver watch worth two pounds and eight shillings, which were two more examples of silver forms that were not common in this rural area.

Levi Willard owned three silver porringers (Figures 22 and 23). These porringers were mentioned in conjunction with 2 butter boats, 2 salts, 1 pepper less, 1 cream pott, 1 punch strainer, 1 cup, 1 punch ladle, 8 tablespoons, 12 teaspoons, and pair sugar tongs. The porringers and all the other utensils combined were appraised at forty pounds total. No individual values were given for the objects. Although only the porringers were identified as silver, it is conceivable that the other items were made of silver also. Considering that in the eighteenth century, inventory takers often combined all the forms made of one precious metal together and gave a total value, it is probable that all these items were made of silver, indicating Levi Willard's wealth and gentry status. Later on in Willard's inventory, after the real estate and stock was described, "1 silver tankard & 2 porringers" were listed at a value of twenty pounds. Possibly the inventory takers missed these silver items at first or they were in an unlikely place, explaining why they were not included with the other silver.

Four inventories of the portrait sitters mentioned gold. Levi Willard, Rufus Lathrop, Charles Church Chandler, and Reverend Ebenezer Devotion all owned gold buttons. The buttons were referred to in a pair and were probably sleeve buttons. In the eighteenth century buttons were a luxury, and often art historians today suggest that the wealth and status of portrait sitters can be confirmed by the number of buttons shown in the portraits. Although the sitter may not own as many buttons as shown, art historians conclude that the representation of buttons in portrait art was a convention

used by eighteenth-century artists to indicate a person's important status. In any case, the fact that these four men owned gold buttons reinforced their gentry status in the community. One other reference to buttons was to silver buttons in Theophilus Chandler's inventory. The gold buttons were worth between thirteen and twenty-two shillings for the pair. In Levi Willard's inventory, the gold buttons were listed with one ring at a total of one pound and eight shillings. Presumably the ring was gold also, but no description was given to suggest what type of ring it was, although owning an item of jewelry again indicated Willard's status. Although some of the inventories of the non-sitters mentioned silver, they included primarily spoons or buckles, and not objects that would suggest their inclusion in the elite gentry class.

The references to two coats of arms in Levi Willard's inventory is another indication of his economic and social status. A "coat of arm" and "Mrs. Willard coat of arm" were mentioned in the inventory, each at a value of one pound. These coats of arms probably referred to needlework pictures of the assumed coats of arms of both the Willard family and his wife's family (Chandler). Fancy needlework of this type was done primarily by girls whose families could afford to send them to embroidery school and had the free time to undertake large projects, such as family coats of arms. American colonists seldom had a right to a coat of arms, but many families adopted them in order to assert one's family's social standing and prestige. Coats of arms were most likely hung in homes to impress neighbors, although hatchments (often wood), which were the English counterparts, were often associated with death and the funeral procession. The coats of arms owned by Willard were probably either made by a daughter or his wife. In either case, that fact that the women in his household had the

time to pursue extensive needlework projects reiterates the wealth of Willard and his family's status in Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹⁹

Only seven inventories, all belonging to portrait sitters, mentioned pictures as part of the household goods. In two of the inventories, one can distinguish the portraits from the other types of pictures the person may have owned. In Levi Willard's inventory, "testator & executors likeness" was appraised at eighteen shillings. "Two effigees or likenesses" were mentioned first in Samuel Chandler's inventory, and the portraits were valued at six pounds. Other types of pictures mentioned in the seven inventories were landscapes, mezzotints, and maps. Primarily, the references were to pictures, sometimes including a description of size, such as large or small. The value of the pictures were often appraised at only a few shillings each. The range of pictures owned was from two to thirty-one.

This thesis does not examine textiles thoroughly, but the references to carpets were noted due to the fact that they were expensive and not common in the eighteenth-century. Four inventories mentioned carpets, Samuel McClellan's, Levi Willard's, John Green's, and Thomas Bugbee's. Samuel McClellan owned two floor cloths, one carpet worth approximately one pound and six shillings, and one carpet valued at just over two pounds and thirteen shillings. Levi Willard owned three carpets valued at thirteen shillings total, and one table carpet worth four shillings. In John Green's inventory it stated "the carpeting" was worth thirteen shillings and five pence. Finally, Thomas Bugbee had one old carpet worth sixteen shillings. Of these four men, the first three also had their portraits painted, whereas, Thomas Bugbee did not sit

¹⁹Susan Burrows Swan, *A Winterthur Guide to American Needlework* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 134.

for a portrait. There were a few references to rugs, but since these may have been for bed rugs and not floor carpets, I chose not to use them for comparison.

A few of the houses of the portrait sitters and non-sitters still stand in Woodstock, Connecticut today. From the exterior, the houses appear to be similar. The houses owned by the portrait sitters Theophilus Chandler and Captain Samuel Chandler, and the houses of the non-sitters', William Hammond and William Lyon, are all two stories high with a central chimney (Figures 24 and 25). The portrait sitter, Samuel McClellan's house also has one chimney, but it was placed left of center to allow for a central hall plan within the house (Figure 26). Two homes, that of the non-sitters, Ephraim Carroll and Deacon Jedidiah Morse, have two chimneys, suggesting a central hall plan, although from the outside they appear the same as the one chimney house (Figure 27). In overall size and style of the exterior, the portrait sitters and non-sitters homes were remarkably alike.²⁰

When examining Anglican churches in colonial Virginia, Dell Upton concluded that "visual elements serve to identify the arena in which social actions are played out."²¹ According to Upton, style is a visual element which can coordinate people, and mode is another element which can express a division amongst them. In northeastern Connecticut, the architecture of the economic elite suggests a coordinated style of the group. The elite's choice of household furnishings, however, reflects a division amongst the economic elite, emphasizing that mode, or the element which divides people, is not determined by economic factors alone. The expression of

²⁰I am indebted to Elizabeth B. Wood of Woodstock, Connecticut for tracking down the houses and for providing images from her own collection and the Bicentennial Project of the Woodstock Historical Society, Inc.

