

Furniture in Colonial Jamaica 1700-1830

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Abstract

Jamaica was the richest British colony in the eighteenth century, and yet there has been little scholarly research in to how consumers chose to live, or how the island was serviced in terms of manufactured goods. The focus of this work is to understand the essence of Jamaican furniture, what makes it identifiable as a separate style and how can this be achieved by bringing documentary material and objects together. This will be the first such study on the Jamaican eighteenth century decorative arts.

While issues such as the transference of design, the importation of furniture, as well as political and cultural influences are examined, the thesis ultimately lays down the foundations for further study and challenges the perception that colonial decorative arts are dictated by the mother country. While it is certain there was a need for British imports it was also the case that furniture was customised for local use and needs. The research will hopefully lead transatlantic furniture historians, curators and collectors to re-evaluate their collections and look upon other objects, not thought to be in their remit, with renewed interest.

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Introduction

The broad issues relating to Britain's colonial past have received much research and scholarship over the past few decades, and more recently that attention has focussed on how the British influenced the countries they occupied in terms of domesticity and the arts.¹ However, Jamaica has not received any such consideration and is absent from this genre of research, the reasoning for this could be two-fold. American scholars generally neglect to include the British Caribbean in studies on Colonial America, forgetting they were once part of the same Trans-Atlantic Empire. Secondly, Jamaica's aboriginal population is extinct and therefore Jamaican culture is perceived in terms of the transference of the African and British cultures to Jamaica during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Perhaps scholars have concentrated too much on the individual characteristics of each of these two cultures and neglected the confluence of the two. In addition to the lack of research, numerous pieces of furniture, labelled Jamaican, have been appearing on the London antique market in more recent years.² It is clear from the captions in auction catalogues, and the two articles published to date on Jamaican furniture, that knowledge of the objects and subject area is extremely limited.³ Until now, the furniture trade in Jamaica has not been studied by furniture historians, and few have ever included the island in any context other than that of sugar and slaves. It is the appearance of fine furniture with labels indicating that they were made in Jamaica that have highlighted the existence of the trade (See Appendix 11).

¹ Jaffer, Amin, '*India and the Domestic Interior*', 1998, PhD Thesis; Jones, Robin, '*Sri Lanka Furniture Industry*' 1999, PhD Thesis.

² Labelled pieces by Ralph Turnbull, William Pitkin and John Mitchell have appeared on the London antique market in the last five years. Commonly, antique dealers now attribute any objects that look remotely like Turnbull's work as by him, the other two are unknown, yet quality and design are so much removed from those labelled pieces as to make a clear attribution remote.

³ Carson, Peter, '*Early Cabinet Making in Jamaica*', The Jamaican, December 1994, p. 19; '*Jamaican Regency Furniture*', The Jamaican, December 1999, pp. 74-75

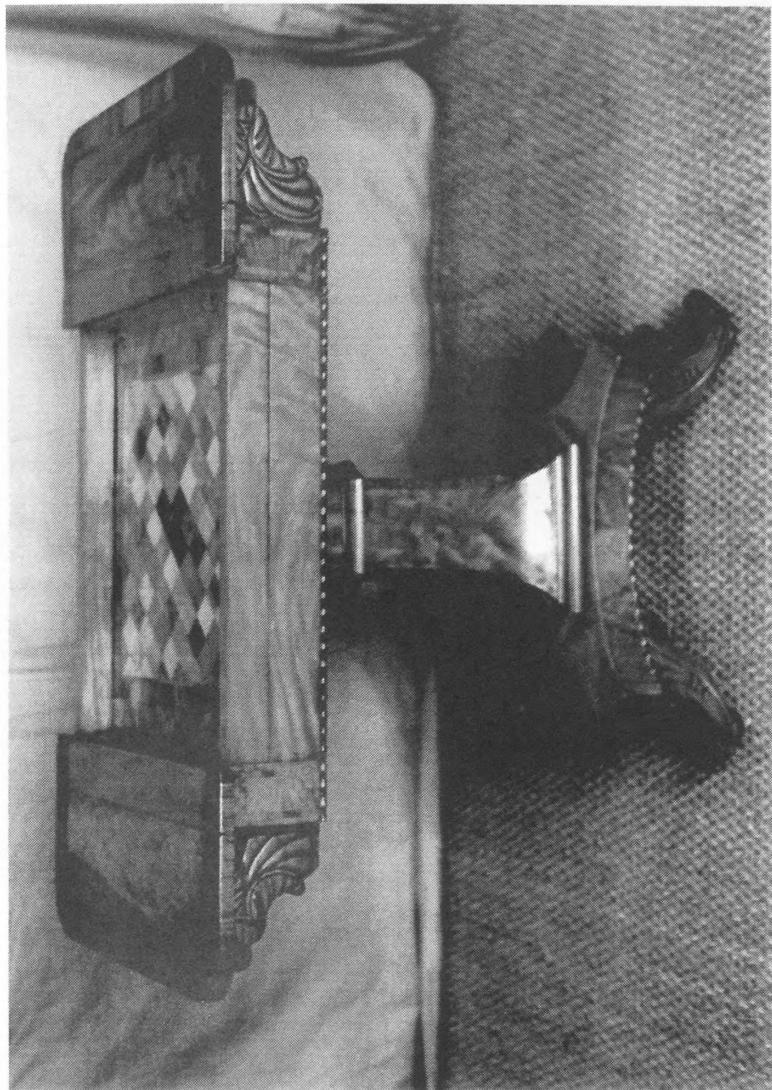


Illustration 1

Table made by Ralph Turnbull, circa, 1830, with its specimen table top and label on the underside.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

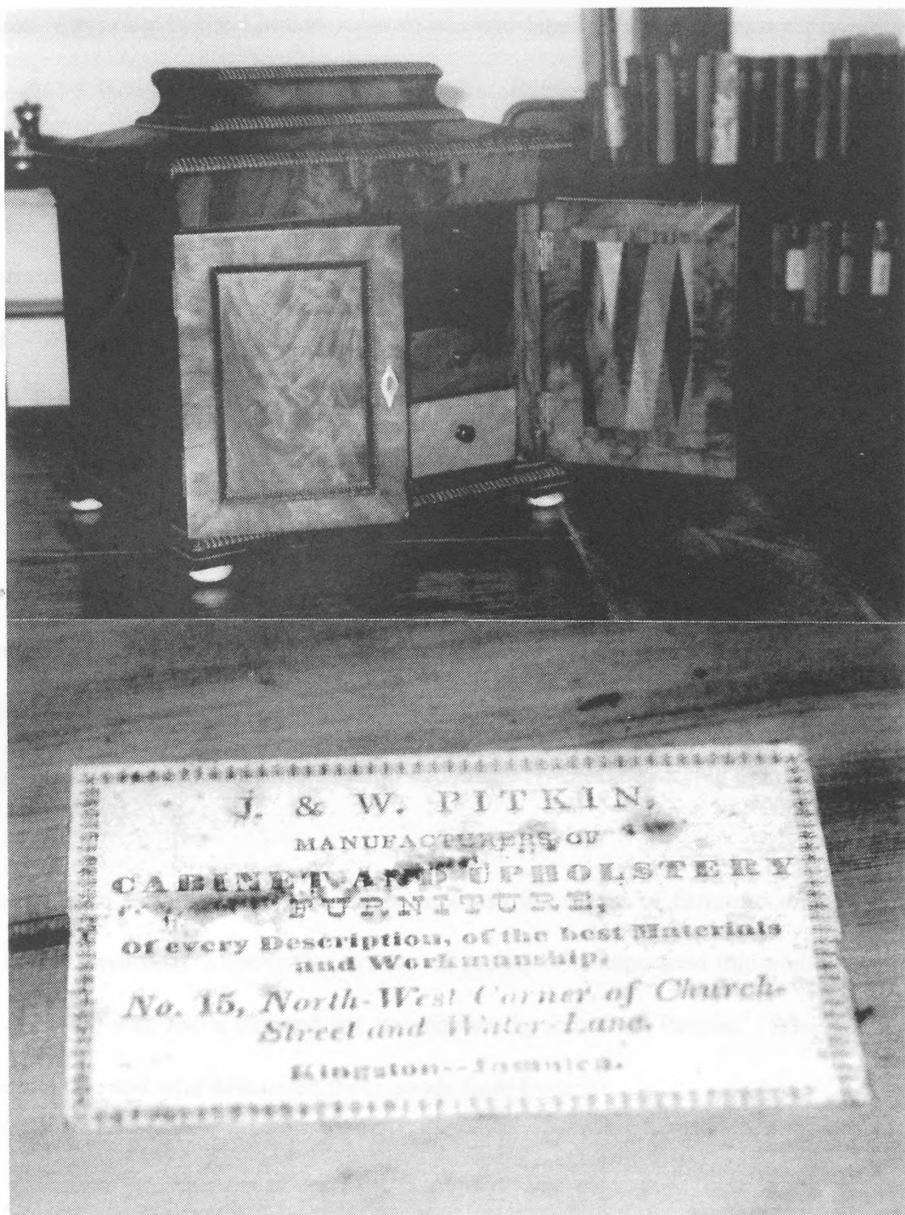


Illustration 2

Writing box made by William Pitkin, circa 1820, with its label on the inside lid.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

These objects appearing in the London sales rooms and labelled with the maker's name and country of origin raise many questions (See Illustration 1 & 2). Ralph Turnbull and William Pitkin were clearly accomplished craftsmen, but did they work alone or were they part of a larger manufacturing centre?

Other questions regarding the nature of this trade immediately come to mind: how long had such a trade existed, who was the furniture made for and how was it sold, who made the objects and what did the objects look like? Who were Ralph Turnbull and William Pitkin, were they black or white, where were they from, where did they learn their trade, how did they organise their workshops and what influenced their furniture making?

If the pieces identified as being Jamaican are representative of only a handful of craftsmen then where did the inhabitants of colonial Jamaica buy their furniture? What was their standard of living and expectations, did the colonials simulate British style, fashion and habits or were they trying a quite different lifestyle?

This thesis explores these issues and seeks to establish the extent of furniture making in Jamaica. The research also endeavours to identify the stratum of society who supported this trade. Even if there was a local industry there was also a demand for manufactured goods from Britain.⁴ Who satisfied this demand and to what degree, and who demanded these goods from Europe?

Over the past 60 years much has been written on furniture and those early authors sought to lay down foundation stones by establishing a variety of styles and types of furniture that reflected the major changes and centres of production.⁵ It was not until the late 1960s and early 70s that serious attention was given to how this material had been gathered, what assumptions had been made, and how to further our understanding of the trade beyond style and form.⁶ Clearly, luxury objects made for rich patrons and that

⁴ Ingram, Kenneth, 'Furniture and the Plantation: Further Light on the West Indian Trade of an English Furniture firm in the Eighteenth Century,' Furniture History Society Journal, 1992, pp. 42-78.

⁵ Macquoid, Percy & Edwards, Ralph, The Dictionary of English Furniture, 1954; Cescinsky, Herbert, English and American Furniture, 1928, Garden City Pub, New York; Downes, Joseph, American Furniture, 1952, Macmillan New York.

⁶ The setting up of the Furniture History Society in 1966, and through the work of Edward Joy, Peter Thornton and others.

have been valued and documented over the centuries require a different research *modus operandi* than objects intended for rural or West Indian daily use.

In recent years several articles and books have been written about the furniture and style of the West Indies, which are worthy of study.⁷ A book by Michael Connor on West Indian furniture is also due for publication in the next few years, which will further satisfy the demand for information on the decorative arts of this region. The few books and articles published to date have gone a long way to expound the fact that there exists a separate and unique Caribbean style, a style that is not European and not American but quite distinct. In Caribbean Style⁸ the interpretation of a particular way of living and an aesthetic appropriate to a modern America has probably brought about the interest in the subject with the subsequent articles on decorative schemes from the region. In the last few years several such articles have appeared in the magazine Antiques, one on Danish Caribbean furniture⁹ and another in the same periodical by the same author on St. Croix and the Virgin Islands.¹⁰ More extensive work has been published on the furniture of Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire and Martinique.¹¹ The furniture from the Dutch West Indies is given a cursory airing in Georgette E. Nije-Statius Van Eps' book, which is largely a catalogue of old objects and a discussion of twentieth century furniture makers. Although an inadequate publication for many reasons it again reinforces the image of the colonial islands gradually developing a trade that satisfied local demand suitable to local conditions. Similarly Francoise Darmezin de Garande and Joseph Poupon's short book on L'Art Mobilier de la Martinique illustrates the existence of a style that is local and though influenced by the mother country, appears to have gained a separate and distinct appearance.¹² Put succinctly different cultures develop different influences and consequently evolve into separate styles.

Articles relating to Jamaican decorative arts are more numerous largely as a result of the work of the Jamaican Historical Society and the Friends of the Georgian Society of Jamaica. The Historical Society,

⁷ Reider, William, 'West Indian Furniture,' Architectural Digest, 1991, pp. 161-165.

⁸ Slesin, Susan & Cliff Stratford, Caribbean Style, 1994, Clarkson Potter, New York.

⁹ Connor, Michael, 'Rising Cane,' Art & Antiques, September 1998, pp. 114-116, 120-121; Danish West Indian Furniture, Antiques, September 1999, pp. 338-347.

¹⁰ Connor, Michael, 'Saint Croix, Virgin Island,' Antiques, March 2000, pp. 457- 463.

¹¹ Nije-Statius Van Eps, Georgette, Furniture from Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire, 1995, Walburg Press.

¹² Darmezin de Garande, Francoise & Poupon, Joseph, L'Art Mobilier de la Martinique, 1995, Departement de la Martinique

founded in 1951, still publishes an annual journal which records different aspects of Jamaican life as well as some of its material culture. However, these societies have been exclusively involved in trying to preserve the more visual facets of colonial life such as town centres and architecture, from development as well as recording empirical information on such diverse subjects as the creolisation of the language and Moravian culture in Westmoreland. Such fervent activity has meant that other important facets of Jamaican life have been neglected. Peter Carson, a Professor of Law at the University of the West Indies, has recognised this deficiency in the research on historic Jamaica; his two short articles, both of which appear in The Jamaican,¹³ are the only articles dedicated to Jamaican furniture. These two articles try to demonstrate the richness of the objects that were being produced and the skills of the craftsmen who created them. However, none of these publications on West Indian furniture answer any of the questions related to design origins, production methods, labour, how objects were bought and sold, or how to determine what makes an object Jamaican or West Indian. Suffice to say no methodology emerges from this material that can be adopted in this work. Even looking beyond specifically Jamaican centred research it is difficult to find a model or approach that can be transferred to this study.

Studies of other types of colonial furniture for example, Bryan Hyde's Bermuda Furniture and Kornelia Vidler and Graeme Dodd's catalogue of Australian Furniture are good pictorial references, but lack scholarly research that put the objects into any social or domestic context.¹⁴ Furniture from Colonial India has received greater attention than its Caribbean counterpart, and although much scholarly research has taken place, identification of the objects and massive differences in land mass, established indigenous cultures and distinct centres of manufacture have made a comparison and model difficult to adopt.

The dispersal of Jamaican furniture has meant that the type of field research required for studies such as Bernard Cotton's English Regional Chairs and John Bivin's Wilmington Furniture 1720-1860 is impossible.¹⁵ Both are very narrowly defined and are based upon definitive regional pictorial and object research via the systematic recording of the objects, by genre, within a given area. The research is

¹³ Carson, Peter, December 1994, p. 19; December 1999, pp. 74-75.

¹⁴ Hyde, Bryan, Bermuda Furniture, 1976; Swan, Amanda, 'Context and Influence of Bermuda Furniture,' 1997, MA Thesis; Dodd, Graeme & Vidler, Kornelia, Australian Furniture, 1976.

conclusive and based on large numbers of the same types of objects appearing in one region, and by virtue of this, they have been attributed to a particular county, district or state.

Other notable regional studies, particularly from America have begun by placing the research within a geographical and historical context. Brock Jobe's Portsmouth Furniture, John Bivin's North East Carolina Furniture and Hurst and Prown's Southern Furniture are all examples of this approach adopted in the late 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶ Yet even these recent exhibition catalogues and regional studies do not place the objects in any social or domestic context and the aspirations and demands of the consumer are never examined. However, there are some studies, such as Claudia Kinmonth's Irish Country Furniture and the E. Milby Burton's Charleston Furniture,¹⁷ that place the objects in a social and domestic framework before analysing the objects.

Colonial Williamsburg, The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts and the Charleston Society have taken nearly 40 years to dismiss the perception that the 'South' has always been the poor relation in creating, manufacturing and designing the decorative arts of America. It will still be many years before the work of the Southern craftsmen are put on a similar footing to their New England contemporaries. The recent exhibition entitled 'Southern Furniture' at Colonial Williamsburg and the accompanying extensive catalogue,¹⁸ and the complimentary edition of American Furniture have challenged the divide between the North and South in America.¹⁹ Yet despite this milestone exhibition neither make any mention of the venture cargoes from the north of America. Nor does the exhibition attempt to place the objects in terms of their obvious European evolution, with the exception of Betsey Fleming's article which does look at levels of consumption of British manufactured goods imported into Charleston.²⁰ The exhibition was designed to break old myths about the '*old south*' yet as we see one myth disappearing another has been

¹⁵ Cotton, Bernard, English Regional Chair, 1990; Bivins, John, Wilmington Furniture 1720-1860, 1989.

¹⁶ Jobe, Brock, Portsmouth Furniture, 1993; Bivins, John, North East Carolina Furniture, 1988; Hurst, Ronald & Prown, Jonathan, Southern Furniture, 1997.

¹⁷ Kinmonth, Claudia, Irish Country Furniture, 1993; E. Milby, Burton, Charleston Furniture, 1955. This combination has proved successful particularly as Burton's book, first published over 50 years ago, although dated, has been republished recently.

¹⁸ Hurst, Ronald & Prown, Jonathan, 1997. Unfortunately, Burton's example was not expanded upon when the huge exhibition catalogue for the Southern Furniture Exhibition held at Colonial Williamsburg was written.

¹⁹ Beckerdite, Luke, American Furniture, 1997.

constructed as in Brock Jobe's New England Furniture in the Colonial era.²¹ The influence of London is glaringly absent in this work, along with the impact of American urban centres further down the east coast.

While some historians have failed to acknowledge this devolving of style from urban to rural context in their studies, others have omitted the relevant issues regarding trade, or have made comparisons with other regions of equal colonial status. Whilst scholars in England are just as guilty on this count, American studies typically neglect to incorporate Jamaica in their research. A case in point is the large volume on Windsor chairs by Nancy Goyne Evans.²² This comprehensive study of the Windsor chair, whilst an admirable and definitive book, makes no mention of the considerable number of Windsor chairs in Jamaica, both imported from America and Britain and those made on the island. The stylistic appearance of these chairs in Jamaica link up with others in the American plantations, but no comparisons are evident in the book. Other authors such as those already mentioned all seem to ignore the fact that trade with Jamaica in the first 70 years of the eighteenth century was considerable. The dissemination of style, taste and objects between the colonies of the Eastern Sea Board and Jamaica appear obvious when researching the decorative arts of Jamaica. Kathleen Matilda Catalano's master's thesis on 'Cabinet making in Philadelphia 1820-1840' illustrates this point lucidly as does Katherine Wood Gross's master's on the Savannah furniture trade.²³ In both of these works trade is viewed in relation to New England and the cabinet makers who exported south. The venture cargo cabinet makers have been researched in detail and the Salem cabinet makers and the Rhode Island trade is dealt with at length. These two dissertations attempt to determine the amount of trade, and acknowledge its importance. However, despite the research indicating that a majority of these venture cargoes went beyond the shores of America, the charting of the statistics is centred only on American States. In Catalano's thesis she even mentions that a significant part of the trade was bound for the West Indies, yet she still only categorises all Caribbean cargoes under West Indies, while lesser outposts in South America and up the east coast of America are analysed separately.

²⁰ Fleming, Elizabeth A., 'Staples for Gentell Living: The importation of London household furnishings in Charleston during the 1780s,' American Furniture, 1997, pp. 335-358.

²¹ Jobe, Brock & Kaye, Myrna, 1984.

²² Goyne Evans, Nancy, American Windsor Chairs, 1996, Winterthur.

²³ Catalano, Kathleen Matilda, 'Cabinet Making in Philadelphia 1820-1840,' 1972, Master Thesis, Wood Gross, Katherine, 'The Source of Furniture Sold in Savannah 1789-1815,' 1981, Master Thesis.

This data categorisation simply ignores the fact of a colonial past, when Jamaica and America were both governed by Britain.

Having examined a large number of studies on regional and colonial furniture, we find none that could be used readily as a method of approach for this research. However, in Philip Zimmerman's article on '*Regionalism in American Furniture*' he describes a three-way approach to the study of furniture from a colony, county or regional environment that could be adapted.²⁴ He first prescribes an intensive reading of the objects, requiring a reconstruction of written material and a profile of local crafts, practices and patterns of taste. This first phase of a regional study is often the initial recognition of a subject area, often where little has been published, or what has been chronologically organised in terms of date and style. Typically it is the identification of a number of objects that do not fall within these categories, and that also display specific material, technique, or design characteristics that bring about the need for a fresh and intensive reading of these objects.²⁵ The second element to Zimmerman's model focuses in on the tight subject area under examination, comparisons may be made with other regions, which illuminate the differences more graphically and therefore highlight characteristics that would otherwise be missed by a narrow or parochial study.

The third part of Zimmerman's approach tends to come into action after the seminal work on the subject has been produced. Broader regional traits are investigated such as topography, procurement patterns, the migration of craftsmen and the establishment and organisation of the crafts, however it is this facet of Zimmerman's model that is so often absent in the study of furniture types specific to a region or town.²⁶ Ivor Noel Hume, although an archaeologist by profession clearly saw the limits of his discipline as he explained in Artifacts of Colonial America. He was passionate about the role archaeology should have in helping put the object into perspective.²⁷ Hume states that archaeological finds are only important when

²⁴ Zimmerman, Philip, '*Regionalism in American Furniture*', Perspective on American Furniture, 1988, Norton, pp. 11-38.

²⁵ Gilbert, Christopher & Murdoch, Tessa, John Channon and his Contemporaries, 1994, V&A. This is a good example, the identification of a genre of furniture that were all decorated with brass inlay led to the exhibition at the V&A and the accompanying publishing of the catalogue.

²⁶ Jobe, Brock & Kaye, Myrna, 1984; Cotton, Bernard, 1990.

²⁷ Hume, Ivor Noel, Artifacts of Colonial America, 1982, Knopf, New York.

found in their original context.²⁸ Generally, the archaeologist deals with inorganic material and may find it located where it was discarded many generations ago. Unfortunately, the furniture historian rarely has the privilege of finding an object in place unless it is fixed to the fabric of a building.²⁹ Hume's work and Benno Foreman's catalogue of American Seating Furniture make identical points but from different disciplines.³⁰ Furniture that has survived, for whatever reason, is a physical manifestation of life that is difficult to find in written records. These objects are not self-expressive but need deciphering.

What can the physical object tell us about the material from which it is constructed, the workmanship required in its construction, and the design that is encapsulated within its form? The object if we are fortunate may illustrate the skill of the craftsman and the pride in his trade through the methodical approach in marking out joints, the correctness of his proportions and with some forms of decoration his nature as a person. These can only be gleaned from an object by someone who is able to see and decode what are otherwise insignificant marks, scratches and carvings. The object contains within its structure information that can be as illuminating as any found in documents or within pictures. Such analysis demands close proximity to the object and the advantage of having collections of objects to work on is evident. Although it is not the intention of this research to make a comprehensive catalogue of Jamaican objects, they were sought as a means of understanding the trade and therefore are integral to the research.

The first real problem for the project is that the amount of eighteenth century furniture in Jamaica is minimal. This scarcity of objects can be attributed to three major factors: the fact that white owners returned home either during colonial times or after Independence; the influence of Americans collecting after the American centenary and the destructive environmental conditions in Jamaica. During the eighteenth century furniture made in Jamaica or even brought from England was not so valued as to be worth taking back.³¹ However, it was deemed valuable enough to sell in the colony and therefore it is not until the nineteenth century that we see eighteenth century objects leaving the country in large numbers.

²⁸ Hume, Ivor Noel, 1982, p. 26.

²⁹ Kinmonth, Claudia, 1993. This book is an example of a study of objects that are found in situ and in which the social context is fully realised.

³⁰ Foreman, Benno, American Seating Furniture 1630-1730, 1988, Winterthur.

Evidence does exist to prove that American tourists did travel down to Jamaica in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to buy mahogany furniture. In the journal of B. Pullen Berry he describes a conversation, held in 1903, with an American lady, “*She was searching for curious old mahogany furniture, especially old cabinets and cupboards of native work, for mahogany, in the days of Jamaican prosperity, was like gold in the reign of Solomon.*”³²

The exodus of furniture from Jamaica continued in the 1910s when large numbers of white colonials returned to England after the collapse in sugar prices and the inevitable bankruptcy of many planters. A period of boom during the 1920s only delayed the repatriation of whites. The final nail in the coffin was during and after Independence, when under Norman Manley’s premiership only limited funds could be taken out of the country. As a consequence white colonials could not repatriate without losing everything, so many in desperation abandoned their property and took any goods or chattels with them that could raise cash once they had arrived at a new home.

These political events and the consuming passions of American collectors are largely responsible for the lack of eighteenth century objects in Jamaica, but the forces of nature should not be underestimated. The number of objects lost to termite, hurricane or humidity is incalculable. Yet while eighteenth century objects are few, for the reasons outlined, furniture from the nineteenth century can be found in Jamaica in reasonable quantities. This is mainly due to it not being valued by America collectors and whites when departing regarding this furniture as worthless.

Identifying the pieces of furniture that were shipped to America is now difficult as they can so easily be confused with American colonial furniture.³³ This raises another issue, if these objects were difficult to identify when they were purchased by tourists in the late nineteenth century then those same objects would

³¹ Much furniture is advertised in the local newspaper in the eighteenth century stating that the owners ‘*were soon to leave the island*’ and that these goods and chattels were to be auctioned.

³² Berry, B. Pullen, 1903, pp. 171-172.

³³ What was thought to be a colonial American bureau on closer examination was dismissed as American or British and subsequently believed to be Caribbean. I wish to thank Sumpter Priddy III for his time and input in the discussion relating to this object. The object can be seen in Illustration 58.

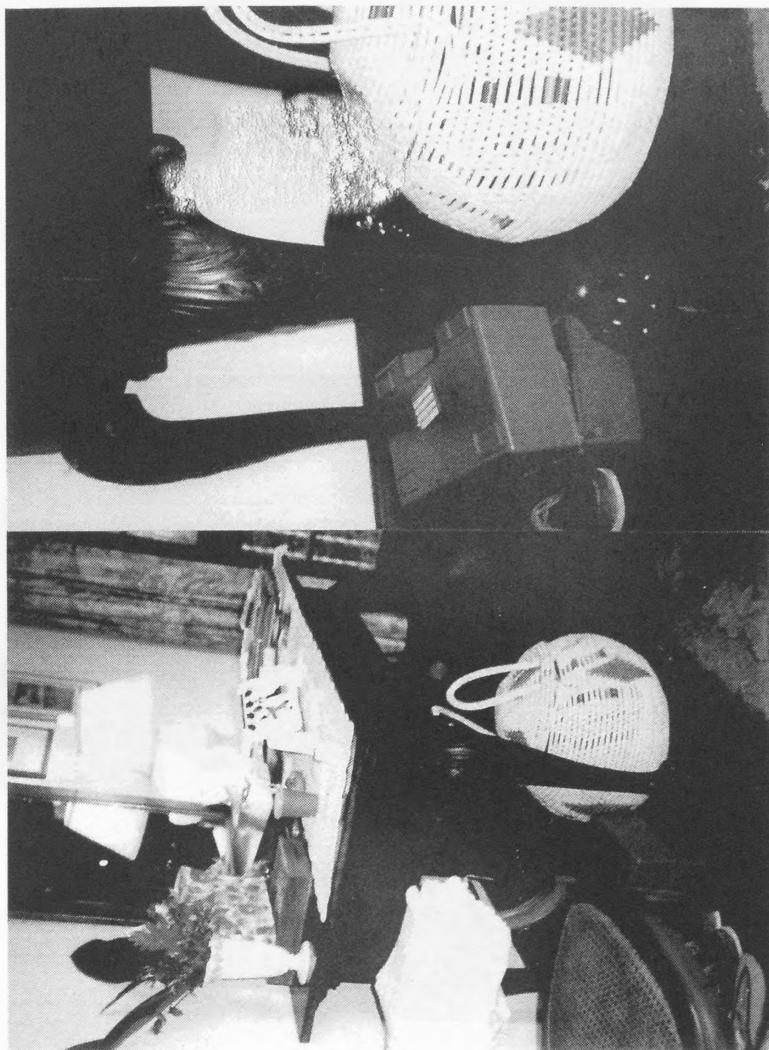


Illustration 3

Goss side table, maker unknown, circa 1770, this table belonged to the Botanist

Goss.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 4

Cellaret, circa 1800, maker unknown.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

be difficult to identify in Jamaica if they were originally American and sold there when new. Similarly how do we separate imported British furniture from locally produced goods?

Only a handful of pieces of furniture were found to have clear and indisputable provenances, while many others are said to have been in families for generations.³⁴ These objects were recorded and particular care was taken to record form, decoration and construction. Once a provenanced object has been established the process of authenticating other identical pieces of furniture becomes simpler. An example of this is a particular type of cellaret found in Jamaica, which has not been illustrated in any British or American regional studies and has been assumed to be indigenous to Jamaica (See Illustration 4).

In a research trip to Jamaica, 15 plantation houses were visited, as well as public buildings and antiques dealers and from the pool of objects thus discovered several hundred were photographed. While only 20% of these pieces were eighteenth century, they were important in supporting the documentary evidence. When viewing this furniture basic timber analysis and dimensions were taken.³⁵ Timber analysis is a useful method of identifying furniture with secondary timber, and therefore tends to only be useful when examining carcass furniture. The timbers were identified by eye. Only the broad family species, such as *Mahogani Swentenia*, could be identified using this method but this was often all that was required. An example of the successful use of this approach is on the furniture of John Shaw of Annapolis. John Shaw being originally from Glasgow used traditional construction techniques from the region of his birth, but used timber from Maryland in the making of his furniture. It was only when close and detailed examination of primary and secondary timbers was performed that pieces thought to be British were identified as not only being American, but by Shaw himself.³⁶

Small thumbnail sketches and photographs were taken of every object located. Some pieces were thought to be English, others American, and many assumed to be Jamaican. During this visual investigation it

³⁴ Those pieces with indisputable provenances include the 'Goss' sidetable (See Illustration 3), and the altar table in St. Peters's Church, Port Royal. Some 30 objects were believed to be from the eighteenth century and are said, by their owners, to have belonged to their family for generations.

³⁵ On a tour of the island some 15 plantation houses were visited, some that were still used as the planters homes, others being a shadow of their former glory.

³⁶ Voss, William, John Shaw Cabinet Maker of Annapolis, 1983, p. 39.

became clear that there was the possibility of British and American craftsmen making furniture in Jamaica, and this point is investigated further in this study along with the other potential influences from other West Indian islands.

Like the work of the early authors of furniture history, this thesis is concerned with establishing a palette of form and decoration, which was utilised in the Jamaican furniture trade during the eighteenth century. However, this facet of the work was not undertaken with the intention of producing a comprehensive study of decoration apparent on Jamaican furniture. It is also not the aim of this work to be a catalogue of furniture made in Jamaica nor is this thesis an adjunct to the study of the British furniture industry, although the trade between Britain and Jamaica was important. It is the intention to use the furniture as visual evidence to support various archival and secondary material in order to create an accurate impression of the Jamaican furniture trade. Therefore, no attempt has been made to record a chronology of form, decoration or design.³⁷ In this work it is the intention to approach the objects from the perspective of the craftsman who made the furniture, and to establish how furniture was sold and who were the consumers who purchased their wares.³⁸

In regional furniture histories the assumption is always made that the regional and vernacular is a later dilution of the urban and metropolitan.³⁹ This investigation reveals the contrary: that the citizens of Kingston were not only in close contact with London and its outports, but with American manufacturing cities as well as being geographically close to the French Caribbean. Although Jamaica is regional in the sense of not being perceived as a manufacturing centre, Kingston was not regional in the sophistication of the objects possessed, and the lifestyle of some of its inhabitants.⁴⁰ This work hopes to demonstrate that although geographically remote from style centres, Jamaicans were very fashion conscious.

³⁷ Gilbert, Christopher, Furniture at Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall, Leeds Art Collection Fund, 1978; Brown, Peter, The Noel Terry Collection of Furniture and Clocks, York Civic Trust, 1987. Generally catalogues of furniture attempt to follow an aesthetic approach by the study of, and concentration on, attribution related to date and design.

³⁸ Foreman, Benno, 1988, pp. XXII-XXIV.

³⁹ Young, Namuni Hale, Art & Furniture of East Tennessee, 1997, Knoxville Tennessee; Bivins, John, 1988; Hurst, Ronald & Prown, Jonathan, 1997.

⁴⁰ McCusker, John & Menard, Russell, 1986, p. 167, states that per capita white Jamaicans are the richest of all the British American plantations owners.

An object based approach that embraces style and form can determine an object's origin, but relies on comparisons with pieces of a known origin. In this study there are not enough of these known pieces to be able to do that effectively. Earlier in this Introduction reference was made to the work of Foreman, Zimmerman, and Hume. These three authors generally support a not dissimilar approach to the study of objects. They point out that the object has to be seen in many ways. It gives us visual evidence of the maker's ability, the material he used, the construction he employed and the dictionary of design he held in his head or hands. Yet even with all this information it cannot alone explain how the craftsman worked, why, where and how he continued in trade. Foreman, Zimmerman and Hume all agree that no study could hope to throw light on the maker by viewing the object in isolation. Hume unsurprisingly talks about the importance of an archeological approach and Zimmerman explains '*Knowing the geographical origin of an object becomes a critical step in its study and aesthetic appreciation.*'⁴¹ If this is not the case then how does this methodology stand? When researching into a group of county or city objects the approach of Zimmerman should be embraced, however, the model breaks down when there are limited numbers of objects, as the rigorous comparison he advocates is not possible. In this work Zimmerman's model is to be tipped on its head and worked in reverse, that is it starts with a context and then moves onto the object.

Whilst it could be construed that the lack of objects is a problem when studying Jamaican furniture, for the purposes of this research the small numbers that are provenanced are seen as liberating departure from conventional methodology. When we are studying the context of the Jamaican furniture trade, we are in effect examining material and issues that may have had a direct influence on the design and form of the object. Issues such as migration, population size and imports would all have had a direct impact on the furniture trade, and therefore these require research and their influence evaluated. Fortunately, it is this area of Jamaican studies that has received considerable attention, being related to the sugar and slave economy. Much research has been undertaken to establish the number of white and black people living in Jamaica and how these numbers increased. McCusker and Russell's book on the Economy in British North America, is a significant publication relating to this issue.⁴² Other articles have been written concentrating on the demographics of the island and comparing them to those of other slave cultures. For the purpose of

⁴¹ Zimmerman, Philip, 'Regionalism in American Furniture,' Perspective on American Furniture, 1988, p. 17.

this work this same material is helpful in determining the cultural integration and its influence on the furniture trade. With the addition of visual evidence we can begin to see this diverse cultural influx percolating its way into the culture of the colony.

Having established the broad context, as the reversed Zimmerman model dictates, then we should next consider placing the object in the environment in which it was seen. The colonial residence is clearly where the object was destined, and therefore by looking at the architecture both exterior and interior we can begin to gain a sense of the setting of the furniture. While we are concerned about establishing the nature of Jamaican furniture by viewing the domestic interior we can also make comparisons with architectural developments. We can look at architectural evolution to see if a similar pattern emerges in the furniture. From a survey of the buildings of Jamaica we may begin to understand the development of style and taste in Jamaica. Other documentary evidence such as diaries, advertisements and probates will all be particularly useful in giving us an insight into the colonial residence and its appearance.

The largest single source of documentary material are the probates held at the National Archive, which date from the 1670s up to the 1880s.⁴³ There are approximately 125 to 150 probates to a volume and sometimes there are two volumes a year. These are therefore an amazing source. If we conservatively average the number of probates per year to 150 then some 15,000 inventories exist, representing an estimated 25% of all white inhabitants for the eighteenth century. It is important to note that there are very few mulattos listed and only a handful of free black slaves.⁴⁴

Due to the lack of knowledge of the furniture trade in the West Indies it is important to establish some fundamental information which will lay down the foundations for further in depth study. Consequently, the search for probates was predominately focused on those who made objects in the woodwork and related trades, such as carpenters, joiners, cabinet makers, upholsterers, coach makers and sawyers, rather than

⁴² McCusker, John & Menard Russell, 1986.

⁴³ JNA, 1B/11/3 Box or File. Throughout this text if reference is made to probates, it is this source that has been utilised unless otherwise stated. The reference for the probate is therefore the same as above followed by the name, occupation and date.

⁴⁴ In searching for craftsmen during the period specified only five inventories were found belonging to mulatto or black free slaves, these held little in the way of valuable goods.

those who purchased objects. These probates were extracted from the 1680s right through into the 1870s, with the exception of 16 years that were missing or unavailable due to conservation work.

These inventories not only help in establishing biographical details such as wealth, parish of residence, age and ~~date of~~ death, but also in providing a deeper understanding of their working lives. By studying, for example, the stock in trade, tools or benches in a workshop we may be able to understand the sophistication of the maker and of his customers. Other scholars of material culture have used inventories to examine ownership and domestic objects in regions of England by tabulating certain objects⁴⁵ and others by recording the changing language used to describe objects.⁴⁶ Whilst these approaches will be embraced here, rarely has this evidence used in relation to a single trade. The focus generally is more broadly based around economic theory and changing patterns of consumption. In this work the material is used to build up a biographical image of the craftsmen, to give an in depth knowledge of the furniture trade by viewing the craftsmen's stock in trade as well as establishing the type of objects the trade produced. The problems of using probates have been acknowledged for many years, and therefore we do not need to cover this ground again.⁴⁷ There are problems of possible confusion between stock in trade and what is in the home when viewing probate inventories related to the furniture trade. However, the lack of information available on this subject and the desire to bring source material and objects together, in order to create an image of a colonial workshop, outweigh the disadvantages of ignoring this material.

In addition to the probates of craftsmen a selection of other residents' probates were gathered to support the findings in the furniture makers' probates. In using this random collection of some 300 probates we can not only determine what furniture was present in Jamaica, but also, by juxtaposing this information with the furniture makers' probates, calculate what the furniture makers were making. The random collection of probates on their own represents very little, and therefore they are only used in conjunction with other primary material.

⁴⁵ Overton, Mark, 'Probate Inventories and the Reconstruction of Agricultural Landscapes,' Reconstructing Past Landscapes, 1984, Chapter 5. Erickson A. L., 'An Introduction to Probate Accounts,' The Records of a Nation, 1990.

⁴⁶ Weatherill, Lorna, 'The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth and eighteenth century England,' Consumption World of Goods, 1993, pp. 206-227.

Newspapers were a further source of information that were used with the probates to contextualise and support perceptions and ideas. Advertisements provided information concerning methods of purchase, the extent of imports and biographical information on individual makers. To record this information a database was set up which categorised the information according to its type, for example upholstery, timber, maker's advert, private sale, auction etc. In general the newspapers held at Institute of Jamaica (IOJ) were out of the dateline of this thesis and those newspapers which were of use were not on microfilm and not in a fit state to be handled. Therefore, those newspapers viewed were either in the Public Record Office, London (PRO), the British Library Repository at Colindale (BL Colindale), or the small but important collection housed at the Winterthur Museum, Delaware, America (Winterthur). In percentage terms the most important of these is the BL Colindale collection which represents 68% of the database, followed by Winterthur with 29% and finally the PRO holdings with a 6% stake. Jamaican newspapers, like American and British ones were only kept systematically from the late 1770s.⁴⁸ Jamaican newspapers dating before the 1770s are extremely rare and only a handful have been located. Therefore the reliance on other material prior to this date, such as the probates, was necessary.

The language of description that is found in newspapers and probates were important in helping to determine lifestyle and the consumers' perception of fashion. A rapid transference of descriptive language would indicate a prosperous and wealthy island that was fashion conscious, the reverse would give an entirely different image of the consumer and furniture maker. Once we can determine this transference then we are more able to assess the furniture trade.

It is necessary to understand the influence furniture and design sources brought into the country, via imports, must have had on the consumer and trade. In studying external influences we can not only understand the consumer's choice, but follow and appreciate the quality and speed of the dissemination of design from America and Britain to Jamaica. Imports could have a major impact on how local craftsmen worked, in terms of style, volume and value of trade. The newspaper and probates again were useful tools

⁴⁷ Moore, J. P., 'Probates Inventories, problems and perspective,' *Probates Records ad the Local Community*, 1980.

⁴⁸ BL Colindale; newspapers included the Jamaican Journal, Kingston Journal, Daily Advertiser, Jamaica; Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle; IOJ, Kingston Chronicle, Royal Gazette and the Colonial Standard.

in determining the extent of these imports. The probates of furniture makers when viewed by what was absent in them can give us a clue as to what was, and was not, imported. This information when compared to other sources, such as import records could shed light on this issue.

Customs Records were also studied. These are held at the Public Record Office (PRO) and run from 1698 to 1783.⁴⁹ Whilst these import and export records initially record furniture by object type, after the 1750s they no longer list objects by genre and form but by the collective term '*Cabinet Ware*'.⁵⁰ The records also have never taken into account private cargoes, and therefore anything brought into the country by individuals has not been documented. Despite this change in the recording of information these records can give us an indication as to what we can expect to see in Jamaica in terms of the type of object, the volume and when it was possible to purchase or see a certain form in Jamaica. The master's thesis of Edward Joy, which was written in 1966, also contextualises these statistics in comparison to other Caribbean islands and colonies.⁵¹ Joy uses the statistics to calculate the number of any one object leaving Britain to any of several destinations. Joy, does separate out Jamaica, but does not use the values in the import records; this thesis will try to use these figures to gauge the number of objects and their unit value. It is likely that this can only be done with objects that entered into the country in large numbers and are relatively uniform, for example chairs. While the problems of the customs records are well documented,⁵² if we accept these pitfalls, these records supported by other primary material can be a useful resource.

Once we have brought together the broader issues of trade, migration, lifestyle and imports then we are armed with the information to examine the furniture trade itself. The furniture attributable to Jamaica is limited and without supporting primary evidence. How these objects came into being, who made them, where were they made, and how were they made and using what materials are some of the questions that need to be answered when viewing this furniture. An important step in answering these points was the setting up of a database, based around the individual makers. Only once the database had received all the information from probate inventories, newspapers and other sources could any patterns or anomalies be

⁴⁹ PRO, Cust 3.

⁵⁰ This happened in 1754.

⁵¹ Joy, Edward, '*The Furniture Industry in Eighteenth Century London*', 1966, Master Thesis.

⁵² Rogers Haley, Anne, '*An Introductory Review of London Customs Records*', 1996, pp. 1-15.

recognised. While advertisements and probates were entered into this system, the first source material used was the birth, marriage and burial registers. The parish registers were of limited value as they only occasionally list the deceased by trade, or give the occupation of the newly wed groom, or the father's.⁵³ This starting point established the names of roughly 400 woodworkers in Jamaica from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The number of woodworkers appearing in these registers increases dramatically during the mid-nineteenth century, presumably as emancipation allowed for the inclusion of former slaves, which had previously not been the case.

The process of setting up a biographical database of craftsmen was enhanced by the inclusion of Livery company records and apprenticeship listings. These records were important in understanding how educated the Jamaican craftsmen were, and what could be expected from them in terms of output.⁵⁴ A similar study of indentured servants, and craftsmen working in America, was undertaken to determine if craftsmen moved up or down the Eastern Seaboard. This information was gathered from a number of sources, but predominately from Winterthur Museum Library and Archive, and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, North Carolina (MESDA).⁵⁵ This information was rich and did much to substantiate ideas and notions as to the nature of the craftsmen in Jamaica. All those names that were discovered in the parish registers were searched in the apprenticeship records and the American archives visited. Numerous other names were added to the database, many only recording the basic biographical details, resulting in nearly 1,200 files on different craftsmen. The thesis has explored and exploited this material to form an image of colonial craftsmen and the training hierarchy as well as gaining an insight into the geographic movement of these craftsmen over time.

Having gathered all this primary material together an analysis was undertaken to pinpoint periods of activity and change by combining the newspaper database date profile with that of the probates (Appendix 1). The resulting chart illustrates that the 1770s, 80s and '90s were the most varied in terms of

⁵³ Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints (CLDS), have copies of all the parish registers for Jamaica. I wish to thank all the staff at the Church of the Latter Day Saints, South Kensington, London, for their help.

⁵⁴ Inland Revenue 1 (IR1) is held at the PRO, but an index is held at the Guildhall Library, London. Gill, Harold, Apprentices of Virginia 1623-1800, 1989, Utah Ancestry.

documentary material available, while another peak is evident during the 1820s. As the nineteenth century material can not be approached in the same manner as that of the eighteenth century due to factors such as the increase in communications, the emancipation of slaves and the changing economic and trade structure, this project was restricted to the eighteenth century, with an end date of 1810. The inclusion of post 1810 material skewed the statistics by there being a large number of cabinet makers and a lot of names from the birth, marriage and burial registers.⁵⁶ 1700 was determined as the starting date of the project as it marks approximately the commencement of the customs records and an increased number of probates.⁵⁷

Four main subject areas will be examined: trade and migration, colonial lifestyle, sourcing imports, and finally the furniture trade. The structure of this thesis reflects these headings. Therefore Chapter One examines the broad trade and political issues related to Jamaica as well as the growth and ethnic make up of the population. The purpose of this chapter is to determine if political events, population growth and the various nations and creeds coming to Jamaica had any influence on the furniture trade.

The second chapter, which is concerned with life style uses an architectural model to determine if the development of architecture and the interior reflect one another. In this way we can track stylistic development via buildings. By reconstructing an image of the domestic space we can determine what was available to the consumer in Jamaica. It is this chapter that focuses on the issue of transference of style from America or Britain and the possibility that forms were being creolised to accommodate Jamaican conditions. The use of the word 'creolise' in this context and work is used to define a changing culture that brought African and Caucasian habits and values together, which in turn evolved and developed to accommodate a wholly different attitude.

⁵⁵ MESDA, has a research centre, which has proved invaluable in this research. Significantly it also, unusually, has a database of all artisans from the region. The database of Jamaican craftsmen was cross referenced with this database. I wish to thank all the staff MESDA for their help and kindness.

⁵⁶ An example of this is prior to removing the post 1810 files the birth, marriage and burial registers accounted for 60% of the total files on the database, whereas once the post 1810 craftsmen were removed the percentage drops to 41% (Appendix 2).

⁵⁷ Not surprisingly the number of carpenters was by far the largest group making up 75% of the total number of woodworkers found during the period 1700 and 1810 (Appendix 3). The next largest group were the cabinet makers and joiners at 6% each, this group of approximately 65 were a large number of furniture makers compared to New England over a similar period.

Having determined what was in the colonial residence we can then begin to examine which furniture was imported and which was made locally. Chapter Three studies the import trade, who supplied this furniture and how it was sold. The chapter is also concerned with external influences that affected the furniture trade and finding tangible evidence for that influence. Finally Chapters Four and Five are focussed on the Jamaican furniture trade. Chapter Four, is concerned with defining this trade, describing the branches of the business and how the business functioned, while the final chapter attempts to establish the process of making furniture. It is not only concerned with workshop practices, but also the materials and tools used by the makers and how these may give us clues as to the nature of the objects that were made. Once we have examined all these facets, we should have a clear idea of the type of objects that the Jamaican furniture makers were producing, and the type of objects that were being imported.

This dissertation, the first scholarly work on the Jamaican furniture trade, embraces the approach of Zimmerman in his article *Perspective on American Furniture*, but without the extensive object base which can so often be assumed in regional studies of America. Therefore the design of this thesis embraces the principles of the regional study, but accepts that the objects do not need to be central to the research.

Chapter One

The Jamaican Furniture Trade in Context

The design of eighteenth century furniture was subject to two major influences: already existing furniture; and the availability of printed sources in the form of what we can call design books, for example Chippendale's Director. Both help us date pieces, attribute and identify makers, and define a regional style. In the absence of the survival of a large number of either of these, the necessity of finding supporting alternatives and contextual information is paramount. Context is important for two reasons: not only can it place the object, but it also gives us valuable evidence about the craftsmen and the nature of their work. The few objects that do survive tell us not only that the trade flourished, but that it was strongly influenced by the mother country. It is doubtful that this British influence was transmitted just through the examination of design books and imported furniture. It is more plausible that the different peoples migrating were more influential in the dissemination of ideas and style in Jamaica. Given that the indigenous population of the island, the Tiwa, did not survive long into the eighteenth century, we must consider who ventured to this Caribbean island, and how other nationals, races and creeds contributed to the changing appearance of the objects there.

While the black slaves brought to Jamaica had no choice in their destination, a majority of the white population did. Why did some whites elect to migrate to Jamaica? Did they opt for this tropical island because it promised a better material and economic life, or were immigrants enticed with generous incentives? If we can estimate the numbers, and the periods when certain types of white people migrated to Jamaica, we can then track their cultural influences and place them alongside other traditions and cultures. In this way, we can begin to build up a montage of different cultural values and habits, which in turn may have manifested themselves in the objects that were made on the island. For example, Scottish migrants to Jamaica were from rural areas, then our expectation of the goods they made for their own comfort would have been very different from those produced and consumed by London residents. Urban craftsmen who had served apprenticeships in major London workshops, producing goods that were

technically sophisticated and stylistically more advanced than some parts of England, could make some Jamaican homes bastions of fashion and gentility in comparison.

Understanding the cultural make-up of the population is thus of great importance. If we can comprehend this rich cultural integration, we may be able to appreciate more effectively what impact race or nation had on the furniture trade, furniture design and manufacture. This chapter seeks to identify the merging cultures of Jamaica in the eighteenth century and to uncover whether these various social groups influenced the style and form of furniture in Jamaica.

Just as the examination of population integration gives us valuable evidence for the interpretation of the rich culture of a community, so we also need to understand the social and environmental barriers that were enforced in that same society. This chapter examines the effects of climate and disease on the island's population, its racial make-up and the tensions between different nationalities and racial groups. Jamaica was characterised by a complex web of changing social conditions and influences. The island possessed serious inter-racial tensions, problems in maintaining population growth, and extremely high mortality rates. This chapter examines the life styles and motivations of Jamaica's population, in particular their reasons for arriving on the island. This provides the social and cultural context in which the various Jamaican furniture makers and tradesmen lived and worked. Understanding this context and related mentalities provides us with some insight into the way in which the furniture trade and working attitudes developed in the period.

Dangers of Living in Colonial Jamaica

The Blue Mountains of Jamaica confronted the newly arriving white travellers and settlers long before they entered the harbour and passed by Port Royal to land at Kingston. The newcomers were keen to land.⁵⁸ Seasickness would be replaced very quickly by other complaints that were far more grave. Jamaica's tropical illnesses not only claimed the lives of many Jamaican citizens, but the weather also took its toll. The infamous earthquake at Port Royal, the island's principal port, on 7th June 1692 killed thousands and

destroyed the richest town and community outside of Europe.⁵⁹ This earthquake was one of many earthquakes and hurricanes to ravage Jamaica in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁰ Port Royal suffered not only the aftershocks of the 1692 conflagration, but later in 1704 the Port burnt to the ground following another earthquake. The hurricanes of 1722 and 1744 finally convinced the residents to move to the new found town and port of Kingston, which became the mercantile centre of the island and challenged even Spanish Town as the island's capital from as early as 1756.⁶¹ Hurricanes continued to play a significant part in curtailing the population of Jamaica, and although political and military peace came periodically, weather has always played a major part in the island's fortunes. However, it was not just the dramatic and violent natural forces that claimed lives. Lady Nugent, usually so formal, wrote in her journal that in 1802, she was reduced to wearing her night-dress to a ball, due to the unbearable heat.⁶² She laments the loss of several friends who had returned home from supper only to die from either heat exhaustion, intemperance or insect fevers. At one supper, Lady Nugent recalled, that a female guest fainted at the sight of a scorpion crawling out of the top of her dress, and on another evening Lady Nugent herself was distressed at finding a poisonous snake in her son's nursery.⁶³ These incidents were not rare, and such events were considered the accepted perils of living in the tropics. Other dangers, however, could be reduced and managed, such as pirate, attack and slave rebellion.

