

Transcript of Lecture Delivered by  
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on October 25, 1998  
A Tradition of Craftsmen: The Dominy Craftsman of East Hampton

East Hampton has secured a permanent and prominent role in the study of furniture-making in America because of the fortuitous survival of not only documentary written records concerning three generations of the Dominy family's woodworking craft practice but also the remarkable existence of the actual shops where they worked and the tools with which they worked. Their specific detailed story will be told by Charles Hummel and it is not my intention to cover the same ground. Rather, I hope to place the Dominys in a broader context of a craft tradition specific to East Hampton and which attempts to explain why the furniture that was made in this community over a period of 150 years looks the way it does.

The study of decorative arts and material culture today had progressed from an antiquarian approach that stressed a hierarchial, elitist and identification-oriented methodology to a more inclusive analysis which desires to encompass social, political, economic and even religious issues which might impact the objects, the craftsmen who produced them and even the consumers who bought them. The conclusions I have reached may conflict with or contradict some of the other presentations you have heard in this series but history, particularly social and cultural history, is comprised of many layers which lead scholars to a variety of interpretations. In my case, I have tried to let the objects speak for themselves.

The relative ease with which we travel today, not to mention our ability to span hundreds and even thousands of miles with telephones, faxes, radios and televisions, dulls our senses to what it meant to be living in East Hampton in 1650, 1750, or 1850. A letter written by a visitor to East Hampton, Aaron Carter of Newark, New Jersey, to his brother Horace in July, 1858 states, "I will try and tell you what kind of a place I am at. It is 5 miles from Sag Harbor, 15 from Greenport, and about 100 from New York. But from the way they are behind the times, should think they were about 5000." (1)

Some fifty years earlier, Yale president Timothy Dwight had a similar impression when he visited Eastern Long Island: "The passion for appearance, so far at least as far as building is concerned, seems, hitherto, to have fastened very little on the inhabitants of East Hampton. A general air of equality, simplicity and quiet is visible here in a degree perhaps singular....Living by themselves more than the people of most other places, they have become more attentive to whatever is their own, and less to the concerns of others. Hence their own customs, especially those which have come down from their ancestors, have a commanding influence on their conduct." (2) And just over a decade earlier, in 1798, John Lyon Gardiner writing to Reverend Samuel Miller in New York stated, "One might suppose that East Hampton might have been settled from Southampton but the method of pronunciation is quite different altho the towns join. An East Hampton man may be known from a

Southampton man as well as a native of Kent in England may be distinguished from a Yorkshire man." (3)

These three observations suggest that East Hampton might accurately be described as a somewhat isolated and discrete entity, similar in fact to the thirteen distinctive areas of early New England identified by linguist Hans Kurath in his study, *Linguistic Geography of New England*. (4) Each of the regions he identified, ranging from York County, Maine to eastern Connecticut, are separated by physical barriers such as mountains, valleys or rivers and were approximately a day's travel from the adjacent regions. Within each area the inhabitants shared a commonality of speech patterns and cultural values including preferences for specific types of furniture and the manner in which it was ornamented. (5) Clearly East Hampton fits the description of physical separation given by Kurath and the descriptions of the community quoted above suggest a place where the majority of the population had more in common than not. Just as they shared a single church and religion for nearly two centuries, the people of East Hampton shared a common way of life and similar values when it came to a matter of taste and fashion. As we will see, the relative physical isolation of East Hampton combined with related factors would determine both the pattern of woodworking craft practice and the appearance of the furniture produced in this village for over 150 years.

Following the initial settlement in 1649, East Hampton experienced a brief period of rapid growth followed by a sharp decline in the number of new settlers when land within the town was completely accounted for. David Gardiner, in his *Chronicles of the Town of Easthampton*, indicates that by 1653 "almost all of the arable land around the first place of settlement, and in the western and eastern plains, comprising a circuit of two miles, was under some degree of cultivation. The division of the land continued to be made among the original purchasers of their heirs and assigns, in proportion to their interests as tenants in common." (6) It is critical to understand the importance of land ownership, particularly to these initial settlers, all transplants to the new world. In their native England, the ownership of land was the most important determinant of social and economic status. (7) This was especially true for the artisan class, whether they were woodworkers, blacksmiths or weavers. Practicing their specialized trades under guild and town regulations, the ownership of a farm or land was almost impossible to dream of for the average craftsman. The yeoman, or basic farmer who owned his land, was by far the rural artisan's superior in terms of security of livelihood. The best of worlds therefore for the rural craftsman was to own land which he could farm to supplement his craft earnings. It was this possibility of self-sufficiency that farming as well as a craft practice offered that attracted many of the early settlers to America, not the promise of religious freedom.

