

AN OCCUPATIONAL-BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF WILLIAM WINTER  
(1863-1936): AN ANALYSIS OF A FURNITURE MAKER  
AND THE FURNITURE MAKING PROCESS  
IN CLARKE'S BEACH, NEWFOUNDLAND

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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(1863-1936): AN ANALYSIS OF A FURNITURE MAKER AND  
THE FURNITURE MAKING PROCESS IN CLARKE'S BEACH, NEWFOUNDLAND

By

Cynthia Boyd

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
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St. John's

Newfoundland

Plate 1

William Henry Winter, furniture maker of Clarke's Beach,  
1863-1936

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)





## Abstract

This thesis illustrates the versatility and creativity of a rural craftsman in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the small community of Clarke's Beach, Newfoundland. By analyzing this furniture maker from an occupational-biographical approach, his life and work are presented in order to understand not only the furniture made but the craftsman who made the furniture.

William Winter's furniture making enterprise is examined from an occupational folklife perspective with particular reference to this craftsman's canon of work technique. Winter's furnishings exemplify, in form and decoration, the desires and aesthetics of both consumer and producer, as well as the influences of factory-produced furniture and local furniture models. Of particular importance, Winter's furniture was solidly built for the homes and residences of a diverse clientele from merchants, fishermen, to priests. His furniture was similar to other examples of Newfoundland outport furniture in its use of numerous styles, designs, and decorative embellishments. Yet Winter's decorative details, in the form of applied, carved, and handpainted motifs, have been borrowed by other contemporary craftsmen as represented on pieces collected by artifact researchers and antique dealers.

William Winter's lasting contribution to the culture and heritage of Newfoundland is not only in surviving examples of his own manufacture but in examples of other furniture models that his work no doubt inspired. His furniture has adorned the living rooms and graced the bedrooms of homes throughout Newfoundland since the early 1900s. This craftsman will be remembered for his ingenuity in creating and constructing furnishings that not only fulfilled the needs of men and women in the 1900s, but of people of the present day.



### Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Bill and Nick Winter with thanks for teaching me what I never knew and for giving me memories that I will always have.

## Acknowledgements

As with any written work, this thesis is the result of three years of all-consuming research and fieldwork. Without the patience, assistance, and knowledge of generous individuals from the state of California and the province of Newfoundland, particularly of Conception Bay North, I would not have been able to finish this seemingly phenomenal task.

First of all, I want to acknowledge members of the Winter family in Clarke's Beach, notably Bill Winter and his wife, Florence who graciously allowed me to visit and stay with them throughout the years 1990-1992. Their hospitality was wide-ranging from providing me with a place to sleep, as well as delicious meals, to responding to numerous and often mundane questions. I am indebted to Bill Winter for sharing with me his knowledge and memory of his father's furniture making business, as well as his father's personal traits. Bill deserves a medal of honour for never showing frustration when I asked why something was made or how it was used. Bill's younger brother, Nick was just as patient when he responded to questions related to William Winter. His ability to recall childhood memories of activities in his father's workshop and later, of his own activities as a furniture maker, were tremendous.

In Newfoundland, my principal informants were Mike Abbott of North River, Clarence Burn of South River, Johnny and Anne Boone and son, Ross of South River, Margaret Brown of Clarke's Beach, Paddy and Francis Kavanaugh of Clarke's Beach, Everett Moore of Clarke's Beach, Elizabeth Whelan of North River, Ina Taylor of St. John's, and members of the Winter family: Bill, Florence and sons, Jerome in Clarke's Beach and Ted in Trepassey. Father Walsh of All Hallows Parish in North River and the staff of the Townhall of Clarke's Beach have been extremely helpful to me. I especially want to thank the Bown family of Bell Island who welcomed me into their home and attempted to help me find Winter furniture on their lovely island. In the United States and Canada, my chief informants were Nick Winter of Windsor, California and Peggy [Winter] Mullaby of Detroit, Michigan. Others who provided information on William Winter were Ellen Carolus of Yakima, Washington, Bill Winter, Jr. of Toronto, Ontario, and Bob Winter of Seattle, Washington. Antique dealer, Ron Hoddinott of Livyer's Antiques in St. John's gave interesting commentary on Winter's furnishings, and John Pruden of Hamilton, Ontario contributed to this thesis from a "individual collector's" point of view.

I wish to thank Walter Peddle, Curator of Material History at the Newfoundland Museum, for providing encouragement in my study of William Winter. His dedicated but sometimes grueling approach to the teaching of Newfoundland furniture construction and design provided me with inspiration. Walter gave the "fine-toothed comb" approach to chapter three and I thank him. The entire staff of the Newfoundland Museum, including the interpreters, always provided me with assistance especially for the exhibition "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter." I would especially like to thank Ralph Clemmens, Rupert Batten, and Frank Barrington of the Historic Resources Division. Freelance photographer, Ned Pratt graciously allowed me to use his photographs of Winter's decorative details, and I am forever grateful. I would also like to thank Doug Wright and Peter Soucy, who produced an excellent feature on William Winter for the CBC national television show Mid-day in July, 1991. Thanks to David M. Porter for saving the day with the handsketched map of Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay North.

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Without the insightful discussion and debate with fellow graduate students of the Department of Folklore, I am afraid I would have been lost. Philip Hiscock, archivist of MUNFLA and fellow graduate student, initially asked if I was providing a union list of Winter pieces in the thesis.

I want to thank him for reading several chapters of this thesis; his suggestions were extremely valuable. Although in the process of writing her own thesis, Melissa Ladenheim consistently provided advice, encouragement, and numerous cups of tea. Both Melissa and her husband and fellow graduate student, James Moreira have continually offered hours of service to myself and just about anyone who steps onto the threshold of the MUN Department of Folklore; my thanks to them for so many invigorating and stimulating discussions. Fellow graduate students, Anita Best, Eileen Condon, Marie-Annick Desplanques, Mark Ferguson, Delf Hoffman, Bruce Mason, and Lise Saugeres have also assisted me in numerous ways.

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## Chapter 1:

### Introduction

This thesis is an occupational-biographical study of William Henry Winter (1863-1936), a furniture maker in Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay, Newfoundland. In particular, it records his career and traces the legacy of his craft to the present day.

My own fascination with objects, especially furniture, stems from the age of fifteen when I haggled with the owner of a well-used rocking chair who wanted twenty-five dollars and I eventually paid ten. Only after I spent three months stripping six layers of paint to uncover a simple pine rocker did I gain an appreciation for the maker's techniques of construction and design. Not until the fall semester of my masters degree program at Memorial did I continue my interest in furniture and furniture making. Through preliminary research for a graduate folklore course, I interviewed William P. "Bill" Winter, son of furniture maker, William Winter. Although early researchers had examined Winter's furniture and interviewed Bill for magazine and book publications, the daily activities surrounding the process of furniture making inside Winter's workshop, as well as those he engaged in outside his workshop were never fully explored.<sup>1</sup> A main objective for this project was not just to examine the furniture made by

this man, but to understand the man who made the furniture.<sup>2</sup> What began as a study of furniture, has hopefully developed into an understanding of the life, personality, and work of a Newfoundland outport furniture maker.

Beginning in the summer of 1990 through the winter of 1992, I visited and interviewed Bill and Florence Winter and older residents of Clarke's Beach, North River, and South River. Bill and Florence's sons, Ted, Bill Jr., and Jerome, provided insight to my work as well. An understanding of Winter's life and work has only come through many subsequent visits with Bill and Florence Winter. Bill's narratives and anecdotes describing his father's thoughts on society, politics, business, and religion evolved during numerous conversations I had with him in his home. Recollections like these were never recorded, but whenever possible, I took generous field notes.<sup>3</sup>

Both Bill and his brother Nick served as chief informants for this thesis. As Nick presently lives in California, I communicated with him by telephone and by mail. When he arrived in Newfoundland to visit family in June of 1990, I was able to interview him in person. As Nick made furniture on a part-time basis for approximately thirteen years after his father's death, his recollections of his father's furniture business, as well as his own, were

invaluable to this research. While he visited with family in Clarke's Beach I joined him there, and we spent several days in search of furniture he had made and sold to people in the 1930s in Conception Bay. As chief informants, Bill and Nick provided extremely different impressions and recollections of William Winter. With respect to each man, I have done my best to combine both sons' reflections of their father in hopes of presenting a more complete picture of this craftsman.

The older residents of South River, Clarke's Beach, and North River that I interviewed were young men and women when Winter operated his furniture business. Their narratives, however, describing places, events, buildings, and landscapes of the area in the early twentieth century, provided necessary contextual details for this research. Several narratives were told and retold to me about the origin of the chair on Winter's workshop roof. Winter placed a chair on top of his workshop to act as an advertisement for his business. To some extent, it seemed that people were more inclined to provide narratives surrounding the chair rather than about the furniture business. Sometimes, I used these narratives to begin a conversation with potential informants; and thus, captivating accounts of ghosts of old women or dead sea captains, who sat rocking in the chair, would soon unfold.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, some of these storytellers owned pieces of Winter's furniture or they knew someone who did. I followed up on any or all leads to examine Winter pieces for two reasons: 1) Winter's furnishings, although similar in construction and design, were not the same in decoration and I wanted to document Winter's repertoire in decorative embellishment, and 2) his furniture was located in contemporary homes, antique stores, and museums, and I wanted to observe and record how these items functioned sixty years after they were first made. If a sideboard was relegated to the back porch with suntanning lotions and oils littering its shelves, I photographed it just as I found it.

In January of 1991, I was awarded a contract by the Newfoundland Museum in St. John's to design an exhibition based on the life and work of William Winter. This exhibit opened in St. John's from October, 1991 to March, 1992 and a portion of the original exhibition is presently traveling to various branch museums in the province. As a result of the exhibition, the fieldwork and research I had been conducting with members of the Winter family and with residents of Clarke's Beach and nearby communities took on new dimensions.

Although this thesis describes the life of an ambitious and versatile craftsman, it is no less the study of a dead

man. Chapter two is an investigation into Winter's life and work from a common-man biographical approach as has been consistently used by Edward D. (Sandy) Ives. In particular, Ives's article "Common-Man Biography: Some Notes by the Way," delineates the methodology he has applied in works such as George Magoon and the Down East Game War: History, Folklore, and the Law and Joe Scott: The Woodsman Songmaker. The historical methodology used is especially pertinent for this study in its analysis of deceased folk performers. Other scholarly works based on biographical methodologies were also consulted (Faulds and Skillman 1984; Mitchell 1991; Titon 1980). By piecing the information from census and birth and death records, archive collections, newspapers, and family photographs together with oral testimonies, this chapter provides an analysis of William Winter as craftsman, businessman, and family man within historic, geographic, and economic contexts (Ives 1974).

Being a well-known and respected craftsman in Clarke's Beach and surrounding communities, Winter prospered in his furniture making enterprise throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Incorporating two folkloristic approaches, that of occupational folklife and material culture studies, chapter three is an analysis of this furniture maker's successful enterprise. Within the occupational folklore perspective, shop-floor rhythms and

activities and occupational narratives concerning furniture made, bought, sold, and delivered through Winter's workshop, will be analyzed in terms of Robert McCarl's "canon of work technique" (McCarl 1986, 71-2). Borrowing from Michael Owen Jones' short list of considerations in understanding producers of objects of traditional manufacture, an ethnographic description of Winter's tools, technology, materials, and the furniture itself will also be presented in this chapter (Jones 1989, 251).

William Winter's canon of work technique can be interpreted by providing four basic precepts that governed his occupation and his life. The first precept is defined by Winter's respect for his resources; he never wasted anything. A second precept can be described as the sanctity of Winter's workshop space and workshop tools and machinery. The third precept combines the interests of the craftsman and the businessman, and that is in making a profit. Finally, a fourth precept within his canon of work technique is Winter's response to his personal aesthetics and desires and to those of his clientele (Jones 1989, 251; Toelken 1979, 185, 189).

As a craftsman, Winter's personal aesthetics were directed by his need for perfection, innovation, and attention to detail. Furthermore, Winter desired to create

objects that were both functional and decorative (Jones 1989, 257; 1987, 171).

His basic line of household furnishings consisted of bedroom sets, parlour sideboards and couches, kitchen tables, wing-back chairs, and medicine cabinets.<sup>5</sup> Winter was influenced by designs and styles of furniture found in catalogues, local furniture factories, and furniture models in peoples' homes. Winter's repertoire in decoration is particularly represented on his parlour furniture, like sideboards for example. Although each sideboard exhibited similar applied, carved, or painted decorations, each piece differed from the next. With every custom piece, Winter expanded his repertoire, increased his sales, and enhanced his reputation as a craftsman in the community. His ability to be conservative with his materials, while versatile and innovative in his designs, was the key to his occupational success.

Winter's furniture was and is recognized for its "fancywork" or embellishment to the extent that decorative motifs characteristic of Winter have been copied on furniture made by other craftsmen in Conception Bay. Chapter four is an examination of Winter's influence on one particular craftsman, his youngest son, Nick. Although Nick followed a similar work technique as his father, he had to respond to the changing attitudes and aesthetics of the



clientele in the late 1930s and 1940s. As a result, examples of Nick's furniture lack the decoration characteristic of the craftsman before, but the pieces exhibit plain, simple and compact furniture that reflected the present desires of members of the community. This chapter also incorporates a comparison of furniture made by Winter, Nick and other (unknown) craftsmen.<sup>6</sup>

Recently Winter's furniture has become recognized by academics, museum researchers, and antique collectors as remnants of Newfoundland's cultural past, a past characterized by an outport way of life. With its growing popularity and recognition, individual pieces are selling for extremely high prices. Winter's matching bedroom dresser and washstand sets sell today for an exorbitant eight-hundred and fifty dollars, a far cry from the fifteen dollar price tag in the 1920s. In the final chapter, I emphasize the "objectification" of Newfoundland culture through handmade items, like outport furniture, as initially described by Gerald L. Pocius in A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (1991, 21). Further, I provide an analysis of how Winter's furniture is still being used by families in present-day homes of Conception Bay. With the attention to William Winter in the form of published articles and books or in the

exhibition "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter," local residents' perceptions of this craftsman have begun to change. Once utilitarian in function, Winter's household furnishings have now become objects of display in many homes.

In this thesis, I hope to provide a detailed analysis of the life and work of a rural Newfoundland craftsman. Although several publications and multi-media presentations have analyzed Newfoundland furniture and furniture makers, there is a dearth of studies describing the intricate matrix of activities surrounding the workshop, workmanship, and work of an individual furniture maker (Peddle 1991, 1984, 1983; Pocius 1988a; MacKinnon 1982; Making the Most of Things 1991). Perhaps, the present study will allow for a greater understanding of an occupation that was rarely pursued by men and women in Newfoundland.

1. The first detailed study on Newfoundland furniture in which Winter's furniture is mentioned is in Walter Peddle, The Traditional Furniture of Outport Newfoundland (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983). A second publication by Peddle presents a more direct analysis of individual furniture makers and their products, such as William Winter in chapter three of The Forgotten Craftsmen (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1984) 61-76.

2. Cooke indicates that there is a lack of studies on furniture makers, and suggests three issues that researchers should consider in understanding such craftsmen: production, composition, and performance. Edward S. Cooke, Jr., "The Study of American Furniture from the Perspective of the Maker," ed. Gerald W. R. Ward. Perspectives on American Furniture (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988) 113-26.

3. Although the field notes are in my private collection, the dates of any quoted or paraphrased information from Bill Winter or other informants has been indicated in the endnotes of each chapter. Recorded interviews have been deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archives (MUNFLA). Data within the text that has been quoted from informants is indicated by the abbreviation, MUNFLA, then the word Tape, then the "C" number, which is the shelflist number for a recorded interview. See the section entitled "Interviews" for a complete listing of accession numbers and shelflist numbers. Other material cited with the abbreviation MUNFLA, is usually followed by Ms. or manuscript, the accession number, a slash and a page number of the manuscript where the information is located (e.g. MUNFLA, Ms., 73-31/5). Appendix D also refers to MUNFLA sources as well.

4. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter four. See Appendix D, for a complete listing of MUNFLA accession numbers of recorded narratives about the chair on the roof.

5. See Appendix B for a complete listing of all recorded, collected, and/or catalogued pieces made by William Winter.

6. See Appendix C, for a complete listing of all recorded, collected, and/or catalogued "Winter Copies," and recorded or collected furniture made by Nick Winter.

## Chapter 2

### William Winter: Community, Family, and Business

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, William Henry Winter (c1863-1936), an energetic and enterprising furniture maker, operated an extremely successful business in Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay. Here, he independently produced numerous household furnishings using only hand tools and a few simple machines. Winter's life revolved around his ability to make wooden objects that met the general needs of people in his community and neighbouring communities, as well as the specific needs of his family and himself. His general line included matching bedroom washstand and dresser sets, parlour couches and sideboards, wing-back chairs, kitchen tables, lamp tables and tilt-top tables, record cabinets, church pulpits, and sleighs. There is a paucity of historical documentation regarding the onset of Winter's career as a craftsman, but what secondary written sources there are, may be pieced together and augmented by oral testimonies. Ethnographic data surrounding Winter's daily life may also be gleaned from a collection of black and white photographs owned by members of the Winter family.<sup>1</sup>

William Winter's father, John Winter (b.1827) was a Danish craftsman who emigrated to Newfoundland in the mid-nineteenth century. Arriving from Copenhagen, John and his brother Niels Frederick, set up a cooperage business in St.

John's. In all probability, the Winter brothers arrived in Newfoundland as early as the 1850s, for sources indicate that Niels Frederick Winther [Winter] married Mary Furse at St. John's Anglican Church in 1894.<sup>2</sup> Possibly in the early 1860s, John Winter married Helen Hayes (b.1828), a Roman Catholic presumably from an area near Clarke's Beach (plate 2). William Winter was born in 1863 and baptized at the Basilica of St. John the Baptist two years later.<sup>3</sup> In 1869, John died at the young age of forty-two leaving his wife to raise five children on her own.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after John's death, Helen Winter left St. John's in order to be closer to relatives in Clarke's Beach. Here, she established a general store. With a business and five children to manage, Helen must have been a very determined and resourceful woman. Nicholas "Nick" Winter described the conditions in which his father lived as a small boy.

I can only imagine what it was like growing up in Newfoundland from 1865...with no father around in a family of five children, no electricity, no radio, very few books if any, no roads or few roads.<sup>5</sup>

When he was not in school, William helped his mother in the store. He went to a Methodist school in Clarke's Beach as there were no Catholic schools in the area. His school days were short, however, for he dropped out at age twelve which enabled him to assist his mother full-time in the

shop. Applying practical skills at fourteen, he made a trap skiff which could be loaded with fifty sacks of flour; the trap skiff was able to deliver goods in the shallow water of Clarke's Beach where larger vessels, such as schooners, could not (Peddle 1984, 64).

As a credit to Mrs. Winter's resourcefulness, she assisted both sons in setting up grocery and general store businesses of their own. William was probably married in 1893, and with his wife, Mary, began their general store operation in Clarke's Beach (plate 3).<sup>6</sup> From one of the few remaining written records of the Winter family, J.J. Winter's store ledger, there is evidence that Winter's brother James operated his grocery business as early as 1899 in Brigus.

At approximately the same time that Winter opened his general store (c1894), his sister, Mary Ann, married Tom Smart, a local wheelwright.<sup>7</sup> Smart took William as his apprentice. Although this was William's first formal training in a widely practiced occupation, it did not interest him for he found it unprofitable. Walter Peddle's preliminary research on Winter in The Forgotten Craftsmen describes why he did not become fully involved in this trade (Peddle refers to Winter as Henry William).

Often a fisherman would come for his wheels and would not have the money to pay for them. Knowing that the wheels were necessary for

the man to continue earning his living, Henry William would let him have them, hoping that payment would be made at a later date. Often, payment was never received. Family sources reasoned that Henry William turned to furniture making because only those having the money to pay for it would approach him to buy furniture (1984, 64).

Importantly, Winter's brother-in-law was not only a wheelwright, but he also made furniture. According to the memories of Smart's granddaughter, he used to "make beautiful furniture, and....doll cradles."<sup>8</sup> Although Winter may have decided to make furniture on his own initiative, the possibility that his brother-in-law exposed him to more than just the wheelwright trade is one factor that cannot be forgotten in understanding the life and occupations of this craftsman. There are few sources that indicate exactly when or why Winter decided to make furniture; however, D. H. Dawe in his unpublished research paper, "Settlement History of Clarke's Beach," lists Winter as a carriage maker who also made furniture circa 1880 (1972, 134). The 1921 Census of Newfoundland lists him as a cabinetmaker, employing no one but himself in this trade.<sup>9</sup> The earliest recollection of Winter making furniture came from Cyril Richards (b.1894) of South River, who remembered William Winter producing furniture as early as 1901 (Peddle 1984, 66). Winter's son, Bill, who was born in 1905, recalled how his father constructed bedroom sets and other



Plate 2

John and Helen Winter

ca. 1850

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)



Plate 3

William Winter with his wife, Mary in Clarke's Beach  
ca. 1930

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)



furnishings at a later date, around 1911 (Peddle 1984, 66). In the community of Clarke's Beach, most men were employed as fishermen in the Labrador fishery or they worked as farmers. As a furniture maker, Winter was recognized by members of his community for his expertise in an area of work that was rarely pursued by individuals in outport Newfoundland. The following brief description of Clarke's Beach provides an understanding of Winter's environment from historic, geographic, economic, and social contexts in which Winter was living and working at the turn of the century.

#### Winter's Community, Clarke's Beach:

##### History and Settlement

Located at the southwestern end of Bay de Grave in Conception Bay North, Clarke's Beach is a small outport lying adjacent to two neighbouring communities, South River and North River (figure A). There are many interpretations of how the place name of this community originated, including variations on the way it is spelled.<sup>10</sup> One origin of the name and the community links it to an Admiral Clarke who lived on the beach (MUNFLA, Ms., 88-154/2). The site of his home was later the residence of Winter and his family, who settled there in the early 1900s.

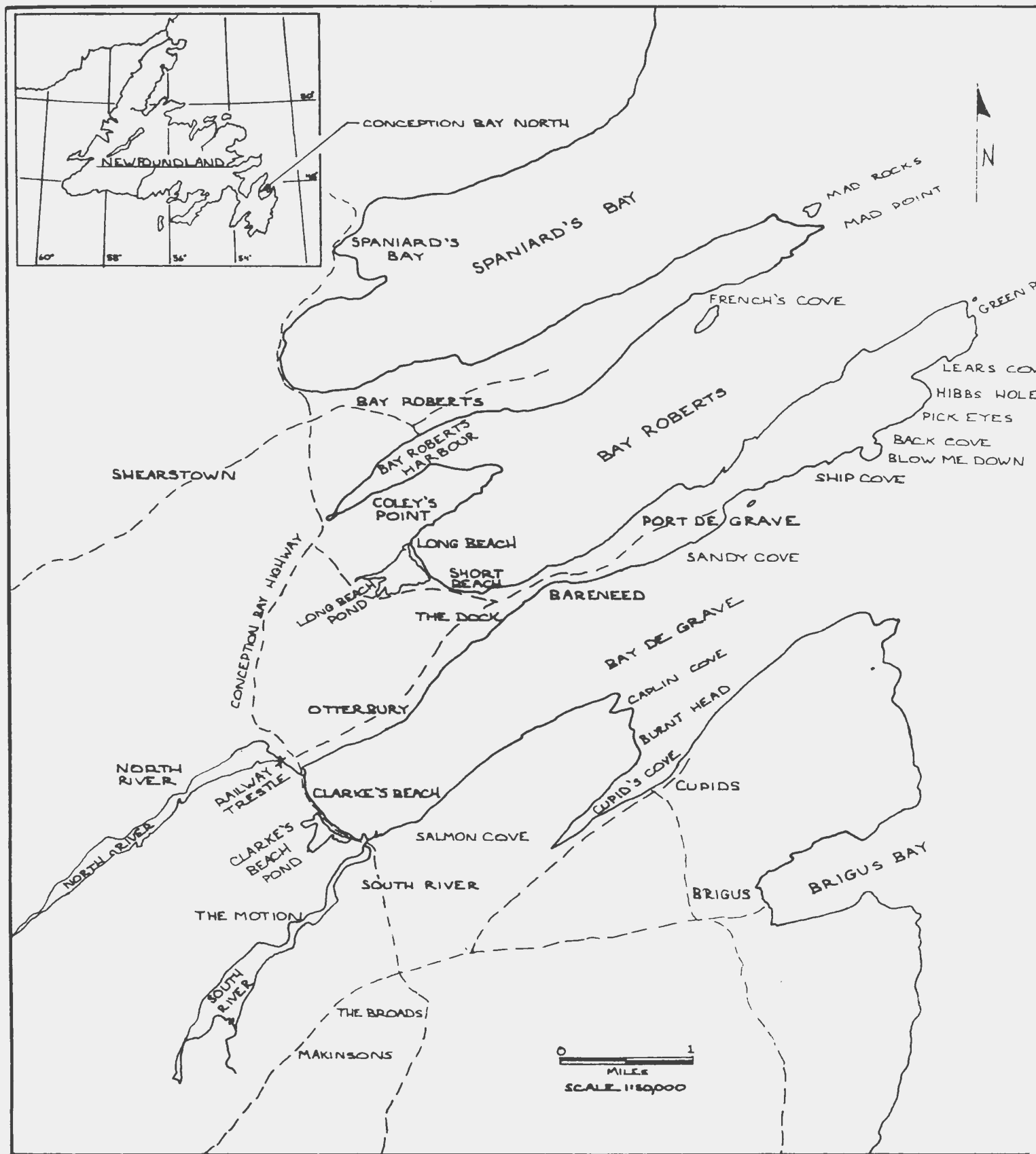
Figure A

Map of Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay North, Newfoundland

Handsketched by David M. Porter

FIGURE A

# CONCEPTION BAY NORTH NEWFOUNDLAND



In Place Names of the Avalon Penninsula (1971), author E. R. Seary offers one particular theory on the origin of Clarke's Beach. Apparently, a distinction was never made between the small harbour of Port de Grave and the bay of Bay de Grave by cartographers until the 1800s. The word grave was used for grève, a shoal or shingle referring to the French practice of drying cod on the beaches (1971, 47-8). In describing the area of Clarke's Beach, fishermen and cartographers called it Port de Grave. Seary surmises that as Port de Grave did not have a shingle beach, these individuals identified the best harbour in the bay with the bay itself. "The shingle beach in fact is found at the bottom of the bay at what is now Clarkes [sic] Beach (1971, 47-8)."

The earliest census records indicate that the community of Clarke's Beach was settled in 1857 with a population of two hundred and eighty people (Dale 1981, 450). Historian-geographer, Gordon Handcock states in his scholarly work, So longe as there comes noe women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland, that Conception Bay was an area of early settlement and rapid growth (1989, 99-100). Further, Handcock explains that the resident population of Conception Bay, especially the western side of the bay between Carbonear and Harbour Main, was settled in the eighteenth century for several reasons: their proximity to



each other, lack of isolation, intermarriage among differing communities, and geographical features like harbours, coves, and shelters which attracted fishermen and farmers (1989, 99-100). These conditions lead one to speculate that a community like Clarke's Beach might have been settled much earlier than is known.

Clarke's Beach was settled by people from Bareneed and Port de Grave who lacked space in their own communities to cure fish and wanted to pursue the Labrador fishery (Dale 1981, 450). Lovell's Province of Newfoundland Directory for 1871 gives an accurate description of this outpost community:

Clark's [Clarke's] Beach--a large fishing settlement on the north side of Conception Bay, in the district of Brigus. Farming is engaged in to a considerable extent, and the scenery around, which is quite remarkable, is enhanced by the bright appearance of the meadow land (1871, 241).

This directory also states that Clarke's Beach was "distant from Brigus by road four miles" (1871, 241). The mail was delivered weekly and the population was four hundred and forty-four (1871, 241). In 1871, settlers such as Anthony, Butler, Dawe, Fillier, Hussey, Moore, Mugford, Snow, and Whelan were engaged in fishing and farming in Clarke's Beach (1871, 241-2).

Before the modern links of road and rail, most people in Clarke's Beach would travel by foot or by horse and dray

to ten or more surrounding outport communities. The capital city of St. John's was an overnight trip being eighty-seven kilometers or fifty-four miles away from Clarke's Beach. In contrast, Bay Roberts was and is only twenty kilometers or twelve miles away from Clarke's Beach (Dale 1981, 450). During the earlier part of the twentieth century, a branch of the Canadian National Railway was connected through Brigus junction via the railway trestle in Clarke's Beach to Carbonear.<sup>11</sup> Like other communities of Conception Bay in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Clarke's Beach was beginning to develop into a self-sufficient and self-supporting community.