Spanish Town as its name suggests derived its origins from the Spanish ownership of the island. As St. Jago de la Vega,⁶⁴ it was the capital, and it continued to be the capital when the British took control in 1655. The security of the island was of considerable concern, not only to the Assembly and Governor General, but for the individual citizen as well. With threats of slave uprising,⁶⁵ maroon attacks and invasion a great deal of the country's wealth and the legislative season were spent maintaining and

⁵⁸ Winterthur, Downs Collection, Doc 780, Sea Journal, Author Unknown, 1765.

⁵⁹ Olley, Philip, 1947, p. 136.

⁶⁰ Marsden, P., 1788, p. 77; Sheridan, Richard, 1976, pp. 615-641. Describes the crises after the hurricanes, storms and earthquakes during the 1780s. Seeger, Edward D., Trans., 1951, pp. 52-53.

⁶¹ PRO, Petition of the Citizens of Kingston, CO 137/27. I wish to thank Robert Barker for sharing this information.

⁶² Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 5th May 1802.

⁶³ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 17th November, 20th May 1804.

⁶⁴ Meaning St. James of the Plain, this name is still used colloquially.

⁶⁵ Bridges, G.W., 1968 (reprint of 1828) p. 91. Bridges discusses Tacky's rebellion in 1760.

commissioning work to increase security provision and improve interior transport for troop movement in case of blockades or attack.⁶⁶

General Nugent spent several months in the early nineteenth century touring the island taking personal charge of the improvements to fortifications and barracks.⁶⁷ Troops were frequently deployed to defend out-lying areas where attacks were likely.⁶⁸ In 1706 the French prisoner de Malherbe wrote detailed notes on the fortified buildings, cannon placements, possible places to land on the island, and the fortifications around the main towns within Jamaica.⁶⁹ De Malherbe estimated that over 7,000 men could be rallied to fight off an invasion attack in Jamaica. Such an invasion had taken place at Carlisle Bay in 1694, and because it had been successfully repelled, the fortune spent defending and paying for a militia was thought to have been wisely spent.⁷⁰

However, it wasn't just the threat of invasion from foreign powers that caused concern to the islanders, the periodic attack by pirates also caused fear.⁷¹ Although by the eighteenth century pirate attacks were greatly reduced compared to the seventeenth century, the British Government occasionally employed pirates as an incognito, unruly regiment that could be utilised to upset Spanish and French shipping.⁷² However, not all these pirates were either controllable or willing to assist governments in gaining power in the region. One account that appeared in writing some years after the event, in Bridges's Annals of Jamaica, in 1828 recalls bloodthirsty pirates, intent on stealing slaves, and in revenge for a previously repelled attack, murdered numerous inhabitants in their houses in the most abhorrent manner.⁷³ Such

⁶⁶ Each year there was a 'State of the Island Bill,' which was concerned with the maintenance and improvements of the infrastructure and defenses of the island.

⁶⁷ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966. General Nugent tours the island March 5th to April 24th 1802, and in various other months during his tour of duty (1801-1806).

⁶⁸ Examples of invasion threats pepper the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1703 the French were repelled and a hundred years later in April, May and June 1805 martial law was enforced after the French fleet was thought to be ready to invade.

⁶⁹ Duisset, Dr. David, Ed., 1968, pp. 6-9.

⁷⁰ In 1694 the French attacked and landed at Carlisle Bay, later in the eighteenth century the French attacks on Jamaica had been repulsed by Admiral Rodney (1782) and Hood's victory over Count De Grasse. In 1806 the victory of Admiral Duckworth also repelled another attempt by the French to land.

⁷¹ Seeber, Edward D., 1951, p. 50.

⁷² A clear example of the relationship between the British Government and the Buccaneers, who sailed the West Indies, can be seen in the attitude of the British towards the Buccaneer Henry Morgan. After Britain and Spain had signed the Treaty of Madrid in 1670, Modyford (1664-1674) the then Governor General of Jamaica sanctioned Morgan one last attack on Panama, which proved very profitable. Morgan stood trial for this attack, but was acquitted and subsequently knighted and sent back to Jamaica as the new Governor Lieutenant.

⁷³ Bridges, B. W., 1968, p. 349 "Brown and Wynter, the notorious pirates, had now fitted out several vessels at Trinidad de Cuba, for the purpose of capturing slaves on the sea side plantations. The parish of St. Ann suffered severely; for it was the richest, and the

attacks from pirates and the maroon population were common and are well documented. These attacks on the general population meant houses often had stone platforms and bastions at the corners to act as observation posts for potential attacks.⁷⁴ Armaments in the home appear to be common, the most likely weapons to be found being guns and pistols, the possession of which were represented in over two thirds of those inventories surveyed.⁷⁵ The fact that so many tradesmen assessed in this project owned weapons indicates the volatile nature of society in Jamaica. This volatility was not just based on foreign powers intent on forcefully taking the island but also internal maroon and slave uprisings.⁷⁶

The white settlers faced huge problems in neutralising the maroon population. The guerrilla warfare tactics of this group of native Arawaks and runaway slaves were unpredictable and savage. The 1730s were the most disruptive years in the eighteenth century for such unrest, and numerous offensives by the British failed to control this rogue element from within. Finally, in 1738, British troops were deployed to wipe out this small private army and engaged in peace negotiations with the maroon chief Cudjoe. The treaty gave the maroons their freedom wherever they chose to settle, but only on condition they handed over their runaway slaves, and that if Jamaica was attacked the Maroons would help to defend the island. Mistrust between the two parties continued, although the whites generally thought the treaty would last for as long as the maroons continued to benefit from its effects.⁷⁷ At least peace between the two cultures helped to reinforce a sense of security on the island, and more remote parishes gradually became free from attack.

least protected, of any in the island. A domestic tragedy was acted there disgraceful to humanity, and scarcely equaled in the sanguinary annals of those times. The proprietor of a considerable settlement, who had fortified his house upon the beach, and had repeatedly repelled these lawless plunderers, one night, in the security of his success, and in the bosom of his family, was boasting that they would never venture to attack him more. The Picaroons had stolen across from Cuba, and were at the moment lying concealed in the brushwood round the house, waiting til the family had retired to rest. With savage inhumanity they listened to the domestic effusions of presumed security; they measured the provocation, and determined on revenge. When all was quiet within, they barricaded the house from without, and applied fire to it in all directions. They heard, unmoved, the agonizing cries of the helpless parents, and their dying children; and, in the morning, nothing remained but the smoking ruins of the house, and the ashes of sixteen bodies. Deeds of atrocity scarce less appalling were of frequent occurrence on the north side of the island"

⁷⁴ Acworth, A. C., 1949, p. 8; Bryan, P., 1973, p. 13; Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 30. Kennedy states in his book that the Palladian Villa is based on the assumption of security and that if the gardens, external to the building, are to be ornamental then the physical and political landscape surrounding the building must be secure. In Jamaica this environment clearly did not exist as fortified houses were regularly being built throughout the eighteenth century and ornamental gardens around the houses were rare, being more likely to have been laid with hardened soil for pimento drying and a clear sight of strangers approaching.

⁷⁵ Of 361 woodworkers' inventories studied some 30% owned weapons and of these 67% owned guns or pistols.

⁷⁶ Sheridan, Richard, 1976, p. 622. An uprising in 1776 caused a state of martial law to be introduced because the discovery was thought serious enough to undermine the security of the island at a time when Jamaica and its relationship to America was difficult. Similarly, after the French Revolution and the introduction of the 'Bill of Rights,' in 1791, there was great fear that news of the French Revolution would be recalled to the black population from slaves that had fled with their master from St. Domingo.

⁷⁷ Seeber, Edward D., 1951, p. 58; Auger, R., 1960, p. 114. In the 1795 slave rebellion incited by the Jacobins of St. Domingo the maroons did side with the slave population and it took some effort to quell the rising.

Crime on the island (as perceived in the eighteenth century) tended to be related to runaway slaves and larceny. Advertisements in the local press concerning these issues appeared with great regularity, often with the aim of returning stolen property. The Royal Gazette, for example announced in 1782, 'Stolen on the night of the 24th instant from Major Muirs house in the Savannah, a small mahogany writing box, with a small brass plate on the centre of the lid, marked A. Leith 69th Regiment, containing sundry papers of no use to any person, other than the owner reward, for its safe return no question asked ten pounds....⁷⁸

Moreover, the white population had no hesitation in intervening when they thought a slave owned major durable goods, which they thought did not befit their status. In 1790 the Daily Advertiser advertisement announced, 'Taken from a Negro, who offered it for sale late on Saturday evening last, a high backed mahogany chair...',⁷⁹ suggesting that it was thought highly irregular for a black person to own such items of value or status.

The return of stolen or lost objects was often rewarded, as was the return of runaway slaves. Many advertisements appeared reporting the loss of a slave and to whom they should be returned if found. The penalties for runaway indentured servants were the same if they were black or white.⁸⁰ It was not just runaway slaves and servants who could expect tough punishment, the perpetrators of petty crimes and larceny received no mercy. Two slaves, Will and Smart, received the death penalty for locking their master in his bedchamber with the intention of stealing £15 from his mahogany bureau.⁸¹ During the same period in England a different attitude purveyed; Roy Porter in his work on English Society in the Eighteenth Century states that 'Magistrates, judges and juries hesitated to enforce the full terror of the law, preferring to earmark atrocious penalties for vicious blackguards.'⁸² Porter continues that the bench overlooked the

⁷⁸ PRO, Royal Gazette, 15-22 June 1782, p. 391.

⁷⁹ BL Colindale, Daily Advertiser, 27th January 1790.

⁸⁰ BL Colindale, Daily Advertiser, 6th September 1790, 'Absconded from the subscriber, on the 3rd of August, 1790, Thomas Wilkinson, a white young man, about 18 years of age, 5ft 10 inches high, and wants a joint of the first finger of his left hand: He will probably engage himself in the Cabinet Making line, having served part of his apprenticeship in that business with the subscriber, to whom he is indentured. This is to caution the public, that whoever may employ him, will be prosecuted to the utmost rigour of the law. A guinea reward will be given to any person proving to conviction with whom he is harboured or employed. John Dick.'

⁸¹ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle Supplement, 26th July 1788, Montego Bay Court. 'It further appeared, that in order to secure their object, and to escape immediate detection, the key of Mr. Mountague's chamber door being on the outside, they turned it, and locked him in - they then removed from its frame the desk, conveyed it down stairs, which must have required great dexterity, on account of its size, and the stairs being narrow and intricate...'

⁸² Porter, Roy, 1990, p. 140.

value of stolen goods so as to reduce grand larceny, then a hanging offence, to petty theft. However, such leniency was not tolerated in Jamaica, and theft was a capital offence and dealt with accordingly. In an island where the white population was so small and the slave population so large, the fear of punishment had to act as a deterrent.

The Jamaican Population

To the newly arrived Europeans, ports in Jamaica must have appeared dens of vice, crime and savagery. Numerous diarists recorded the shock of being confronted by naked slaves in the hustle and bustle of Kingston,⁸³ which even in the early eighteenth century was one of the more populated cities in the Americas.⁸⁴ Kingston was certainly large even during early colonisation: Higman estimated the total population of Jamaica to be 55,000 as early as 1692 of which 45,000 were slaves. Twenty years later total population had grown to 65,000.⁸⁵ Bridges in 1662 had estimated the population of Kingston to be 4500 in 1662 and 12,000 nine years later,⁸⁶ if these early statistics are to be believed, then his calculation suggests that the population was larger than Charleston, the nearest major southern American plantation. Charleston's population was estimated in the 1730s to be 4,500, smaller than the estimates for its Jamaican sister made 50 years earlier.⁸⁷

By the 1770s Kingston was larger than Boston as well as Charleston and was smaller in population only than Philadelphia and New York. In 1775 the Charleston's population was estimated to be 12,000,⁸⁸ whilst a survey of the population of Kingston made five years later indicates that its total white population was 16,000.⁸⁹ McCusker and Menard calculate that Charleston was the fourth largest settlement in America, which would place Kingston as the third largest trans-atlantic colony until the 1780s when cities such as

⁸³ Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, pp. 35, 38; Winterthur, Downs Collection, Doc 780, Sea Journal, Unknown Author, 19th March 1765. Vice Admiral Vernon, 1740, pp. 34-35.

⁸⁴ McCusker, John, 1986, Chapter 7.

⁸⁵ Higman, B.W., 1976, p. 61.

⁸⁶ Bridges, 1968, p. 77.

⁸⁷ Fleming, B., 1993, MA Thesis, 'The export of English Furnishings to Charleston South Carolina during the 18th Century,' it is believed that this figure only represents the white population.

⁸⁸ Bridenbaugh C., 1938, pp. 143-303.

Baltimore began to increase in size while Kingston's white population remained unchanged.⁹⁰ Although Charleston was smaller than Boston, Philadelphia or New York, it was extremely rich and was therefore a prime destination for immigrants. Emigrating craftsmen would have travelled directly to Charleston, but there is also evidence that they made for Kingston, indicating that Kingston perhaps offered equal wealth and inviting prospects.⁹¹

However, despite the desire to increase their material wealth, immigrant craftsmen could not have been blind to the very high mortality rates on the island. The average life expectancy was '*abysmally low*'.⁹² In Jamaica, deaths outstripped births; sickness and disease consistently struck, and there were fewer children per family than in America where the birth rate could be as high as 5-10 children.⁹³ In the 13 American colonies growth was rapid for the white and black population whereas in Jamaica the white population began to stagnate as early as the late seventeenth century.⁹⁴ The fortunes of the black population, however did increase dramatically. Despite the purchase of more men than women and the planters discouraging procreation until the end of the eighteenth century,⁹⁵ the slave population increased from 80,000 in 1722 to 310,000 in 1834.⁹⁶ When slaves were first brought to Jamaica at the end of the seventeenth century the growth of the slave population was much like that in other slave economies. In these early years of the slave trade when the island only had some 45,000 slaves birth rates were healthy. It was only after the introduction of mono-production culture of sugar that slaves were viewed as units of labour and workloads were increased. Work routines became longer, and the general maintenance of slaves' health and material well being diminished. Certainly in the first half of the eighteenth century when huge numbers of slaves were imported and slave prices were low, their treatment was particularly appalling (Appendix 4).⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Winterthur, *Cornwall Chronicle*, 1st March 1788, Parish of Kingston population, white male 4,793, white female 1,746, total 6,539; Brown male 1,812, brown female 1,957, total 3,769; Black male 8,500, black female 7,670, total 16,170. This poll was taken by Capt. Bartlett, Town Guard, on command of the Lieutenant Governor, John Jacques, Custos of the Parish of Kingston.

⁹⁰ McCusker John, 1986, p. 154.

⁹¹ Coxe Prime, Alfred, 1969, Vol. I & II.

⁹² Burnard Trevor, 'Inheritance and Independence: Women's Status in Early Colonial Jamaica,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1991, January, p. 99; Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, p. 41.

⁹³ Leyburn, James, 1962, p. 182.

⁹⁴ Watts, David, 1987, p. 277. In Watts accounts the white population only increased from 12,000 in 1700 to 15,000 in 1834.

⁹⁵ Sheridan, Richard, 'The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the West Indies during and after the American Revolution,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, October 1976, p. 635. On Barbados the white planters during the American Revolution encouraged the slaves to reproduce because of the large losses due to hurricanes, famine and lack of slave trade and money.

⁹⁶ Watts, David, 1987, p. 277.

⁹⁷ Appendix 4, this chart shows that from 1750 to 1810 the cost of skilled slaves tripled, from an average of £60 to £180 per slave.

The arrival of white servants and white labour prevented a rapid decline in the white population.⁹⁸ Although the white population did considerably less, in terms of manual labour on the sugar estates, by law the planters had to employ a number of servants of white skin, this law also applied to tradesmen. The Deficiency Law was clearly in operation in 1739, when the author Charles Leslie summarised the Act in his work A New and Exact Account of Jamaica. Leslie writes that a minimum number of whites had to be present on every plantation so that the slave population could be kept under control. The quota every planter and tradesman had to maintain was the employment of one white person for every five slaves. Should they own ten slaves then they were required to employ two whites, and thereafter every ten slaves required the employer to engage a further white employee.⁹⁹ It did not matter whether the rank of the white person was a humble indentured servant or an overseer, as long as these ratio numbers were maintained, in the belief it would preserve social order. The prime purpose of the Deficiency Law was to maintain subservience of the slave population, but other reasons also existed.¹⁰⁰

Although the white population struggled to maintain their numbers, the black population, through slavery increased dramatically. The slave population increased, not because the white population encouraged family welfare amongst slaves, but because of the vast numbers who were imported from Africa. The changing demography of Jamaica is graphically laid out by McCusker, he relates how in 1660 the white population of the West Indies represented 60% of the white population whereas in the Americas in 1780 this was down to 20%.¹⁰¹

Once sugar production became established the slave trade accelerated and the birth rates of the black population dropped, as the slave was seen as a unit of labour and not as an individual.¹⁰² It was only during

⁹⁸ Burnard, 1991, pp. 93-114. The native white population was unable to sustain their numbers let alone grow, p. 97; Hall, Douglas, 'Bountied European Immigration, Seaford Town to 1850,' Jamaica Journal, 1974, pp. 48-54.

⁹⁹ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 214.

¹⁰⁰ The question is whether the Deficiency Law was a method of raising tax on Planters (no white servants the more you pay), or a method of ensuring white supremacy and keeping whites safe. Deficiency Law was increased during uprisings or when the militia was being utilised. Taxing those that had not brought forward enough whites for duty, and by default identifying those that had not employed enough white workers for the number of slaves they owned, was a useful means of encouraging the employment of whites.

¹⁰¹ McCusker, John, 1986, pp. 230-231, population figures and charts are shown on these pages which illustrate that the white population did not alter much from 1660 until 1770, whilst the black population increased massively from 25,000 in 1660 to reach $\frac{1}{4}$ million in 1780. However, numbers probably peaked at around 280,000.

¹⁰² McCusker, John, 1986, p. 221. The further South you go the longer it took for the black imported population to start procreating and maintaining its numbers. Sustained natural growth in the slave population began as early as 1720 in Virginia, but as late as 1840 in Jamaica.

the American Revolution when the Americans imposed a trade embargo on Britain and her colonies, a period known as the subsistence crisis, that this pattern of treatment had to be re-examined. The subsistence crisis of the 1780s meant that food and provisions were in short supply, in the West Indies and the number of ships carrying slaves and other goods to the colonies was drastically reduced. So much so that many of the governors of the Caribbean were constantly in touch with the British Government, pleading for supplies to be sent to the islands as poverty, famine and insurrection loomed.¹⁰³ Famine was indeed rife and estimates of the number of deaths caused by the lack of basic foodstuffs during the 1780s range from 15,000 to 21,000.¹⁰⁴ It was under these circumstances, when the number of slaves had dropped and the cost of provisions had increased, that the planters began to encourage slaves to provide their own food by setting aside otherwise useless land, and by encouraging slaves to have families.¹⁰⁵

The demand for cheap labour by the ruling white population to provide huge profits may explain the rapid growth in the black population, but why did the ruling white population struggle to maintain its numbers? Why did white immigrants make such a drastic life choice and head for Jamaica where they knew that disease and sickness and a potentially early grave awaited them? McCusker states that, '*In spite of evidence of local variations and regardless of our imprecise measures, it seems clear that mortality rates were somewhat higher and fertility much lower in the West Indies than on the continent.*' He continues by quoting Benjamin Franklin on life on the continent '*if it's easy to marry and to get on in life then people will.*'¹⁰⁶ Land was cheap in America in this period, there was plenty of work and food for all and so people could afford to marry early in life, and have children, who in turn were able to afford land of their own, as was the case in New England.¹⁰⁷ In Jamaica, however, cultivated land was limited, and the prospect of owning your own property and affording a family was becoming more difficult. The white population did marry and procreate, but fewer men married because there was two men to every woman. Not only were women scarce, the climate and social conditions were not conducive to longevity, in fact quite the opposite. As Frederick Kubler observed on a walk around the cemetery in Kingston in 1778 noting the gravestones;

¹⁰³ In July 1776 in Jamaica the lack of food prompted a slave insurrection, it was crushed before it could be effective and thereafter martial law was introduced.

¹⁰⁴ Sheridan, Richard, October 1976, p. 632; Watts, David, 1987, p. 277.

¹⁰⁵ Breen, Tim, 'Creative Adaptations: Peoples and Cultures,' *Colonial British America*, 1984, pp. 195-232; Sheridan, Richard, October 1976, p. 635.

¹⁰⁶ McCusker, John, 1986, p. 223.

During the hour I spent I read more than 50, but can you imagine my amazement to have found, among all these, only one person who lived to the age of 52 years! I found none older: on the contrary most people had died between 20 and 36 years. Here lies a lawyer of 26 years, there a merchant of 29, here another of 24. There lies a whole family of whom the father died at 35 years of age, the mother 39, the eldest son only lived to 17, the younger to 11, one of the daughters was 13, another 9 – and all these people died with in the space of 5 years.¹⁰⁸

Clearly, life in Jamaica was difficult, and a short life was more than likely. So what encouraged white settlers to come to this part of the world, was it the promise quick and large financial gain?¹⁰⁹

Cost of Living

While slaves struggled to raise crops to gain material possession and a better standard of living, white visitors inhabited a more affluent and material world, but found it difficult to afford reasonable accommodation when first arriving on the island. When Charles Leslie visited the island in 1739 he found Jamaica to be expensive:

I believe there is no place where silver is so plenty they use no copper, the lowest piece is a Ryal which passes for 7d ½, but a halfpenny in Scotland will go a great deal further: considering the excessive dear living, one would need good wages, and money in plenty. You can't dine for less than a piece of Eight, and common rate of boarding is L.3 per week¹⁰⁹

Some 50 years later the German traveller Frederick Kubler also commented on the cost of living, ‘*Most of the inhabitants are merchants and sailors. They are all extremely rich. Also life is so excessively expensive here that a person can not live on less than 6 ecus per day.*¹¹⁰ The Jamaican currency was worth 75% of sterling and this remained roughly the same throughout the time period under discussion. Much of the trading was also done in Spanish pistoles, each was worth 23s.9d. of a Jamaican pound.¹¹¹

Why was the cost of living so excessive? Was it because goods of all types were scarce, or was it that the standard of living was so high and therefore high prices were affordable and accepted by the occupants on the island? In either case scarcity or a high standard of living would have had the effect of increasing demand for manufactured goods, including those in Jamaica. Once Britain was unable to supply sufficient

¹⁰⁷ Potter, Jim, ‘Demographic Development and Family Structure,’ *Colonial British America*, 1984, p. 128.

¹⁰⁸ Levy, Mary Catherine, 1984, p. 38. Another example would be the 193 Moravians who came from America, 64 died, 98 returned within a year, and of the 64 who remained 45 died within 5 years and 57 within ten years, Lang, Brother *The Moravians in Jamaica, History of the Mission of the United Brethren Church*, 1809.

¹⁰⁹ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 39.

¹¹⁰ Levy, Mary Catherine, 1984, p. 38. An Ecu was worth five shillings.

manufactured goods to the colonies then the birth of a manufacturing industry in the American colonies would have commenced.¹¹² The establishment of import substitutes is not unusual, indeed Britain itself had been the victim for the desire of goods that were not indigenous and were imported initially at great cost.¹¹³

What begins to emerge in this picture of early modern Jamaica is a two-speed economy. The plantocracy, who generated enormous wealth and prosperity on the island, and those who served and serviced that plantocracy. The planters in terms of numbers remained relatively small yet their wealth, power and influence was immense, juxtaposed with the number of other residences on the island. Although, the planters' wealth and power were great their contribution to the island's development was limited. If and when the planters chose to become involved in the politics of the island it was usually out of self-interest. Roads and bridges were named and repaired in '*State of the island Bills*,' but suspiciously they were often to the benefit of nearby planters who were also members of the Assembly. One such example would be the case of Worthy Park, when George Beckford maintained that this planter abused his position to better the infrastructure of his estate, in terms of road and bridge improvement, and a two and a half mile aqueduct that were all constructed at the public expense.¹¹⁴ To sustain the dominance of plantocracy and to keep this oligarchy in place there was a need to maintain the white population.

Migration Policy

In the late seventeenth century when land and employment were readily available in Jamaica the immigration figures illustrate that whites were willing to take the chance of a short life for rich returns. Between 1660 and 1770 3,947 white servants migrated from Britain, of which 80-90% came from England.¹¹⁵ Of these numbers 40% were from London and a further 20% from the Home Counties. The Welsh were the next largest group, with the Scots becoming more prominent as the eighteenth century

¹¹¹ These valuations were kindly provided by Robert Barker.

¹¹² De Vries, Jan, 'Between Purchasing power and the world of goods: Understanding the household economy in early modern Europe,' *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 1993, pp. 86-87.

¹¹³ Ormrod, David, 'Cultural Production and Import Substitution. The Fine and Decorative Arts in London, 1660-1730,' pp. 1-21, unpublished paper.

¹¹⁴ Beckford, George, 'The History of Worthy Park as a Microcosm of the evolution of Jamaican Economy and Society,' *Jamaican Journal*, 1971, pp. 19-20.

progressed. Although Jamaica was a popular destination in the late seventeenth century, in the early to mid eighteenth century this changed.

The pattern of migration declined significantly in the early eighteenth century as population figures illustrate that there was very gradual increase in the white population after the 1680s. Any migration after this date only maintained numbers, whilst in the other American colonies migration continues unabated.¹¹⁶ Clearly, the earthquake of 1692 had its effect on the population growth of the island and may have also shattered the confidence of prospective migrants. In addition, indentured servants, if they survived their term, could be guaranteed a small piece of land, and house supplies for a year, these benefits could not go on indefinitely as the amount of land that could be farmed and secured was limited.

By the early eighteenth century the numbers of indentured servants began to drop, although they still accounted for one third of the total white population until the 1730s.¹¹⁷ It was clear to the governing body of Jamaica that more had to be done to encourage migrants to come to Jamaica and so other incentives were adopted. In 1749, the Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica summed up the incentives that had been decided upon for new settlers. Significant for the subject of this thesis is the fact that the Assembly was clearly concerned about the lack of tradesmen on the island and passed a bill offering free passage and bounty specifically to sawyers, carpenters and joiners.¹¹⁸ The bill was repealed ten years later, and it can only be assumed that the number of tradesmen had increased in this period so as not to warrant its continuance. It was during this period that the upholsterer Charles Villineau arrived in Jamaica. Villineau, who had been ruined by the hurricane of 1752 in Antigua, took refuge in Jamaica where he had relatives and petitioned the House for a grant to set up his business. The House of Assembly evidently wished to see the upholsterer stay and elected to award him a substantial grant of £50.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, p. 792.

¹¹⁶ Breen, Tim, 1984, pp. 209-210; Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, pp. 772-773. Burnard states that the numbers of whites in Jamaica between 1700 and 1730 only increased by 1000, despite there being large numbers migrating.

¹¹⁷ Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, pp. 774-775. In an estimate by the Governor General in 1730, 52% of the white population were servants, indentured and undentured.

¹¹⁸ Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, Vol. IV, (1746-1756), 1797; In 1749 'an act for the better and more effectual encouragement of white families to become settlers in this island; and for giving a Bounty to certain Artificers to come over and exercise their several trades' was introduced. Section XII of this Act specifies "...Sawyers, Carpenters, Joiners," for free passage and a bounty of Ja. £10.

¹¹⁹ Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, (Oct 7th, 21st 1752) 1797. Charles Villineau, citizen of London, upholsterer and cabinet maker petitions the Assembly, he had come from Antigua where his life had been wrecked by a hurricane and therefore migrated to

The belief that huge fortunes could be made in Jamaica would have been one of the key reasons for migrants risking hardship, death, attack and insurrection.¹²⁰ Of the 4,000 indentured servants who travelled to Jamaica over the eighteenth century very few, in fact less than a third, were likely to survive the length of servitude, and for the unscrupulous planter the lack of survival meant costs were reduced further if servants did not survive.¹²¹ Having indicated the difficulties and incentives of living in Jamaica, we can now examine the nations, races and creeds that were attracted by free passage and bounty?

Irish and Scottish Migration

The problem of encouraging whites to move to Jamaica was alleviated to a limited extent by the fact that the Barbados and the Leeward Islands refused to take Irish indentured servants. The Irish were perceived as lacking loyalty to the Crown and having the potential to incite rebellion amongst the slaves and generally undermining white rule.¹²² However, in Jamaica, the Irish servants were perceived as less of a problem, as the established whites benefited from their arrival. The planter could comply with the Deficiency Law at a minimum cost, as Irish servants were five pounds cheaper than their other British counterparts.¹²³ The Irish servants were leaving an impoverished land where the chances for personal improvement and employment were scarce, in exchange for an exotic island where food was plentiful and life was believed to be better. If they survived their indentureship they had the prospect of freedom and land (albeit inadequate for farming).

The Irish were recorded as being the least preferred of the servants employed in Jamaica because their approach to work was considered more relaxed, but the white Jamaican employers were not in a position to be selective. Scots were more numerous in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth century and were more valued by the Jamaicans as they were considered trustworthy, loyal and hardworking. In the

Jamaica with his wife and child. It would appear he already had a brother in law living in Jamaica, and on arrival sought funds to continue being an upholsterer, as he was in Antigua. The Assembly awarded him Ja. £50.

¹²⁰ Breen, Tim, 1984, p. 210.

¹²¹ Ghirelli, Michael, Emigrants from England to America, 1682-1692, 1968. Of the 550 indenture servants named as having gone to Jamaica only two were found to have gone into the woodwork trade, these were Waterfield and Charles Raines, both died in Jamaica and probates indicate they were woodworkers.

¹²² Beckles, Hilary, October 1990, p. 510; Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, p. 782. In this graph the Irish make up approximately 2% of the total migrants.

¹²³ Sheridan, Richard, December 1987, p. 298. Here Sheridan explains the inconvenience of the law and how some planters preferred to pay the fine than employ the white staff.

period 1660 to 1696 they made up only 1.5% of the migrants, but by the end of the 1770s, this had increased to nearly 6%. Most were from central Scotland, with a third from the Highlands.¹²⁴

Some surviving pieces of furniture found in Jamaica, possess a Scottish style or form, and we can perhaps conclude that they were either exported from Scotland, made by a Scotsman in Jamaica, or were made by a non-Scottish maker influenced by a Scottish piece of furniture. In whichever case, the migration of Scots and their work can be seen as contributing to the cultural montage of the Jamaican furniture trade. An example of this dissemination of style and form can be seen in a number of chests of drawers found in Jamaica. These chests have the characteristic of three small drawers at the top, just like their Scottish counterparts (See Illustration 5 A & B). While this provides only one instance, this form is so strongly associated with Scottish furniture that this example can leave little doubt that Scottish migration meant that Scottish craftsmen, furniture and a Scottish style were available in Jamaica in the early modern period (See Illustration 6 A & B).

American Migration

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century external events helped alleviate Jamaica's labour shortages. Both the American and French revolutions, although economically distressing for Jamaica, greatly boosted the supply of skilled labour to the island and compensated for the loss of population through famine, disease and natural disasters during the same period. Some of the American loyalists fled to East and West Florida, Honduras¹²⁵ and the Mosquito Coast only to find that the Spanish were to side with the American republic once war broke out in Europe.¹²⁶ With this new unrest, the refugees in these countries were driven out and forced to take refuge in the islands of the British Caribbean. The American Revolution brought many loyalists to Jamaica, and although numbers are not certain, there is evidence that as many as 3,000 whites came to Jamaica bringing with them 8,500 slaves. Certainly nearly 850 whites

¹²⁴ Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, pp. 781-782.

¹²⁵ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle, 1783, Migration of the refugees from Honduras were listed with further list of subscribers to the relief fund.

¹²⁶ Callahan, North, 1967, p. 141; Brown, Wallace, 1992, p. 122. Wallace calculates that roughly 200-300 Americans landed in Jamaica after fleeing these three countries. This would roughly match the list of refugees stated in the Cornwall Chronicle in 1783.

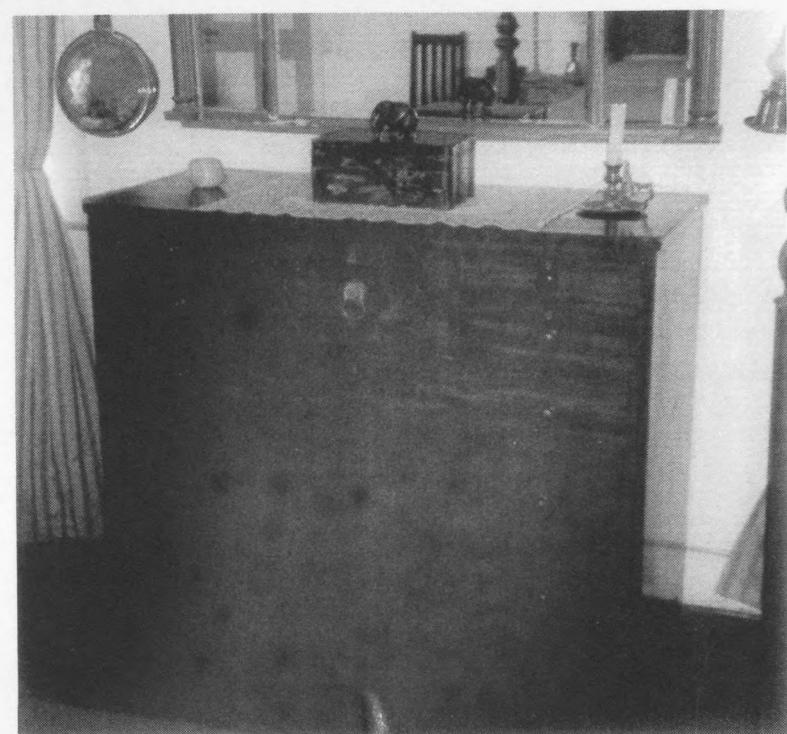


Illustration 5 A & B

Two chests of drawers, Circa 1790 and 1820, These objects with their three top drawers are very characteristic of Scottish Chest of Drawers, no such configuration is seen on English pieces of a similar date.

Photographed by the author, Private Collections.



Illustration 6 A & B. Two Scottish chests of drawers, one dated 1806 and made by John Biggar the other of a similar date, maker unknown. These two are typical of Scottish chest of drawers having three drawers on the top tier. Jones, David, 'Scotch Chest,' Regional Furniture Society Journal, 1993 Vol. VII, p. 11; Jones, David Anthrology of Scottish labelled Furniture, Regional Furniture Society Journal, 1988 Vol. II, p. 41, Private Collection

and 5,000 slaves came from Georgia and 1,250 whites and 2,600 blacks from South Carolina.¹²⁷ In general the established white Jamaicans treated these loyalists well and encouraged their continued stay by both providing provisions and making changes to the law. The House of Assembly acted quickly to encourage the new settlers from the Southern American states as well as those that had fled to Honduras and Mosquito Shore. The new arrivals were exempted from paying tax on any slaves that accompanied them for seven years, they were released from public duty, and informed that charges for land patents were to be met by the public purse. In return, the Americans were still required to serve in the militia and to sign affidavits as to their intent to settle and the number of slaves they brought with them. They were also required to settle and plant their new lands within two years of their arrival.¹²⁸

However, despite this warm welcome, the Americans became aggrieved by what they thought were artificially high prices for goods and grants for land that was described as little more than swamp. In one well documented case, land by the Black River in St. Elizabeth's was given to Mr. Frogg, a tailor, from Charleston, but he was so disgruntled by its poor quality that he took his case to the House of Assembly. George Murray, a member of the House and Surveyor who investigated the case, had to face questions over the allegations made by Mr. Frogg. A member of the House asked Mr. Murray '*Are you of the opinion that any living creature, besides fish, frogs, Dutchmen, and amphibious animals, can exist in the district, as laid down in Mr. Grants scheme, now before the House.*' Mr. Murray replied '*He thinks not.*'¹²⁹

Not only did the American loyalists have to contend with land unfit for human living, they were also threatened by the British Navy, which captured as prize cargoes numerous loyalist ships which were trying to escape from the new republic. As if this were not enough, the 1780s marked a decade of an unusual number of hurricanes. During that decade Jamaica had some six storms and hurricanes and several earthquakes which made the newly arrived guests despair at the inclement conditions and many just gave up and went to England, or were prepared to risk death by returning to the United States. Those that stayed and survived the trials of the 1780s were hit by a huge yellow fever outbreak in the 1790s.

¹²⁷ Brown, Wallace, 1992, p. 121.

¹²⁸ Brown, Wallace, 'The American Loyalists in Jamaica,' The Journal of Caribbean History, Vol. 26.2 1992, p. 126. Callahan, North, 1967, p. 142.

¹²⁹ Callahan, North, 1967, p. 127; Brown, Wallace, 1992, p. 142.

Established immigrants were more immune from disease having already experienced other epidemics, but the newly arrived population was decimated.¹³⁰

The influence of American craftsmen on Jamaican furniture makers is difficult to determine. Given that British craftsmen travelled to America, just as they travelled to Jamaica, then we are unlikely to find any direct influence, that we can safely attribute as being American rather than British, in the years prior to the American Revolution. Yet we do have the example of, John Fisher, a cabinet maker who is thought to have trained in Lancaster, who is first recorded as living in South Carolina in 1767 where he received £50 in the will of Ezra Waite.¹³¹ Four years later John Fisher's business partnership, with one of Charleston's most important cabinet makers, Thomas Elfe, came to an end.¹³² The importance of this connection with Thomas Elfe is significant. Elfe had been in business in Charleston since the early 1750s and he was a respected furniture maker and citizen of South Carolina. It seems that the two remained friends after the dissolution of their partnership, as Elfe's account books record Fisher being paid for executing some fretwork and turning bedposts. During 1783, Fisher was banished for being a royalist and left Charleston for Jamaica. His departure and arrival are recorded in contemporary documents, and so there can be little doubt that this is the same John Fisher. At his death in 1804, Fisher's probate inventory illustrates that he specialised in turning bedposts, as some 20 were recorded as in stock, along with a lathe. The fretwork Fisher produced, although not evident in Fisher's probate, also disappeared out of the repertoire of Thomas Elfe. The work that is thought to be attributed to Elfe which incorporates fretwork, all falls within the period 1768 to 1780, coincidentally the same period when Fisher would have been working in Charleston. Only one piece of furniture has been found in Jamaica containing fretwork, this being the top half of a bookcase, which included an open fretwork pediment (See Illustration 7). The presence of John Fisher in Jamaica clearly illustrates that American migration after the American Revolution brought some talented craftsmen to Jamaica.

¹³⁰ Sheridan, Richard, October 1976, pp. 632-633; Brown, Wallace, 1992, p. 122; Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, pp. 775- 777, in this article the author illustrates the fact that the migrant population tended to make up two thirds to three quarters of the mortality rates.

¹³¹ Burton, E. Milbey, 1955, p. 91. Ezra Waite was a prominent builder in Charleston, his most famous surviving house is the Miles Brewton House. It is likely that Fisher worked on some of the extensive interior woodwork in this house.

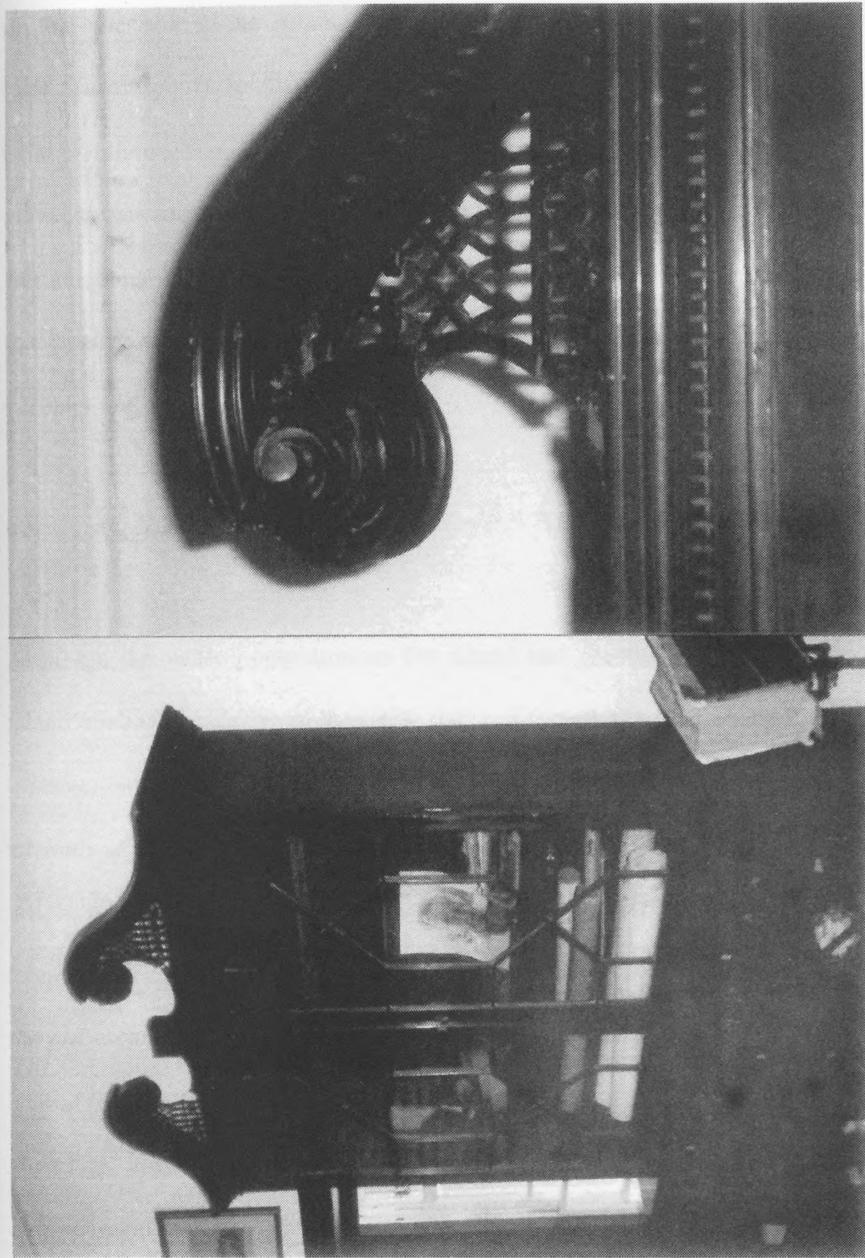


Illustration 7

Open fretted swan neck pediment, on top section of either a bureau bookcase or bookcase,

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

¹³² Bjerkoe, Ethal Hall, 1978, pp. 88-89.

Later in the eighteenth century when American furniture makers, who were second or third generation Americans, had begun to develop a uniquely American style, it is perhaps easier to identify those idiosyncrasies in Jamaican objects. The cellarret in Jamaica conforms to an American form, both are very different to its English counterpart. While in England cellarrets were commonly placed under a sideboard, on the other side of the Atlantic this piece of furniture was raised off the ground and stood independently (See Illustration 4). In America this is commonly by means of a stand with four legs, in Jamaica a turned central column was preferred. Although the stands were different in the method in which they were elevated, we see that the idea was English but the form was not. Whether these stands were conceived simultaneously in Jamaica and America, or the idea was copied by one colony from the other does not hide the possibility that practical solutions to living conditions and home comforts were exchanged both verbally and visually.

French Migration

Although the white population on the island had greatly increased due to the flight from America, the island's white population in the eighteenth and though the early years of the nineteenth century's had seen a 'diminution of Inhabitants.'¹³³ The Assembly regarded the increase in population in the 1780s as an attribute of the better 'security, wealth and prosperity' of the island. While Wallace Brown's states in his article on the American loyalist that a Jamaican lawyer 'advocated the free distribution of land to the loyalists because it would exploit the interior, improve the roads, strengthen the militia and generally make the place more beneficial to the Crown.'¹³⁴

However, the loss of Americans through yellow fever, whooping cough and pleurisy was to be compensated by those arriving from St. Domingo after the French Revolution. The political turmoil in France, during the late 1780s and early 1790s, and the issue of the French Bill of Rights in 1791, had such far-reaching effects that not even those in revolutionary Paris realised the extent of the liberties they were

¹³³ Bridges, B. W., 1968, p. 348.

¹³⁴ Brown, Wallace, 1992, p.123; Sheridan, Richard, 1976, p. 634. Sheridan writes of the process of improving the interior, so that slaves could grow their own crops and help with the lack of provision at that time.

giving to the peoples of their colonies. St. Domingo was the first colony to gain its independence, not for its bloody uprising but for the fact that the majority of the slave population rose up against the ruling whites and overthrew a political system that was only maintained by hypocrisy and greed. The St. Domingo revolution clearly had huge implications for Jamaica, which geographically was only 60 miles to the East.

Whilst Jamaica was willing to accept refugees from this island, this was not without a degree of trepidation. The Jamaican planter feared the coloured and black population who came over with their masters would inflame their own slaves and incite revolution and fill the heads of their slaves with thoughts of liberty, equality and fraternity. Men of the military were suspicious of the French whites freedom to move around the country and survey the island's defenses without the knowledge of whether these persons were genuine refugees or spies of the new French system.

The French whites numbered 1,200 and the French blacks approximately 1,500, and their arrival caused a great deal of anxiety in Jamaica.¹³⁵ Such was the paranoia concerning black French slaves infiltrating Jamaica's slave population with thoughts of insurrection, that only 20 French slaves were allowed to reside outside of Kingston and the Parish of St. Andrew. Even the French in Kingston were seen as a security threat, and the tendency of the free French men of colour to set up secret societies did not promote confidence. Indeed the main instigator in setting up these societies, L. Esscroffrey, was brought to trial for inciting uprisings and generally undermining the peace of the island.¹³⁶ The number of French, whether black or white, again increased after the defeat of the French by Christophe in 1803, although numbers coming to Jamaica are not known.

Generally the French were peaceful and integrated into the population with little fuss, despite various encounters with less than honest English captains transporting and robbing, the French from St. Domingo.¹³⁷ The smooth integration of the French came about for several reasons. Firstly, the French that fled St. Domingo were wealthy and wished to maintain a system from which they had benefited and apply

¹³⁵ Bryan, Patrick, 'Émigrés Conflict and Reconciliation. The French émigrés in 19th Jamaica,' *Jamaican Journal* 1973, p. 14.

¹³⁶ Bryan, Patrick, 1973, p. 16. Esscroffrey was brought to trial for holding secret meetings that were of a subservient nature; no case could be proved against him.

¹³⁷ Yates Geoffrey, 1953, pp. 12-14.

it in their newly adopted country. Secondly, the indigenous white population profitted from the French presence, because of the French whites' knowledge of coffee cultivation and the ability of the French slaves to teach their Jamaican counterparts the skills involved proved advantageous. There was a subsequent increase in coffee production in the years after the French settled, which can be ascribed to them.¹³⁸

An increase in the production of coffee in the latter years of the eighteenth century has been clearly established, and that this was due to French migration. If such an influence can be seen in the production of coffee can we see similar influence in the style and form of objects that were seen after the French migration in Jamaica? Although the events in St. Domingo were very dramatic few white French nationals arrived in Jamaica, yet we still can find some evidence that their arrival introduced French forms to the island. It is known that the French coach maker Archibald Thomson practised his trade in Jamaica after leaving St. Domingo,¹³⁹ and we see French style armoires in Jamaica dating from the late eighteenth century (See Illustration 8). The French armoire, with its two large doors that dominate the front façade is a very different form to the English press, which has two doors in the upper portion and drawers in the lower section. Yet we see the armoire's appearance in Jamaica, but the term '*Armoire*' was not adopted, instead we see the introduction of the term '*wardrobe*' being commonly used (See Illustration 9).

¹³⁸ Bryan, Patrick, 1973, p. 17.

¹³⁹ Thomson, Archibald, Coach Maker, Probate, 1799. Archibald's probate clearly states that he was a former resident of St. Domingo, and debts owing include one large debt from the Commission or General of St. Domingo.



Illustration 8

Late eighteenth century Armoire found in Jamaica, it is typically French in its appearance, with its two full length doors and the barrel of the hinge exposed.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 9

English style press in Jamaica, circa 1800.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Jamaican advertisements and probates also begin to use the term wardrobe from 1790 onwards, however, the term 'press' continues to be in use and therefore the '*wardrobe*' is clearly a new form of furniture that was not common prior to 1790. In terms of timing and style it seems highly likely that the introduction of this object is linked to the arrivals of refugee from St. Domingo.

English Migration

Despite all these various nationalities entering Jamaica the white population remained stable and did not increase much until the early nineteenth century. In fact, as Breen states, '*the health conditions in Jamaica remained wretched throughout the entire eighteenth century*,' and it is this fact alone that kept the white population from expanding.¹⁴⁰ Men who came to the island wanted to become rich quickly and leave. Women as a proportion of the population were small, estimates calculate that they were two to three men for every woman,¹⁴¹ yet because of their numbers they had a remarkable amount of freedom and legal status which would not be equalled in London. In Jamaica women on the death of their husbands were entitled to a third share of the estate and this did not include gifts that may have been distributed prior to that death.¹⁴² In general, the European whites that came to Jamaica were essentially English males in their late teens to early twenties and were indentured to be tradesmen or were tradesmen already.¹⁴³ The majority of the white male population was English, and when viewing the origins of this group they appear to come from all parts of England.

In studying the furniture of Jamaica we may assume that the objects were first and foremost of English origin and design. Imports from London and '*the outports*' were significant and the fact many of the island's subjects were English, and many of the tradesmen were English trained may provide us with sufficient evidence to expect to see English furniture in Jamaica. The presence in Jamaica of furniture by prominent furniture makers such as Gillows and Morgan and Saunders reinforce the point lucidly and in viewing the furniture found in Jamaica today, we still see evidence of the English influence. Typical chest

¹⁴⁰ Breen, T. H., 1984, p. 210.

¹⁴¹ Burnard, Trevor, October 1996, p. 773.

¹⁴² Burnard, Trevor, January 1991, p. 94. Burnard, Carr and Walsh argue that women did benefit from the sugar society, Kulikoff, believes the planter society fortifies male dominance.

of drawers, sopha's, side chairs and tables that were available in England during the eighteenth century can be found, not only are they physically present but were also listed regularly in the probates and advertisements of the eighteenth century. These objects are important because they acted in the absence of design books as the patterns and prototypes for the local craftsmen in Jamaica. Evidence of objects such as the upholstered sopha that was relatively typical in many country homes in England is illustrated in a *Johnny Newcombe in Jamaica* caricature and this form of object is also to be found in Jamaica (See Illustration 10 & 11).¹⁴⁴ Similar objects, which have clear English models to work from can also be found in Jamaica, examples of D-end tables, ball and claw card tables, toilet commodes and tripod tables are a few that were identified. The English influence on the furniture in Jamaica was profound, most objects would be worked from English examples and a great number of the craftsmen making the furniture learnt their trade in England.

African Population

The majority of the population of Jamaica was black. Estimates suggest that roughly 90% of the population were slaves with the remaining ten percent white, and with a small number of mulattos.¹⁴⁵ The mulatto population was an awkward and politically sensitive portion of society to officially recognise in law. The Assembly did not ban intermarriage, nor condemn concubinage with slave women, for to do so would have meant placing a large number of the legislature at odds with the law.¹⁴⁶ Instead like other

¹⁴³ Burnard, Trevor, October, 1996, pp. 789-791.

¹⁴⁴ Edwards, Ralph, 1966, pp. 454-455.

¹⁴⁵ Fernardo, Henriques, MacGibbow & Kee, 1968, p. 44. Henriques states the population in 1791 was divided thus, 30,000 whites, 10,000 freed negroes and men of colour, 1,400 maroons and 250,000 black slaves. Making a total of 291,400. In a newspaper article, no date known, the white population was estimated to be approximately 23,000 in 1788.

¹⁴⁶ Dunn, Richard, 'A Tale of Two Plantations; Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia, 1799-1828,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, January 1977. In this article Dunn discusses and proves that the percentage of mulatto children in Jamaica were significantly higher than in Virginia. It appeared to be acceptable to have interracial relations in Jamaica whereas in Virginia there was evidence that products of such relations did not live long.