In East Hampton, within fifty years of settlement, it was almost impossible to obtain land unless you were a descendent of an original family or were fairly wealthy. The result was that at a very early date there was no incentive, in fact no reason for new craftsmen bringing with them new fashions and skills to migrate to the very end of

Long Island. The pattern of craft practice that was therefore established relied on the transferral of tools and skills from master to apprentice, meaning in most cases from father to son or other member of the family. Joshua Garlick, who died in 1677 and was the husband of accused witch Goody Garlick, provided in his will to "give my tools to my sons Joshua and John equally to be Devided betweene them when they are capable to use them." These tools included joyners tools, turning tools, coopers tools and carpenters tools. (8)

The father to son transferral of the knowledge and equipment to earn a living forms a clear pattern in East Hampton. Among the families with multi-generational woodworking craftsmen, many traceable to the seventeenth century, are the Bakers, Dominys, Fithians, Hedges, Mulfords and Schellingens. We cannot forget that other craftsmen appear early in the records and then disappear, such as Alexander Willmott, originally from New Haven, possibly having died without heirs or who moved on, unable to compete against the several family dynasties. (9)

The first generation of craftsmen who settled in East Hampton and other Long Island and New England towns probably had rather specialized skills. For example, a woodworker who was termed a carpenter in England would have been assumed to possess only the tools and skills needed to build houses, not furniture. Joyners were a step above carpenters in both skills and the type of tools they owned. They were trained to do finer finishing work and furniture-making. Other woodworkers specialized in turning, coopering, wheel-wrighting and ship-carpentry. The large urban centers in the Colonies, such as New York and Boston, could support such specialized branches of the craft but the realities and needs of the small rural towns dictated that woodworking craftsmen were forced to take on a variety of woodworking tasks, hence the diversity of tools Joshua Garlick left to his two sons.

Cultural historian Robert St. George, in his article "Fathers, Sons, and Identity: Woodworking Artisans in Southeastern New England, 1620-1700," poses another intriguing idea related to the development of multi-task woodworkers. (10) In his study of the relationships between the first three generations of craftsmen and their sons in the early settlements, he suggests that family craft units or dynasties encouraged diversification of skills to enable the younger members of the family to remain in their home village and compete economically both within and outside the family. In other words, there was a limit to how much new furniture was needed in a demographically stable community like East Hampton and a newly trained artisan might find himself either in competition with his own father or forced to consider moving away. But if the craftsman could also make shingles and clapboard, build houses and mills, produce barrels for whale oil and flour or build boats, his chances of earning a sufficient living were greatly enhanced.

There were, however consequences to generalization versus specialization. On the one hand families tended to remain as a unit and within their original community, but the trade-off was that the roles and skills of the local craftsman, once distinct, now began to blur together and become more homogenous. Taking on many tasks

rather than concentrating on one tended to reduce each to a formulaic process more than a creative one. This was particularly true where furniture-making was involved and which we will look at shortly.

Having a diversity of skills was actually a necessity in a rural community dominated by an agrarian economy. Since ownership of land was of primary importance the practice of a craft took on a different character in East Hampton and surrounding areas than it would have in an urban center. To begin with, lack of enough business and the need to raise crops and animals made woodworking a part-time rather than full-time enterprise. The typical Long Island craftsman owned his house and had his shop within or adjacent to it, as did the Dominy's and their contemporary Timothy Mulford. He owned approximately 100 acres of land, usually a few acres adjacent to his house and the rest in fields a short distance away. Agrarian economies depended heavily upon barter rather than cash transactions and labor was a common means of paying for goods and services. With his own farm providing much of the family's basic needs, the craftsman

could use his special skills to provide products and services in exchange for any other items he needed.