#### Geography and Topography

In order to appreciate Winter's life as a farmer and furniture maker, it is important to consider specific geographic and topographic features of his environment. At the southeastern part of Clarke's Beach and South River lies a broad open valley which is astride the estuary of the South River. This valley runs southwesterly from the end of Bay de Grave ten miles inland.<sup>12</sup> A brief description of neighbouring communities sheds some light on this particular valley. As indicated earlier, the communities of South River and North River, referred to as Southern Gut and Northern Gut when Winter lived and worked, surrounded

Clarke's Beach. Southern Gut according to Seary was noted as a "wild rocky little place" (1971, 282). Seary indicates that three miles inland from Southern Gut was a fertile valley, "through which runs a brook forming occasional ponds, and emptying itself into the sea on the southern side of Port de Grave" (1971, 282). In a much narrower valley, separated by a high rock ridge, lies the North River. As a result, these geographic features formed a highly indented coastline which created suitable harbours for early settlers' fishing fleets.<sup>13</sup>

An impressive feature in this area is a principle ridge which rises over four hundred feet from the valley floor at the rear of Clarke's Beach. Although composed of old hard rock, this ridge has effective tree cover on its lower slopes as well as in pockets where soil has accumulated. On the North River side of this ridge, the valley contains ground moraine soils with bedrock near the surface, while on the South River side there are extensive granular deposits sometimes in the form of dissected terraces.<sup>14</sup> Excellent soil conditions in the valley and the sheltered nature of parts of Clarke's Beach and nearby communities have lent themselves to suitable farming and grazing land. William Winter utilized his land for multiple purposes: as a pasture for his cattle, a small timber grove

to harvest wood for furniture construction and for fuel, a large garden, and potato patch.

### Vegetation

Trees indigenous to this area are both coniferous and broadleaf types. The most prevalent evergreen coniferous trees, generally used in constructing outbuildings and other structures like stages, flakes, and wharves, and in making furniture and boats--especially during the time in which Winter worked-- include: white spruce (Picea glauca), balsam fir or "snotty var" (Abies balsamea),<sup>15</sup> and white pine (Pinus strobus).<sup>16</sup> Winter primarily used pine for his furniture, as did other residents who made crude furniture out of necessity, like Jack Mulloney who constructed benches for his home (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671). A deciduous-coniferous tree found locally in Clarke's Beach is larch or tamarack (Larix laricina), and another deciduous tree, white birch (Betula papyrifera) is also found in this area.<sup>17</sup> Shrubs with fruit which were typically used by Clarke's Beach residents for jams, canning, and wines include: partridgeberry or mountain cranberry (Vaccinium vitisidaea), low sweet blueberry (Vaccinium americana), red raspberry (Rubus idaeus), and blackberry (Rubus spp.).<sup>18</sup>

Clarke's Beach Economy: The Labrador Fishery

Clarke's Beach never had an inshore fishery, but many of its settlers prosecuted the Labrador fishery (Dale 1981, 450). After "getting their berths from merchants in Cupids, Brigus, or Bay Roberts," men and their families would go "on the Labrador."<sup>19</sup> Many women, single or married, received berths and were employed as "cook" for the duration of the Labrador fishing season (MUNFLA, Tape, C14673). As historian-geographer Michael Staveley describes it, the Labrador fishery was divided into two parts: the "floater" fishery and the "stationer" fishery (1977, 69). The floater fishery consisted of schooners that carried local crews who sailed each June or early July from Conception Bay or the northeast coast. They fished from their "floating" base, the schooner. Stationers were those fishermen who prosecuted the fishery from shore "stations" (1977, 69).

In the 1890s there was a marked decline in the numbers of people who were involved in the Labrador fishery (Dale 1981, 450). Instead, many members of the community began farming and were employed in local sawmill operations or became merchants of general stores. Stores such as Nicholl's and Noseworthy's "took in locally-produced fish and crops. They gave credit and they provided all the necessities of life, from coal to cotton, wicks and kerosene, to the tools for cutting staves and hoops"

(Sparkes 1974, 11-12). Gerald Sider, in his work Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration, explains that merchants of small stores and shops in outport communities placed an emphasis on the "truck system" as their dominant form of payment (1986, 22).

Sider describes how fisher families were entrenched in the "truck system" (1986, 22-3). Essentially, this was a credit system in which fishermen gave their catch to the merchant in return for shop goods and equipment supplies (Wadel 1969, 16). This line of credit inhibited and/or prevented the families from having cash or any form of capital for themselves (Sider 1986, 22-3). Another feature of the "truck system" was the "tal qual" or "as is" payment. Although cash was not used in the truck system, it did use prices which were entered on the merchants' books for supplies and for fish (Sider 1986, 86).

The prices paid--or allowed--for fish ordinarily were based not simply on the amount of fish delivered but also on their grade, with the grade based on the size of the fish and particularly on the quality of the cure (Sider 1986, 86-7).

Even with a variety of grades of fish from merchantable at the top, to "West Indie" or cull at the bottom, merchants, starting in the late nineteenth century, did not always grade the fish they received, they would simply take

all the fish from the community at one average price, "tal qual" (Sider 1986, 87).

Merchants bought fish tal qual in situations where the fishery was becoming sufficiently productive or remunerative to engender an outport "middle class"--fisher families with larger boats and more extensive operations (Sider 1986, 87).

Of particular relevance to Clarke's Beach and other Conception Bay communities who regularly prosecuted the Labrador fishery, Sider describes how "tal qual buying was often encountered on the Labrador coast, in the late nineteenth century, where the catch was enormous..." (1986, 87).

For one of my informants, Johnny Boone of South River, who fished "the Labrador" for twenty-two summers as a stationer, enormous catches did not always occur: "I come home with as low as twelve dollars for the summer and as high as nine hundred dollars" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14673). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, some families of Conception Bay were still going "on the Labrador" to fish, but many more were participating in farming and other forms of employment (Dale 1981, 450; Mannion 1977, 11-12).

### Farming and Other Occupations

As the area of Clarke's Beach was located within a valley, high ridge, and river estuaries, the land was highly

arable and suitable for grazing. Farmers in this community usually had at least one head of cattle and kept track of the animals by engraving or imprinting an identification marker into the animals' horns or ears.<sup>20</sup> In a community with no fences and animals that usually wandered astray, this was one way in which to identify who owned the cattle. Some residents engraved the first initial of their last name into the ears or horns of their cattle, like William Winter whose cattle were easily identified with the letter "W." Generally, people also kept pigs, sheep, chickens, goats, and horses in small barns or outbuildings (Bartlett n.d., 6).

Farming in this area consisted of two or three types of gardens: a hay garden for animals to graze; a vegetable garden where turnips, parsnips, beets, carrots, cabbage, and potatoes were grown; and a kitchen garden where similar vegetables grew but were used chiefly for canning and pickling and in jams and sauces (MUNFLA, Ms., 77-288/4). As mentioned previously, residents of this community and nearby communities prepared jams, tarts, and pies from a number of indigenous and cultivated fruits in the area like partridgeberries, blueberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and maidenhair or teaberries.<sup>21</sup>

Usually, the gardens were fertilized with natural substances like caplin (Mallotus villosus) and other fish,



sea-weed or seagrass (Zostera marina), horse and pig manure, lime, wood ashes, and tea leaves.<sup>22</sup> If caplin were not corned or panfried for a meal, their excellent source of iron fertilized the garden soil (MUNFLA, Ms., 77-288/appendix). Caplin rolled upon the shores of beaches in late June or early July and with great excitement people gathered them up by the hundreds. According to one source, "caplin was easily accessible on both "Long Beach" and "Short Beach"" in the nearby community of Bareneed (Bartlett n.d., 6).

In late September and early October of the harvest season, vegetables were dug up to be stored for the winter in a small building called a root cellar. Root cellars were simply a hole dug in the ground and a house built over the top. After placing the vegetables in storage, the gardens were prepared for winter: weeds were taken out, the land plowed, and vegetable stalks were added to the land to fertilize it during winter months.

As indicated from oral testimonies of present-day members of Clarke's Beach and other communities and written census records, people worked as full or part-time farmers, but they were employed in other occupations as these became available. In 1891, a sawmill operated by Horwood Lumber Company employed one hundred and twelve men (Dale 1981, 450). Similarly, Samuel Batten began a sawmill operation

in 1908 which provided employment (Dale 1981, 450). Batten's mill also produced fish casks and drums, an endeavour actively pursued by many in this community as will be discussed shortly. A year after Samuel Batten opened a sawmill, Charles Williams opened "Williams Drug Store" (Dale 1981, 450). The 1921 Census of Newfoundland indicates that Robert Boone and James Whelan of Clarke's Beach listed their occupation as owner-manager-operator of sawmills (126, 129). As mentioned previously, William and Mary Winter were running a general store at their home on the beach in the early 1900s. William Winter was also known for his prosperous furniture making enterprise which he operated in his barn across the road from his home.

Towards the early twentieth century, the Labrador fishery no longer predominated the lives of people in this community. Census records from 1921 indicate that residents of Clarke's Beach were involved in many different occupations like the following: labourer for the "Newfoundland Government Road" and the CN Railway, teacher, post master, postal telegraph officer, photographer, maker of hoops, cabinetmaker, carpenter, iron ore miner on Bell Island or coal miner in Sydney, Nova Scotia, tin smith, and domestic household servant.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, the "making of hoops" was one of the most frequently listed part-time

occupations of men in Clarke's Beach and neighbouring communities at this time.

As boys, Winter's sons Nick and Bill constructed hoops for fish drums in their father's workshop, and Nick particularly recalls the arduous task of being a maker of hoops.

We also made fish drums, Bill and I, in the workshop. It consisted of birch staves and the drums had a fifteen inch head. They were fifteen inches in diameter and about fifteen inches high. There was two types: one that held a half quintal of fish, one that held a whole quintal of fish.

CB: Who would you sell them too?

NW: A guy by the name of Ches. Oh, there was a couple of buyers, Ches Fillier used to buy them.... They were not water tight but you had to be very careful with them. And you could not use nails because... nails and salt codfish did not go together. A lot of people around there made drums, fish drums... thirty or forty people in the area were making them. Some businessmen... Ches Fillier, he would buy what we'd call the staves, birch staves, about three-eighths of an inch thick and anywhere from three to four inches wide. And you would go and pick them up, the staves, and then you'd buy the hoops. People would go into the country, cut the hoops, and split them and draw them out. But it was all barter, you did

not get cash...so you made up the hoops, and you would use any kind of lumber you could get.... When a freight car [Fillier's store was near the railway trestle in Clarke's Beach] come to pick up...you would bring them over there, and you would count the number that you made from his stock that he would give you... Whatever was left over, you could take what you want. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676)

### Religion

Several religious denominations were established in Clarke's Beach such as the Church of England in the late nineteenth century, the Methodist Church in 1874 in Salmon Cove, and the Reformed Episcopalian Church in the 1880s. Two other churches were founded in this area: the Roman Catholic church of North River--All Hallows Parish--established in 1906 and the Pentecostal Assemblies in 1922.<sup>24</sup> Noted for his talents in constructing pulpits, altar pews, and statue stands, William Winter was commissioned by clergy of All Hallows Parish and the Pentecostal Assemblies to fill a number of special orders for their churches. William Winter decorated the window panes of one of the first Pentacostal churches in Newfoundland, which was near South River. He also constructed several religious furnishings for his own church, All Hallows Parish.<sup>25</sup>

### Winter's Family

Long before William Winter was involved in custom work for churches or furniture orders for his clientele, he was courting a school teacher in Burnt Head, Cupids. Mary Furlong was a native of Carbonear and when her parents moved to Brigus, she took a teaching position in Burnt Head. Winter's son, Bill, recalled the memory of a Mrs. Power, who was once a pupil of his mother's. She said that all Miss Furlong's students cried when they heard she was to be married. According to the Winters' children and the members of the community, William and Mary Winter must have been a very handsome couple. William was remembered as a short man with a curly moustache and Mary was known for her "rounded face and warm smile."<sup>26</sup> One of the Winters' children, Bridget "Peggy," described how she and her brothers and sisters did not inherit their parents' distinctive features, for she said to her mother: "Father's a good-looking man and you're a good-looking woman. We're all runts."<sup>27</sup>

Shortly after their marriage, Mary and William had their first child, John "Jack" Winter, who was baptized on August 29, 1895.<sup>28</sup> The Winter family steadily grew to include five more boys and three girls: James "Jimmy," Leonard, Frank, Peggy, Ellen "Nell," Mary Dorothy "Dot," Bill, and Nick (see Appendix A). The Winters had a busy and successful life, for many people remember them as reliable,

resourceful, and determined. Everett Moore, who grew up with Winter's sons, Nick and Bill, holds similar impressions.

Winter was a marvelous man, father, very devout man in almost everything....the Winters were a very trustworthy people...very much devoted to each other, and to their family. They were the salt of the earth, the rock of the community. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671)

Mary Winter played an active role in the success of her husband and her family. When Winter was busy in the workshop, she managed the general store and their home with remarkable precision and efficiency. Residents, like Margaret Brown, remembered Mary as a smiling and gentle woman who was very serious "because they had a big family." She continued by saying, "Mrs. Winter appreciated life, family, and neighbours, but she had so much to do that she never had time to visit around that much" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671).

In 1918-1919, Winter started to expand the family home into a two storey house. Peggy [Winter] Mullaby describes the process:

There was a first storey and an attic; the upstairs had two small bedrooms and three downstairs. As the family got bigger, two bedrooms were added on the back. It was raised into a two-storey.<sup>29</sup>

As an extraordinary individual in the community, Winter was very self-sufficient: he had his own groves for timber, farm and gardens for food, and general store for necessities he could not produce on his own. Winter's groves were filled with woods such as pine, spruce, and balsam fir. Balsam fir, referred to as "snotty var," was not normally used for furniture construction but for firewood. Although Winter's land lacked fences, his cattle were free to roam and graze. On this land, Winter stored perishable fruits and vegetables in a root cellar.

Winter's sons took care of the large garden and potato patch, carried water and wood to the house, and stocked the shelves of the general store. Bill performed specific chores for his mother's store, including having to check that every egg his mother sold in the store was "good." Filling a large pan with water, Bill placed individual eggs into the pan: if they floated they were bad; if they did not, they were good, consummable eggs.<sup>30</sup> Anything from wallpaper, flannel, oils, nails, salt beef, cod, and tar to candy was sold in the store, and daughters, Nell, Peggy, and Dot served customers with their mother when the store became busy.

#### Winter's Handcrafted Items for the Farm, Store, and Home

When working with wood, Winter relied on his resourcefulness and ingenuity to create and construct items

that were used by his family or by members of the community, and these items served necessary functions on the farm, in the store, or in the home. For the farm, he produced "nest eggs" made from a chunk of wood with a round hole hollowed out in the middle; here, the hen sat to lay eggs. According to Bill Winter, farmers would buy ten or more of these to place in their hen houses, for the hens tended to lay more eggs in these snug wooden nest eggs than in beds of straw.<sup>31</sup>

Winter created items that were used specifically in his general store. He constructed change containers by taking blocks of wood and hollowing holes to hold Newfoundland dimes, nickels, and pennies; the wood blocks sat in the bottom of the store's cash register. Winter's handmade butterchurn produced butter, cream, and buttermilk. People from St. John's who travelled to Conception Bay would stop and buy butter at Winter's store. This popular sales item was even stamped with the word "butter." Nick and Bill remembered manually turning the crank of the butterchurn (plate 4). They especially recall making their favourite childhood treat, ice cream (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675).

People in the community relied on Winter to make domestic items as well, like rolling pins. He supplied his own children with leather shoes and boots by using wooden shoe pegs as a model. Another item that Winter crafted for



his family was a horse-drawn sleigh; this vehicle was used for both pleasurable sleigh rides on snowy nights and for transportation on roads that were seldom thoroughly plowed during winter months.

### The Winter Family Photographs

Winter's love of life and of family is evident in the memories of his surviving children and from the family's large collection of old photographs. The photographs owned by the Winters' provide essential ethnographic detail surrounding events in William Winter's everyday life.

When looking at one particular family portrait, Bill described how friends and relatives were present for the picture because Dorothy "Dot" was leaving for Detroit (plate 5). Winter, like his mother before him, encouraged his children to strive for success and happiness and to take advantage of any opportunities that came their way. Four of his sons went to the United States to live and work, and his three daughters either found work or were married in the States. On the occasion in which this photograph was taken, the Winter family and some friends were about to travel with Dot by taking the train "cross country" from Whitbourne to Port Aux Basques, and then they were to see her off when she left for Sydney by ship.<sup>32</sup>

Two other photographs indicate how the Winters' were beset by tragedy on more than one occasion. One photograph shows Mary Winter praying over a child at a wake (plate 6). As Jimmie Winter died in 1906 when he was a small boy, it is likely that this photograph was taken at his wake. Another photograph portrays Dorothy Winter in a relaxed pose in Detroit (plate 7). This was probably the last picture taken of Dot before she died. In 1930, she left Detroit for a long-awaited visit with family in Clarke's Beach. In Clarke's Beach, Dot went on a camping trip with some friends in the community. While her friends were swimming, they looked as though they were having difficulty so Dorothy jumped in to assist them and drowned (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671). In the midst of these tragedies, the Winters dealt with their grief by continuing their devotion to each other, their remaining family, and their business.

Plate 4

Butterchurn made by William Winter

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



## Plate 5

Family and relatives gathering for Dorothy "Dot" Winter's departure; members of Winter family are William (back row, third from right), William's sister, Bride (standing beside him), Bill Winter (kneeling at far right), and Dorothy (seated just behind her brother, Bill)

ca. 1920

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)



Plate 6

The Wake of James "Jimmie" Winter, Mary Winter seated beside  
the bed

ca. 1906

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)





Plate 7

Dorothy Winter posing in Detroit, Michigan

ca. 1929

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)



### Winter's Workshop

In the early 1900s, William Winter built his first furniture workshop and a second, more elaborate shop, was built after 1921. As Nick Winter recalls, both workshops were used for many purposes beyond furniture construction. These buildings housed cattle, horses, their offspring, and food supplies for the animals.

The loft next to the workshop was filled from end to end with hay for animal food. Two-thirds of the first floor was for cattle, horses.... The hatch door on the second floor of the hay loft was used...for pitching hay from a horse and wagon backed up to the building.<sup>33</sup>

Between 1907-1910, the first workshop had a windmill attached (plate 8). This machine supplied power to the fly wheel of a large lathe located on the first floor of the workshop.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, winds in Newfoundland were too unpredictable for the "Canadian Airmotor" to work properly, and Winter sold it to Joe Moore of the community of the "Broads" where it was used to saw up firewood.<sup>35</sup> Nick recalled how the windmill would race in high winds and detach itself from its bearings and sail across roof-tops, obliterating everything in its path until it rested on a nearby field! The gable roof of the first workshop was destroyed on one such occasion forcing Winter to start construction on a two storey workshop in 1921 (plate 9). By buying some property in Salmon Cove, Winter re-used the wood

from an abandoned house to build a new workshop. In keeping with the first precept of his canon of work technique, Winter recycled wood out of necessity, as he regularly re-used various wood scraps, from such things as packing crates to make different parts of furniture. "Whatever wood that these things came in, you knocked the nails out of them and tried not to break it up because he used it" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674).

Winter had to be resourceful in order to use his workshop efficiently (Peddle 1984, 64). The "Canadian Airmotor" was an invention that, while providing necessary power for furniture production, was spacially efficient as it was located outside of the workshop (plate 10). Another efficient technique involved Winter's pet dog. Winter trained an ordinary dog to run on "wooden steps around the inside of the drum like a hamster in its rotary cage, thus providing the power to operate the lathe" (Peddle 1984, 67). This dog was strong and probably not small, for, as Nick thought, "the weight of the dog would have been an important factor in its ability to turn the lathe" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14677). On one occasion, the dog followed Winter up the ladder to the second floor of the workshop. "A dog can only go up a ladder, he can't go down...so he would have to carry him in a sack to get him to the first floor" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14677). Remarkable for its intelligence and strength,

this dog gave tremendous assistance and companionship to Winter, who was saddened when the dog died. By this time, Winter's sons had been introduced to minor woodworking skills like sandpapering, turning the large lathe, and applying certain finishes to the furniture. Winter's efficiency was matched only by his perfectionism, and although he allowed his sons to assist him in the workshop, he directed what they could and could not do. As evidence to the sanctity of his tools, Winter was known to have a particular motto: "don't touch the tools."<sup>36</sup> As described in detail in chapter four, Nick curiously watched his father make furniture and he too, wanted to learn the craft. His father had other ideas, however, and he did not allow Nick to use his tools. In order to make his son understand that he did not want him in the workshop, Winter told Nick a story from his own life experiences.

Between 1921 and 1926, he, my father, had a blind piano tuner in to tune the piano. Parts were all over the dining room. My father moved one part to a different area. Maybe six inches from [the] original position. The blind piano tuner threatened if he ever did that again, he would leave everything undone...He told me later in the workshop that that is why he did not want people working for or with him and especially me, as I would ruin his tools and misplace things.<sup>37</sup>

Plate 8

Winter's first workshop with a windmill attached (upper  
righthand corner)

ca. 1900

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)



Plate 9

The second workshop with the famous chair on top of the roof  
ca. 1921

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)





Plate 10

A magazine clipping advertising the Canadian airmotor

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd

THE

# Canadian Airmotor.

ENLARGED VIEWS OF WORKING PARTS  
PUMPING AIRMOTOR.



Although Winter allowed his sons to assist him intermittently in his workshop, it is evident in this narrative that he did not want his children in his workshop on a daily basis, nor using his tools which might be destroyed. Narratives, like this, told within the context of a particular occupation or trade, which describe how to avoid possible accidents are termed "cautionary tales" (Santino 1978, 201).

Besides being protective of his tools, Winter was also extremely self-reliant. According to Nick, his father was a self-taught cabinetmaker, who, to the best of his knowledge did not have anyone else working with him.<sup>38</sup> Peddle indicates in his work, The Forgotten Craftsmen, that when Winter was busy he hired a Matthew Fowler to assist him (1984, 69).

Both Nick and Bill had the opportunity to frame pictures for and with their father, who imported framing materials like moulding from an art supply store in New York. Framed portraits of the Titanic, the Holy Virgin, and Queen Victoria were popular items sold in the general store.<sup>39</sup> For people who did not come to the store, one of Winter's sons peddled these products from door-to-door. Bill recalled that he knocked only on the doors of people whom he knew would buy the pictures.

We used to buy pictures, Nick and I...and make a frame....and I'd go around selling them...I knows where I was going that I would get a sale.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14670)

"Any Work that Came Up, He'd Do It."

Despite poor conditions as a boy growing up in outport Newfoundland, William Winter was successful because of his perseverance in learning and developing his craft.

[He] had to think everything out, make his own tools, produce furniture from local woods, be able to work long hours in order to sell to people who were in a very haphazard profession...namely, fishing for cod.<sup>40</sup>

As a craftsman, Winter's desire for perfection in his work was generally admired and respected by community members. His reputation as a skilled craftsman increased as his abilities to create furnishings and other objects expanded to meet the growing needs of the community. Nick's comment about his father: "any work that came up he'd do it" reflected how Winter was continually working; he never stopped.<sup>41</sup> As people recognized Winter's many abilities, he was flooded with requests beyond just furniture orders, and it appears that he usually found it difficult to refuse his services. Not only did his completion of a number of projects give Winter financial security, his abilities to construct a variety of objects elevated his status in the community. Winter became a rare commodity--a specialist--in

a community of fishermen who needed his individual expertise.<sup>42</sup>

### Handcrafted Objects for the Community

As the workshop was open from Monday to Saturday, nine in the morning until nine in the evening, Winter's life was devoted to work. In combining both his interests as a craftsman and a businessman, Winter completed numerous orders from furniture to coffins and made a substantial living. Last minute requests or "rush jobs," like constructing coffins, sometimes required Winter to stay in his workshop all night, as indicated by Nick Winter: "The worst thunder and lightening storm he ever experienced, he was building a coffin for a neighbour who had died...by lantern light after midnight."<sup>43</sup>

If a death occurred, the family of the deceased gave Winter the exact measurements of the body and the lumber with which to build the coffin; they might even offer to assist him in constructing the coffin in the workshop. With its completion, Winter sometimes received additional payment if the family had the means.

On his own initiative, Winter provided the community with a useful vehicle. As most funerals in the area of Clarke's Beach entailed a walking procession with a wagon leading at the front, Winter designed a horse-drawn hearse.

He ingeniously installed ball-bearings on the rear floor of the vehicle so that a coffin could be inserted and slide in with ease (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670). At a minimal cost of seven dollars, inexpensive compared to today's standards, a family hired William Winter as chauffeur to drive the hearse. Winter would dress appropriately for the occasion by wearing a fancy suit and a bowler hat. If a family was on a tighter budget, they supplied their own driver and horse and rented the hearse for five dollars. Bill Winter indicated that as the hearse was used by the community for years, its constant need for repair prompted Winter to retire the vehicle.

Winter made and sold a basic line of household furnishings that adequately fulfilled the desires and aesthetics of people in his community and neighbouring communities of Conception Bay. These included bedroom and parlour sets, sideboards, kitchen tables and couches, parlour sofas, and lamp tables. Winter's furnishings were not only ordered and sold from his workshop but were distributed to two different business dealers. Charles "Charlie" Cohen of Bell Island bought and sold Winter's furniture to miners of Wabana, and the Batten Brothers of Humbermouth sold his furniture to fishermen in Notre Dame Bay (Peddle 1984, 76).

As Winter diversified his furniture forms and decorations, he expanded his repertoire to include custom work. Custom designed pieces were generally made for churches and other institutions. Winter also catered to a wealthier clientele in Conception Bay for whom he, at a "few extra dollars," made additions to any piece of furniture as requested by individual customers.<sup>44</sup> Winter spent many sleepless nights thinking over a particular design or decoration, and sometimes he took a "drop of rum" to help him sleep.

The only time he drank...there were always a bottle of rum--Lamb's Rum--up in under the bed, now if he, had to make a bit of furniture and he didn't know exactly how he was going to make it...maybe he'd stay awake and then... this drop of rum would put him to sleep.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14670)

In addition to bedroom and parlour sets, Winter completed orders for wooden pulpits, candle holders, chalices, parlour or occasional tables, and pedestals for churches and missionaries. His ideas in design and decoration for these particular objects probably came from a large catalogue of Christian ornamental art called The Pontifical Institute of Christian Art, which was buried in Winter's tool box.<sup>45</sup> Winter constructed pedestals for religious statues, attached altar chairs, an occasional table for Holy Communion, and a pulpit for All Hallows



Parish. With the exception of the pulpit, all of these items are still presently found in the church (plate 11).

Monsignour Whelan, the priest of this parish for the early part of the twentieth century, was visited by fellow clergymen from other parts of the island. On one occasion, a visiting priest saw the work that Winter had done and requested that he custom design a pulpit and some candleholders; possibly, these items were for the Church of England on Merasheen Island. In 1922, Nick was eight years old when this pulpit was lowered "down from the workshop... It went by train to the south coast, the pulpit was very elaborate."<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Winter was commissioned to furnish the interiors of both the Pentecostal Mission in South River and the Church of England in Salmon Cove ca. 1920. Nick remembers how his father sold a piece of land to the Pentecostal Mission, and the mission asked him to complete the interior furnishings of their meeting house.

Up in the belfry he put a square thing on top of it...He made that with four panes of glass with gold paint, twenty-four by twenty-four; he painted religious messages on those panes of glass: "Jesus saves; Jesus the Light of the World." It was like a pagoda...The painted letters had to be done backwards on the inside of the glass so weather wouldn't destroy it [them].<sup>47</sup>

In Salmon Cove, Winter fitted altar rails and pews into the Church of England. In the evenings, Nick would run down

in a two-wheel rig to pick up his father; the rig was normally used to bring barrels with water from a nearby well. Winter would sit in the rig, while Nick ran "alongside of it" en route to Clarke's Beach.<sup>48</sup>

Winter produced signs or shingles for local businesses with wood and cardboard letters. He had a box filled with rubber letter stamps that he used to complete the lettering on temporary wooden gravemarkers in community cemeteries, as permanent gravestones were still imported to the island (Pocius 1982). On the outside of the workshop, he placed wooden letters "W. H. Winter" for the furniture business; but the chair that sat on the roof of this building, however unconventional, was probably the best advertisement for his trade. As will be described in chapter two, the chair adorning the workshop roof stood out in this community as a local landmark and as a subject for well-known legends.

In addition to making and repairing furniture, Winter repaired and repainted carriages and wagons, a harkening-back to his days as a wheelwright. He also had an iron forge to repair any ironwork that needed to be fixed on these vehicles. His son Bill observed the step-by-step procedure of repainting a carriage--a procedure that revealed Winter's demand for perfection in any task with which he was directly involved.

Now father would take in this carriage.... I'd cut it down, scrape it down and everything down to the iron, if there'd be any wooden repairs that you'd see, then he would repair it...and then he gave it five coats...there were two coats of paint...then a coat of varnish...then the "stripe" [yellow painted line decoration] and then another coat of varnish. That was five coats and it'd look...you could see your face in it, it was glistening after five coats. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670)

Whether he was building a piece of furniture, decorating the interior of a church, or repairing a carriage, Winter's personal aesthetics and desires for perfection, innovation, and attention to detail were evident in his work and his craft.