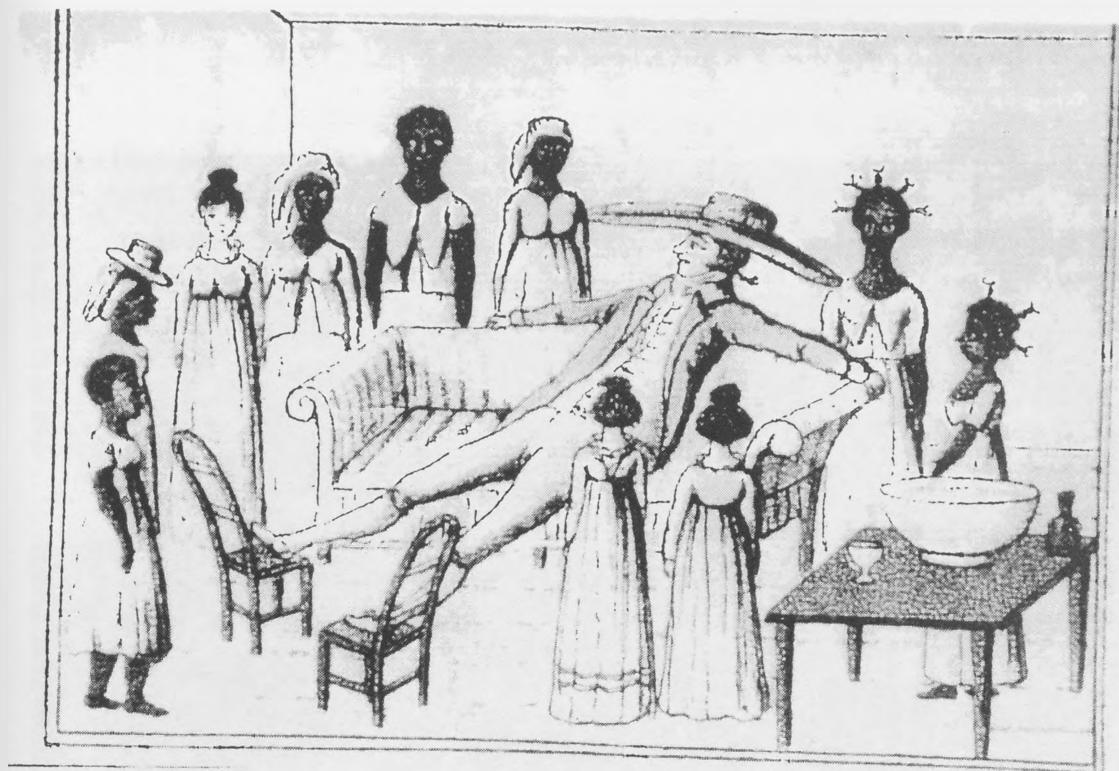


Illustration 10, Johnny Newcombe in the West Indies,
Johnny is seen here reclining on a sopha similar to one found in Jamaica.

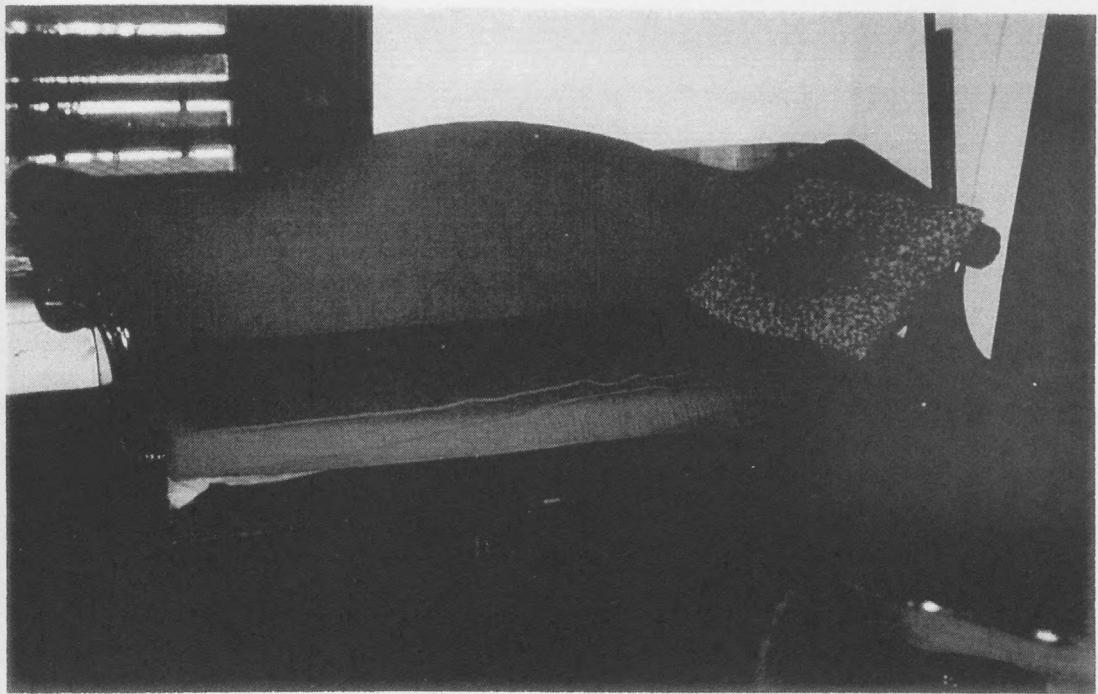


Illustration 11, Sopha found in Jamaica,

that is similar to that seen in Illustration 10.

Private Collection.

Caribbean islands the law simply ignored the situation. Miscegenation on the American continent, however, was condemned and made unlawful by nearly all the American colonies.¹⁴⁷ Yet despite the intimacy between planter and black concubine the white population of the colony invented an elaborate terminology to make definitions distinct between black and mulatto and, more significantly between mulatto and white. While a mulatto was the product of a white and black person, the terminology of the differing degrees of removal from black or white was carefully distinguished. It was only after the dilution of black blood into a person was one eighth that the child, known as a musteffino, was recognised as being free and ranked as white.¹⁴⁸

Although the white male population indulged in these affairs with remarkable candour,¹⁴⁹ the effects of miscegenation meant that the mulatto's status began to increase to a worrying pitch for some whites. Clearly the product of a liaison between master and servant was treated better than a slave and generally the perception was that mulattos did not work the land, but were more likely to work in a trade or as house servants.¹⁵⁰ As early as the 1730s the mulatto population was given various rights by the passing of private acts in the House of Assembly, particularly the right to inherit. However, such was the wealth mulattos were able to generate through their own efforts, and the fortunes they were left by their fathers, that the Assembly chose to act and to reduce their status to its near former level. In 1763 mulattos in total were estimated to have accumulated wealth in excess of two to three million pounds. White tradesmen found that they were at a disadvantage, or more likely intimidated, by this wealth and sought a change in the law, which was granted in the same year. The white perception of the mulatto population was that they were too snobbish and the whites referred to them as '*half gentry*,' and from the slave perspective the mulattos were collaborators.¹⁵¹ After 1763 only £1,200 of assets could pass to mulattos or freedmen from whites,¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Jordan, Winthrop, 'American Chiaroscuro; The Status and Definition of Mulattos in the British Colonies,' *William & Mary Quarterly*, April 1962, pp. 193-194.

¹⁴⁸ Fernando, Henriques, MacGibbow & Kee:1968, p. 45. Mulatto are the off spring of white and black, Quadroons the offspring of white and mulattos, Mustees the offspring of white and Quadroons, and a child of a Mustee is called a Musteffino. Mulatto and a Black offspring was a Sambo.

¹⁴⁹ Jordan, Winthrop, April 1962, p. 194; Wright P., Ed., 20TH November 1802.

¹⁵⁰ Morgan, Philip, 'Slaves & Livestock in Eighteenth Century Jamaica,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, January 1995, p. 57; Dunn, Richard, 'A Tale of Two Plantations; Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia, 1799-1828,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, January 1977, p. 49.

¹⁵¹ Jordan Winthrop, April 1962, p. 187. There is also a description in the *South Carolina Gazette*, March 22, 1735, that enforces this perception.

¹⁵² Fernando, Henriques, MacGibbow & Kee, 1968, Chap II, p. 42. This book states the law changed in 1763, whilst Winthrop Jordan, April 1962, pp. 198-199, states the change in law came in 1761.

and it was only as late as 1816 that manumission was decreed legal as a method of freeing a slave after the death of the master.¹⁵³ By these methods freedmen and mulattos were kept at a distance, but the private lives of the whites were allowed to continue without intrusion.

While the freedmen of colour were given more rights the contempt for the black population from the white Jamaicans was unrelenting throughout the eighteenth century and even continued beyond emancipation. The lecture on the *Negro and Jamaica* given by Arthur Bedford Pinn at the Anthropological Society in London, in 1866, was perhaps a true and disturbing insight into how some of the white population thought of their former slaves.¹⁵⁴ In Bridges' *Annals of Jamaica*, he gives a remarkable account of the history, traditions and culture of the island, but he also gives a remarkably frank account of his own views of the black population.¹⁵⁵ Not only were the slaves treated cruelly physically, but also by the writer's pen. Fear of the slaves' capability led many to write such propaganda against them, and certainly after emancipation that physical fear still existed when the Assembly voted to bring whites in from Britain and Germany rather than let the interior land grants be sold to former slaves.¹⁵⁶

The relationship between slave and white was always strained. While the planters could enforce differences at will by issuing punishment for incompetence, laziness, or inability, those tradesmen who worked closely with the slave population felt more vulnerable. This was particularly so with several black slave craftsmen who worked in Kingston and were able to compete with their white counterparts.¹⁵⁷ In the *Journals of the Assembly* of 1797 there was much discussion about the fact that these white craftsmen thought the trained slaves were stealing work from them, or working hard on their day off and were therefore tired on Monday morning.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ It was not until 1824 that free blacks and people of colour were allowed to give evidence in court against whites.

¹⁵⁴ Bedford Pinn, Arthur, 1971, p.5. The description that is relayed in the speech is broadly taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1797. The actual text is too offensive to record here.

¹⁵⁵ Bridges, B. W., 1968, pp. 90-91, 400-4. The author gives a bleak and damning account of the behaviour of the slave and their attitudes!

¹⁵⁶ Hall, Douglas, Part 1, 1974, pp. 48-54, Part 2, 1975, pp. 2-9.

¹⁵⁷ Francis Moore was a black tradesman working in Kingston in the 1730s, John Satia became a Freeman of the City of London after completing his apprenticeship in London.

¹⁵⁸ *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica* Vol. VI, 1766-1776, 1797, pp. 163, 414, 417, 441, 442, 443, 445, 448, 457, 459, 460, 461, 475, 476, 491.

Relationships between master and slave on the estates and plantations in Jamaica were just as difficult as those were in the workshops of Kingston. Occasionally there are accounts of slaves receiving presents from overseers and masters, but these were usually for services rendered. Mr. Thistlewood the overseer of the Vineyard estate rewarded Marina his regular bed partner with many gifts culminating in the construction of a small house. On the same estate his mulatto driver Dick also benefited from numerous gifts after helping the rather green overseer go hunting and acquiring other skills required during his tenureship.¹⁵⁹ If slaves wished to buy goods, then they most certainly had to work for any money, as planters did not give money to the regular slaves. Most slaves were able to farm the meagre lands they were given on Sundays and with the goods produced they were able to consumer or barter for other processions. It is unfortunate that the level of this trading is not recorded in surviving documents and therefore the scale and extent of this barter exchange remains unknown.

The significant contribution of the slaves to the furniture trade can never be fully understood as there is little documentary and visual evidence that would illustrate accurately their efforts. However, there are a number of surviving Jamaican objects that are curious and that obviously were not made by a person trained in furniture making. These objects could be examples of slave workmanship. Clearly, there would have been white as well as black untrained woodworkers making furniture, but would a white unskilled worker have a greater understanding of western furniture making techniques than a slave? The white unskilled maker would have produced naïve and clumsy work, but its structure would have been identifiable. However, a black slave's attempt to make furniture would show very different methods of construction, form and decoration. An example is provided by an early nineteenth century sopha table, which although its western style can easily be determined, its construction is very unconventional as is its decoration (See Illustration 12 A & B). However, this table is far from crude indeed its ability to be easily dismantled and its surface decoration demonstrate the work of a skilled craftsman. This sopha table could have been constructed by a white craftsman, but its cabinet work and its inlaid table top suggest otherwise.

¹⁵⁹ Morgan, Philip, 1995, pp. 57-59, 65-66.

The table top is said to be typical of African fertility symbols and consequently the table may well have been a gift to a prominent black or mulatto couple on the occasion of their wedding.¹⁶⁰

The notion that slaves just made crude furniture is inaccurate. While for their own comfort slaves would have been limited by the materials and tools available to them, those working in the white furniture makers' workshops may have made fine furniture and those making objects for their white masters would have used and had access to good materials. Whilst little physical evidence survives of this category of object in Jamaica we do see examples at Preston Park, North Carolina. At Preston Park are two presses constructed by the estates slave carpenter, these items were made from mahogany and demonstrate the slave had an excellent understanding of western furniture making skills. The master of the estate clearly considered the articles to be fine pieces as they were good enough to be housed in the entrance hall of Preston Park. Objects such as these are rare, trying to find such examples as these was not possible in Jamaica, but the fact they do exist elsewhere illustrates the possibility that they were made in other slave cultures. When studying vernacular or crudely made furniture found in Jamaica it is important that we do not assume that they were slave objects or made by slaves, these pieces were utilitarian pieces that could have just as easily been made for and by the unskilled white worker as the slave. Similarly objects that are more sophisticated, but do not follow typical furniture making conventions should also be viewed in a similar manner.

Summary

Jamaica, despite many external events, such as war and political interference proved to have a buoyant and profitable economy throughout the eighteenth century. It was a naturally rich island, which suffered less than other islands during the subsistence crisis, but eventually was unable to sustain its peoples because of the natural disasters that hit the island in the 1780s. Jamaica was not only contributing to the mother country's wealth, but was in fact responsible for a large part of its wealth for much of the eighteenth century, as can be seen in the large estates that were developing in England from the wealth generated in the colony. This economic wealth brought with it a substantial rise in the standard of living for those related

¹⁶⁰ Several furniture dealers and historians studying Afro-American culture have indicated that the top can be read in this manner.

to the sugar trade. However, the wealth generated by the sugar trade was only so easily exported and therefore the production of sugar had a reduced impact on the lives of the inhabitants of the island. Even with the large portion of the sugar money leaving Jamaica the island became very wealthy. Certainly, those several hundred planters that remained on the island lived like princes, and those that serviced this trade must also surely have benefited too. Although great wealth was apparent in Kingston and the outlying parishes the fear of slave rebellion and foreign attack was a constant thorn in the side of the white population. To counter such attacks a standing army was constantly present with a militia ready to be called up to protect the island from such threats. To maintain the militia a loyal white population had to be present and the replenishment of the white population was seen as essential. Disease, intemperance, diet and the climate took their toll on the mortality of the islanders and throughout the colonial period the maintaining of the white population was a problem and life was precarious. While the white population only managed to sustain its numbers, the continuance of the slave trade meant the black population increased dramatically.

Although the white population barely managed to double over the whole of the eighteenth century the wealth of these white colonials increased substantially and the standard of living of the inhabitants reflects that prosperity, by the growth in the consumption of manufactured goods.

The legislature of Jamaica appears to have had a constant problem of enticing whites to the island. Free passage and a bounty were introduced for a short period, and later revolution in America and St Domingo also sought to maintain the white population. Yet despite these influxes the assembly was concerned about white numbers. The Deficiency Law and incentives for tradesmen clearly indicate that there was a lack of craftsmen on the island, and the effect of this skill shortage is important when examining the furniture trade.

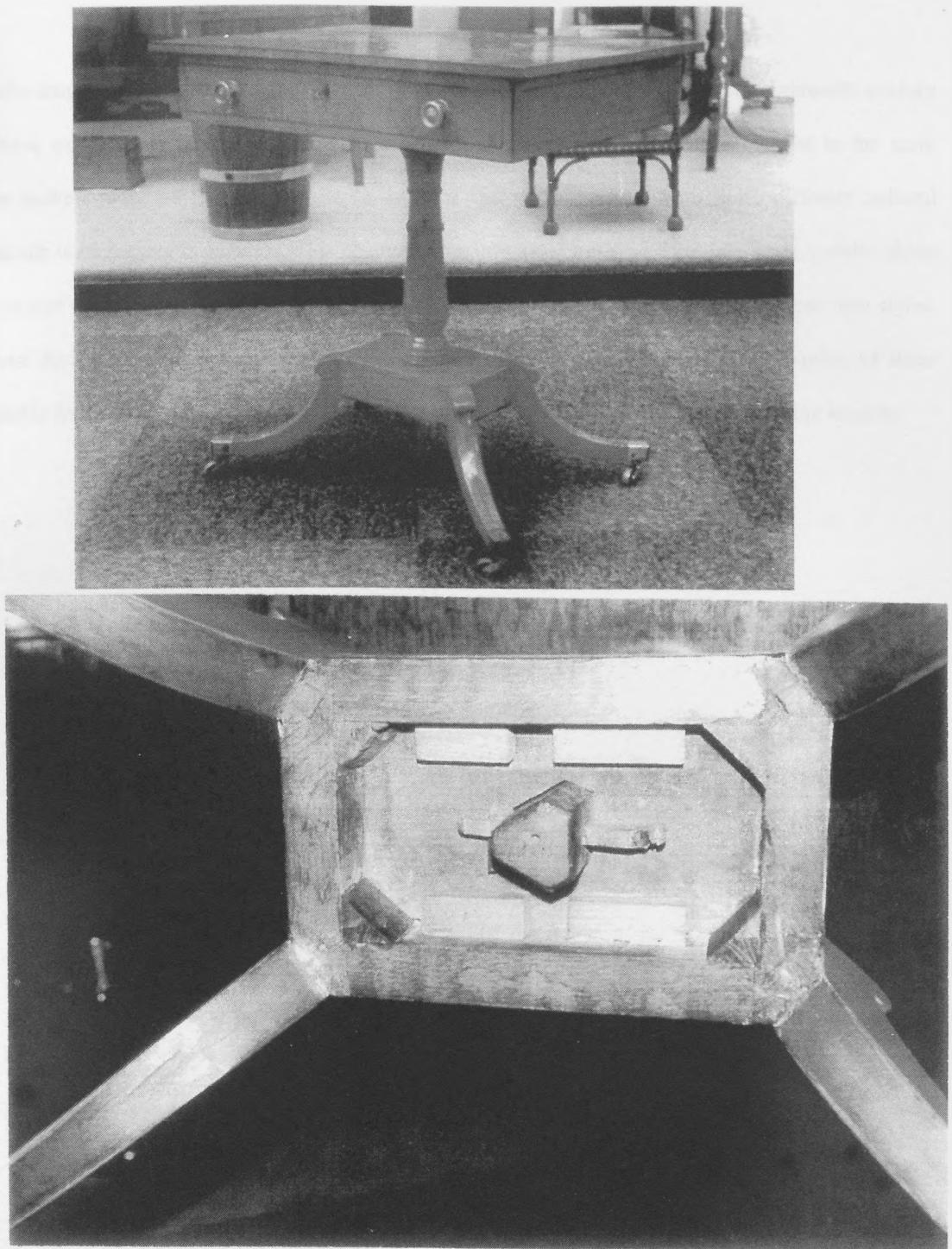


Illustration 12 A & B

Yacca wood table, circa 1820,

this table is unconventional in its construction and can be taken apart easily.

Photographed by the author, Olympia Antique Fair, 1997, Lenox Cato, London.

It has also been demonstrated that the different peoples arriving in Jamaica over the eighteenth century would have exposed the Jamaican consumer to other styles, forms and decoration. Whilst in the main furniture makers were of English descent, it is clear that often makers from quite different cultural backgrounds were present in Jamaica. This cosmopolitan influx not only gave the consumer a wider chose of objects and styles to purchase, but the indigeneous furniture makers would have seen these new styles, forms and designs and tried to emulate them. It is this crossing of cultures and the adapting of these recognisable forms which makes us realise that Jamaican furniture has a different and definable identity.

Chapter Two

Life Style and Objects

In this chapter the architecture in Jamaica will be analysed to see if it conforms to the British model of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. If the ~~trews~~ of Britain were followed then how did the colonial residence adapt to the Caribbean climate and society, and was the architecture suitable for or compatible with that way of life? Answering this will help our understanding of how people in town and plantation houses organised or adapted, their living spaces, and the objects that went into them. If we can ascertain the level of comfort in the colonial residence then we may be able to understand more about their attitudes towards the purchase and possession of furniture. Did colonial whites hang on to vestiges of '*Old England*' or did they exchange objects and customs that were related to the '*mother country*,' for habits and a style of living that was more suitable to the tropical and colonial life?

Creolisation was the process of adapting ideas and forms to fit in with the tropical colonial life, and this chapter will attempt to access how far creolisation extended. Although creolising could be just seen as colonials adjusting to the local climate and learning a pidgin English, it was actually a rejection of the customs of Britain and the developing of a different set of values, in order to establish a more comfortable and suitable method of living. This chapter explores that evolution in both the architecture and the furnishing of the colonial home. While life in Jamaica may have been precarious, colonials would have attempted to build a comfortable life, while this issue spanned society, did merchant, shopkeeper and planter all have the same aspirations, or was everyone just looking to make money and leave the island quickly? If the merchant, shopkeeper and planter were interested in more than profit, then what were they prepared to spend their money on and what standard of living was deemed acceptable?

Levels of comfort and prosperity of the white colonials in Jamaica can be calculated via the goods available at the time, and the extent to which they mimicked their British counterparts. Were the social spaces in the home put to the same use as their counterparts in Britain, or did the interior design and architecture of Jamaican homes evolve to embrace a less formal approach to eating, sleeping or entertaining? If we can

interpret how rooms were used and how interior architecture evolved, in the Jamaican home, then we can look at the furnishings and furniture to see if they developed in the same manner.

Understanding the level of sophistication of the Jamaican interior can help in the interpretation of consumer expectations, of the furniture they desired, and what makers and retailers were expected to supply. This is important in placing the Jamaican furniture trade in context. If the consumer had no aspirations to own fashionable furniture, then the makers would have felt no urgency in supplying such stock. However, if the customer was very aware of styles and trends in London, and there was a rapid transference of ideas and design from Britain to Jamaica, then the furniture trade in Jamaica would have responded to these demands. It has already been established that the island was wealthy, therefore the means were available to promote fashionable and comfortable living, but do the range, design, and quantity of furniture reinforce this?

Once consumer demand has been explored we can then examine how the furniture trade in Jamaica responded. Provenanced objects in combination with documentary evidence may provide a clearer picture of the furniture makers' response in terms of the dissemination of design. Evidence from both artefacts and documentary material will be used to determine how quickly design, fashion and taste transferred across the Atlantic, and what effect this had on the colony and its furniture trade.

The slave contingent which made up the largest single group of the population, certainly had a different standard of living to the white population, and were the least able to play a part in the consumer market. Their world of goods was limited and remains virtually invisible to us. To what extent was the black population concerned with material comfort, despite a system that was so discriminating and cruel? Is there evidence to suggest that housing remained in families for generations and that wealth could be accumulated over a period of time? Given that there is a lack of material we can not answer many of these questions so this chapter concentrates on the white population and how it lived. Only when this has been studied can we juxtapose the material comfort of the whites against that which is known about the black population.



Illustration 13

Lord Rodney's Memorial, 1780s, sculptor John Bacon.

Sangster, Ian, Jamaica, 1973, Ernest Benn, London, p. 52.

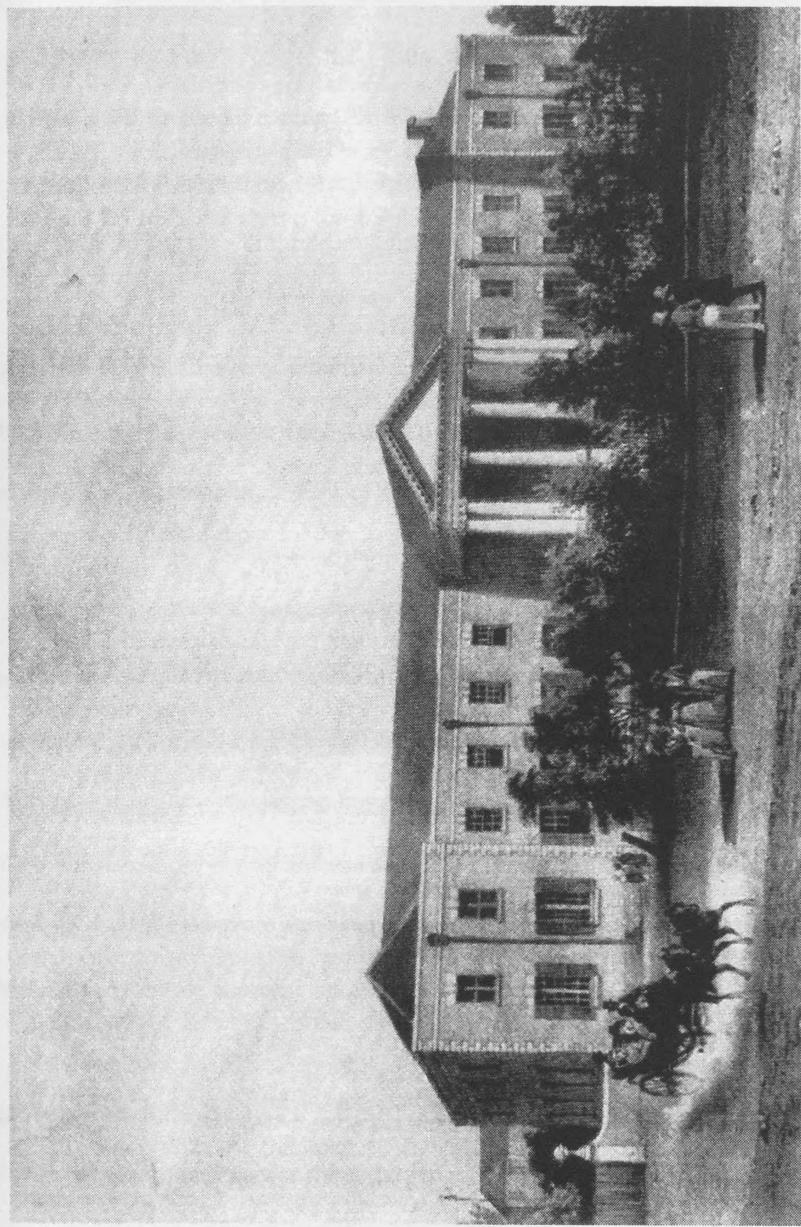


Illustration 14

Painting of the King's House, the building was completed in the 1760s, and was the largest colonial governor's residence of its day.

Wright, Philip, Ed., *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 1966, p. 10.

Public architecture

Investment in architecture, particularly in the public sphere, has always influenced the domestic space. Public buildings were erected not only as symbols of the oligarchy's confidence in, and hopes for the prosperity of the community, but also to give the citizen a sense of permanence and pride. However in Jamaica, the construction of public buildings came relatively late. The public buildings in Spanish Town, were completed from the 1760s to the 1780s, while some of the great plantation houses were being built as early as the late seventeenth century.¹⁶¹ Yet in terms of colonial settlement the public buildings of Jamaica were significant and important contributions. These public buildings were also testimony to the wealth and importance of Jamaica in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Kingston, the main port and commercial capital, is on the Liguanea plain, which lies between the sea and the Blue Mountains. Spanish Town, the capital, is 18 miles inland from Kingston and requires travelling across this plain. By the first years of the nineteenth century travellers en route to Spanish Town would have had the experience of crossing the first pre-fabricated iron bridge to be seen in the Americas, shipped from Colebrookdale.¹⁶² On arriving in Spanish Town one would have been aware of how uncomfortable and hot the capital was and that it did not benefit from sea breezes at night, like Kingston. Most residents only wished to visit when the House of Assembly sat and when the Governor was holding court.¹⁶³ During this short period the town would be bustling,¹⁶⁴ and once the Assembly rose for the Season the town would be left to the Governor, his retainers and court officials. In general Spanish Town was laid out just like Kingston, in a grid pattern at the centre of which was King's Square, which was greatly enhanced by several notable public buildings.

The great architectural feats of the British colonial period in Jamaica were all built in King's Square: the King's House was placed to the west, the House of Assembly to the east, Lord Rodney's memorial to the north and the Courts of Justice to the south. The English sculptor John Bacon 'created' the memorial,

¹⁶¹ The architectural feats in Spanish town were built in the second half of the eighteenth century in comparison to the construction of the great plantation houses.

¹⁶² Curtin, M., 1991, pp. 49-50. The pre-fabricated bridge was brought to Jamaica in segments and erected in 1801, and was the first to be built in the Americas.

¹⁶³ The Assembly and Court sat between October and December.

which was commissioned by a grateful Jamaica after Lord Rodney defeated the French, under the command of Count de Grasse in 1782, and prevented the island from being captured. (See Illustration 14) The larger than life statue remains not only a ringing tribute to Lord Rodney, but was also an outstanding statement on the state of Jamaica's wealth at the time. However, not all who surveyed Bacon's work thought it was so magnificent, the Frenchman Edouard de Montule stated '*It [the sculpture] is set up under some kind of vault, probably destined originally for some other object, and this position prevents its being viewed in its true perspective. I should say also that it has the default of many other fine statues: it is clothed and draped in the Roman style...*'¹⁶⁵ Whether this was genuine criticism, or sour grapes, is unknown, but the positioning of the sculpture in a fine classical square must have been a spectacular sight in the Americas in the late eighteenth century. The classical style of the sculptor also gives an indication of how the island's leaders perceived the importance of the island and their concern that its capital should reflect that position.

Despite the importance of Bacon's sculpture of Lord Rodney, the most impressive structure and largest building in the Americas was the King's House, which was the Governor's Official Residence,¹⁶⁶ and was first conceived by Governor Trelawney who was in office between 1739 and 1751.¹⁶⁷ Despite the early planning of the building it was not completed until the arrival of Governor Lyttleton in 1762, who became its first resident.¹⁶⁸ The land on which the new house was to be built was cleared between 1743–48 and construction began as early as 1749 (See Illustration 14). The Assembly agreed plans for the interior and façade in the late 1750s, and the building was completed some three years later at considerable expense, costing the islanders some 30,000l. local currency.¹⁶⁹ Like the memorial to Lord Rodney this building was a large and important structure that signified the economic and political strength of the island.

⁵⁴ Vendue master's would hold auctions every day.

⁵⁵ Seeber, Edward D., 1951, p. 62; Curtin, M., 1991, p. 48.

⁵⁶ The House burnt down in 1925.

⁵⁷ Edward Trelawney, Governor, 1738–1751.

⁵⁸ Lyttleton when he arrived was important in decorating the house, including commissioning furniture from Britain and from local craftsmen, see in later chapters.

⁵⁹ Colley, Linda, 1992, p. 212; Acworth, A. C., 1949, p. 6. In this work the author incorporates Edward Long's description of King's House in 1774. The cost of building the King's House in Spanish Town, was roughly half the amount King George III spent renovating Buckingham House, later Palace, in the 1780s.

The impression such a building must have made, with the long facade running 200 feet and a further 60 feet when the offices and yards were added, would have been awe inspiring. The central portico gives an air of grandeur to the whole building and very successfully breaks the length of the front elevation. On completion, the King's House became the largest colonial Governor's Residence in the Americas. Tryon's palace in New Bern, North Carolina measured 82 by 52 feet, and was probably the only comparable colonial residence at that time. The planning of Tryon began as early as the 1740s, but it was not completed until October 1770 and some eight years after that was half the size of the King's House.¹

These fine public buildings represented the pinnacle of public architecture to be seen on the island. It is also true that some fine feats of engineering took place in defending Jamaica, but these buildings can not be construed as important in terms of the development of architecture on the island. Bacon's sculpture, the Iron Bridge and the King's House were all magnificent displays of wealth, engineering and style. Did these public edifices inspire and influence the colonials to build fine homes that were stylish and reflected their own personal wealth and western European ideas?

Town housing

The houses of Spanish Town and Kingston were generally modest and were initially two storied and usually made of brick and wood and painted to reflect the heat of the sun.² Above the colonnades were galleries for those living above, enclosed by shutters, called jalousies, which while giving privacy also allowed the air to circulate freely within the houses. However, two storied buildings due to their inability to withstand the more fierce effects of the weather, were being replaced by single storied houses. Charles Leslie, as early as 1731, talks of these two storied houses as becoming scarce, as they were '*disapproved of, because they seldom are known to stand the shock of an earthquake, or the fury of a storm.*'³

¹ Young, Joanna, 1992, p. 19.

² Whilst a majority of the old colonial houses in Kingston have been destroyed, by development and the 1907 earthquake, the town of Falmouth remains intact and contains many two storied houses, as described above.

³ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 31.



Illustration 15

Adolphe Duperly, Daguerrotype of Market Street, Falmouth, 1860.

Courtesy of the Facey/Boswell Trust.

In Adolphe Duperly's daguerreotype of Falmouth (See Illustration 15), circa 1860, the two storied buildings still dominated the main street and it would be a number of years before they were completely replaced by single floored buildings, which were thought to be sturdier. Planters probably only held small properties in Spanish Town and generally a gentleman's house had five to six rooms and were not two storied, but single block buildings instead.¹⁷³ With the absence of the double storied dwellings the streets were less shaded and trees appear to have taken their place in sheltering the pedestrian. Edouard de Montule commented on the greenery of the trees, and the shade they provided, in 1778. He mentioned that the foliage was often the colour of the latticed galleries.¹⁷⁴ Some 50 years later a more critical Englishman observed that Kingston had not improved, on close inspection, and stated that the houses on the streets were insignificant and the more substantial buildings were hidden behind walls or by trees.¹⁷⁵

While those elected to the Assembly, its servants and officials were confined to living in Spanish Town for the duration of the Season, those residents of Kingston who could leave the town for the hills, did. Kingston as well as being prone to earthquakes, was hot and dusty, and therefore those that could afford to did not live in the town during the heat of the day. As Montule wrote, the merchants had their shops in the town, but lived on the edge of Kingston. In a letter written by him in December 1778, he states, '*The shops of the wealthy merchants are in the centre and on the port, while their houses are at the extreme edge of the city,*' and goes on to say that many wealthy Kingston merchants '*live for the most part outside of the town on their plantations or their country houses, and early in the cool morning they come in their carriages to their shops in Kingston. At 9 o'clock having accomplished their business, they go to the café where they remain all day, returning home at night in the cool of the evening.*'¹⁷⁶

The houses the merchants retired to each evening were known as penns, and were usually on the edge of the town or on the higher land overlooking Kingston where the weather was a little more forgiving. William Cynic toured Jamaica in 1823 and commented that '*the neighbouring country is thronged with pretty villas which are called penn's, the residence of the merchants and shop keepers, who pass the day in*

¹⁷³ Kelly, James, 1831, p. 30.

¹⁷⁴ Seeber, Edward D., 1951, p. 34.

¹⁷⁵ Froude, James Anthony, 1888, p. 209.

¹⁷⁶ Seeber, Edward D., 1951, p. 36.

*their stores and resort to them as soon as business is over.*¹⁷⁷ Even the Governor had a penn to retreat to if the heat of the summer became too oppressive. While these penns were not on the grand scale of the plantation homes, they were comfortable single storied buildings and not dissimilar to those in the towns except in terms of location (See Illustration 16 & 21).

The merchant William Lodge, who died in 1714, probably lived in a penn on the outskirts of Kingston.¹⁷⁸ He, his child and brother lived in a seven room penn, and as well as the type of furnishing being listed such as tables, chairs and beds we see other superfluous objects such as the parrot and its cage, a clock and a buffet. However this property was modest compared with the luxuriously appointed accommodation of the planter Nicholas Burke, whose penn was very well furnished.¹⁷⁹ The penn, which had three bedchambers each housing a four poster bed, had three reception rooms and boasted objects such as a '*mahogany carved tea table with a sett of tea china*' and sconces in '*guilt frames*'. There is clearly some distinction to be made between the penns that were located on the edge of Kingston and Spanish Town and the accommodation that was available for the tradesmen, shopkeepers and those that could not afford to escape the town centres.

Ascertaining even the number of rooms let alone their contents, for those who lived in towns has proved difficult. Generally these homes would have belonged to the materially poor, and the probates do not list their possessions by room, but rather in one short list, perhaps suggesting that they lived in only one or two rooms. Many tradesmen appear to be included amongst this group, the joiner Peter Galliard had listed in his probate of 1745 only two beds, two chairs and a table. Fifty years later, in 1793, the probate of the tailor James Reid comprised a similarly meagre list of contents, but with the addition of a backgammon table.¹⁸⁰ The material goods of these two tradesmen were very limited and this would suggest that their living accommodation was reduced to a room or two. Other tradesmen appear to have been more comfortable like the glazier Robert Scrivan in 1736, who seemingly lived above his shop on Harbour Street

¹⁷⁷ Cynic, William R., 1826, p. 222.

¹⁷⁸ William Lodge, Merchant, Probate, 1714.

¹⁷⁹ Nicholas Burke, Esquire, Probate, 1771.

¹⁸⁰ Peter Galliard, Joiner, Probate, 1746; James Reid, Taylor, Probate, 1793.

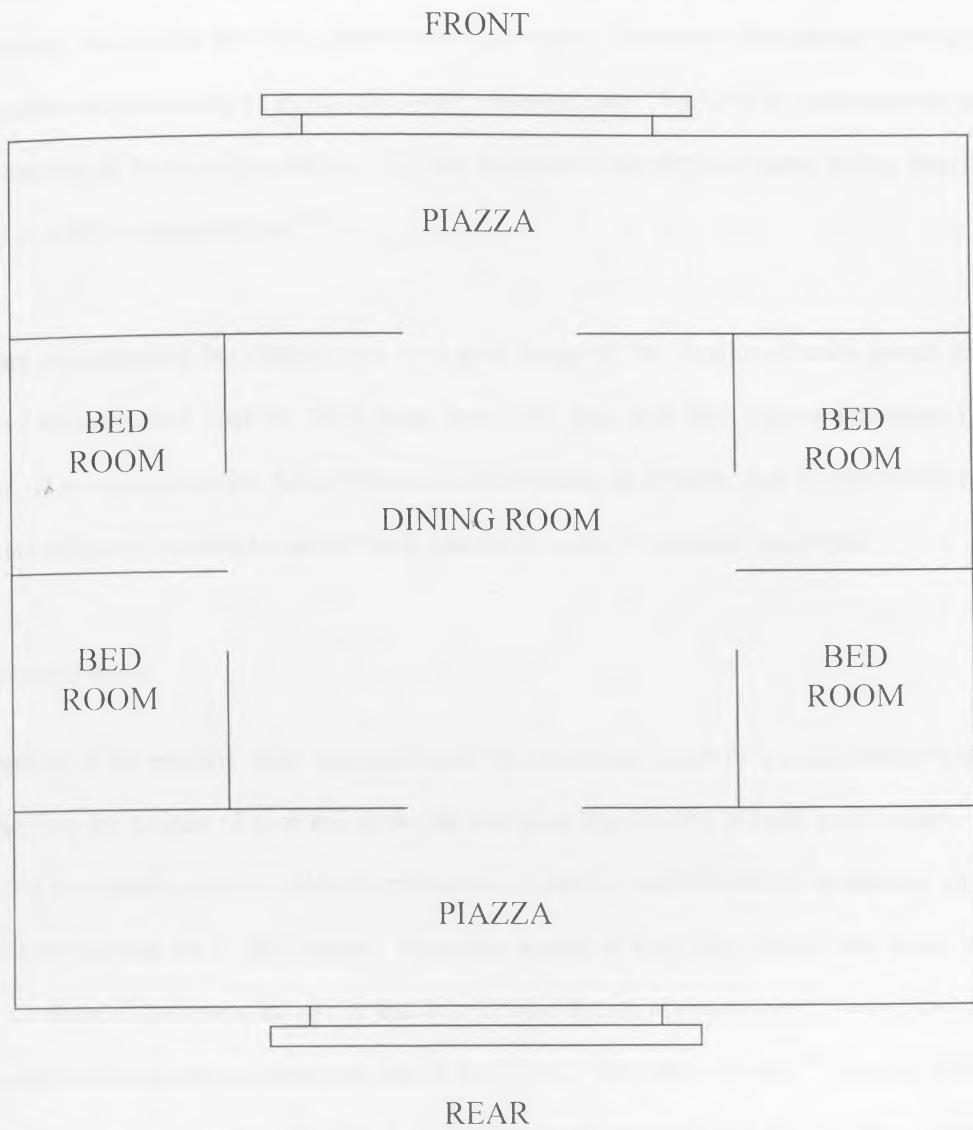


Illustration 16

Plan of a typical penn. Note that the design centres around the dining room in the middle of the house and from which all other rooms extend. This plan is based on Bromley and Greenwood Penns.

in Kingston.¹⁸¹ In this probate is listed a bathroom, hall and chamber along with a kitchen. These rooms were adequately furnished with prints and furniture, and a modest level of comfort is evident in the description of the objects that were placed in the apartment. However, descriptions relating to the size, configuration and decoration of pens and town houses are rare. We have no contemporary commentary on the interiors of these houses and can only use probates to identify how many rooms there were and if these were richly furnished or not.¹⁸²

Surviving paintings and descriptions give us a good image of the exterior of town houses and what the streets of Kingston and Spanish Town must have been like, and they suggest that these houses were modest. If we are to look for the architectural achievements in Jamaica then we should not search in the towns, but rather seek out the houses of those who made money from sugar and slaves.

The plantation houses

The standing of the planters, their aspirations and the enormous wealth they accumulated meant that they were not only the arbiters of taste and style, but also used their money to build great houses. The King's House is a remarkable piece of colonial architecture, however, public buildings in Jamaica were following the precedent already set by the planters. Plantation houses of huge proportions were being built decades before the King's House was complete, and it is to these houses we need to turn to discover the domestic architectural development and achievements of the island. As Leslie indicates,¹⁸³ prior to 1755 there were few fine buildings in the towns of Jamaica. The public buildings were neat, but not fine. However, in the countryside there are ruins as well as complete structures from the first half of the eighteenth century. These early buildings can only be described as grand in scale, and very fine buildings of their type, Colbeck Castle, Stokes Hall and Seville House are but three that fall into this category.¹⁸⁴ Colbeck Castle was the most magnificent in terms of scale (See Illustration 17), although some questions have been raised as to

¹⁸¹ Robert Scrivan, Glazier, Probate, 1736.

¹⁸² The examples given either describe the contents of each room in the probate or they list the household possessions separately from the stock in trade. In making an arbitrary selection in this way we may gain some insight, albeit unscientifically, into the accommodation of those that lived in the pens around Kingston and Spanish Town.

¹⁸³ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 78.

¹⁸⁴ Friends of the Georgian Society of Jamaica, Newsletter, June 1998, p. 3; December 1996, p. 1, 4. Colbeck Castle is thought to have been built between 1675 to 1720, and Stokes Hall has recently been dated as, also being of the latter date. Higman, B. W., 1988, p. 5. In his book he gives the number 393 plantation houses for 1832.

whether the house was ever completed and lived in.¹⁸⁵ This question aside, the intention of the owner to build such a grandiose structure reflects the economic importance and confidence that had been growing on the island since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The building of these large plantation houses illustrates the faith of the planter in the ability to make money, and that settlement was not going to be temporary. This optimism was also not so apparent in the administrators of the island who, for another thirty or forty years, lacked such confidence, and only constructed buildings for defence purposes. An example can be seen in the works executed on various forts around the island including Fort George and Fort Charles.¹⁸⁶

Colbeck Castle, in plan, measured 94 by 83 feet, and was built of local stone with quoins of red brick.¹⁸⁷ The building was over three floors, with substantial towers at the four corners. There is no doubting the grandeur of the project, it was certainly the largest domestic building proposed in the Caribbean at the time. Stokes Hall, another stone structure, on a smaller scale to Colbeck Castle, also has stone towers in each corner and a stone first floor, which had an arched façade that was built for defensive rather than aesthetic reasons (See Illustration 17). Morant Bay was close to Stokes Hall, which had been the landing point of the French under General Du Casse in 1694, which precipitated the need for defensive buildings. It is thought that these buildings were both rallying points for the militia and used as forts if required.¹⁸⁸ This theory is reinforced by the fact that Stokes Hall had small narrow windows, called loopholes, in the towers. Stone platforms to rural houses in the early eighteenth century were common, and loopholes were prevalent in these platformed buildings along this coastline. Only after threats of invasion had become more remote did loopholes and defensive structures cease to be a feature of the local architecture.

In response to the physical and psychological insecurity of living in Jamaica at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the owners of the plantations made sure their homes were on the tops of hills or in clearings providing views of the surrounding countryside. These structures were usually made of brick and in essence were identical in terms of design, form and scale to their English models, despite the difference

¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 33.

¹⁸⁶ Black, Clinton, 1988, p. 78.

¹⁸⁷ This is an interesting feature, as it is usually the case when the reverse is true, the house being built of red brick and the quoin was dressed in stone.

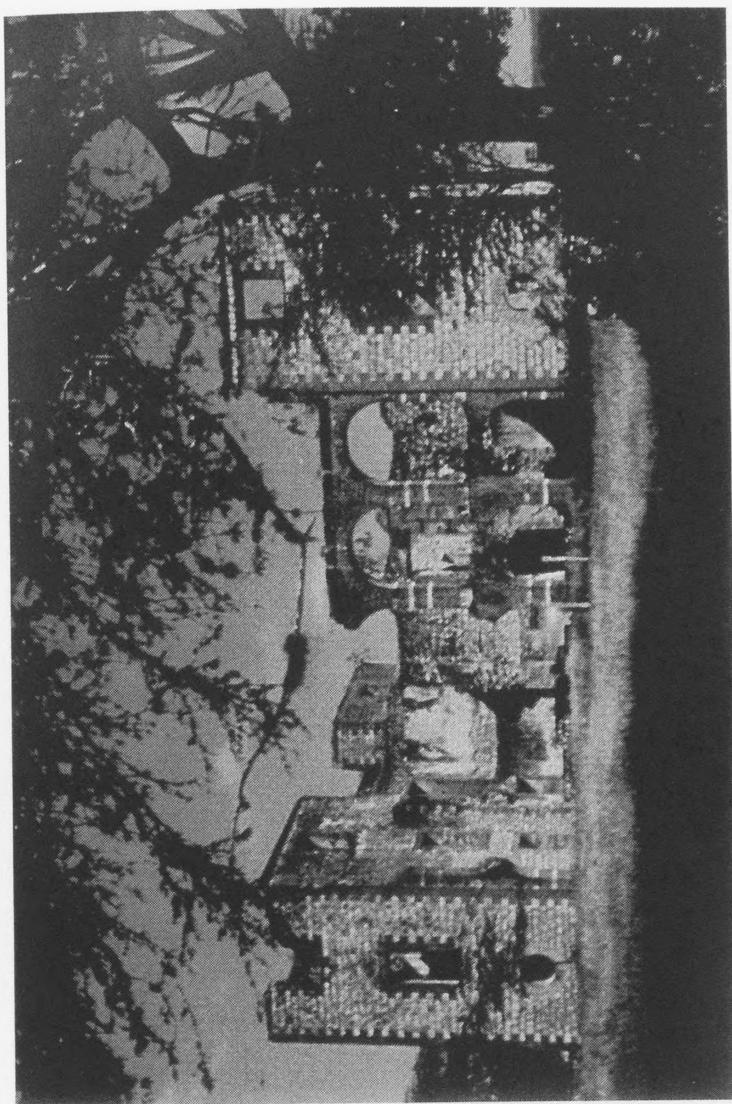


Illustration 17

Colbeck Castle, Jamaica, with its four stone turreted corners.

Blake, Evon, Beautiful Jamaica, 1971, Vista Publications.

¹⁸⁸ Higman B. W., 1988, p. 232.



Illustration 18

Stokes Hall, is placed on a hill top and has stone turreted corners.

Curtin, M., Ed., Jamaica's Heritage, 1991, Mill Press, WI.

in climate and geography. These houses were solid and lacked the large windows which were so much a feature of the houses in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and generally did not let airflow through the home, which must have been very hot and uncomfortable. Annandale in St. Catherine's is an example of this early form of colonial dwelling. It is situated on the top of a hill without any cover from the sun, there are sash windows to every room, upstairs and downstairs, and the front door is situated at ground level. Neither the front door nor the windows are shaded from the sun, and there is no verandah or porch for the owner to rest on to catch the evening breeze. The house is on two levels and has a roof that is shallow in pitch and consequently holds the heat of the sun in the rooms below. In the interior there is a central corridor that runs from front to back, with a central broken stairwell in the middle of the house.

From the corridor downstairs the main rooms are placed symmetrically either side, with each of the principal rooms having a fireplace (See Illustration 19). This is a fine Georgian house, yet it makes no concessions to the climate, and the interior must have been insufferably hot during the oppressive Jamaican summer. The building of fireplaces was completely unnecessary, and living in the upstairs rooms with their sash windows and ceiled bedrooms must have been akin to being in an oven. Although, now rare, Annandale is an example of the need, at one stage, to transfer the familiar and secure housing of Britain, across an ocean to a new world in order to maintain that sense of stability and safety.

The great houses of Jamaica are largely situated on the top of hills or slopes where the land about could be seen and imminent attacks could be sighted, and in this sense Annandale was typical of many great plantation houses. In Jamaica the fear of attack never disappeared, as the rebellion of slaves and maroons continued into the mid-nineteenth century¹⁸⁹ and the threat from invasion from foreign forces continued until the early nineteenth century. Yet despite these threats the civilian and military population was more than equipped to repel such attacks and therefore there appears to be a shift in the middle of the eighteenth century from building fortified houses to a domestic architecture that took into account comfort.¹⁹⁰ Clearly this change in approach to living would have influenced how people viewed the interior of the home and the furniture within.

¹⁸⁹ Cundall, Frank, 1937, p. 15.



Illustration 19

This fireplace in Annandale, St. Catherine's, is redundant in the tropical heat of Jamaica.

Photographed by the author.

¹⁹⁰ Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 30.

By the mid-eighteenth century, houses that were placed on hill tops and had stone platforms with their loopholes were seen as sufficient defence, and further fortification was deemed unnecessary. The platformed house also proved to be utilitarian, not only for its defensive features, but also its ability to make living more comfortable. The raised first floor that sat on the stone platform was more likely to catch any prevailing breezes, and an arched or open space under this floor allowed the air to circulate underneath the house too. Rose Hall and Halse Hall are examples of this, but many others follow this same pattern in Jamaica.

The transition from fortified castles and Georgian houses to the plantation house that became common in Jamaica in the second half of the eighteenth century was not dissimilar to the changes in architecture that were happening in England. After the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 there was a shift away from fortified buildings, and the architecture of the late seventeenth century became more airy, with larger windows, in anticipation of the familiar Georgian House. The change in the nature of English architecture at this time was not coincidental, but was a manifestation of how their owners viewed their future and the security of their family. In the same way the psyche of the West Indian planters influenced building decisions. Only once the issue of security is put to rest does the architecture of the Jamaican and English house become more recreational. In Jamaica the architecture reached that purely recreational status later in the eighteenth century, when the fear of attack had abated, but there was always a measure of anxiety, which the evolution of the building reflected. Just as it had taken 30 years after the Glorious Revolution for the architecture of England to embrace the architecture of Andrea Palladio, so it was in Jamaica that fortified houses gave way to homes designed for comfort and sometimes bastions of style.¹⁹¹

In Jamaica turreted corners gradually disappeared and were replaced with towers that were wooden pavilions. Halse Hall is a fine example of this; here we have the remnants of the fortified house with towers on each corner yet these turrets are wooden (See Illustration 20). Instead of the loopholes that were

¹⁹¹ Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 34. Indeed Kennedy makes the comparison that the plantation houses of the West Indies were not dissimilar to those houses built in Ireland, the only difference being the likelihood of a indentured servant rising instead of a slave uprising.

present in Stokes Hall there are now sash windows in the towers. Halse Hall was a stepping stone towards houses that were suitable for the climate and were reasonably safe.

The owners of these great houses, the headquarters of the plantations, wished to give the impression of secure, established and ancient piles undisturbed for centuries. Although leisure and defence were diametrically opposite, the desire to give an impression of rural repose, where visitors were mistaken into thinking these houses were the seats of country gentlemen, accelerated the demise of the fortified house. These same residents, though, made huge amounts of money through ruthless concentration on business and a willingness to protect their commercial interests.¹⁹² It is this fact that is sometimes forgotten when we see the great houses of Jamaica and other plantation economies in America, Caribbean as well as in Britain.