An active imagination helps to comprehend the variety of tasks a woodworking craftsman might be called upon to perform in a town like East Hampton. There were houses to be built, houses to be moved and houses to be torn down. The meeting house might need repairs, the jail a new door. Barns, sheep sheds and chicken coops were required not to mention work on the fulling mill, pecking mill and grist mill. For the farm the craftsman might provide an ox yoke; a wheel barrow; rake, hoe or ax handle; feed troughs; or even a wagon. Household needs had to be accommodated and might include bread trays, knife boxes, butter molds, salt boxes, rolling pins, curtain rods, shelves, dough troughs, dry sinks, mortars and pestles, pressing boards, ink stands, cartridge boxes, foot stoves and hat boxes. There was also a need for looms, spinning wheels, hetchel boards and swifts. Among the more unusual items were crutches, writing slate frames, rulers and wig boxes. The craftsman literally provided a cradle to grave service with his products including coffins.

We tend to think of craftsmen as those who were creating and making brand new items, but a look through any woodworker's account books indicate that a great deal of his time was spent repairing or fixing furniture, farm equipment and household articles. In fact, entries for "mending" appear so frequently it would appear that no broken furniture was ever discarded. Farm equipment received hard use as did spinning wheels and replacement parts were constantly needed. Chair posts, stretchers and splats as well as table tops and leaves were replaced. In 1831, East Hampton cabinetmaker Septimus Osborne mended twenty-four desks at Clinton Academy. (11) Furthering my belief nothing was thrown away even if it did go out of style Osborne also altered old style chests with one or two drawers into more fashionable four drawer bureaus. (12)

Another important determinant in the pattern of craft practice for the woodworker in a rural environment was the change of seasons. The rhythm of daily life, the tasks to be performed and when, were all dictated by the calendar. As Philip Zea has said in his essay 'Rural Craftsman and Design', "In rural America, cyclical patterns of production, exchange and consumption define the life of the people." (13) Charles Hummel noted that both Nathaniel Dominy IV and Felix Dominy showed, 'a preoccupation with the passage of time' and the seasons with Felix even keeping a "Journal of Weather and Heat." (14) It only makes sense that as a part-time craftsman with a need to work his farm the rural woodworker would prefer, if possible, to concentrate on making furniture during the winter months. Of course he would take on work in the summer if necessary and especially if he had sons to help out or could barter his services for labor in the fields. The importance of maintaining a balance between his craft and the source of food for his family and livestock is nowhere better illustrated than in the accounts of Bridgehampton woodworker Nathan Topping Cook. In the midst of a series of entries dated 1797 involving the building of a house for David Hedges, Cook simply noted, "this Day quit to harvest." (15)

Before taking a look at some of the furniture made or used in East Hampton, let us quickly summarize several key points which will help us place these objects in context. The rural and essentially agrarian environment of East Hampton dictated a pattern of woodworking craft practice that was part-time rather than full-time in nature and which quickly evolved, shortly after initial settlement, into a craft characterized by diversified rather than specialized skills. The relative physical isolation of East Hampton and the lack of land or other inducements to attract new settlers and particularly new craftsmen, until the late 18th century development of nearby Sag Harbor, meant that the community was dependant upon a group of craftsmen who were part of locally trained family craft dynasties. Skills, tools and patterns, not to mention shared values and attitudes, were passed from one generation to the next establishing a continuity in craft practice and in deed---that is, the physical shape and form of the furniture produced---which remained almost unchanged and only rarely challenged for 150 years.

The story of East Hampton is embodied in its furniture. Yes, the story could be more complete and detailed but it does at least provide an outline. Founded in 1649 by a small group of settlers who were apparently unhappy in their original landing point of Lynn, Massachusetts, East Hampton actually found itself under the jurisdiction of the New Haven Colony and subsequently Connecticut. Despite years of political dispute and wrangling which ended with all of Long Island becoming part of New York, the eastern end of Long Island became a virtual annex of Connecticut through its family and commercial connections. Many of the early settlers on both the north and south forks of Long Island came from the New Haven Colony. Among the earliest surviving pieces of furniture which have a history of ownership in East Hampton are those with a New Haven Colony connection.

The carved chest originally owned by Thomas Osborne, a tanner who moved to

East Hampton from New Haven about 1650, is one of the most important pieces of American seventeenth century furniture and possibly the earliest documented example since it would have to have been made before Osborne's cross-Sound move. In the collection of "Home Sweet Home", it is believed to have been made by Thomas Mulliner, a craftsman who learned his trade in Ipswich, England.(16) The most elaborate of seven related examples it represents the transition from medieval to classical design in both furniture and architecture. The chest displays the overall repetitive designs associated with medieval art but it is organized within a classical framework of architectural arches. Interestingly, four of the seven chests have a history of ownership in East Hampton and three of them were possibly made there.