### Ideas and Attitudes

Winter was not only respected for his craftsmanship but for his thoughts and ideas as well. Nick recalled how his father's advice had been sought by a businessman from Whitbourne. The man asked, "how can I get away from bad debts?" Winter responded by articulating one of his business policies--a policy against giving credit which was distinctly uncharacteristic of Newfoundland's merchant-fisher credit relations of the time (Sider 1986, 86; Wadel 1969):

Close your business...because if you're in business you have to expect to have debts. Debts are the enemy. By giving credit you can drive people out of your store...for people who give credit are only doing themselves an injury.<sup>49</sup>

## Plate 11

Pedestal statue stand made by William Winter for All Hallows  
Parish, North River, originally for a statue of St. Joseph

Photo by: C. Boyd



Winter's policy against credit suggests that his community was prosperous enough to support him outright as he depended on them for the majority of his furniture sales. In chapter three, Nick describes how his father reacted when he did not receive cash payment for bannisters he had designed for a customer, he simply removed them from the customer's house. As described earlier in this chapter, Winter became a full-time furniture maker on the premise that only people who could afford to buy furniture would order it from him (Peddle 1984, 64). Winter may never have allowed credit in his furniture business, but as a local merchant, he, along with his wife, probably dealt with credit on an every day basis in the general store.

Although Winter and his wife were devout Catholics and attended church on a regular basis, Bill remembered that his father recognized the potentially negative effects of imposing one's own religious beliefs on others.

Father used to say "why go into China and Christianize and educate them when they'll just become greedy violent people...like the Christians; just leave them as they are, they're probably better off."<sup>50</sup>

Winter employed his own proverbial expressions that reflected the way he viewed his world and that of people elsewhere. He had his own opinions of how information should be interpreted whether it be written or spoken

information. Nick maintains that his father's "idea of the spoken word and written word was: believe fifty percent of what you hear, ten percent of what you read, and forty percent of what you see."<sup>51</sup> Winter's version is similar to the following proverb found in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs: "Believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see" (Simpson 1982, 12). Another of Winter's expressions that reflected his belief that most consumers were gullible and easily fooled was: "if sawdust was put in a package, people would buy it."<sup>52</sup> Winter was not misguided by what he saw or heard. He especially knew when his children were being dishonest. Winter's retort would be, "if you told that to a dead horse, he'd get up and kick your brains out."<sup>53</sup>

Many people enjoyed watching Winter construct furniture when they stopped briefly to have a chat at his workshop. Others have distinct memories of him when they went into the general store with their parents or with their friends. Margaret Brown recalled an occasion when she and her friend, Mary went to buy something at the store.

And there was a bell, Mrs. Winter had a bell, you'd open the shop--the bell would ring so that they'd hear the bell in the kitchen so they'd come out...and Mary [young girl] took the door...she moved it back and forth, back and forth to hear the bell ring so Mr. Winter looked out from the kitchen and this was Mary...he laughed because he knew she did it....they [Winters'] wouldn't get

vexed, just take it in good stride. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671)

In the face of authority, Winter was sometimes "peculiar." Bill described one such occasion in which this aspect of his father's personality presented itself. Apparently news had travelled about Winter's dog to the governor of Newfoundland, and he was excited and wanted to see the amazing dog.

I remember the old governor wanted to see the dog, you know...And he was brought from Harbour Grace in a carriage up to see the dog. Father said he was too busy...Now I don't know what he had against the governor...But if you'd come along [to see the dog] he'd be tickled to death. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670)

Presumably, Winter was not impressed that the governor had come to pay tribute to him and his well-trained canine. His treatment of the governor was probably a purposeful rebuff to a political figure whom Winter, for reasons unknown, did not particularly respect.

As indicated above, not every person and/or customer found Winter to be a friendly and diplomatic individual, however, he was greatly admired and respected by most people for his love of life, family, and work. His craftsmanship was held in high regard for its innovation, creativity, and utility in the home, business, or church.



### Winter's Death

For approximately two years before his death, William Winter faced his greatest challenge. No amount of spirit, energy, or vitality could stop the fatal effect of cancer. The malady took its course and Winter succumbed to the disease on June 12, 1936 (plate 12). At the time of his death, an enlightening written account of Winter's life as a well-known craftsman and community member was presented in his obituary by an anonymous author. The obituary was lengthy in comparison to other obituaries on that particular page of The Daily News. Whoever wrote this piece appears to have had a detailed knowledge of Winter.

On Friday, June 12th, during the silent hour of midnight there was called to his eternal reward a well known citizen in the person of Mr. H.W. Winter of Clark's Beach. Mr. Winter was a cabinet-maker by trade and owned and successfully operated a furniture business at Clark's Beach and had made extensive connections with most parts of the country. He was a man possessing splendid qualities who practiced honesty and service in his dealings and thus earned the confidence of all those whom he dealt with. He was of an energetic disposition who laboured in his furniture store in the lonely tenor of his way until some seven months ago he was stricken with a malady which defied all medical skill. He did not realize his serious condition and thought he would find some cure, but after he had consulted some of our city surgeons he found to his grim surprise that his affliction was beyond their aid, the inevitable was approaching and he was about to be finished with life's

duties at which he had laboured almost half a century. He had outlived the allotted span in life by one year, but he was quite active and able to be about his business; so much so that the lapse of time alone can remove from the minds of a devoted wife and family the thought that their husband and father is with them no more. On Sunday evening some 300 people of all denominations wended their way to the residence of the deceased and at 3 o'clock lined up and accompanied the remains to North River church where the funeral services were read by the Rev. Fr. Dinn, after which the remains were conducted to the cemetery and committed to mother earth. The deceased leaves to mourn a wife, five sons, John and Frank at Detroit, Leonard at California, William and Nickolas at home; also two daughters, Mrs. W.J. Mullaly [sic] at Detroit and Mrs. T.J. Dwyer, Bell Island. Another daughter, Dorothy, was accidentally drowned at Ocean Pond in 1930, from which Mr. Winter never fully recovered. Mr. J.J. Winter of Brigus, a brother, and a host of relatives and friends, all of whom are extended the deepest sympathy of the community.<sup>54</sup>

Members of Winter's family and of his community distinctly remember that Winter suffered from "cancer of the face" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671). What started as a small blemish on his head, turned into a fatal malignancy which doctors in St. John's claimed could be burned off. Winter refused by saying that "there's no one that's going to put a knife to me or burn off anything off me" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675). Perhaps Winter knew that the treatment would not be of any use. Until his dying day, Winter had a

remarkable sense of pride and dignity as witnessed by his youngest son, Nick: "I was there the night he died...he asked me to turn him around in the bed; he wanted to be at the other end, so I turned him around and just like that he was gone."<sup>55</sup>

Plate 12

Funeral Procession for William Winter, June 29, 1936, North  
River, Conception Bay

(Courtesy of Bill and Florence Winter)

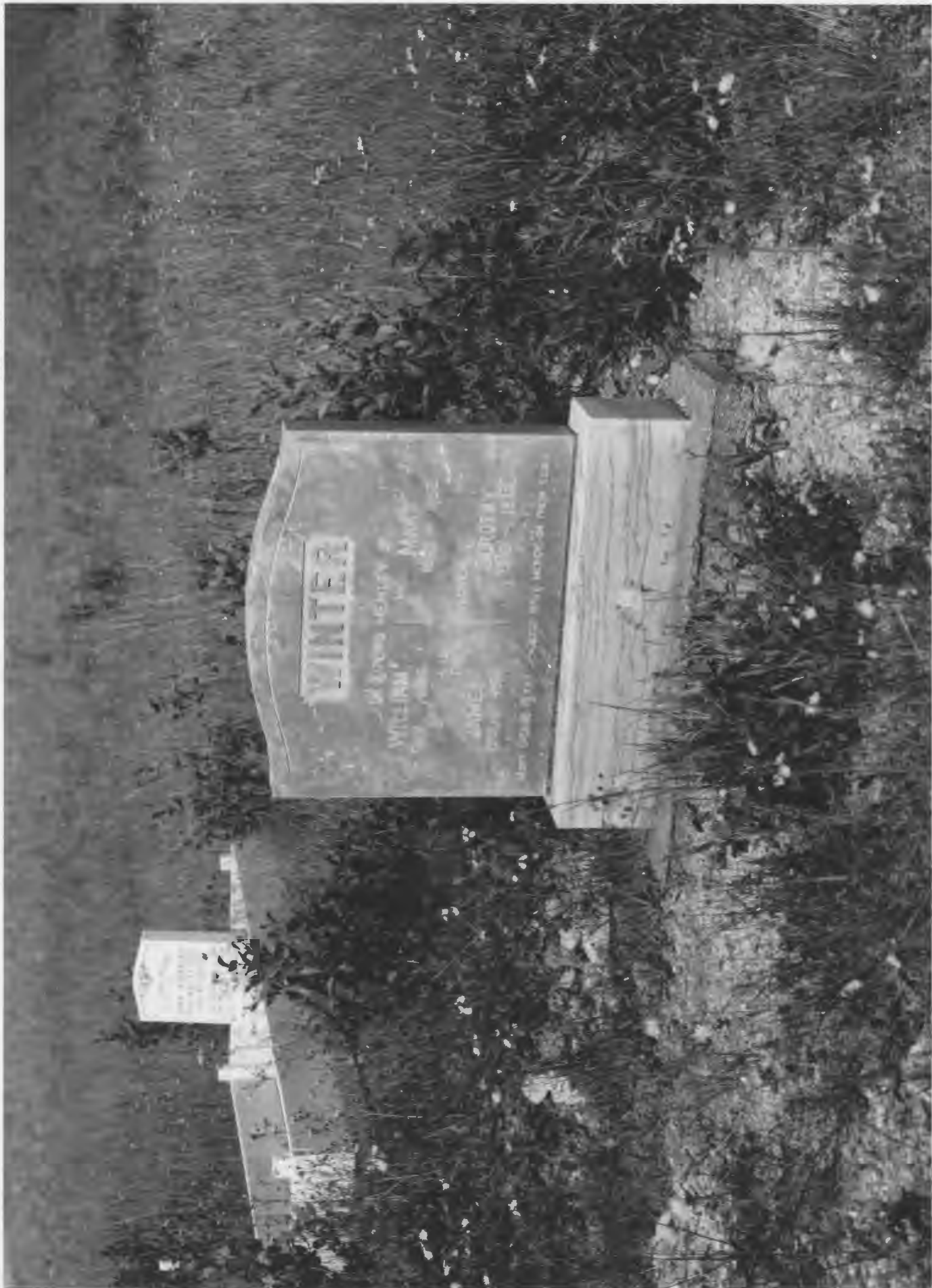


Plate 13

Gravestone of William Winter, his wife, Mary, daughter,  
Dorothy, and son, James

Birch Hills Cemetary, North River, Newfoundland

Photo by: C. Boyd



1. The secondary sources include preliminary research on William Winter by Walter Peddle, The Forgotten Craftsmen (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1984) 61-76; The 1921 Census of Newfoundland, District of Port de Grave (St. John's, Newfoundland) 126; and Winter's Obituary, "Obituary, Mr. H. W. Winter," The Daily News (St. John's, Newfoundland, June 29, 1936) 7.

Photographs of the Winter family were described by Bill and Nick Winter in conversation with the author during the summer of 1990 through the winter of 1991. It is not surprising that there were numerous photographs of Winter and his family because a photographer by the name of David Garland was working in Clarke's Beach as early as 1890. D. H. Dawe, "A Settlement History of Clarke's Beach," MS at Memorial University of Newfoundland Maritime History Archives, 1972, 141-2, no. 101-13-1-15.

2. Winter Family files, Maritime History Archives, file no.# 40N. Information on the Winter geneology was also collected from Ellen [Smart] Carolus, a distant relative of the Winters. Ellen Carolus, letter to the author, 5 February 1992. See Appendix A for the William Winter family geneology.

3. Walter Peddle indicates in The Forgotten Craftsmen (1984) that the Roman Catholic parish records from the Basilica of St. John the Baptist indicate that Winter was baptized and born in 1865. In The 1921 Census of Newfoundland Winter indicates that he was actually born in 1863. This coincides with the date of his father's death in 1869, as William Winter was the oldest child of five which was indicated in the MHA family files under John Winter, file no. 40N.

4. Gertrude Crosbie, Births, Deaths, and Marriages in Newfoundland Newspapers, 1866-1870, (St. John's, Memorial University of Newfoundland Maritime History Archives, February 1987) 215.

5. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 8 January 1990.

6. Bill and Florence Winter, conversation with the author, 24 June 1991.

7. Ellen [Smart] Carolus, letter to the author, 11 January 1992.

8. Ellen [Smart] Carolus, letter to Bill Winter, 17 January 1987.

9. The 1921 Census of Newfoundland, District of Port de Grave, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, (St. John's, Newfoundland) 126.

10. Lovell's Province of Newfoundland Directory for 1871 entitles its directory of this community as "Clark's Beach," 241-2.



11. Project Planning Associates, North River, Clarke's Beach, South River Municipal Plan, 1971-81 (St. John's, n.p., April, 1971) 3-5.

12. Project Planning, 4.

13. Project Planning, 4-5.

14. Project Planning, 4-5.

15. Bill Winter uses this term to differentiate wood types. Another source for this term can be found in G. M. Story, W. J. Kirwin, and J. D. A. Widdowson eds., Dictionary of Newfoundland English, 2nd ed. with supplement (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 501.

16. These same types of trees were used for boat construction, as indicated by David Alan Taylor, Boatbuilding in Winterton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper no. 41, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada) 63-4. For sources of vegetation in this area see, A. Glen Ryan, Native Trees and Shrubs of Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Parks Division, Department of Tourism, 1978) 14, 16, 17.

17. Ryan, 20, 89.

18. Ryan, 39, 76, 92-3, 98-9.

19. For sources referring to the Labrador fishery in which individuals went "on the Labrador" see, J. Ralph Dale, "Clarke's Beach," Encyclopedia of Newfoundland, vol.1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers' Ltd., 1981) 450; Susan Shiner, ed., Our Life on Lear's Room Labrador, by Greta Hussey (St. John's: Robinson-Blackmore, 1981); Clara J. Murphy, "Folkloric Exchange between Labradorians and Newfoundland Fishing Families "on the Labrador", "Proceedings of the National Student Conference on Northern Studies (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 1988) 510-14; and from Johnny and Anne Boone, interview by Cynthia Boyd, MUNFLA, Tape, C14673.

20. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 25 June 1991.

21. For sources on fruit bearing shrubs, see Ryan 39, 76, 92-3, 98-9. Maidenhair and teaberry were described by Bill and Florence Winter, conversation with the author, 6 October 1991; and in Story, Kirwin, Widdowson, 320.

22. For sources describing caplin, see, Story, Kirwin, Widdowson, 82; on natural fertilizers used in Newfoundland gardens see, MUNFLA Ms., 77-288/appendix; on seagrass (Zostera marina) see, Ernest Rouleau, List of the Vascular Plants of the Province of Newfoundland (Canada) (St. John's: Oxen Pond Botanical Park, 1978) 56.

23. The 1921 Census of Newfoundland, District of Port de Grave, 101-31.

24. Dale 1981, 450; Banquet To Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of ALL HALLOWS PARISH North River, Newfoundland, 1906-1981 Friday, November 5, 1982.

25. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

26. Michael "Mike" Abbott, conversation with the author, 11 June 1990.

27. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 3 July 1991.

28. This source was found in the E. R. Seary surname files in Memorial University of Newfoundland Language and Folklore Archives. It reads: "Winter, John of W. Winter & Maria [Mary] Furlong baptized Aug. 29, 1895 at Clark's Beach--sponsors, James Casey and Margaret Furlong."

29. Peggy [Winter] Mullaby, telephone interview by Cynthia Boyd, 20 June 1990.

30. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 23 June 1991.

31. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 23 June 1991.

32. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 23 June 1991.

33. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

34. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

35. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 8 January 1990. The Broads refers to a community near Makinsons, see figure A. In Place Names of the Avalon Peninsula, Seary calls this community, Broads Cove Gasters which distinguishes it from many Broad Coves on the Avalon Peninsula (1981, 115). George Bartlett, in an unpublished student paper entitled Land Grant to Noah Snow, Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay (Maritime History Archives, Ms., 43-C-1-8/5) indicates that the windmill was indeed operating in this location, he states: "There was one particularly interesting sawmill at the neck of the Broads,

a windmill, about a 1000 feet up..." The windmill will be discussed in chapter three.

36. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

37. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 8 January 1990.

38. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

39. For sources describing the origins of framed portraits or pictures that were and are placed in the "front rooms" of homes in other parts of Newfoundland such as the Southern Shore, see, Gerald L. Pocius, A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (Athens and Montreal: The U of Georgia P; McGill-Queen's UP, 1991) 238-49.

40. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 8 January 1990.

41. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

42. Louis J. Chiaramonte, Craftsman-Client Contracts: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Community, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies No. 10 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1970) 28-9. This is speculated in chapter three with more direct implications.

43. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 2 February 1991.

44. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

45. The reference for this catalogue is the following: Pontifical Institute of Christian Art: Church ornaments of our own manufacture (New York: Benziger Brothers, n.d.) 10-12.

46. Although it is not exactly known where this particular pulpit was sent, Bill Winter believes it was to Merasheen Island. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 24 March 1991; Nick Winter, letter to the author, 2 February 1991.

47. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

48. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

49. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 October 1990.

50. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 24 March 1991.

51. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 2 January 1991.

52. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

53. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 October 1990. In The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, a proverb related to Winter's expression was the following: "Deadmen tell no tales. 'Twere best to Knock 'um i' th' head...The dead can tell no tales" (Simpson 1982, 49).

54. "Obituary, Mr. H. W. Winter," The Daily News, St. John's, Newfoundland, June 29, 1936, 7.

55. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 21 June 1990.

## Chapter 3

### The Furniture-Making Enterprise of William Winter

#### Part I:

#### The Furniture-Making Enterprise: An Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, occupations outside of the fishery were rarely pursued by men in outport Newfoundland (Newfoundland Royal Commission Report 1933, 247). Despite this pattern, William Winter successfully made and sold household furnishings and custom-designed furniture on a full-time basis in Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay from ca. 1900 to 1935. Throughout this chapter, the work and workmanship of William Winter will be analyzed from historical, economic, and social contexts in which he was making furniture.

His ingenuity and versatility can be seen from an extensive array of his furniture pieces found in present-day public and private collections, as well as in the stock of local antique dealers. Collections such as these, as well as oral testimonies given by individuals who own furniture made by Winter, indicate the variety and complexity of furnishings that he produced.

Winter handcrafted a basic line of household furnishings such as: bedroom sets, consisting of a matching dresser and washstand and/or a bed; parlour chair sets, consisting of a settee, rocking chair, and one plain chair; medicine cabinets; lamp tables; hallstands; parlour and

kitchen couches; mantelpieces; wing-back chairs; parlour sideboards; parlour or occasional tables; and kitchen, tilt-top, and drop-leaf tables.

According to the number of pieces identified and recorded to date, Winter's most popular sale items by far were bedroom sets and parlour sideboards (see Appendix B) (Peddle 1984, 69). His washstands were usually constructed with one cupboard, a drawer, and a lyre-shaped backboard with a towel rail. The matching dresser or bureau was made with three drawers and a lyre-shaped backboard with an adjustable mirror that could be tilted backward or forward. These sets were usually placed in the more private interiors of the home and generally not seen by the public; and therefore, they were not elaborately decorated (Pocius 1991, 250).

Parlour sideboards were placed in the front room or parlour -- a room where special guests of the family were entertained (Pocius 1991, 238-42). A family's best furnishings, framed pictures, and bric-a-brac located in the parlour often reflected social and economic status. Exemplifying such ideals, Winter's parlour furniture was intricately decorated with applied, carved, and handpainted embellishments. From the early 1900s to the 1930s, Winter's products were competitive to that produced by furniture factories in larger centers of St. John's and the mainland of

Canada; his prices ranged from fourteen dollars for bedroom sets, twelve for parlour couches, seven for kitchen couches, eight or more for mantlepieces, forty-five for parlour chair sets, to sixty dollars for hallstands (Peddle 1984, 69). When he custom-designed furniture for particular customers or was commissioned to make special furnishings for local churches and missionaries, the prices fluctuated according to the amount of labour, materials, and ornamentation given to the objects.

Until the late nineteenth century, full-time furniture-making specialists were uncommon in outport Newfoundland. Walter Peddle, Curator of History at the Newfoundland Museum, claims that one major consequence for the absence of such specialists is that the outports did not develop a set of regional furniture designs and styles which would provide a guideline for furniture makers based upon the common needs and tastes of the fishing-oriented residents (Peddle 1991).

Like other outport furniture makers, Winter had the ability to select and reject designs and decorations from any number of sources. In his introduction to Peddle's The Traditional Furniture of Outport Newfoundland, Pocius describes how "each maker had knowledge of a wide repertoire of forms, styles, motifs, and finishes, and each new piece could potentially combine any number of these in new ways"

(1983, xvii). Winter's basic forms and decorations were patterned from printed sources like popular catalogues or books of instruction, and from existing furniture models made by other Newfoundland furniture makers; furniture crafted by earlier British tradesmen; and handmade and mass-produced furniture imported from various sources both in Great Britain and in North America (Peddle 1991).

Following the precepts of his canon of work technique, Winter wanted to make furniture that was functional and attractive. Winter used materials conservatively and employed simple techniques in construction to keep his furniture at a marginal cost. He relied on the availability of local woods, lumber from nearby mills, and wide pine boards from packing crates and demolished buildings. Instead of using conventional methods of mortise and tenon joinery, he used wide pine boards to simulate paneling on the ends and doors of furniture pieces, like matching bedroom dresser and washstand sets. He painted imitation grains on the furniture, that resembled hardwoods like mahogany and oak, and he decorated his furniture with ornamental embellishments to create elaborate and ornate furnishings, especially parlour furnishings. Winter employed simple construction techniques combined with decoration to make competitive products for a diverse clientele.



In its simple form and applied decoration, the furniture that Winter made was an expression of his creativity as a craftsman and a reflection of the desires and aesthetics of his clientele. Whether they were fishermen, merchants, or priests, his customers influenced the design, materials, and decoration of the furniture he made. Thus, the objects, in their form and decoration, combined the aesthetics, preferences, and values of both consumer and producer.

#### Landmarks: Winter's House and Workshop

Entering the town of Clarke's Beach from the community of South River, one notices that there is only one house built along the beach. This house was built by William Winter in the early 1900s and was his home until his death in 1936. Presently it is occupied by his son, Bill Winter and daughter-in-law, Florence. Winter's home is a large two-storey structure with bay windows which face the Conception Bay Highway (plate 14). Except where recent repairs have been made with modern materials, the majority of the house is covered with shingles that Winter handcarved. Like his furniture, the house is elaborately decorated with panels, turned posts, brackets, and shell or fan carvings. Winter's home, in form and decoration, is marked by its individuality and is one of the most

Plate 14

Winter's residence in Clarke's Beach, Newfoundland; built in  
the early 1900s

Photo by: C. Boyd



recognized houses in the community. Senior members of the Clarke's Beach community, who were only children when Winter was making furniture, remembered this furniture maker's elaborate residence, as well as his general store. The store, which is now a small entranceway, was attached to the house, and Winter's wife, Mary, sold eggs, salt beef, fabrics, and other goods there. Margaret Brown of Clarke's Beach was a young girl when she went to this store on the beach:

His wife had a store, dry goods,  
groceries, different materials for  
making curtains and ah, things for your  
house.... she was quite busy there.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14671)

Across the street from his home, Winter built his first workshop around the turn of the century, and it stood until 1921 when it was replaced by a second, larger workshop. Both the first and second workshops were actually barns that contained Winter's furniture making enterprise as well as his farm animals (see plates 8, 9). The first workshop was well-known in the community because of an attached windmill that Winter used to drive a large lathe, which turned out table and chair legs. The second workshop was remembered by family and community members because of Winter's famous pet dog who turned the large lathe, and because of a chair that was nailed to the workshop roof for all to see.

Workshop ca. 1900 - 1920

As Winter did not rely on apprentices, he devised ingenious methods to construct furniture quickly and efficiently within a cramped working environment. In 1904, Winter purchased a Canadian Airmotor windmill from a company in Canada, which he attached to the side of the workshop (see plate 10). The windmill was used to drive the large lathe located on the first floor of the workshop. The windmill went at an unpredictable rate, however, and depending on the velocity of the wind it would either work fast and furiously or sit idle. As mentioned in chapter two, the wind blew so hard that the windmill would spin violently, releasing itself from its bearings, sailing across roof tops, and damaging everything within its destructive path (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). Winter sold the windmill to Joe Moore of the Broads, a small community outside Clarke's Beach, near Makinsons (see figure A).

Workshop ca. 1921 - 1969

His second workshop was built in 1921 and stood until 1969 when it was torn down by the highway commission to expand the Conception Bay Highway.<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s, Winter's oldest son, Jack had returned from the War and started working as an electrician, Nell had married a native of Bell Island, and Frank, Leonard, Peggy, and Dorothy were soon to

leave Newfoundland for Detroit in search of work.<sup>2</sup> Although Bill and Nick lived at home, their primary chores involved working the fields, gardens, and the potatoe patch, not working for their father in his workshop (plate 15). For the most part, Winter did not necessarily need his children's help, however, because he had trained his dog to run in the treadmill of the large lathe. Many people came to see the dog perform this feat, the dog would get excited and jump out of the treadmill. In order to control the dog, Winter trained him to work the treadmill until he tapped the side of the machine with a stick at which time the dog would stop.<sup>3</sup>

This workshop was a well-known landmark not only because of the famous dog that Winter had trained to help make furniture, but also because of a simple kitchen chair that adorned the roof of the workshop (see plate 9). For many onlookers and townspeople, this chair held supernatural significance. Numerous narratives were told suggesting why the chair originated there. The narratives recalled by members of Clarke's Beach, other outport communities, and members of larger centers like St. John's, focus on supernatural explanations--ghosts and spirits that occupied the chair; as well as narratives dealing with the actual function of the chair--the sign of a man's trade, a carpenter's advertisement (see Appendix D).

## Plate 15

Winter's youngest sons, Bill (leaning on tool box) and Nick (seated in chair) with Bill's dog, Springer at the Winter residence in Clarke's Beach

Photo by: C. Boyd





All of these community legends concentrate on a single episode, an episode which is presented as miraculous, uncanny, strange, and true (Bennett 1986, 416; Oring 1986, 125).

For one woman, Mrs. Ina Taylor, who lived in Carbonear but worked in St. John's during the 1930s, the chair was a familiar sight in her daily travels to and from work:

It was a real landmark, and if you were driving along you would be sure to see it and would make a point if a stranger was with you to point that chair out, and anyone else it was always: I see the chair's still there, I wonder who they're looking for now. I guess whoever it is, is long gone, I guess they're back from the sea now.<sup>4</sup>

Popularly told narratives depicting the chair's supernatural existence are maintained by many people. Typically, the story surrounds a woman who sits in the chair watching the sea for her lost lover, as provided by the following example from Memorial University of Newfoundland Language and Folklore Archives.

Mrs. Emily Wickham of Clarke's Beach:

A long time ago, a young man and woman lived in that house. The man was a fisherman and he often went on long fishing trips. When the woman expected her husband home from these trips, she would take the chair and sit on the roof and watch for her husband's ship. This went on for years and years. Finally, when the man was old he went out on his ship, but he never returned because his ship was lost in a storm. The old lady was told about his death, but she refused to accept it and from that day

until her death she sat for hours on her roof waiting for her husband's ship to return. (MUNFLA, Q68-146/4-5)

Ironically even today, people do not realize that it was simply an advertisement of Winter's furniture making business (Peddle 1984, 66-67). One comment by a resident of Clarke's Beach, however, indicates that the chair represented both advertisement and supernatural belief.

That's the place where the spirits rest....And some nights they say you were able to see lights shining around the chair.... The chair was a shingle, the sign of old man Winter's trade. (MUNFLA, Ms., 73-31/23-4)

People who remembered stories were sometimes hesitant to reveal what they had heard, or what they personally believed to be the true story of why the chair was located on the workshop roof.

CB: Do you remember hearing any stories about the chair Winter had on top of his workshop?

AB: No [pause] No. People said that he died in that chair.

CB: Who died?

AB: Mr. Winter, people said he died in that chair, but that wasn't true, it was his advertisement for his business. It was always there, you could always see it.<sup>5</sup>

In all likelihood, the legends about the chair originated because of an actual event concerning the Winter family or an event occurring within the workshop itself.

Narratives told about a widow who sat in the chair to watch for the return of her drowned sons coincides with the actual death of Winter's youngest daughter, Dorothy, who died from an accidental drowning in Ocean Pond in 1930 (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671). Another famous story describing how the ghost of a local priest sat in the chair coincides with the death of Monsignour Whelan, who was All Hallows Parish priest from 1906 to 1923 in North River, Conception Bay.

As Winter's workshop was one of the largest commercial buildings in the town of Clarke's Beach and neighbouring communities, it was the only building that had space to accomplish certain tasks outside Winter's furniture construction. In 1923, one task that particularly required the space in the workshop was the embalming of a priest who had died in Labrador. There, he was administering to "the spiritual needs of the Indians" of North West River, Labrador.<sup>6</sup> This priest had previously served in Conception Bay for seventeen years. When he died, his body was returned to the island in a large container full of salt which was placed on a steamer bound for Clarke's Beach. As a devoted member of this church and a friend of the Monsignour, Winter allowed the embalmers from St. John's to prepare the priest's body in his workshop.