²¹Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane, Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986), p. 160.

division amongst groups did not occur only on the economic level. Within one economic class, certain members could choose to separate themselves from others through their consumption habits.

This paper examined men who were amongst the wealthiest twenty percent in the area of Woodstock, Connecticut. These men were separated into two groups based on whether or not they commissioned a portrait by Winthrop Chandler. Scholars have already determined that the commissioning of a portrait in the eighteenth century was one way for a member of the elite to separate himself from others in the community. This separation, however, was believed to be an economic separation. Considering that the two groups in this study were wealthy, there must have been other factors that influenced the decision to commission a portrait. The differences in the social backgrounds of the two groups indicate that education, occupation, and political positions were also very important in determining consumption patterns. The commissioning of a portrait expressed a person's social, intellectual, and economic position in society.

Understanding that portraits can convey more than economic status, it becomes conceivable that other types of household objects may also be an expression of a person's overall social, intellectual, and economic standing. When examining elite inventories, it becomes apparent that chairs with slip seats, tea tables, desk and bookcases, and silver are other examples of objects that contain status-bearing information. The ownership of these types of objects was common to the portrait sitters. The portrait sitters self-consciously chose to express their social position in the community through portraits and household objects, whereas not all of the economic elite did. The inventory analysis of the economic elite from the Woodstock,

Connecticut area encourages a more careful examination of the elite class. Within each economic class there may be divisions based on other factors besides wealth. Simplistic generalizations about the consumption patterns of the economic elite class are inappropriate, and further study must be done to understand the many-faceted influences on the ownership of various household objects.



Figure 1. **Winthrop Chandler.** *Self-portrait.* ca. 1785-90. Oil on canvas, American Antiquarian Society. Source: *Winthrop Chandler and His Contemporaries* (New York: David A. Schorsch, Inc., 1989), p. 17.

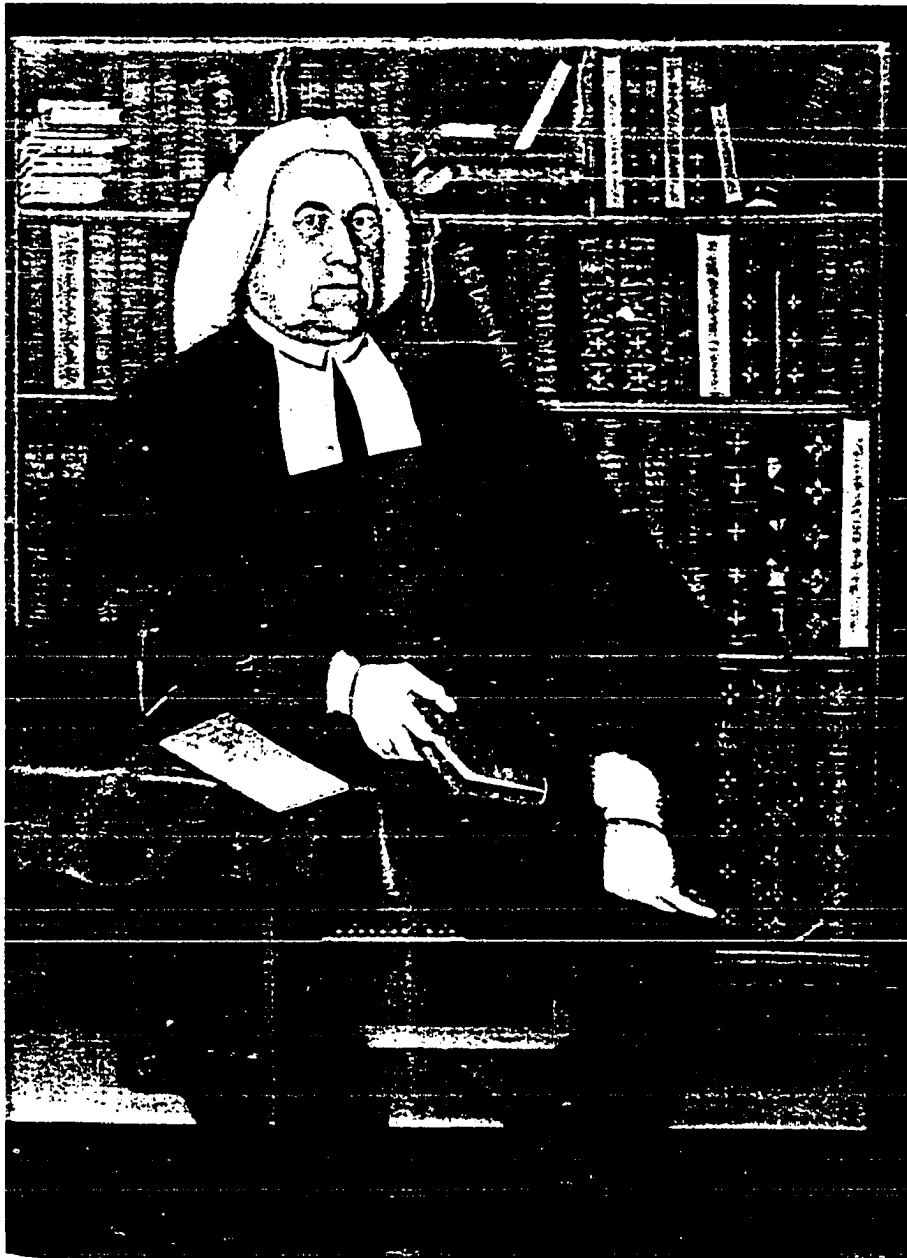


Figure 2. Winthrop Chandler. *Reverend Ebenezer Devotion*. ca. 1770. Oil on canvas, Brookline Historical Society. Courtesy, Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Slide Library.