The chest now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art descended in the Stratton Family and purportedly was originally owned by John Stratton (d. 1685). Although its design follows the same format of the Mulliner-Osborne chest, we can see a flattening of the facade with the arches incise-carved on the flat panels. Another chest owned by the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities was, in all likelihood, made in East Hampton for the Hedges family from whom it was obtained. The carving is quite linear and appears to be copied from similar carving on the end panels of the Osborne chest. We can get a sense from this chest of what other joined furniture in East Hampton looked like. Apparently the chest was originally painted, the stiles and rails in red, the panels possibly ochre and the channel moldings and abstract flower stems in black or a dark green. Supporting an attribution to an East Hampton craftsman, albeit an anonymous one, is yet another locally owned chest with similar carved motifs, associated with the Sherrill family.

Small seventeenth century lidded boxes have traditionally been called Bible boxes although they were probably used to store other books and papers and even small articles of clothing and jewelry. Two examples in the collections of the East Hampton Historical Society, one carved with foliated S-scrolls, the other with stylized flowers and the date 1703, may have been brought to East Hampton from the Guilford area of Connecticut. A similar small box-like cupboard which descended until recently in the Hedges family served a similar purpose of storing valuables. The interior contains small drawers which could be secured by locking the paneled door. Apparently someone lost the key at some point and had to resort to forcing open the lock, hence the patch on the door.

Sadly, our study of and knowledge about the furnishing of seventeenth and eighteenth century Long Island homes has been severely hampered by the loss of the vast majority of the probate records and inventories through a series of fires including the 1911 fire at the New York State Library in Albany. The surviving 1682 will of Thomas Diament of East Hampton gives us a glimpse, however, of what one of the more substantial members of the community owned: "To my eldest sone James Diament.....{I leave) my best fether bed that I usually lie upon and all the furniture belonging to it as Curtains boulsters vallainces pellowes Covered blankets pillow beers and a paire of my best sheets together with my bedstead....my

long table In the bigger Roome with ye forme {bench} belonging to it and my greater looking glass and the coboard in the room aforesaid and one of my great chests and three of my best chayres and my great wicker chayre, also a Chest of Drawers," (17)

We can only imagine what a grand statement that bed with its curtains, valances and pillows must have made. For those with a desire to see a close approximation of what a fully dressed bed of this type might have looked like, the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has recently installed a wonderful reproduction fully-hung seventeenth century bedstead. Diament's reference to his "great wicker chayre" probably referred to the material the seat was fashioned from. A great chair otherwise indicated a large armchair reserved for the head of the house. Such a chair might have been similar to the example in the Wheelock collection of the East Hampton Historical Society. Even with the loss of its finials and handgrips and with the addition of rockers it is still an impressive chair. An even better understanding of the power that such a chair could convey can be seen in the great chair owned by Barnabas Horton, just across the Bay in Southold, and which is now in the Winterthur Museum collections. Benches and stools were probably the most common form of early seating furniture but are exceedingly rare survivals, making the example that until this past year had always been in the Hedges family of East Hampton that much more important as a documented example. It is in fact the only known Long Island joint stool and is believed to have been first owned by either Stephen Hedges (1634/5-1734) or his son Daniel (1677-1734).

While I have stressed the isolation of East Hampton, I have not intended to imply that communication, trade and commercial intercourse with the outside world did not exist. A great deal of trade occurred, but my guess is that a very limited number of people from East Hampton actually traveled outside the town and conversely, since East Hampton was not at the crossroads of a major trade route, that few outside visitors came to East Hampton until late in the 18th century. This situation would have had a considerable effect on consumer tastes. After all, if you could not actually see the latest fashions or styles how would you know you wanted them? We can only guess at this point that an occasional individual who did travel or who had family or business contacts in New York, New Haven or other outside locations either ordered or brought back to East Hampton an item of furniture that struck their fancy. The other possibility is that an enterprising merchant, and there were many of them during this period, simply took a chance and sent items to an agent who would sell them in the community. For example, in 1735, the schooner Hannah, out of the port of Boston and bound for Long Island, carried a cargo that included "twenty hundreds of Isle of May salt, three thousand and five hundred feet of Boards & plank, one chaise, two dozen chairs & a parcel of Earthen ware here made also two barrels of nails, a parcel of Brasiery wire, Sundry Loose Shopgoods & one Trunk & one box cont. Sundry European goods here openly bought & all here legally imported." (18) We don't know if this schooner was headed to eastern Long Island but certainly similar ships did trade regularly along the length of the Sound.