So horses brought this huge load of salt  
and Father Whelan to our workshop,  
because of the space, you know, because

the downstairs, the doors just flung open, they could just back it in, so the embalmers arrived, two of them from St. John's. They unpacked him...out of the huge box of salt. In the back of the workshop...they must have spilt some embalming fluid because for a month later I'd bring kids in to smell this stuff. So after the funeral was over, my father decided to dispose of all the salt, and the box was still there filled with salt, and we had to shovel the salt in a wheelbarrel out to the beach.... and among the salt--years ago men used to wear metal bands [garters] that you could stretch over their shirt to keep their shirt in a certain position--and we found his there. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14673)

It was from this particular event that people have since created the story of Father Whelan's ghost who sat in the chair on top of Winter's workshop, watching over his Catholic parishioners.

#### The Work and Workmanship of William Winter

The second workshop measured 42 X 18 feet and consisted of two floors (Peddle 1984, 62). The first floor had a paint shop in which Winter varnished, painted, or applied fine line decoration on furniture pieces only when this area was completely free of dust. This area was also the location for the large lathe and Winter's cows and horses. The second floor consisted of Winter's woodworking area where he kept his tool box and work bench. Hay was also stored on the second floor.

This furniture making enterprise was essentially the enterprise of one man as Winter's workshop had certain limitations. There was insufficient space to comfortably construct furniture, and it was difficult to maintain a dust free environment necessary to finish his products with varnish or shellac. Presumably, there must have been one part of the workshop that Winter kept completely clear of animal hair, hay, and dust in order to finish his furniture. As Winter's youngest son, Nick recalled, this part of the workshop remained to be seen:

There was no room for anything because the hayloft was stogged from end to end and all that was left was the little workshop.... There was so much dust and everything in there that, there was no way you could leave a finished product over there--as soon as it was finished, it was gone out of there. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

As suggested in chapter two, there was only enough space for one person to work and he probably did not hire someone to assist him in the workshop on a full-time basis. Peddle indicates in The Forgotten Craftsmen that Cyril Richards recalled how Winter had hired a Matthew Fowler during peak times of furniture production--summer through fall (1984, 64). The 1921 Census of Newfoundland states that Winter's occupation was a cabinetmaker and when the census presents the question, "Is person working on own

account, that is, neither employing others, nor working for an employer?, Winter replied affirmatively.<sup>7</sup>

In accordance with the precepts of his canon of work technique, Winter impressed upon his children the sanctity of his tools and workshop space. For the most part, his sons were only allowed to practice basic woodworking skills like sandpapering, collecting natural materials for upholstery, and turning the large lathe in the workshop.

Considering the limitations of the workshop, Winter's ingenious use of wind and dog power was indicative of his ability to employ whatever resources available to make furniture as quickly and efficiently as possible. Peddle has stated that Winter "mass-produced" furniture (1984, 61). The only mass-produced furnishings that Winter sold were unassembled chairs imported from the Mainland; he fitted them together and charged seventy-five cents for each chair (Peddle 1984, 69). The term mass-produced connotes that he made furniture with many machines and specialized workers assisting him. In actuality, Winter made large quantities of furniture by himself. In The Nature and Art of Workmanship, author David Pye describes two kinds of workmanship, that of risk and that of certainty (1968, 4-5). Applying the workmanship of certainty or mass-production, a craftsman cannot spoil a job but under the workmanship of

risk, the quality of the job is constantly changing during the process of construction (1968, 4-6). As certain pieces of furniture, like bedroom sets, required the same materials, construction, and decoration, Winter made and stockpiled all the parts to assemble as many sets as he could at one time. Although each bedroom set was made using the same techniques and materials, the chance that each bedroom set could have different handpainted decorations or applied embellishments was a distinct possibility. To remain competitive and survive financially as an outport furniture maker, Winter constructed large quantities of furniture simply and effectively with little or no assistance.

### Tools

Winter owned a large collection of tools. He made some of these himself, others he bought locally or imported. All his tools were kept in a large tool box measuring forty and one half inches in length, twenty-one and a quarter inches in depth, and twenty-four inches in height (plate 16). Winter screwed approximately three hundred screws onto the surface of the tool box which he had placed there to enhance its overall appearance (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670). Recent restoration efforts by Ralph Clemmens, Rupert Batten, and Frank Barrington of the Historic Resources Division revealed

the tool box's original construction of oak and pine which was hidden by white and blue paint. A brass plaque, enclosing the tool box's lock, remains in its original condition; it is engraved, "H. W. WINTER" (plate 17). According to Nick, the tool box was normally locked and the key placed on a hook in the workshop. Unless Winter granted his sons permission to open the tool box and use his tools, he was the only one who had access to the box and its contents.<sup>8</sup> Many conventional tools were used: wood and metal planes, moulding planes, chisels, spoke-shaves, drawing knives, marking gages, hammers, gouges, carpenter's square, rip and cross-cut saws, hack saws, bit and brace sets, and hand-drills. Although there were probably many more tools in this craftsman's collection that are now missing, several types of planes were found in Winter's tool box. These included plow, jointer, beading, rabbit, and moulding planes made from hardwoods like birch and beech. Some of the planes handmade by Winter, were specifically set at only one moulding setting.

Plow planes were used to make grooves in the backs of his matching bedroom dresser and washstand sets which held the lyre-shaped backboards. Jointer planes were used for mortise and tenon joinery, and rabbit planes would be used in rebating the wood to receive another part of the



Plate 16

Winter's tool box (before restoration)

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Plate 17

Engraving on brass plaque "H. W. WINTER" from the lid of the  
tool box

Photo by: C. Boyd



furniture piece. Beading planes would produce a beaded or rounded edge on the tops of his washstands and dressers, and moulding planes would be used to create the baseboard moulding or strips of wood on chests of drawers, parlour sideboards, and washstands.

Winter used a set of metal combs and rubber rollers to apply imitation grains that simulated hardwoods like mahoghany, oak, or walnut (plate 18) (Peddle 1983, 31-2). He also used a small foot-operated lathe to turn wood into hundreds of carved rosettes, bosses or buttons, and brackets that were used to decorate furniture (plate 19). The large lathe, with a rotating treadmill first operated by his dog and later manually operated by his sons, was used to turn wood into decorative posts and table, chair, and sofa legs.

Other tools that he employed were handmade moulds or templates. As many of his products, such as bedroom dresser and washstand sets, were similar in design, Winter created moulds, templates, or patterns for specific parts of these furnishings. As these sets were popular, he stockpiled the various parts, and when he had orders for three or four bedroom sets, he could make them all at the same time. The moulds for bedroom sets consisted of lyre-shaped backboards, panels with scooped corners, brackets, and simulated panels for the sides of both dressers and washstands and simulated panels for the cupboard doors of washstands. Other items,

specifically for dressers, were also stockpiled such as pins that held the mirror in place and a rolling pin baluster that crowned the backboard of the dresser. Moulds or patterns were made of thin board and were hung from the workshop wall. Nick described how his father made extra moulds. "They measured a quarter of an inch of wood and you would lay these down onto another piece of board, trace them out with a pen and you would have another pattern to use" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675).

#### Upholstery tools and materials

Winter had a basic set of tools that were used in upholstering wing-back chairs, parlour couches, parlour chair sets, and sleighs. Although many of his upholstery tools have been lost, his sons recalled that he had mallets, tacks, clamps, twine, and curved sewing needles. In stuffing these upholstered items, he used natural materials like "seagrass" (Zostera marina) which washed up along the banks of the estuary of South River (Rouleau 1978, 56).

Winter's sons, Bill and Nick, as young boys in the first two decades of this century, were given the tedious job of gathering up large bunches of seagrass, bringing it back to the workshop in a small box cart, and preparing it for their father's use.

Plate 18

Winter's imitation graining tools: combs and rollers

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd







Plate 19

A small foot-operated lathe that Winter used in his workshop  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



You had to bring it home, spread it on the garden.... Then it had to be dried, washed because there was salt water in it. There was sticks in it. Everything had to be picked out; now there was a job that any kid would not want to do. When it drifted on the beach, there was every kind of stick there that clung to it. You had to pick all that out of there and make it fluffy, you know for him to use. He would come along, and he would pick up a handful saying: "look at this, you gotta do that over again." It matted like wool. This almost had to be carded like wool. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

In later years when seagrass was no longer available, Winter used sawdust and hay to stuff his furniture. Although Winter never knew why it had disappeared, one possible reason it became virtually non-existent has been offered by Dr. Peter Scott of the Department of Botany at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Apparently in the 1930s, this seagrass or Zostera marina became less plentiful in the estuaries of South River and in areas outside of Conception Bay. According to Dr. Scott, Zostera marina was infected by a fungal disease that came to Newfoundland waters through a warm current. This fungal disease wiped out beds of seagrass in some harbours of Bonavista North. The destruction of the beds disturbed the sedimentation and natural underwater breakwaters which preserved the delicate balance of the harbours. As a result, entire communities uprooted and left these areas of Bonavista North.<sup>9</sup>

Despite its apparent extinction, Nick Winter remembered one instance when the seagrass returned briefly, much to everyone's surprise.

About 1927, 1928, there was this big wind storm. My father was sure we would loose the roof off the house. Next day the beach along the river was piled up with seagrass. We hauled it home with a horse and cart, spread it out in the field for the rain to wash it. We had stacks of seagrass like hay.<sup>10</sup>

After stuffing his furniture, Winter covered the exterior of his upholstered pieces with fabrics that his wife had stocked in the general store. Fabrics with a flower or velvet pattern were popular for parlour chair sets and wing-back chairs, and duck cloth or sail canvas, for couches.

### Construction techniques and materials

In keeping with his precept to respect his resources, Winter saved on the cost of wood by relying upon local woods like timber from his own groves and specific pieces and sizes of wood from nearby lumber mills. His groves produced pine (Pinus strobus), spruce (Picea glauca moench), tamarack (Larix laricina), and fir (Abies balsamea) (Ryan 1978, 14, 16, 17, 20). According to Bill Winter, spruce and tamarack were useful but fir, known locally as "snotty var," was practically worthless because of the knots that caused damage to the lathe. "You couldn't do anything with grove

timber, the knots, the plane wouldn't stand the knots after" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670).<sup>11</sup>

At a local lumber mill near Bay Roberts, Winter was able to pick and choose the lumber that he wanted. He also used the wood from packing crates in which commercial goods were shipped. These crates were usually composed of spruce, fir, and pine which often was of poor quality, but the boards were wide and therefore suitable for parts of furniture that were hidden from sight (Peddle 1984, 69). Winter's efforts to recycle wood and other materials would delight present-day conservation-minded people. Winter, however, had little choice and practiced conservation out of necessity to keep the costs of his products competitive. He also encouraged his son, Nick, to re-use materials, demanding that he diligently remove nails and other hardware from crates. "Whatever wood that these things came in, you knocked the nails out of them and tried not to break it up because he used it" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674).

Winter's use of bits and pieces of wood is evident in some examples of furniture he made for his home. These include a record cabinet (see plate 40), constructed out of pine, birch, and oak, and a lamp table, made partly from a cheese box. Both of these pieces are located in Winter's house and are presently being used by his son, Bill Winter (Peddle 1984, 68).

In order to make competitive products, one of his construction techniques was to apply simple, but effective lap and butt joints and mortise and tenon joints to assemble his furniture. Lap and butt joints were used in the construction of drawers; lap joints joined the fronts to the sides and butt joints connected the backs to the sides of the drawers. Mortise and tenon joints were used to frame end and door panels of case pieces like sideboards and matching bedroom dresser and washstand sets. When Winter obtained wide pine boards, however, he simulated end and door panels by applying mouldings or strips of wood around the edges of the board--a procedure which simplified construction and took less time (plate 20) (Peddle 1984, 71).

Winter also simplified the construction of the lyre-shaped backboards of his bedroom dresser and washstand sets. Each lyre-shaped backboard was an extension of two of the vertical boards which enclosed the back. Another advantage of this particular practice was that it resulted in a more sturdy product. The disadvantage was that such backboards could not be removed to facilitate relocating the furniture. The high backs of parlour sideboards were also fixed in a similar manner. As with the washstands and dressers, this practice insured stability while making the product impractical to move.

Plate 20

Detail of a cupboard door from a Winter parlour sideboard;  
this displays Winter's use of wide pine boards

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd





Although Winter's furniture was simply constructed, he made attractive and impressive pieces by embellishing them with numerous applied, carved, or handpainted decorations. Applied decorations, like bosses or buttons, D-shaped carvings, panels with scooped corners, and brackets, were made in large quantities and stockpiled by Winter. Carved and handpainted decorations included sunburst, shell or fan carvings, wheat sheafs, bell flowers, and sprig-leaf motifs. He carved or painted these decorations meticulously on the surface of his furniture. A more detailed discussion of Winter's decorations will be presented in a later section.

Applying imitation grain finishes and "bevelling" edges were other simple techniques that Winter employed to save time and money. He frequently applied imitation grain finishes, resembling hardwoods like mahogany, walnut, and oak, to his furniture. Using metal combs, he spread one of two kinds of stains, "burnt umber" or "sienna," over the wood to create a grain and used rubber rollers to make circular designs and decorations (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). These tools were difficult to use because the graining materials would clog the teeth of the combs and grooves of the rollers. After using the tools, he removed leftover grain materials with a chisel, but eventually this practice bent the metal combs and widened the grooves of the rubber rollers.

On most of his pieces, especially matching bedroom and washstand sets and parlour sideboards, Winter applied a yellow line decoration to accentuate the furniture. As his products were constructed from relatively thick boards, Winter "bevelled" some of the edges of his furniture, including those of the tops of bedroom washstand and dresser sets and tables and drawer fronts, to achieve a lighter and more refined appearance. This technique made his furniture more visually appealing to his clientele.

By constructing furniture from simple materials like grove timber, wide pine boards, and bits and pieces of wood and by accentuating his pieces with decorative embellishment, Winter was able to create a very impressive and competitive product.

#### Historical Influences on Designs and Decorations of Newfoundland Outport Furniture

In the absence of a regional school of furniture design, Winter, like other Newfoundland outport furniture makers, established his own repertoire of furniture forms and decorations. Consequently, outport craftsmen were not concerned with producing furniture that followed any one unified style; they combined elements and ideas from any number of sources such as those from catalogues or pattern books and existing furniture models made by earlier British

tradesmen and furniture imported from Europe and North America (Pocius, "Introduction" in Peddle 1983, xvii).

Furniture makers in different regions of Great Britain and Ireland had an established set of guidelines that governed what kinds of furniture was made as well as how it was made. The earliest surviving pieces of Newfoundland outport furniture made during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were almost certainly handcrafted by highly skilled tradesmen recruited from Britain to serve as shipwrights and joiners under wealthy merchants residing in the outports (Peddle 1991).

As Handcock indicates, most immigrants and settlers who came to Newfoundland had few employment opportunities outside of "the catching, processing, and marketing of codfish" (1989, 253). Yet, prior experience in other occupations, and tradesmen "such as carpenters, coopers, shipwrights, sailmakers...were always in demand and provided occupational niches in the immigration process" (1989, 253-54).

British tradesmen inevitably experienced a slack time in their work, and presumably, they made furniture for the more prosperous of the outport residences, as examples of their craftsmanship can still be found. The early pieces of furniture served as models for future resident furniture

makers of Newfoundland (Pocius, "Introduction" in Peddle 1983, xvii; Peddle 1991).

### Winter's trademark

"As the nineteenth century progressed, furniture was more and more adorned with turnery, carving and other detail," explains Peddle (1983, 32). Decoration was characteristic of William Winter's furniture throughout his career. Community and family members recognized his penchant for decoration as his trademark, his signature. His surviving children referred to their father's use of decoration and ornamentation as "fancywork."<sup>12</sup> Pocius states that "the ability to create the new is really the innovative combining of existing ideas; no one maker creates something new completely out of nothing" (1988a, 317).

It is safe to assume that Winter's choice in design and decoration of household furnishings and church-related items was influenced by instruction manuals and pattern books, for I discovered two such printed documents dating from the 1900s in Winter's tool box and in his wall cabinet. As revealed in chapter two, a catalogue entitled The Pontifical Institute of Christian Art, was found in Winter's tool box; the catalogue disclosed numerous examples of pulpits, altar rails, and candelabra. Located in the wall cabinet was an instruction book entitled The Cabinetmaker and Upholsterer's

Companion by J. Stokes, which included instructions on applying ornamental embellishments and imitation grains. As well, Winter was probably influenced by furniture models from Europe and North America found in the residences of the community, furniture sold by local furniture shops, and existing furniture crafted by earlier English and Irish tradesmen.

Winter had a basic form for each furniture model. Building on this basic form, he combined decorative elements to produce distinctive pieces. With decorative and ornamental details Winter elaborated upon simple forms; he did not create entirely new ones. Michael Owen Jones notes that innovation may be the product of experimentation or seemingly idle play with materials, as well as the outcome of others' suggestions or expectations.

Of special importance in understanding why forms are repeated and activities are emulated is the fact that, first, they have proven effective and, second, they define the situation, providing models for what to do and how to do it. While novelty is exciting, familiarity is comfortable (1989, 244).

An examination of Winter's basic line of furniture shows there are approximately twenty different decorations that he applied to his pieces. Winter carved or applied decorative details, and he handpainted yellow decorations on the finished surface of furniture. Yellow painted

decorations were usually simple details that adorned bedroom sets and parlour sideboards. These consisted of sprig-leaf motifs, wheat sheafs, bell flowers, fish tails, swirls, and straight and crossed lines that framed the edges of the furniture (plates 21, 22).

Winter pre-made large numbers of decorations because he applied them generously to most of his pieces. These decorations served a double purpose: first they were glued or nailed onto the basic frame of a piece to hide any nails and other construction details that were exposed; and second, they were used to embellish an otherwise very plain piece of furniture. Applied decorations included brackets, panels with scooped corners, bosses, rosettes, hearts, acanthus leaves and other leaf motifs, fretwork, split turnings, balusters, finials and pendants, D-shaped carvings, pilasters, and sunburst, shell or fan carvings (plates 23, 24).

Winter's method for making large quantities of decorative details may be exemplified through describing the construction of one decoration. Bosses, or small, protruding circular pieces of wood similar to buttons, were placed on most of Winter's parlour furnishings (plate 25). They were made by taking a stock of wood that he would turn on the end of his small lathe. By attaching the end of the stock to an iron pin clamped to the lathe, the wood would

spin and turn while Winter marked out the bosses at consecutive intervals along the piece of wood. With wood turning tools, such as gouges, Winter shaved away the wood on each boss, creating a circular piece of wood with a second circle in relief on top of the boss. Each boss was then individually sawed off this piece of stock and placed in a box for future use.<sup>13</sup>

Other decorations unique to Winter and found on only one or two pieces that he made suggest that some decorations were used specifically for custom pieces or discontinued and replaced by simpler ones. The "doghead" decoration, to be discussed in a later section, is one example.

Winter utilized his repertoire of decorative motifs on his more expensive parlour pieces: parlour chair sets, mantelpieces, sideboards, couches, cabinets, hallstands, and parlour or occasional tables. Some decorations were carved on the wood with a gouge chisel. One such decoration appears frequently on Winter's work: the sprig-leaf motif (plate 26). It can be found especially on wood portions of upholstered pieces like parlour chair sets, parlour couches, and wing-back chairs. This motif portrays several branches and leaves interconnected and intertwined.

Fluting is also characteristic of Winter's work. Such fluting consists of alternating short and long grooves and is found on pilasters, columns, and balusters supporting the

shelves of sideboards or mantelpieces (see plate 39). This type of carving is also evident on the front legs and rails of Winter's wing-back chairs. The sunburst, shell, or fan carving was both an applied and incised decoration which he used on bannisters and newel posts, ceiling ornamentations, sideboards, mantelpieces, parlour couches, and occasional tables (plate 29 and see plate 57). Winter used this decoration again and again on custom-designed furniture, on pieces he made for his own home, and on the exterior of his house. It is perhaps his best known decoration, for it and other decorations characteristic of Winter's work have been copied and reproduced on furniture made by other Conception Bay craftsmen within the late twentieth century.

### Winter's Clientele

Winter's choice of occupation was based on his abilities to make household furniture and other functional items like pulpits or coffins. As a specialist in a particular trade, he relied on his ingenuity, creativity, and versatility to successfully earn a living. Importantly, Winter relied on the members of his community and of neighbouring communities for his livelihood since it was they who would purchase his products.



Plate 21

Handpainted decorative details from a Winter washstand:  
wheat sheaf, panel with scooped corners

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

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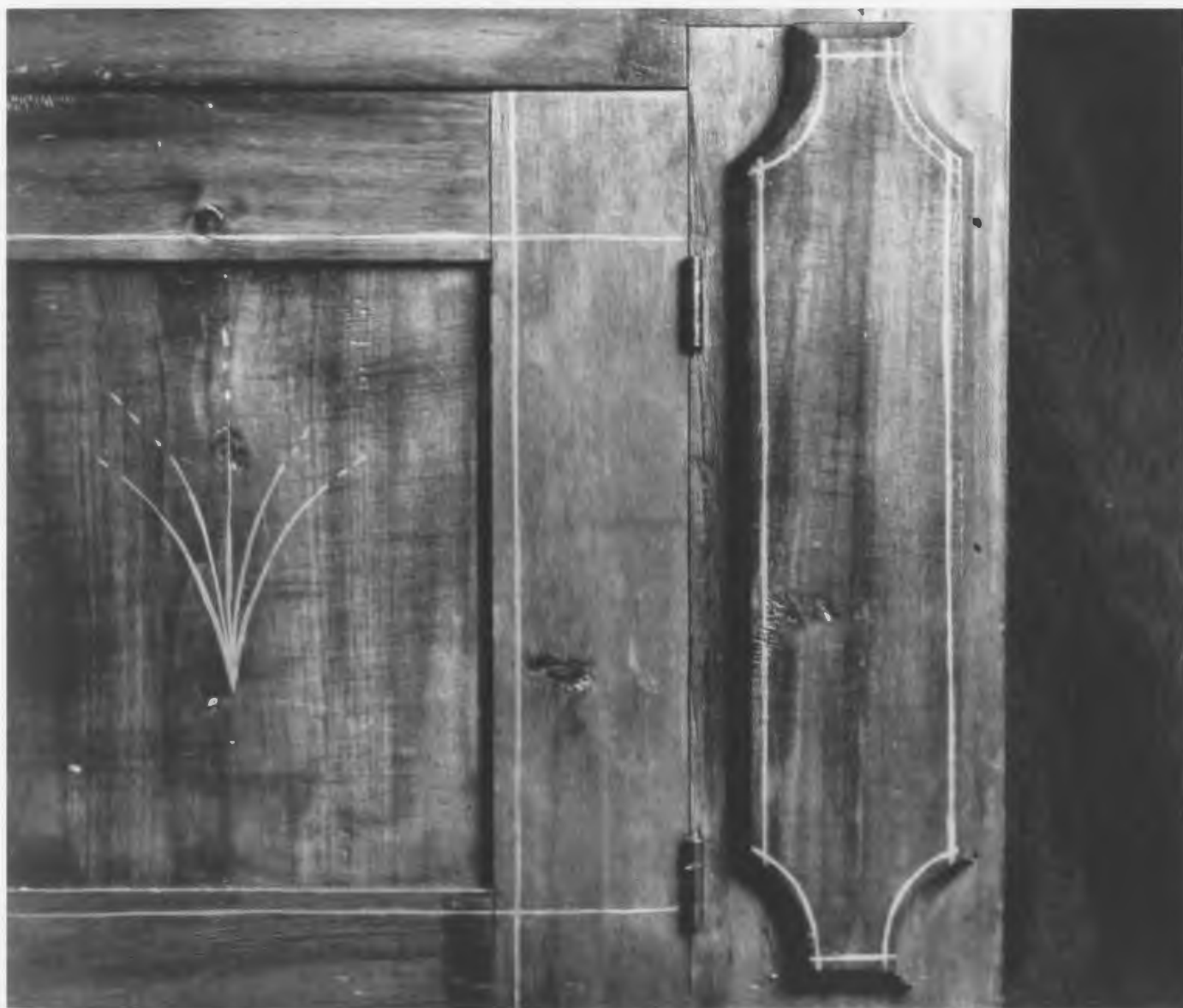


Plate 22

Handpainted decorative details from a Winter dresser: fish  
tails and yellow line decorations

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991

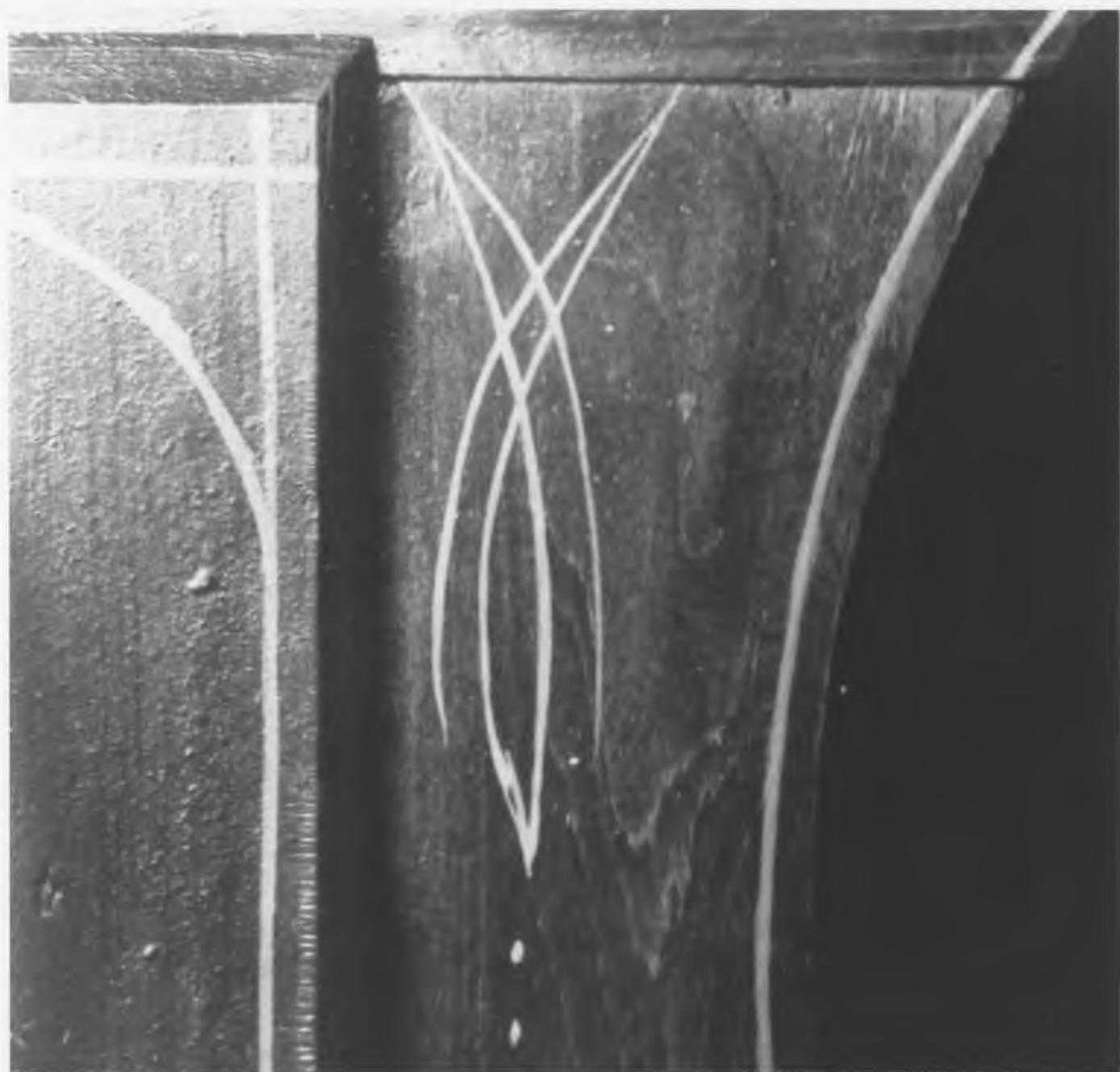


Plate 23

Carved and applied decorations from the Winter rectory  
sideboard: rosettes with split-turnings applied below  
the surface

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991



Plate 24

Carved and applied decorations from a Winter mantelpiece: an applied acanthus leaf with sunburst carvings (at the opening to the mantle)

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991





Plate 25

Applied boss decorations and D-shape carvings adorning a  
Winter parlour or occasional table

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

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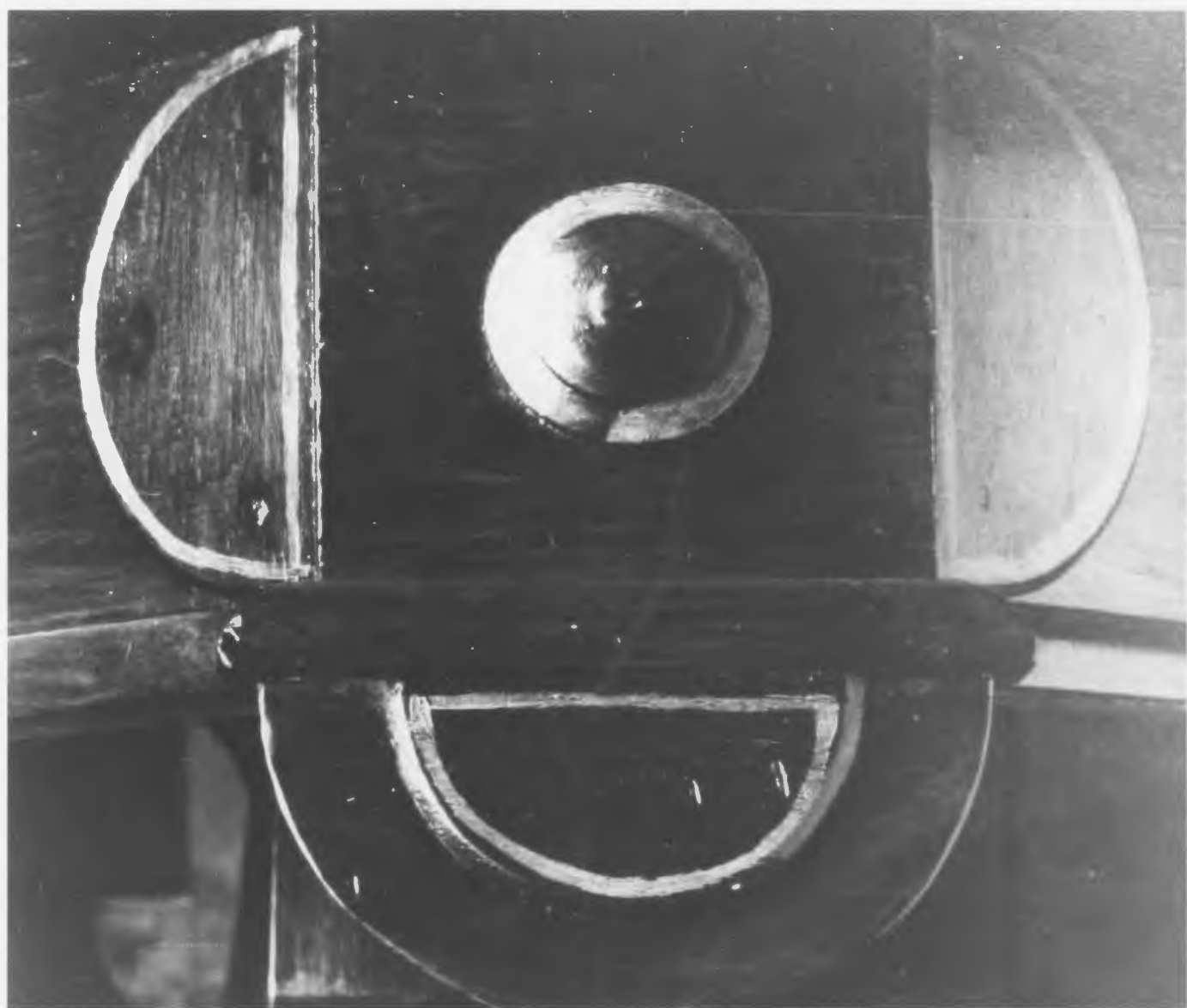


Plate 26

Carved sprig-leaf motif decorations embellishing a Winter parlour couch with dog-head decoration.