Not only were plantation owners keen to display their wealth, they wanted to give the impression of power and confidence, and to affirm the longevity of the plantocracy itself. Self-belief and desire to demonstrate increased economic wealth came via several generations surviving the constant threat of attack and the need to articulate and accept that this was a way of life, just as hurricanes and earthquakes were too.

Living spaces in the plantation house

The planters belief in the permanence of the plantation system and the extent of their wealth made them ideal clients for the architect. With the coming of the Palladian idiom we begin to see more confident buildings being erected across the island, yet certain aspects of the former house designs remained. The stone platforms of the fortified house continued and became a typical part of construction.¹⁹³ Indeed many of the great houses of Jamaica incorporate residues of these early house plans, in their exterior and its obviously elevated effect on the interior space. Frequently, a loggia or piazza as they are known as in Jamaica, runs the length of the front facade, ends with two chambers on its corners, being the remnants of the fortified towers. In Lewis's account of the houses he visited in 1845 he states, '*The houses here are*

¹⁹² Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 18.

¹⁹³ Froude, James Anthony, 1888, pp. 209-210; Fleming, Ian, 1965, p. 120; Phillip, John M., 1969, pp. 68-69.

generally built and arranged accordingly to one and the same model. My own is of wood, partly raised upon pillars; It consists of a single floor; A long gallery, called a piazza, terminated at each end by a square room, runs the whole length of the house.¹⁹⁴ The square room described was indeed the form commonly found in plantation houses and fortified buildings of an early period. The long gallery on the first floor was accessed by a central flight of steps, from which one reached the piazza. The piazza in some of these houses were open but one also found them, like their Kingston and Spanish Town counterparts, enclosed by means of jalousies (See Illustration 21).¹⁹⁵ These piazza usually run along the front of the building, but it was not uncommon to have them on the back of the property too, or alternatively on the three sides that were affected by the sun. Whatever the case, their purpose was the same, to shade the residents and interior rooms from the sun and to capture any breezes. Leslie makes this point in his work, ‘They have generally a piazza to which you ascend by several steps, and serves for a screen against the heat, and likewise is a way of enjoying the benefit of any coolness that may be in the air.’¹⁹⁶ Half a century later in 1788, Peter Marsden made the same point. He wrote that the architecture was successful in that it promoted comfortable and cool living, ‘For admission of light and air, some are protected from the sun and rain, either wholly or in part, by jalousies, or by these sash windows, with Venetian blinds. To most of the houses is attached either piazza enclosed by jalousies or an open colonnade.’¹⁹⁷

The piazzas,’ were generally enclosed and shielded from the gaze of the sun by jalousies that could be adjusted according to the breeze. Although jalousies were common, and placed all around the building, if the piazza did not extend to all sides of the house, sash windows could be seen from the exterior.¹⁹⁸ These were included not for added privacy, but to keep the torrential rains from blowing into the interior. During the storms the jalousies and sashes were closed and the whole house was plunged into darkness, with the exception of the light from these windows. Lewis states, ‘The whole house is verandaed with shifting venetian blinds to admit air; except that one of the end rooms has sash-windows on account of the rains, which, when, they arrive, are so heavy, and shift with the wind so suddenly from one side to the other, that

¹⁹⁴ Lewis, M. G., 1845, p. 42.

¹⁹⁵ Jalousies is the Jamaican term for a fixed type of Venetian blind, the term was used in the eighteenth century, but the origin of the word is not known.

¹⁹⁶ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 31.

¹⁹⁷ Phillippo, John M., 1969, pp. 68-69.

¹⁹⁸ Kelly, James, 1871, p. 15.

*all the blinds are obliged to be kept closed; consequently the whole house is in total darkness during their continuance, except the single sash – windowed room.*¹⁹⁹ In those houses that had open piazza they were periodically found to have jalousies at one end, if that was the direction of the sun, but more usually the piazza was completely enclosed.

Where the precise idea for these galleries comes from remains a mystery. They do appear in other West Indian islands as well as in mainland America, from as far apart as New York and New Bern to as far south as Florida. None of the colonies in either America or the Caribbean appear to have galleried buildings before 1725, and it is not until the 1740s that most colonies have surviving examples that were similar to those seen in Jamaica. Van Cortlandt Manor House on the Hudson in New York is remarkably similar to a Jamaican plantation house.²⁰⁰ This house is raised, with steps leading to a verandah which encircles the house, the only difference being the verandah is not enclosed like its Jamaican cousin (See Illustration 22). In Roger Kennedy's book Architecture, Men and Women and Money in America 1660-1860 he writes that other than geographic location, which enables the dissemination of ideas to travel unimpeded, the only common element to this form is that they were all closely associated with a slave economy.

It is true that many of the galleried houses were found in former slave economies, it is also true that they are found by the Hudson River and as far north as Canada. Whilst there is room for debate on this point, the argument also needs to make clear that the inclusion of the piazza in the plantation houses was brought from England, via the introduction of Palladian architecture.

In England and Europe there had been a long tradition of having exterior and interior spaces dedicated to the purpose of exercise and contemplation. If we look at the liturgical buildings of the medieval period with cloisters which allowed the residents to exercise, rest and ponder in all weathers we see many fine examples. Although these buildings are inside out, for our purposes, they do illustrate a long tradition of exterior spaces that are attached to the interior. Similarly in the Tudor buildings of England, many have long galleries that were used for exercise. For example The Vyne in Hampshire, with its gallery completed

¹⁹⁹ Lewis, M. G., 1845, p. 53.

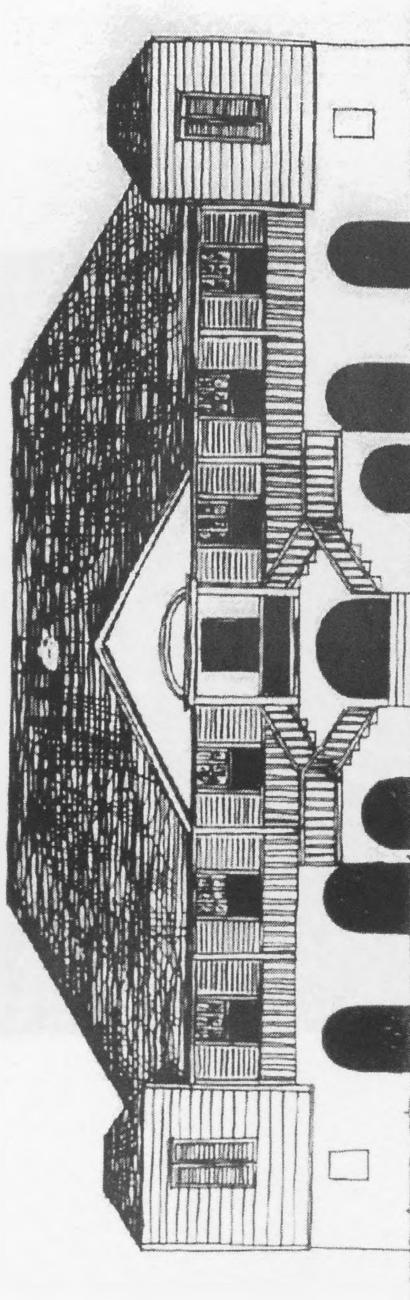


Illustration 20

The turreted corners of Halse Hall are like that at Colbeck Castle
and Stokes Hall accept these are constructed of timber.

Kennedy, Roger, Architecture, Men and Women and Money in America 1600-1860,

RandonHouse, New York, p. 63.

²⁰⁰ Kennedy, Roger, pp. 68-71.



Illustration 21

At Mount Pleasant House the jalousies enclose the piazza.

Photographed by the author.

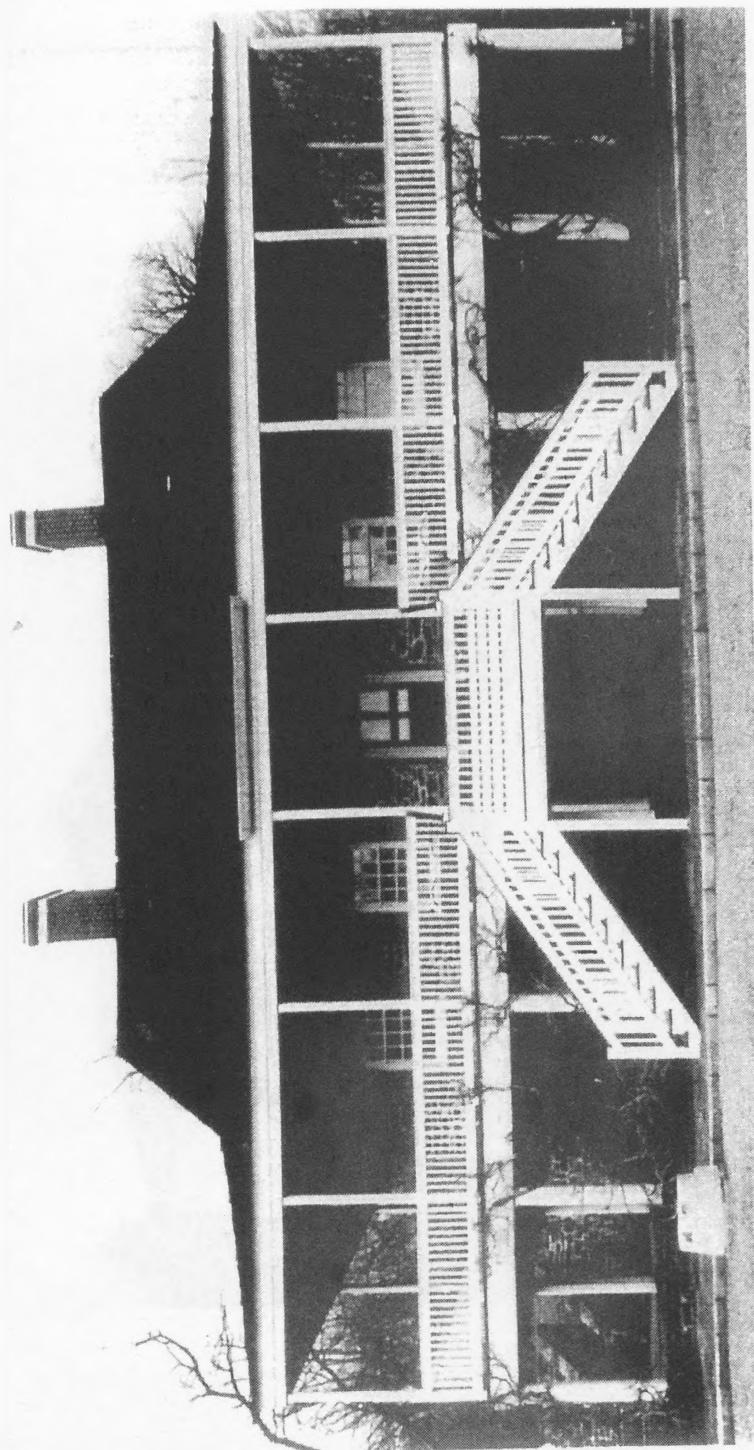


Illustration 22

The Van Cortlandt House in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, has many similar features to the Jamaican planter's house, including the shallow pitched roof, the flight of steps to the main floor and the piazza encircling the house. Kennedy, Roger, Architecture, Men and Women and Money in America 1600-1860, Randon House, New York, p. 63.

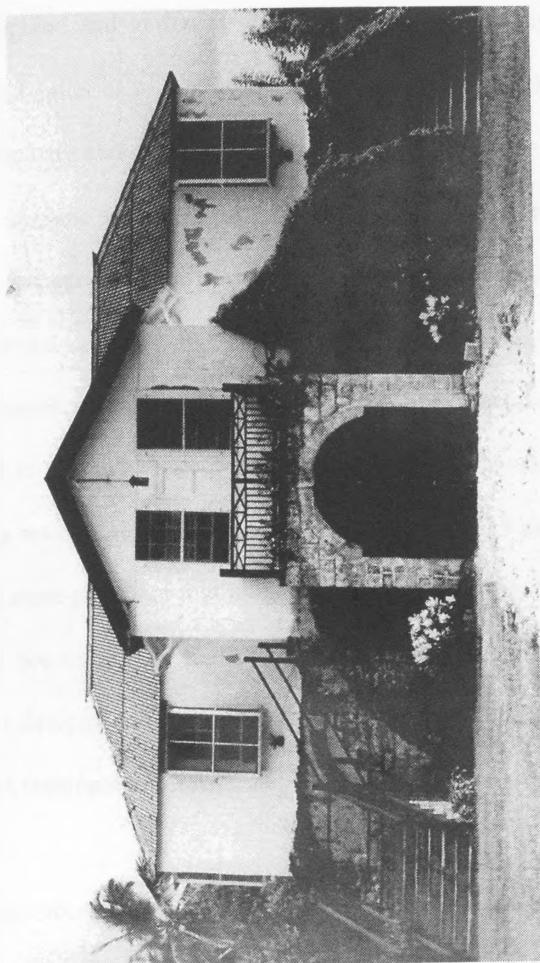


Illustration 23

Hordley House in the Jamaican Palladian style, B. W. Higman

Jamaica Surveyed, 1988, IOJ, p. 127.

by 1520 and Hardwick Hall, which was finished a little later in 1596 both have impressive galleries that extend the length of the buildings in which they exist. As Mark Girouard states in Life in the English Country House, ‘Sixteenth century doctors stressed the importance of daily walking to preserve health, and galleries made exercise possible when the weather would otherwise have prevented it.’²⁰¹

Just as England had galleries to walk up and down in during the winter months, then so the Jamaican planters had galleries to rest in when the weather was excessively hot. Like early English galleries these piazza were bare and considered part of the exterior of the building, and just like the English, the galleries gradually became incorporated into the interior and were no longer detached. In eighteenth century Jamaican inventories, the piazza is frequently listed as a separate space containing many objects of furniture and decoration, so much so that they had become an informal living space and integral part of the planter’s house. When this happened is difficult to ascertain, as its emergence appears in so many parts of the world at a similar date. Roger Kennedy puts this down to coincidence, yet for a similar design to emerge in several places independently, between 1735 and 1740, seems to go beyond coincidence.²⁰² It would be more plausible that the completion of the Palladian villa at Chiswick was an inspirational source for these houses across the colonies. Jamaica and the other colonies of the America’s could utilise Palladio’s designs and yet retain the practicality of the fortified house in the 1730s, it therefore made a useful and fashionable model.

It becomes clear that the plantation houses of the eighteenth century were evolving and developing from the fortified house to comfortable, but guarded living spaces. Style and fashion did not pass by unnoticed, these houses were reflecting developments in architecture back in Britain, but were also sensitive to their own needs and comfort. Sash windows and chimney pieces were of no use in Jamaica, whereas jalousies and piazzas were fundamental to any new structure. The planters’ desire to improve their living conditions came about because of the vast wealth they were generating, they could afford to live like aristocrats and they did.

²⁰¹ Girouard, Mark, 1978, p. 100.



Illustration 24

English style oak table, circa 1710, found in Jamaica.

This table was probably brought over to Jamaica, but it is also possible that it was made there using

English materials. Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

²⁰² Kennedy, Roger, 1985, p. 61.



Illustration 25

English style mahogany table, circa 1710-20, found in Jamaica.

This table was made in Jamaica, but using an English model such as that found in Illustration 24.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Just as the planters' architecture evolved, so did the interior, and furnishings followed the same course of development. In the early part of the century when plantation owners were concerned with security and home defences, and creating houses like Britain, the contents reflected this outlook too. If the furnishing of the Jamaican interior was the same as that in Britain then we can make direct comparisons with British houses, however, if this is not the case then what did the planter consider acceptable and useful in their new country? Furniture found in Jamaica dating from the early eighteenth century, if not British is modelled on what British furniture makers were producing at that date. Several tables found in Jamaica, are particularly interesting and very rare. Not only do we see the simple oak table in Jamaica with the its stretchers hanging low to the floor, (which is characteristic of late seventeenth century English furniture) but also a similar table made in mahogany (See Illustrations 24 & 25). Mahogany was not commercially available in Britain until the 1720s. Unless this table was constructed late, this table is unique. It is made following a British tradition, but of a foreign material, and no such example would have been found in England. Similarly a refectory table, also found in Jamaica, copies the form of a table dating from the first quarter of the eighteenth century and would in England have been made of oak or walnut, and in America of cherry and walnut. The Jamaican example is again constructed out of solid mahogany and would have had no British equivalent (See Illustrations 26 & 27).

The interior of the plantation house

Many of the houses that survive reflect a general plan that matches contemporary commentaries. From the piazza one entered either a hall leading to the dining room, or came directly into the dining room.²⁰³ Whatever the configuration of the house the dining room was typically at the centre of the house with corridors leading to all four sides of the building, in a cruciform plan. This arrangement allowed maximum air circulation at the centre of the house, especially when eating.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ An example of a plantation house where piazza leads to dining room would be Mount Pleasant, and an example of a house, which leads from piazza to hall and then dining room, would be Bromley House. I would like to thank the owners of these houses for their help in allowing me to view their homes and furniture.

²⁰⁴ Hampstead, Bellfield and Mount Pleasant houses are examples of this type of plan.

The partition between the piazza and the dining room was in essence the front façade of the house and therefore architectural detail was carried through into the design of the room.²⁰⁵ The use of architectural features was key to transforming formerly exterior space into an interior room. In Bromley House, which dates from the 1780s, we see heavy external features present in the piazza (See Illustration 28).²⁰⁶ A few years later at Minard estate the piazza had become enclosed, forming a integral interior space (See Illustration 29). At the Minard, the architectural elements which still exist, were appropriate for the internal space, being dedicated to a hall for the ‘*worthies*.’²⁰⁷ The rooms backing onto the piazza would, as a matter of course, have window frames like the buildings without a piazza. Sometimes these windows had glass and at other times not. Their presence or absence, like much concerned with the design of the Jamaican house, was related to climate. The windows allowed light and air to enter the inner part of the building. The rooms that back onto and were at the end of the piazza were usually bedchambers,²⁰⁸ and the inclusion of windows would have certainly led to a lack of privacy as well as consuming valuable wall space in the bedchamber itself. William Cynic commented on the lack of privacy when he visited an old plantation house ‘*I had been in bed and asleep for some hours, as I guessed, when I was awakened by footsteps in the piazza to which my chamber windows opened.*’²⁰⁹ This was not just a problem relating to one house, as Cynic mentions young ‘damsels’ peeping through the window on the piazza at the lodging house of Polly Vidal, who were promptly scolded for their intrusion.²¹⁰

The arrangement of the rooms allowed the resident to move freely around the house. Rooms tended to connect from one to another and this again allowed for free airflow as well as being a fire precaution. It is in this way that the house plan was not dissimilar to that of the Palladian architecture that was favoured in England, and promoted by Lord Burlington at Chiswick House. The scheme in England had the disadvantage of being built in a northern climate, whereas those built in Italy and Jamaica were more akin, and warmth and fine weather were expected.

²⁰⁵ A fine example of this is seen in Bromley House, my thanks to the family for allowing access and photographs.

²⁰⁶ Another subtler example would be the Barrett House, in Falmouth. Although this house belonged to a merchant it demonstrates exactly the same point. Unfortunately, the house has since collapsed.

²⁰⁷ Curtin, M., Ed., 1991, p. 33.

²⁰⁸ Lewis, M. G., 1845, p. 42. On each side of the piazza is a range of bedrooms, and the porticoes of the two fronts form two or more rooms.

²⁰⁹ Cynic, William R., 1826, p. 45.

²¹⁰ Cynic, William R., 1826, p. 2.



Illustration 26

East Virginian walnut gate legged table, circa, 1700-1730. These tables whilst copying their European counterparts were usually made of local timbers, this one is made of black walnut which is indigenous to Virginia. Hurst, Ronald; Prown, Jonathan, Southern Furniture, 1997, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, p. 205.

The floors of the great houses were not marble from Italy, but invariably of a rich timber that was highly polished. One commentator speculated as to the safety of such lustrous finished floors, ‘*The floors are quite as highly polished as mahogany tables usually are; and a new-comer must walk as circumspectly as he would on ice.*’²¹¹ The floors were usually made of either cedar or mahogany, which must have presented a remarkable display for new arrivals. In the early eighteenth century they still were exotic materials and highly prized back in England. In Jamaica though, this was not the case and floors, window frames, staircases and doors were commonly constructed of this durable and termite proof material. In 1787, the Kingston Journal advertised mahogany window frames being sold, along with mahogany sashes and shutters.²¹² So common were these exotic timbers that they appeared to be in abundance in every building.²¹³ Not only were the private houses of the rich fitted with such beautiful hardwoods, but also taverns as illustrated in this description ‘*Around midday I went to a hotel named Howard's Tavern. It is a magnificent building of some few floors, all built of mahogany wood. Each storey is surrounded by a wide verandah on which six persons can walk abreast. The doors, the staircases, the floors are all of mahogany and the interior panelling is of ebony wood.*’²¹⁴ In another account recalling the sad state of the staircase at Rose Hall, in 1912, the diarist writes, ‘*One end of which is entirely occupied by a magnificent staircase, which still remains, and, though neglected and mouldly, seems to show what the rest of the mansion must have been. Every thing about it, rails, balustrades and mouldings, is carved out of Sandel wood... So highly polished and exquisitely designed is this piece of architecture that the late governor general offered a large sum....*’²¹⁵

Another author went on to describe the staircase as a ‘*specimen of joinery in mahogany and other costly woods seldom excelled.*’²¹⁶ Like the staircase the doors and windows were also made of solid timber, as was any panelling.²¹⁷ The same author describes the doors at Rose Hall as magnificent and four inches

²¹¹ Kelly, James, 1831, pp. 15 & 30.

²¹² BL, Colindale, Kingston Journal, 8th August 1787, “*John Hall for Sale to be sold cheap for cash 7 sash Frames with sashes and shutters, all made of mahogany.*”

²¹³ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, Feb 4th and March 23rd 1802. Lady Nugent gives several examples of the abundance of mahogany being used in the interior and the fineness of the woodwork.

²¹⁴ Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, p. 36.

²¹⁵ Aspinall, Algernon E., 1912, p. 199.

²¹⁶ Leslie, Charles, 1739, p. 31.

²¹⁷ Cynic, William R., 1826, p. 236. ‘*The dwelling house of the proprietors are also large and commodious, and generally fitted up with well polished mahogany, floors, wainscott, doors, etc... But these are now deserted by their owners, who for the most part are rich absentees.*’

thick, and then goes on to describe the carved panels and mouldings that were '*fashioned in curious and antique forms, while the top is ornamented with a very deep cornice, formed after the arabesque pattern.*'²¹⁸ These were internal fixtures and features to match any found on the island, and indeed to be found anywhere at that time.

One of the main problems causing the degradation of the buildings, other than hurricane and earthquake, were termites. Although the introduction of so much tropical hardwood had clearly helped deter them other extreme measures were taken to dissuade them from entering and even consuming houses. Paint mixed with sand was applied to the external walls as it was said to prevent them from eating the walls, while in the interior houses were void of ceilings and had walls that reached the roof (See Illustration 30).²¹⁹ The lack of ceilings and rooms that were not separate compartments had the added advantage of increasing the airflow throughout the house. However, the sight of highly ornate interiors with stuccoed walls, beams and pediments over doors that looked onto the shingles of the roof must have appeared peculiar to eighteenth century English eyes. Certainly the thinness of the walls did not pass without comment, Lady Nugent in 1802, recalled the unpleasantness of hearing every word from the other side of a wall, and then having to greet the same people without recognition of the previous discussion.²²⁰

The interior of the Jamaican planter's house was vastly different from their American mainland counterparts. The houses and living conditions of the Northern States were different because of the climate. However, those in the Southern States of America, where climate and economy were more akin to that of Jamaica did show some similarities. Yet the political turmoil of the Caribbean in the early

²¹⁸ Aspinall, Algernon E., 1912, p. 239.

²¹⁹ Cynic, William R., 1826, pp. 314-315.

²²⁰ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 27th March 1802.



Illustration 27

Jamaican gate legged table, circa 1710-1720. This table echoes tables of a similar type in England, but this one is made of mahogany, no American or English table was made in this wood at this date. Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 28

Bromley House, the interior of the piazza has strong architectural features, which would indicate that they should be on the exterior. Photographed by the author, with kind permission of the owner.

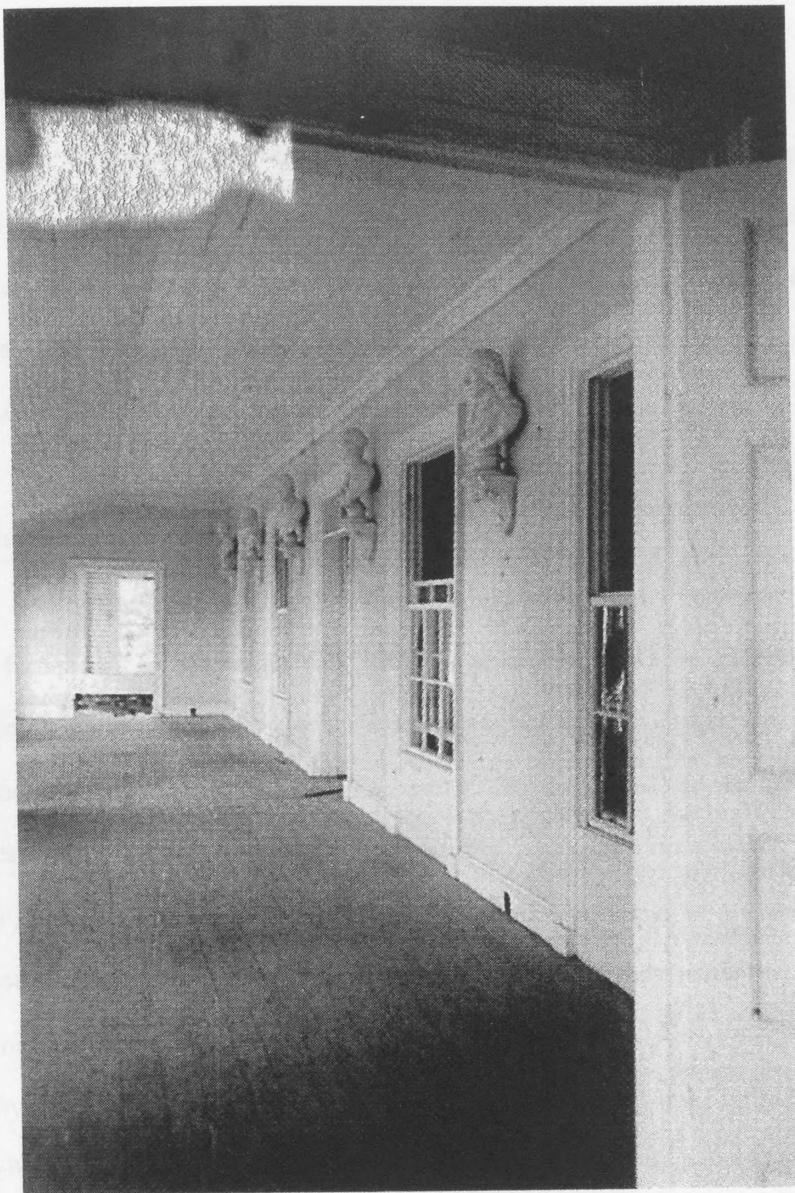


Illustration 29

Minard, although the room is in a poor state it has some wonderful architecture features, this room is no longer a piazza, but rather another more formal space.

Curtin, M., Ed., Jamaica's Heritage, 1991, Mill Press, p. 33.

eighteenth century and that of the American Revolution later on meant that the architecture of these two cultures evolved in different ways.

In studying the architecture of the plantation houses of Jamaica we can clearly see the similarities with Italian classical villas. The façade of the houses, the layout and use of the ~~interconnecting rooms~~ to capture the breeze are all familiar features. Yet the adaptation of elements of the Jamaica house to cope with extremes in climate such as the placing of the piazza on the exterior of the house, rather than on the interior, and the lack of ceilings and windows were clearly concessions to the heat. However, generally we can say that Jamaican plantation houses remained classical in their layout and concept.

Furniture and Furnishings

Comparing the furnishings of American and British interiors is useful in assessing the distinctive expectations of comfort and sophistication of the colonial resident. Even the presence of mundane items can tell us whether a genre of object was common or not. By the same logic the absence, or rarity, of another object can help establish patterns of fashionability, and contribute towards understanding the differences from British households. While the planter can be considered as a wealthy resident, other colonials were not so affluent, and their furniture and furnishing reflects their smaller income. However, in studying the furnishing of the house we are not so concerned with the value of objects, as to what they represent and why they are either present or absent. Clearly the uniqueness and high value of some objects indicates the preferences of the rich. However, we are also concerned here about when objects appear in inventories and how regularly these objects were featured in the home.

Floor Coverings

In the Northern states of America the cold meant floors were covered with carpet, rugs and mats, in the 'South' and Jamaica this was not the case. Carpets in both colonial centres appear to have been quite rare, which was not surprising considering the nature of the weather, but while Charleston residences were likely

to have canvasses on their floors, in Jamaica any floor covering was unusual. Only a dozen residents in Jamaica²²¹ were found to have floor coverings listed and these were usually ‘Spanish matts’,²²² or rugs with only the rare floor cloth. Vice Admiral Davis was the only resident found amongst archival material to have listed in his inventory a ‘*large carpet*,’ while several others had small turkey carpets. Lady Nugent discussed the notion of having carpets when she arrived at Bryan Hall, the former home of the historian Bryan Edwards. In her diary she commented on seeing a turkey rug, and that its presence was ‘*an extraordinary sight in this country*.’²²³ It can be safely concluded that floor coverings were not a common feature in the Jamaican home.

Lighting

The lighting of the Jamaican interior seems to have been a fine art. One traveler was confused as to how the candles in the room would be lit, given the amount of air and draughts that were encouraged to enter the room. He rationalised that if the draughts were excluded then the candles would probably melt. The mystery was soon solved, when a domestic servant entered the room ‘*As I thought of this, I saw a little Negro come in carrying a very tall bell shaped jar of very fine, pure white glass and having lit the candle he put this cover over it.*’²²⁴ Over 80 years later little had changed and when James Anthony Froude recognised the same glass bell jars, he too commented on the need for draughts and the clever device to protect the lit candle.²²⁵ In the inventories of the day these glass bell shaped shades were also referred to as ‘*glass shades*’ or simply as ‘*glass*’ on the table or sideboard. While glass bell shades were not rare in Jamaica, they were in England. However, despite their simplicity these glass bells do not appear regularly in the probates of residents in Jamaica, and must have been an expensive and fragile item restricted to the sideboards of the materially comfortable. No woodworkers owned such an item.

Other forms of lighting were listed in probates, which particularly refer to candlesticks of pewter, silver, brass and wood. Wooden candlesticks were common and were often described by the timber they were

²²¹ This dozen were found amongst the all the documentary evidence surveyed, which included newspapers over 500 probates and other sources.

²²² Exactly what Spanish mats are is not known, it could be that they were made from leather?

²²³ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 2nd April 1805.

²²⁴ Seeger, Edward D., 1951, p. 36.

²²⁵ Froude, James Anthony, 1888, p. 266.

made of, such as mahogany or ebony.²²⁶ How they were made and whether they were turned or constructed in another manner was never described, and to date no such item appears to have survived. If candlesticks were common then chandeliers were not. There is little evidence that they were used in colonial Jamaica, except within public buildings. However, chandeliers were known to have been used in public buildings. The church of St. Peter's in Port Royal was known to have had chandeliers, as did the King's House, Spanish Town.²²⁷ In Philip Wickstead's image of the Saloon in Kings' House, the room was clearly illuminated with chandeliers and the sconces on the pillars and pilasters provided supplementary lighting (See Illustration 31).²²⁸ The only document to list such an object in a domestic context in the eighteenth century is to be found in the 1736 probate of Henry Cunningham, Governor of Jamaica.²²⁹ Given the status of the owner, it can be concluded that chandeliers were either expensive, or not a desirable form of lighting in colonial Jamaica. Problems of keeping candles from being extinguished by the wind and the inaccessibility of these chandeliers must have made these objects difficult and of little use.

Sconces were probably the most common form of lighting other than candlesticks amongst gentlefolk. In inventories of tradesmen, however, those that list sconces were few, and those that had candlesticks were in the majority. The sconce in Jamaica was a more expensive form of illumination and not affordable for those on lower incomes. The descriptions of sconces in the probates describe them being made of walnut and mahogany, and decorated in lacquer, silver and gilt. There were sconce looking glasses and carved sconces, which give the impression of an object that was highly valued and sought after. However, in Jamaica the term '*sconce*,' just as in England, embraced both a looking glass with an arm extending, and a decorated wall bracket on which a candle could be attached. Lamps, either table or oil are infrequently noted, and candle stands in which these lights were placed appear to be have been in little use.²³⁰

²²⁶ Nicholas Burke, Planter and Speaker of the Assembly, Probate, 1772. In the probate of Burke is listed a pair of mahogany candlesticks. Samuel Grant, Gentleman, Probate, 1765. There is also listed a pair of Ebony and Mahogany candlesticks in Grant' probate.

²²⁷ Jamaican Journal, 1986, no page number.

²²⁸ Richards, Judith, 1967, pp. 13-15.

²²⁹ Henry Cunningham, Governor, Probate, 1736. Henry Cunningham was declared Governor and before he was officially appointed he died. Nicholas Lawes, Governor 1718-21, gave a chandelier to St. Andrews church in 1706, the chandelier still survives with its inscription. The only other inventory to list chandeliers appears as late as 1809. John Pross, Esquire, Probate, 1809.



Illustration 30

Hope Plantation has no ceilings in otherwise formal rooms.

Photographed by the author.

²³⁰ Of those woodworkers' inventories surveyed, the term 'torchere' is never used and the 'candle stand' only appears twice. Hinton East, Planter, Probate, 1793; Samuel Grant, Gentleman, Probate, 1765. Both list mahogany candle stands in their inventory.

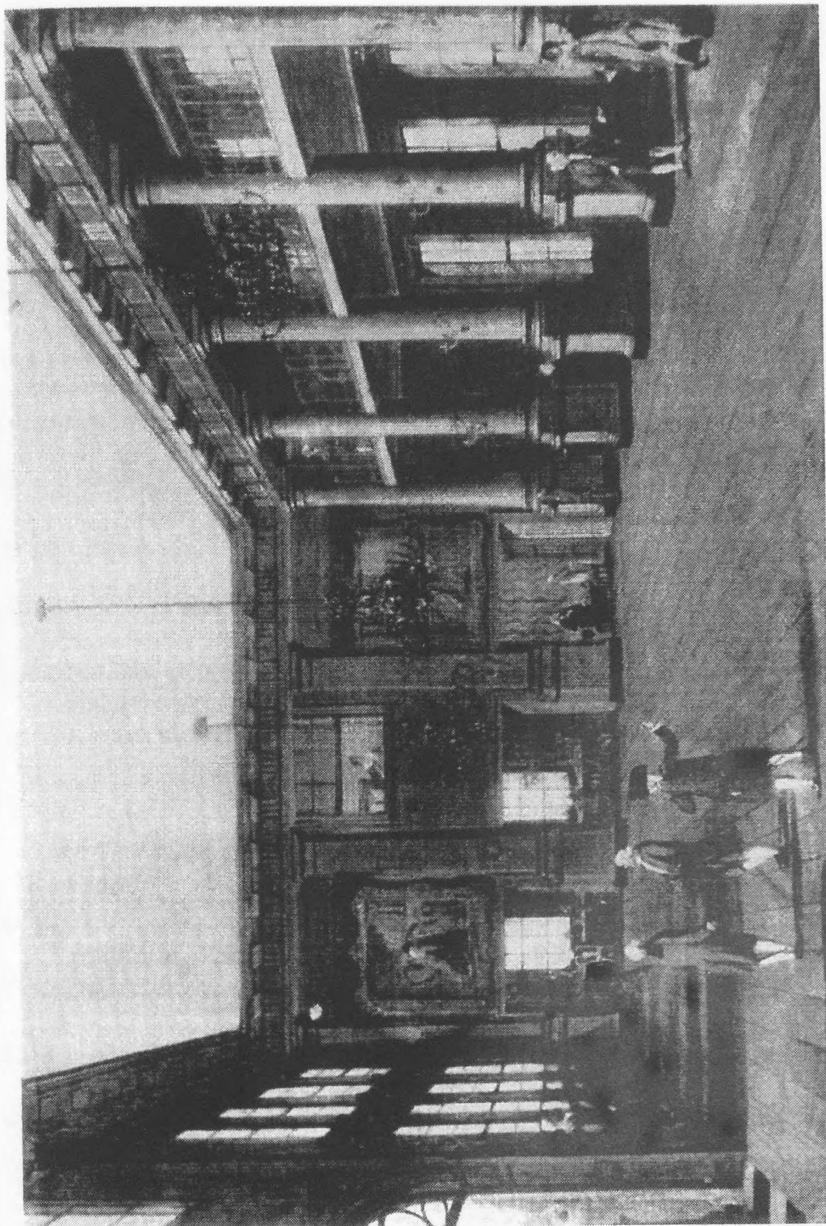


Illustration 31

Philip Wickstead's painting of the Long Room in the King's House, circa 1770s.

Wright, Philip, Ed., Lady Nugents Journal, 1966, p. 13.

Wall Adornment

Looking glasses

In the British home the fireplace was incorporated into the design of the building because the fire helped to increase light throughout a room by being reflected off the looking glass and overmantel. In Jamaica when fireplaces were included in the fabric of a building they were more for decoration than use.²³¹ For the most part the fireplace was absent. Frederick Kubler stated in a letter of 1778 that no *fireplace of chimney is seen as there is no need for these in Jamaica where every day is very hot.*²³² The loss of the

focal point in the living rooms must have appeared disorientating to Europeans and other focal points would have been sought. The lack of the fireplace would account for the absence of overmantels in any Jamaican interior, while looking glasses were in abundance by comparison.²³³ In inventories, the looking glass is described in a variety of ways illustrating that a large selection of form, size and decoration existed. Large looking glasses and dressing glasses appeared regularly in documents, while pier glasses and gilded looking glasses were scarce. In the planter Hinton East's inventory, the most impressive looking glasses were those described as being carved and gilded, like the '*Girandoles carved and gilt in best burnished gold.*' In the same inventory another girandole had '*carved plinths of foliage ornamental supporting griffins.*'

Other inventories also list carved and gilded looking glasses or girandoles. However the largest in terms of size and number were not surprisingly reserved for the Governor's Residence. The accounts of the King's House list the '*24 brass gilt girondoles*' and '*3 Sconce glasses, not exceeding 4 1/2 feet, frame included, and of a proportionate height*' that were placed in the Long Room.²³⁴ While the King's House was very much a public space, the fact such an interior was available to the public to see would have made a great impression on those visiting.

²³¹ The only inventory to mention a chimney piece and glass frame is that of Hon. Thomas Barnard, 1728.

²³² Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, p. 36.

²³³ Of 160 probates over half listed looking glasses.

We can determine if these objects were made locally or imported if we examine the inventories of furniture makers, to see if they held stocks of looking glass frames. In the probates of Jamaican furniture makers looking glasses were present throughout the eighteenth century, whereas sconces were not so common amongst furniture makers' probates being present in only 3%.²³⁵ Of this small number only three were described as being made of wood.²³⁶ This was also the case for looking glasses. In some 71 inventories of woodworkers that list looking and pier glasses none document or suggest that these craftsmen were making the frames. When inventories list several frames, beyond what could have been expected in the planter's Great House, the assumption can be made that they were imported from Britain, and that only the simplest of frames were manufactured locally during most of the eighteenth century. However, although in the early eighteenth century there is no evidence to contradict this, it may not have been the case for the last quarter of the eighteenth century. An advertisement of 1779 appeared in *The Jamaica*, clearly stating otherwise, 'Kingston, Carver and Gilding in General, Neatly executed by Joseph Hughes, at Mr. Armstrong's in Harbour Street, N.B. Burnish Gilding properly performed.'²³⁷ Nine months later Joseph Hughes gives us a greater insight into the services he provided by extending his advertisement to include, 'makes all kinds Looking Glasses Frames, Picture Frames, Gerondoles, &c. in Oil or Burnished Gilding...'.²³⁸

Prints

Other forms of wall decoration included paintings, prints and the occasional thermometer or barometer. The prints that were listed in the probates were rarely described by subject matter. Numerous probates list 'Indian prints,' which may record the source of the prints rather than the nature of the image. Religious prints were seldom listed, and it was only via the observations of Frederick Kubler that any evidence of such prints exists at all.²³⁹ Only two inventories specifically identified the subject matter of the print, one being Don Quixote²⁴⁰ the other Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress.' The Hogarth series of prints were listed in the probate of the Hon. Thomas Garbrand as early as 1739, only some four years after the paintings were

²³⁴ *Journals of the House of Assembly*, Vol.. V (1757-1766) 1797, October 9th 1762, pp. 353-4. The Long Room is the same as that depicted in the Philip Wicksteed painting, see illustration 32.

²³⁵ This represents 11 craftsmen out of some 400.

²³⁶ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730: James Kerr, Carpenter, Probate, 1746; Emmanuel Timberlake, Carpenter, Probate, 1741; Duncan McLean, Carpenter, Probate, 1740.

²³⁷ BL, Colindale, *The Jamaica*, May 1st 1779.

first shown publically in London, demonstrating that a standard print was reaching Jamaica relatively quickly.²⁴¹

There is evidence amongst the probates that Jamaican craftsmen did frame prints in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. In 1734, Robert Pitchard of Port Royal lists some 37 prints and frames, whilst six years later Duncan McLean's inventory includes six pictures with gilt edges in stock and '*33 ditto in black frames.*' The making of frames and the stocking of pictures by woodworkers declined by the middle of the eighteenth century. No woodworkers had a stock of pictures, frames or prints in the second half of the century and it is likely that this service was being skillfully carried out by shopkeepers of the period. In the 1770s, prints were being sold at the shop of Andrew Fenn by order of the Court of Vice-Admiralty. The list of goods to be sold at Fenn's shop includes '*A large collection of Prints, in gilt frames.*'²⁴² Given the lack of information from probates, and the fact that the earliest newspapers date from the late 1770s it is difficult to be sure exactly when this shift to retailing took place. It is clear that there was a change in the selling of pictures and their frames, and this job no longer fell to the furniture maker, and therefore framed pictures were probably imported for direct retailing.

Paintings

Although prints were more prevalent than paintings in inventories, descriptions of paintings were more detailed, and the subject was occasionally recorded. Portraits of ancestors were listed en masse, such as in the inventory of Peter Beckford, of 1735, which just lists '*15 family picture,*'²³⁸ as does the probate of Sir Nicholas Lawes which lists '*four family pictures.*' However, portraits of the reigning monarch or past sovereigns were also listed. For example, Henry Cunningham's probate of 1736 includes pictures of the 'King and Queen' [George I & Queen Sophia], while Thomas Howe's probate of 1734 indicates that he possessed nine paintings of the '*Royal Family.*' Peter Galliard in 1728 had a full length portrait of '*King William.*' The most impressive and valuable display of loyalty to the crown is revealed in Sir Nicholas

²³⁸ BL, Colindale, *The Jamaica*, February 19th 1780.

²³⁹ Levy, Catherine, Mary, 1984, p. 36. The rooms are decorated with paintings and especially with many fragments of the Old Testament.

²⁴⁰ Emmanuel Timberlake, Probate, 1741. In Timberlake's probate it lists 22 Don Quixote prints.

²⁴¹ Osborn, Harold, Ed., 1986, p. 539.

Lawes's inventory, which includes two paintings, one of 'Charles I' valued at £100 and another of 'George I' painted by Godfrey Kneller estimated at £120. These two paintings appear to have been the most important paintings seen in the island until William Henry Lyttleton imported two Shackleton paintings in the 1760s.²⁴³ Although the Shackleton paintings were to be acquired for the Official Residence of the Governor, it would appear from the probates of other former Governors of Jamaica that paintings of the monarch became the property of the Governor on leaving office. If we exclude the Governors from those that own paintings of the royal family then only one painting is found belonging to a private individual.²⁴⁴

During the second half of the eighteenth century evidence begins to emerge about the sale of paintings. Andrew Fenn's, in 1779, advertised that he was selling from his shop paintings of two former Doges of Venice. A month later one of the paintings was being raffled at Bentley's Tavern, where the painting could be viewed and tickets purchased at a half Johanna each.²⁴⁵ Jamaicans also had the opportunity of commissioning their own portraits locally. An artist by the name of J. Stevenson had '*a collection of portraits painted in oil colour, 17 inches by 21, size of life. Executed at One Mill'd Doubloon each, which is considerably under half the price.*'²⁴⁶ Stevenson appears to have been desperately trying to build up business and had resorted to cutting his prices to encourage customers.

The presence of oil paintings in Jamaica was closely associated with the appearance of some talented artists, like Joseph Dunkerley, Philip Wickstead and John Bartholomew Kidd.²⁴⁷ The arrival of these artists in late eighteenth century illustrate that not only was there a demand for art and portraiture in Jamaica, but that these sitters were wealthy enough, and perceived themselves as worthy of being recorded for posterity. The desire to record one's achievements on canvas was prevalent in all the American plantations and in England too.²⁴⁸ However, unlike America and England, in Jamaica we are left with only descriptions or lists of their work that once decorated the great houses. Indeed on a visit to a great house in the early years

²⁴² *The Jamaica*, 16th June 1779.

²⁴³ Cunningham, Howe, Lawes and Lyttleton were all Governors of Jamaica, and Peter Beckford was Speaker of the House of Assembly.

²⁴⁴ Thornton, Peter, 1978, p. 254. Thomas Howe, Esquire, Probate, 1734. Howe was a member of the Assembly. It is not surprising that so few paintings of the monarch were present, as such a privilege could only be granted by the reigning monarch.

²⁴⁵ *The Jamaica*, 23rd July 1779. A Johanna was a Portuguese or Brazil currency and was valued at about £3 Ja.

²⁴⁶ *The Jamaica*, 27th November 1779. A Milled Doubloon was worth 16 Ecus, approximately four Ja sterling.

²⁴⁷ Cundall, Frank, 1915, pp. 364-365. Wickstead is said to have worked under Zoffany, J. B. Kidd practised in Boston before migrating to Jamaica and little is known of Dunkerley other than he trained in England.

of the twentieth century, Algernon Aspinall comments on the house being practically devoid of furniture although some of the paintings remained. *'Three portraits in richly carved frames and painted by a master hand and immediately attract attention; indeed, they are almost the sole occupants of this lofty room, for the furniture there is scarcely a vestige, and the fine dark coloured woods of the floor, base and doors, once so highly polished are now damp and mouldy. The gilding which formerly adorned the frames is now dull and tarnished, but the pictures are still fresh and fair, and the colours are as bright and vivid as the day they came from the painter's easel.'*²⁴⁹

However, despite the lack of material evidence it is clear that that the plantocracy, government officers and other significant persons did not look at blank walls, but quite the opposite. These notables decorated their walls, whether by purchasing through shops or by commission, with paintings and images suitable to their rank in society.

Paintings appear to belong in the realm of the rich and powerful, yet the ownership of Royal Coats of Arms was even more select, with only John Hanson, esquire, owning such an object.²⁵⁰ However, while the royal insignia was very rare, the heraldic motifs of other residents were not uncommon. Daniel Javett had a 'Coat of Arms in a gilt frame,' as did Henry Dray, Hall William Clarke and several others.²⁵¹ Richard Goodman on his death had made provision for his coat of arms '*to be sent back to England*,' clearly he had recognised its importance over and above the other possessions he owned.²⁵² Like family paintings, the heraldic shields belonging to a planter and his family were concerned with either stating the family's importance and longevity on the island or, alternatively, the creation and establishment of that image.

The hanging of objects on walls was not a necessity of life and therefore it falls into the realms of conspicuous consumption. Paintings, chandeliers and coats of arms were luxuries, while looking glasses and the array of sconce types were more serviceable items they could be purchased cheaply if functionality was the prime objective. Wall decoration was in the houses of rich Jamaicans an affirmation of the social

²⁴⁸ Lindsay, Jack, Ed., 1999, pp. 23-36, pp. 53-66.

²⁴⁹ Aspinall, Algernon E., 1912, p. 236.

²⁵⁰ John Hanson, Esquire, Probate, 1746.

²⁵¹ Daniel Javett, Planter, Probate, 1744; Henry Dray, Gentleman, Probate, 1794; Hall William Clarke, Gentleman, Probate, 1771.

status of the occupier as well as an indication of their level of sophistication. Lower down the social order, the commissioning of paintings was prohibitively expensive, so alternative forms of decoration were adopted, such as prints. Where decorative sconces were commonly found in the homes of the wealthy, the candlestick is as frequently listed in the homes of the more humble citizens. While this distribution between the wealthy and the modest is not at all surprising, what is remarkable was the level of comfort found amongst the wealthy merchants and planters.

Furniture

The study of the Jamaican furniture reveals an evolution from the accepted English standards to a more creolised way of living. Just as we saw the adaptation of the Palladian verandah into an informal living area, called the piazza, so we see even the most comfortable of homes accepting new forms and ways of coping with the local conditions and environment.

Upholstery

Early inventories list items that can only have been described as luxurious although only confined to the elite. A fine example of this can be seen in the 1727 probate of the Duke of Portland. The Duke's possessions included such items as japanned furniture, upholstered seating and bedding, and an inlaid marble table. The upholstery could have so easily been designed, and made, for an English town house. Chairs in his inventory are described as '8 *damask chairs*' and '4 *old ----- velvet chairs*,' as well as '12 *elbow chairs with yellow damask cushions*' and '2 *ditto with brocade seats and backs with calico covers.*'²⁵² The Duke's furniture was not upholstered for the comfort of the sitter, on the contrary brocade and velvet upholstery must have been uncomfortable and clammy. The owner of this furniture was more concerned with displaying the signifiers of his position, than accommodating to the functional dictates of the climate. The upholstering of furniture with heavy fabrics was at odds with the humidity and heat, and

²⁵² Richard Goodman, Merchant, Probate, 1797.

²⁵³ Duke of Portland, Governor 1722-27, Probate, 1727.

generally upholstered furniture was limited to seat pads, cushions and palliases.²⁵⁴ The listing of curtains was also rare, and the use of jalousies instead of sash windows appears to have made window curtains redundant.

Furniture with surface decoration

Just as upholstery was not conducive to sitting in comfort, so inlaid and japanned objects were just as unsuited to the Jamaican house. Although, back in England these objects were both held in high esteem for the skill they demonstrated and in their exotic connotations, in the climate of Jamaica their life span was considerably shortened and their presence slightly absurd, but highly prized. Indeed, their presence was doomed from the moment they were landed, or made, on the island. The fluctuations in the Jamaican climate, from high to low humidity would have degraded these objects very quickly.

Veneer and inlays would have been stuck down using protein glues; such as animal or fish glue and in temperate climates these adhesives may last for many decades, or even centuries. Yet in the hot and tropical climate of Jamaica the delamination would have been greatly accelerated and the veneer or inlay would have lifted in a very short period of time, this may explain why only two probates record inlaid wooden furniture in tropical Jamaica in the eighteenth century. The probate of James Clarke in 1727 records an inlaid antique gun and a 'walnut inlaid escritoire' and in 1746, David Hamilton's probate listed a 'Mahogany table with inlaid brass.'²⁵⁵ To re-inforce this rarity, furniture makers' probates indicate that they did not have stocks of veneer, or veneered objects in their workshops. Clearly, the furniture makers recognised the problem of working with veneers in such a climate, and either chose not to practise this art, or found veneering an expensive and time consuming process in a country where exotic timber was in abundance.

The japanned finish, which would have had a gesso background to make it smooth followed by a building up of many layers of shellac, would have lifted from its substrate when the humidity was high and low.

²⁵⁴ A palliase is a stuffed mattress used on chair seats.