All of this detour to try to explain the existence of this leather upholstered chair in East Hampton. Of New York origin, it is similar to hundreds of chairs made in the second-half of the seventeenth century both in New York and Boston and which were staples of a coastal trade up and down the eastern seaboard. The chair is an urban and sophisticated statement. It's ownership in East Hampton either conferred status upon the owner or raised a few eyebrows.

Let us look at one more seventeenth century piece of furniture before moving on. Collected locally at the end of the nineteenth century by William Efner Wheelock and gifted twenty years ago with many other examples of East Hampton furniture to the East Hampton Historical Society, this square table, as it may contemporarily have been referred to, also relates to New Haven Colony furniture design. The vigorous disc or spool turnings of the legs and stretchers are similar to turned supports on a great cupboard in the Metropolitan Museum of Art believed to have been owned by Connecticut Governor Robert Treat of Milford and a second cupboard probably owned by Milford minister Samuel Andrew. While undoubtedly owned in East Hampton, we do not know whether this Jacobean style piece was made in Connecticut or here in East Hampton.

A major stylistic change occurred at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century in furniture design, which involved significant innovations in the way furniture was conceived, constructed and used. Most significantly for the woodworking craftsman, joinery gave way to cabinetmaking. Mortise-and-tenon pegged stiles and rails fitted with panels were replaced by dove-tailed case and drawer construction and carved surfaces were banished in favor of burlled or otherwise figured shimmering facades of veneer. New skills and new tools were required to make furniture in the William and Mary and subsequent Queen Anne styles. In urban areas this happened seemingly overnight as European - trained craftsmen flooded into the cities of Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Within a generation their trained apprentices were producing furniture in the latest fashion. But what about rural areas such as East Hampton?

The simple answer is that they couldn't compete and couldn't change, at least not overnight. Fortunately for them, their customers walked to the beat of the same drummer. Change, when it came, came slowly and was modified to accommodate the skills that the local craftsmen possessed. Over time they would acquire a few new tools and learn to make rough dove-tails. They would adopt a number of new furniture forms and they would attempt to update them even if only superficially. Occasionally they would be challenged to attempt to replicate a piece of furniture from outside their world. They did their best with the tools they possessed but, eventually, they would find that they were left behind.

A tall-case clock in the Winterthur Museum which was found in East Hampton exemplifies the new William and Mary style. While it may have been owned in East Hampton it was certainly not made here since no local craftsman possessed the ability to make a veneered case. It is much more likely to have been made in New

York or one of the western Long island towns. It may have served, however, as a model for the clock in the Wheelock Collection which is possibly the earliest tall-case clock made here. The simple case reflects the abilities of an East Hampton carpenter-joiner to emulate urban styles. The works are not complex and appear original to the case.

East Hampton's response to the new style of chairs was a relatively easy one. Rural versions could be produced using the same tools and techniques that had been used previously. Whether using vertical moulded bannisters, as on the armchair said to have been owned by Reverend Nathaniel Huntting (1675-1753), or a slat-back armchair, both in the East Hampton Historical Society collections, the component parts could be turned on a lathe or shaped simply by hand.

Another new seating form in the early eighteenth century was the corner chair. Tales abound that it was created for a gentleman to be able to sit in while accommodating his broad-coat and sword. Regardless of its purpose, other than a piece of seating furniture, it appears to have been a popular form on eastern Long Island judging from the number of surviving examples. One, owned by Samuel Miller of Fireplace in East Hampton is the only example of Long Island furniture known to have had a Spanish or paintbrush foot. Again, the chair is composed of turned or simply cut-out elements. A second corner or roundabout chair in the East Hampton Historical Society collections amplifies the rural joiner's approach to duplicating a high-style design. Probably made thirty or more years later than the Miller corner chair, this example creates a Chippendale style chairback splat by drilling out circular holes, rather than carving or even cutting them out, in a fashionable pattern.