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991



Plate 27

Sunburst carving decorating a drawer front of the Winter  
rectory sideboard

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991



Plate 28

A combination of sunburst carvings, bosses, and split  
turnings embellishing the gallery of the Winter rectory  
sideboard

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991





Plate 29

Bannister and newel post with sunburst carving

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



His furniture may have been fundamentally utilitarian, but it was often decorated to such a degree that one might speculate whether it served a more ornamental purpose. As dictated by his canon of work technique, Winter responded to the desires and aesthetics of his clientele when they requested that new and popular designs and styles be incorporated on the furniture that he created.

Churches and missionaries commissioned Winter to make pulpits, candlestands, and statue stands. Custom-designed pieces or special orders for individuals or institutions allowed him to fully utilize his repertoire in form and decoration. As suggested in chapter two, Winter's ability to create both basic household furnishings and commissioned pieces perhaps gave him an elevated status in the community. According to Chiaramonte when a man is sought for his expertise in a given area of specialization, his status becomes elevated because of his abilities to serve community members (1970, 23-4).<sup>14</sup> One can speculate that over time Winter became more selective in what furniture he chose to make, as well as in the clientele for whom he was making it.

As Jones points out, a craftsman is influenced not only by his own personal values when creating objects, but also by those of his customers.

He is creating an object that serves a practical purpose.... Those forms produced widely over time and space must

have something to recommend them, and many consumers and prospective customers want no other. Utility and expectation precipitate the image of a particular form.... (1989, 246).

Winter's customers were given the opportunity to request what additional decorations they wanted on the furniture they bought. The degree to which he adorned furniture with decoration and ornamentation according to customer specifications, came with a cost.

"For a few extra dollars" a piece of furniture could be reconstructed at the customer's request either to add another drawer or cupboard or to apply another decoration.<sup>15</sup> Winter's customers had different needs. For example, a fisherman may have asked Winter to make a mantelpiece for his home. As he would not have much space in his home nor much money in his pocket, he would probably request that the mantle be a simple piece to place over his fireplace. "He could do very rich things too if he had an order for it, but when a neighbour or a fisherman comes with a little money, you got to make it for that" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). If someone came to him with a particular design but could not formulate the idea, Winter was "handy with a sketch" and would draw the design in front of the customer to see if that was what s/he had in mind. Sometimes Winter would lie awake at night thinking about a particular design for a customer (MUNFLA, Tape, C14670). As Nick Winter remembered,

"everything could be adjusted to the amount of money that was paid" for a piece of furniture (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). An elaborate piece of furniture reflected a customer's social and economic status. More importantly, the manner in which custom-designed furniture was constructed or decorated would reflect a customer's desire for individuality. Nick concluded by saying:

If someone said for five dollars more, will you do this, or can you do [this], I want it a little different from my neighbour's.... There was always room for making something a little different. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676)

In his community, customers could simply drop by the workshop, place an order, warm their hands by the woodstove, and possibly discuss how they wanted their furniture designed. Winter told his customers to return in a few weeks to pick up their furniture order (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). The activities surrounding Winter's furniture-making enterprise are revealed in narratives told by family and community members. According to folklorist Jack Santino, narratives that reflect the every day events and working relationships of a particular occupation can be referred to as "occupational narratives" (1978, 199-201). One particular occupational narrative told by Nick Winter reflects customary craftsman-client, family behaviour.

My memory as a kid was that it was always a big deal when both the husband and wife would come on the horse and

sled, and they would always bring a little moonshine for my father. That was part, you know, of the deals on the barrelhead. "Cash on the barrelhead," there were no written contracts, it was all on the handshake.... throw the cash on the barrelhead.... that seemed to be part of doing business. When they would come down to pick up the furniture... they would all come in the house, and my mother would make tea and things like that and they would produce.... the bottle of moonshine. So my father would have a few drinks with them and they would set off with their furniture. They'd get on the horse and sled and go up to Colliers or Conception Harbour. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

Winter's reputation as a furniture maker spread over much of Conception Bay and Bell Island. One general store dealer, Charlie Cohen, requested that Winter ship some of his furnishings to Bell Island. At the time, a local grocer by the name of Jack Moore owned a boat which he used to ship dry goods to Bell Island. According to Jack Moore's son, Everett, Winter shipped furniture on Moore's boat, the Mary B. Smith.

They [W. Winter and N. Winter] did sell it to Bell Island because my father had a boat, we used to trade.... in conjunction say with the store. We'd buy potatoes, saltfish, eggs, lumber, things of this nature and we would sell to Bell Island. In the meantime, we would carry freight, things that we'd carry over would be furniture of William Winter. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671)

Cohen sold Winter's bedroom sets, couches, and mantlepieces to miners "on time."

The miners on Bell Island were only making two-fifty a day, something like twenty, thirty cents an hour, so Winter would sell a bedroom set for fifteen dollars. Fourteen dollars for the set itself and a dollar was charged for the crate it was shipped in. Cohen would get it, and he would sell it for twenty-six dollars. He would sell it at so much down a month. When Winter had waited too long for the money, he would write Charlie Cohen and then a check would be sent with another order for more bedroom sets. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14677)

As Winter was influenced by his customers to make certain pieces of furniture, one can speculate that it was also his customers who influenced him not to make certain furnishings. Presumably, he ran into difficulties with customers who did not pay him for furniture he had taken time to make or custom-design for them. On one such occasion he had made a bannister and newel post for a man's home. When it was finished and installed, the man claimed he had no money to pay Winter. After Winter waited several weeks to be paid, his son, Nick recalled how "father went down and took it out of his house; yeah, whipped it out when he didn't get his money!" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675).

With the exception of the bannisters that Winter made for his own home, there is no artifactual evidence to support his manufacture and sale of these objects (see plate 29). This narrative by his son reveals a bad experience that possibly influenced Winter's decision not to make

bannisters again. It also provides evidence to another precept from Winter's canon of work technique, the desire to make a profit. As the narrative was told to Nick by his father, William Winter may have wanted to provide a word of advice to Nick for his own business transactions in the future; thus, the bannister narrative serves as a cautionary tale (Santino 1978, 200).

## Part II:

### Winter's household furnishings: Construction and Decoration

By examining individual pieces of Winter's furniture, one can understand how he employed basic techniques of construction with applied decoration to make both simple and complex pieces.

### Bedroom Sets

Winter's matching bedroom washstand and dresser sets have been frequently found and recorded in present-day homes of Clarke's Beach and surrounding communities of Conception Bay (plate 30, 31). As bedroom sets were in constant demand, Winter made and stockpiled the parts to construct several simultaneously. These sets were all very similar in both form and decoration. Both the dressers and washstands had lyre-shaped backboards which, on the dresser supported a mirror and, on the washstand, held a towel rail. As



mentioned in an earlier section, Winter did not always assemble washstands with conventional mortise and tenon joints. Instead, the framing of the front of the washstand and its paneled door were fitted together with more simple lap joints (1984, 71).

Only a small amount of embellishment, including both applied and handpainted details, decorated bedroom sets (see plates 21, 22). Winter applied brackets just below the tops and flanking the drawer of both dressers and washstands (Peddle 1983, xiii). Rectangular panels with scooped corners were fixed on either side of the cupboard doors of these washstands. On the dressers, the mirror was attached to the lyre-shaped backboard by wooden dowels having pyramid-shaped ends, and it was crowned with a rolling pin baluster motif (plate 32). Bedroom dressers were supported by narrow bracket feet which were separated by a scrolled apron. Washstands, for the most part, however, had no feet and sat directly on the floor. The bedroom sets were given an imitation mahogany or oak finish and had yellow wheat sheafs, swirls, and crossed lines applied freehand to their surface.

Nick Winter remembered his father's method for imitation graining and varnishing bedroom sets. Indicative of Winter's desire for perfection and attention to detail, this was a meticulous process which required sanding,

applying paint, and applying more paint, a water stain, and an imitation grain; as well as applying a yellow line decoration or "stripe" and a final coat of varnish (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676).

As will be mentioned in chapter four, Nick applied two coats of an imitation grain material which was also referred to as a stain. There were two different kinds of grain materials that were referred to by their colour: "burnt umber," a dark grain, or "sienna," a light grain. After applying the imitation grain material to the piece of furniture, he sanded down the wood. Then he applied putty to the nail holes. The putty was a handmade concoction of linseed oil and white lead. After applying two more coats of paint, he covered his set with a water stain. Finally, he applied the imitation grain (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676).

Matching bedroom sets were made for the most private rooms of the house. Bedrooms were not seen by everyone who happened to visit (Chiaramonte 1970, 14; Pocius 1991, 250). Consequently, bedroom sets were designed more for utility and less for impressive display. Until recently the washstand just discussed was the only type of Winter washstand reported. The Newfoundland Museum, however, has acquired an entirely different form of washstand made by Winter (plate 33).

Plate 30

An example of a Winter washstand from a matching bedroom set  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Plate 31

An example of a Winter dresser from a matching bedroom set  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd

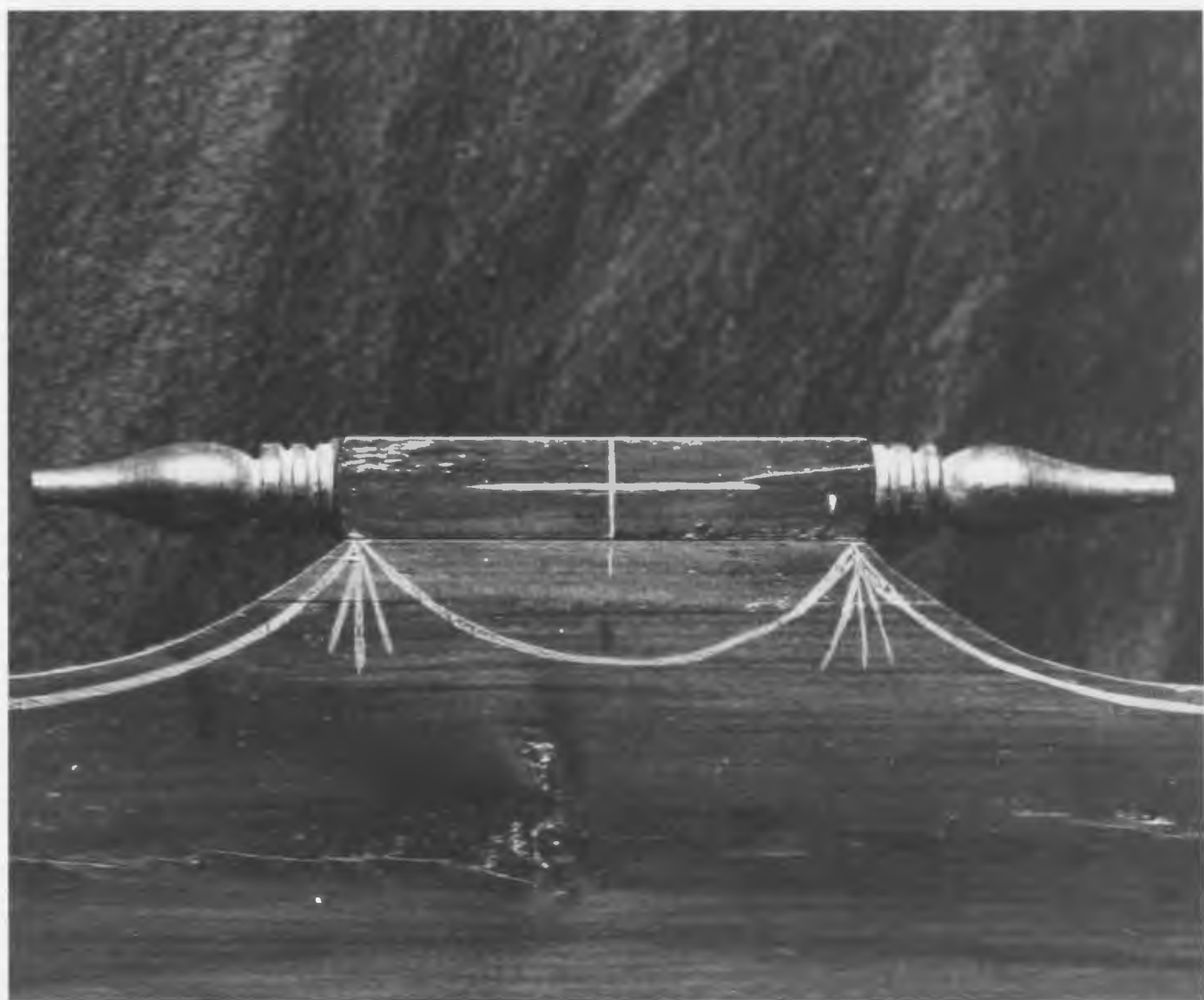


Plate 32

Decorative detail found on Winter dressers: a rolling pin  
baluster motif

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991





This piece has splashboards rather than a lyre-shaped backboard (plate 34), and the decorative features include a rounded drawer front, commonly found on Winter's sideboards, split balusters and a crowning rolling pin or baluster. According to Jones, it is the customers who "influence the nature of the product through stipulation of design elements, materials, and construction (1989, 249). As this type of Winter washstand is the first one reported, it may have been custom-designed for a particular individual.

### Mantlepieces

Mantlepieces exemplified Winter's versatility in adapting to individual tastes and preferences. Winter constructed mantles that did little more than frame a fireplace (plate 35). Others, however, were made more ornately, having two separately constructed parts, the mantle and the "over mantle." In addition to the main wide shelf, mantles often had small shelves enclosed by spindle-shaped balusters located underneath the main shelf and flanking the fireplace opening. Brackets, incised and handpainted with crossed lines and dot decorations, supported the small shelves.

Plate 33

A Winter washstand custom made with splashboards

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991



Plate 34

Lyre-shaped backboard characteristic of Winter washstands  
(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991

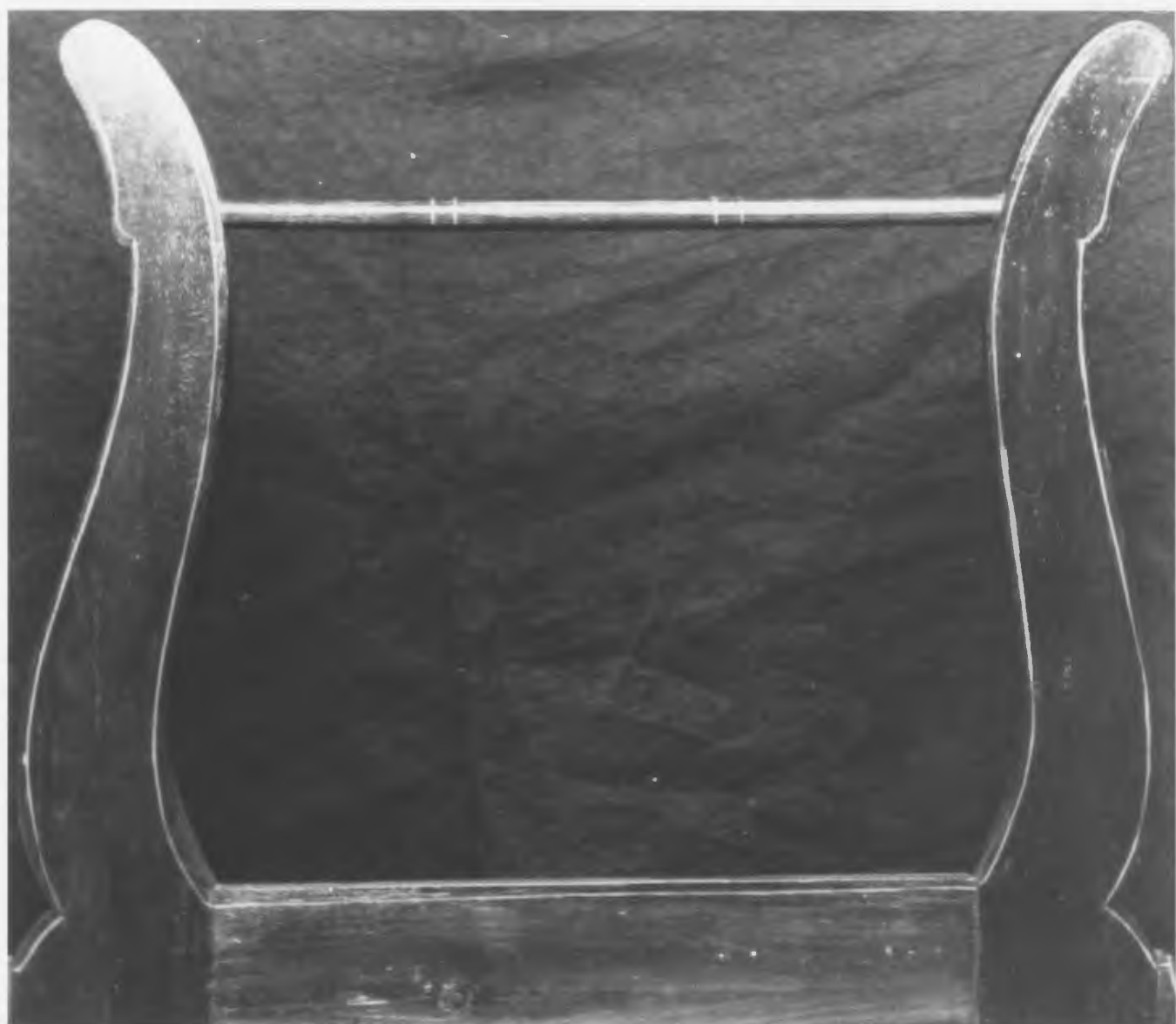


Plate 35

A Winter mantelpiece in a home in North River  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Sunburst or fan carvings were applied to the front of the mantle in a semi-circle and were applied as window sashes that framed the opening to the fireplace (see plate 24).

One Winter mantelpiece, originally owned by Mrs. E. Taylor of South River but now by her neighbour Ross Boone, exhibits an unusual finish with a combination of carved and yellow painted decorations. Although the decorations on this piece were characteristic of Winter, they were arranged in a unique manner. Instead of applying semi-circular sunbursts, Winter handcarved this decoration on a rectangular piece of board and highlighted the carved lines with yellow paint. This particular piece could have been designed with Taylor's preferences and tastes in mind.

Other decorations on this piece indicate Winter's preferences, for crossed lines with dots enhancing the base of each baluster suggest that he may have been inspired by crossed cricket bats and balls for this decoration. As mentioned previously, Winter was an avid cricket player. This mantle will be described in more detail in chapter four.

Some of Winter's mantles and overmantles were made in two sections. The overmantle was made separately, allowing it to be easily removed in the event of applying a new layer of wallpaper or paint (Peddle 1984, 72). Overmantles consisted of a main frame, two shelves enclosed by spindle-



shaped balusters, a mirror, and elaborately decorated with sunburst or fan carvings, fluted carvings, bosses, rosettes, pendants and a crowning finial in the shape of an urn (see plate 24). As Nick recalled, the overmantles were usually made for Winter's wealthier clients:

It was only the rich.... people like the Nevilles, Fitzgeralds or people who could afford more or less elaborate mantelpieces, wherein the cheap ones.... we used to sell them for five or eight dollars. It was only a few boards thrown together. He did these too, and we sold them to Bell Island. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

#### Winter's Parlour Furniture

For the most part, Winter custom-designed furniture for a wealthier clientele. Governed by the precepts of his canon of work technique, he responded to and satisfied the clients' desire for elaborate and ornate pieces, he expanded his knowledge and repertoire in design and decoration, and he generated more sales for his business. Parlour furnishings like couches, parlour chair sets, parlour or occasional tables, and sideboards, portray Winter's wide-ranging repertoire in decoration. Possibly, Winter's best selling parlour furnishings were couches and sideboards. Although designated as ornate parlour furniture, these decorative and functional pieces appealed to the desires and aesthetics of all his clientele.

A Winter parlour couch was constructed with a head-or-arm-rest at one end of the couch (Peddle 1987, 1-b). They were upholstered with painted sail cloth that was tacked onto the furniture with an applied "morocco" stripping--a material simulating leather or vinyl (plate 36). Each couch had two rows of four coiled springs to support a cushioned shape. The backboard of the couch was usually constructed with wide pine boards, which were attached by "stitching" the boards together--a process perhaps unique to this craftsman. These boards were placed edge to edge and as Nick observed "you had to connect the boards together by stitching them with nails. We would bend the nail and drive it through [the wood] like a hook" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674).

Winter used inexpensive burlap sacks in upholstering his couches, and as mentioned earlier in this chapter, he used a natural material which his sons called "seaweed" or "seagrass" (Zostera marina) to stuff the parlour couches (Rouleau 1978, 56).

After you made the basic frame of the couch, you would take burlap strips about four inches wide and you would lay the springs on the piece of wood - one by four [board] - that went across. You then strapped this burlap lengthways over the springs, then crossways. In this way, you sewed the burlap onto the springs. This was done with a crooked needle, and it kept the springs more or less stable - they were not able to slip sideways. We would put another burlap sack, stuffing it with seaweed, tacking this down. After this you were ready to place the canvas. With parlour couches,

or those with springs, you specifically used a vinyl coated canvas. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

Nick and Bill Winter indicated that their father not only made and sold parlour couches, but he repaired them as well. When his father started to repair a couch, Bill remembered looking for any money that might have fallen between the seat and the backboard of a couch (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). Nick also described his fascination in helping his father repair couches.

Once you removed the back off the couch we [you] would find all kinds of things hid [hiding] back there. There would be metals, few pieces of silver, needles and stuff like that. But my father did not like that [removing the backboard] because some of it would be so dirty and dusty. He wanted to do it outside where there was lots of wind because some of these things would be in a house twenty years before they come [came] out. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14677)

One particular feature of a Winter parlour couch was the "rounding" of the end of the couch.

You would take a piece of stock and you would scrape a mark or lay something on there and draw a mark. Putting it on the "chopping block," you would cut down with the axe as close as you could, cutting most of it off, doing this roughly at one end and then the other. Then you would take the stick that held the wood on the workbench and you would straighten it, you would plane it out. So it was rounding, and you would have to put it in a vice or something to steam it and bend it. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676)

Plate 36

Winter parlour couch with dog-head decoration

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991



### Decoration of the parlour couch

Winter's couches were profusely decorated with applied sunburst carvings, D-shaped carvings, and bosses highlighted by yellow lines, and incised sprig-leaf motifs. An unusual decoration not frequently found on his parlour couches was the "dog-head" ornamentation (see plate 26). As Winter had trained his own dog to run within the treadmill of the large lathe, perhaps this decoration was a tribute. On one collected parlour couch of the Newfoundland Museum collection, this decoration appears on the crowning section of the backboard where the heads of two dogs appear to be facing in opposite directions (Peddle 1984, 64).

Winter shipped many of these couches to Bell Island, and on one occasion, while transporting the furniture by box cart to the dock, Nick and his father encountered some difficulty with their horse. The nervous animal's sudden movements shifted the load in the cart and as a result, the dog-head ornamentation on the couch was broken off.

My father and I were waiting for the steamer to come from Bell Island, this was the Mary B. Smith. We had two bedroom sets and a couch on what we call a "dray" - a two-wheeled wagon. The lower horse was a bit nervous, and he jumped around in the workshop because we were trying to keep it out of the rain, but he knocked the top off the back of the couch where my father carved the dog-heads. The ship was coming, however, so rather than try to repair it, he smoothed it out and put black

paint on it. We went on over and shipped it to Bell Island. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

Of four surviving examples of Winter couches, only two include a doghead decoration; possibly its accidental removal created a simple ornament that took less time and appealed to Winter. The dog who turned the lathe died and perhaps with him this decorative detail.

### Parlour Sideboards

Winter is perhaps best known for his parlour pieces, especially his sideboards, many of which are still in use in present-day homes around Conception Bay. Pocius indicates that sideboards were one of the first furniture types developed during the nineteenth century that were intended primarily for display (1991, 242). Usually, a Winter parlour sideboard consists of two sections: on the bottom is a cupboard enclosed by two doors, over which is built a single rounded drawer; on the top is a high backboard with a centered mirror (plate 37). Typically found above the mirror is a full-length shelf for displaying glassware and knick-knacks. One unusual feature perhaps unique to Winter's work is an open shelf that has the appearance of a long step leading from the rear of the top of the cupboard section to the front of the mirror.

Plate 37

Winter parlour sideboard

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Copyright Ned Pratt 1991





Winter's sideboards are made of pine with an applied finish that resembles mahogany. He painted and/or carved a leaf-like ornamentation on the front of the cupboard doors and drawers and then applied a fine line of yellow paint along the edges of panels, drawers, and doors. Although Winter used this basic plan from one sideboard to the next, he individualized the pieces through the use of decorative embellishments.

Using his small foot-operated lathe, Winter created decorative motifs which he combined and recombined on certain areas of his sideboards. Various decorations flanking the cupboard doors consisted of carved or painted sprig-leaf motifs, wheat sheafs, or cross-hatched lines. Painted sprig-leaf motifs were placed on the rounded drawer front and bell flowers joined together with a curved line were painted just above the drawer. Door-casing rosettes and two split-turnings were applied to each end of the drawer, and rectangular panels with scooped corners were located on either side of the cupboard doors (see plate 21).

On some sideboards, like the one Winter was commissioned to complete for the Roman Catholic rectory in Brigus, a large post was split and applied to each side as an alternative decoration (plate 38 and see plate 23, 27, 28). This particularly large decoration was probably turned on Winter's dog-powered lathe (Peddle 1984, 74).

Plate 38

The Winter rectory sideboard made for the priest's rectory  
in Brigus

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

(Courtesy of Walter Peddle)



The backboards of these pieces were also adorned with decoration and ornamentation. Flanking each side of the mirror, pilasters supported a spindle rail shelf or gallery of the backboard. These pilasters suggest a likeness to Greek ionic or corinthian columns. They could also be found supporting Winter's mantlepieces (see plate 24). Winter's use of two-tiered baluster supports held the spindle rail shelf in place, as well as provided room for additional bric-a-brac that an owner might want to display.

Other features that varied from sideboard to sideboard were the form and decoration of the backboard column. Sometimes the backboard was framed by a crowning gallery, but usually it consisted of an apron that crested in the middle and on the ends of the backboard. Winter applied ornamental leaf carvings, painted line decorations, or fluted grooves to augment this backboard column.

