

1979?

NOTES regarding ANTIQUE FURNITURE

in possession of

Charlotte C. Donnell. Sheepscott, Maine

All information in this statement is from verbal communications with members of my family with whom I lived for many years, and others with whom I had frequent association. The continuity of its possession within the family I can attest to from personal observation, beginning about 1900.

My great-grandfather, Jotham Donnell, married my great-grandmother Jane Woodbridge, daughter of Benjamin Woodbridge Jr., of the town of Newcastle, Maine, on November 12, 1812, and established a home in the town of Alna about one mile north of Sheepscott. The desk, or "secretary" and the tall clock noted below were a part of the marriage dower from the Woodbridge family.

Secretary - Constructed principally of brown mahogany, with panels of bird-eye maple on each of three drawers and on the leaf which lifts to form the writing space. Behind and above this space are three compartments each with its own door, and drawer and pigeon holes inside. This top is 18 inches high. Over-all dimensions are 40.5 inches long by 51.5 inches high by 20 inches deep. There is some nicely wrought inlaid beading of light and dark wood around the top and the corner posts. I have seen three pieces identical with this in proportion and size, but more elaborately decorated, in large museums. Each was officially dated as from "first decade, 19th century." This desk stayed in the Donnell home until 1917. Except for the first three years thereafter it has travelled with me wherever I lived. I brought it back to Sheepscott in December, 1958. It has recently been carefully repaired and refinished. Brass pulls are modern reproductions.

Tall-case Clock. - The clock's history is the same as for the desk and was removed from the family home in 1917. Both were removed to the home of my father's sister at Newcastle. The clock had been given to my brother, Philip S. Donnell, as the desk was to me, by general family agreement. The clock stayed in her home until her death, but plainly marked as belonging to my brother. It was shipped to him in Oklahoma and later to Texas, returning to Sheepscott in December 1958. It was brought to my house following the death of his widow in 1965. I have a lifetime title only, to the clock, but I am advised that suitable adjustments regarding the title can probably be made if this seems desirable when final decisions are made.

The clock is apparently of mahogany veneer. It has no brass trimming except the key-hole facings, but the two doors, the base panel, etc., have a delicate inlaid heading of light and dark wood. It shows the changing phases of the moon. The only part not original is one of the weights which was rebuilt as an exact replica of the other one. The top is decorated with three wooden finials and an open-work grilling which ~~appears~~ have once been larger than now. Over-all measurements are 7'5" by 19' by 9". The clock has recently been carefully refinished.

The two ~~teams~~ items noted below are American Empire style, and I know less of their origin in the family. Sometime prior to 1898 they had been bot as cherished pieces of family furniture from the home of Alna by my aunt and taken to her home in Bangor. It was there that I first saw it. It was later moved to Newcastle when the family moved and, when my aunt died, to Vassar College where her daughter, Florence Donnell White, was a member of the French Department faculty. It remained there until her estate was settled in 1951. All items in her possession known to be Donnell family pieces were willed to her "six cousines" and at our request were shipped to Sheepscott where we had a group summer home. The sofa and chairs came to me by agreement when this plan was broken up. They were moved to this house soon after I returned to Sheepscott in 1958.

The family, including the aust who was born in 1850, have always considered it as "Great-Grandmother's sofa", but there is nothing other than the general dating of the style of furniture, to determine its previous history, or that of the chairs.

Sofa. - The facing of the framework is brown mahogany veneer, including the top facing of the scroll-like arms. Otherwise arms, back and seata are upholstered. During the time that the sofa was in my cousin's possession the seat of the sofa was widened, and the arms correspondingly lengthened. The alteration is hardly detedtable, except that sofas of that period were notoriously uncomfortable, which this one is not. This means that the piece has been altered and is not now quite "in the period." Outside measurements are :- Length 6'3" depth 30", height, 35½"

Pair of Parlor Chairs. - Constructed of mahogany, partly veneer, in a comparatively simple American Empire style. The seats are detachable for upholstering, and are now covered with modern hand-done needlepoint. The history of these chairs is not as clear as the sofa, except that my cousin bequeathed them to us a family pieces, and they were associated with the sofa in the White home in Newcastle. Prior to that my memory is too vague to be of value.

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Charlotte C. Donnell