The desk was one of the important new furniture forms, necessary for any man who claimed a pretense to business. Certainly East Hampton craftsman had to have seen or had access to a desk in the new style to be able to copy one. Their version was without veneers but it was credible nonetheless. The slant-front desk in the collection of the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, made for a member of the Tallmadge family around 1720, is in the full-blown style, sans veneer; but with ball-turned feet and William and Mary style brasses it is a fashionable item. Both the Tallmadge and the Timothy Mulford desk, owned by the East Hampton Historical Society, represent a significant step up in the skills of the local craftsman. Not only is dove-tailing employed, but part patterns are being employed to make, in the case of the Mulford desk, bracket feet.

The Mulford desk is a monument in itself because it proves that East Hampton had at least one other eighteenth century craftsman capable of making substantial furniture. The desk which otherwise might easily have been attributed to the Dominy family of craftsmen, bears an inscription on the interior document drawer, "Made att East Hampton / By Timothy Mulford / Bridgehampton may ye 24 1749 / John Cook His Box." Mulford is identified as a joiner in a land indenture of 1754, and he was one of at least six other Mulford family woodworkers. (19) His shop, like the Dominy's was adjacent to his house on the corner of Main Street and Buell's Lane.

Deacon John Cook, for whom the desk was made, lived in Mecox, part of present-day Bridgehampton.

There is no question that the Dominy family was, to put it as a pun, the dominant craft family dynasty in East Hampton. Their mechanical genius seems to have been in their genes and they are one of very few craft families in Colonial America able to work both with wood and metal. Yet it is clear that other woodworking craftsmen were able to hold their own and earn a living in East Hampton. During the same period that the Dominy's were most active, David Baker, Mordecai Homan, Reuben Hedges, William Huntting, Obadiah Jones and several other craftsmen were also working.(20) Nearby, Southampton also had several woodworking family dynasties including the Sanfords, Coopers and Jagggers and it was inevitable that their territories and potential customers would overlap in the middle ground between them. Undoubtedly there were feelings of competition, but in a rural small town environment there was also a realistic evaluation of how much one could depend on craft practice versus other means of earning a living.

Probably the most common form of case furniture in a rural town was the chest with drawer or drawers. Its simple construction was perfectly suited to the carpenter-joiners skills. Essentially these chests are large boxes constructed from six boards. The sides are cut out at the base to provide boot-jack feet, the top is hinged to provide access to the deep compartment and a drawer is inserted in the front. Finishing decorative touches consist of a simple plane-run moulding around the lid and base and the application of a coat of paint, or "cullering" as account book entries called it. Red, or vermillion, blue and black seem to have been the most frequently used colors. Charles Hummel, in discussing the products from the Dominy shop, refers to the timeless quality they seem to possess.(21) Indeed, the local craftsmen repeated the same design concepts over and over again distilling forms like these chests to their basic elements and without additional ornament or decoration which might have dated them more closely to a particular style or fashion. One of the few clues to dating these chests with drawers, all of which were found in East Hampton, is to study the brass hardware (if it is original, as it is here) and follow the progression from the early eighteenth century William and Mary tear-drop pulls to late-eighteenth century Chippendale backplates with bail handles.

The acceptance of these simple, utilitarian and timeless, almost styleless pieces by the vast majority of the community reinforces our sense of communally-shared sets of values. If someone wanted to really make a statement they could always turn to a source outside of the town or they could indulge in a piece that more subtly said fashion through choice of more expensive materials, such as the imported mahogany used in this chest with drawers owned by Southampton silversmith, Elias Pelletreau.

If any single object, including buildings, could be said to represent the identity of the town of East Hampton during the colonial period, it was the Meetinghouse. Serving as both the ecclesiastical and secular center of the community, it was here that most of the town would have gathered together. Interestingly, therefore, it was

the Meetinghouse that served as the public stage or showcase for tradition, values and even fashion. A turned post that is a surviving relic from the 1717 Meetinghouse speaks as eloquently as any piece of furniture can of East Hampton's craft tradition. The prominent baluster-turned vase is the basic decorative element found on chairs, tables and stair-balusters throughout the eighteenth century. It is the common vocabulary of all East Hampton's craftsmen, whether they were Dominys, Bakers or Schellingens.