Figure 3. Winthrop Chandler. *Captain Samuel Chandler*. ca. 1780. Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington; Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. Courtesy, National Gallery of Art.



Figure 4. **Winthrop Chandler.** *Charles Church Chandler.* ca. 1785. Oil on canvas, The Connecticut Historical Society. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 5. Winthrop Chandler. *General Samuel McClellan*. ca. 1776. Oil on canvas, Private collection. Source: Nina Fletcher Little, "Winthrop Chandler" in *Art in America, An Illustrated Quarterly Magazine*, 35: 120.

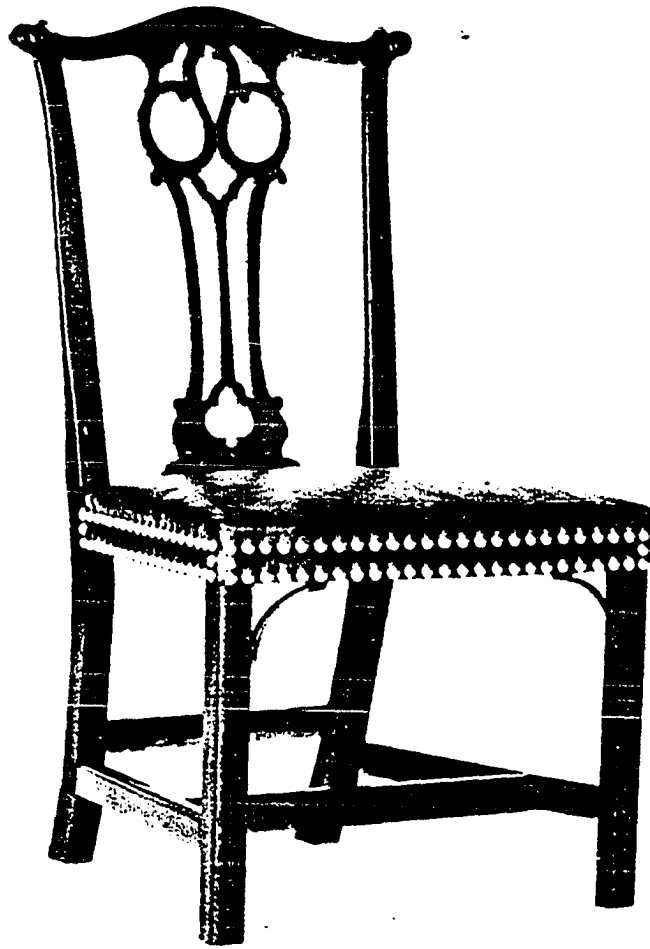


Figure 6. Joined Chair. Attributed to Felix Huntington. Norwich, Connecticut, 1770-1785. Santo Domingo mahogany and hard maple. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 7. Winthrop Chandler. *Eunice Huntington Devotion and Child*. ca. 1772. Oil on canvas, Lyman Allyn Art Museum. Courtesy, Lyman Allyn Art Museum.

