

PIECES of HISTORY Art Shaw

"AN INTERESTING AUCTION"

In 1820 Amos Gile came to Bastard Township from Vermont and settled on lot 19 in the fifth concession, fronting on the Harlem Road. In 1833 he bought more land in lot 18 which he left to his son Agel. With the addition of the west half of lot 17, Agel Gile was able to establish a prosperous farm and a stable family which remained on that property for three more generations. About 1855 he built a beautiful stone house which stands by the Harlem Road about a mile south of the village.

On May 16 and 18, 1981, this house was the site of an auction sale at which the furniture of all four generations was disposed of. For the purpose of this article I will ignore the last three generations and concentrate on the first one.

The fact that so much of the first generation furniture survived is a tribute to the frugality and stability of the family. Even though subsequent generations had furnished the house with the styles of their times, the displaced furniture was not sold or discarded but stored carefully away. In the sale there were enough very primitive hand made pieces that it seemed the complete furnishings of the original log house might have been there.

In addition to being old and well preserved, many of these artifacts had been outstanding examples of their type to start with. Perhaps the star of the show was the blanket box shown in photo CD 2 from my picture file. The addition of the drawer in the bottom and the carefully dove-tailed base boards set this specimen above the ubiquitous blanket box that we all know. But its beautiful simplicity does not outshine the country Empire style chest in photo CD 3. This is the product of a highly accomplished and somewhat sophisticated cabinetmaker of whom Leeds County can be proud. There was another Empire chest, no less outstanding but bigger and darker in colour. There was also a fine drop leaf table with a wide walnut top and gate legs. One of the gate legs was broken but the pieces were there and the break was recent as if it had happened in preparing for the sale. The rocking chair which is shown (poorly) in photo CS 9 was built and signed by Mr. Rathburn who was a cabinetmaker in Harlem as early as 1851. Photo WS 2 shows a wash stand of the enclosed type with lift lid. These were most popular in the Maritimes and were not common in this area.

Besides the furniture there the artifacts that the family had used to establish their prosperity and independence. There was a flax breaker, spinning wheel and accessories for a loom

but no loom. Among the family papers is preserved a picture of an unidentified ancestor of the Giles spinning flax on the same spinning wheel. The 1851 census records show that Agel's brother and sisters on the home place in lot 19 produced 50 yards of linen cloth as well as 30 yards of fulled cloth and 40 yards of flannel from the wool of their 70 sheep. The men in the family included blacksmiths and harness makers, all of which was evident from the artifacts included in the two day sale.

In the early 70's, I remember stopping at that house to admire the 1931 Plymouth coupe in the drive shed. I guess they took pride in everything they owned.

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FROM 4:30 P.M.
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SUNDAY, JULY 12, 1981

FROM

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NO CHARGE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 5

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