Several other architectural remains from the Meetinghouse are also in the East Hampton Historical Society's collections. Dating from a remodeling project in the 1750's, the boldly modeled pulpit with distinctive meandering vine-and-berry carving and polychrome-paint is derived directly from architectural work found in Hartford and surrounding areas of the Connecticut River Valley. The architectural capital is strikingly similar to those on a doorway from a Westfield, Massachusetts house now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Sherry Foster in her article entitled, "The Reverend Buell of East Hampton: Tastemaker in the Connecticut Valley Tradition" makes a cogent case for Buell being responsible for importing Connecticut craftsmen to undertake this work.<sup>(22)</sup> Indeed, it would have taken a personality as strong and influential as Buell to push this project through. Assuming this was the case, just what did the local craftsman think of being usurped?

Perhaps it was Buell's influence, perhaps it was the upset of the Revolution and enforced contact with Connecticut, or perhaps it was plain chance but breezes and hints of outside fashion occasionally blew across East Hampton. Tea-drinking and the social ceremony accompanying it called for specialized furniture forms. Clearly the model for this locally made tea table came from Connecticut. Pay heed to the shape of the scalloped apron for you will see it again on local high chests of drawers. Another variant of the tea table had a circular top and turned pedestal base supported on tripod cabriole legs. This outstanding example was owned by Silvanus Miller of East Hampton but was made in New York City. The response of local craftsmen was to make a table like this one in the Wheelock collection. This particular maker, and I am sure he was not a Dominy, can be identified by the shape of his rather chunky baluster-turned pedestals and undished plain tops. Here is a stand by the same craftsman. In comparison, this is a stand attributed to Nathaniel Dominy IV.

The high chest of drawers was not a popular form in New York after 1730 but numerous examples from eastern Long Island are known and which indicate the cross-Sound influence of New England and particularly Connecticut. The terminology is somewhat confusing since the Dominys referred to this form as a chest-on-chest while Caleb Cooper in Southampton apparently called them high chests and his contemporary Daniel Sandford seems to have termed them a case of drawers and frame. Certainly more stylish than the chest with drawer and significantly more expensive, anywhere from four to ten times the cost of a simple chest, I am struck yet again at how little variation exists between the numerous surviving examples despite the fact that they were made by at least three, and maybe

more, different craftsmen. The similarity of these chests may indicate a particular prototype but more likely speaks to the issue of tradition and shared taste. The first example is in the Wheelock collection. The second was found in Bridgehampton and bears an inscription, "O.B. Lucas." Lucas was a nineteenth century Sag Harbor cabinetmaker who must have repaired this piece. The third, also in the Wheelock collection, is attributed to Caleb Cooper of Southampton.

The most ambitious piece of furniture made in East Hampton was probably the desk and bookcase Nathaniel Dominy V made for John Lyon Gardiner in 1800. Charles Hummel will be sure to discuss it in his lecture so I show it only as a culminating and aberrational example of a rural East Hampton craftsman using all of his skills and ingenuity to produce an object that really was foreign to his experience. Gardiner was clearly one of the most worldly inhabitants of East Hampton and was affluent enough to buy and order fashionable items such as a pair of Liverpool ceramic pitchers from England, decorated with his name and family coat-of-arms.<sup>(23)</sup> When remodeling and furnishing his house in 1796, he acquired numerous articles from New York including a sideboard, looking glass, sofa, carpet and mahogany bedstead. His instructions for the latter were that it be "plain neat and fashionable."<sup>(24)</sup>

Gardiner owned other furniture indicative of his wide-ranging tastes including this Hartford, Connecticut area desk-and-bookcase, yet he frequently and constantly patronized local craftsmen and accepted their vision of taste and fashion. Lest we conclude that Gardiner was a singular exception, we do know that other examples of outside fashion and different style were owned in eighteenth century East Hampton, such as this Newport high chest and rectangular tea table which descended in the Tillinghast family. But, in the final analysis, we must conclude that for most members of the East Hampton community the traditional values and objects created and shaped over a 150 year period of time were more acceptable and desired than the choices available elsewhere.

## NOTES

1. Letter, Aaron Carter to Horace Carter, July 27, 1858, East Hampton Free Library, East Hampton, New York.
2. Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (4 vols.; London: Printed for William Baynes and Son et. al), 1823, 111,297.
3. John Lyon Gardiner, "Gardiner's East Hampton," *Collections of the New York Historical Society* (New York: Printed for the Society, 1869), 233.
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