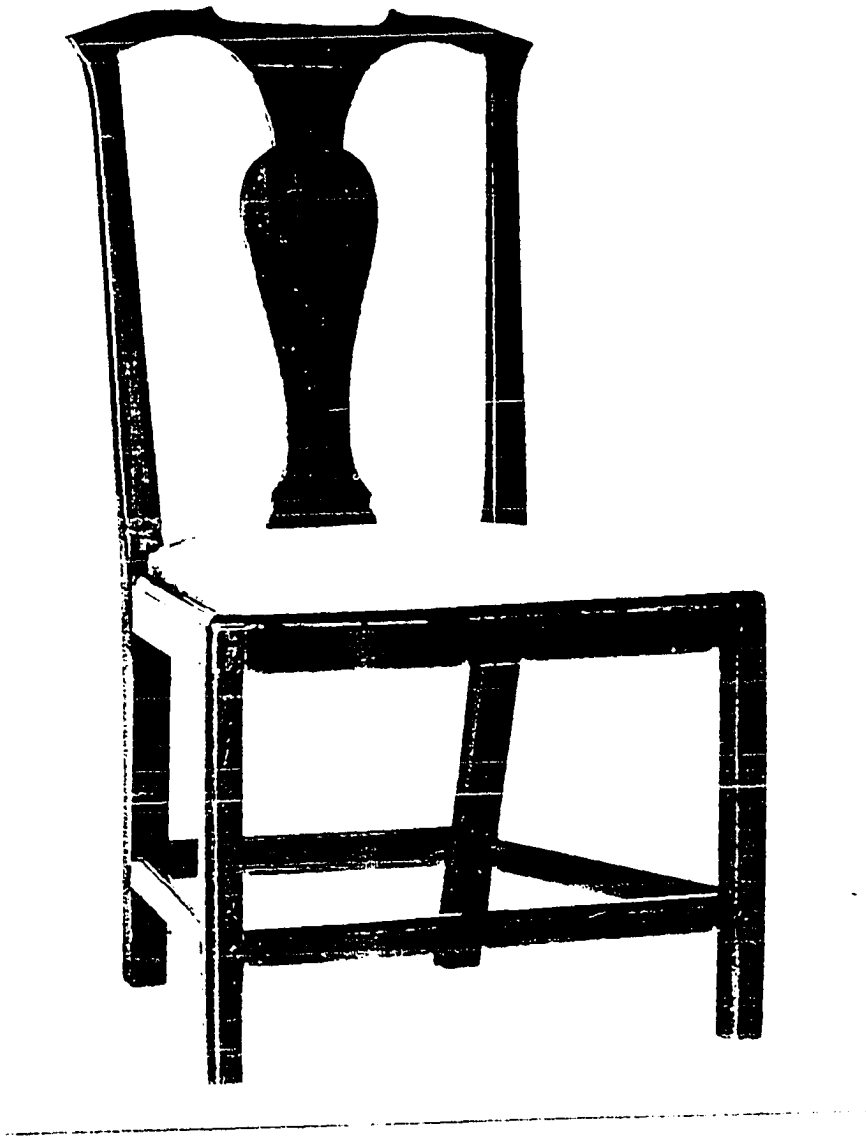


Figure 8. Joined Chair. Norwich, Connecticut, 1770-1780. Maple and tulip poplar.
Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 9. Winthrop Chandler. *John Paine*. ca. 1786. Oil on canvas, Private collection. Source: Jean Lipman and Tom Armstrong, *American Folk Painters of Three Centuries* (New York: Hudson Hill Press, Inc., 1980), p. 32.

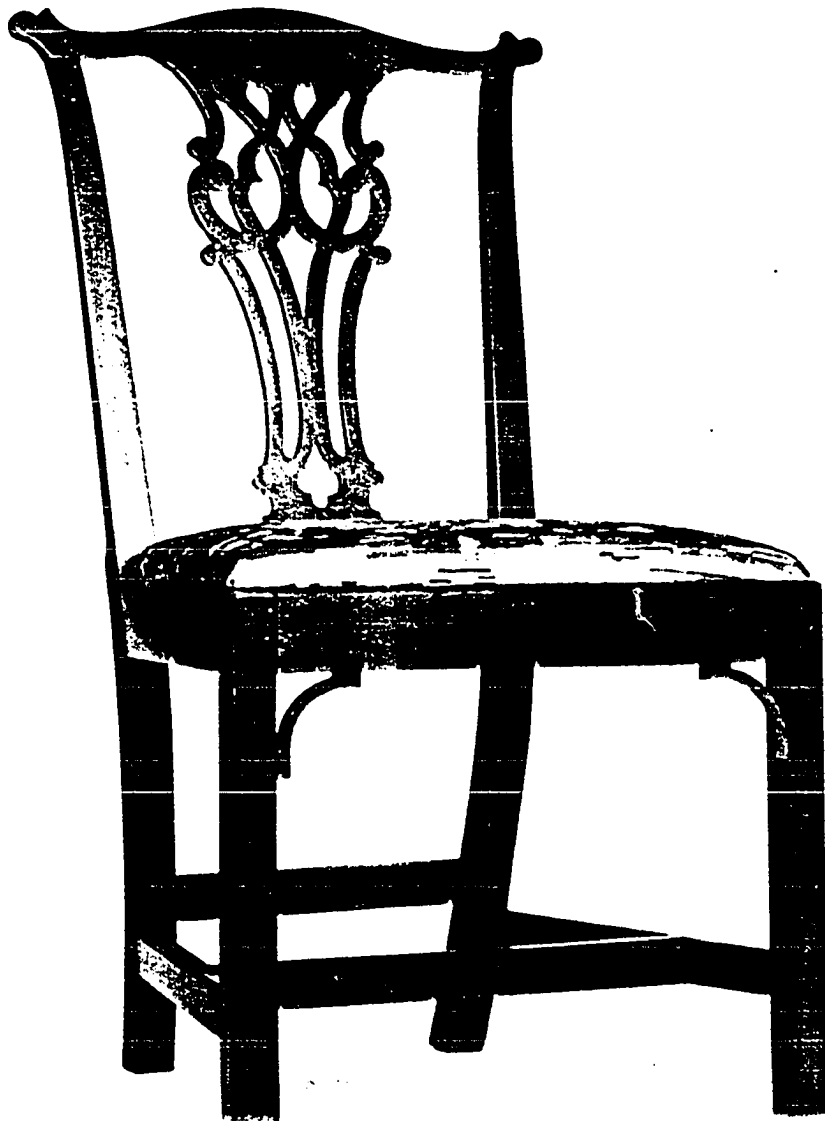


Figure 10. Joined Chair. Attributed to Felix Huntington. Norwich, Connecticut, 1770-85. Mahogany and maple. Leffingwell Inn, The Society of the Founders of Norwich, Connecticut, Inc. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.