A recently acquired sideboard in the Newfoundland Museum collection suggests that Winter varied his decorative techniques more than was originally thought by previous writers. Whereas the sideboard pictured (see plate 37) represents the usual designs and decorations found on existing Winter parlour sideboards, the sideboard just acquired and restored (plate 39) represents an unusual Winter parlour sideboard. Although the basic construction is characteristic of other sideboards, there are several

Plate 39

A custom ordered parlour sideboard with fluted decorations  
made by William Winter

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd





peculiarities that make this piece distinct. The base, for instance, has two tiers of drawers rather than the usual one, and unlike other Winter sideboards, the drawer fronts are not rounded. They were left flat and carved with a sprig-leaf motif--a decorative device Winter commonly employed on many of his parlour chairs and couches. In place of Winter's plainly turned pilasters, this sideboard has pilasters that are intricately decorated with fluted grooves. The shape of these pilasters is similar to the decorations flanking the door of a record cabinet made by Winter for his own use (plate 40).

This sideboard has since been restored by Ralph Clemmens, a specialist in reproducing, repairing, and restoring furniture for Historic Resources Division, St. John's, Newfoundland. According to Clemmens, it has many features that separate it from other Winter sideboards. Clemmens dates this sideboard to the 1930s because the hardware used for the drawer pulls is indicative of that period. As wide pine boards became less available, Winter could no longer use them to simulate paneling on his pieces. Winter constructed the panels of this sideboard with mortise and tenon joints. Underneath the four corners of the sideboard, holes were drilled where carved feet would usually be placed. This was not a characteristic feature of



Plate 40

Record cabinet made by William Winter for his home  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Winter's work, but in all likelihood he was responding to a customer's specifications.<sup>16</sup>

This sideboard might also suggest that Winter was progressing in his craftsmanship to incorporate new styles and designs that catered to his own aesthetics, values, and preferences. When Winter's sons, Bill and Nick were asked what they thought of this particular piece, they could not believe that their father had actually constructed such a strange sideboard. Nick remarked that if his father had made that sideboard he would have remembered the carved [fluted] pilasters.<sup>17</sup> This sideboard might well have been one of the last pieces of furniture that Winter made.

If this sideboard were actually constructed in the 1930s, it was made at a very difficult time in Winter's life. In July of 1930, Winter's daughter, Dorothy, died tragically in a drowning incident in Clarke's Beach while she was visiting from Detroit. Four years later, Winter himself was battling cancer. His obituary states that Dorothy's death was one "from which he never fully recovered."<sup>18</sup> Jones describes how "the loss of a friend, a relative, or one's own health fosters introspection, which in turn may promote the production of a song, story, or other work" (1989, 192). Perhaps, this peculiar sideboard was a creative expression of Winter's grief over the loss of his daughter and a realization of his own mortality.

Miscellaneous Decorative Embellishments

Winter's wide-ranging repertoire in decoration and ornamentation also included folk art motifs like those found on local architecture of houses, barns and outbuildings of Conception Bay. Folk decorations, such as hearts, diamonds, and circles, have been painted on many barns and outbuildings located on the Avalon Peninsula.

Winter applied hearts to decorate an occasional table found in his own home (plate 41). On almost all of his furniture, Winter applied bosses which he highlighted with yellow paint, such as the case on his parlour couches and tables. The yellow paint accentuated a middle circle and an outside circle when it was applied around the outer edge of the boss (see plate 25). Similar to this decoration was Winter's "bull's eye" detail that he applied as a center piece to tilt-top tables. This decoration consisted of a painted circular line that enclosed a solid circle in the middle (plate 42) (Peddle 1984, 67). Remarkably, this same decoration appears on a barn door located in Trepassey, along the Southern Shore (plate 43). This particular decoration leads one to speculate who copied whom. Did the owner of the barn first apply the decoration to the barn door? Perhaps it was a more common or traditional motif which both Winter and the owner of the barn utilized. While suggesting the influence of the cultural context in which

Plate 41

A Winter parlour or occasional table with applied heart  
decorations

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Plate 42

Tilt-top table with bull's **eye** decoration made by William  
Winter for his home

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd

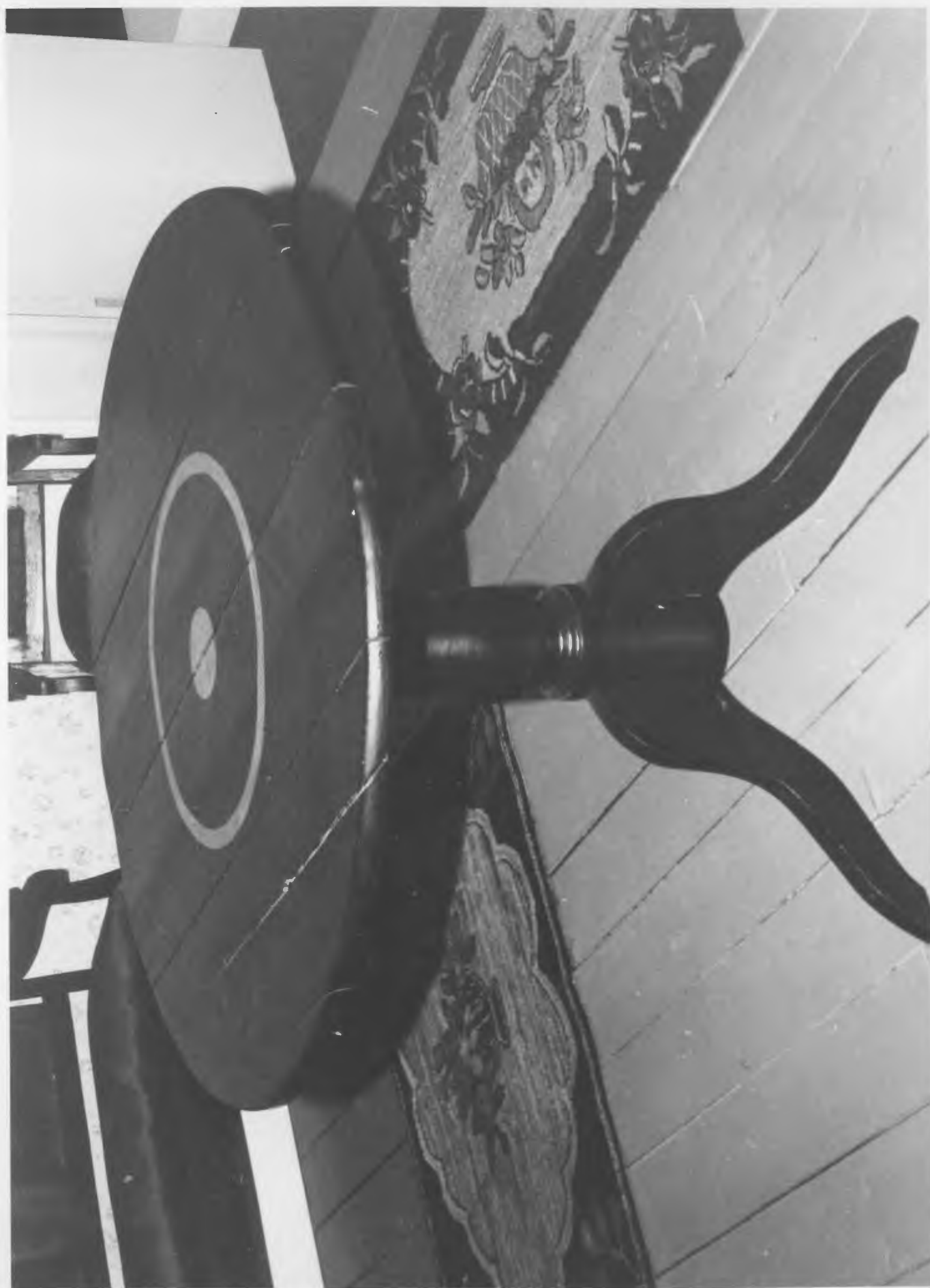




Plate 43

Bull's eye decoration adorning an outbuilding in Trepassey

Photo by: C. Boyd



Winter was decorating furniture, these examples reveal his diversity and innovation in decorative technique.

William Winter's prosperity as a furniture maker was a reflection of his ambition, ingenuity, and creativity as a rural craftsman in an outport community. His diversity and versatility was exhibited in the extensive amount of both simple and elaborate objects that he handcrafted for members of his community and neighbouring communities. In keeping with the four precepts of his canon of work technique, Winter used and re-used local materials and resources; he embellished his furniture with decorative motifs that responded to and was influenced by the desires of his clientele; and the forms and decorations that were indicative of Winter's basic line of household furnishings expressed the aesthetics, values, and preferences of both producer and consumer.

The most characteristic feature of Winter's furniture was demonstrated in his penchant for decorative detail. Whether he was inspired by catalogues or instruction booklets, existing furniture models, architectural motifs and folk art ornamentation found on local barns and outbuildings, or customer requests for popular designs of the period, his trademark was his decoration. Winter's decorations have not only appeared on his furniture, but on pieces of furniture made by other craftsmen. As will be

discussed in the next chapter, sideboards, washstands, couches, and chairs have been collected and recorded by the Newfoundland Museum as "Winter copies" because they exhibit or suggest Winter's influence in both their form and decoration. The decoration on these pieces significantly resembles Winter's painted, applied and incised decorations like sunburst carvings, D-shaped carvings, bosses, panels, and split turnings.

Winter was an ambitious individual whose furniture is still in use in present-day homes and can be seen in museum collections. His most important contribution to the history and culture of Newfoundland has been his influence on other rural craftsmen who were inspired by Winter's forms and decorations to make their own furniture. This process continues the legacy of a skilled and creative individual.

1. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 20 August 1990.
2. Nick Winter and Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 20 June 1990.
3. Conversation with Bill Winter in Clarke's Beach during the filming of the national CBC television show Mid-day, 13 July 1991.
4. Mrs. Ina Taylor, telephone interview by Cynthia Boyd, 25 October 1990.
5. Anne Boone, conversation with the author, 9 February 1991.
6. Pamphlet, Banquet To Commemorate The 75th Anniversary of ALL HALLOWS PARISH North River, Newfoundland, 1906-1981, Friday, November 5, 1982.
7. The 1921 Census of Newfoundland, 126.
8. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 11 March 1991.
9. Dr. Peter Scott, conversation with the author, 15 August 1991.
10. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 27 October 1991.
11. "Snotty var" is also described in the Dictionary of Newfoundland English. Story, et al, Dictionary of Newfoundland English 2nd ed. with supplement (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990) 450.
12. Peggy [Winter] Mullaby, telephone interview by Cynthia Boyd, 20 June 1990.
13. Bill Winter, Ralph Clemmens, and David Porter, conversation with the author, 30 and 31 August 1991.
14. From a different perspective, Pocius indicates that, like an individual who provides new information through gossip, the craftsman who creates new and innovative pieces provides gossip in a handmade object; this form of creative expression enhances the social standing of a furniture maker in Keels, Bonavista Bay. Gerald L. Pocius, "Gossip, Rhetoric, and Objects: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Newfoundland Furniture," Perspectives on American Furniture, ed. Gerald W. R. Ward (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988) 328, 337.

15. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 26 June 1990.

16. Ralph Clemmens, conversation with the author, 7 June 1991.

17. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 11 July 1991.

18. "Obituary, Mr. H. W. Winter," The Daily News, St. John's, Newfoundland, 29 June 1936, 7. It is also important to note that Winter indicated in The 1935 Census of Newfoundland that his occupation in 1935 was not a cabinetmaker, as in 1921, but a merchant. The 1935 Census of Newfoundland, District of Port de Grave, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, Newfoundland.

## Chapter 4 Winter's Influence on Other Newfoundland Craftsmen

After battling cancer for almost two years, William Winter died from the disease on June 29, 1936 in Clarke's Beach. As most of his sons lived in the United States, it is not surprising that Winter left his property, furniture making business, and general store to his youngest son, Nick. On his deathbed, Winter apparently indicated that Nick would be the only one "to keep the business [general store and furniture business] from going bankrupt" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675). Bankruptcy was an all too familiar occurrence in this area as well as across Newfoundland, Canada, and the United States during the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

William Winter never encouraged his children to follow in his footsteps. Although none of them became full-time wheelwrights, carpenters, or furniture makers, Nick worked part-time as a furniture maker. Nick explained that in the 1920s, many fathers in Newfoundland wanted their children to pursue other occupations that required formal training and education:

In the area of Port de Grave, Bareneed, and Clarke's Beach, fathers, especially those that were fishermen, did not want their sons to follow in their footsteps. That is why there were so many teachers, ministers, government employees from that area. The thought was, if you could get into a better profession then go to the U.S.A. or Canada. In my family four boys...and four girls went to the United States.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned in chapter two and three, Winter did not allow others to assist him in his workshop as there was limited space to work efficiently. Although Nick and Bill assisted their father as young boys in the workshop, they only sandpapered the wood or applied varnish to the furniture under his supervision. Nick was eager to learn more about his father's trade, and his persistence to use the tools earned him a set of his own tools. In order to learn some of his father's techniques, like applying imitation grain finishes, Nick resorted to hiding in the workshop and watching his father work.

He was very annoyed and surprised when I made my first medicine cabinet with a door mirror and false graining.... And he asked "who told you to get into my combs and my rollers and my graining stuff?" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676)

Even when Winter became ill with cancer in the late 1930s and had retired from his furniture business altogether, he still did not encourage his son to make furniture. Despite this fact, Nick started to make and sell a basic line of household furnishings in keeping with the tradition of craftsmanship that was begun by his father.<sup>3</sup>

After he gave up, that was the first time I used anything. After he died...there was a bedroom set in the front room upstairs, so I had a pretty good knowledge of mathematics and geometry in school, so I measured it, I thought I'd try it to see if I could do it, so I made one. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)



Later, Nick sent a letter to Charlie Cohen of Bell Island and asked him if he wanted to sell some bedroom sets. When a few sets eventually sold in Cohen's store, Nick was asked to send more furniture. It was not long before Nick discovered that making, selling, and repairing furniture in Conception Bay was not exactly a lucrative venture.

The fourteen dollar bit [price of bedroom sets]...you could work your head off and not make any money. When the war started, Argentia base started, people were making a lot more money, so of course, I wanted to make a bit too.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

In 1942 the town of Argentia was the site for the construction of an American military base which provided employment to over 10,000-15,000 civilians.<sup>4</sup> Many people in Conception Bay worked as labourers on the base and earned higher wages than ever before. Some of Nick's friends and relations found work on the base, but they did not always have transportation. As one of the few people who owned a vehicle, Nick was often asked to "taxi" them to and from the base daily. These trips provided extra cash to an otherwise impoverished craftsman (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674, C14676). His taxi services were greatly enhanced by a road that was built from Argentia to Holyrood with specific intentions to "improve war-time transportation and communication."<sup>5</sup>

With the onslaught of World War II, Newfoundlanders experienced the full effects of a cash economy which existed because of a large number of Canadian and American troops stationed on bases across the island.<sup>6</sup> As wages had increased considerably, Nick felt justified in charging more for the furniture that he made. Johnny Boone of South River bought a bedroom set from Nick Winter in 1938 at a cost of fifteen dollars. According to Johnny, Nick sold another bedroom set to a relative of his, Frank Boone, who was charged thirty-six dollars. Johnny explained the reason for the price increase:

Now he paid thirty-six dollars...when Argentia started, see the price went up...because a lot of people going to Argentia and making a few extra dollars and that's, if Nick told you, why he should ask more for his furniture.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14673)

#### Nick Winter--Furniture Maker 1935-1948

Nick rearranged the workshop space to fulfill the needs of a part-time furniture maker and a taxi driver for the community. By extending the building by a third and removing the cattle and horses, he was able to put doors and a floor in the workshop. This allowed enough space for one or more cars. Unlike his father who desired that no one use his tools or assist him on a full-time basis, Nick had several young men of the community making furniture and

repairing cars in the workshop. Paddy Kavanaugh, Bate Mugford, Ned Fowler, Jack Fitzgerald, and Sam Canning were some of Nick's friends and assistants. Ranging in age from sixteen to twenty years, these men gained experience in car repair and carpentry skills which some of them used later in other careers.

I had more people working there with me than my father did because I didn't give a damn about the tools...The tools were just tools to me. I had help because I had all these kids around. I remember Paddy...I was trying to work him into it [furniture making]. He'd be on his own, working away...in the workshop, making couches...So, he got to know a few things. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

Although Nick made furniture part-time for thirteen years, he believed that his work "was never like his" [like William Winter's]. Yet, he indicated quite proudly that he was "the only one in the family who started doing the same things that he did."<sup>7</sup> When Nick was asked if he thought he was a craftsman, he responded by saying: "no...jack of all trades, master of none" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675).<sup>8</sup> He did indicate, however, that his father was truly a craftsman and explained why:

The difference between a priest and clergyman to a shaman is, the priest and clergyman do what they are told from a written book...The shaman seeks an experience.... My father had to think everything out, make his own tools, produce furniture from local woods.<sup>9</sup>

Nick's comment reflected his belief that he was the clergyman and his father, the shaman. He expressed that he, as a part-time furniture maker, was "more or less operating on something that had gone before," and he concluded by stating:

I wasn't initiating something, I was experimenting as I went along with it, I was changing things that would take less time, less effort, and I knew that this had gone on for years and years...I knew that people would eventually want a different quality product...and all this fancy work, who could I get to buy it from me? If you're making something to make a living, you got to have a prospective customer, right? I didn't have them to put in the effort. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

This passage indicates that Nick was governed by a canon of work technique similar to his father; notably, he sought to make a profit and respond to the desires and aesthetics of his clientele. As a result of the changing attitudes and preferences of his customers, the inferior quality of available materials, and numerous distractions from more lucrative opportunities, Nick began to make furniture that was simple, compact, and primarily utilitarian.

#### Winter's influences

Nick constructed a basic line of household furnishings which included: bedroom sets; parlour chair sets, with a

settee and only one chair; mantlepieces; wing-back chairs and kitchen chairs; parlour and kitchen couches; and small tables. He was commissioned to make pulpits and ornamental pedestals for local churches. As mentioned earlier, he, like his father, employed the use of templates or moulds to stockpile multiple parts of furniture. These included templates for: the lyres of the lyre-shaped backboards of dressers and washstands; brackets which were placed underneath the surfaces of washstands and dressers; bosses or buttons used for decoration on many furniture pieces; and panels with scooped corners which decorated washstands (see plates 21, 25). Nick decided to limit the amount of decorations he applied to his furniture because the time involved to make elaborately crafted furnishings did not equal the amount of money received for the work.

Brackets, yea, I made hundreds of these. For instance, I'd always look for some...nicely grained pine for that, a softwood that you could carve, and I'd make ten or twenty of these at a time. Because you used two on the washstand and two on the--and then I cut that all out eventually. For the first couple of years, I followed through, I followed pretty much like he was doing, but then as time went on and people started working, getting higher pay, working in Argentia, I had to reduce, I had to cut down on the product and I had to increase the price. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

Like his father, Nick applied imitation grains to his bedroom sets with a small comb on the lyres of the lyre-shaped backboards and a large comb on the wide drawers of washstands and dressers (see plate 18). Unfortunately, he was discouraged from using some finishes and varnishes because the materials available in the 1930s were of an inferior quality than what was available in the 1920s. On some occasions when he had sold bedroom sets to customers, the finish bubbled and cracked and, consequently, it had to be replaced only weeks after it had been applied (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674). Obviously, these materials did not enable Nick to make a quality product.

While the buying and selling of William Winter's furniture was conducted entirely in the workshop, Nick did not always sell his furniture there. Instead, he would usually place completed orders on his car rack and deliver them directly to the customer. One of Nick's assistants in the workshop, Ned Fowler, wrote to him, saying: "I remember when we would all go over with bedroom sets and couches on the roof of the '32 plymouth, and I would have to sit on a blueberry box to drive."<sup>10</sup>

In 1948, Nick closed the furniture making business and left Newfoundland for Toronto and Detroit in search of more profitable ventures. His brother, Bill now began living in the Winter residence on a permanent basis. Nick felt that

if he had not been distracted by other jobs such as his taxi service and his part-time work as an electric meter reader with his Uncle Jim Winter, he would still be making furniture today.

I was gaining speed in making things....I started experimenting with new types of furniture, and I probably would have made out alright...My mother always said it was a mistake for me to go along with my Uncle...I would have done much better at the furniture eventually...that was her thought.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14676)

#### Examples of Nick Winter's Craftsmanship

Although few examples of Nick's furniture have been found and recorded, a bedroom set and a parlour chair do exist and will be described (see Appendix C). Other furnishings, for which there is only oral testimony, have also been incorporated in this section. Nick's furnishings will be analyzed by presenting both the construction techniques and decorative designs that Nick employed, as well as the number of techniques and decorations he used which suggests his father's influence. In general, Nick was influenced by the furniture designs of many sources which included: printed documents like catalogues, pattern books, and newspapers; furniture models made by local furniture makers; and most importantly, the personal desires and aesthetics of his customers.

### The Pulpit

As noted in chapter two and three, William Winter was commissioned to make pulpits, candlestands, pews, altar rails, and statue stands for local churches and missionaries. His inspiration for many of these furnishings came from a catalogue displaying ecclesiastical metal work, altar rails, pulpits, candelabra, and priests' vestments.<sup>11</sup> In chapter two, Nick remembered watching his father make at least two different pulpits, one which was placed in a local Anglican church and another which was delivered to a Catholic church on the South coast. Shortly before Winter's death, Monsignour Dinn of All Hallows Parish commissioned Nick to make a pulpit for the church. According to Nick, his father did not want him to make the pulpit, and even went so far as to convince Monsignour Dinn to cancel the special order. Nick, however, was determined to make the pulpit and declared to his father and the Monsignour that he "was going to make it anyway and if necessary use it himself."<sup>12</sup> Winter, who was impressed by his son's determination, replied: "That's what I like to hear. Go ahead."<sup>13</sup>

In 1932-33, Nick made the pulpit from British Columbia fir or Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii)<sup>14</sup> because it gave a nice natural grain, and he received "the enormous sum of



thirty-five dollars."<sup>15</sup> Apparently the pulpit was six-sided, and he described it:

Inside [the bottom half, underneath the lectern] you got six legs so I made a thing that went across and joined all the legs, but these legs were a foot apart, but for strength see...and then inside I went across to this one, crossed them and put a hub there.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

As the pulpit has been lost for years, members of the community believe that it was destroyed when All Hallows Parish was replaced by a new building in 1954. Margaret Brown of Clarke's Beach remembered this pulpit as it was, inside the church:

It was really like you see the ones in the Church of England with three steps going up with [a] lovely rail and lovely "handiwork"...carved up...and Monsignour Dinn used to go up on the pulpit and he would lean on the rail.... Varnish was the thing in the old days...it was varnished with a sheen and the fancywork! (MUNFLA, Tape, C14671)

Nick felt this pulpit was the only item he ever made that was different from his father's workmanship. Yet, he indicated that while adequate, his pulpit did not equal more than ten percent of one crafted by his father (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675). As Nick followed patterns in the Christian art catalogue, the basic form of his pulpit was probably like pulpits his father had made. Similarly, Nick's description of the pulpit provides evidence that his use of decoration

on this piece was comparable to his father's general use of embellishment. On parlour sideboards, William Winter applied split turnings which were simple posts cut in two and glued on the furniture as decoration (see plate 23). Usually, they were applied underneath the surface and flanking the sides of cupboard doors on the sideboard. In a similar fashion, Nick applied wooden chalices on the front panels of his pulpit. They were originally whole chalices, but, much like a split turning, Nick cut the chalice in two and applied each half on the pulpit as decoration.

I turned out a chalice in the lathe...and once I knew I could put a chalice on there...I sawed it in two, lengthways, then I put the two halves.... one on this side and one on that side [of the pulpit lectern].  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

### Bedroom Sets

As described in chapter three, bedroom sets were popularly sold items of William Winter. Simply constructed and having very little decoration, these were made for utilitarian purposes rather than for display (see plates 30, 31). His sets had lyre-shaped backboards which, on the dresser, supported a mirror and on the washstand, held a towel rail. The washstand had one drawer and a small cupboard. Brackets flanked each side of the drawer and

rectangular panels with scooped corners were applied to each side of the cupboard door (see plate 21). The dresser consisted of three drawers with decorative brackets flanking each side of the first drawer. Both pieces contained several painted decorations, like wheat sheafs on the cupboard door of the washstand and curved lines, swirls, and fishes on the edges of each drawer of the dresser (see plate 22). The dresser had an additional decoration crowning the top of the mirror--a rolling pin baluster motif (see plate 32). Most of Winter's washstands were constructed to rest on the floor, while the bedroom dresser was designed to rest on four pedestal feet. Overall, the bedroom set was painted in an imitation grain with a reddish tint resembling mahoghany.

Using a similar work technique as his father, Nick stockpiled various parts for the bedroom sets which would allow him to make several sets at the same time. Having large quantities of parts of and/or completed furniture pieces was an efficient technique that provided more time to devote to custom made furnishings. Nick described the process of making several bedroom sets at one time:

I could make a bedroom set in three days after I had had experience...but I'd make enough [parts] for four bedroom sets...make it up and have it piled up; so many pieces for the sides, so many pieces for the front, and so on, and the arms...the drawer fronts...I was improving all the time and

looking for ways to cut corners. (MUNFLA,  
Tape, C14676)

The only bedroom set I recorded that Nick had made was located in a loft at Johnny Boone's residence in South River, Conception Bay (plate 44, 45). This set was examined to see similarities and differences in comparison to William Winter's bedroom sets. A first look reveals that Nick painted an imitation grain, resembling oak, on the lyre-shaped backboard, surface, and drawer of the washstand. The rest of the washstand was covered in spotted or smudged imitation grain, and the cupboard door panel contains decorative swirls of imitation grain. Nick Winter changed the appearance of the finish on the dresser by painting the grain over most of the surface and only applying the spotted or smudged effect on the lyre-shaped backboard. By painting an elaborate amount of imitation grain on the bedroom furnishings, Nick compensated for the lack of applied or painted decorative details on the surface of these pieces. Like his father, he applied panels with scooped corners to the washstand and a rolling pin baluster motif to the dresser.

With a few exceptions, the construction of Nick Winter's bedroom set and his father's bedroom sets appear to be the same. There are some obvious differences, however, for Nick designed his washstands to rest on four pedestal

feet and the dresser has no back attached to it (plate 46). As Peddle has mentioned, outport craftsmen frequently left their furniture unfinished (1983, 30). Similarly, Nick revealed that "you wouldn't need to, [finish the dresser] it would just go up against a wall."<sup>16</sup> On his washstands, however, the backs were finished. The lyre-shaped backboards of both dressers and washstands were not removable from the rest of the piece of furniture. Using a similar technique as his father, Nick attached an extra piece of board to the bottom of the lyre which he nailed to the back of the washstand or dresser. This practice allowed for a more stable product, but it eliminated an owner's ability to easily relocate the furniture from one area of the house to another.

### Parlour Chair Sets

William Winter made a parlour chair set which consisted of two upholstered chairs, one rocker and one arm chair, and a settee or love seat. At forty-five dollars, the parlour chair set that Winter made was elaborately carved, upholstered and varnished. The only complete Winter parlour chair set in existence is owned by the Newfoundland Museum (see Appendix B).

Plate 44

An example of a washstand from a matching bedroom washstand  
and dresser set made by Nick Winter

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Plate 45

An example of a dresser from a matching bedroom washstand  
and dresser set made by Nick Winter

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd





Plate 46

The unfinished back of a dresser made by Nick Winter

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Recently, the Historic Resources Division's restoration craftsman, Ralph Clemmens, re-upholstered this set for a temporary exhibition.<sup>17</sup> All three parlour pieces were made from birch and upholstered with a blue imitation velvet fabric, which was tacked on the upholstery with simulated leather strips or "morocco" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14677). Decorative sprig-leaf motifs were carved on the wood surface of both the bottom rail and crest rail of the parlour chairs and settee. Brackets or "ears" were applied on each end of the crest rails. Winter stuffed these pieces with seagrass or seaweed (Zostera marina)<sup>18</sup> which, over time, corroded the iron coiled springs that gave shape to the upholstery. Although carefully washed and rinsed by Winter's sons, the seagrass stuffing still retained a large amount of salt on its surface when it was used to stuff the furniture. When these particular pieces had been relegated to a damp environment like a basement or outdoor shed, the salt from the seagrass mixed with moisture and leaked through the upholstery, staining the legs of the parlour pieces. This caused some areas of the furniture to become discoloured.

Nick's parlour chair sets included only an arm chair and a settee. According to Nick, he made three parlour chair sets in the late 1940s which he sold to people in local communities; one set was burnt in a home in Clarke's Beach and another was sold to a woman who moved to Boston,

Massachusetts. At the home of Mr. J. P. James, in South River, I located the third set with only the arm chair intact. James's mother had bought the parlour chair set from Nick Winter for forty-five dollars. When the parlour chair set was discovered, the settee lay rotting on the side of a hill and the remaining chair had been placed in James' basement.

Ralph Clemmens restored this chair as well, and he explained that the piece was comprised of several different local woods: birch for the arms and lower slat, tamarack for the legs, and pine for the seat and back posts of the chair.<sup>19</sup> The chair was painted with an imitation grain resembling mahogany (plate 47). Nick stuffed his furniture with seagrass, hay, and straw as large quantities of seagrass were no longer available.<sup>20</sup> Both William and his son, Nick used conventional mortise and tenon joinery in the construction of their parlour chairs. Another similarity of the Winters' parlour chairs was that the width between the arms of the chairs was extremely narrow, far too narrow to make for comfortable sitting chairs.