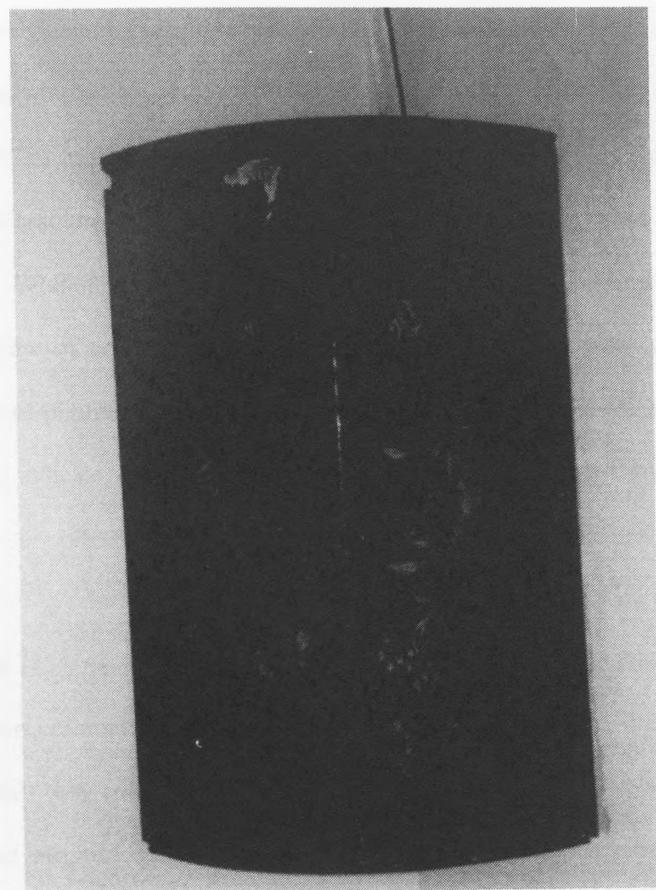


Illustration 32

This japanned corner cupboard, circa 1730, was found in Jamaica. There is some evidence to suggest this kind of furniture was made in Jamaica for a short period in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

²⁵⁵ James Clarke, Esquire, Probate, 1727; David Hamilton, Captain, Probate, 1746.

The adhesion between the substrate would have quickly broken down and the japanned finish would have flaked off the object, or unsightly cracks would have appeared in the object's carcase. Yet despite this, japanned furniture appears to have been made in Jamaica for a short period of time and was available to purchase throughout the eighteenth century. Of the 400 hundred woodworkers that are documented in the time span under study only three had japanned furniture in stock. The significance of these three makers is that they died between 1724 and 1734, all three lived in Port Royal, and two of the three were in business together.²⁵⁶ These three craftsmen were all described as 'Joiners' and had stocks of japanned furniture at the time of their deaths. While it could be argued that this furniture was being imported from Britain, there is evidence in the probate of one of the three, Robert Pitchard, that he was creating these objects in Jamaica. The presence of pigments, varnish and clock parts, which in themselves were rarely present in woodworkers probates, indicate that he was in the process of decorating furniture and clocks, using japanning techniques.

On Pitchard's death in 1734 no further evidence exists to suggest that this craft continued in Jamaica. Although japanned chairs, cabinets, corner cupboards and other items were represented in the goods and chattels of white colonials they could not have been made in Jamaica. In Edward Joy's thesis he records the amount of japanned furniture leaving Britain for the Caribbean, and certainly this furniture was in demand in Jamaica as over 20 inventories were found owning japanned objects throughout much of the eighteenth century.²⁵⁷ Several probates list significant objects up until 1740 and then there appears to be a gap of several decades until this type of object reappears in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Of those objects listed in the early eighteenth century craftsmen's probates, corner cupboards appeared the most often, with chairs, boxes and the odd cabinet also being documented. Given the rank of those that owned this type of object it appears they belong to richer members of the community in Jamaica. The Duke of Portland who had '*6 japanned chairs a corner cupboard and dressing table*' and the gentleman William Gordon who had an '*old japanned cabinet*' and a '*japanned corner cupboard with glass*' illustrate the type of owner who possessed such goods (See Illustration 32).²⁵⁸ This array of larger japanned objects

²⁵⁶ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730, and his business partner, Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734. Although there is no evidence it may be the case that all three were connected to the same business.

²⁵⁷ Joy, Edward, 1966, p. 76.

²⁵⁸ Duke of Portland, Governor, Probate, 1727; William Gordon, Esquire, Probate, 1740.

was not present in the latter inventories where the objects were smaller, such as candlesticks, japanned waiters and boxes. Amongst the goods and chattels of Richard Goodman were ‘*pontipool teapots*’ and it is perhaps conceivable that those objects that were described as japanned, were in fact pontypool ware.²⁵⁹ The discontinuity, of some 40 years in the appearance of japanned objects was finally broken by an advertisement appearing in a local newspaper. An advertisement in The Cornwall Chronicle and General Advertiser of 1787, informs the reader of the arrival from Bristol of goods including ‘*japanned waiters*’.²⁶⁰ Japanned goods at the end of the century were mainly small manufactured wares and feature regularly in both probates and shop advertisements.

By the end of the eighteenth century the high social status of japanned wares had clearly diminished, as the objects were being advertised for all to purchase, rather than just for commission. Despite the free availability of these small japanned wares the japanning of furniture in Jamaica never recommenced nor does there appear to have been a demand for it to restart.

Walnut Furniture

While japanned objects were being produced in Jamaica during the 1720s, there also appears to have been a large number of pieces of walnut furniture listed in the inventories. While japanned objects were an unusual presence because of the nature of the object and its fragile surface, walnut furniture was also an unexpected object to see in Jamaica for a different reason. Walnut, whether American or European,²⁶¹ is not indigenous to Jamaica and any planks, logs or objects would have been imported from Britain or from the East Coast of America. The furniture that appears in the inventories of Jamaica was just as likely to have been made of American as European walnut. American the export of walnut, albeit in small quantities, was imported into England as early as 1719, after the French ban on walnut to Britain had been put into effect that same year.²⁶² The consequence of this action was that Britain purchased walnut from other European mainland countries and in the long term began to encourage the utilisation and importation

²⁵⁹ Richard Goodman, Merchant, Probate, 1797. Pontypool ware is the painting and lacquering on tin to simulate a japanned effect. Muir, Julia, ‘Pontypool Ware,’ 1999, Master’s Essay, RCA/V&A.

²⁶⁰ The Cornwall Chronicle & General Advertiser, January 20th 1787.

²⁶¹ American Walnut, *Juglans Nigra*; European Walnut, *Juglans Regia*.

of timber from the American colonies, including walnut. Throughout the 1720s America was the main source of walnut coming into England, its volume drastically increasing when the introduction of the Naval Stores Act came into effect in 1724. The impact of the Act on the timber trade was marked, for shortly after its implementation we begin to see the listing of American walnut in English probates.²⁶³ One of the first probates to list the arrival of American walnut in 1724, was that of Lazarus Stiles who listed '*117ft of two inche Virginia Walnut*' and '*317ft of one inche Virginia Walnut*'.²⁶⁴

Although American walnut was being exported from the Chesapeake to make furniture in England it is unlikely that American walnut was being converted into furniture to be exported to Jamaica directly. Indeed, there was no evidence to suggest that the American furniture makers were exporting any cabinet ware in the first half of the eighteenth century. Given that walnut was not indigenous to Jamaica and that walnut is particularly prone to insect attack its commercial use was limited. Consequently, little evidence survives to demonstrate that this genre of furniture was manufactured in Kingston or in any other part of Jamaica. The listing of walnut furniture in probates was initially thought to represent imported goods from Britain. Curiously the probates may suggest otherwise: it may be the case that walnut furniture parts were sent to Jamaica and that this furniture was then constructed in the workshops of Port Royal and then retailed. The inventory of William Lodge, merchant, lists his stock, and included '*14 bundles of walnut tree chais*' along with '*3 doz cain chairs, 8 elbow, 18 round tables, 5 couches, 27 parrott cages*' and tools consisting of '*20 dozen carpenters hammers and 4 doz joiners hatchetts*'.²⁶⁵ This stock, which was confined to furniture and woodwork tools, implies that Lodge was an importer, and perhaps a retailer of furniture. Just as significantly, it also suggests that in the early eighteenth century the making and supplying of furniture was in great demand. The importation of walnut furniture continued in the 1730s, and Peter Beckford's inventory of 1735 confirms this, as '*4 anglo walnut chairs, 12 ditto...*' are mentioned.²⁶⁶ Beckford's inventory records that these pieces of walnut furniture were English, and helps support the notion that walnut furniture was not produced in Jamaica. Furthermore, none of the furniture makers on the island held stocks of walnut timber and only four makers had any furniture that was listed as

²⁶² Cross, John, 1993, Appendix 7.

²⁶³ Cross, John, 1994, pp. 60-62.

²⁶⁴ CLRO, Lazarus Stiles, Joiner, Orphans Court Records, List C, 3197.

²⁶⁵ William Lodge, Merchant, Probate, 1714.

walnut. Of these four, one had a walnut sconce with branches and another a walnut cannister.²⁶⁷ In effect only two had a large or significant number of walnut pieces in their workshop. Robert Pitchard had a chest of drawers and a desk of walnut and James Fisher had a dozen chairs and an elbow chair of the same wood.²⁶⁸ While these two furniture makers did have in stock walnut furniture, there is no evidence to prove whether they did, or did not make it. Whichever the case, it is certain that the making of walnut furniture in Jamaica was relatively restricted, and by the early 1740s had ceased to be mentioned in probates of furniture makers.

One of the effects of the Naval Stores Act was that mahogany in England was taxed by weight rather than by its length and thereby became very cheap to import into England. Perversely, walnut was not included in the Act and quickly became very expensive. Its declining importance on the London and Jamaican market was matched by the increasing popularity of mahogany. While in terms of value walnut retained its percentage of the market, it was rapidly overtaken by mahogany as the predominant timber for furniture makers in England. During the 1720s walnut fell out of fashion and only re-emerged when mahogany was relatively common and cheap in the workshops of London furniture makers. The Earl of Egremont in the 1760s chose to have his Chippendale designed chairs made in walnut rather than mahogany, and the merchant Norton ordered his furniture in 1764 and specified that they should be made of walnut, and not mahogany.²⁶⁹ Just as walnut begins to gain a new social status in England, so it did in Jamaica. Later in the eighteenth century only an occasional piece of walnut furniture appears in the Jamaican probates, which is surprisingly given it is not an indigenous wood and that the timber is prone to insect attack. Therefore its appearance in Jamaican homes reflects the desire for fashionable items and to follow British taste.²⁷⁰

Mahogany Furniture

The most popular material for the craftsmen in Jamaica was mahogany. All types of furniture were manufactured using this timber and its suitability for the tropical climate and conditions was unmatched.

²⁶⁶ Peter Beckford, Planter, Probate, 1735.

²⁶⁷ William Warren, Joiner, Probate, 1730; Emmanuel Timberlake, Carpenter, Probate, 1741.

²⁶⁸ Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734; James Fisher, Joiner, Probate, 1724.

²⁶⁹ Norton Mason, Frances, 1968, pp. 76-78.

Not only was this hardwood generally termite proof, it was hard wearing and could stand up to the rigours of the climate. Much of the furniture listed in the furniture makers' probates, other more general inventories and advertising was made of mahogany.

Mahogany is indigenous to Jamaica and Jamaican mahogany was highly prized in Britain for its high density and dark colour. This quality of mahogany was quickly farmed out of existence, and by the late eighteenth century the trade in the fine mahoganies was negligible. The earliest reference to any mahogany furniture in Jamaica appears in the probate of William Crosby of Port Royal in 1713 which lists 'One mahogany Oval table.' In the same year the carpenter Daniel Griffin, again from Port Royal, had in stock at his death '432 ft of mahogany' valued at a little over £5, which again was the first documented example of a woodworker having such material in his stock in trade.²⁷¹ Mahogany was imported into Britain in small quantities in the second decade of the eighteenth century and only increases in volume after the Naval Stores Act was implemented. It is curious that the popularity of mahogany in Jamaica only occurs after the 1724 Act, which had the effect of lowering its export costs to Britain. Only after Britain started to import mahogany did the timber begin to appear in the stock in trade of woodworkers in Jamaica, and appear in the probate inventories in general as a material suitable for furniture.

In 1724, John Ford a joiner of Kingston died leaving over 600ft of mahogany in stock.²⁷² James Fisher another joiner from Port Royal also had huge quantities in stock.²⁷³ Fisher's timber included 200 planks of mahogany making up over 7200 ft of the timber as well as '4 solid pieces' and another 140 boards calculated to be 1740 ft of mahogany board. This was not his complete stock in trade, but illustrated that as the demand for mahogany grew in London, so it did in Jamaica. These early probates that list mahogany as stock in trade curiously do not list any mahogany furniture.

It is not until 1727 that a probate listed a piece of furniture made in mahogany, could be construed as having been made by a Jamaican craftsman. The probate of James Clarke, states that he owned a 'New

²⁷⁰ Bowatt, Adam, 1995, pp. 116-117.

²⁷¹ William Crosby, Carpenter, Probate, 1713; Daniel Griffin, Carpenter, Probate, 1713.

²⁷² John Ford, Joiner, Probate, 1724.

²⁷³ James Fisher, Joiner, Probate, 1724.

desk mahogany.²⁷⁴ Only in the 1730s do we see Jamaican craftsmen regularly holding stocks of mahogany furniture. For example, William Warren in 1730 had in stock a ‘*mahogany bureau not finished*’ and Robert Pitchard also had a ‘*mahogany desk unfinished*’ and a ‘*new mahogany square table*.’ In the same year as Pitchard’s probate, Moses Touro had taken possession of a ‘*new mahogany escritoire*.’²⁷⁵

It becomes clear that although Jamaica had vast amounts of mahogany it was not effectively used until it became cheap and fashionable in England. Only after the British market created a demand for mahogany did Jamaican craftsmen begin to construct objects from this timber to, copy the British makers. Similarly the Jamaican consumer was influenced by fashion several thousand miles away. With the introduction of mahogany furniture, objects constructed from walnut and other materials, including japanned work tended to disappear from probates, or their value is diminished, and the object is referred to as ‘*an old walnut bureau*’ the connotation being that it was out dated and of little value.

During the transition from walnut to mahogany furniture there is evidence that both types were made and purchased. Robert Pitchard’s probate of 1734, lists both types of furniture as does Alexander Henderson’s probate which includes ‘*1 new walnut chest of drawers, 1 mahogany ditto*.’ In the same year as Pitchard’s inventory that of Thomas Howe’s states that not only did he have a ‘*walnut beaufett*’ and ‘*walnut bureau*’ but he also owned a mahogany bureau bookcase.²⁷⁶ After the commencement of the use of mahogany by furniture makers the marble topped table of the first three decades of the eighteenth century was described as ‘*marble table with mahogany frame*.’²⁷⁷ The distinction here is that prior to the introduction of mahogany the base of the table would have been constructed using another material, or even gilded, but would not have been mahogany.

The presence of mahogany furniture in Jamaican probates is, in itself, not particularly useful, as most Jamaicans owned mahogany furniture in some form or quantity. What is surprising is that Jamaican craftsmen, who were clearly skilled in japanning and making other fine pieces did not make furniture out of

²⁷⁴ James Clarke, Esquire, Probate, 1727.

²⁷⁵ Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734; James Clarke, Esquire, Probate, 1727; Moses Touro, Merchant, Probate, 1734.

²⁷⁶ Alexander Henderson, Planter, Probate 1740; Thomas Howe, Esquire, Probate, 1734.

²⁷⁷ Of the inventories studied only ten marble tables were discovered and several that also lists ‘marble.’

mahogany until it was fashionable in London. It is only after English models arrive in Jamaica that we see the local craftsmen making furniture out of a local material and importantly ceasing to produce objects that were unsuitable for a tropical climate and where the material was not indigenous.

The appearance of items of furniture that were clearly more than just utilitarian reflects the need to mimic the fashion and style of London. The presence of goods that were beyond the constraints of practicality also illustrates the wealth of some Jamaicans and the style and comfort in which they expected to live.

Creolising forms of furniture

The creolising of furniture in Jamaica is concerned with how furniture differed from those in England. The convergence of African and Caucasian culture, values and forms could have been the reason why a certain style and forms developed. However, the climatic conditions of the colony could have also been the reason for new objects and the alteration of otherwise common forms appear in Jamaica. The presence of luxury goods such as walnut and mahogany furniture as well as girandoles, japanned furniture and gilded objects suggests that the Jamaicans were wealthy, able and willing to keep in tune with English taste. Although, European fashion and habit often took precedence over comfort, Jamaicans appear to have adapted London taste to Jamaican living. The question is to what extent were Jamaicans willing to push aside social sensibilities and protocol, and accept a creolised lifestyle?

Dining room furniture

While furniture such as beds, chairs and tables would have differed little from their British counterparts, there are other items of furniture in the Jamaican home that were very different from Britain. Familiar forms such as breakfast tables, mahogany chests of drawers, bookcases and bureaus were typically found in the Jamaican and English home throughout the eighteenth century, as well as round, semi-circular, square, triangular or oval tables and tables for dining, taking tea and playing cards. It is the more unusual descriptions of furniture in probates that illustrate the difference in the objects available to the two separate

markets. Dining tables appear in dining rooms and beds unsurprisingly were located in bedrooms in probates on both sides of the Atlantic, yet the common appearance of the free standing 'beaufett' in the dining room of Jamaica does not have an English or American counterpart (See Illustration 33).²⁷⁸ The object was a vestige of the seventeenth century, the term coming from the French 'beaufete.' It appears it was an early 'whatnot' and was relatively common in Jamaica. Whereas other countries interpreted the beaufett as a fitted cupboard, in Jamaica it remained an open series of shelves held together by turned legs on each corner of the shelf and was presumably for storing glasses and other objects related to dining.

The other piece of furniture that was listed in the dining room was the sideboard or side table. The beaufett and the side table or board were recognised in eighteenth century Jamaican probates as separate items and were not confused.²⁷⁹ The sideboard appears later in the eighteenth century probates, the earliest listing appearing in 1767.²⁸⁰ The year before was the first time the terms table and board were linked, being written in the inventory as a 'sideboard table.' Although the sideboard and beaufett appear in the same inventory they were clearly defined in the minds of those listing them.²⁸¹ Whereas the beaufett displayed all its objects on its shelves, the sideboard also incorporated several drawers so that liquor could be locked away. The probate of James Riddock, dated 1797, lists such a piece, it described a 'sideboard with liquor drawer's (See Illustrations 34).²⁸² Similarly in the Daily Advertiser of 1790 notification of a sale lists 'a large mahogany sideboard with drawers, rum cases etc.'²⁸³ The side table, however, appears to be just that a table placed against the side of the room. Caution is required however when a table described as a side table as it could be an early form of sideboard or an actual side table or part of a dining table that was against the wall when the full length of the table was not required. Fortunately, the term is only used three times in the furniture makers' inventories studied, one of which uses the term 'sideboard table.'

²⁷⁸ Crowe Leviner, Betty, 'Buffet or Bowfat? The built-in cupboard in the eighteenth century,' Antiques, May 1999, pp. 754-761.

²⁷⁹ Gloag, John, 1990, p. 158. In Gloag's Dictionary of Furniture he states that the beaufett and sideboard were recognised as different objects in England, as illustrated by Celia Fiennes' diaries in the early eighteenth century.

²⁸⁰ William Gosling, Carpenter, Probate, 1767.

²⁸¹ Alexander McKenzie, Carpenter, Probate, 1782.

²⁸² James Riddock, Carpenter, Probate, 1797.

Bedroom furniture

Whilst there were some differences in the type of objects used in the dining room, the bed chamber did not appear to have been any different from its British counterpart other than in the presence of lighter bedding and the standard inclusion of the mosquito net. William Cynic describes a bedroom as being furnished in a 'simple manner' including a chest of drawers, two or three chairs and a bedstead. He mentions too, the necessity of the mosquito net, stating that he '*heard whizzing of mosquitoes in the night, though they could not penetrate through my curtains or mosquito net, which covers the whole bedstead.*'²⁸⁴

The description of the bed gives an insight into the desire of some Jamaicans to live as luxurious and comfortable a life as money could buy. In the Daily Advertiser of 1790 a bed for sale was described as '*1 four-poster bed, with fluted columns and double screws*' (See Illustration 35) and listed below this item was a '*sopha bedstead, upon a new construction, with cupola top and lathe bottoms.*'²⁸⁵ While there are many references to mahogany and 'compleat' bedsteads there were few references to four poster beds, which is surprising considering their numbers in Jamaica today. Other than several public sale notices appearing in the newspapers and other references in the inventories, few four poster beds are evident in the homes of the colonials. However, in the early nineteenth century the inventory of the furniture maker John Fisher in 1804 lists no fewer than 20 mahogany bedposts and on his death a client had returned a bed. Fisher was most likely to have been a specialist bed maker, as his stock in trade listed little else.

Only Nicholas Burke, Speaker of the Assembly, was found to own two four poster beds, otherwise their absence from the workshops of the furniture makers and the household goods lists of other inventories suggest that they were relatively rare and only made towards the end of the eighteenth century.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ BL, Colindale, Daily Advertiser, October 2nd 1790.

²⁸⁴ Cynic, William R., 1826, pp. 314-315, p. 10.

²⁸⁵ BL, Colindale, Daily Advertiser, December 20th 1790. The double screw referred to in the advert was probably reference to Solomonic columns on the head and foot boards.

²⁸⁶ Nicholas Burke, Speaker of the Assembly 1770, Probate, 1772.



Illustration 33

Beaufetts of this form are unusually only found in Jamaica.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Equally rare as the four poster bed was the wardrobe. The predecessor to this storage cupboard was the press or clothes cupboard, both of which were commonly referred to in eighteenth century furniture makers' probates. The 'press' in Jamaica, as in Britain, begins to be referred to as a wardrobe after Hepplewhite first used the word in his Cabinet Makers and Upholsterers Guide in 1788.²⁸⁷ Only a year latter in The Cornwall Chronicle at Montego Bay a wardrobe was for sale, described as '*an elegant mahogany wardrobe.*'²⁸⁸ Despite the seemingly quick adoption of the terminology from London, the term was not in common use in Jamaica until the end of the century. The transference from press to wardrobe was clearly confusing at this stage, as in the probate of Abraham Benaim, in 1797 the administrator referred to a '*mahogany press or wardrobe.*' Yet a couple of years later James Renny's probate reveals that he had many items in his bedroom including a tent bed and wardrobe.²⁸⁹

Piazza furniture

Other than the dining room and bedroom, the room which probably demonstrated most clearly the inclination of the white population to creolise was the piazza which had little in common with its English counterpart. The piazza in Jamaica was more than a verandah or gallery, it was probably the main social space in the colonial house. Consequently, the presence of a great number of chairs, sofas and games tables was not unusual. While upholstered furniture was never listed as being placed in this space, other chairs which had solid seats like the Windsor chair and the leather-bottomed chair were often present.

Although no leather chair survives, its appearance in the probates of furniture makers and many citizens indicate that it was a popular form of seating. When the leather-bottomed chair was mentioned it was invariably listed as being in the piazza, and was not found in any other room. The inventory of the joiner Thomas Sheppard of 1730, lists '*6 old leather chairs*' as well as '*14 dozen Brazile red leather chairs*' and

²⁸⁷ Hepplewhite, George, 1788.

²⁸⁸ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle, August 8th 1789.

²⁸⁹ Abraham Benaim, Silversmith, Probate, 1797; James Renny, Merchant, Probate, 1799.

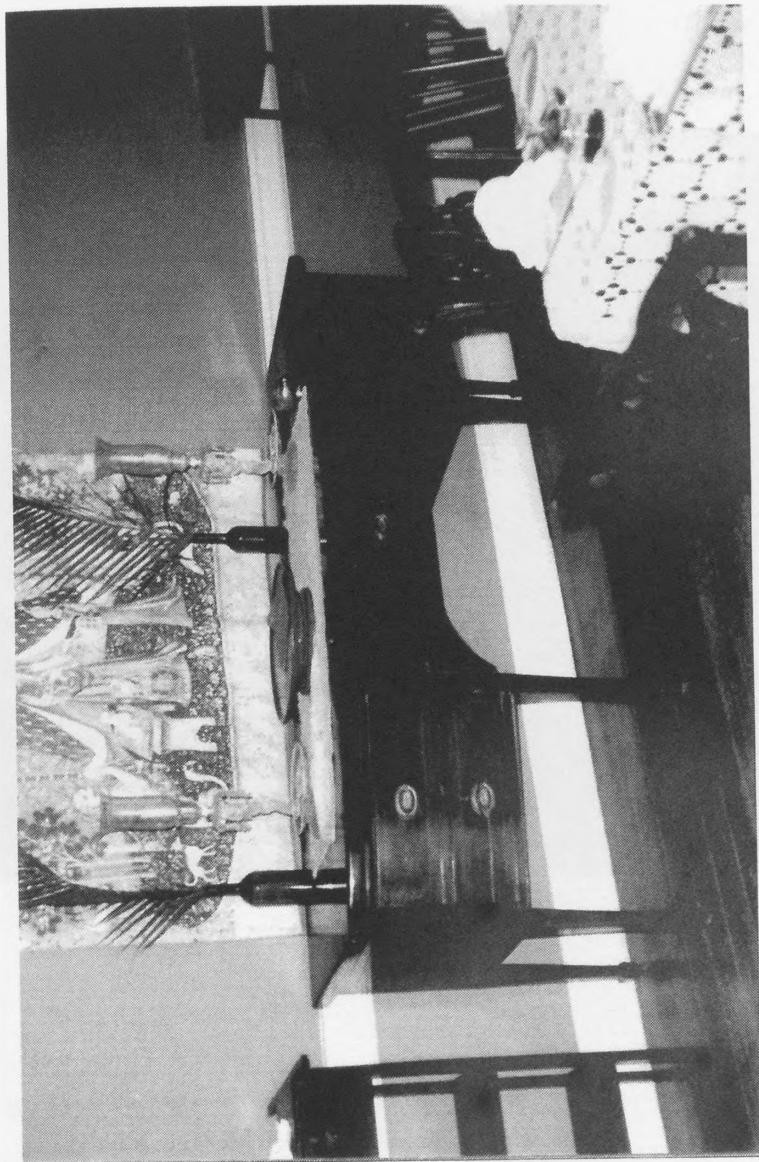


Illustration 34

Jamaican sideboard, circa 1800, is very similar to English examples, but this one was probably made in Jamaica. Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

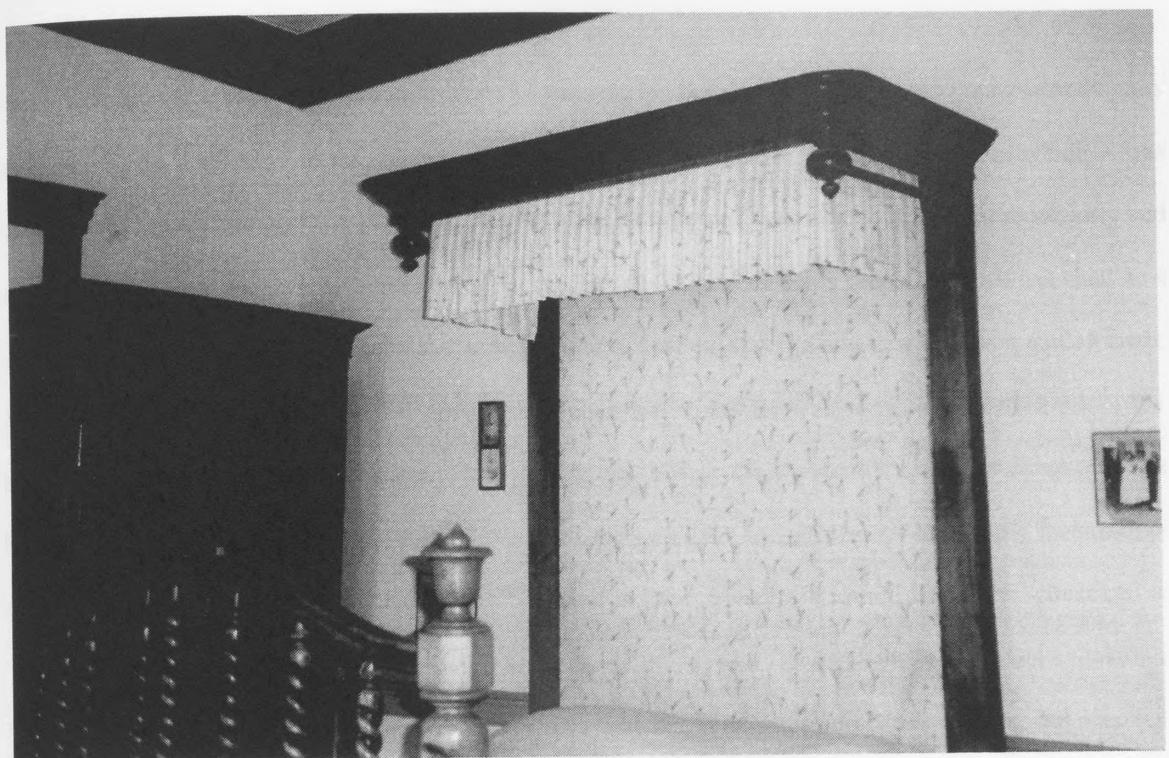


Illustration 35

This bedstead has solomonic columns on the foot board.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

‘6 new leather chairs.’²⁹⁰ The leather chair could have been an early prototype of a planter’s chair, which was a reclining chair that had a piece of leather that was swung from front seat rail to the back.²⁹¹

However, it is probably more likely to have been a simple straight backed chair with a leather seat and back pad, just like those found in England. The presence of this type of chair declines after the 1750s and thereafter was rarely mentioned. No leather chairs are listed in furniture makers’ stock after 1753.

The Windsor chair clearly was more popular and suitable for Jamaican living. It was made of mahogany and was like an English Windsor chair in every way with the exception of the timber from which it was constructed.²⁹² The origin of the Windsor chair is discussed in Ivan Sparkes’s book, but more recently and significantly in Nancy Goyne Evans The America Windsor Chair.²⁹³ Evan’s scholarly work has shed new light on the origin of this chair, which it is now thought to have been originally designed as a garden chair, first being called a ‘*Forrest*’ chair.²⁹⁴ This form of chair was in use from as early as 1719 until the 1740s. Henry Williams in the 1730s constructed ‘6 *Mohogany Forest Chairs neatly carved with scrolls*’ for Frederick Prince of Wales. The only use of the term ‘*forrest chair*’ in Jamaica appears in the inventory of Alexander Henderson, which is dated 1740.²⁹⁵ Chairs in other inventories could have been construed as ‘*Windsor*’ chairs, but are not titled as such. An example of this is in the probate of John Dallas taken in 1725. He had in stock ‘12 *wooden chairs*.’ Given that the Windsor chairs were nothing but wooden, complete with bogged seats, this description could have been an early version of the Windsor chair, which was yet to be defined clearly or named.

The first use of the term ‘*Windsor*’ in England according to Goyne Evans was in 1725 in a probate of that date.²⁹⁶ In Jamaica the first listing of Windsor chairs was only five years later in 1730, in the inventory of Francis Wood, which included ‘1 *Windsor chair*.’ Thereafter the Windsor chair became a familiar item in

²⁹⁰ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730.

²⁹¹ The nineteenth century planters chair had one piece of leather that acted as seat and back, whereas others and early examples may have had two pieces of leather one for the seat the other forming the back.

²⁹² Cotton, Bernard, 1991. In this comprehensive book on the regional chair all the chairs were made of local timbers. However, metropolis manufacture was not in the remit of the book, and nor was the making of the Windsor chair for the export market.

²⁹³ Sparkes, Ivan, 1975; Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996.

²⁹⁴ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996, p. 43.

²⁹⁵ Alexander Henderson, Planter, Probate, 1740.

²⁹⁶ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996, p. 42.

the Jamaican probates. In 1734, Peter Beckford's inventory lists 33 chairs including '2 *Windsor elbow chairs*' and in the same year Thomas Howe had '2 *double Windsor chairs*' and '4 *single ditto*'.²⁹⁷ This early listing of the double Windsor chair mirrors the earliest mention of such an item in England. In 1735, the Jamaican House of Assembly paid £12.5s. for the payment of 12 Windsor chairs for the Council Chamber in the King's House.²⁹⁸ This purchase must constitute the first institutional use of the Windsor chairs as well as giving us a clear price. It was significant that in the early 1730s English Windsor chairs were described as being made of mahogany, just as they were in Jamaica at a similar date. Charleston's first Windsor chairs were documented in 1734, while in Philadelphia they appeared a little later, in 1736.²⁹⁹ Despite this fact colonial America appears to have manufactured their own Windsor chairs by 1745. The making of Windsor chairs in Jamaica was not evident in any craftsman's probate until this later date either.³⁰⁰

In Jamaica the Windsor chair was also described in a variety of forms, and given other names. The most common forms were the high and low back versions. The low back Windsor was a chair with a solid seat and turned legs, stretcher and spindle with a horseshoe shaped armrest and back dowelled onto the lathes.

The low back mahogany chair was another name under which the Windsor chair masqueraded. In the inventory of Harry Lumsden was listed '6 *low back mahogany Windsor's chairs*' (See Illustration 36).³⁰¹ Just as the Windsor was referred to as a mahogany low back it also had a high back version too. The high back Windsor was similar to the low back, except its back was extended by a further line of turned lathes on which a crest rail was mounted, forming a comb shape on top of the horseshoe already described.

²⁹⁷ Francis Wood, Planter, Probate, 1730; Peter Beckford, Planter, Probate, 1735.

²⁹⁸ Cundall, Frank, 1937, p. 168.

²⁹⁹ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996, p. 65.

³⁰⁰ While we can speculate that this was the first Windsor chair to appear in a craftsman's workshop it is not certain that it was made in that workshop.

³⁰¹ Harry Lumsden, Carpenter, Probate, 1799.



Illustration 36

Low back Windsor chairs were relatively common in Jamaica and this one is typical of its genre.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 37

Green painted Windsor chairs were common in eighteenth century Jamaica, this very rare green painted Windsor bench is the only one known to have survived.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Another variety of the Windsor chair, although not common in Jamaica, appears in several probates described as ‘green painted Windsor chairs.’ As early as 1735, Peter Beckford’s probate states he owned ‘Windsor elbow chairs painted green’ and some 30 years later in 1767, William Gosling lists in his probate ‘12 old green painted Windsor chairs.’³⁰² Although plenty of mahogany Windsor chairs are to be found in Jamaica, of both the low and high back variety, the presence of the double and triple Windsor are much scarcer. Only one example was discovered that was painted green and was certainly the type described in numerous inventories (See Illustration 37).³⁰³

The exact provenance of the Windsor chair is unknown. Despite Goyne Evans’ extensive research its introduction into England still remains a mystery.³⁰⁴ It was certainly originally designed as an outdoor object as an early painting depicts the chair in an external setting as early as 1769.³⁰⁵ Clearly, in Jamaica there was a need for a chair that could be placed out of doors, on the piazza, but that was heavy enough not to be blown over and did not have any fabrics that could be affected by rain or harbour insects. The Windsor chair fitted these requirements and its simplicity meant that it could be easily made. Although the Windsor chairs were described as being made of mahogany in England as early as 1733,³⁰⁶ it was not until the 1750s that evidence exists to suggest that the chairs were produced locally in Jamaica, therefore prior to this date it is likely that they were imported.³⁰⁷ In 1753, the inventory of the carpenter Junesa Young lists ‘8 Windsor chairs’³⁰⁸ while Mathew Nutter had ‘6 mahogany Windsor chairs’³⁰⁹ William Wells held ‘30 Windsor chairs’ in his inventory in 1774, and a little later William Cumming had ‘20 Windsor [chair] frames.’³¹⁰ These furniture makers’ probates suggest that Windsor chairs were produced in Jamaica in the latter half of the eighteenth century, yet they do not reveal from where these early owners of the Windsor chair bought them.

³⁰² Peter Beckford, Planter, Probate, 1735; William Gosling, Carpenter, Probate, 1767.

³⁰³ My thanks to the owner for allowing me to photograph this rare object, its location is not disclosed at the request of the owner.

³⁰⁴ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996, pp. 38-42.

³⁰⁵ NMM, PAH295, Two men are depicted sitting on a piazza in Windsor chairs, in a painting of ‘A view of the Harbour in the Parish of St. Ann’s, 1769.

³⁰⁶ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1996, p. 43. The joiner Henry Williams is stated as supplying the royal household with Windsor chairs from 1729 to 1733, and describing the chairs as ‘two richly carved mahogany Windsor chairs at £8.0.0’ the pair.’

³⁰⁷ Discussed in Chapter Three.

³⁰⁸ Junesa Young, Carpenter, Probate, 1753.

³⁰⁹ Mathew Nutter, Joiner, Probate, 1772.

³¹⁰ William Cumming, Carpenter, Probate, 1804; William Wells, Upholsterer, Probate, 1740.

The Windsor chair did not go out of fashion and appears in a great number of inventories throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not only was the Windsor chair represented in a large percentage of inventories, but it also appears in great numbers in individual probates. James Watson had '10 Windsor chairs,' and more specifically Hinton East's probate states he had '14 Windsor chairs on the Piazza' and Joseph Mode also had '12 Windsor chairs on the piazza.'¹ When inventories list goods and chattels room by room the Windsor chair was always placed in the piazza. In the caricature of '*Johnny Newcombe in the West Indies*,' which dates from the turn of the eighteenth century, the figure of Johnny sitting in a Windsor chair illustrates what a Jamaican Windsor chair looked like (See Illustration 38 A & B). The Windsor was an easy chair to relax in, its back legs were kicked far back and the rake of the back allowed the sitter to lean backwards on the back two legs. The lifting of feet from the floor was not only a restful pose, but also prevented insects climbing up the sitter's legs, and was noted several times by travellers, and clearly appeared odd and ungainly to European eyes.² The piazza was not just for sitting on, or for catching the breeze. Many inventories of planters and overseers reveal that it was used as an observation point. Spyglasses have only ever been found in the inventories of planters or overseers and were used to observe the workforce and gain warning of an attack from the slaves or maroons.

Recreational furniture

The spyglass was not commonly found in urban probates whereas the table, which was usually a gaming table of some kind, was common in the town and the plantation house. Lady Nugent sat at a writing table on the piazza while other sources stated that eating and drinking on the piazza were common.³ Playing cards or backgammon were well established recreational activities in Jamaica and the gaming table would have been a common feature on the piazza. Gaming tables were listed in the workshops of the furniture makers throughout the eighteenth century. The earliest was recorded in 1727, in the personal goods of

¹ James Watson, Probate, 1764; Hinton East, Planter, Probate, 1793; Joseph Mode, Probate, 1747.

² Bell, Brian, 1993, pp. 49-50.

³ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 26th January 1802.

George Fleming and is described simply as an ‘old backgammon table.’³¹⁴ This seemingly late appearance of this type of object is mirrored by the rise in popularity of the mahogany card table, in England, in the same period. Great numbers of mahogany card and backgammon tables were listed in the probates of English makers after 1730.³¹⁵ Yet the folding and walnut card tables, that existed prior to the newly fashionable mahogany version, were not present in any Jamaican documentation. In contrast, the tea table was present in Jamaican probates as early as any such object was found in England. In an early English print, circa 1710, entitled ‘*The Tea Table*’ taking tea was still a novel and expensive occupation.³¹⁶ A table specifically for drinking tea from was recorded in a Jamaican maker’s workshop as early as 1715. Whilst ‘tea table’ was still an uncommon name at this date in England, it emphasises the rapid transmission of style and fashion across the Atlantic. However, the listing of a tea table in the inventory of the planter Robert Philips, in 1703, must raise questions as to the origin of the tea table itself.³¹⁷ Later, the common appearance of the mahogany tea table in Jamaica again coincides with the regular making and selling of mahogany tea tables in London and England. The brief appearance, in Jamaica, of a ‘*silver tea table*’ in the probate of Elijah Gomezsall in the 1730s was probably related to the silver equipage that was placed on the table rather than the nature of the table finish, although a silver leaf tea table can not be dismissed.³¹⁸ Such descriptions were not used until the third quarter of the eighteenth century in England, and they reveal once again the early use of terminology in Jamaica.³¹⁹

Other furniture in Jamaica related to the taking of tea included tea trays and boards, as well as kettle stands and tea chests, which were later known as tea caddies. The tea chest was relatively common, but the caddy is rarely mentioned in eighteenth century accounts. It was not until the last years of the eighteenth century that the tea chest was beginning to be referred to as a tea caddy. Several probates illustrate this changing nomenclature. James Renny’s probate of 1799, lists a ‘*tea caddie*’ and the carpenter James Small had a ‘*tea caddy*’ and a ‘*tea board*.³²⁰ The term ‘*caddy*’ was first used in England after 1788, and went into

³¹⁴ George Fleming, Turner, Probate, 1727.

³¹⁵ PRO, Cust 3.

³¹⁶ Saumarez-Smith, Charles, 1993, p. 57.

³¹⁷ Robert Philips, Planter, Probate, 1703. The probates that have been studied in London furniture makers workshops have not listed a tea table earlier than this date.

³¹⁸ Elijah Gomezsall, Esquire, Probate, 1737.

³¹⁹ Wakling, Gillain, 1985, Introduction.

³²⁰ James Renny, Merchant, Probate, 1799; James Small, Carpenter, Probate, 1801.

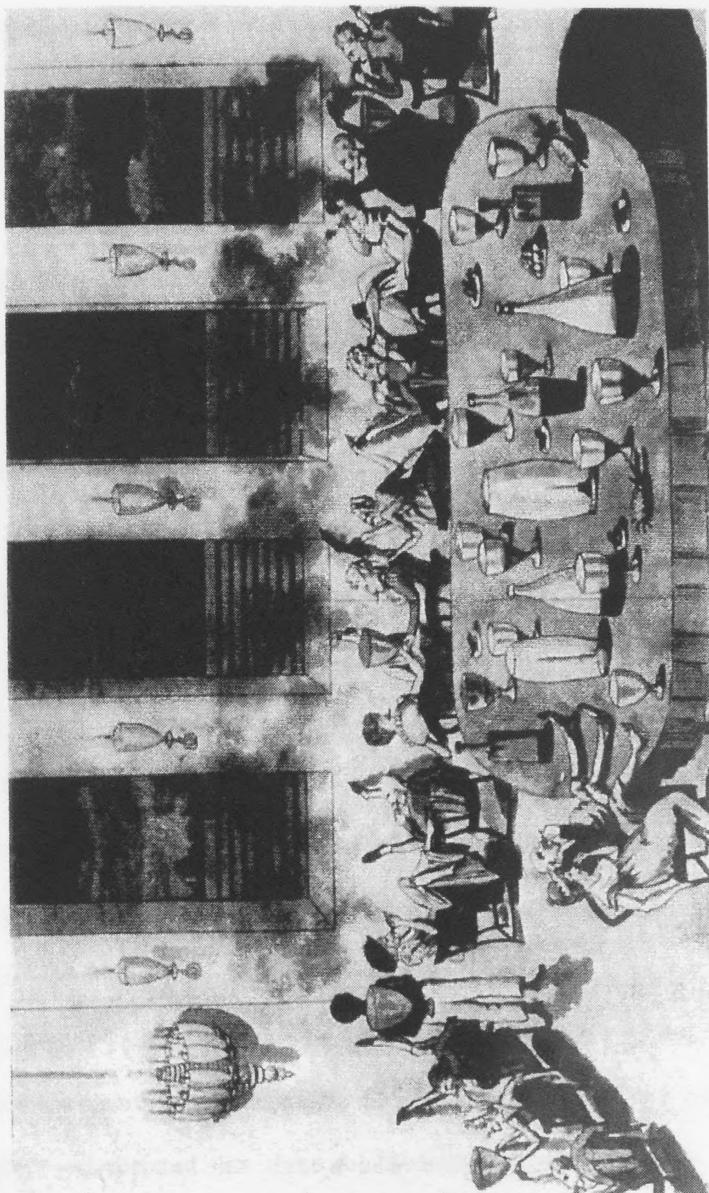


Illustration 38 A

'*Segar Smoking Society in Jamaica*,' this caricature illustrates people creolising with their feet on the table and up the walls, thus preventing insects walking up their legs.

general usage sometime between that date and when Sheraton's Dictionary was published in 1803. Sheraton states that the caddy was a general term used for all shapes of tea chests.³²¹ Prior to 1788 the tea chest was the vessel in which tea was stored and secured,³²² and several makers list the tea chest as part of their stock. Most of those described were made of mahogany, but one or two rare and late examples appear to have been made of satinwood.³²³

Slave housing and furniture

Although very little evidence survives to indicate the level and individual circumstances of slave accommodation, there are contemporary accounts that depict how some slaves lived. If slaves, albeit a small number, are described owning and making furniture for themselves then we must speculate on the nature of this furniture.

To the newly arrived slaves the plantation estates would have been gilded cages; the only means to survive was by coming to terms with the eternal production routine of the estate. The plantation buildings were constructed with no expense spared in their detail, the housing of the slaves was in marked contrast. According to Higman slave houses were generally located close to the sugar works and millhouse, while the planters' house in contrast was distanced from the sugar works and slave quarters alike. This arrangement was the same in the Chesapeake and Tidewater areas of the Southern states of America.³²⁴ While it would seem the number of slaves in any one estate was smaller than its Jamaican counterpart, the size of the accommodation appears to be the same. The number of slaves in any one house would depend on the size of the family unit. Family units tended to reside in a single house, with new young females being adopted and fostered into these family units. In contrast single adult males lived in separate accommodation, often in groups, and would only live away from these gangs when they had a wife.

³²¹ Sheraton, Thomas, 1803.

³²² Gloag, John, 1990, p. 663.

³²³ Christie's, Seend Green House Auction, Lot 47, Monday 19th September, 1988. A George III Satinwood work box of canted section, the hinged lid inlaid with a brass border enclosing a lidded compartment, the lid bearing trade label Ralph Turnbull, Cabinet Maker, Kingston Jamaica.

³²⁴ Higman, B. W., 1988, p. 81.

When maps and illustrations do show the slave housing it is an abstract element of the diagram, and the information recorded is usually inaccurate. On Edward Long's Lucky Valley Estate in Clarendon the survey depicts the slave houses in the background on a hill, with what appears to be small vernacular pitched houses with a single door and window.³²⁵ Other depictions are similar, but these images should not be assumed to be accurate, they only illustrate the location of the slave accommodation rather than a genuine representation of the number of houses and their position. Usually the number of houses is inadequate for the number of slaves on any estate, and the images of the houses appear to be generic. Little detail is shown other than houses with a pitched roof, door and window. Rarely does an illustration show the window to be on the gable end of the house. The inclusion of windows was not common and those that didn't have windows, probably had slits in the thatched roof. Joseph Sturge describes in 1837, the interior of a slave house stating that '*Ellis invited us to his house, which is a large, comfortable, and furnished cottage, with jalousies in the casements.*'³²⁶ This description is similar to Bryan Edwards's description some 50 years earlier, where he comments on the interior of a slave house as having '*venetian windows that acted like blinds.*'³²⁷

On the odd maps that do depict slave quarters, the houses of the important slaves such as the Driver or the Watchman were separated out and labelled.³²⁸ These houses, whether in reality or just because of their status in the surveyor's mind, were bigger and the gardens larger and fenced off. It is likely that social order in terms of the size of house, land and processions was evident in the ranks of the slaves. If such order existed amongst the domestic servants then it is certainly the case that it existed among the other slaves too. Higher ranking, or long serving, slaves were more likely to gain favour from the planter or overseer and have access to materials and tools that were otherwise were not available.

Slave accommodation in the Americas and Jamaica appears to be very similar in construction, materials and size. The houses tended to be built in pairs, sharing the same roof but with two front doors and each having a fireplace. Each unit would be divided into two, and a thin wattled wall, which would lack privacy,

³²⁵ Higman, B.W., 1988, p. 90.

³²⁶ Sturge, Joseph, 1968, p. 170.

³²⁷ Bryan Edwards, 1812, p. 26.

³²⁸ Higman, B. W., 1988, p. 243, 248.

would separate the two houses. Again those slaves of higher status could hope for a detached structure of a larger size,³²⁹ although, sometimes a detached house was constructed for the convenience or as a reward for services. In Thomas Thistlewood's journals of the early 1750s that record his life as an overseer in graphic detail, he describes the day to day running of the estate as well as the character of animal and slaves alike. The journal also gives an insight into another side to his character, in the remarks about his sexual preferences for certain female slaves, which includes a short description of a slave house built for one of his favourites Marina. The house had two rooms, and in total size measured 18 by seven feet.³³⁰ Marina was a recently arrived slave on the estate having come from Africa and her rise in status in having her own house would have been the cause of much resentment. Indeed, when Thistlewood left, he asked the trusted pann keeper '*to take care of her.*'

Slave accommodation was located on clean and level land, and the structuring of the house would begin with wooden poles hammered into the ground. These stacks before being driven into the earth would have been burnt; this would have had the effect of reducing rot. From these stacks the mainstays could be attached and the frame of the house could be nailed or tied. Once the eave joist was in place shorter rafters were nailed or notched into the frame so that roofing material could be applied. The roofs could have been made of several materials, but commonly they were thatched using palm leaves, or as a poor substitute, sugar cane leaves were utilised. The leaves were tied together in tight bundles and then tied to one another, these bundles were two deep and would have kept the elements out. The effect was that the house was watertight and appeared top heavy with a roof that hung low and nearly reached the floor. In Thistlewood's journal of 1831, he describes how these houses could even sustain the force of a hurricane.

The dreaded hurricane had commenced! I was soon dressed, and assisting in the nailing windows. And otherwise saving the house, which we find to be in vain; and we now only thought of securing our retreat to the negro house. These are so constructed, as to resist even the

³²⁹ Sturge, Joseph, 1968, p. 173. Sturge records the best slave house they visited was that of the hospitable nurse and midwife.

³³⁰ Morgan, Philip, 1995, p. 67.

*tremendous power of the hurricane; having the hardwood post such deeply in, and closely thatched almost to the ground: with cuts for the doors and windows.*³³¹

The focus of the house was the fire. The fire was situated in the centre of one room, which was used for heating the house, while a separate fire was made outside for cooking.³³² The second chamber, which was accessible from the first room, was laid out for sleeping. The thinness of the walls meant privacy was rarely possible and many slaves sought privacy by constructing detached houses. Even when the houses were separate, they were usually close together to make a courtyard, for community activity.³³³

Theft amongst the slaves was common and numerous cases were recorded of one slave stealing food or livestock from other slaves.³³⁴ This probably explains why all the houses had doors that were locked during the day when the slaves were at work.³³⁵ The interior of these houses varies. Some describe them as cold and sparse,³³⁶ other authors describe them as cosy and comfortable with modest furnishings.³³⁷ Floors of the houses were usually dry, hardened soil and only rarely were they elevated by joists with wood put down on top.

Furnishing was modest, and again it would appear that the rank or standing of a slave had a bearing on the amount of material possessions owned. Descriptions of slave house interiors in the eighteenth century are rare. Bryan Edwards, historian and planter, describes the slave quarters that he observed as giving the impression of warmth and modest comfort, and likewise the overseer Thistlewood, described the objects in his mistress Marina's as giving her substantial comfort over her fellow slaves.³³⁸ However, the opposite impression is given in the report of Dr. John Quier, the physician of the Worthy Park Estate, given to the Jamaica House of Assembly prior to emancipation. In this report he claims that the inadequate lodgings,

³³¹ Kelly, James, 1871, p. 23.

³³² McDonald, Roderick, 1993, p. 106.

³³³ Kulikoff, Allan, 1986, pp. 368-9.

³³⁴ McDonald, Roderick, 1993, pp. 41-43; Morgan, Philip, 1995, p. 71.

³³⁵ Sturge, Joseph, 1968, p. 184.

³³⁶ McDonald, Roderick, 1993, pp. 96-97.

³³⁷ Sturge, Joseph, 1968, p. 173, 184, 186. Sturge and Harvey describe visiting several slave houses and state they were all comfortable and consisting of two or three apartments.

³³⁸ Morgan, Philip, 1995, p. 73. The goods included thread, an old cap, two handkerchiefs, a white shirt, two pairs of trousers, a yard of cloth, a basket, a tin roaster, wild cinnamon, wax light, a form, a little stool, a cupboard that Thistlewood hung for her in the

were smoky, damp and cold, and were responsible for causing respiratory ailments amongst the slaves.³³⁹

Although no Jamaica slave furniture has been discovered or authenticated to illustrate and understand the level of comfort in their homes, it is certain that many slaves were skilled. Hundreds of slaves throughout the eighteenth century were estate carpenters and not only serviced the plantation in maintaining the estate, but were also seconded to build slave accommodation.³⁴⁰ While there is evidence to prove that slave carpenters were used to build and repair slave housing, no physical evidence in Jamaica was discovered for the making of either houses or furniture.³⁴¹ McDonald in his book on Jamaican and Louisiana material culture does refer to a publication in the late eighteenth century where the making of chairs, tables and beds by slaves was recorded.³⁴² No illustrations from the eighteenth century are known to have survived of the interior or any furniture within that interior.