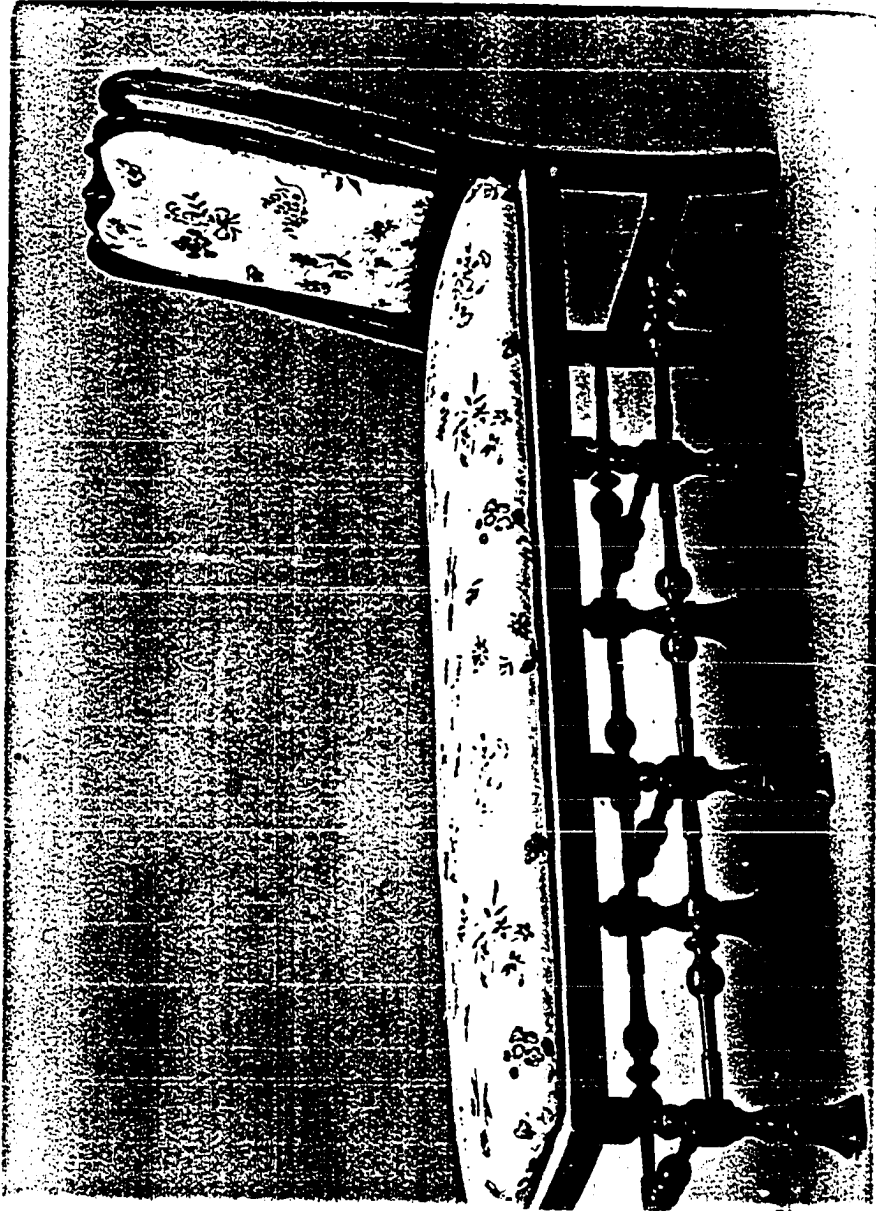


Figure 11. Daybed. Connecticut, 1710-25. Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum.

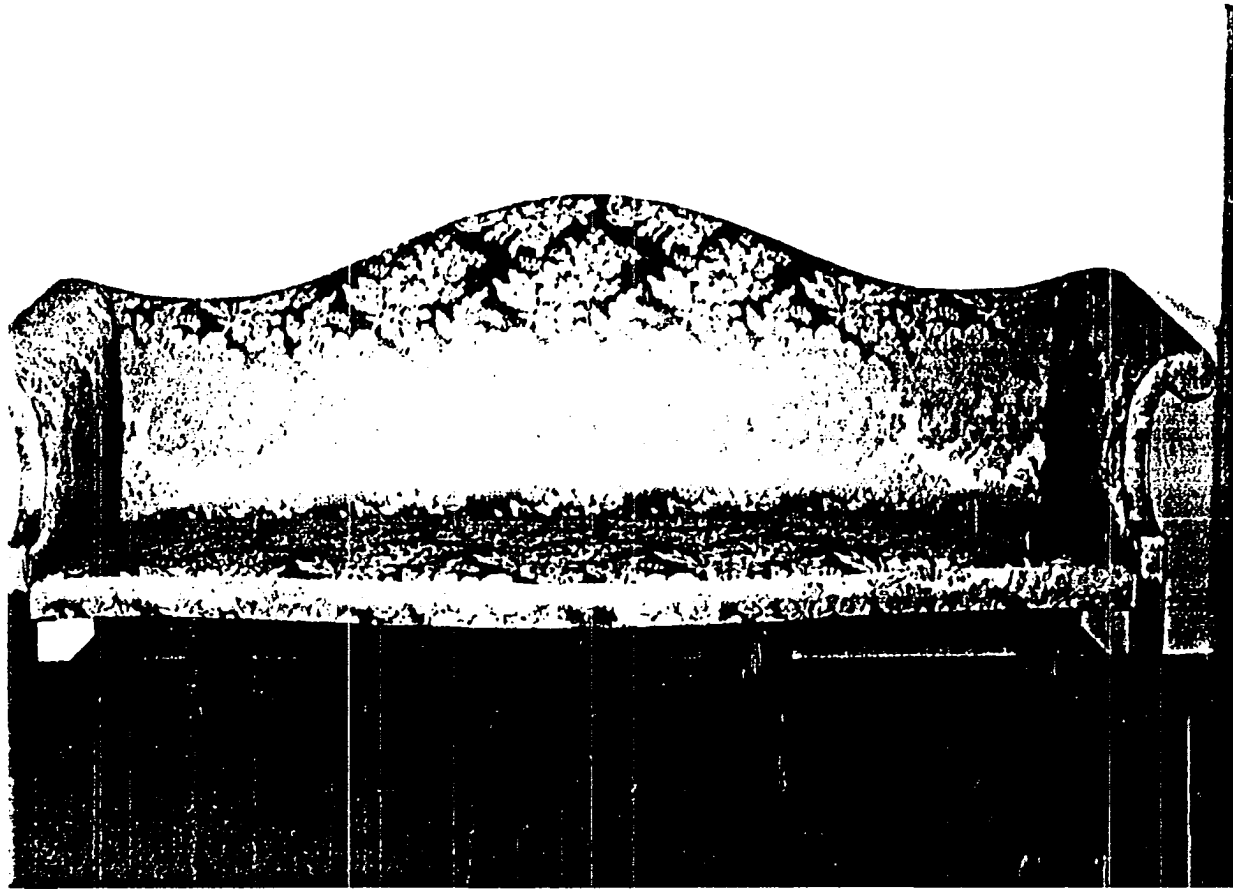


Figure 12. Sofa. Connecticut, 1760-1805. Mahogany, cherry, poplar, and pine. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 13. Tea Table. Connecticut, 1765-75. Cherry and pine. History of ownership in the Colonel John Chandler Family of Woodstock, Connecticut. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 14. Dressing Table. Connecticut, 1740-1760. Cherry and white pine. Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum.