William Winter's parlour chair (plate 48) was more delicate in appearance, however, and generously decorated with incised sprig-leaf motifs on the wood surfaces of the chair and settee. Nick's only applied decoration, brackets, were used by Winter as well. As parlour chair sets were

advertised in Eatons' catalogues as early as 1901, both Winter and his son were most likely influenced by the same furniture styles and decorations of the period.<sup>21</sup> Even though Nick and his father applied a similar decoration, Nick was not influenced by Winter, for he could "not remember him making a parlour set" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14676). This is quite plausible as only one complete Winter parlour chair set exists today; a fact which may indicate that Winter did not receive many orders for these furnishings, they were too expensive to make, or he did not like making them.

### China Cabinets

Some of William Winter's best selling parlour furnishings were sideboards. Nick constructed similar case furniture pieces which he called china cabinets (plate 49). Nothing that William Winter made closely resembles this type of cabinet except a wall cabinet which he built for the dining room of his home in Clarke's Beach. There are at least two china cabinets that Nick made which exist in Newfoundland: one was found in the dining room of his father's house and the other in the dining room of Paddy Kavanaugh's residence in Clarke's Beach. As his father was often influenced by a customer's request for a particular

Plate 47

A parlour chair made by Nick Winter

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd





Plate 48

A parlour chair made by William Winter  
(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

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Plate 49

A china cabinet made by Nick Winter in the Winter residence  
in Clarke's Beach

Photo by: C. Boyd



design or decoration, Nick, too, was influenced by a customer's idea for a china cabinet. He explained:

I sent some china cabinets to St. John's... Fred Hussey brought me some plans for it, for cabinets one time. Well, just drawings from some friend of his who wanted something made, something special he wanted. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14674)

These cabinets were built in a triangle which allowed them to fit into any corner space of a room. Nick maintains that he built them entirely from British Columbia fir, yet the china cabinet he made for his father's house is decorated by a plain turning on the top made from birch. Generally, the front of the china cabinet consists of two long panels that flank either side of the glass and wood cupboard doors. Nick covered the panels of the cabinet in his father's house with gold leaf wallpaper for decoration.<sup>22</sup> The middle of the cabinet contains a glass cupboard door revealing two shelves that are designed to hold china, glassware, or bric-a-brac. Lining the walls behind the shelves of this cupboard, Nick recycled packing case material from refrigerator containers.

When Gus [his cousin, Gus Winter] sold the refrigerators, they came in crates, and it was a plywood, cheap plywood... it was thin and everything... so that's what I used for bottoms, for backs of bureaus, of washstands. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

In all likelihood, this practice was influenced by his father whose canon of work technique emphasized the conservation of resources; William Winter re-used wood from commercial packing crates for furniture construction. Located below the glass cupboard of the cabinet, two paneled cupboard doors contain a shelf for place-settings and silverware. One drawer, directly beneath this set of cupboards, is generally used for linens. Imitation crystal knobs and metal handles open the cupboard doors or drawers. Other than the birch turning on the top of the cabinet, the three turned legs, on which the cabinet rests, provide the only decoration. As revealed in the following passage, Nick's designs were modified according to the preferences and needs of his clientele:

You have a lot of space in something like that, yet it takes up very little room.... Things were changing then, people didn't want that old fashioned stuff.... That's the reason I started making these corner cabinets because these rooms were cluttered with furniture anyway in the small houses, and you put a big sideboard in and it took up the whole space. But it was...very easy for me to sell these, something that fits into the corner.  
(MUNFLA, Tape, C14674 and C14675)

### Hallstands

During the victorian period of the late nineteenth century, hallstands were found in the foyer of most homes

where they served several functions. In his essay "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," Kenneth Ames describes that most hallstands of this period consisted of four functional components: (1) provisions for umbrellas; (2) hooks or pegs for hats and coats; (3) a looking glass; (4) a small table, often with a drawer and a marble top (1978, 31). Although most Newfoundland outport furniture makers did not usually make hallstands, William Winter built at least one for his own home in Clarke's Beach (plate 50).<sup>23</sup> At eighty inches high and thirty-eight inches wide, this hallstand was more cumbersome than most conventional victorian hallstands, and it projects eighteen inches into the foyer of Winter's front entrance. According to Ames, "hallstands rarely project far into the space of the hall, usually only twelve or fifteen inches" (1978, 36).

Nick Winter did not make hallstands like these because most people in the community could not afford to buy them, did not have the space, or they did not have a use for them. His father's hallstands were probably the most expensive pieces that he sold, at sixty dollars a-piece. Presumably because of the cost, Winter only made hallstands when they were specially ordered by the wealthiest of clientele. Ames indicates that "its mere possession was a mark of some social standing" (36).

William Winter's hallstand consists of two parts: the lower part contains a table surface with attached rails to hang umbrellas or canes and a dummy drawer; the upper part consists of a rectangular mirror flanked by two sets of decorative hooks with ram's heads for hanging coats. Applied on either side of the dummy drawer are decorative brackets and directly beneath each bracket are two elaborately turned legs supporting the hallstand. Rails, placed parallel to each side of the table surface, are decorated at each end with bosses or buttons. A low platform joining the back and legs of the hallstand holds shoes and boots. The upper part of the hallstand is decorated with a spindle rack and crowned with a cresting apron. D-shaped carvings embellish each side of the spindle-rack at the top of the hallstand.

Nick created a hallstand which reflected the changing desires and needs of his clientele. "People used to ask me for their halls, a place to hang clothes and things like that, so I came up with a real small thing and put a mirror in it" (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675). He then described how he complied with people's requests:

NW: I had a piece of board like that. I put an extra screw that went through to the wall and then the bracket would go on there, [and] it would cover the original screw that held it onto the wall. I sold a lot of them....



CB: How much would you charge for them?

NW: Well, I could get five or six dollars for that. All it was, was four pieces of one by four and the hooks. I sold them to people who would nail them on the wall and when they had visitors they had a mirror. Wherein for me to build one like his, there was no way I'd get paid for it. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

He reasoned that if a person needed something like a hallstand but could not afford to buy an elaborately constructed piece of furniture, his modified hallstand design was the solution. He concluded by saying:

This was satisfying to a person who didn't have too much money: they had a mirror, they got a place to hang their clothes, whereas this [William Winter's hallstand], was something elaborate. (MUNFLA, Tape, C14675)

Despite the fact that Winter did not encourage his son to follow his line of work, Nick was determined to learn how to make furniture. Economic realities of the time forced Nick to make furniture on a part-time basis while engaged in other forms of employment. Initially using the same pattern books and catalogues, following similar furniture templates, and employing the same techniques in form and decoration as his father, Nick's craftsmanship was directly influenced by Winter's furniture models. Although Nick eventually eliminated decorations from his furniture, he, like his father, continued to make furniture that responded to the desires and aesthetics of his clientele.

Plate 50

A hallstand made by William Winter for his home

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Winter's Influence on Other Contemporary Craftsmen

Nick Winter was not the only furniture maker to be influenced by William Winter. In Conception Bay, several pieces of furniture have been acquired by the Newfoundland Museum that suggest a resemblance, especially in decoration, to furniture models made by William Winter (see Appendix C). For this reason, the Museum has catalogued these pieces as "Winter copies." Although it is not always known who made these pieces, they were probably handcrafted by individuals in nearby communities who made the pieces for their own use, out of necessity. Without formal training in furniture design, these rural craftsmen adapted their work to include recognizable designs and decorations of furniture models typically found in people's homes throughout Conception Bay.<sup>24</sup>

Like Nick Winter's furniture, the "Winter copy" pieces exhibit similarities in decoration usually found on furniture models of William Winter. These include sprig-leaf motifs, rolling pin baluster motifs, brackets, panels with scooped corners, lyre-shaped backboards, bosses, sunburst carvings, D-shaped carvings, decorative spindle galleries, and applied imitation grain finishes.

A privately owned pine and birch washstand located in Spaniard's Bay is profusely decorated with applied embellishments and carved details commonly used by Winter.

On the back and side rails of the splashboard, decorations characteristic of Winter's work like sunburst carvings, sprig-leaf motifs, and a rolling pin baluster motif, can be seen (plate 51). Circular bosses were applied to the front ends of each towel rail, a decoration typically adorning most of Winter's parlour sideboards. This piece was made circa 1900 in Port de Grave by John Mugford, nicknamed "Happy Jack." The washstand is part of a private collection (Peddle 1983, 180-1).

One washstand found in Clarke's Beach closely resembles Winter's washstands in both construction and decoration. It is made of pine and plywood probably in the first half of the twentieth century (Peddle 1983, 180-1). Decorative details distinctive to Winter are also found on this piece: a lyre-shaped backboard (which is removable), a bevelled edge on the surface of the washstand, one drawer, rectangular panels flanking the cupboard, bosses, and yellow painted lines and an imitation grain finish applied throughout (plate 52). Like Winter's washstands, this piece rests directly on the floor.

A yellow-ochre painted pine couch found in South River and dated from the early twentieth century exhibits a direct influence from Winter's furniture models. Decorative embellishments similarly employed by Winter can be seen on this couch. They include sunburst carvings flanking either

end of the couch followed by D-shaped carvings and a sprig-leaf motif extending the length of the couch. The head rest of the couch is covered with bosses and sprig-leaf carvings (Peddle 1983, 90).

A painted pine sideboard from the early twentieth century, originally constructed in North River, portrays only one motif similar to Winter's sideboards. This is the ledge or gallery located just below the mirror. Recently, the Newfoundland Museum acquired a piece of toy furniture which resembles a Winter parlour sideboard. Although this was made for a child's use, it is not known whether Winter actually made toy furniture. Characteristic of Winter's sideboard models, this particular piece has a rounded drawer, two cupboard doors, a ledge, and the beginning of a backboard which appears to be missing. The person who created this piece decorated the sides flanking the cupboard doors with applied wooden hearts. As mentioned in chapter three, this is a folk decoration typically featured in a painted form on the doors of outbuildings in different parts of Newfoundland.

Furniture handcrafted by Nick Winter and the Winter copy pieces are examples exemplifying how Winter's forms and decorations have survived in the products of other furniture makers he inspired. Winter's craft and craftsmanship is a

lasting contribution to Newfoundland's outport furniture-making tradition.

Plate 51

Winter copy washstand made in Port de Grave by John "Happy  
Jack" Mugford

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



FIRE EXIT →



Plate 52

Winter copy washstand made in Clarke's Beach

(Newfoundland Museum Collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



1. Catherine F. Horan, "Argentia," The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland, vol.1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers' Ltd., 1981) 71-2.

2. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

3. Roberts makes reference to three generations of chairmakers who followed the same construction techniques from father to son. Warren E. Roberts, "Turpin Chairs and the Turpin Family: Chairmaking in Southern Indiana," Midwestern Journal of Language and Folklore 7.2 (1981): 57-106, rpt. in Viewpoints on Folklife: Looking at the Overlooked (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988) 118.

Jones indicates similar traditions in chapter six of Craftsman of the Cumberlands: Tradition & Creativity. Michael Owen Jones, The Hand Made Object and Its Maker, rpt. as Craftsman of the Cumberlands: Tradition & Creativity (1975; Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 1989) 197.

4. Horan, 72.

5. Horan, 72.

6. Michael Staveley, "Resettlement and Centralization in Newfoundland", in John W. Webb, Arvo Naukkarinen, and Leszek A. Kosinski, eds., Policies of Population Redistribution (Oulu, Finland: The Geographical Society of Northern Finland, 1981) 162.

7. Nick Winter, telephone interview by Cynthia Boyd, 4 February 1990.

8. This popular expression is a proverb in Wolfgang Mieder ed., A Dictionary of American Proverbs (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 337.

9. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 8 January 1990.

10. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 3 November 1991.

11. The subtitle on the cover page of this catalogue reads: "Gold and Silver Smiths, ecclesiastical metal work, medals, altar rails, pulpits, etc.; Gas and electric light fixtures, Church ornaments of our own manufacture." This catalogue was found in Winter's tool box.

The Pontifical Institute of Christian Art: Church ornaments of our own manufacture (New York: Benziger Brothers, n.d.).

12. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.

13. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.
14. The Principal Commercial Trees of British Columbia, Illustrated Forest Activities No. 4 (Victoria: Forest Service, Publication Information Division of British Columbia, 1973) 3.
15. Nick Winter, letter to the author, 22 November 1989.
16. Nick Winter, conversation with the author, 22 June 1990.
17. "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter" produced by the Newfoundland Museum, Historic Resources Division, Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, with the assistance of the Museum Assistance Program, Guest Curator: Cynthia Boyd, exhibition dates 10 October 1991 - 10 March 1992.
18. Ernest Rouleau, List of the Vascular Plants of the Province of Newfoundland (Canada) (St. John's: Oxen Pond Botanical Park, 1978) 56.
19. Ralph Clemmens, conversation with the author, 10 May 1991.
20. As mentioned in chapter three, Dr. Peter Scott of the Department of Botany at Memorial University of Newfoundland, maintained that Zostera marina or seagrass was wiped out in the 1930s by a fungus brought by warm currents to the harbours of Conception Bay North. Dr. Peter Scott, conversation with the author, 15 August 1991.
21. Examples of period style parlour chair sets in 1901 can be seen in the following catalogue: The T. Eaton Co. Ltd. Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter catalogue, no. 46, 47 (Toronto: T. Eaton Co. Ltd., 1901) 219.
22. Pocius explains that this practice is common in Calvert, Newfoundland, where people wall-paper not only the interiors of their homes every spring but occasionally the panels and cupboard doors of furniture. Pocius 1991, 94-7.
23. Walter Peddle indicated that this was the case as most homes did not have a foyer. Walter Peddle, conversation with the author, 11 March 1991.
24. Pocius maintains that the designs of furniture models made by one craftsman in Keels, Bonavista Bay were incorporated on pieces of furniture made by other craftsmen in the area. Pocius 1988, 342.

## Chapter 5 Winter's Furniture and Cultural Revivalism

In a large blue '79 Ford truck, we climbed the snow-encrusted road without difficulty, but I was anxious to get out of the car as soon as we saw the house. S. Sylvester did say that his house was old and rambling, but to me, it was a mansion secluded in a forest of pine trees and evergreens which were indistinguishable, covered in several feet of snow.<sup>1</sup> My friend, David and I mounted the stairs to his residence, and I tried to stifle my excitement at the prospects of finding a Winter parlour settee. I had only seen one settee, complete with its accompanying rocker and plain chair, owned by the Newfoundland Museum. After seeing a parlour settee on display in a recent exhibit of Winter's furniture, Sylvester called to ask if I, as guest curator of the exhibit, would identify whether or not the settee that he owned was made by William Winter.<sup>2</sup>

Sylvester greeted us at the door with a smile and laugh, looking at us and the vehicle in which we came as if to say, that truck could make it through anything. As he showed us in, I noted the British accent, strong cigarette odour, and his sweater's insignia, the Crow's Nest, which was a local club for elite members of the military. Quickly scanning the interior, it was evident Sylvester's tastes ranged from imported Chippendale furniture to paintings by local artists.

Once I saw the parlour settee, I knew it was made by William Winter. With its tattered upholstery, weathered wood, and delicately carved sprig-leaf motifs unscarred by over sixty years, this Winter piece looked almost reverent placed among contemporary upholstered chairs and an oriental rug.

Sylvester said: "it's his isn't it?" And I replied, "yes, no other." "So tell me about it," he said, "what's the history behind these pieces?"

I explained that I had only seen one complete set which consisted of a settee and two chairs. Winter sold them to his wealthiest clientele for forty-five dollars. I indicated that today, Winter's furnishings might sell for almost five or six hundred dollars as traditionally made crafts have become recognized as material remnants of Newfoundland's cultural past.

Sylvester asked how much this piece would be worth. "It is for sale, you know," he stated matter of factly. As it was only one of three pieces in a set and the upholstery was not the original, I mentioned that individual collectors or antique dealers would pay accordingly. Of course, I liked the settee instantly and offered him four hundred dollars.

Sylvester's smile disappeared, he was frowning. "Four hundred dollars is frankly not enough," he said. "That is

less than a day's wages for me. This is a piece of Newfoundland heritage. Other people have told me that with a little varnish and new upholstery this settee could be worth \$1000 dollars or more!"

My dream to finally own a piece of Winter furniture ended when it became evident that S. Sylvester wanted big money. In ca. 1920, Winter parlour chair sets sold for a mere forty-five dollars, a price that the average individual could barely afford to pay. William Winter would be amazed at the price of his furniture in 1992. Before my exchange with this individual, I had already begun to question why Winter's furniture was in demand and why it was fetching such high prices. During a visit to Clarke's Beach to see Winter's son, Bill, I discovered a Winter parlour couch for sale in a Great Eastern Furniture outlet. Proprietor Sid Callan proclaimed that he had re-upholstered the couch using a staple gun. A large piece of bristol board taped to the side of the couch was marked in black marker: "Winter Couch \$1000." Although the furniture outlet is no longer there, the actual building is no more than fifty feet away from where Winter's workshop once stood, the location in which Winter sold those very same couches for twelve dollars a piece. In downtown St. John's, Livyer's antique shop sells Winter parlour sideboards for \$850 dollars and a bedroom set



for \$800 or \$465 for the dresser and \$415 for the washstand. This is a far cry from fourteen dollars for a bedroom set or fifteen if it was shipped to Bell Island, as the crate to ship it in cost a dollar. Winter's furniture is sold outside of Newfoundland as well. In May of 1992, I talked to John Pruden of Hamilton, Ontario who had recently purchased a parlour sideboard for seven hundred dollars in an antique shop in Kingston, Ontario.

On one occasion, in which Bill Winter and I were discussing current prices for his father's furniture, he shook his head in amazement and said: "I wonder what father would think if someone offered him a thousand dollars. What would he make for it?"<sup>3</sup>

Winter and his work has been recognized largely by the efforts of artifact researcher Walter Peddle, Curator of Material History at the Newfoundland Museum. Notably, two of his publications, The Traditional Furniture of Outport Newfoundland (1983) and The Forgotten Craftsmen (1984) introduce and describe Newfoundland furniture, furniture making technology, and furniture makers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These works have allowed outport furniture makers like Winter to become known and appreciated by contemporary Newfoundlanders who have all but forgotten such rural traditions. Works by other researchers and academics have also contributed to the recognition of

Newfoundland craftsmen and women who made furniture, hooked mats, and boats (MacKinnon 1982; Pocius 1988a; 1979; Taylor 1980; Making the Most of Things 1991). This recognition of Newfoundland made objects, however, is part of a larger focus by artists, academics, musicians, actors, and writers in the rejuvenation and revival of both material and verbal traditions of Newfoundland's cultural past.

Since the early 1970s, Newfoundlanders, especially the intellectual elite of St. John's, have sought ways to revive authentic and "true" Newfoundland culture through identity symbols representative of that culture, like mummering (Jackson 1986, 1-22; Pocius 1988b, 57; Joyce 1986, 44). To many, true Newfoundland culture is represented by outport life in which people lived, shared, and worked communally. To experience the essence of traditional Newfoundland living, one must possess handcrafted furniture and hooked mats, collect folksongs, ballads, and tales, or participate in seasonal activities like janneying (Pocius 1991, 22-3). As a result of major political and historical events in Newfoundland, largely Confederation with Canada in 1949 and the centralization programmes from 1954 to 1972, the way of life characteristic of an outport community has all but disappeared (Staveley 1981; Pocius 1991, 20-1).

To save what culture has been lost, Newfoundlanders and outsiders have been involved in a nativist movement that

focuses on the time since Confederation with Canada (Overton 1979, 222-23). In order to understand nativist movements, it is necessary to briefly define what is meant by nationalistic and revitalization movements. Anthony C. Wallace, in his essay "Revitalization Movements" describes nationalistic or nativistic movements as part of revitalization movements, and these he defines as "deliberate, conscious, organized efforts by members of a society to create a more satisfying culture" (1979, 422). As a result of hundreds of Newfoundland communities being resettled under the Centralization Programme and the Fisheries Household Resettlement Programme, nativists feel that people left their ancestral homes because they were disillusioned by the government's promises of cash incentives and greater social and economic benefits. Pocius indicates that people have since concluded that "life before resettlement was filled with daily connections with common places, which were no longer experienced after resettlement in strange and modern towns" (1991, 21).

The current nativist movement promoted and directed by individuals and groups in St. John's has created what critic Sandra Gwyn calls a "Newfoundland Renaissance" or "Newfcult Phenomenon" (1976, 41). This renaissance has allowed for a renewed interest in and nostalgic revival of essential aspects of Newfoundland rural life and folk culture (Overton

1979, 229). For some, handcrafted objects represent the past of this culture, whether it consists of past values and traditions or past people and places in Newfoundland. In some instances, people believe that Newfoundland culture is represented by the media, as with past radio programs like "The Newfie Bullet" (Narvaez 1986, 65-76). With specific reference to objects, Pocius indicates that they are preserved by people to ensure that past cultural values remain; thus, these items become, in his words, "objectified" forms of that culture (1991, 23).

#### In Recognition of Newfoundland Outport Furniture

Newfoundland outport furniture has been given the most attention by artifact researchers, academics, and local antique dealers. These individuals have been salvaging outport furniture from out of the hands of both the notorious Mainland "picker" and Newfoundlanders who apparently no longer appreciate handmade furniture (Peddle 1984, 89; 1983, 21-5). Since Confederation, Newfoundlanders, whose economy changed from a credit to a cash consumer-oriented economy, began to devalue handmade objects (Pocius 1991, 20; Peddle 1984, 89). Objects, like outport furniture, were discarded because they characterized eighteenth and nineteenth century lifestyles (Pocius 1991, 20; 1988a, 339; Peddle 1983, 21-3). As indicated by one of

my informants, Johnny Boone of South River, "You would use it [handmade furniture] until you couldn't, then you would take it outside just to get it out of the house. You would get something else that you liked."<sup>4</sup>

In some cases, if handmade furniture was not destroyed, it was practically given away to pickers or collectors from the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia and from the United States. These pickers came to Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s to knock on doors in search of handcrafted goods (Peddle 1983, 22-3). Peddle suggests that pickers were both a blessing and a curse to Newfoundland:

Although they have probably saved numerous Newfoundland antiques from destruction, they have taken the large part of what remains of Newfoundland's antique furnishings to the North American mainland, where its specific identity and significance is lost (1983, 23).

In his first publication on outport furniture, Peddle maintains that not all of it was removed and sold, for pickers tended to cover areas of Newfoundland that were less accessible and serviced only by boats, while more populous areas of the island serviced by roads were not completely exhausted of handmade objects (1983, 23). In some cases, outport furniture has survived because people did not discard it until it was no longer functional. Once a particular piece of furniture was not used inside the home,

it was often placed in a nearby shed or loft which served as storage space for tools, paint containers, or fishing equipment (Peddle 1983, 22; Pocius 1988a, 339).

As mentioned in chapter three, outport furniture was noted for its individuality. Rural Newfoundland craftsmen incorporated not just one unified style or design to their pieces, like Hepplewhite or Chippendale, but they combined a number of styles, designs, elements, and motifs from different factory-produced or locally produced furniture models (Peddle 1991; Pocius 1988a, 328; 1983, xvi-xix). Through academic research, publications, and museum exhibitions, scholars and researchers have emphasized that pieces of outport furniture are the surviving products of a once vibrant Newfoundland furniture-making tradition. Furnishings for strictly utilitarian purposes have been transformed into objects symbolizing Newfoundland's cultural past. Pocius suggests that these objects have become objectified signs of culture:

Objectified Newfoundland culture removes items from the context of their social obligations so they can be exhibited, displayed, or performed in new social networks, all having little resemblance to their original function (1991, 23).

In their aim to rekindle images of Newfoundland's culture and heritage for visitors who never think of heritage or for visitors nostalgic of that heritage, museums and historic sites are sometimes the worst offenders of

objectifying aspects of Newfoundland's past. Writing on the notion of identifying, preserving, enhancing, or commemorating surviving artifacts and landscapes, David Lowenthal notes that "we affect the very nature of the past, altering its meaning and significance for every generation in every place" (1979, 124). For individual collectors or museums, salvaged artifacts act as reminders of values, beliefs, and ideals of the past (Hewison 1987; Pocius 1991, 52). Evidence of the inherent virtues of museum preservation and collection in Newfoundland is succinctly given by Peddle in the following passage:

Five years ago Newfoundland rural furniture was almost completely ignored in Newfoundland. Today there is reason for optimism. The Newfoundland Provincial Museum in St. John's is increasing its efforts to research, collect, and publish information about traditionally made Newfoundland materials...antique dealers and collectors are now acquiring and promoting the sale of local antiques in the Province of Newfoundland... Newfoundlanders in general are slowly becoming aware of the importance of their traditionally made furniture, as some pieces have been retrieved from attics and twine lofts, restored and are being used again in the home. Perhaps despite its continuing depletion, a portion of what little must remain of a once rich material culture, will be preserved (1983, 25).

As manifested in passages like these, outport furniture is gaining recognition among contemporary Newfoundlanders

for its link with craftsmen and women who once made furniture and other objects with hand tools and few machines. Using ingenuity and innovation without formal training, individuals created necessary and functional furnishings for themselves or for others. These people of Newfoundland's past lived in outports, lives characterized by a close relationship to the land and sea. Scholars and museum researchers have played an essential role in promoting Newfoundland's cultural past through their emphasis in the preservation of objects considered characteristic of that past. In transforming outport furniture from objects of utility to objects of display, scholars and researchers, like nativists, allow handmade items to become objectified signs of culture. The outport furniture of William Winter, through its use and display in present-day homes, museums, and antique shops, provides an excellent example of how items become objectified.

#### Winter's Furniture: Present-day Use

As indicated in the first part of this chapter, Winter's furnishings were not only sold successfully during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but are sold in the 1990s among antique dealers and individual collectors in Newfoundland and Ontario. The simple but decorative furniture of William Winter now sells at costs



higher than this rural craftsman would have ever imagined sixty years ago. Collectors and antique dealers acquire and sell Winter pieces and museums proudly display his furniture, but at the same time, Winter's furniture is being used by people in present-day homes of Conception Bay. Some are used by the ancestors of contemporary Newfoundlanders who originally bought furniture from William Winter, the pieces having been placed and retained in the family home for generations.

Winter's furniture has become the subject of numerous museum publications and exhibitions of the Newfoundland Museum, including the most recent exhibit "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter." As a result, many people of Conception Bay who own his pieces have been influenced by Winter's popularity in such larger circles of St. John's. In some cases utilitarian pieces of furniture have undergone a transformation.

William Winter constructed furniture to last. His techniques were not always conventional, but his furniture was extremely well-built. Antique dealer Ron Hoddinott of Livyer's Antiques has been selling locally made furniture in St. John's for fifteen years. He indicates that "Winter's furniture was...tightly-knit, solid; you put it in a house, it will last for hundreds of years."<sup>5</sup> Despite this clear reputation for solidity, Winter's trademark was his penchant

for decoration. Whether it was a washstand, medicine cabinet, or a sideboard, he embellished all his pieces with decorative elements and motifs. An additional feature of Winter's furniture was his use of imitation grain finishes. These finishes simulated expensive woods like mahogany and oak, popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hoddinott suggests that most people do not like these finishes today and offers the following explanation:

"Fake-graining," nobody in Newfoundland, as a general rule, has any use for it. I got a bedroom set in Clarke's Beach; it was in pristine original condition. I had it in the shop for a couple of years. Then I stripped it of the grain finish, and I sold both pieces in a day. And it's hard to find a [Winter] piece with its original finish in immaculate condition, enough to be worth trying to sell it that way.<sup>6</sup>

Winter furnishings found in Conception Bay homes have almost all lost their original finish due to years of use during which people have covered signs of wear with coats of paint. Although this particular practice removes remnants of the craftsman's original decoration, a coat of paint provides variety and gives the furniture a new appearance.<sup>7</sup> The most prevalent examples of Winter's furniture still used in homes of Clarke's Beach, South River, and North River are bedroom sets, mantelpieces, and parlour sideboards (see Appendix B). This reflects the fact that some of these

furnishings were probably Winter's best selling products (Peddle 1984, 76).

One example of a parlour sideboard owned by the Snook family of Clarke's Beach, has been relegated to the back porch until it can be restored. Gloria Snook explained that it had once belonged to her husband's parents who used the sideboard in their home in French's Cove, a small community outside of Bay Roberts.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally used in parlours or front rooms where Newfoundlanders entertained guests (Pocius 1991, 238), Winter parlour sideboards are now found in non-traditional settings. One sideboard, originally purchased by Noah Boone from Winter in the early 1900s, was passed on to his son, Johnny. Although it had been relegated to his shed, Johnny "fixed up" the sideboard by applying a coat of brown paint and gave it to his daughter-in-law who placed it in her beauty salon.<sup>9</sup> One sideboard owned by the late Bill Wilson of North River was placed in the kitchen pantry. Like other examples mentioned, this sideboard lacks its original finish and has been given a coat of brown paint. In the pantry, however, it still functions as a display arena for the best dishes and glassware of the Wilson family (plate 53).