Slaves in general did not own much in the terms of material possessions other than the clothes they wore and some other basic cooking utensils and sleeping blankets. Only those slaves that were close to the master, either a domestic servant or driver, managed to gain possessions and live in relative comfort compared to their fellow slaves. No instance has been found of slaves manufacturing furniture for themselves, but evidence has been found that clothes and houses were being made for one another. Furniture is not recorded in the homes of slaves, and even freed slaves rarely owned furniture, no matter how simple.³⁴³ Clearly there is no comparison between how the white and black population lived. Even the poorest whites were materially better off than the slave population.

completed house, a chest for her clothes, a barrel for her corn, a barrel of beef brine, a piece of beef, potatoes, three bottles of rum, sugar and butter.

³³⁹ McDonald, Roderick, 1993, p. 98.

³⁴⁰ McDonald, Roderick, 1993, p. 102.

³⁴¹ Some objects in America are thought to be made by slaves, two cupboards at Preston Park, North Carolina and a corner cupboard at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia are two such examples.

³⁴² McDonald, Roderick 1993, p. 104; Higman, B. W., 1976.

³⁴³ Only five freed slaves probates have been found to date, these five were very poor and owned little. Their possession amounted to only the clothes they wore.

Summary

The aim of this chapter was first to examine the evolution of architectural development in Jamaica and see if this reflected broadly what was taking place in England over a similar period of time. Then secondly it sought to establish if that evolution was broadly being modified in the same way in Jamaica, and if so could we expect a similar course of development to occur in the interior and furnishings of the Jamaican home.

If we look at the evidence then we do find some merit in this architectural model. If we look at the public architecture on the island, it appears that this sphere has always followed in the wake of the planter's achievements. Some of the great plantation houses constructed in Jamaica were palatial in terms of colonial residences, compared to their American neighbours and the public architecture in Jamaica. While public efforts must have been initially concentrated on fortified structures, the planters built substantial homes, and led the way in developing the architecture of the island. The early plantation houses were defensive and some also followed late seventeenth century British houses, which were uncompromising in their design given the conditions of the colony. The Palladian villa of the early eighteenth century brought about a new form of home that was adapted to the climate, yet remained essentially a defensive building. As settlement became less volatile as the century continued, there was a marked shift away from defensive homes to houses that were comfortable and even luxurious. By the end of the century there was a model plantation home that remained virtually unchanged until the advent of modern materials.

Can we see this same architectural, if not stylistic, development in the interior and furnishings? While it is recognised that there are difficulties in making any comparison with town housing, as the nature of the interiors of these houses was rarely recorded, there is an indication that interiors and furnishings followed the same architectural developments as the planter's house.

The furniture that we find in the early houses was like that which could be found in the British home. Upholstered and japanned furniture, which could either delaminate or were unnecessary, made little concession to local conditions, just as the idea of seventeenth century style houses made little sense in a

tropical climate. Objects made of European timbers illustrate that furniture, or the timber it was made from, was brought to Jamaica. With the importation of oak furniture in the early eighteenth century tables would have been simulated using mahogany instead of oak.

We were also concerned with understanding when the colonial began a process of adaptation to local conditions and stopped accepting British manufactured goods as ideal for colonial living. The attitude of the consumer was important to establish. If consumption was conspicuous and homes were flamboyantly decorated then the implications for the furniture trade on the island are clear. If this was the case then our expectation of what they produced can be high, however, should the reverse be the true and fashions and style were of little consequence then the furniture trade on the island would also reflect that consumer mood.

It is perhaps one of the most surprising elements of this research that we find very little mahogany furniture in Jamaica prior to its widespread use in Britain, and that new types of object were present in Jamaica prior to any other colony. Once the fashionability of mahogany was recognised then it appears to be quickly acted upon in the emerging furniture trade on the island. Mahogany, while it is recognised as a useful material prior to the Naval Stores Act of 1724, was not used commercially on the island until there was a demand for it in Britain. We see the use of mahogany in the workshops of Jamaica mirroring its use in London. It is also at this date that we begin to see the furniture trade develop, and the needs of the consumer beginning to be addressed. However, we could not expect to see such a clear transference of design and objects in the language of description as we see in some objects that appear in Jamaican documentation. Examples such as the Windsor chair, the presence of Hogarth's prints and the tea table all show that Jamaica was rapidly receiving fashionable and utilitarian designs from England. The exposure of the consumer or furniture maker to such objects, clearly would have set a standard.

It is clear, from the small number of household items of furniture that have been selected, and the stock in trade of the furniture makers in Jamaica, that there appears to have been a rapid transference of object type and description from England to Jamaica. In several instances the dissemination was very close, and in

other cases it took a maximum of five years before object and language documented in England appeared in the Caribbean island. If we can see the exchange of terminology and object types reaching Jamaica so quickly then it is equally plausible that the dissemination of style and fashion occurred as quickly.

Perversely, in the Jamaican ‘beaufett’ we see an example of the English model being retained long after the object has fallen out of fashion. While in England the ‘buffet’ was metamorphosed into the shape of a sideboard, the ‘beaufett’ continued to be used right through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Jamaica. In many cases the new styled British sideboard sat next to the Jamaican ‘beaufett’ in the dining rooms of the white colonials. Other forms of furniture appeared to be typical of their British counterparts, breakfast and Pembroke tables, escritoires and chest on chests as well as many other many types of objects were regularly listed in England and Jamaica. Some of these pieces, while first being conceived in Britain were embraced by the white colonials and later gained greater popularity with them than with their English counterparts, an example being the Windsor chair.

Increasing sociability in Jamaica during the eighteenth century reflects, not only the growing stability of the island, but also the move from an early settlement to a plantation economy that was prospering and becoming more sophisticated in its consumption patterns. The commercial prosperity of Jamaica in the early decades of the eighteenth century of Jamaica began to make possible a level of living not experienced before on the island. Just as in England economic growth and stability in the late seventeenth century brought with it an increase in luxury and an expected increase in the standard of living, this was the case in Jamaica too.³⁴⁴ This confidence is also echoed in the architecture of the island, particularly in the public works, which reflected that growing wealth and optimism. In the wake of prosperity, people were increasingly judged, not only by their wealth and how that was manifested, but also by the social morals and constraints of a complex society. It has been demonstrated that ownership of goods in Jamaica reflected fashion in Britain and that the purchase of goods in Jamaica was initially blind to the conditions of the country. Yet as the eighteenth century progressed the settlers continued to purchase objects that were

³⁴⁴ Saumarez-Smith, Charles, 1993, pp. 50-53.

suitable and fashionable, while the manufacturers began to construct what was suitable, practical and profitable, but not necessarily what was fashionable in England.

Jamaica as an island was able, through great architectural constructions, to establish an image that it was a society that was not only rich in monetary terms, but also culturally enlightened. It is also clear that the plantocracy created and propagated that belief and colonial government, belatedly, echoed that construct. However, despite the vast wealth it could not be hidden that money was built on human suffering and the enlightenment was only present in the few and depravity and bigotry in the many.

The creolising of the citizens also manifested itself in many ways, in the standards of dress, the entertainment available and the diet and drink that the local whites consumed. While new arrivals commented on the local idiosyncrasies, they soon adapted to the living conditions, discarding the formal manners and protocol of England. Even the prudish Lady Nugent states the need to bathe in cold water and attend balls in nothing more than her nightgown.³⁴⁵ Far from this being seen as freakish behaviour it was accepted as something that the heat and humidity dictated.

The early settlers took with them not only the skills necessary to colonise a new country, but also the fixed attitudes, designs and traditions of the old country. Later into the eighteenth century we see the development of an independent style and life, which was divorced from its British origins. Clearly, objects and fashions were quickly transmitted to Jamaica, indicating a mimicking of the London scene, but how far down the social hierarchy this extends remains unclear. It is evident that the more remote corners of the island were just as likely to have objects of the latest fashion as those citizens in Spanish Town or Kingston. The planter's estate was where the wealth of the island was concentrated, but their tastes were matched by those of fashion in the main settlements, who were more notable in government than in trade. Those that have been cited above as being senior in the administration of the island were mainly planters themselves.

³⁴⁵ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 30th January 1802.

In contrast to all this wealth, the slave population lived in very basic accommodation and very few managed to gain any personal possessions, and even fewer became established enough to have objects to pass from one generation to another. The lack of information makes it impossible to know whether slaves made furniture for themselves, or even had materials from which to construct basic objects. However, given some of the slaves were skilled in carpentry and joinery, it is certainly the case that some objects were made.

JOHNNY NEW-COMBE in the ISLAND of JAMAICA.

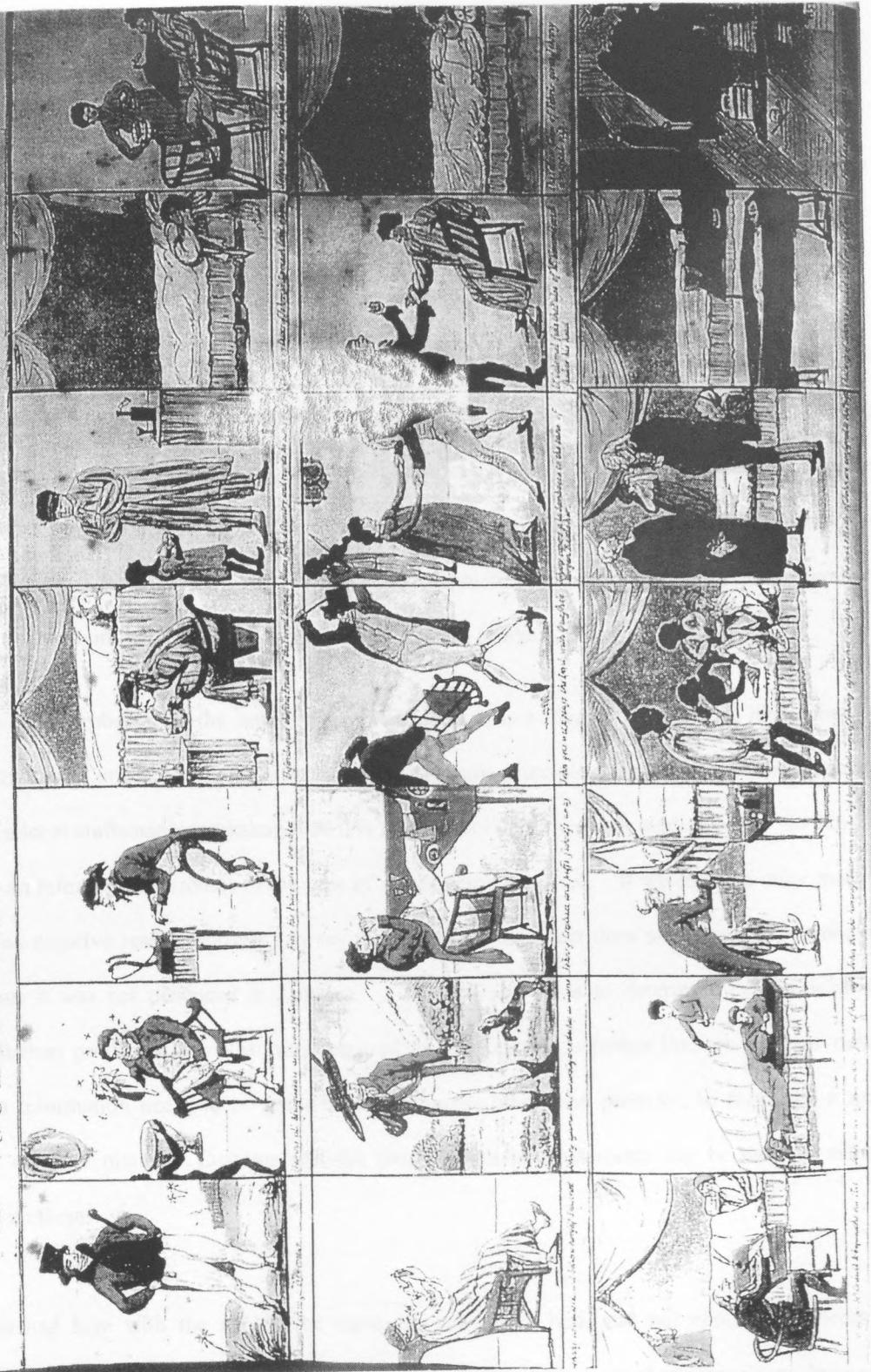


Illustration 38B,

'Johnny Newcombe in the Island of Jamaica,'

seen seated in several Windsor chairs.

Bell, Brian, Jamaica, 1993, APA Publication, p. 47.

Chapter Three

Acquiring furniture in Jamaica

By searching for auctioneers' and shopkeepers' advertisements we can begin to determine the nature of the goods coming into the Jamaica. If these are compared with the inventories in the furniture makers' workshops, we may be able to form a clearer picture of the balance between locally produced and imported furniture and who supplied which furniture. An understanding of the types of imported furniture, and where it was imported from helps reveal the levels of sophistication and expectation of the colonial customer, and to an extent, what the local furniture maker could produce.

If many craftsmen's probates list the same type of object, such as a 'beaufett,' then it is likely that this object was being made, or owned, by these artisans. By the same principle, if an object does not appear in the probate of a local craftsman's workshop then it is more likely that it was not made locally. In this way we may make an informed decision as to the type of goods being imported. If we can find other material to reinforce this negative result, then we can say that because this object does not appear in a probate it probably means it was not produced in Jamaica. This chapter aims to determine exactly what the Jamaican craftsmen produced and what was required to be imported, whether through need or desire. However, this information needs to be gathered from sources other than probates, to formulate a more balanced and accurate picture. Customs records, journals and advertisements can be used to make a comparison with them.

We are concerned here with the choice the consumer may have had, and not about the process of purchasing, the transportation of the object, the process of selling an object, the shopkeeper's mechanism to entice customers into the shop or the look and refinement of eighteenth century consumption in Jamaica. The aim of this chapter is to understand what imported furniture could be purchased in Jamaica, where it had come from, in what quantities and how regularly. If we can determine these points then we can continue by assessing the level of dependency on those imports, or alternatively and more significantly, how much furniture was supplied by the island's furniture industry and how varied this work was. The

final section of this chapter will concentrate on items that are thought to have been made locally and are indigenous to Jamaica having already determined the goods that were imported.

Private cargo

The largest trading partner with Jamaica was Britain. Much of the foodstuffs and manufactured goods that serviced the plantations was brought in from Britain throughout the eighteenth century and indeed throughout the colonial period. Despite Jamaica's close proximity to Cuba and St. Domingo few manufactured goods came from those islands, at least not legally. To ascertain the extent of this illegal trade would be difficult. Venture cargo ships often did not record where they were bound for, others purposefully avoided providing such detailed information, as illegal trading was also very profitable. Furniture sales would presumably have been a small percentage of this trade and as the nature of the trade was banned, it is impossible to quantify. It is also difficult to ascertain the amount of private cargo entering Jamaica. Private cargoes, which often included furniture for the passenger to use to equip cabins on their epic voyages from Britain to a colony, whether in the Americas or the East Indies. Furniture companies, such as Morgan, Bailey and Saunders³⁴⁶ specialised in such equipage that could maximise usage, but take up minimum space. However, for our purposes this furniture arrived undetected and the quantities involved remain unknown.

William Hickey travelled to the West, as well as the East Indies, in the late eighteenth century, and while he does not record the goods and chattels he took with him to Jamaica he does for his journey to India. His description, although not specifically describing his journey to Jamaica, does recall planks of rosewood falling on his head, and stating that this wood was the private cargo of the captain of the ship.³⁴⁷ On another voyage, by a lady, to the West Indies she does give reference to her accommodation on board, stating her room measured five by six foot in size, and was grandly entitled '*the state room.*' The room was equipped with two beds, each two foot wide, leaving little room for anything else.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Collard, Frances, 1985, pp. 23-4, 332. Morgan and Saunders specialised in patent, campaign and metamorphic furniture. Its flexibility, utility and compactness made the pieces ideal for cabin life, and life in the colony on arrival.

A bed by Thomas Butler and an unmarked table found in Jamaica illustrate vividly that in the early nineteenth century some ‘knock down’ furniture was being exported to Jamaica (See Illustration 39).³⁴⁹

Despite these two examples and Hickey’s private cargo, this source of furniture can only account for a small percentage of furniture coming to Jamaica in this manner.³⁵⁰

Second hand furniture

Private cargoes were brought to the island when new immigrants arrived, but when the colonials departed, dead or alive, their goods and chattels were sold off. Given the short life expectancy of the islanders, the second hand market in Jamaica was a buoyant and prosperous trade. Auctions offered a chance to purchase goods perhaps not otherwise readily available. Lady Nugent, in 1801, went to Admiral Penn to purchase furniture prior to all the goods and chattels being auctioned.³⁵¹ Many advertisements for similar auctions pepper the earliest newspapers, right through the period under study. In 1779 the household effects of Mary Hill were to be sold which included ‘*all her Household Furniture, Plates, Glass, China, and her Four valuable House Negroes.*’³⁵² Twenty years later exactly the same method of disposing of goods and chattels was taking place when the late Doctor Thomas Langley’s furniture was put up for sale. Unlike Mary Hill’s advertisement, his furniture was listed in detail, 15 pieces of cabinet ware and 17 chairs and a sofa.³⁵³ Auctioning a deceased citizen’s goods was an established and common form of selling furniture, crockery and other household items throughout the colony, and appears to have been a long established method of selling goods prior to the confirmation of such practices in the newspapers of the time.

While the vendue master was often responsible for the disposing of an estate on the death of its owner, he also sold the possessions of those leaving Jamaica to return to Britain. Such was the case advertised in 1790, ‘*This morning between 10-11 at the subscribers vendue store Sundry Household Goods, Belonging to a person who intends to leave the island shortly, consisting of chamber chairs, mahogany tables, a*

³⁴⁷ Hickey, William, 1754 (Reprint 1977), pp. 246-247.

³⁴⁸ Walker Andrews, Evangeline, Ed., 1923, pp. 26-27.

³⁴⁹ Beard & Gilbert, 1986, pp. 137-138. Thomas Butler, St. Catherine St., The Strand, ran a workshop until the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. He was the master of Morgan and Saunders.

³⁵⁰ Brawer, Nicholas, 2001.

³⁵¹ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 3rd October 1801.

³⁵² BL Colindale, The Jamaica, 29th May 1779.

*mahogany rum case with flint bottles, a knife case containing 2 dozen knives forks, sundry china, glass ware, kitchen utensils etc etc ...*³⁵⁴

Many other examples of such advertisements appear in the Jamaica newspapers and were clearly a common means of disposing of effects prior to departure. In a probate of 1735, the merchant John Morant curiously lists miscellaneous goods, ranging from furniture, ivory fans and soap that appear to have belonged to many individuals.³⁵⁵ It would seem that in Morant's probate, the goods were all listed as being in his store and he was charging for storage. It could be that the pieces of furniture were stored by residents who left it too late to sell them before they departed the island, or alternatively the goods could not be sold and therefore they were left in Morant's hands to dispose of them by whatever means. If one of these were the case, it was clearly not a satisfactory arrangement for those departing the island, and as a method of disposing of goods and chattels it did not become an established method of sale. Morant's case was the only example of objects being stored in this way.

A more successful solution for departing residents was by using a vendue master. The vendue master pursued a curious trade, they appear to have acted as both auctioneer and quasi-shopkeeper.³⁵⁶ Not only are we unfamiliar with the term '*vendue master*' or the work they did, but also the length of time they had been working on the island. Their advertisements give the impression that the way in which they traded was not new, but quite routine. Yet how did they trade prior to readily available printed material to disseminate and inform the public of their sales? The answer is to be found in an odd paper written by a vendue master, describing his business in 1750.³⁵⁷ This frank account describes the nature of the goods he handled, how much commission he charged and the level of expense he incurred running his establishment. He clearly sold goods for the merchants and sea captains, as well as disposing of the goods of co-partnerships that had dissolved, shops that had ceased trading, as well as to sell off the effects of the deceased and those wishing to leave Jamaica. He traded every day, including Saturday and Sunday, and when the courts sat. He also

³⁵³ Crossley, David; Saville, Richard, 1991. Dr. Thomas Langley may have been related to Elizabeth Langley who married Dr. Fulke Rose and, after his death, Sir Hans Sloane.

³⁵⁴ BL Colindale, *Daily Advertiser*, 26th January, 1790.

³⁵⁵ John Morant, Merchant, Probate, 1735.

³⁵⁶ Fleming, Betsey, 1993, p. 23. The vendue master appears to be neither a merchant nor a shopkeeper and is perhaps what Betsey Fleming is referring to in her thesis when she ponders on the issue of what is a 'merchant' in Charleston.

records in this document how he informed the public of his sales, ‘*In the Common course of the sales, the Vendue Master sends round the Town a person with a written List in his hand, of what goods are that day on sale, tinkling a Bell continually as he goes, so that all Persons so minded may look upon it, and a copy of the said Paper is also put up that morning or the Day before at the Court House and some Other Publick place in the Town.*’

We can now understand how information was disseminated before 1779. Although newspapers survive after the 1770s to illustrate his business, only one or two newspapers exist prior to 1779 and they do not contain any advertisements for the vendue masters.

Although a number of shops were well equipped to satisfy most tastes and pockets, the newspapers were predominantly full of the advertisements of the vendue master and the varied stocks he had to offer, usually sold for cash only. The vendue masters, Yate and Swarbreck of Kingston, sold perishable commodities, as well as manufactured goods, that had just been imported from Lancaster, Liverpool, Cork and London in their South Sea House store. The goods were only sold for cash, approved bills or produce. Credit did not appear to have been on offer. The lists of goods being sold by Yate and Swarbreck included a considerable amount of furniture including: -

A neat mahogany corner cupboard with glass doors, Mahogany sideboard tables with commode fronts, Ditto wardrobe, Ditto Ladies toilets, A neat palmaletta wood commode with toilet, drawers &c., A neat mahogany bureau and book-case with sash doors glazed, A neat bureau writing table of Zebrawood, the top covered with black leather, to elevate twice, Oval Pembroke tables, Card and tea tables, Night chairs, Bed chamber chairs with hair cloth bottoms, Oval tea trays and Waiters, Green painted Windsor chairs, Childrens chairs, Backgammon tables, Knife cases complete, An excellent full sized BILLIARD TABLE, with apparatus complete.³⁵⁸

The amount of furniture that was imported and being sold by this one partnership is extensive, not only in the number of objects, but also the range too.

³⁵⁷ IOJ, MS 1030, 1750, Vendue Master (no name given).

³⁵⁸ PRO, Supplement to the Royal Gazette, 16th May 1782.

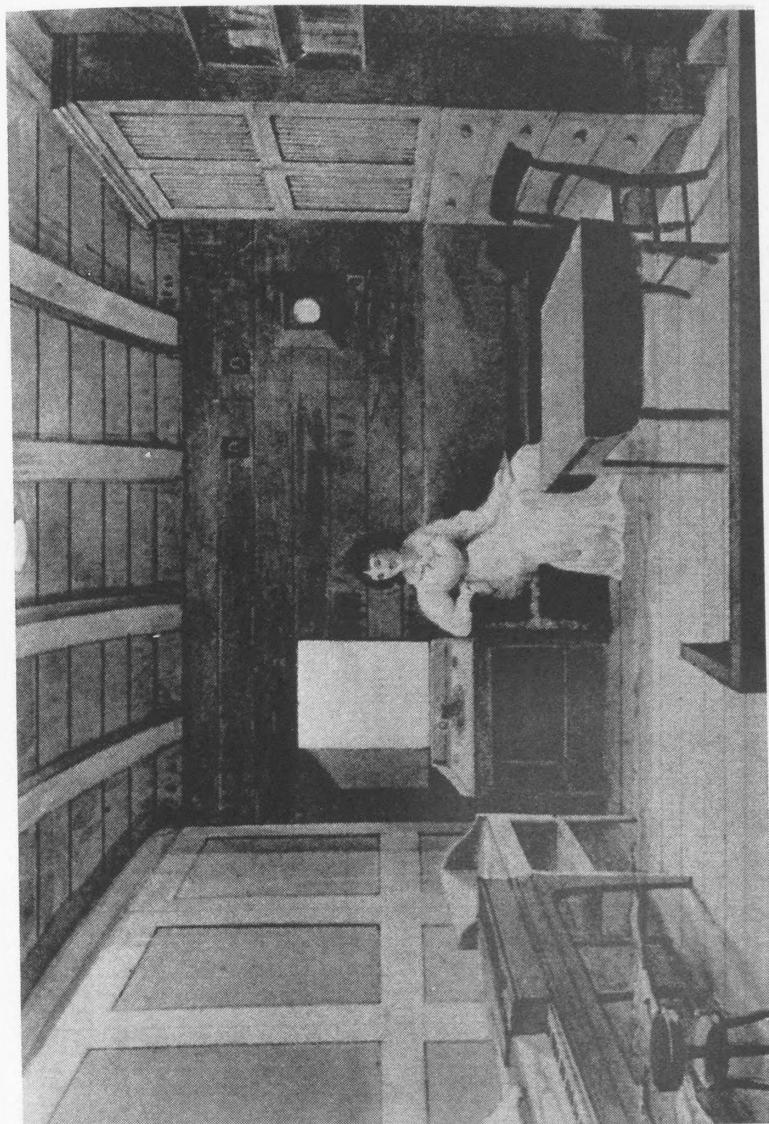


Illustration 39

The ship cabin was an empty space, which the passenger had to equip themselves, this early nineteenth century cabin was well furnished.

Northcote, Bade, Colonial Furniture in New Zealand, 1976, Reed, Wellington, p. 36.

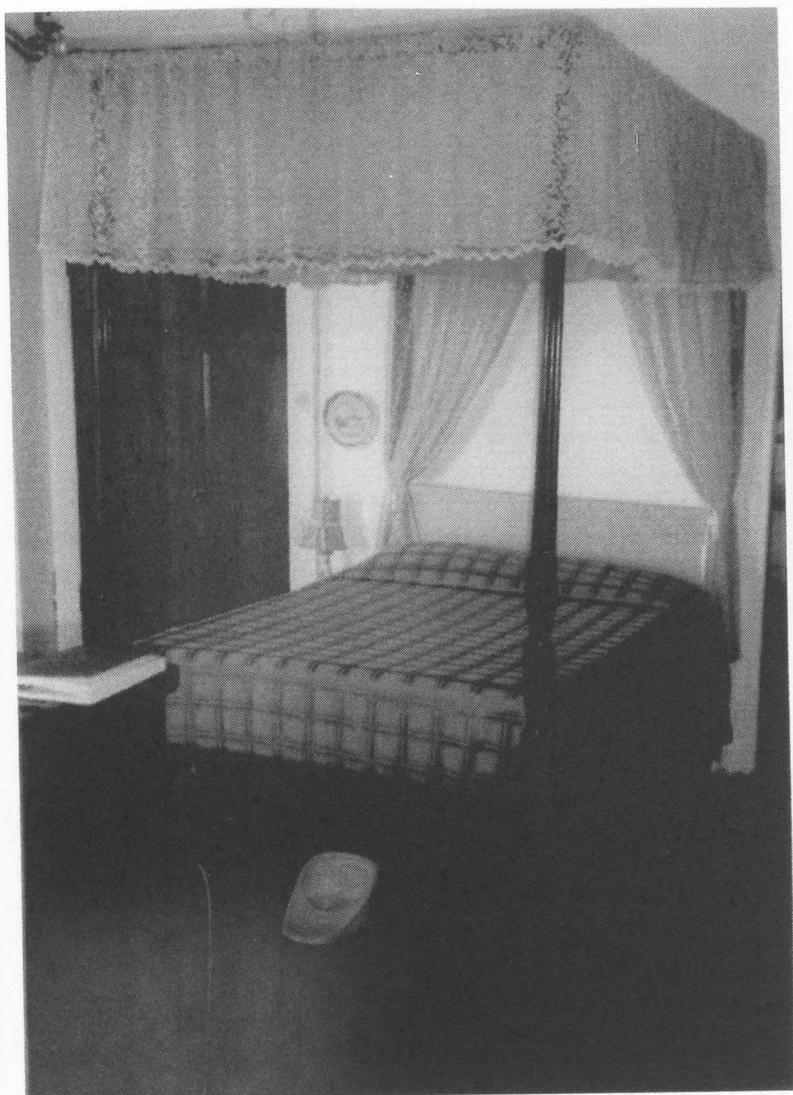


Illustration 40

This Thomas Butler bed was found in Jamaica and was probably taken to Jamaica as cabin furniture.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Nugent House and Garden
1800

Rec'd from the "Bazaar"
1 sofa & 4 cushions for £1.8
2 Chairs & 2 cushions for £1.
all on credit - - - - - ~~Not yet paid~~

Returned to the 2 Boys & 3 Girls
the bill is sent by one of the
Family servants, Mr. G.
George Than the value of £1.8
for the sofa & the above chairs
which I will pay when the
will be due ~~Not yet paid~~

Illustration 41

Receipt for one sofa and two chairs, with seat pads and cushions.

Nugent Papers, IOJ.

Shopkeepers

The vendue master acted as an auctioneer, either in his own shop or in the residences of some of his clients. The main difference between the shopkeepers and the vendue master was not what they sold, but how the goods were sold. The shopkeepers' advertisements give no indication that their wares were second hand and therefore it is likely that they only sold new goods and may have extended some credit. Such evidence can be seen in the credit notes given to Lady Nugent in the early years of nineteenth century. These receipts record the purchase of a sofa (See Illustrate 41). Whilst Lady Nugent may be an exception, given her status as the first lady of the island, it is probably that such lending terms extended to others of sound finance. While the shopkeeper seems to have only sold new goods and offered credit the vendue master sold second hand as well as new items, but gave no credit and expected payment before the goods were released.

The shopkeeper existed in parallel with the vendue master. However, it is difficult to tell if the shopkeeper was only interested in retailing those goods that were not available by other means, or stocked all goods for all seasons, making their money by extending credit and providing a constant and ready supply of goods. The broad range of advertisements in the papers suggest that not only were there ironmongers, bakers, cake makers and clothes retailers but also print sellers, jewellers and many other shops in Kingston. Lady Nugent's diary provides an insight into shopping. On her first shopping trip after a review at the Parade in Kingston, she noted '*went a-shopping with the ladies*,' and was clearly surprised by the social interaction between her party and the wives of the shopkeepers, all of whom appeared to be on an equal footing.¹ Whilst she does not go into further detail about her shopping excursion by the very nature that '*the ladies*' were socializing with shopkeepers wives implies that the trip took a prolonged period and that there were many shops to visit. This may be substantiated by the numerous advertisements under different names that

appear in the newspapers informing the reader of the wide variety of goods and wares available during the period.

An advertisement of a Kingston shop reveals both the quantity and diversity of goods. The customer could browse amongst the china and Queen's ware as well as the pickles, Yorkshire hams and perfumes, see musical instruments and Manchester cottons as well as mahogany furniture. Other shopkeepers were keen to advertise their newly acquired goods. William King of Montego Bay advertised a long list of household goods that had lately landed from Glasgow, including '*a general assortment of looking glasses.*' On the same page in the next column Rod Tulloch, also a shopkeeper from Montego Bay, reported on the goods he has just acquired, listing '*square and oval dressing glasses, with commode fronts*' along with items similar to those advertised by William King.³⁶⁰ While these shopkeepers appear not to have purchased their wares from the same ship, it is likely that they were keen to inform the public of their extensive stock and in turn entice the shoppers to peruse their stock before competitors were seen to be retailing the same goods. These two advertisements also illustrate that the shopkeepers did not have a monopoly on any type of product, no matter how small or large, and that the market they sought to serve was competitive. If this was the case with the retailing of looking glasses then there is every reason to believe that the rest of the furniture trade was as competitive.

Imports of furniture from Britain

The colonial household, whether it be that of planter or urban dweller, was not short of furniture to buy, nor of choices of places to go to spend money in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. While the sale of goods was taking place in Kingston other goods of a similar ilk were also being sold in Martha Brae and Montego Bay. It would appear that wherever you lived on the island, one did not have to go far to purchase manufactured goods from Britain.

³⁵⁹ Wright, Philip, Ed., 1966, 12th April 1802.

³⁶⁰ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle, 10th December 1790.

It is difficult to establish how early in the eighteenth century consumers had a selection of goods available to them, and when vendue masters first offered their services. For the first three quarters of the eighteenth century very little evidence and few newspapers have survived, in fact only one newspaper has been discovered that was printed prior to 1779, dated March 1726.³⁶¹ In this one newspaper, furniture is listed having arrived from an unknown destination (probably England), on the ship Neptune. The furniture included cabinet ware, looking glasses, sconces, chest of drawers, cane chairs, marble tables on walnut-tree frames and dressing glasses. Clearly, furniture was being imported into Jamaica, but we do not know how reliant consumers were on this import trade. It begs questions about the effect imports were having on Jamaican furniture.

In order to assess what imports were coming into Jamaica from Britain, we can turn to the British custom records, particularly Cust 3.³⁶² While these records are flawed for several reasons, they do give us an overview of the state of trade between the two countries.³⁶³ A survey of these customs records revealed some surprising points: while the Spanish War of Succession stemmed the flow of goods at the beginning of the century, the Austrian War of Succession, the Jacobite Rebellion, the Seven Year War as well as the American Revolution appear not to have interfered drastically with trade between Britain and Jamaica.³⁶⁴ In the survey of years between 1699 and 1783,³⁶⁵ the earlier years of 1704 to 1744 averaged upholstery and cabinet ware coming into Jamaica at approximately £270 per year. This figure was roughly 50% cabinet ware and 50% upholstery. There was a marked change before the late 1740s to the late 1770s when we see a seven-fold increase in this trade. For this period the average yearly imports from Britain were £1,889 worth of upholstery and cabinet ware.³⁶⁶ In these latter decades the average yearly imports were £900 of cabinet ware and approximately £1,000 of upholstery.

³⁶¹ *The Weekly Jamaican Courant*, 22nd March 1726. I wish to thank Peter Carson, UWI, for bringing this newspaper to my attention.

³⁶² PRO, Cust 3, 1699-1783. These customs records list items imported and exported during this time period. While the records are difficult for a number of reasons they do provide us with an estimate up to the pattern of trade between Britain and Jamaica.

³⁶³ Haley, Anne Rogers, 1996, pp.1-21; Clarke, G. N., 1938, pp. 33-42. The flaws in these records has been acknowledged for a number of years. Among the many problems associated with these records, are that the values given to each object or commodity were superficial, and these do not reflect the market value. Secondly, whilst we can gain some measure of what type of object was being imported in the first half of the eighteenth century from the records, this is not the case by the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

³⁶⁴ PRO, Cust 3, the level of imports that reached Jamaica in 1699 was not reached again until the late 1750s.

³⁶⁵ Two years from every decade were examined, these were the fourth and last year of each decade, eg. 1699 and 1704 etc..

³⁶⁶ Bowett, Adam, 1998, p. 25. This was in part due to the huge increase in the price of mahogany over this period.

It is clear from this select survey that the amount of goods being imported into Jamaica from Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century was relatively little compared to the second half of the century. It is also of importance that while London dominated the trade in furniture and upholstery during the first half of the century, subsequently, the outposts³⁶⁷ were more competitive, and equaled London in reaching the Jamaican market in the third quarter of the century. This is particularly true of cabinet ware, where there is a noticeable increase. However, throughout the entire eighteenth century London sent the majority of upholstery, which would have included bedding and curtain hangings, squabs and palliases.

It would appear from these statistics that the furniture maker in Jamaica in the early part of the eighteenth century would not have had so many imports to compete with, and that this trickle of furniture turned into a flood of objects by the third quarter of the century. By the 1770s the customs records and the newspapers list large amounts of furniture and upholstery coming from Britain and consequently the local trade must have felt under siege.

From 1699 to the late 1750s the customs records categorise the type of furniture coming into the country, for example chairs, clock cases, escritoires and looking glasses. By the 1750s this stops and furniture was listed generically as 'cabinet ware,' and any upholstery continued to be categorised as such.³⁶⁸ In many of the early listings the furniture type is often given a nominal value and a taxable value, but not a unit value. However, on the odd occasion we do get a chance to calculate the unit value of pieces of furniture being sent to Jamaica. For several years the number of chairs imported were numbered and valued for the total amount. Chairs came into Jamaica in large numbers sometimes as many as 500 in any one year. If we assume the chairs were identical then the superficial price did not vary much from 1699 to 1749.³⁶⁹ In 1699 a chair was superficially estimated to value 4s.2d whereas 50 years later the price had risen to 5s.11d, with the highest estimates being in the 1720s and '30s when the superficial price per unit increased to 7s.0d. However, these prices are imprecise and do not necessarily mean that chairs retailed at this price, but what the estimate does allow us to determine is an approximate number of chairs being imported using the

³⁶⁷ The outposts were anywhere in Britain, other than London. In the furniture industry this usually implies Lancaster or Liverpool.

³⁶⁸ In consequence of this, any assessment of the object type after this date is impossible. We can only estimate from the total value the amount entering the country.

custom records' own estimates. If we average the price of a chair being imported to 6s., then for the first 50 years of the eighteenth century, when the records list chairs separately, the average number of chairs being imported each year was 230 (See Appendix 5).

From the import records it is apparent that large numbers of chairs were exported from Britain to Jamaica. Only in one instance do we come across a merchant who had chairs in stock. These chairs were walnut caned chairs, bundled in sets of six and there were 14 bundles. As well as each bundle a further three and a half dozen chairs, four couches and 16 elbow chairs were listed. The price of the 14 bundles and three and a half dozen chairs was set at 16s. and other chairs in the same probate also give similar unit values for a chair, and therefore were clearly higher than the customs price. If we assume that the goods were imported in the year of the merchant's death, 1714, then this merchant's stock of chairs accounts for nearly half the chairs imported in that year. Given that this merchant had so many chairs in stock, it is possible that in Jamaica at the beginning of the century chairs were only being sold by one or two merchants. Would this have acted as an incentive to local craftsmen to produce chairs to break this monopoly? In studying the probates of craftsmen, we can only find chair making taking place in any substantial numbers, after 1724. Those that had numerous chairs and couches in stock, number four, all of which practised in the first half of the eighteenth century and resided in Port Royal.³⁷⁰ Of these four craftsmen only Thomas Sheppard held stocks of more than 30, he had over 200 chairs in stock at the time of his probate. Other than Sheppard, and his partner Pitchard, we find that chairs were not produced in great numbers by local craftsmen, with the reliance seemingly being placed on imports.

While chairs remained reasonably static in terms of superficial value, it is difficult to assess the value of other objects because the numbers being imported were so low in the first half of the century and the objects were not specifically defined in the third quarter of the century. For example, the 12 escritoires listed at the beginning of the century were averaging 8s. each, but by 1739 the one escritoire that was listed for that year was valued at £10. In this instance it is impossible to make a value statement as the £10

³⁶⁹ Clearly some chairs were more elaborate than others, this would vary the value of each chair. However, given that so many were being imported we can estimate a superficial value.

³⁷⁰ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730; Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734, and others.

escritoire must have been much more sophisticated than its early counterparts. Similarly the number of looking glasses entering Jamaica were relatively low compared to the number of chairs imported, and their value was related to the size of the glass. Again, in such cases it is misleading to give a superficial unit price.

Carcase furniture was not brought to Jamaica in any great quantity until after the 1750s.³⁷¹ An example of the small numbers of carcase furniture imported can be seen in the 36 escritoires and three chest-of-drawers that were imported, in the sample years, to Jamaica from 1699 to 1749. While it is clear that the customs officers were not thorough in their inspections,³⁷² we can generally say that carcase furniture was not imported in sufficient numbers, and was likely to have been made locally. In examining the probates of craftsmen who made carcase work we find more engaged in various carcase type objects, such as corner cupboards, chest of drawers and desks than we see making chairs. Clearly chairs were seen as either difficult to make and that the prices they could obtain for their work did not merit the effort, especially if large numbers of chairs were being imported. However, carcase based furniture was large and heavy and therefore more expensive to import and the local maker could and did compete.

Although the local furniture maker produced potentially fine cabinet work, those who were wealthy and more conscious of style would have chosen to communicate with their British agents or relatives and ordered goods to be exported to meet their particular needs.

William Henry Lyttleton, in 1763, was Governor of Jamaica, and rather than commission local craftsmen to furnish his Penn with a bureau, chest of drawers, three toilet glasses, two toilet tables with drawers and 12 Windsor chairs, he asked his agent in London, Long and Drake, to purchase and send the said goods to him.³⁷³ Six months later he was clearly regretting the decision as '*the furniture for my home in the mountain being made of green wood is not come in so good condition as I could have wished and is so*

³⁷¹ We can only assume carcase furniture imports increased in line with the increase in cabinet ware imports, which also included chairs after the late 1750s.

³⁷² An example of this could be seen in the 1726 newspaper. This newspaper records a cargo lately landed that includes cabinets, chest of drawers and marble tables on walnut frames, yet these do not appear in the customs record. Although we do not know where the ship is from, at this date it is assumed it was from Britain, it would be extraordinary if the ship had sailed from America.

³⁷³ Duke University, Special Collection, Journal of William Henry Lyttleton, 34 Box 4, June 16th 1763.

swollen as to be for the present useless.' However, he clearly had not learnt from this experience as four months later he again ordered a pair of 'card tables covered with green cloth.'³⁷⁴ As yet very little other evidence has come to light to suggest commissioned work was brought to Jamaica. While numerous residences appear to have owned objects that were likely to have been British made, there is no proof that these were either commissioned from Britain or simply imported by merchants.

However, there is one important exception: the extensive papers and archives of the Gillows family firm do record a sporadic connection with Jamaica. In the records of this London and Lancaster, eighteenth century furniture making company are to be found numerous correspondences with their various agents in the West Indies, one of which was Benjamin Swarbreck, previously mentioned.³⁷⁵ While the founder of the Lancaster firm kept up a regular correspondence with this agent, mainly to procure timber, he was also not blind to the possible business potential of the island for his manufactured furniture. In 1756 Robert Gillow concludes a letter to his agent with the note '*Should esteem it a particular favour if you can engage any orders in my Wooden way.*'³⁷⁶ Although Swarbreck did not fulfill this request for some years, orders did eventually come, but not just from Jamaica, but from Dominica, Barbados, Guadeloupe, Antigua, Martinique, St. Kitts and Grenada.³⁷⁷ This extensive business operation required constant correspondence and contact with his agents and the good will of all those involved. Amongst the West Indian orders were those for Jamaica, nineteen commissions were received and dispatched by Gillows. The earliest order being from a Mr. Marsden in 1747 for a small consignment, which unfortunately does not specify the exact nature of the goods provided. Thereafter there was nearly a twenty five-year gap before any further orders were received, all the subsequent orders were made between 1771 and 1788. The Gillows records indicate that this trade did not continue after the death of Benjamin Swarbreck in the late 1780s. However, it is possible that a former journeyman for the firm, John Fisher, acted on their behalf from 1799 until his death in 1804.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Lyttleton, April 6th 1764.

³⁷⁵ See Footnote 10 of this chapter.

³⁷⁶ Bowett, Adam, 1998, p. 17.

³⁷⁷ Ingram, Kenneth, 1992, Appendices, Table 5.

³⁷⁸ Cross, John, 1998, p. 31. Fisher, having served an apprenticeship in Liverpool or Lancaster then lived in Charleston, South Carolina. He resided here until he was banished for being a loyalist; he ends up in Kingston Jamaica. Appears back in London to claim compensation. Moves up to Liverpool and trades as a cabinet maker for three years. By 1799 he is working for Gillows and then three years later he heads out to Jamaica where he sets up another business and eventually dies in 1804.

Most of the orders received by Gillow were over this seventeen year period and included objects as diverse as bookcases, cribbage boxes, counting house desks to Windsor chairs and a gouty chair. Despite the large disparity between the size of orders, ranging from £4 to £102, Gillows honoured all orders and appeared to have little problem with collecting accounts in Jamaica, which was not always the case with the other Caribbean islands.³⁷⁹

It is perhaps fortunate that comprehensive records of the Gillows company survive for us to be able to gain some insight as to where a small percentage of the British imported furniture had come from and who had commissioned it. In Kenneth Ingram's article on the Gillows trade with the West Indies he uses Edward Joy's thesis to make a comparison with British Customs records to ascertain what percentage of the Jamaican furniture trade Gillows commanded.³⁸⁰ It would appear that for the sample year (1771), and for which custom records exist, Gillows imported 50% of the furniture.³⁸¹ Ingram makes the mistake of assuming the trade declaration was a true estimate of the value of the goods being imported, it has been already shown this was not necessary the case. However, even accounting for this error Gillows remained an important exporter to Jamaica.

Imports of furniture from America

America in the eighteenth century was a huge market for British manufactured goods, a large proportion of which was exported to the Southern States.³⁸² A report by the Council of Trade and Plantations to the House of Lords in 1734 explains that in New England the opportunities of making vast wealth from cheap labour and clement weather were remote. The Report states, '*the people of the New England being obiged to apply themselves to manufacture more than other plantations, who have the benefit of a better soil, the warmer climate, such improvements have been there in a eleven sorts of mechanic arts, that not only are*

³⁷⁹ Ingram, Kenneth, 1992, pp. 46-47.

³⁸⁰ Joy, Edward, 1966, p. 118.

³⁸¹ Ingram, Kenneth, 1992, p. 44.

³⁸² Fleming, Betsey, MA Thesis, 1993, p. 24.

*escritoires, chairs and other wooden manufactures, but hoes, axes, and other iron utensils, are now exported from thence to the other plantations.*³⁸³

How much of the furniture mentioned above was sold in the Mid and Southern states is difficult to assess. Consequently, we have little idea as to the extent of American exports to the West Indies. Until extensive research is undertaken to understand the coast wide trade in America, and the islands of the Caribbean, an answer to this question will continue to be elusive. The secondary material on the venture cargoes of Salem, Newport and Providence make frustrating reading as they generally only refer to the region of manufacture, speculating who made what piece of furniture and the decoration and genealogy of the furniture making families.³⁸⁴ While these regions were the most important centres of furniture production for New England and significant in America, it is frustrating that the authors do not expend much effort researching the destination of this furniture, which was made for export. Any studies that have been carried out related to the destination of Townend, Cahoon, Goddard, or Sanderson furniture, to name a few, have generally not been pursued unless it is along the American East coast.³⁸⁵

However, we are fortunate that one or two authors have speculated on where these prized America objects had been shipped to. Mabel Swan, one of the earliest authors to investigate the subject was also refreshingly broad-minded. In her 1949 article, in the magazine Antiques, she lists ships leaving Boston in 1744, for many destinations, and amongst this list was the Brig Sarah, which was bound for the West Indies. Her cargo included '4 desks, 11 tables' and '2 doz. chairs'.³⁸⁶ Later in the same article Swan records that from the Piscataqua region³⁸⁷ of New England in one year nearly 600 chairs, 103 desks and 35 tables were sent to the West Indies. The landing book of James Brobson also lists large quantities of furniture being sent to the West Indies. The book gives a total of 346 chairs being exported to either Martinique or Barbados between 1792 and 1805, from the Port of Wilmington, North Carolina.³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Newton, A., P., Ed., 1953, Item 20, 'Report of the Council of Trade and Plantations to the House of Lords, 1734.'

³⁸⁴ Ormsbee, Thomas Hamilton, August, September 1939, pp. 6-7, 14; pp. 10-11, 20. Moses, Michael, 1984.

³⁸⁵ Vibert, Jeanne Arthur, MA Thesis, 1981, pp. 22-25. This thesis is a fine example of this, the research investigates in great detail the life and work of John Cahoon, Cabinet Maker, Newport, Rhode Island 1745-1785. Yet when researching the destination of his furniture the author confines their work to the East Coast, despite there being strong evidence that the furniture was exported to the Caribbean.

³⁸⁶ Swan, Mabel, 1949, pp. 278-280.

³⁸⁷ Now known as Portsmouth.

³⁸⁸ Winterthur, Downs Collection, James Brobson, Landing Book, 1790-1805, Doc 484 29248.

Margareta Lovell in her work on 'The Business of Cabinetmaking in the Eighteenth-Century' clearly states '*the scale of this export enterprise can only be estimated, but it seems to have been considerable.*'³⁸⁹ The article continues to explain the sizeable shipments bound for the Southern States of America, but finally acknowledges that '*Shipments to other important markets, such as New York and the West Indies, were probably much higher.*'

In seeking to discover exactly how much New England furniture ended up in the West Indies, or more specifically Jamaica, we are not only faced with the problem of American furniture historians marginalising the West Indies, but also the vagueness of eighteenth century merchants in stating where their ships were destined.

Venture cargoes, as the name suggests, were speculative loads that were carried down the East Coast of America until they were sold. If by some misfortune they could not sell their wares in one port then the captains of these ships would venture further south into the Caribbean until all the merchandise was sold. The merchant clearly sent goods with the intention of selling them quickly and for a handsome profit. This strategy could not always be guaranteed, so while a captain when departing stated to customs officials that his ship was to dock and sell its cargo in Charleston, in reality, if he found no market there then he would continue his voyage until all the goods were sold. In 1810 this was taken to extremes when the ship the *Molly* set out from Salem. It had still not sold its cargo of furniture by the time it had reached Rio de Janeiro, by which time the captain was desperate and was trading the furniture for supplies to return home.³⁹⁰ Here lies another problem when researching this subject, just because a ship is destined for a certain port, it does not necessarily mean that it finished its journey at that port. While some merchants and captains clearly were trying to sell their wares quickly and profitably others extended themselves and went beyond the law. Such were the profits to be made in embarking upon illegal trade, that the level of illicit trade is incalculable.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Lovell, Margareta, 1991, p. 60.

³⁹⁰ Swan, Mabel, 1949, p. 280.

³⁹¹ Lovel, Margareta, 1991, p. 39.

Given this smuggling and profiteering, how can we establish how much furniture was exported to Jamaica?

There is no evidence, discovered to date, that can prove that the venture cargoes of furniture from the Northern States landed on the quayside of Kingston. Although we know ships from Boston, Rhode Island and Salem landed in Jamaica, no documents suggest furniture was amongst the goods landed.³⁹²

However, while the evidence for the Northern States is sketchy documents relating to the exports of furniture from Philadelphia and the Southern States of America are more helpful. The merchant Stephen Dutilh was an important and wealthy merchant who worked from Philadelphia at the turn of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.³⁹³ In the early part of the nineteenth century it is known that he insured one of his vessels to travel to Jamaica and other parts of the West Indies to sell manufactured as well as consumable goods. At the time of taking out the insurance, St. Domingo was still considered too dangerous as the insurers, the Delaware Insurance Company, gave clear instructions stating that the vessel could go to any ports in the West Indies except St. Domingo.³⁹⁴

Dutilh had already experienced the darker side of trading in the Caribbean, where uprisings, revolutions and foreign affairs were whipped up as quickly as the tropical winds. A couple of years earlier, Dutilh's ship the '*Fair America*' had been captured by French Privateers and the captain and crew were murdered. The ship was later recaptured by a British frigate and taken to Martinique. In Dutilh's insurance claim he lists the goods he had lost, amongst which were 24 mahogany chairs, two large looking glasses, two marble tables, 21½ dozen German looking glasses and a staggering 47 dozen assorted Windsor chairs.³⁹⁵ A couple of years after this ship had been captured, as previously mentioned, Dutilh was sending goods to Jamaica. Although we do not know that the furniture was landed in Jamaica, the nature of the goods going to Cuba would suggest that it was plausible that furniture was being sent to Jamaica from Philadelphia.

³⁹² Ott, J., 1975, pp. 140-141. Ott tabulates ships from Providence and Newport exporting goods between 1783 to 1795. The tables show ships going to Jamaica in the years 1784 and 1787.

³⁹³ The firm's records are all kept at the Pennsylvania Historical Society. It is unfortunate that the records are only catalogued according to date, and while it is known that some 350 files of correspondence related to the West Indies, it was impossible to search the 57 feet of shelves dedicated to the firm to find them.

³⁹⁴ Winterthur, Downs Collection, Dutilh Etienne, Account Book, Doc 424, 7th January, 1804, p. 2.