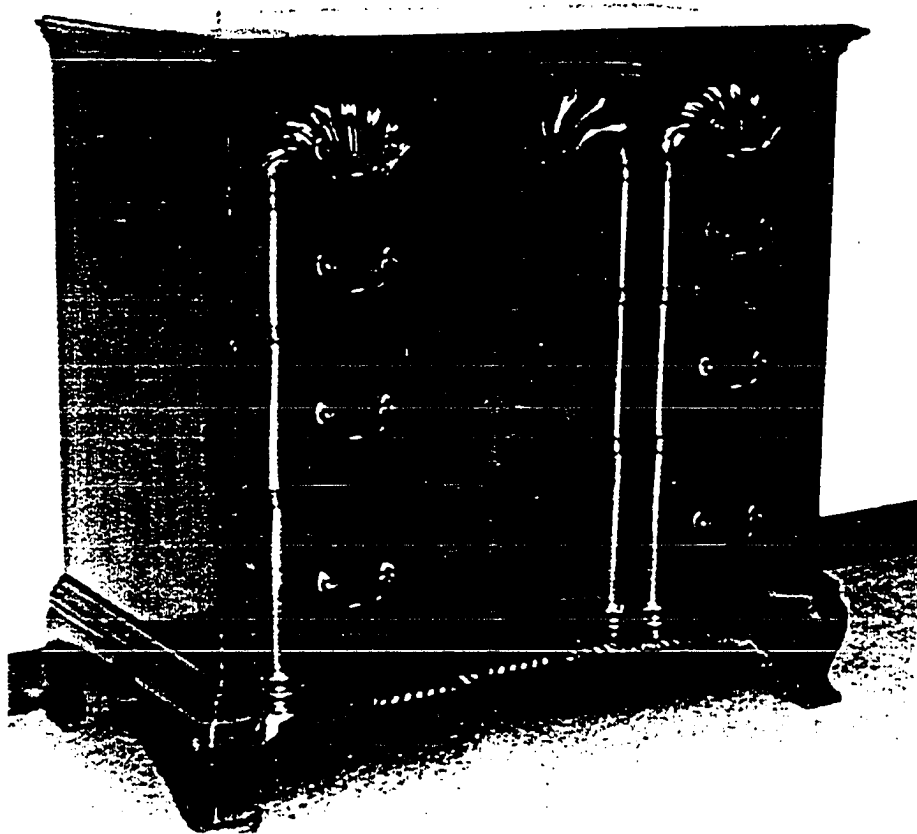


Figure 15. Chest of Drawers. Norwich, Connecticut area, 1755-1805. Cherry, poplar, pine, and chestnut. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.

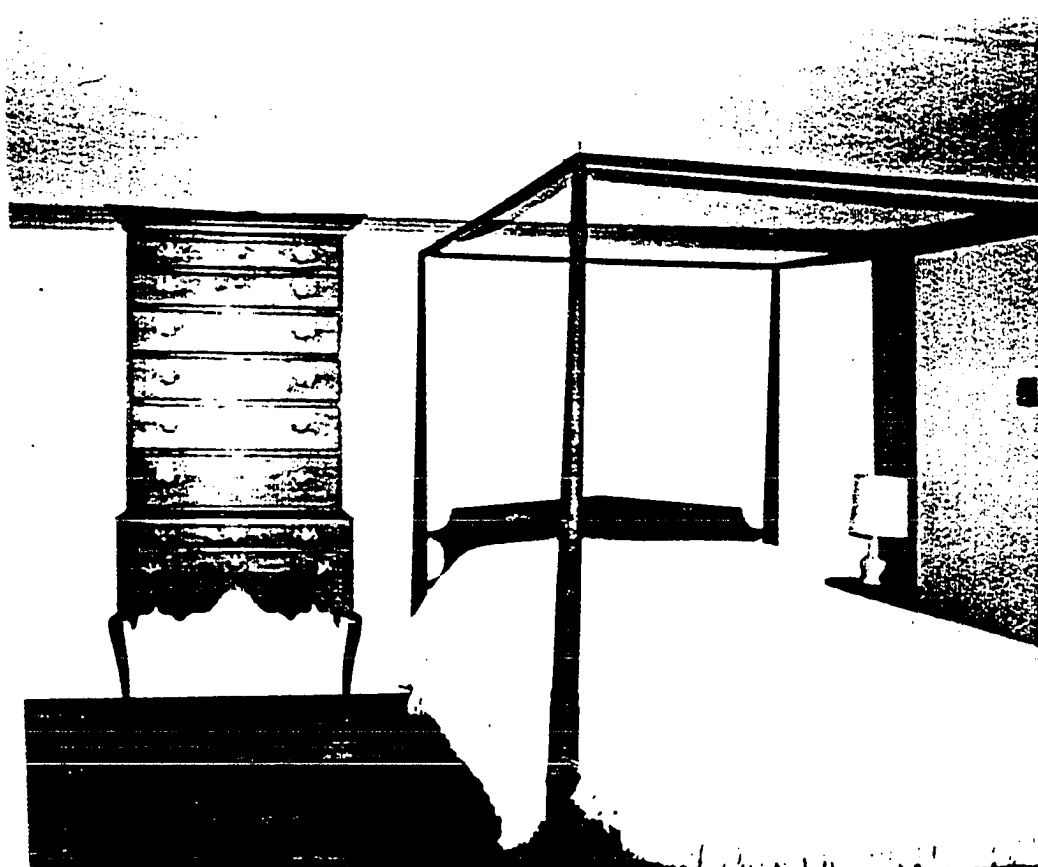


Figure 16. High Chest. Samuel McClellan House, South Woodstock, Connecticut. Photograph by Elizabeth Wood, 1981. Courtesy Elizabeth Wood.