Several Winter pieces owned by the Boone family of South River demonstrate how the value, significance, and use of such objects has changed spanning over three generations

from the 1900s to the 1990s. In the early 1900s, Noah and Emma Jane Boone custom ordered a bedroom set from William Winter that included a washstand, dresser, and bed. Nearly eighty years later, their son Johnny gave the remaining pieces, the bed and dresser, to his son, Ross. When I asked about his plans for the Winter pieces, Ross said that they would be part of the "Antique Room" he was designing in the basement of his suburban split-level home in South River. Ross is of the generation of Newfoundlanders who have begun to appreciate certain aspects of Newfoundland's cultural past, whether they are material or verbal items. In Ross's antique room, the dresser sits in one corner with a reproduction of a victorian basin and pitcher on its surface. The bed was removed to Ross's workshop where he is restoring the original finish (plate 54). When I began to photograph these pieces, Ross's mother, Anne commented on her son's arrangement and use of the furniture and surrounding objects:

AB: [pointing to the top of the dresser] You know that would not normally be there...the basin and pitcher would be on the washstand and you wouldn't even see the chamber pot. [then to CB] I wonder what old Mrs. Boone would think if she were to see that someone was so interested and paying so much attention to this old furniture."

CB: What was her first name?

AB: Emma, Emma Jane...I remember when this dresser was in her bedroom and she had her linens in the drawers.<sup>10</sup>

Months later, Anne Boone told me that she had saved a Winter mantelpiece from being discarded. Apparently, a friend of hers was having the area around her fireplace covered by a wall of gyprock and the mantelpiece was to be covered by this new partition. "I told her that she should not have that covered up and she said, 'well, what am I going to do with it, I have no use for it.'"<sup>11</sup> Anne later told Ross about her friend's mantle, knowing that he liked antiques and could find a use for it. He went by the woman's house and removed the mantle, placing it in his shop. Although mantelpieces function as both utilitarian and decorative pieces of furniture that enclose fireplaces (Glassie, 1975, 131), Ross attached this mantelpiece to a plywood wall of his workshop where it encloses a woodstove (plate 55). The mantelpiece functions in mock imitation of how it functioned in the past.

Johnny and Anne Boone indicated how things, like furniture, were continually thrown out because people did not appreciate them like they do now. Anne reasoned that she had probably decided to save the mantelpiece because Ross appreciated the old furniture.

I guess why Ross has it now, because it's sentimental to him, just as we felt too. But at that time, there was no one around then

who cared that much about the furniture...oh my, when we think about all that we threw out.<sup>12</sup>

And as her husband, Johnny, honestly concluded: "There was nobody who put a value on it, like they do today."<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the largest collection of Winter's furnishings used in a present-day home is in William Winter's own residence. As indicated in chapter two, Bill Winter and his wife Florence currently reside in the house located on the Conception Bay highway. The house in its design and decoration is a reflection of Winter as a carpenter, but the Winter furnishings within are a tribute to the versatility and creativity of Winter as a craftsman. Of more than a dozen furnishings, several pieces in Winter's home are designed from his basic line, and others are one-of-a-kind furnishings that have never been found in any other collection. Surviving members of Winter's family, particularly his son, Bill, who has lived in the house for more than forty years, have maintained, repaired, and restored this furniture.

Plate 53

Winter parlour sideboard located in a North River residence  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd





Plate 54

A bed with handpainted and applied decorative details made  
by William Winter  
(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Plate 55

A Winter mantelpiece

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



Before museum researchers, academics, artists, and university students ever became interested in Winter's furniture, Bill and his wife primarily used these pieces as furniture, and the furnishings were placed in each room with specific spatial functions in mind.<sup>14</sup> Still today, for example, a bedroom set is located in a bedroom. The drawers of a dresser hold clothing or linens. Its surface is covered with a lace doily and objects of personal hygiene. On the washstand sit a basin and pitcher, and a towel hangs on the back rail (plate 56). In the Winters' bedroom, a parlour table (see plate 41) displays religious statues of the Virgin Mary and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, along with a rosary, medals, and holy cards, testimony to Florence's Catholic faith. A number of Winter's creations were specifically designed for this house: the staircase with ornate bannisters and a newel post, a decorative hallstand for the front entrance (see plates 29, 50), and a circular sunburst carving surrounded by finials placed in the ceiling where a crystal chandeleir once hung (plate 57). The dining room with a wall cabinet and Bible and lamp stands and the kitchen with a large table likewise display Winter's utilitarian furnishings. Over time, however, new and contemporary furnishings have been bought and placed in Winter's house but only in addition to the furniture already there. Although few of the pieces made by Winter have ever

been removed from the house, their functions have changed as their value and significance have increased in the eyes of those who own them.

Bill and Florence have been interviewed on numerous occasions and the results of the research have made their way back to them (Peddle 1984, 1983). Not surprisingly, published articles by scholars and researchers are read by the informants, who, in turn, are influenced to change their perceptions based on others' written perceptions of them.<sup>15</sup> Whether it was because of the work of early researchers or the present study that I was conducting, Bill and Florence's perceptions of Winter and his craft, have been steadily changing in a number of ways. During the second year of my research, it became evident that miscellaneous objects, photographs, and odd tools and pieces of furniture began to appear that had not been visible or talked about before. As well, obvious changes in the manner in which Winter's furniture and other items are being used in their house suggest that things have taken on new value and meaning for Bill and Florence.

When anyone enters the Winter's home, it is through a side entrance where the "old store," Mary Winter's general store, was located. This area consists of a large open space with a door to the left going into the backroom where wood junks and miscellaneous materials, magazines, books,

bags, and planters are kept. The door going to the right enters into the kitchen. Particularly in the summer, Bill and Florence greet visitors and neighbours in this particular area, and they listen to the radio, read, or rest in this space. Furnished with numerous objects, like hats, jackets, a water heater, a freezer, and a vacuum cleaner, this room also contains a wing-back chair, chest of drawers, knife box, tool box, butterchurn, and record cabinet made by William Winter. Although many of the furnishings and other items have been changed or modified by Bill Winter, some are organized in a manner that beckons the visitor to look at them. Sitting underneath the window to the left of the door is William Winter's tool box which Bill painted white and blue. Winter's handmade butterchurn adorns the surface of a broken television set which sits on a tiny table, next to the tool box. Against the wall on the same side of the room as the tool box, is a chest of drawers with both a knife box and a cricket bat nailed on the wall above. On the surface of the chest of drawers, a small rack displays magazine and book articles, a student paper, and other publications about William Winter. A pair of wooden shoe pegs, a Newfoundland railroad stud, a box filled with Winter's rubber letter stamps, a milkbottle, a cow bell, an 1899 ledger from James Winter's grocery store, and a china gravy boat are also displayed on this surface. This is just one corner where

the visitor is presented with a brief history of the Winter family (plate 58).

The Winters loaned a majority of these furnishings and other objects in this room to the Newfoundland Museum for the exhibit "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter." Due to their interest in and involvement with this exhibition, the Winters indicated to me that when the museum returned the items loaned, they would like to similarly "display" them in their own home.<sup>16</sup> For the exhibit, the tool box was restored to its original oak finish by the museum; the tools inside were cleaned and the box was displayed with the lid open, a plexiglass cover protecting it and its contents during the exhibit. Bill wanted the plexiglass cover and label "Winter's tool box" to remain when museum staff returned it to him. Florence and Bill felt that because friends and relatives would be visiting the following summer, they wanted them to be able to see exactly how certain pieces were displayed in the exhibition. Florence indicated that the parlour table in their bedroom was going to be placed in the parlour. A framed poster of the exhibit would be placed on the wall and this parlour table would rest underneath; the surface of the table will be covered with photographs from the exhibit opening and exhibit brochures, photo albums filled with restored photographs of William Winter and his workshop



Plate 56

A Winter washstand

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



**Plate 57**

**A sunburst carving decorating the ceiling in the Winter home  
in Clarke's Beach**

**Photo by: C. Boyd**



Plate 58

A chest of drawers made by William Winter with numerous objects displayed on the surface; located in the side entrance to the Winters' residence

Photo by: C. Boyd



ca. 1920, and books and magazine articles written by Walter Peddle.

Why did Bill and Florence decide that Winter's furniture and other objects would now serve as items of display rather than items of function? Was it because they had been influenced by the impressions of researchers who told them that Winter was a remarkable craftsman, a craftsman whose furniture pieces were surviving products of a forgotten tradition? As indicated earlier, Bill expressed amazement at the prices that people were now paying for his father's furniture. Even his son Jerome had recently paid a relatively high price for a sideboard, in comparison to what it once cost. Like his father, Jerome's interest in Winter had been renewed, and he started to acquire pieces of Winter's furniture. Although he had never indicated exactly why he was now seeking to acquire this furniture, it seemed that he was building his collection for both sentimental and monetary reasons. A month before the exhibition closed, he and a friend were in the exhibit hall looking at a Winter dresser to which his friend pointed and said that he thought his parents had one just like it. Jerome came up to me later and said, half-jokingly: "Now I don't know how I'm going to get that one off him."<sup>17</sup> There is little doubt that a folklorist's research and museum exhibition contributed to his growing awareness of Newfoundland's

cultural traditions as represented by his grandfather's furniture.

Bill's other sons' Ted and Bill Jr., marveled at the way in which their grandfather's life and work was honoured in the exhibit. Ted described how ironic it was that Winter's small foot-operated lathe was put on display when he remembered that he and his brothers used it as a goal for street hockey. Returning home for a visit with his parents, Bill Jr. came to St. John's to see the exhibit. Incredulously, he looked from one part of the exhibit to the next and at one point asked: "Where did all this furniture come from, who owns it?" When I responded that some was owned by the Newfoundland Museum and other pieces were loaned from his father, he said: "growing up at home, father would never tell us which of the furniture was grandfather's."<sup>18</sup> This was not astonishing to hear as most Newfoundlanders felt that handmade furniture was inferior to mass-produced pieces that had become more affordable after Confederation (Peddle 1984, 89).

Evidently, as Bill Jr.'s remark suggests, Bill Winter's appreciation for and identification with his father's craftsmanship has certainly evolved over time. In the last five years, Bill has even tried to salvage a few of his father's furnishings. When the chimney was removed from the Winters' dining room, the mantelpiece, which once adorned



the fireplace, was not discarded but placed in a bedroom. Several decorative carvings were removed in the process, but Florence and Bill kept these as well. Two sunburst carvings were applied to pieces of wood to act as bookends (plate 59).

So Florence says, we won't throw it away, we'll make bookends out of it...that's why even them little pieces were put together...and made so that they would never be lost.<sup>19</sup>

On one occasion, Bill made a gallant effort to preserve a parlour couch which children in a nearby community were using as a springboard. When he approached their mother in an attempt to purchase the couch, she flatly refused indicating that her children obviously enjoyed jumping on it; why should she sell it? Several months after I had begun my initial fieldwork, Bill and I searched a church basement for a missing parlour table and eventually discovered it, in complete disrepair. He asked the priest if he could have it, but was told that because it had been found, the church would now have it restored.

The Winters were flattered when the national CBC television show Mid-day decided to feature William Winter's furniture in a four-minute spotlight interviewing Bill and me in Clarke's Beach (July 1991). Seconds into the interview, Bill paid the deepest compliment that, I, as a researcher could have ever hoped to receive. He indicated

that he was happy that someone was interested in Winter and his furniture because this interest kept it alive.<sup>20</sup> The compliment was truly a measure of how Winter and his craft provided meaning and significance to his son.

Had Winter's craftsmanship become objectified signs of Newfoundland culture in Ross Boone's house, the Winters' house, or in any other homes in Conception Bay communities? In several cases, it is evident that Winter's furniture was displayed rather than utilized simply as furniture. Yet homes that contained Winter pieces also contained contemporary furniture. In other Newfoundland communities, like Calvert on the Southern Shore, Pocius notes that people have replaced objects of the past by objects of the present, but the activities taking place in the spaces in which those objects function have not changed (1991, 28). By contrast, a Winter parlour sideboard and an arborite table from Woolco co-exist in many Conception Bay dining rooms. They augment each other, giving balance to the past and present lifestyles of Newfoundlanders. Whether it is owned by an individual collector in St. John's or owned for generations by families in Conception Bay, Winter's furniture has remained decorative and functional decades after its initial creation and manufacture. In the words of antique collector Ron Hoddinott, "People probably would buy his furniture

whether it was a week after he made it or seventy years later."<sup>21</sup>

Plate 59

A Winter mantelpiece and ottoman, and small bookends

(Private collection)

Photo by: C. Boyd



1. S. Sylvester is a pseudonym. This exchange took place on January 29, 1992. Approximately six months later, Sylvester contacted me again; this time my offer stood and I now own the Winter settee.
2. Sponsored by the Newfoundland Museum and the Historic Resources Division, the exhibit, "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter" was open to the public on October 10, 1991 through March 10, 1992; Guest Curator, Cynthia Boyd.
3. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 9 March 1991.
4. Johnny Boone, conversation with the author, 9 February 1992.
5. Ron Hoddinott, conversation with the author, 8 February 1992.
6. Ron Hoddinott, conversation with the author, 8 February, 1992.
7. Pocius states that "furniture was not rapidly replaced simply when the look of the object was no longer new...residents did have a way of creating variety in the appearance of their furniture before it wore out." Pocius 1988, 339.
8. Gloria Snook, conversation with the author, 23 June 1990. Seary indicates that Ed French lived in the area of French's Cove and Bay Roberts as early as 1775 (1986, 159).
9. Johnny Boone, conversation with the author, 9 February 1992.
10. Anne Boone, conversation with the author, 8 February 1991.
11. Anne Boone, conversation with the author, 9 February 1992.
12. Anne Boone, personal communication with the author, 9 February 1992.
13. Johnny Boone, conversation with the author, 9 February 1992.
14. Many scholars have analyzed the issues of space in regard to the relationships between human activities and the arrangements of household furniture and other objects, notably: Gerald L. Pocius in A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (1991) and Yi Fu Tuan in Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977).
15. James Clifford in his essay "On Ethnographic Allegory" describes that "informants interpret prior versions of their culture, as well as those being written by ethnographic scholars." This appears in James Clifford and George E. Marcus eds., Writing

Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) 117. Elaine Eff in her essay "Traditions for Sale: Marketing Mechanisms for Baltimore's Screen Art, 1913-1985," suggests that screen artist Ted Richardson was influenced by the interviews she conducted with him, which "enhanced his self-image as well as his public image." This essay appears in New York Folklore. Special Section: "Marketing Folk Art." 12.1-2 (1986): 57-68. From a Newfoundland perspective, Philip Hiscock indicates in the introduction to his thesis that he influenced his informants during his initial research. Philip Douglas Hiscock, Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland Radio Broadcasting: An Analysis of Occupational Narrative, Oral History and Song Repertoire, M.A. thesis, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland) 1987, 193-4.

16. Bill and Florence Winter, conversation with the author, 9 February 1992.

17. Jerome Winter, conversation with the author, 3 February 1992.

18. Bill Winter jr., conversation with the author, 17 November 1991.

19. Bill Winter, conversation with the author, 7 November 1989.

20. Bill Winter said this during the shooting of the national CBC television show Mid-day which featured William Winter, 13 July 1991.

21. Ron Hoddinott, conversation with the author, 8 February 1992.

## Chapter 6:

### Conclusion

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, William Winter produced hundreds of household furnishings with relatively few tools and machines for a diverse clientele in Conception Bay. In his own community of Clarke's Beach, Winter was admired and respected for his creative and practical abilities to make just about anything. From rolling pins, butterchurns, leather boots, to coffins, Winter's creative abilities were wide-ranging. A hearse used for funeral processions was one of his most notable contributions to the area. No less resourceful, his wife, Mary operated a general store where eggs, saltbeef, biscuits, tea, calico cloth, and wallpaper were sold. Together, Mary and William raised nine children, two of whom died tragically.

However variant and wide his talents, it was in constructing and designing furniture that Winter was most successful. Chapter three of this thesis examines Winter's furniture making enterprise, particularly the daily activities surrounding his workshop. With very little space in which to work, Winter hired few people to assist him in his business. Instead, he employed other methods to make furniture quickly, efficiently, and inexpensively. One such method was his use of an imported windmill, which he



attached to the shop to supply power for the large lathe. When this invention no longer worked, Winter trained his dog to run in the wheel of the lathe.

As seen throughout chapter three, Winter's canon of work technique (McCarl 1986) was governed by a set of four precepts consisting of: 1) conserving and recycling his resources, 2) sanctioning his tools, machinery, and workshop space, 3) making a profit, and 4) responding to his personal desires and aesthetics as well as to those of his clientele (Jones 1987, 171; Toelken 1979, 185, 189).

Whether recycling wood or nails, using wide pine boards to simulate paneling, or applying imitation grains to represent expensive hardwood finishes, Winter was a resourceful and ingenious furniture maker who created attractive furniture at competitive prices. With each object that he made, however, Winter demanded perfection, innovation, and attention to detail.

As there was not a full-time furniture making industry in outport Newfoundland, Winter, like other rural craftsmen, was not constrained by any one standard and incorporated a number of different designs and styles from local factory-made and imported furniture models available to him at the time (Peddle 1991; Pocius 1988a). A characteristic feature of his furniture was decorative embellishment. Winter's repertoire in decoration consisted of carved sprig-leaf

motifs and sunbursts; applied brackets, bosses, and split turnings; and handpainted swirls, fish tails, and wheat sheafs. Through fancywork such as this, Winter catered to the personal desires and aesthetics of his clientele. If someone wanted an inexpensive bedroom set, Winter would not apply as much decoration, but 'for a few extra dollars' Winter added any number of ornamental details.

Winter's best selling pieces of furniture were parlour sideboards and matching bedroom sets. Of more than seventy-five examples of Winter furnishings that presently exist in museum collections, antique shops, and modern-day homes in Newfoundland and other parts of Canada, sideboards, washstands and dressers represent nearly half of this number. The successful sale of these pieces can also be measured by the fact that other washstands and sideboards made by contemporary craftsmen resemble, in form and decoration, that characteristic of furniture models made by William Winter. In chapter four, Winter's influence was specifically analyzed by comparing a number of his pieces, like bedroom sets, hallstands, and parlour chairs with the craftsmanship of his son, Nick Winter. Despite his father's lack of encouragement, Nick handcrafted a line of furniture similar to his father's for approximately thirteen years after this successful craftsman died. Though Nick's furniture lacked decorative detail, it was solid, plain, and

practical furniture that reflected the aesthetics of consumers in the late 1930s and 1940s.

After nearly sixty years, William Winter's simple, but decorative household furnishings have appreciated in commercial and sentimental value. Newfoundland revivalists, scholars, and museum researchers have emphasized the importance of collecting and salvaging Newfoundland outport furniture and other handmade objects because they are surviving examples of Newfoundland's cultural past. As suggested in chapter five, Winter furniture has become recognized for its link with the past, a past characterized by outport life. Pocius argues that items once made for utilitarian purposes, like furniture and hooked mats, are now items for display (1991, 23).

This thesis attempts to provide a detailed study of a rural Newfoundland furniture maker. By combining an analysis of both the life and work of this individual, it is hoped that a full description of this versatile craftsman was attained. William Winter will not be remembered because he was a fine cabinetmaker. Rather, he will be remembered as an ingenious craftsman who used recycled wood and carved or painted decorations to produce a line of household furniture that has fulfilled the needs and engaged the eyes of customers from the 1900s to the 1990s.

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### Interviews

Interview with Bill and Florence Winter of Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay North, Newfoundland, October 27, 1989, by Cynthia Boyd. MUNFLA, Tape, 92-322/C14670.

Interview with Everett Moore of Clarke's Beach and Margaret Brown of Clarke's Beach, Newfoundland, May 8-9, 1990, by Cynthia Boyd. MUNFLA, Tape, 92-322/C14671.

Interview with Paddy and Francis Kavanaugh of Clarke's Beach, Newfoundland, June 2, 1990, by Cynthia Boyd. MUNFLA, Tape, 92-322/C14672.

Interview with Peggy [Winter] Mullaby of Detroit Michigan, June 20, 1990, by Cynthia Boyd. (interview not tape recorded)

Interview with Johnny and Anne Boone of South River, Newfoundland, June 21, 1990, by Cynthia Boyd. MUNFLA, Tape, 92-322/C14673.

Interviews with Nick Winter of Windsor, California in St. John's, Newfoundland, June 13-22, 1990, by Cynthia

Boyd. MUNFLA, Tape, 92-322/C14674, C14675, C14676,  
C14677.

## Appendix A

The Winter Family

John Winter        +        Helen Hayes  
 (b.1827,d.1869)        (b.1828,d.1911)

|

Daughters: Mary Ann + Tom Smart; Ellen + Frank Kelly;  
 and Bridget "Bride" + J. J. Curran

Sons:            William H.    +    Mary (Furlong)  
                  James J.        +    Ellen (?)

William Henry Winter    +    Mary Furlong  
 (b.1863,d.1936)                (b.1870,d.1946)

|

Daughters: Bridget "Peggy" (b.1899- );  
 Ellen "Nell" (b.1904,d.?);  
 Mary Dorothy "Dot" (b.1908,d.1930)

Sons:            John "Jack" (b.1895,d.?)  
                  Frank (b.1897,d.1950)  
                  James "Jimmie" (b.1901,d.1906)  
                  Leonard (b.1902- )  
                  William "Bill" (b.1905- )  
                  Nicholas "Nick" (b.1914- )

## Appendix B

Union List of Existing Furnishings Made by William WinterKey for Appendices B and C

\* Newfoundland traveling exhibition "A Legacy in Wood: Furniture of William Winter" (1992 - )

+ These particular furnishings appear in publications by Walter Peddle, namely: The Forgotten Craftsmen (1984) and The Traditional Furniture of Outport Newfoundland (1984).

~ These Winter pieces are discussed and/or appear in photographs in the present study.

Bedroom Sets

## 6 Complete sets:

One washstand, dresser; restored to original finish, presently in traveling exhibition.\*

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. 981.280 A-B

One washstand, dresser; with original finish +  
Lois Holden, Bareneed, C. B.

One washstand, dresser; Winter added glove boxes to the dresser and he constructed the washstand to rest on four legs, both are painted white.~

Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Two bedroom sets; all painted brown

The late Bill Wilson, North River, C. B.

One washstand, dresser; original finish~

Charles Way, Heart's Content/Mount Pearl

One washstand, dresser; original finish

Rupert Batten, Bay Roberts

7 Separate pieces:

Washstand - custom piece, with splashboards;

restored to original finish, presently in

traveling exhibition.\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD

Cat. no. 991.16.3 A-B

Washstand - for commercial sale, stripped to the

base coat, yellow ochre finish

Livyer's Antiques, Duckworth St., St. John's, NFLD

Washstand - display piece only, original finish

Peg Magnone, Mallard Cottage Antiques, Quidi Vidi

Village

Washstand, painted brown, undergoing restoration  
Jerome Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Dresser, original finish; rolling pin baluster  
motif was not applied on this piece  
Ross Boone, South River, C. B.

Dresser, stripped to the base coat, yellow ochre  
finish; recently purchased from Livyer's Antiques  
Individual collector, St. John's, NFLD

Chest of drawers, one-of-a-kind\*~  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

### 16 Parlour Sideboards

Two sideboards - one with a gallery and one with  
two columns and a mirror; original finish,  
presently in traveling exhibition.\*+~  
Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. nos. 986.449; 986.363

Two sideboards - the Rectory Sideboard and a  
custom piece with carved and fluted pilusters;

both restored to original finish, presently in traveling exhibition.\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. nos. 986.728; 991.16.1 A-C

Sideboard - for commercial sale, restored and repaired, not original finish

Livyer's Antiques, Duckworth St., St. John's, NFLD

Sideboard - recently purchased from Livyer's Antiques, traces of original finish.

Individual collector, St. John's, NFLD

Two sideboards, original finish with additional coat of varnish; one purchased from Walter Peddle in Newfoundland; the other sideboard was bought in an antique shop in Kingston, Ontario.

John Pruden, Hamilton, Ontario

Sideboard, original finish; purchased in Carbonear, C. B.; now in Nova Scotia

Individual collector, Nova Scotia

Sideboard, original finish

Walter Peddle, Spaniard's Bay, C. B.



Sideboard, original finish

Charles Way, Heart's Content/Mount Pearl

Sideboard, painted brown, good condition~

Gloria Snook, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Sideboard, painted brown, good condition~

Margaret Boone, Marg's Beauty Salon, South River,  
C. B.

Sideboard, painted brown, good condition~

The late Bill Wilson, North River, C. B.

Sideboard, original finish, pristine condition

Barbara Farrell, North River, C. B.

Sideboard - custom piece with unique bracket  
decoration; restored, traces of original finish

Jerome Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

### Parlour Couches

Couch with doghead decoration, restored to  
original finish, presently in traveling  
exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. 982.5441

Couch with repaired doghead decoration; purchased  
from Walter Peddle in Newfoundland  
John Pruden, Hamilton, Ontario

Couch without doghead, original finish, re-  
upholstered  
Rupert Batten, Bareneed, C. B.

Couch without doghead, original finish  
Lois Holden, Bareneed, C. B.

Parlour Tables

Parlour table with elaborate decoration, restored  
to original finish, presently in traveling  
exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. 986.720

Parlour table, smaller in size, plain decoration,  
restored to original finish, presently in  
traveling exhibition\*+

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. 986.505

Parlour table, painted white and green, in need of  
restoration~

All Hallows Parish, North River

Parlour table, displays Winter's use of folk  
decoration by applied hearts, original finish+~  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

### Mantlepieces

Mantle with overmantle, original condition,  
presently in traveling exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. 986.721

Mantle with overmantle, original condition  
Lois Holden, Bareneed, C. B.+

Two mantles, original imitation grain finish

The late Bill Wilson, North River, C. B.

Mantle, original dark shellac and handpainted  
yellow decorations

Ross Boone, South River, C. B.

Mantle, repainted white, unique decorations

Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

#### Parlour Chair Sets

One complete set, including love seat or settee,  
rocker, and plain chair, restored to original  
finish and re-upholstered; presently in traveling  
exhibition\*~

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD

Cat.no. 986.506 A-C

Separate piece, one love seat or settee, in need  
of repair, not original upholstery

Cynthia Boyd, St. John's, NFLD

Miscellaneous tables

Lamp table+ and Bible stand, original finish  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Lamp table, repaired, original finish  
Jerome Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Kitchen table, original dark shellac~  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Drop-leaf table, painted yellow, top replaced with  
arborite surface  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Tilt-top table with "bull's eye" decoration,  
restored to original finish; presently in  
traveling exhibition\*+~  
Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD  
Cat. no. R986.719

Tilt-top table with restored "bull's eye"  
decoration and finish  
Earl and Judith Ralph, St. John's, Newfoundland

Other miscellaneous furnishings made by William Winter

Two religious pedestal stands; repainted+~  
Altar chair set, three attached chairs with  
original finish and upholstery

All Hallows Parish, North River, C. B.

Wall cabinet, original condition;~

Record cabinet, original dark shellac finish;+~

Ottoman, upholstery replaced with wooden table top,  
repainted green;~

Wing-back chair, upholstery restored, original  
finish;+~

Bannisters and newel post, original dark shellac  
finish;~

Hallstand, original finish;~

Carved sunburst decoration on living room ceiling+~

Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

One bed with front and back headboards and side  
planks, original finish removed, stripped to  
reveal natural pine

Newfoundland Museum Collection, St. John's, NFLD

Cat.no. not available

One bed with front and back headboards and side  
planks, original finish~

Ross Boone, South River, C. B.

## Appendix C

Winter Copy Furnishings and Furnishings made by Nick WinterFurniture of Nick Winter

Parlour chair; original finish and upholstery restored.  
Cynthia Boyd, St. John's, NFLD\*~

Matching bedroom washstand and dresser; original finish  
Tony Boone, South River, C. B.

China cabinet, original finish  
Paddy and Francis Kavanaugh, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

China cabinet, original finish  
Bill and Florence Winter, Clarke's Beach, C. B.

Furnishings of Other Conception Bay Craftsmen:  
the "Winter copies"

Minature sideboard - toy furniture piece; restored and  
painted dark brown, presently in a traveling  
exhibition\*~



Newfoundland Museum Collection; Statement of  
Acquisition June 28, 1991 from Livyer's Antiques

Winter copy sofa; restored with orange ochre finish,  
presently in a traveling exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection

Cat.no. 991.20

Winter copy washstand; original imitation grain finish,  
presently in a traveling exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection

Cat.no. 986.397 A-C

Winter copy washstand, made by John "Happy Jack"  
Mugford of Port de Grave; restored to original  
finish\*+~

Walter Peddle, Spaniard's Bay, C. B.

Winter copy sideboard; restored with additional  
imitation grain finish, presently in a traveling  
exhibition\*+~

Newfoundland Museum Collection

Cat.no. 986.498 A-B

## Appendix D

List of the "Chair on the roof" Narratives from Archival sources

Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language  
Archive Subject Motif Index (compiled by Michael Taft, 1980,  
with additions\* by Cynthia Boyd)

Questionnaires

Q68-101-0

Q68-102-3

Q68-146/4, 5

Q68-198/1, 2

Q68-217/3, 5

Q68-424

Q68-466

Manuscripts (Ms.)

Ms. acc. no. 68-21/281-88

Ms. acc. no. 73-31

Ms. acc. no. 88-154\*

Folklore Survey Cards (FSC)

FSC 75-13/057\*