³⁹⁵ Winterthur, Downs Collection, Dutilh, 1802, 77 x 531. At Winterthur, there is also a Shipping Order for Dutilh ship the '*Betsey*,' bound for Cap Francois, Cuba, with six dozen chairs onboard. 1790, 23rd October, 66 x 86.1.

Prior to Dutilh the Baltimore Port Records list no fewer than 12 sloops and brigs departing for Jamaica in 1799.³⁹⁶ Yet we still do not have conclusive evidence that furniture was exported from America to Jamaica. However, a few years earlier in 1768 we find evidence that a trade in furniture between Jamaica and Philadelphia did exist. The well known American cabinet maker Benjamin Randolph appears to have ventured into trading with the West Indies, by sending goods down to Jamaica on the ship '*Diana*'.³⁹⁷ Randolph was a famous Philadelphian and American cabinet maker who had made many fine commissions including the table on which the Declaration of Independence was drafted.³⁹⁸ In his accounts he also cites and credits another Philadelphian craftsman Francis Trumble with supplying him with goods for the '*voyage to Jamaica*' At this period in his career Trumble was only making Windsor chairs.³⁹⁹ Therefore we have not only a clear proof of furniture being made in Philadelphia and then exported to Jamaica, but also of one of the sources for the many Windsor chairs that appear in Jamaica (See illustrations 42-46). In this instance the trade with Jamaica can hardly be described as speculative, here it is stated that goods were specifically destined for Jamaica. However, we can only speculate as to the nature of the cargo, the amount, and whether this was a regular contact between Philadelphia and Jamaica. In Susan Stuart's article on the Gillow's firm exporting Windsor chairs she states that John Swarbreck of Kingston was receiving Windsor chairs from America in the early 1760s, but she could not ascertain from where the chairs were made and who made them.⁴⁰⁰ Could Francis Trumble of Philadelphian be the maker and Benjamin Randolph the exporter. Stuart continues in her article to say that the correspondence between Swarbreck and Gillow's implies that this trade dried up when the revolutionary wars arrive. No evidence has been found to establish any trade between America and Jamaica was conducted after the late 1760s and early 1770s.

³⁹⁶ Winterthur, Downs Collection, Baltimore Port Records, 1782-1824, M. 761.

³⁹⁷ Evans, Nancy, 1963, p. 107.

³⁹⁸ Bjerkoe, Ethel Hall, 1978, pp. 181-182.

³⁹⁹ Goyne Evans, Nancy, 1999, p. 81.

⁴⁰⁰ Stuart, Susan, 1995, pp. 65-71.



Illustration 42

Low back Windsor chair, made by Francis Trumble, Philadelphia circa 1765.

Goyne Evans, Nancy, American Windsor Chairs, 1996, Winterthur Museum, p. 87.



Illustration 43

Low back Windsor chair, found in Jamaica, circa 1790-1810.

This chair, or its design, which is common in Jamaica could have been imported from Pennsylvania.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 44

High back Windsor chair, made in Philadelphia circa 1765.

Goyne Evans, Nancy, American Windsor Chairs, 1996, Winterthur Museum, p. 67.



Illustration 45

High back Windsor chair, found in Jamaica, circa 1790-1810.

This chair, or its design, which was common in Jamaica could have been imported from Pennsylvania.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.



Illustration 46

The caricature of 'Johnny Newcombe in the Island of Jamaica,' circa 1800,

depicts 'Johnny' leaning back on his Windsor chair smoking and drinking.

Bell, Brian, Jamaica, 1993, APA Publications, p. 48.

Imports of furniture from other destinations

Although British and American goods and commodities account for most of the imports to America, the influx of migrants from St. Domingo must have had some influence on the type of goods that were available or seen in Jamaica. We know some integration between the French and British took place. In Lady Nugent's diary she not only records the efforts she had to go to in translating her recipes for her new St. Domingan cook, but later recalls that there was a ball at the King's House for the French men fleeing St. Domingo.⁴⁰¹ Despite these recollections, only a coach maker has been documented as having practised his trade in Jamaica, having fled St. Domingo.⁴⁰²

Given that the 1724 Navigation Act stated that any trade with foreign nations was not acceptable, any foreign manufactured goods coming into Jamaica would be the result of revolution, weather, smuggling or prize cargoes that were captured. Clearly these imports would be few in number, or not documented and therefore the trade with the Spanish, Danish, Dutch and the French Americas would be small and virtually undocumented

Locally produced furniture

It has already been stated that identifying a piece of Jamaican furniture is difficult. The reason for this is twofold, firstly imported objects were available, and secondly imported furniture can be confused with objects made by British craftsmen in Jamaica. However, the appearance of several object types that are recorded in documentation of the period reveal that some objects were Jamaican by origin, or alternatively carried on being utilised long after the object fell out of use in Britain. Other objects can be identified as Jamaican because it is clear that they were neither imported nor made by craftsmen with British training. Usually by their lack of sophistication and the naivety of the design and craftsmanship although this is not always the case.

⁴⁰¹ Wright, Philip, Ed., 10th November, 1801; 19th October, 1802.

⁴⁰² Archibald Thomson, Coach Maker, Probate, 1799. Thomson probate not only states that he was formerly a subject of St. Domingo, but his lists of debtors includes a large amount owing from the Commissioner General of St. Domingo.

Objects that were copies of British imports or models have been found in Jamaica. Several striking examples exist. Many 'D-end' tables that were used at eating times either acting as side tables or by being placed at either end of a Pembroke or gateleg table to form a long table with 'D' shaped ends have been located (See Illustration 47). In Britain these tables were constructed by attaching four straight legs onto a coopered frieze. The material of the frieze and the legs were usually softwood, yet when examining the same style table in Jamaica these same table friezes were made of solid mahogany and the frieze was not coopered. The legs were solid and no example of a veneered D end table has been discovered in Jamaica. British tables of this type would usually have the leg terminating in a marlborough foot and stringing applied to the base of the frieze and around the top of the foot, whilst occasionally we see stringing around the base of the frieze the other features were not evident. The Jamaican D-end tables were simple tables made of solid mahogany with simple decoration and were common in eighteenth century houses, many are listed in the inventories of both furniture maker's and the consumer's homes. An example of this can be found in the workshop of John Harstead who lists '5 tops for dining tables' and 'setts of dining tables unfinished'.⁴⁰³ Other makers who stock these tables include John Mitchell and John Fisher also listed five and six 'setts of dining tables'.⁴⁰⁴

Sideboards were also found to have been made in Jamaican workshops. An 1800 inventory of the workshop of John Mitchell lists several sideboard tops included in his stock in trade. These sideboards were likely to have been similar to those illustrated in Ralph Edwards' Dictionary of English Furniture.⁴⁰⁵ The carcase of this type of object sat on six legs, one in each corner and two others in the front, usually placed where the front façade breaks, the tops were large and the front elevation was usually decorated with inlaid stringing. Sideboards found in Jamaica, unlike their British counterparts were never veneered and usually appeared heavier in proportion (See Illustration 34). However, one sideboard was discovered that had many features that related to British models (See Illustration 48), it was proportionately lighter than

⁴⁰³ John Harstead, Carpenter, Probate, 1801. A set of dining tables constitute a centre table (a version of a Pembroke table) with two folding leaves and two 'D' ends to place either side of the Pembroke table.

⁴⁰⁴ John Fisher, Cabinet Maker, Probate 1804; John Mitchell, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1800.

⁴⁰⁵ Edwards, Ralph, 1966, p. 478.

other examples found in Jamaica and also follows the design of Hepplewhite.⁴⁰⁶ The inclusion of a brass gallery at the back of the object, the false drawer front illustrating that a leaded drawer had been present, evidence of ghost marks for mouldings, and a veneered top and drawer fronts illustrate that this sideboard was indeed British in origin. Another sideboard of similar form found in Jamaica did not have these characteristics. The top, drawer fronts and sides were made in solid mahogany, there was no gallery and the proportions of the sideboard appear heavy and ungainly. However, the drawers were decorated with inlaid stringing canted at the corners, and the top also carried a reeded mould around its edge. This sideboard, although it carries some of the features of a late eighteenth century sideboard is not British, but copies a British example. These two are interesting in that they do demonstrate that a British model was available to Jamaican craftsmen, and that local craftsmen did copy British designs. An advertisement in the Daily Advertiser in October 1790, lists the goods for sale for an individuals estate. The first item on the list was a '*A large mahogany sideboard with drawers,*' in the same year we have further evidence that sideboards were imported. The Daily Advertiser, for 1790, states that a ship from Lancaster brought as part of its cargo many items of mahogany furniture including sideboards.⁴⁰⁷

Further objects were based on British examples. A concertina card table discovered in Jamaica is a fine example, although only one table of this kind was found, its presence gives a clear indication that local craftsmen did copy furniture that was bought to the island from Britain. The card table has four cabriole legs that terminate with ball and claw feet (See Illustration 49). The top of the legs are elegantly carved with incised acanthus leaves, while the rails on all four sides are serpentine shaped with turreted corners. Yet despite the table embodying the characteristics of a metropolitan concertina card table, it has some noticeable flaws. The top of the table is made of solid mahogany, which was not typical of British examples, neither does it have a baize surface, which in Britain would have been a standard feature, nor does it contain counter holders in the turrets, despite the top being solid. The table's concertina action is rudimentary and does not rely upon a sophisticated jointing mechanism, but rather upon crude wrought iron metal hinges that are nailed to the wooden action. Although this object appears to be a fashionable metropolitan table, it was likely to have been made in a Jamaican workshop. In the workshops of several

⁴⁰⁶ Hepplewhite, George, 1794, plate 29.

makers we see many card tables. For example in the probate of Robert Pitchard in 1734 we find a ‘frame for card table.’ However, the description is vague and the exact nature and ornament of the table is remains obscure.⁴⁰⁸

Jamaican furniture that imitated imported furniture was probably very common in the eighteenth century, as demand for such goods was great. These imitations, although not as well constructed, nor as carefully considered as their British exemplars would have been readily available. Although some objects copied British examples there are a few that were superior to their English cousin. The four poster bed that is to be found in Jamaica was usually modelled from British examples, but far from being a deviative cousin, it proves to be a fine object in its own right in terms of its construction and decoration. The British four poster bed generally relied upon the upholsterer to fashion the bed with fabrics and testers to develop a comfortable and aesthetically pleasing appearance. In Jamaica the upholsterer still provided this service, but the need for heavy curtains and testers was unnecessary due to the climate. Consequently greater reliance was put upon the construction to decorate the bed. A frame was more likely to be exposed therefore we see greater attention paid to decorative details in the beautifully carved bed posts, foot and head boards. These four poster beds were unlike any available in Britain, superior in decoration, and are clearly readily identifiable as Jamaican. Four poster beds are evident in several workshops inventories dating from as early as 1715 until the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰⁹ The exact design of the early bed posts remains unknown, but the later examples were probably heavily carved and made of mahogany. In the probate of John Fisher he lists 20 mahogany bed posts and similarly in the inventory of Joseph Stafford we see listed not only ‘2 sets of bedstead posts’ but also ‘one woodworking lathe.’⁴¹⁰

However, the four poster bed is a rare example of the superiority of Jamaican over British furniture. This adapting of an object to suit the local environment can be seen in other objects that have no relationship with furniture back in Britain. We have already discussed sideboards similar to those found in Britain, yet we find another type of sideboard that was common in the plantation house. This Jamaican sideboard was

⁴⁰⁷ BL Colindale, *Daily Advertiser*, 23rd August 1790.

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734.

⁴⁰⁹ Leonard Smith, Joiner, Probate, 1715.

⁴¹⁰ John Fisher, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1804; Joseph Stafford, Carpenter, Probate, 1766.

much higher than the typical sideboard found in England and usually stood on one or two tripod legged columns. This form of sideboard was regularly seen in Jamaican homes, whilst the British version was not so common. Why the Jamaican sideboard stands so high is thought to be related to the fact that slaves served from this raised platform and therefore there was no need to have the table at a height that would be suitable to serve yourself, which was the case with the British example. The elevated sideboard was usually made of local timbers such as mahogany and West Indian satinwood and have some form of decoration on the front apron. The drawers to these sideboards were located on either side allowing the front to be free for carvings and mouldings. The most common form of decoration was a running reeded mould that ran the length and width of the front apron. The height of the sideboard was roughly four foot and the length was normally four to five feet, however one example was seven foot in length and stood on two tripod columns (See Illustration 50).

The plantation chair was another item of furniture that does not have a British model. Exactly where the plantation chair derives from is not known. It is clear that the chair did not come from Britain, and that this chair was likely to have been present in Jamaica from the late eighteenth century. In the inventories of craftsmen we do not see planter's chairs mentioned, and while it is thought these chairs were given another name such as '*leather chairs*' this could also imply the chair had a top cover that was leather. The consequence of this is that ideas about their accurate location and descriptions are not available. Despite these problems we do find chairs of this type in Jamaica, they all follow the basic form but all are embellished in very different ways. The basic form consists of a piece of leather swung between the seat rail and the crest rail of a chair. The arms are characterised by long arms that protude beyond the seat, to enable the sitter to raise their legs and rest them on the arms. In this position the sitter avoided ants and insects crawling up their legs when asleep. However, the informal nature of the arrangement meant they were not intended for use in company and by ladies, and would usually have been for gentlemen or informal gatherings.

The decoration on the planters chair is restricted to the panel below the crest rail or alternatively the crest rail itself. Designs were usually geometrical or were carved to give a weaved appearance to the wood, but no figurative design has been located (See Illustration 51).

We have examined objects that copied British models, or became superior in terms of carving, timber and functionality to the examples imported. Other objects found in Jamaica have also been illustrated that have no equivalent in Britain, such as the high sideboards and the planter's chair. However, other types of furniture were uncovered in Jamaica that were originally copied from English pieces of furniture in the late seventeenth century. The beaufet that are found in Jamaica are versions of the early '*buffet*,' indeed in some probates the spelling of the word remained unchanged. The English buffet was a free-standing piece of furniture that had several shelves and occasionally a cupboard incorporated within its design. In Jamaica we see this same object, rarely with a cupboard (See Illustration 33), but several with just shelves. However, the original design was a heavy object usually made from oak, which fell out of fashion and disappears from the British cabinet makers' workshop by the late seventeenth century. In Jamaica this is not the case, the beaufet continued to be manufactured throughout the eighteenth century, and the form was much lighter. The piece was usually supported on four turned legs with solid mahogany shelves (See Illustration 52). The probate of the carpenter James Fisher had listed '*a new large buffer*' in 1724 and nearly eighty years later in 1802 William Cumming another carpenter also has in stock a '*Beaufett*,' clearly demonstrating this object never fell out of production during this period. Despite the absence of this object in England we find examples of beaufets in Jamaica throughout the eighteenth century, in both workshops and homes. After an absence in England of seventy years, it is curious to find this object being exported from Glasgow in the 1770s.⁴¹¹ Could it be the case that the success of this object in Jamaica bought about its renaissance in Britain? If so then we have some evidence to suggest that British furniture makers learnt from colonial craftsmen, albeit via a limited repertoire of object types.

⁴¹¹ Winterthur Cornwall Chronicle 1777, 22nd March. In this shop advertisement we find listed for sale many items of furniture including '*Beaufetts*'.

Several items of furniture appear in the inventories of furniture makers in Jamaica that do not appear to have been imported. Clearly, it is likely that these pieces were made by Jamaican craftsmen and reflected a growing individual style and a move from being totally reliant on imports. Other types of object may have been made locally, especially those that had no British model or equivalent, it is this class of object which is wholly Jamaican, adapted for Jamaicans by Jamaicans.

Summary

It can be seen from import records, newspapers and other records that the majority of goods coming to Jamaica were being shipped from Britain, and that most of those goods were sent out as speculative consignments. Relatively little furniture appears to have been commissioned, but this could be due to the lack of documentary material rather than a representation of reality. Those commissioned goods that have been mentioned illustrate vividly that some Jamaican consumers could afford the best and most fashionable English furniture. Countries other than Britain do not appear to have imported a great deal of furniture to Jamaica, even the America's trade remains sketchy. However, in order to understand and quantify America's role in the import of furniture to Jamaica, more detailed research is required on the venture cargo trade.

Combining information from customs records, advertising and probates, we can state that chairs were generally imported into Jamaica in the first half of the eighteenth century. Given the evidence from the probates, merchants appear to have had a monopoly until the 1720s, and even during the rest of the century locally made chairs were only produced in small numbers and the vast majority of chairs were imported from Britain. In contrast the craftsmen in Jamaica manufactured cabinetwork throughout the century, and relatively little was recorded as being imported, particularly in the first 50 years of the eighteenth century. However, the amount of cabinetware imported during the third quarter of the eighteenth century drastically

increased. Even if we take into account the large rise in the price of mahogany in England,⁴¹² the seven-fold increase in the amount of cabinetware entering Jamaica represents a substantial escalation of trade. Given that the British markets had lost the American trade, an increase in trade to the remaining British Americas was inevitable and this probably accounts for this rise.

The Jamaican furniture maker faced increased competition in the second half of the eighteenth century and despite there being a regular trade in cabinetware, this increase must have had an impact on the local manufacturers. Chairs, throughout the eighteenth century were not the staple trade of the Jamaican furniture maker and he appears to have accepted that imported chairs were better and cheaper. It is only after the turn of the nineteenth century that we see Jamaican craftsmen beginning to make chairs in any great number and actively competing with the importers.

⁴¹² Bowett, Adam, 1998, p. 25.



Illustration 47

D End Dining Table, found in Jamaica, circa 1800.

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection



Illustration 48

Jamaica Sideboards, one with Gallery, found in Jamaica, circa 1790s,

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection

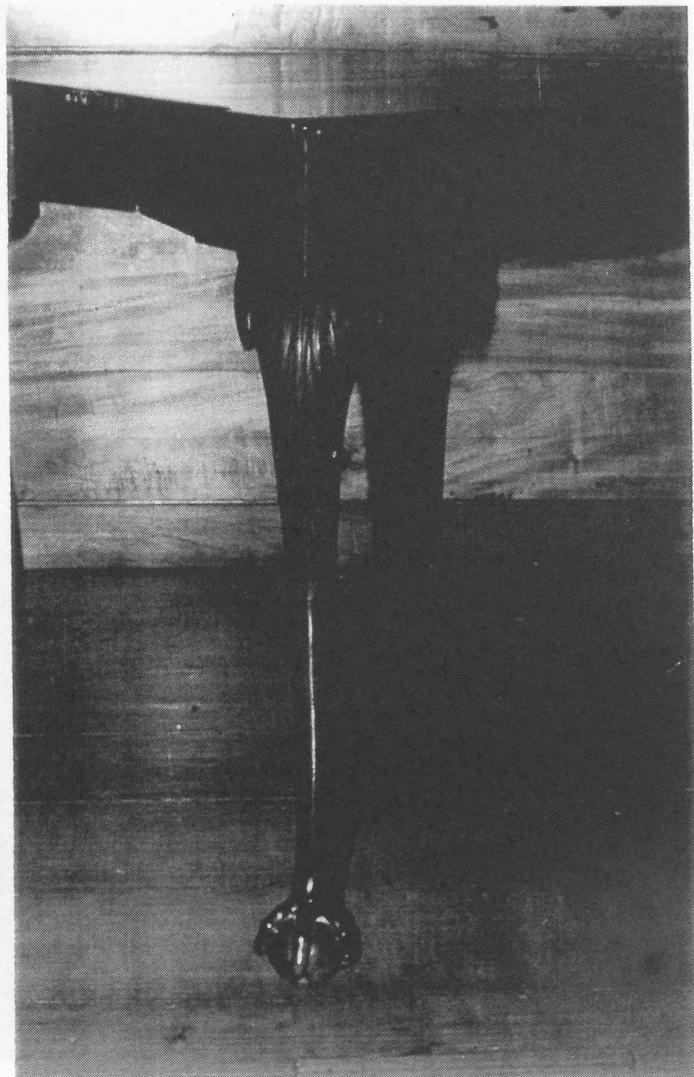


Illustration 49

Concertina Card Table with Ball and Claw Feet Jamaica, found in Jamaica, circa 1780s,

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection



Illustration 50

Jamaican Sideboard on tripod legs with turned column,

found in Jamaica, circa 1730s,

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection

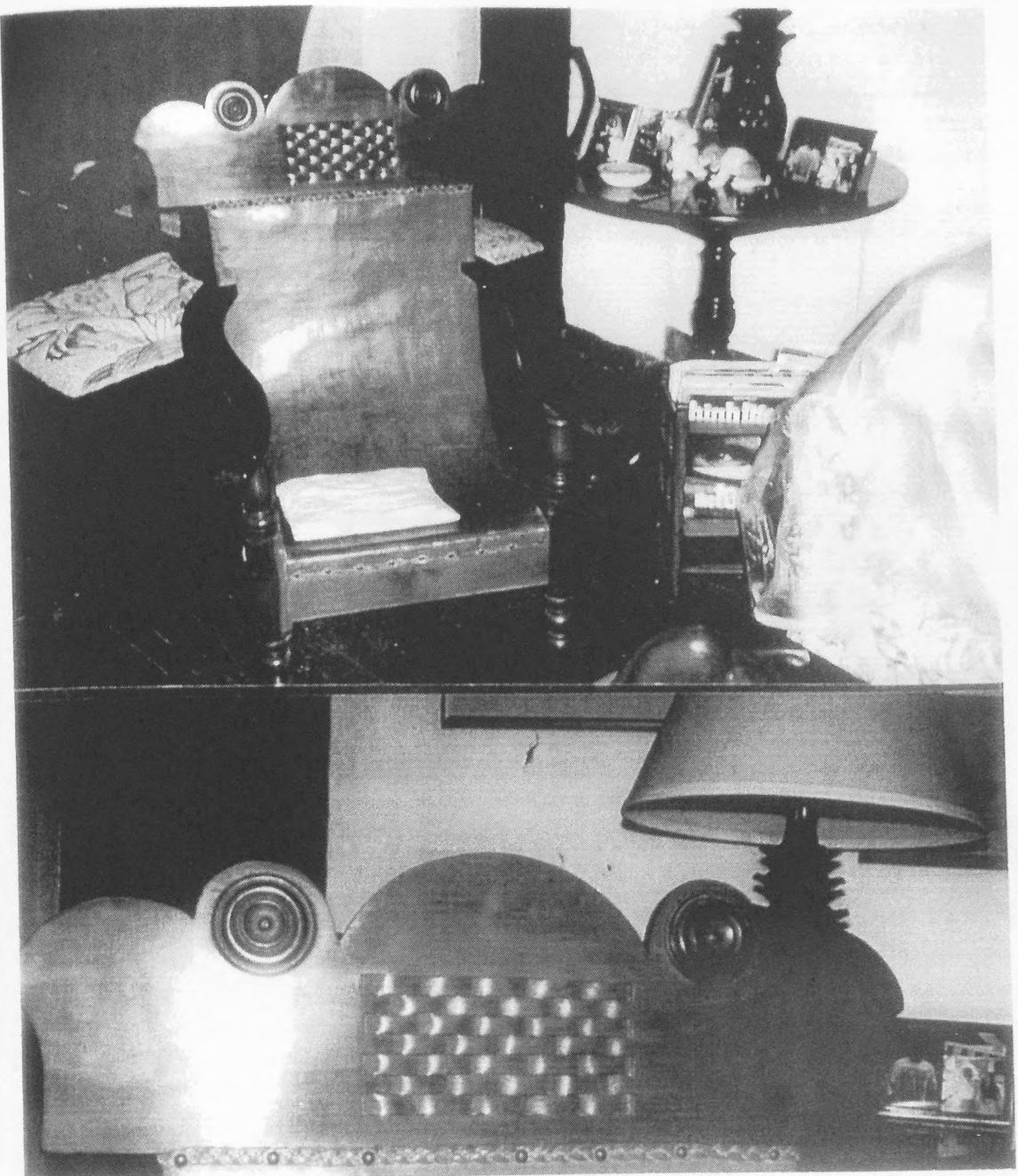


Illustration 51

Jamaican Plantation Chair with leather seat, and carved detail of crest rail,
found in Jamaica.

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection

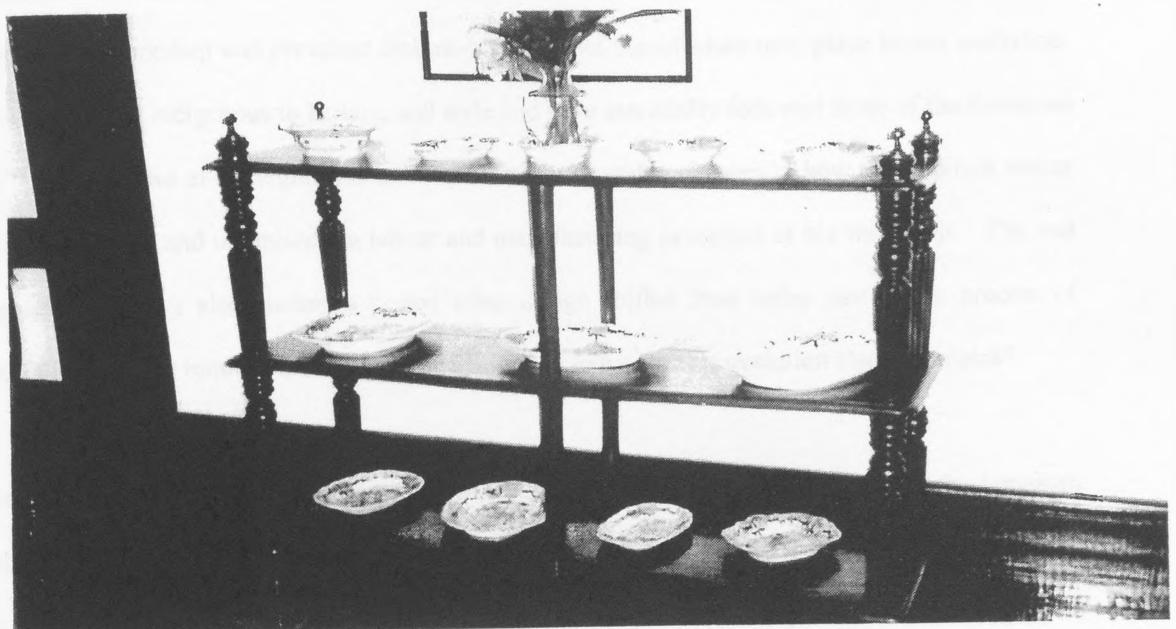


Illustration 52

Jamaican Beaufet, with shelves and turned legs,

found in Jamaica, circa 1800.

Photographed by the Author, Private Collection

Chapter Four

The Furniture Trade in Jamaica

Great changes were undergone in the furniture industry in London during the eighteenth century,⁴¹³ and this chapter examines to what extent this was also the case in Jamaica. At the beginning of the century in Britain, the artisan workshop was prevalent and most design and manufacture took place in this workshop. Materials were usually indigenous to Britain, and style and taste essentially followed those of the European continent.⁴¹⁴ By the end of the eighteenth century there were notable changes in how the furniture maker conducted his business, and organised the labour and manufacturing processes of his workshop. The end of the eighteenth century also marked a period when design shifted from being part of the process of making, to fall within the remit of the architect or designer. Do we see this evolution also in Jamaica?

The purpose of this chapter is to contrast the relatively slow improvement and evolution of the Jamaican trade with the progressive nature of the English furniture workshops. While it has been shown that the Jamaican workshops were aware of developments in style, and kept up with English fashion and taste, the method and processes of manufacture did not evolve along the same lines as main centres of furniture production, such as London and Lancaster.⁴¹⁵ It will be seen that some of the craftsmen in Jamaica were skillful, and in these cases were these craftsmen apprenticed to successful masters in Britain or were they untrained but skilled labourers? How did these craftsmen, who were aware of goods coming in from Britain, compete? Did they struggle with the growing number of imports, or were they innovative in changing their work practices to cope with this competition?

In order to be able to understand the development of the furniture industry in Jamaica and how innovation may have taken place, we must first define the different specialisations of this trade. How did a carpenter

⁴¹³ Kirkham, P, 1988, Introduction, pp. 1-10.

⁴¹⁴ Timber was home produced except for when the importation of Baltic softwoods, and continuous supplies of walnut from the continent helped satisfy demand.

⁴¹⁵ London was clearly a metropolis in the furniture trade, Lancaster was also important, because of the efforts of the Gillows company. In Scotland, Edinburgh was the centre of the furniture trade, however, little has been published on the Scottish trade. Only recently David Jones' work in the Regional Furniture Society Journal and his book on The Edinburgh Cabinet Makers' Books of Prices has begun to shed some light on the subject. Jones, David; 2000, Introduction, pp. 1-39.

differ from a joiner and cabinet maker; what services did each of these trades perform; and was there any ambiguity in defining their tasks? Once this is established we can begin to investigate how the woodworkers conducted business and whether they form partnerships or worked as small independent units? Did these furniture makers employ other whites or did their workshops utilise slave labour to manufacture furniture? Were slaves trained; did they serve apprenticeships; and was there the opportunity for them to have their own workshops; or, as seems more probably were slaves just considered cheap and unskilled labour?

If woodworkers did employ other craftsmen, were white and black artisans treated equally? Can we determine if large businesses were being organised with different trades working under the same roof? If this evidence exists, then we would be able to trace an evolution in the terms of the British model. Should this have been the case then, by the end of the century, we would expect to see a shift from the subcontracting of work out, to the development of a comprehensive manufacturing firm: but was this really the case in Jamaica?

Workshop size can be ascertained by several means, but an owner's reputation is difficult to assess unless the contemporary reporter actually recorded a visit to an establishment during their travels on the island. As very little evidence of this type exists, we can only reconstruct how the colonial workshop functioned via a compilation of diverse sources. Apprenticeship records provide clues to the craftsman's ability and probates sometimes allow us to assess the nature of the work.

The manufacture of furniture can be examined by studying the tools and stock in trade of the manufacturer, but this form of analysis is greatly enhanced by the presence of objects. Objects give us a visual insight into the aesthetic of the craftsmen as well as offering an opportunity of reconstructing how they were manufactured. An examination of surviving furniture can help determine levels of skill, and enable the comparison of the capabilities of Jamaican with European craftsmen. Although tools, materials and design books may be present in any workshop they do not illustrate what the craftsmen did with them, only what he could possibly achieve. The lack of a collection of Jamaican furniture to work from has greatly impeded

this study, but it has also allowed the exploration of other methods of analysis. This chapter seeks to use furniture found in Jamaica to illustrate and support the various other avenues of investigation that were explored. Hopefully the use of these approaches will not only enable the mapping of a long forgotten industry, but also demonstrate its sophistication.

Training

There appears to have been no trade organisation, cooperative, unions or societies operating or functioning in Jamaica during the eighteenth century. Why this lack of collective unity should have been the case is not exactly known, but possible reasons can be speculated upon. The Jamaican Assembly probably found that skilled men were in short supply and every encouragement was made to entice them to continue. Restrictive and regulated guilds, unions or societies would only have acted to impede that objective.⁴¹⁶ Given the lack of longevity of the occupants of the island, serving any sort of journeyman's term or any other closed shop would have meant low wages and resulted in even fewer furniture makers producing furniture. It was clear that any restrictive practice would only have discouraged more from craftsmen migrating to the island. If the average age for a settler was little over 30, then training was neither a useful, nor profitable option for a master craftsman. The masters of England, unlike their Jamaican counterparts, could use found apprentices as a means of educating a new generation, but they were more usually perceived as a form of cheap labour. The abundance of cheap manpower in Jamaica, however, meant that apprentices were of limited use. Slaves were much more profitable, and not only could they be given the arduous and mundane tasks, but they required little training and more importantly they would remain in the colony for life. Apprentices would not only have demanded the right to learn, but once qualified they could provide competition for the master. If the master could see no advantage in apprenticing a young man, then the potential apprentice would also have been doubtful as to the advantages in the scheme. The laying out of a large sum to the master as a premium would have been seen as an especially risky investment for the apprentice as both parties were prone to an early grave, and finding a master worth his salt would have been difficult.

⁴¹⁶ IOJ, MS 2074, List of White Settlers. Several acts were passed in Britain to encourage migration to the new colonies, these include one in 1736, 1743, 1747, 1750, 1752 and 1754.

Although a formal apprenticeship system does not appear to have existed in Jamaica, there is evidence to suggest that there were some slaves and white immigrants serving apprenticeships. The only record of such arrangements appear in accounts of runaway apprentices. In 1719 a notice was recorded in The Jamaica Courant stating an apprentice had runaway from the joiner Charles Green, and that he offered a reward for his apprehension.⁴¹⁷ Only a small number of such accounts have survived and the exact nature of the arrangement is unknown, whether these accounts recall a rare individual contract between two parties or that the arrangement was common place common is unclear. However, there is clear documentation of fine craftsmen having worked in Jamaica and having served apprenticeships in Britain between 1710 and 1773, these craftsmen number 56.⁴¹⁸ Notable among these was Thomas Philips, who appears to have served his apprenticeship with Peter Gerrard of Liverpool in the 1750s.⁴¹⁹ Gerrard also took in John Fisher at the same time.⁴²⁰ After finishing his apprenticeship John Fisher, who came from either Liverpool or Lancaster,⁴²¹ went to Charleston, South Carolina and worked there successfully for a number of years until he was banished after the American Revolution in 1784.⁴²² Three years later is recorded in London, filing for compensation from the claims commission, from whom he received £25.⁴²³ The same John Fisher then appears to have worked back in Lancaster for the Gillows company as a master, eventually returning to Jamaica where he died a couple of years later.⁴²⁴

John Fisher was the only craftsmen known to have left Britain twice for the Americas. Other Jamaican craftsmen who served their apprenticeships in Britain included Thomas Cursworth, an upholsterer who

⁴¹⁷ IOJ, The Jamaican Courant, 15th April 1719.

⁴¹⁸ For full list see Appendix 6. Although 56 craftsmen working in Jamaica have been found to have served British apprenticeships, only half those on the database either fall into the dateline of apprenticeship records (1710-1773), or were included in the survey. Therefore, the 56 craftsmen found represent 8% of the total number sought. The apprenticeships that were plausible, or in doubt, were not included in the 56. The IR1 index is held at the Guildhall Library.

⁴¹⁹ IR1, 1/51 F81 (1751) Thomas Phillips apprenticed to Peter Gerrard of Liverpool, Joiner.

⁴²⁰ Beard, Geoffrey, Gilbert, Christopher, Ed., 1986, p. 302. John Fisher, Cabinet Maker of Liverpool, petitioned freedom on Roger Dewhurst and Peter Gerrard during 1761.

⁴²¹ Fisher was an apprentice in Liverpool, but did work in Lancaster. It is therefore difficult to know whether he was from one or the other.

⁴²² Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle, 29th May, 1784 lists a number of people, lately landed, who were banished from Charleston, amongst which it lists John Fisher, Cabinet Maker.

⁴²³ Brown, Wallace, 1992, Vol. 26.2, p. 137 states:- 'John Fisher, a Charleston Cabinet Maker, arrived at the end of the war accompanied by 39 slaves, yet in 1787 in London the claims commissioners pronounced him destitute and gave £25 passage money back to Jamaica.'

⁴²⁴ V&A, Furniture & Woodwork Department, Osborn Indexes of Gillows Records, John Fisher 1597, 1617, 1626, 1665, 1669 1679, 1716. John Fisher is only listed in the Gillows Estimates books for the period 1799 to 1804 and is stated as being a Master. Archer, Lawrence, Monumental Inscriptions of British West Indies, 1875, p. 114. 'Thomas Fisher, in memory of his brother John Fisher, Late

served his term in the 1720s with John Hodson, who was also an upholder. John Hodson was much sought after in his day; he supplied many furnishings for the Duke of Atholl, the Duke of Gordon, and supplied furniture to Holkham Hall, Norfolk.⁴²⁵ George Philip Thompson of Southton⁴²⁶ and Thomas Sheppard of Stepney appear to have served the same master,⁴²⁷ John Knowles, who was probably the joiner who worked at 'The Cabinet and Four Coffins' in Tooley Street, Southwark.⁴²⁸ Of the 56 who served their apprenticeship in Britain, 19 served them in London, and only four were thought to have been trained in either Scotland or Wales. After London there were equal numbers of each, from the North of England, the East of England (including East of London), and the West Country.⁴²⁹

The Inland Revenue apprenticeship records fall away in the 1770s, making an assessment of where Jamaican craftsmen were trained across the whole century virtually impossible. However, they do help illustrate some general points.⁴³⁰ Up until the 1770s it appears there was no regional pattern or preference for those leaving for Jamaica. From this small survey it is possible to say that a furniture maker was as likely to migrate from Dorset as from London or Liverpool. More importantly, this survey illustrates that skilled craftsmen were going to Jamaica, having potentially completed apprenticeships in England with fine masters. As a point of comparison, 189 woodworkers were found to have travelled from England and Scotland to either North or South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and Maryland throughout the period of entire eighteenth century.⁴³¹ So, despite poor living conditions in Jamaica, the allure of potential wealth was great for these craftsmen.

Cabinet-Maker in Kingston, OB 1st November 1804, AET 67.' Significantly the inscription does not state he was a Cabinet Maker of Kingston, but rather a Cabinet Maker in Kingston.

⁴²⁵ Beard, Geoffrey, Gilbert, Christopher, Ed., 1986, p. 439; Coleridge, Anthony, 'John Hodson and Some Cabinet Makers at Blair Castle,' *Connoisseur*, April 1963, pp. 223-230.

⁴²⁶ There appear to be no Southton in Britain but there are two South Towns, one in Yarmouth, Norfolk and the other in Hampshire.

⁴²⁷ IR1, 15/40 1737 George Philip Thompson of Southton; IR1, 4/180 1716 Thomas Sheppard of Stepney. George Thompson died in 1753 and Thomas Sheppard in 1730, both died in Kingston, Jamaica.

⁴²⁸ Heal, Ambrose 1988, p. 101; Beard, Geoffrey, Gilbert, Christopher, Ed., 1986, p. 520. Although John Knowles is only first listed in 1729, at this late date he took out an insurance policy with cover amounting to over £500, which would clearly indicate he had been in business a number of years prior to the start of the policy.

⁴²⁹ The remaining six were not clearly located.

⁴³⁰ Why the IR1 records cease at the end of the 1770s is not clear, however, a more comprehensive IR1 listing exists at the PRO, which was not searched as the records are year by year and not by surname.

⁴³¹ These figures were gleaned from the database held at the Museum of Early South Decorative Arts, in Winston Salem, North Carolina. The Museums research centre holds comprehensive material related to the 'South' and these figures are deemed to be relatively conclusive. It should be remembered that the figures do not include those craftsmen that may have landed in America and then moved to the Southern states. I wish to thank Mrs. Martha Rowe, of MESDA, for her assistance and help in gathering this material.

Another two apprentices who served their apprenticeships in London from 1724 to 1731 were John Satia and Francis Moore. The significance of these two apprentices is that they were black. Francis Moore was listed in the Joiners' records as 'Negro born,' and served his apprenticeship with Thomas Burnford.⁴³² John Satia was apprenticed to William Attey, and when he had completed his term of servitude he applied for the freedom of the City. This was his right, and not a privilege, but Satia found that, due to his skin colour, clarification was required as to his social status.⁴³³ Eventually, the Court of Alderman, allowed Satia the freedom of the City, but thereafter barred any further black apprentices from their freedom, and furthermore banned further black apprenticeships.⁴³⁴ Despite this ruling one other example of a black person serving an apprenticeship has been discovered. Samuel Benge served under Nathaniel Samuel in Sevenoaks, Kent and then travelled to Jamaica and later died in Philadelphia around 1796. Why Benge was able to serve an apprenticeship after the Court of Alderman's ruling, has not been ascertained. However, it is likely that since the apprenticeship was served in Kent and not London, the jurisdiction of the Court Aldermen did not apply. While no black craftsmen served apprenticeships in London after Satia, the same situation cannot be said for the provinces and other cities. Francis Moore's plight was very clear, he missed out on his admission to the freedom to the City as he was about to complete his apprenticeship in the same year that John Satia gained his freedom. There is no indication that John Satia returned to Barbados, from where it is thought he originated, but it is known that Francis Moore did go to Jamaica, where he set up a workshop, continuing there until his death in 1739.⁴³⁵ With the exception of Samuel Benge, we can generally state that no further black apprentices were trained in Britain in the eighteenth century, and therefore the masters and qualified workers in the furniture trade were probably all white.

Despite gaining the freedom of a company, not all qualified apprentices would have been able to obtain employment in their trade, and some would have wished to seek a better life or search for the riches promised in the new territories. To afford such a journey, many became indentured servants for a period of time. The period of servitude was on average seven years and thereafter a piece of land and basic provisions were provided. In this way, many had the opportunity of building a new life, gaining land and provisions were provided. In this way, many had the opportunity of building a new life, gaining land and

⁴³² IR1, 10/157 1724 Francis Moore, A negro born to Thomas Burnford Cit & Joiner £15.

⁴³³ I wish to thank Robert Barker for drawing my attention to this information.

⁴³⁴ Aldous, Vivienne E., 1999, pp. 30-31.

⁴³⁵ Francis Moore, Joiner, Probate, 1739.

achieving a quality of life that could only have been dreamed of in Britain. The risk of such a venture was an early grave if the West Indies was the chosen destination. All workmen risked harsh treatment from their master. This is revealed in the case of Thomas Smith who was an indentured servant who ran away from his master in New Kent County, Virginia. Smith who had trained as a house carpenter in England died in Jamaica some 15 years later.⁴³⁶ Of 149 indentured servants who went to Jamaica from 1730 and 1740, most were stated as being woodworkers. Of this number only 11 have been found to have survived beyond their indentured term.⁴³⁷ Of these 11, three were recorded in marriage registers; one in a burial register, and another in a jurors' list, indicating that they survived the journey and the first few, usually fatal, years in servitude. A further two former apprentice joiners had indentured themselves to pay for their crossing. William Waddell who had served his apprenticeship with Simon Starr of Dover, was an indentured servant in Jamaica for four years from 1729. He was last documented as having married in Kingston.⁴³⁸ The final surviving apprentice that went into service was William Warren, who was born in 1707, served his apprenticeship with Edward Allen of St. James's Westminster, and then left Britain the year after completing his apprenticeship in 1730. He married two years later in Kingston and died there in 1735 aged 28.⁴³⁹

The only incidence of a furniture craftsman serving an apprenticeship in America, and then living in Jamaica, was that of James Baker. Baker served his apprenticeship with Jonas Cawson of Princess County, Virginia between 1758 and 1763, but is recorded in the burial register of St. James parish, Jamaica in 1779.⁴⁴⁰

Although, several migration acts were introduced in Britain to encourage craftsmen to migrate to Jamaica, few took up the opportunity.⁴⁴¹ Only 15 were found to have been listed by their trade in the List of White

⁴³⁶ Thomas Smith, House Carpenter, Probate, 1791. MESDA, *Virginia Gazette*, 29th July 1776, pp. 7-1.

⁴³⁷ Kaminkow, Jack & Marion, 1964. Although 149 indentured servants were listed as embarking for Jamaica, the actual number that landed there is unknown.

⁴³⁸ CLDS, Kingston Marriage Register, 25th July 1732.

⁴³⁹ William Warren, Joiner, Probate, 1735; IR1, 1/11 F21 (1725) William Warren of St. Faiths London to Edward Allen of St. James Westminster, Carpenter £15. CLDS, Kingston Married Register 18th February 1732.

⁴⁴⁰ Gill, Harold, 1989, p. 13.

⁴⁴¹ It is difficult to establish exactly how many took up the offer to resettle in the Americas. We are fortunate that a list survives illustrating that 15 carpenters were brought over as part of the 1752 immigration Act. However, numerous other immigration acts were introduced at this time in Britain, and whilst these may have encouraged some artisans to go to Jamaica, the numbers were probably not large and the high mortality rate in Jamaica neutralised the efforts.

Settlers in 1752, and of this 15 only two appeared in any further records in Jamaica.⁴⁴² William Stone does not appear to have survived long after the voyage, while William Pinkney was recorded as having died in 1768 and was known to have practised his trade up until 1765 when he was the appraiser for the probate of the furniture maker, Jonathan Satterwaite.⁴⁴³ Some evidence does exist, however, to suggest that the incentives the Assembly used to encourage craftsmen to come to Jamaica from Britain were effective, even though Jamaica remained short of skilled artisans. Indeed, when Charles Villineau petitioned the Assembly for money to set up a business in the upholstery trade, having fled the hurricane struck Antigua in 1752, he received a generous sum.⁴⁴⁴ Villineau's compensation and treatment clearly illustrates that any person with good skills was in demand and was encouraged to settle in Jamaica.

Although several apprentices and indentured servants came to Jamaica to establish a new life, a number of experienced craftsmen also travelled to Jamaica. As already explained, several came directly from Britain, but others came by a more circuitous route, such as Henry Dickson. In 1730, he was recorded as a carver from St. Anne's, Westminster, who at the mature age of 48 indentured himself to live in Jamaica.⁴⁴⁵ No records survive to indicate whether he achieved his objective. Another ten craftsmen were documented as having left Britain and travelled to Jamaica. However, these craftsmen did not journey directly to Jamaica, but went via the Southern States of America. The earliest appearance of one of these craftsmen in Jamaica was Robert Burrough, a carver. Burrough was born in England and was then indentured to a craftsman in Norfolk County, Virginia. He then disappears from the records, but his death is recorded in Jamaica, in 1766.⁴⁴⁶ In 1774, the upholsterer Barrow Johns(t)on advertised in the South Carolina Gazette announcing that he had just arrived from Liverpool and was setting up shop in the upholstery business. As Barrow Johnston is recorded as dying in Jamaica in 1787, we can assume that he left America as a royalist, just as John Fisher had done in 1784.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² IOJ MS 2074, List of White Settlers, 1752. Why this list was compiled in Jamaica is not known, no such lists have been found in Britain to date.

⁴⁴³ William Stone, Carpenter, Probate, 1753; William Pinkney, Carpenter, Probate, 1768; Jonathan Satterwaite, Carpenter, Probate, 1764.

⁴⁴⁴ Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, Vol. VI (1766-1776), 1797, p. 78.

⁴⁴⁵ Kaminkow, Jack & Marion, 1964. This information was found in an annotated copy of the book held at the CLRO, 'Henry Dickson of the Parish of St. Ann's, Westminster for Middx, Carver, aged 48 years, 1730.' I wish to thank Robert Barker for drawing my attention to this information.

⁴⁴⁶ MESDA, Robert Burrough, apprenticed in England in 1731, not known when he left for America. Departed South Carolina in 1766 for Jamaica, no record of Burroughs in Jamaica.

⁴⁴⁷ Barrow Johnston, South Carolina Gazette, 31st Oct 1774, p. 3; Kingston Burial Register, 22nd July 1787.

Other examples of this type of migration can be seen at the end of the eighteenth century. John Boyd who trained as a cabinet maker, left Glasgow in 1802 and arrived in Charleston where he tried to set up in the upholstering business.⁴⁴⁸ Again this business could have only lasted a short period, as he was listed as the administrator in the probate of the Robert Fairburn, carpenter, in Kingston, in 1811. In Fairburn's probate Boyd refers to himself as a cabinet maker, and in his own probate taken in 1816 he was also described as a cabinet maker.⁴⁴⁹ While these cases illustrate that craftsmen travelled from England to America and on to Jamaica, others appear to have come directly from America without connection with Britain. The carpenter, Alexander Driesdale (Drysdale) lived in Georgia prior to moving to Kingston, in 1790. We only know that Driesdale lived in Georgia because his creditors made applications to administer his estate. However, his reason for moving to Kingston, other than running away from bad debts, may have been to seek out his brother or uncle, Henry Drysdale.⁴⁵⁰ The carpenter John Gale, who lived in Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1697, purchased land on the Coopers River in that same year in South Carolina for £209. Why Gale purchased this land is unknown, for there is no evidence that he ever went to live in America, and in fact he is documented as having died in Jamaica in 1712. Shortly after his death his son, also John Gale, sold the land for £500.⁴⁵¹

There were also several craftsmen that left Jamaica for America. Of the ten found in the survey to for America, six were originally from Britain, three of whom came from Scotland. William Tweed, a ship's carpenter crossed the Atlantic prior to the 1770s and settled in Charleston only to move to Jamaica and then later to return to America. He died in Charleston in 1778.⁴⁵² Of the ten who relocated from Jamaica to America, six chose to live in South Carolina. The upholsterer, Thomas Johnson Coleman advertised in Charleston in 1766, stating that he was a '*working upholsterer from London*' and that he was setting up trade in the town.⁴⁵³ Nine years earlier he had been listed in the Kingston Marriage register.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸ MESDA, John Boyd, South Carolina State Gazette, Timothy's Daily Advertiser, Charleston, S.C. 25th May, 1802. Robert Fairbairn, Carpenter, Kingston, 11th February 1811.

⁴⁴⁹ John Boyd, Carpenter, Probate, 1816.

⁴⁵⁰ Alexander Driesdale, Carpenter, Probate, 1791; Georgia Gazette, Savannah, 29th April 1790, p. 3.

⁴⁵¹ John Gale, Carpenter, Probate, 1712; MESDA extracts of records of the Secretary of the Province and the Register of the Province of South Carolina, Miscellaneous Records 1682-1690, Unit 4, 9th August 1697, p. 65.

⁴⁵² MESDA, William Tweed, removed from South Carolina for being a loyalist.

⁴⁵³ MESDA, Georgia Gazette, 8th April 1767.

While there were more craftsmen found travelling to Jamaica than migrating up to America in the study, the numbers remained relatively small. Of the 17 that left the mainland for Jamaica, one was explicitly expelled after Independence was declared, and a further 11 decided to relocate to Jamaica between the years 1716 to 1790, implying they were also political migrants. Of the 27 craftsmen found to have travelled to or from Jamaica, the more skilled appear to have been more likely to leave America for Jamaica. New migrants were more likely to travel between America and Jamaica. The American War of Independence brought a short period of '*national cleansing*,' during which most of these craftsmen moved (See Appendix 7).⁴⁵⁵ However, it is clear that there was not a clear pattern of migration between Jamaica and the Eastern Seaboard. No economic migration seems to have taken place, and generally once a migrant had decided on their chosen destination, they stayed put.

In all these cases no blacks or mulattos were listed or were separated out in the Jamaican records, and therefore the number of freed blacks and mulattos that served apprenticeships and traded as craftsmen was negligible. Despite this lack of education and opportunity for mulatto and black craftsmen, there was a small number (seven in total) who were listed as freed craftsmen in Jamaica. Francis Moore was the only one known to have owned his own workshop, but others may have worked in workshops as skilled artisans. Of the six other freed blacks, they all but one were married between 1786 and 1801. These five were found only in the Kingston Marriage Register and no other evidence has been uncovered to demonstrate that they possessed either a workshop, owned their own tools or succeeded in their profession.⁴⁵⁶ Another free mulatto was written up in the Journals of the Assembly,⁴⁵⁷ claiming that he had been educated in England and had served a regular apprenticeship to a carpenter. However, no evidence has been found to substantiate this claim, and no further correspondence was recorded in the Journals of the Assembly to

⁴⁵⁴ Thomas Johnson Coleman, Kingston Marriage Register, 15th January 1757; Georgia Gazette, 8th April, 1767; South Carolina Gazette, 16th June, 1st September, 1766 and 28th February 1769.

⁴⁵⁵ This survey was done by combining the Jamaica Craftsmen Database, and cross referencing it with the MESDA database and other source material, such as America newspapers, Winterthur archive, and other printed sources.

⁴⁵⁶ CLDS, Kingston Marriage Register, the five listed were Richard Lodge, Cabinet Maker 1st July, 1794; Mathias Marks, Cabinet Maker, 24th December 1790; William James McDonald, Carpenter, 29th May, 1789; Thomas Samuel Walker, Cabinet Maker, 13th December, 1786; Rose Crawford, 20th January 1801.