Figure 17. High Chest. Samuel McClellan House, South Woodstock, Connecticut.
Photograph by Elizabeth Wood, ca. 1968. Courtesy, Elizabeth Wood.



Figure 18. Winthrop Chandler. *Judge Ebenezer Devotion*. ca 1772. Oil on canvas, Scotland Historical Society. Courtesy, Lyman Allyn Art Museum.



Figure 19. Desk. Fairfield, Connecticut area, 1740-60. Cherry and Pine. Private collection. Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society.

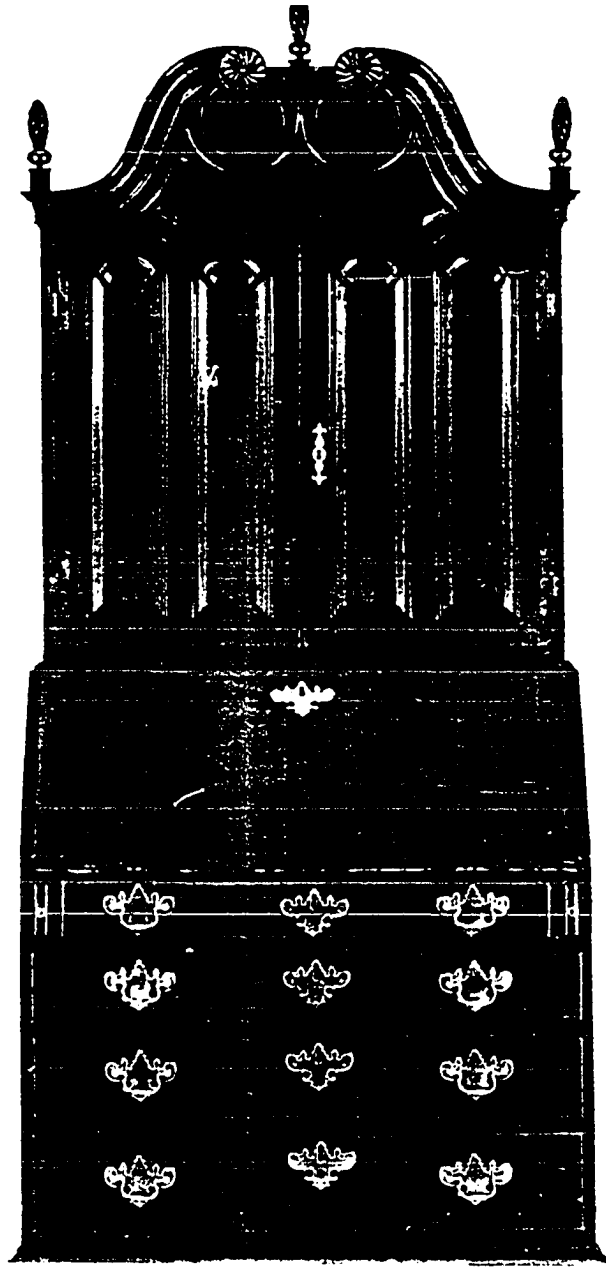


Figure 20. Desk and Bookcase. Connecticut, 1765-80. Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum.



Figure 21. Clock. Attributed to Peregrine White. Samuel McClellan House, South Woodstock, Connecticut. Photograph by Elizabeth Wood, 1981. Courtesy, Elizabeth Wood.



Figure 22. Winthrop Chandler. *Colonel Levi Willard*. ca 1775. Oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Courtesy, Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Slide Library.



Figure 23. Porringer. Silver, American, 1750-1800. Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum.

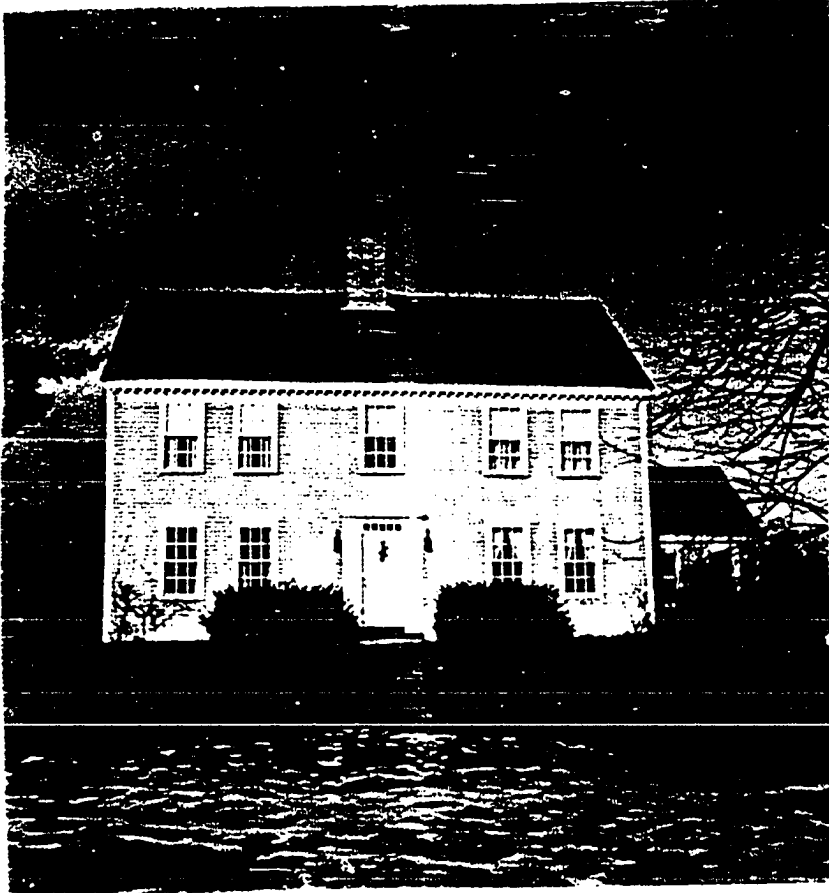


Figure 24. Theophilus Chandler House. Woodstock, Connecticut. Photograph by Elizabeth Wood, 1987. Courtesy, Elizabeth Wood.



Figure 25. William Lyon House. Woodstock, Connecticut. Photograph by Elizabeth Wood. Courtesy, Elizabeth Wood.

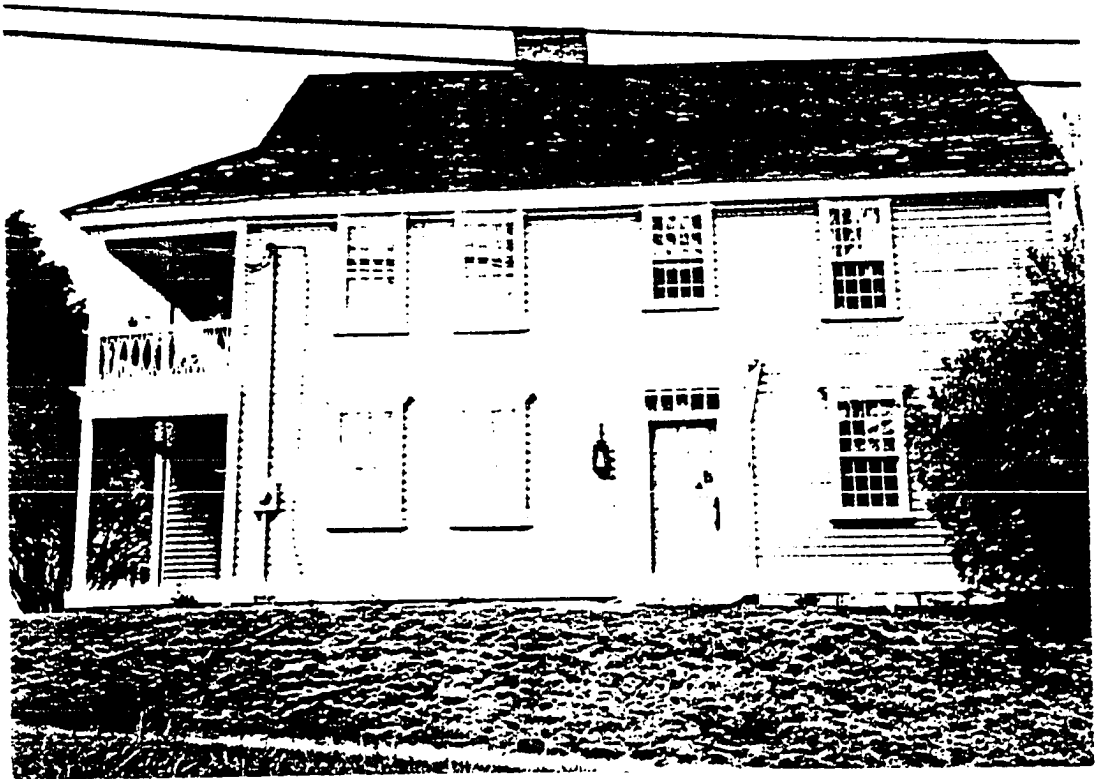


Figure 26. Samuel McClellan House. South Woodstock, Connecticut. Photograph by the author.

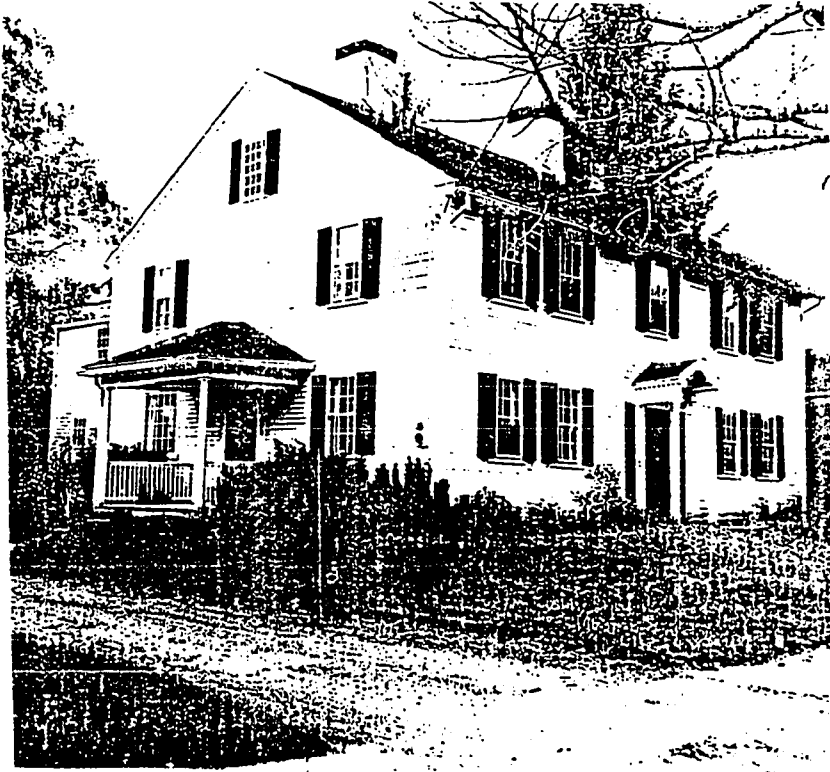


Figure 27. Ephraim Carroll House. Woodstock, Connecticut. Bicentennial Project, Woodstock Historical Society, Inc. Courtesy, Elizabeth Wood, Woodstock Historical Society.

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