⁴⁵⁷ The Journal of the House of Assembly are the records of minutes taken in the House of Assembly.

support his statement. Whether he did or not, it seems clear that he did practise as a carpenter in the 1750s and '60s, and was wealthy enough to have owned his own slaves.⁴⁵⁸

The Crafts Associated with the Furniture Trade

The crafts in all their forms and facets were based predominately in Kingston. Of the 1020 records of craftsmen associated with the furniture industry, ranging in date from 1700 to 1810, 55% of them were based in Kingston (See Appendix 8). After , the next most popular parishes for craftsmen to settle in were St. James' and St Catherine's. Both had 7% of the total number of furniture makers working in their parish. The number in St. Catherine's is surprisingly low given that Spanish Town fell within the parish. The 85 artisans that lived in St. James' were likely to have been based around the island's second port, Montego Bay (See Illustration 53). Port Royal was the next most popular location with 4%, and thereafter, the rest of the island had only 13% furniture makers spread among the remaining 14 parishes. The 561 furniture craftsmen in Kingston included carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers as well as upholsterers, turners and coach and chaise makers. Of the total number of craftsmen in the database, 75% were described as carpenters, 6% as joiners, and a further 6% as cabinet makers. Upholsterers made up only 1½% of the total, and turners a mere 1% (See Appendix 3). However, while the craftsmen were recorded according to their title in their probate, the definition of these trades is not so clear cut. Some carpenters were probably joiners, and some joiners may have been cabinet makers. Other more usual combinations include the odd cabinet maker who was more likely to have been an upholsterer. Some of the carpenters were general builders and other carpenters were planters. In general, the trade stated on the probate, although usually referring to the deceased's trade, can be misleading, and after careful scrutiny other conclusions may be drawn.⁴⁵⁹ However, for the purpose of this survey the definition given on the probate has been used in the analysis, except where two trades were given on one probate. In such cases the more skilled craft has taken precedence.

⁴⁵⁸ Journals of the House of Assembly, Vol. V, 24th Oct 1761, 1797, p. 109. Only two coloured men were found to have their own slaves, Dugald Clarke and Francis Moore.

⁴⁵⁹ For the purpose of this thesis, and for clarity, the title given to a person on their probate is how they have been catalogued as in the database. This may give the effect of there being slightly more carpenters and fewer joiners and cabinet makers on the graphs, but the overall distribution would remain virtually unaltered. However, in the rare case when the probates actually contradict themselves, for example where the deceased was recorded as a carpenter and then later in the probate was recorded by another trade, then the craftsman was catalogued by the more sophisticated trade. An example would be if a craftsman is first recorded as a carpenter and

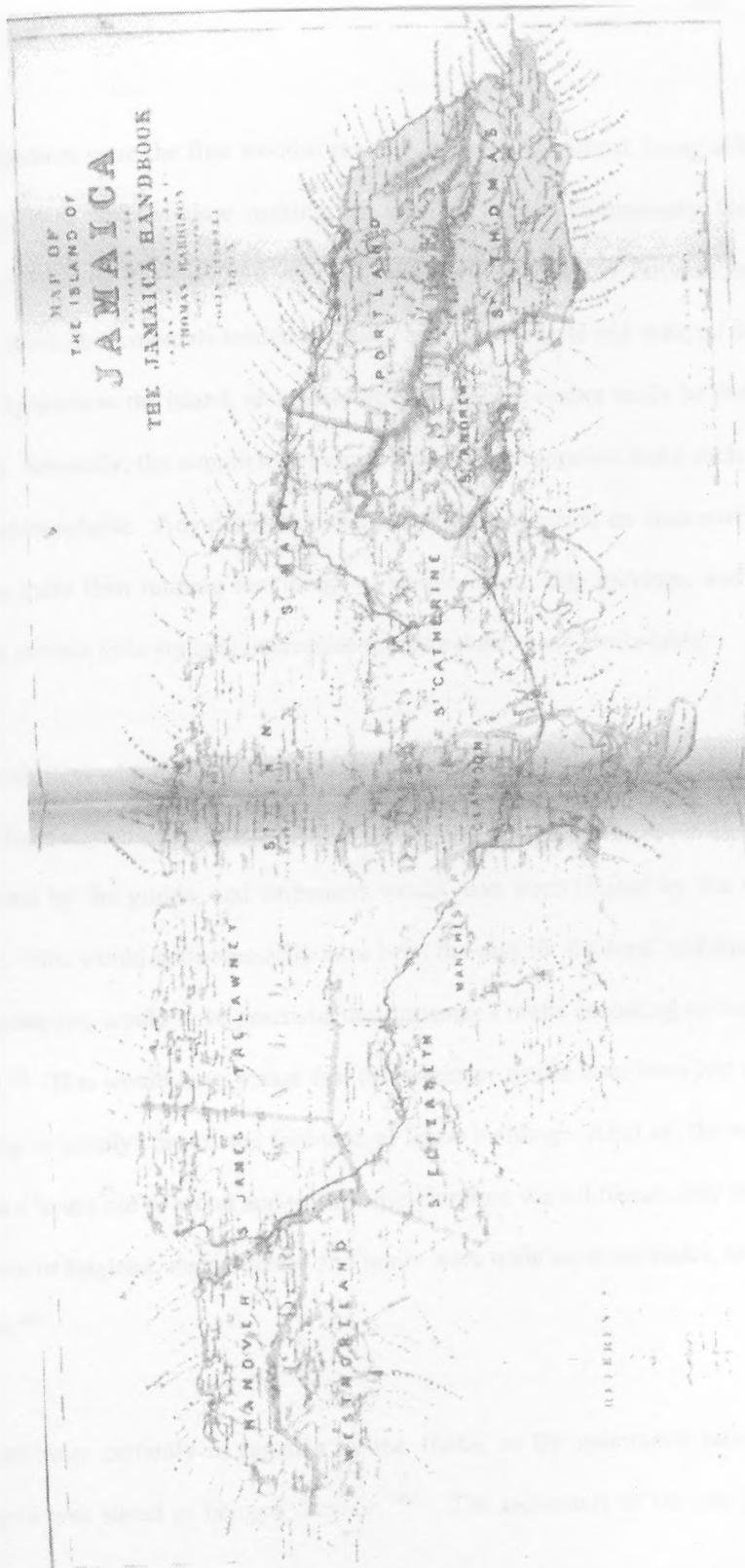


Illustration 53

Dr David. Historic Jamaica from the Air, 1996,
Map of Jamaica, circa 1895.

Ian Randle Publications, pp. 98-99.

then later acknowledged to be a cabinet maker then the latter title is the one by which he was listed in the database. Fortunately, there are only a handful of cases such as these.

The Carpenter

The carpenters were the first woodworkers to arrive on the island, being able to turn their hands to house building, door and window making, as well as making rudimentary furniture for the early settlers. However little of this furniture survives, and that which has is difficult to identify for several reasons. Firstly, these new colonials tended to make objects in the style and material they were used to, and not what was indigenous to the island, and therefore these objects cannot easily be distinguished from those made in Britain. Secondly, the simplicity of construction and decoration make such objects difficult to identify by the modern scholar. Any decoration that would have appeared on these early pieces would have amounted to little more than running mouldings or simple repeat chip carvings, and because of this simplicity the objects contain little stylistic expression to make them easily attributable.

The craftsmen who travelled to Jamaica in the seventeenth century would have been just as likely to have come from a rural as an urban centres in Britain.⁴⁶⁰ Whilst in the cities, the craftsmen would have been restricted by the guilds, and carpenters would have been limited by the division between carpenter and joiner. This would not necessarily have been the case for the rural craftsman. The rural craftsman, free of such restraint, would have practised the carpenter's crafts according to the medieval understanding of the word.⁴⁶¹ This would have meant that the carpenter would have been just as likely to have engaged in the making of simply constructed furniture, as house building. After all, the technicalities and skill required to frame a house out of wood and to construct furniture were different only in scale. By the mid-seventeenth century in England, the carpenter and joiner were quite separate trades, and clearly defined as such by the 1660s.⁴⁶²

Joiners were certainly in Jamaica by the 1680s, as the indentured servant Michael Cornish, bound for Jamaica was stated as being a '*Joynor*'.⁴⁶³ The carpenters of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

⁴⁶⁰ Of those that served apprenticeships 51% served them away from the capital.

⁴⁶¹ Gloag, John, 1990, p. 183.

⁴⁶² NAL, Evelyn, John, 1664, p. 78.

⁴⁶³ Ghirelli, Michael, 1968, pp. 19-20. Michael Cornish, joiner's son from Drury Lane London, indentured 1685.

century would have been very busy in Jamaica. Not only were they trying to build the infrastructure of a new colony, but they were constantly set back by the forces of nature. Port Royal's hurricanes and fires made sure carpenters became adept at house building in the early years of the eighteenth century.

Early eighteenth century carpenters' inventories give little away in determining the nature of the carpentry work they did. In the period before the cessation of the war of Spanish Succession, only five probates of carpenters were found to have survived. Of these, three were just listed in burial registers and therefore tell us very little other than providing basic biographical information. The other two carpenters were likely to have been furniture makers, rather than carpenters. James Wallis was probably old and retired, as his tools were described as '*old*', as was his furniture. He had an '*old chest*' and '*9 old leather chairs*' as well as an '*old gun*'.⁴⁶⁴ He also possessed 18 other chairs of different sorts, five bedsteads, two of which were turned, and four tables. James Wallis was probably an old carpenter, who also engaged in joinery. The second probate relates to William Newman, a joiner, who died in 1703. Although he carried no furniture in stock, his list of tools was extensive and valuable, and beyond the requirements of a carpenter. His tools included '*7 pareing*'⁴⁶⁵ and '*35 small mortising chisels*', and '*4 smoothing plains, 2 Jack plains, 2 Large plains, 1 spring ditto, 5 Cornishing plains, 1 small ditto, 11 halfe plains*'. As well as these planes, a further 70 planes were found in his workshop. The extensive number of planes were clearly for different mouldings, and this list combined, with the large number of chisels and many and varied types of saws, squares and augers, suggests a workshop of some sophistication.⁴⁶⁶ The more usual tool kit for a carpenter was limited to an axe, large augers, saws, hammers and a small set of chisels and one or two planes. These tools would have been suitable for any exterior work and for the making and fitting of simple door and window frames. Why there are only a small number of carpenters listed for this first decade of the eighteenth century, especially given the amount of work being undertaken in the building of Kingston, the new centre of commerce for the island, remains an anomaly. It could have been the case that there was a shortage of skilled labour, just

⁴⁶⁴ James Wallis, Carpenter, Probate, 1701.

⁴⁶⁵ Pareing was probably referring to the word paring, which is the process of cleaning up and straightening the ends of boards with a chisel, usually done when a board has been sawn. The chisel is held at 90 degrees to the material and forced though the wood, usually by pushing with the shoulder on top of the chisel.

⁴⁶⁶ William Newman, Carpenter, Probate, 1703. The total value of the tools was approximately £24, which was a large sum for tools in the eighteenth century. In the second decade of the eighteenth century the average value of tools of a carpenter was £4.8s.

as there had been in London after the fire of 1666, and that many craftsmen at this time were buried with little or no estate worth recording.

The carpentry trade continued throughout the period under study, and while a small proportion of carpenters made furniture, the majority were involved in house building and estate work.

The Joiner

As the title of the joiner implies, he was a craftsman that joined pieces of wood together. In the 1630s this was a much sought after status in Britain and it was to determine the nature of the furniture trade for at least a century.⁴⁶⁷ The joiner was able to make such items that required mortise and tenon joints, pins and glue, as well as anything that was dovetailed. In Jamaica, the demarcation between the carpentry and joinery trades was certainly not enforced. Carpenters did engage in joiners' work, and later in the century several joiners appeared to be doing cabinet work.

It was not until the 1720s that the term joiner became more widely used in Jamaica. Ten Joiners were recorded for that decade, whereas prior to 1720 only five were discovered. Of the ten joiners documented in the 1720s, two were listed in marriage registers while another two were indentured servants who had come over from Britain. Of the remaining six, three probates were damaged or unreadable, leaving three remaining. These three probates illustrate that the joiner's work in Jamaica was of a more challenging nature than in Britain; that joiners seen to have been more skilled than carpenters; and that joinery could include furniture making. Of these joiners, two had served apprenticeships in England and two possessed stocks of mahogany.⁴⁶⁸ In his probate of 1724, John Ford not only had fish glue, clearly defining him as a joiner, but also 625ft of mahogany, while James Fisher had a staggering 10,000ft of mahogany in stock in the same year.⁴⁶⁹ Is it incidental that the number of joiners was increasing in Jamaica just as the Naval Stores Act was introduced? Prior to 1724, only eight joiners were listed as working in Jamaica and using

⁴⁶⁷ Edwards, Ralph, 1964, p. 331.

⁴⁶⁸ It would appear that carpenters that had stocks of mahogany were involved in joinery and furniture making, rather than house building and this may be a means of identifying more furniture makers in probates.

⁴⁶⁹ John Ford's 625ft of mahogany was valued at £11. Therefore James Fisher stock is estimated to have been valued at £176.

the title of joiner. In the period prior to 1720 there were only five recorded. Fourteen years after the Naval Stores Act this number had risen to 47. As furniture making was clearly taking place in Jamaica prior to 1724, it was being executed by those who classed themselves as joiners, whose numbers were insignificant compared to those who made furniture after 1724. If we wished to claim a date when furniture making commenced in Jamaica then surely this date would be important in determining such an event. The introduction of mahogany into the repertoire of the English furniture maker also marks the period when the Jamaica furniture makers started to use the title joiner the 1720s (See Illustration 25). Not only did the furniture makers of Jamaica begin to call themselves joiners, they also used mahogany as their main material, copying their English cousins.

For the 1730s over 39 probates of joiners survive; the largest number for any decade in the eighteenth century. While over a third of these craftsmen were referred to as 'carpenter and joiner,'⁴⁷⁰ the remaining titles were not so confusing. The rest were styled joiners, and there can be little doubt that they were engaged in furniture making rather than house building. Alexander Cantlie, for example, had listed in his probate of 1730, an '*unfinished box*',⁴⁷¹ An earlier example is that of Leonard Smith who, in 1715, not only possessed a glue pot, but also incomplete and finished work that included an '*unfinished chamber table*' and a '*new oval table*'.⁴⁷²

We can see that in Jamaica joiners used the same materials as English furniture makers, and their probates suggest that they also made furniture in just the same manner. Therefore, while we do not see the title cabinet maker deployed in the first half of the eighteenth century in Jamaica, we do see the emergence of the joiner as the furniture maker. We now know at which point the joiner emerged as a furniture maker in Jamaica: but when did the cabinet maker take over that role?

⁴⁷⁰ This third were gleaned from Ghirella, M., 1968, list of migrants from England. There may be some doubt as to their definition of the different trades and therefore such information must be accepted with caution.

⁴⁷¹ Alexander Cantlie, Carpenter and Joiner, Probate, 1730.

⁴⁷² Leonard Smith, Carpenter and Joiner, Probate, 1715.

The Cabinet Maker

Only eight inventories of joiners were discovered, after the 1730s. These eight probates were dispersed between 1740 to 1767. Why the joiners went into decline in Jamaica after 1740 after peaking in the 1720s and 1730s is unclear. In Britain, the rise of the cabinet maker began at the end of the seventeenth century. The fleeing Huguenots from the European continent brought rapid change and advancement in the crafts of Britain. While cabinet makers were present in Britain prior to the Huguenots, the numbers greatly increase at the end of the century after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Joiners constructed their furniture using mortise, tenon joints and wooden pegs to hold together panels in contrast to the cabinet maker who used dovetails. The cabinet maker also decorated his work with veneers, inlays and carvings while the joiner restricted the ornamentation of his furniture to mouldings, chip carvings and forms of painting, such as japanning. While this definition can easily explain the decline of the joiner and the rise of the cabinet maker in England, it appears that the joiner's demise happened in the same way in Jamaica albeit later. The furniture makers of Jamaica, whether joiners or cabinet makers, realised that veneered furniture was useless in a climate with had such high humidity. The fact that only one piece of inlaid furniture has been listed or found in Jamaica illustrates this point.⁴⁷³ If the change in the surface decoration did not alter, and joiners as well as cabinet makers had been constructing furniture using dovetails and adhering the carcase with glue, then in Jamaica at least, there was no difference between the joiner and the cabinet maker. It is probably for this reason that the term joiner did not decline until relatively late in the eighteenth century in Jamaica, and consequently the title cabinet maker did not come into common use until the 1760s. In England, the term cabinet maker had been in use since the Restoration⁴⁷⁴ and by the 1740s was synonymous with a person who made furniture, while a joiner had become a person who made door and window frames.⁴⁷⁵

However, while the construction of furniture appears not to have differed in Jamaica over the period, then perhaps a distinction can be made between the joiner and the cabinet maker in the type of timber used for construction. Benno Foreman states that '*the cabinet maker commonly uses a conifer under his veneers.*'⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ David Hamilton, Captain, Probate, 1746. Hamilton's probate lists a 'mahogany table inlaid with brass.'

⁴⁷⁴ PRO, Charles Hudgebote, Probate, 1664, 4/8630. In 1664, Charles Hudgebote's probate has him listed as a cabinet maker, this is one of the earliest listings of a cabinet maker in England.

⁴⁷⁵ Edwards, Ralph, 1966, p. 110.

⁴⁷⁶ Foreman, Benno, 1988, p. 46.

The furniture maker in Jamaica, however, did not need veneers, as he was able to use the veneer in its solid state without the problems of veneering. The next question posed is whether mahogany appeared in Jamaican joiners' and cabinet makers' stock in trade? Of those joiners that held timber in stock in the probate survey, prior to 1723, two had stocks of timber which were described as being of '*various woods*.' After 1724, four joiners are recorded as holding stocks of timber, and, more specifically, all four held large quantities of mahogany. Of those cabinet makers that list timber in stock, all record mahogany as part of their stock in trade.

It is clear that some of the craftsmen termed '*carpenters*' prior to 1724, were also likely to have been making furniture, but after 1724 it was more unusual to find any furniture maker listed as a carpenter. This clarifies the situation, and it is possible to conclude that the term '*joiner*' and '*cabinet maker*' covered one and the same occupation. Both held mahogany in stock and both made furniture using the same construction techniques.

Although carpenters were not engaged in furniture making after 1724, over half those carpenters that had timber stocks also held stocks of mahogany. Not only was furniture being made of mahogany in Jamaica, but also doors, windows and floors. Lady Nugent, on her tour of the island with her husband in 1802 commented on the number of houses, including those of Mr. Mitchell and the Spring Garden estate, that had their interiors fully furnished in mahogany.⁴⁷⁷ It is not coincidental that the fashion for mahogany floors, doors and windows only occurs after the popularity for the timber appeared in England in the 1720s. The connotation of mahogany with luxury and a taste for the exotic allowed the Jamaica plantocracy to display their fashionability in a spectacular way at little cost and to maximum effect.

As has been established the title of joiner lingered on in Jamaica beyond its common use in England, the title cabinet maker was slow to be adopted in Jamaica, and the difference between a joiner and cabinet maker appears to have been small. However, to gain a more precise definition, we must look at the objects

⁴⁷⁷ Wright, Philip, Ed., 4th February 1802.

that the cabinet maker was involved in making and those that the joiner was not concerned with. The cabinet maker, made furniture, but he also may have provided the services of an upholsterer?

Upholding was a medieval trade that had gradually moved away from its initial relation to tailoring. By the seventeenth century it had begun to encompass the interior fitting of all upholstery, including seat pads, mattresses, bed hangings and window dressings. Many of the great cabinet makers of the eighteenth century called themselves upholsters as well as cabinet makers, including Thomas Chippendale, Ince and Mayhew, George Bradshaw and many others.⁴⁷⁸ The Jamaican cabinet makers inventories listed not only items of incomplete mahogany furniture, but also objects that were to be upholstered. Bed frames, sofas, couches and easy chairs were all to be found in the cabinet makers workshop in Jamaica in the later part of the eighteenth century. Peter Ridley, a Jamaican cabinet maker who died in 1784, had not only unfinished cabinet work in stock, such as '*new work double nest of drawers*' and '*unfinished bookcase with mahogany doors*' but also upholsters' work, which included '*new work, mahogany bedstead*' and '*standing venetian blinds*'.⁴⁷⁹ Other cabinet makers also possessed similar stock, but these tended to appear in the inventories later in the eighteenth century.⁴⁸⁰ Upholstered furniture was not popular in Jamaica as it was impractical: upholstered chairs and other upholstered forms of seating were uncomfortable and hot in the climate of the tropics, and curtain hangings were superfluous and were usually only ever ornamental. We begin to see why the 'cabinet maker' was slow to establish himself in Jamaica. In Britain, the early cabinet maker was also an upholsterer, but upholsters were simply not in demand in Jamaica and their trade was therefore unimportant. The joiner on the other hand was in much greater demand.

Although the need for upholstery in Jamaica was never great, the cabinet maker grew in popularity in Jamaica during the 1760s. Only three craftsmen using the term cabinet makers have been found to have lived in Jamaica in the first half of the eighteenth century. In the 1760s, just as the cabinet maker was becoming more popular the joiner disappears. No joiners were listed after 1767.⁴⁸¹ Why this should be the case is not entirely clear, it is thought to be related to the publication of design source books in England and

⁴⁷⁸ Gilbert, Christopher, 1986, p. 98.

⁴⁷⁹ Peter Ridley, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1784.

⁴⁸⁰ Stamp, Peter, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1795; Mitchell, John, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1800.

⁴⁸¹ Richard Lancellot was the last joiner to be found, and he married in 1767 and was not heard of again after this date.

the continuing migration of craftsmen from Britain. Given the increase in the number of cabinet makers in Jamaica, it would not be unsurprising to find an increase in the amount of upholstered furniture in Jamaican households. However, although only a small number of household probates were examined there was no increase in upholstery appearing in the interior. Fully upholstered objects, such as chairs decline after the 1730s, while other upholstery such as easy chairs and beds were, unsurprisingly, constantly appearing in the inventory lists throughout the century. Therefore those cabinet makers who did upholster furniture must have regarded this as a small percentage of their trade and continued to make furniture. In short, joiners began to rebrand themselves as cabinet makers.

The Upholsterer

The upholsterers in Jamaica as discussed earlier were involved with the upholstering and covering of beds and chairs, and window dressing. Little evidence survives to suggest that much window dressing took place, but the upholsterer was certainly involved in the upholstering of bed hangings and seat covers. William Wells, who worked in Kingston from the 1740s through to the 1770s, not only had 30 chairs and seven beds in stock, but a large selection of textiles to cover the furniture.⁴⁸² The stock of such extensive material could indicate that the fabrics were used not only for upholstery, but also soft furnishings, window and bed hangings.

The upholsterers were only found to have traded from the late 1720s in Jamaica continuing to practise throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Prior to 1729, no evidence has been found to indicate that upholsterers were working in Jamaica, consequently any upholstery found in Jamaica prior to that date was more likely to have been imported from Britain.⁴⁸³ The number of upholsterers trading during the last three quarters of the eighteenth century appears to have been relatively evenly distributed (See Appendix 10).

⁴⁸² Wells, William, Upholsterer, Probate, 1774.

⁴⁸³ In the probate of the Duke of Portland, in 1727, upholstery was listed and yet no upholsterers were known to be working in Jamaica at that time, then until otherwise proven it can be assumed that these pieces of furniture were imported or brought to Jamaica as private cargoes.

The first upholsterer to emerge in the documentation appears in 1729 in the marriage registers, giving us little indication of the line of work in which he was engaged.⁴⁸⁴ Of the number of upholsterers found to have been working in the 1730s, all but one was listed as an indentured servant or appeared in the marriage register.⁴⁸⁵ The only upholsterer for whom a probate exists for this period turns out to have been a retailer of haberdashery; his inventory of goods included a long list of items suitable for a haberdashery store, shop fittings and a counter.⁴⁸⁶ Another upholsterer, James Baines, rather than upholster furniture, appears to have been selling fabric as well as an assortment of furnishings. In 1755, he had large stocks of fabric that amounted to over £230 of stock, and included materials such as royal peacock cottons, crimson damask, and blue velvets. As well as these brightly coloured fabrics he also possessed bolts of printed cotton, with descriptions such as '*Bacchus grotto, cornucopia chintz*' and '*India sprigg with birds*,' which conjure up an image of richly decorated furniture and interiors (See Illustrations 54). Along with these fabrics there were borders and festoons to match, with many other accessories to enhance and complete a decorative scheme and providing an indication of the range of choice and qualities available to Jamaican consumers.⁴⁸⁷

By contrast, two other upholsterers were clearly engaged in the business of covering furniture. William Wells had 16 chamber chairs and seven beds to cover, one bed of which was made of ebony. James O'Neal's probate states he had a '*sopha without cover*'.⁴⁸⁸ Twenty-seven upholsterers in Jamaica, between 1729 and 1805, in addition to O'Neal and Wells, had furniture in stock, and their stock consisted of only fabrics and accessories for upholding. This would imply that the upholsterer was not so much engaged in the upholstering of furniture, but rather in hanging curtains, dressing beds and generally decorating interiors. Unlike the upholsterer in England, who not only engaged in furniture making and upholstery in its many and varied branches, the upholsterer in Jamaica did not encroach onto the cabinet makers trade, and in many cases gives the appearance of a trade concerned only with soft furnishings.

⁴⁸⁴ CLDS, Peter Tofsey, Upholsterer, Kingston Marriage Register, 16th September, 1729.

⁴⁸⁵ Kaminkow, Jack & Marion, 1964. CLDS, Walton Steevens, Kingston Marriage Register, 6th February, 1733; Thomas Baker, 1738; Thomas Balling, 1736; Henry Hardy, 1736; Francis Surredge, 1738.

⁴⁸⁶ CLDS, Michael Cooper, Kingston Marriage Register, 26th May, 1736; Probate, 1741.

⁴⁸⁷ James Baines, Upholsterer, Probate, 1755.

⁴⁸⁸ William Wells, Upholsterer, Probate, 1773; James O'Neal, Upholsterer, Probate, 1805.

It is clear that those working as upholsterers were primarily either retailing material to cover chairs, beds and walls or were employed to fit out beds and interiors. The cabinet maker on the other hand, from the numbers that stocked chair and sofa frames was involved in the process of upholstering furniture for the home, albeit as a small part of their business.

While there were always exceptions, this research reveals that clear lines were established in the furniture trade in Jamaica that separated the various branches of the trade. Initially the joiner made furniture, and as the term joiner faded from fashion, the cabinet maker came into being. The cabinet maker not only made furniture and upholstered what he made, but also makes furniture that may require upholstering. The upholstering of bed, chair and other coverings, as well as other fabric decorations in the interior of the home fell to the upholsterer.

The Turner

The Turners' Company was as old as that of the Carpenters' company, its origins reaching back into the fifteenth century and continued to thrive until the end of the seventeenth century as a separate craft. A dispute with the Joiners' Company in 1633, reasserted the turners as an independent trade and stated that it was the right of the turner to do all work executed on the lathe.⁴⁸⁹ This appears to have remained the case until the early eighteenth century, when once again the carpenters and joiners encroached on the turner's source of income. This also appears to have been the case in Jamaica.

Only eight craftsmen in Jamaica were found to have been titled turners in the surviving documentation, and only one case, George Fleming, provides us with anything but basic biographical information. Fleming, a turner in the 1720s, had only his lathe to indicate the nature of his work. Clearly, he turned wood for a living, but any assessment of the type of goods he was producing is difficult to determine from such meagre information. While only eight craftsmen were titled turner, a further 11 woodworkers were found to have owned lathes and another two had columns in their stock in trade. Columns were turned

⁴⁸⁹ Foreman, Benno, 1988, p. 44; Edwards, Ralph, 1966, p. 625.



Illustration 54

The pattern 'Peacock' is nearly identical to the one described in the probate of James Baines in 1755.

Payne, Melanie, Textile Classics, 1990, Mitchell Beazley, p. 127.



Illustration 55

This India Cotton print would be similar to the '*India Sprigg with Birds*' described in the probate of James

Baines, the colour and richness of the fabric is dazzling.

Harris, Jennifer, Ed., 5000 Years of Textiles, 1993, British Museum Press, p. 226.

and this could indicate that these woodworkers were also involved in turning. If we consider only those cases where more than just biographical details survive we are left with 13 craftsmen in total that engaged in some sort of turning, excluding George Fleming. Of this number, three were cabinet makers and the rest carpenters.

Of the ten carpenters, two were without probates and the other eight all either produced, or had in stock, columns or door and windows frames. Why all these carpenters, who possessed lathes, should also have door and window frames listed but not any turned work is baffling, but what is clear is that these craftsmen were more likely to be involved in house joinery, rather than furniture making. Given that these carpenters, were probably house carpenters then it is likely they were turning columns, balustrades and knoll posts for houses. This small sample of carpenters engaged in turning from the first half of the eighteenth century, also implies that any turned work that was required for furniture making was supplied to the joiner by the carpenter. According to the probate evidence joiners were not found to own lathes and therefore did not engage turning in Jamaica.

The three cabinet makers, who possessed with lathes, lived late in the eighteenth century and all three produced bedposts. John Fisher, a cabinet maker working in Kingston up until 1804, had 20 bedposts in stock, and his inventory, unusually, notes that a bedstead was returned by Andrew Bogle after Fisher's demise. Similarly, in 1803, Alexander Goldie, another cabinet maker, had 'bedposts' and '7 sets of bed rails' as well as other items of finished and unfinished furniture in his workshop. The cabinet maker John Mitchell, in 1800, had a 'mahogany bedstead unfinished' and 'sopha frames' and 'parts of 2 frames for Pembroke Tables'.⁴⁹⁰

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a revival in turning. Ralph Edwards observes in his Shorter Dictionary of English Furniture that 'the classical revival brought turning into

⁴⁹⁰ John Fisher, Probate, 1804; Alexander Bogle, Probate, 1803; John Mitchell, Probate, 1800.

*favour for legs of tables, chairs and bedposts.*⁴⁹¹ This revival also clearly emerges in bedsteads that were made at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Jamaica. However, it is curious to find so few descriptions of turned furniture documented in Jamaica at the end of the eighteenth century. Although, the language of description in the probates does not detail the particular elements of an object, we do see objects listed in the inventories such as Pembroke tables and other items of furniture, which if they followed their English models, would have had turned members (See Illustration 55). Only one advertisement provided information on turned work executed and available in Jamaica. The Daily Advertiser for 1790,⁴⁹² tells us that in George Seddon's vendue store he had new furniture on sale.⁴⁹³ Amongst the list of goods Seddon was selling were, '*1 Sopha bedstead, upon a new construction, with cupola top and lath bottoms*' and '*1 Fourposter bedstead, with fluted posts and Double screw.*'⁴⁹⁴ The first item, the sopha bedstead, appears not to have included any turned elements, but the lath bottom described was likely to have been a head and foot board made of turned parts.⁴⁹⁵ The second item, the four poster bed with its double screws implies that the bed could have had double open Solomonic columns that would have need to be turned first before being rasped out on a lathe (See Illustration 35).⁴⁹⁶

Although it appears that furniture that was possibly available in Jamaica could have been turned, there were few turners or lathe owners on the island to carry out this type of work. Those involved in turning wood in the eighteenth century were house carpenters. If a piece of furniture needed to be turned in the early part of the century, then this would have required the joiner to engage a turner, but evidence for this cooperation has not come to light. However, given the limited number of turners found, and the lack of information surrounding their trade, it is difficult to make any strong conclusions about the extent turned work appeared on Jamaican made furniture.

⁴⁹¹ Edwards, Ralph, 1964, p. 626.

⁴⁹² BL, Colindale, Daily Advertiser, 20th December, 1790.

⁴⁹³ A vendue store was a shop belonging to an auctioneer.

⁴⁹⁴ While it is unclear exactly the meaning of 'double screw' it is thought that it implies the bed had elements that were double twisted, possibly the head and foot board.

⁴⁹⁵ Gloag, John, 1990, p. 421. Laths are the upright spindles found commonly on Windsor chairs between the seat and the top rail, and flanked by large turnings on either end.

⁴⁹⁶ A Solomonic column, is more commonly known today as a barley twist, in this case it is two twists that are separated, making them open.

The Carver and Gilder

Carving and gilding were always regarded as the pinnacle of the furniture maker's craft, and the employment of carvers and gilders in a town or city in England usually implied that the town was prosperous. Similarly, the presence of the carver in Jamaica would be an indication of a wealthy and upwardly mobile society. In a colony such as Jamaica, it would be surprising to find any craftsmen who dedicated themselves solely to carving as a means of full employment. It would be more plausible that joiners and cabinet makers also did carving as well as furniture making in general. A good example of this is provided by Journals of the Assembly. In 1766, the cabinet maker Richard Roach petitioned the House of Assembly to pay for work he had carried out in 1764 which included the supply of '*thirteen settee mahogany carved chairs*,' of which he had only made seven.⁴⁹⁷

If a carpenter, joiner or cabinet maker owned a number of gouges, then it was likely that they were engaged in some sort of carving on furniture or on house interiors. Many carpenters were found to possess a few gouges, for instance, James Stewart who in 1740 had '*12 pr former gouges and chisels*.' Richard Spencer gouges, for instance, James Stewart who in 1740 had '*12 pr former gouges and chisels*.' Richard Spencer who had a '*dozen gouges*' in 1743 and John Sist, a 'House' carpenter who possessed a parcel of old gouges.⁴⁹⁸ These carpenters were clearly using gouges to help in the process of house building and fitting, and were not necessarily carving wood for a living. However, in the probate of 1734 the joiner Robert Pitchard, '*54 old carving gouges*' were listed that were valued at £3.5.0. Similarly, in 1782, Alexander McKenzie had '*8 Scribing and Carving Gouges*'.⁴⁹⁹ In both these cases, these craftsmen possessed stocks of furniture and it would therefore be safe to assume that the carving gouges they had listed were occasionally employed in ornamenting furniture.

These craftsmen clearly satisfied a demand for the embellishment of furniture, which they undertook in their workshops. However, there were several craftsmen in Jamaica who did work solely in the business of wood carving and gilding for a living. Two craftsmen trained in the art of carving were Christopher

⁴⁹⁷ Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, Vol. VI (1766-1776), 1800, p. 657.

⁴⁹⁸ James Stewart, Carpenter, Probate, 1740; Richard Spencer, Carpenter, Probate, 1743; John Sist, House Carpenter, Probate, 1745.

⁴⁹⁹ Robert Pitchard, Joiner, Probate, 1734; Alexander McKenzie, Carpenter, Probate, 1782.

Marsden and Henry Dickson. Marsden originated from St. Martin's in the Field, London, and Dickson from St. Anne's, Westminster, left England for Jamaica, as indentured servants in 1722 and 1730 respectively.⁵⁰⁰ Fifty five years later, in 1779, and again in 1780, the carver and gilder Joseph Hughes advertised in The Jamaica, stating that: -

*'Joseph Hughes, Carver and Gilded, At Mrs Armstrong's Harbour Street, makes all kinds Looking Glasses Frames, Picture Frames, Gerondoles, &c. in Oil or burnished Gilding:..... Also, Brackets for Time Pieces, &c. Gold Borders for Rooms; Bed and Window Cornices, and every other kind of Ornament in the House Carving branch. Executed in the neatest taste.'*⁵⁰¹

The only other references that alert us to the presence of this high level skill in Jamaica are not so informative. The burial register for George Forrest reveals that he was a carver and gilder, but the type of work he carried out is not known, and other than the fact he probably practised his art in Jamaica, we know nothing.⁵⁰² The other case where a carver and gilder was known to be working in Jamaica is alluded to in the newspaper The Jamaica. J.H. Stevenson, a coach maker in Kingston, added at the end of his advertisement placed in 1780, that '*they keep a carver and gilder*' and '*they provide Frames of any kind at the easiest rates.*'⁵⁰³

What has become clear, is that for much of the eighteenth century, the craftsman dedicated just to carving was not resident in Jamaica. In the carvers absence, the furniture maker executed any furniture that required carving, as in the example of Richard Roach. Although there was a demand for such work, there was clearly not enough demand to engage a carver in full time employment for much of the century. It was only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that we see dedicated carvers working in Jamaica, and this must reflect the customer's desire for such a service to be available.

Despite the small number of craftsmen dedicated to carving in Jamaica, still fewer were found to exist in mainland America over a similar period. In searching for such craftsmen in New England, none were found, and in the Southern states, the only carver solely devoted to this trade was John Sears.⁵⁰⁴ Sears, who

⁵⁰⁰ Kaminkow, Jack and Marion, 1964, p. 149. Unfortunately, nothing else has been found on either of these carvers, in Britain or Jamaica.

⁵⁰¹ BL Colindale, The Jamaica, 1st May 1779; 19th February 1780.

⁵⁰² CLDS, George Forrest, Carver and Gilder, Kingston Burial Register, 21st April 1792.

⁵⁰³ BL Colindale, The Jamaica, 19th February 1780.

⁵⁰⁴ Jobe, Brock; Kaye Myrna, 1984.

was employed in the workshop of William Buckland until his death in 1774, worked on the interiors of Guston Hall, Virginia and Samuel Chase House, Maryland.⁵⁰⁵ In both these houses Sears engaged in the carving of architectural details as well as carving furniture. Sears, who was British trained, was exceptional, and no other examples of a dedicated carver in colonial America (and even up to the signing of the American constitution in 1787) have been found.

Other furniture related trades

Other branches of the furniture trade appear to have been incorporated into the work of the joiners and cabinet makers. No separate bed and chair makers, for example, have been found during the eighteenth century even though it is known these objects were made in Jamaica. The craftsman who specialised in making looking glass frames, did not exist and it these items appear to have been made by joiners. Although no dedicated frame makers were recorded, one carpenter, Joseph Strafford, was involved in the making of looking glasses. Strafford had probably started in this line of work from as early as 1766 and continued to do so until his death in 1773.⁵⁰⁶ In his stock in trade he had '20lb Quick Silver' and tinfoil, as well as other items useful to such a trade, including '2 Slates and weights for silvering looking Glasses.' The production of mirrors in Kingston at this early date is surprising and may predate any such production in America. While other furniture makers may not have been silvering glass, others were certainly branching out into making looking glass frames and toilet mirrors. Thomas Sheppard in 1730 had 22 pier or looking glasses in his workshop, as did Junia Young, who had over 21 in his shop at his death in 1754.⁵⁰⁷

The examination of these branches of the woodwork trade proves that there were no structures or restrictions in place in Jamaica to prevent craftsmen from engaging in any branch of woodworking that they felt fit to tackle. The lack of discipline in organising the woodwork trade also illustrates that no trade organisations were able, or willing, to police the colony. While some fine craftsmen were clearly capable

⁵⁰⁵ Hurst, Ronald; Prown, Jonathan, 1997, pp. 264-269.

⁵⁰⁶ Joseph Stafford, Carpenter, Jurors List, 1766; Probate, 1773.

⁵⁰⁷ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730; Junia (also spelt Junesa) Young, Carpenter, Probate, 1754.

of executing fine woodwork, there must have been many others that were untrained for the task in which they found themselves employed.

Business organisation

Having considered the many facets of the furniture trade, the investigation turns to how the trade conducted its business. In the latter years of the seventeenth century the system of making chairs in London shows us that chairs were being manufactured in large numbers and that the bespoke method had been abandoned. The shift from bespoke furniture making to a form of manufacturing that lent itself to producing objects in significant numbers was the first stage of a re-organisation of the furniture trade. The standardising of parts and the simplifying of furniture design to make a more economical production system more economical illustrate a divergence from the status quo, and significant changes in the furniture makers' circumstances and attitudes. The large and expanding colonial market, demanding manufactured goods, acted as a catalyst in the development of the furniture trade. In the urban furniture making centres of the country the amount of work expected dictated radical changes in the way furniture was made.

The study of customs' records reveals that the amount of imports entering Jamaica were increasing throughout much of the eighteenth century.⁵⁰⁸ So how did Jamaicans organise their workshops to compete with this rise in British goods? Do we to see the merging of workshops to provide an order that the economy of scale that would allow these craftsmen to compete and survive economically, or evidence of sub-contracting and increasing numbers of partnerships? In England by the end of the eighteenth century large comprehensive workshops existed in London, which had the effect of making furniture ever cheaper to produce.

It has been assumed that the furniture industry in Jamaica was ran by colonial whites in large operations using black slave labour purely subordinate to their whites owners. But does this accurately reflect the

⁵⁰⁸ PRO, Cust 3, Import Records.

system operating in Jamaica? Were black craftsmen solely the property of the white ruling class, or were there free black men practising the furniture maker's craft independently?

Sole traders

The vast majority of woodworkers in Jamaican revealed by the source material appear to have been either independent workers, or employees of large concerns. It is difficult to establish the exact numbers of each, as many craftsmen remain hidden from the documentation. It is difficult to establish if the slaves listed in the records were carpenters and labourers in the workshop, or were just domestic servants and labourers working on the small-holdings that some of the more rural craftsmen possessed. However, if we limit the search to those for whom we have more than biographical details, and then exclude the craftsmen who owned slaves and owned more than one woodwork bench,⁵⁰⁹ then we can calculate that 58% of all the craftsmen were likely to have worked alone.⁵¹⁰ While it would be rash to state that all these craftsmen worked independently, it is from this same pool of craftsmen that we find white craftsmen who worked in the larger workshops as employees or on estates and plantations as carpenters and handymen. In fact 3% of the 58% sample, were found to have worked from one estate to another as estate workers. Whether this work was commissioned, piece meal or sought on a speculative basis cannot be gleaned. However, a small number of craftsmen earned a living in this way. Charles Stewart, who lived in the remote north-west parish of Hanover, had debts owing at his death from Green and Rockspring Estates.⁵¹¹ John Ore, from Trelawney, which again was one of the more remote parishes, was owed money from James Savage, Jack Libert, the Unity Estate and Dromilly Estate.⁵¹²

Similar piece work was also being undertaken earlier in the century as revealed in the probate of James Hunt in 1740.⁵¹³ Hunt did carpentry work at 'Little Mountain' for John Anderson as well as other work for Dr. Thomas Reid at 'Carpenters Mountain.' These few rural craftsmen, dying in remote parishes, were not

⁵⁰⁹ This would imply other craftsmen worked alongside the master of the workshop.

⁵¹⁰ 58% amounts to 158 craftsmen. The number of craftsmen that worked as estate carpenters, can not be detracted from this figure, and therefore we must except that a portion of the figure may have had little to do with furniture making.

⁵¹¹ Charles Stewart, Carpenter, Probate, 1804. There is some evidence to suggest that Charles Stewart was a cabinet maker, although it can not be substantiated yet.

⁵¹² John Ore, Carpenter, Probate, 1793.

wealthy and probably lived in the parish in which they died. They possibly served those estates that did not have a dedicated carpenter on the plantation or did not require a full-time carpenter.

The transitory nature of the craftsmen that worked on these estates would imply that their work was rudimentary, and not up to the standards of the cabinet maker.⁵¹⁴ The work would have been simply constructed with little understanding of the joints required and would have lacked the stylistic finesse of the furniture maker. An example of such a piece can be found in Greenwood House (See Illustration 56). This metamorphic library chair and steps was inspired by Morgan and Sanders' *'Patent Metamorphic Library Chair,'* which was advertised in Rudolph Ackerman's Repository in July 1811.⁵¹⁵ The Greenwood House example was crudely made and lacks any grace or aesthetic refinery, but its origins are clear.

The white workshop master

Out of the 158 craftsmen included in the survey we are left with 42% of craftsmen who possibly worked within a workshop of two or more men. Those craftsmen that stated that they owned their own skilled slaves, or had more than one bench, were certainly white masters working in a workshop of more than one. However, only a small percentage of those that possessed slaves specified that the slave was a skilled worker, making any assessment of the exact nature and number of this type of workshop difficult.

If we look at the number of skilled slaves that were listed in any one craftsman's workshop then the ability of that workshop to rationalise or increase production can be assumed. In order to determine the number of workshops that practised in this manner we must only analyse those probates that stated the nature of a slave's trade. Slaves in general cannot be assessed for the part they played, if any, in the running of the workshop unless the probate specified that they were skilled in some aspect of woodwork.⁵¹⁶ Of the 58 cabinet makers uncovered, only one, Jasper Wild, was found to own a slave who was described as a carpenter in 1747.⁵¹⁷ As joiners also made furniture, a similar study was undertaken to see if any joiners

⁵¹³ James Hunt, Carpenter, Probate, 1740.

⁵¹⁴ Bridenbaugh, Carl, 1990, p. 15.

⁵¹⁵ Collard F., 1985, pp. 20-21.

⁵¹⁶ The number of cabinet makers with slaves was eleven, but only one cabinet maker has a slave that can be described as skilled.

⁵¹⁷ Jasper Wild, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1747; The total value of the estate was £72 of which his carpenter slave was valued at £70.

had skilled slaves. Again, of the 63 joiners listed, only one had skilled slaves listed in his inventory. In this case the joiner Francis Moore, who died in 1739, had three carpenters listed as part of his estate.⁵¹⁸

It is not surprising to find that the vast majority of the skilled slaves, described as carpenters were owned by white carpenters. Thirty-seven probates prove this to be the case. However, of this number, most of the craftsmen were found to be either house builders or house carpenters. There is evidence within 5 of these 37 probates to suggest that these craftsmen were in fact furniture makers rather than carpenters.⁵¹⁹ These five 'carpenters' averaged five skilled slaves each: all but two of the skilled slaves were carpenters, the other two being sawyers.⁵²⁰ The dates of the probates for these five carpenters were spread across the eighteenth century, from as early as 1741 to as late as 1804, which only indicates that such a large number of skilled slaves in any one workshop was not at all common.

The number of benches these five held can be used to indicate whether the carpenter slaves actually worked at a bench, rather than on carpentry work of a more basic nature. Only the two earliest probates do not list benches. Of the three remaining probates that list work benches, two record more carpenter slaves than benches available. Alexander McKenzie, had two benches and five carpenter slaves, while Charles Brown, ten years later in 1796, had four benches and eight carpenter slaves. William Cumming had five carpenter slaves and six benches. If slaves involved in furniture making did work at the bench then there were not many of them. It is evident that it was more usual for slaves to be working for carpenters at carpentry than for a slave to be working in the furniture maker's workshop.

⁵¹⁸ Francis Moore, Joiner, Probate, 1739.

⁵¹⁹ In the case of these five, they all had either sufficient stock in trade, or list items of furniture as incomplete or new.

⁵²⁰ Emanuel Timberlake, Carpenter, Probate, 1741. Timberlake had two sawyers and two carpenters and no benches listed in his probate, which would suggest that the slaves were not involved in furniture making, but rather carpentry.

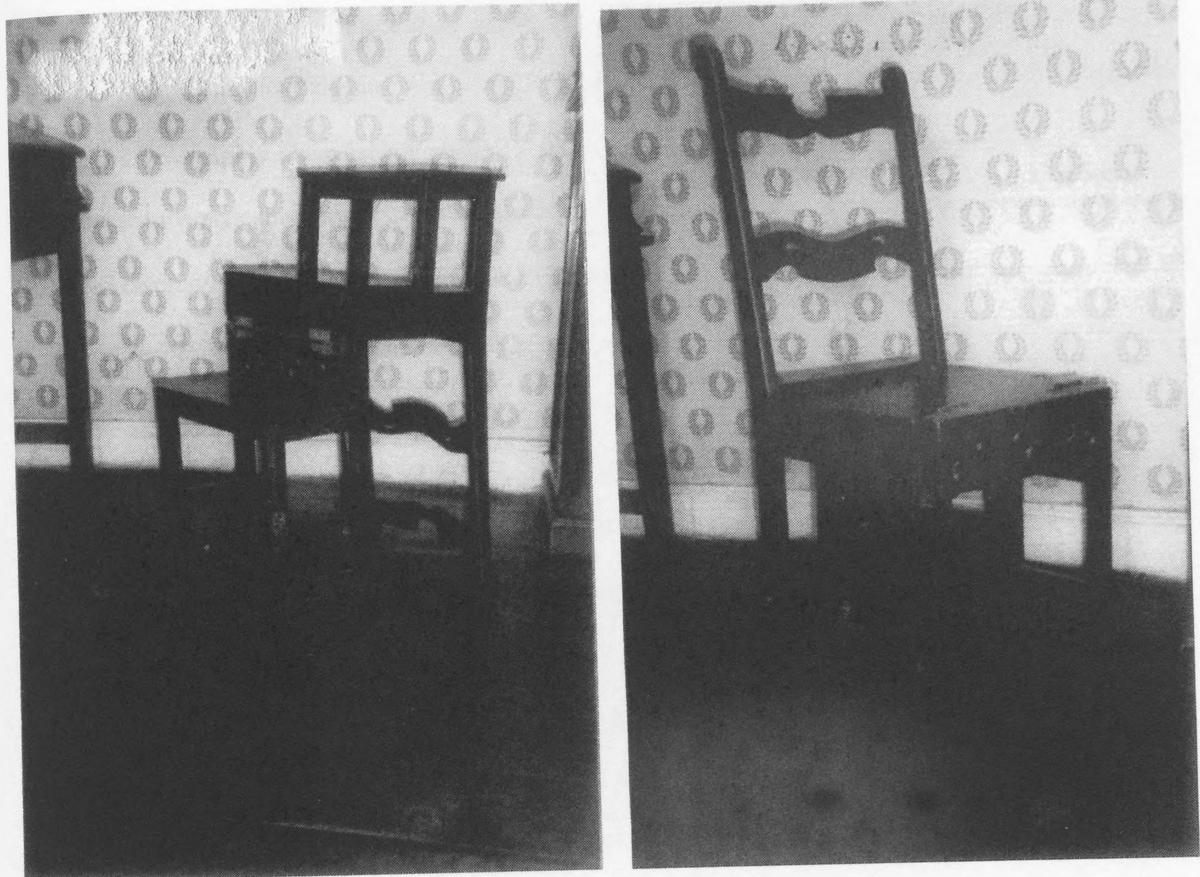


Illustration 56

A metamorphic library chair found in Jamaica, 1840s, although the chair is constructed simply the chair is copying the design from Ackerman's Repository. Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

If it could be established that the number of craftsmen who had more than one bench was greater than the number that had skilled slaves, then it could be assumed that white woodworkers were more likely to be working at a bench. Of 40 craftsmen who owned more than one bench, nine were furniture makers. Of this number only two owned more than one bench and had skilled slaves. In contrast to this, seven furniture makers who had benches had no skilled slaves. This indicates that the majority of furniture makers did not employ slave labour at the bench. In many furniture making workshops there were no slaves, and in others the slaves were being put to work doing labour intensive and low skilled tasks. Carpenters employed the majority of the slaves labouring in the woodworking trades where the work would have been heavy, intensive and less skilled.

However, this was not always the case: in 1778 a German tutor observed, '*The German whom we met on shore was from Holstein, a joiner by profession. He and his brother came to this country 17 years ago. Skilled in his art, hardworking and thrifty, a moderate drinker of rum (as are many Englishmen and Germans here) he grew rich, so rich in fact that now he owns seven large houses in this city as well as a workshop with more than 30 workmen.*' He continued, '*This rich and polished countryman conducted us first to his workshop. There we saw 19 black slaves who worked naked making the most beautiful tables and turned work from the lumber of mahogany and cedar.*'⁵²¹

This contemporary report clearly states that slaves were engaged in the process of making furniture, while other primary evidence suggest this was far from the norm. It was possible, therefore, for some workshops to use slave labour in the making of furniture, and several have already been mentioned such as those of William Cumming and Alexander McKenzie, but it is also clear that it was usual for white craftsmen to work alongside the white master. Although, the German tutor noted the 19 slaves in the workshop possibly of the Blenchenden brothers and what they did, he does not describe the other 11 workers in the workshop. These 11 other workers were presumably white, and probably worked in more senior and

⁵²¹ Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, p. 35; Carson, Peter, *The Jamaican*, December, 1994, p. 19. Carsons article was the only work on Jamaica craftsmen, until recently, and makes reference to the brothers from Holstein. The name Blenchenden is linked to the brothers, but unfortunately no reference as to the source of this information is given.

skilled positions in the workshop.⁵²² John Mitchell, a cabinet maker in the early nineteenth century, had 12 benches and nine slaves, a large workshop by colonial standards. Even if all nine slaves were engaged in work at the bench, which is unlikely, then there were still two benches that would have been unoccupied, and were therefore likely to have been used by white employees.⁵²³

The records suggest that few Jamaican furniture makers had skilled slaves and even fewer had benches to accommodate them. Although a number of white craftsmen probably had one or two slaves and used their labour in the workshop, there is little evidence to support this. Other workshops existed that employed several white craftsmen and a similar number of slaves to produce furniture and this kind of workshop was probably the most common during the eighteenth century in Jamaica. Furthermore, there were also half a dozen larger workshops that existed, the largest belonging to the Blenchenden brothers. It is unfortunate that this large workshop, along with its owners, is not fleshed out in any other source material. Other large workshops were documented; the workshop of the cabinet makers John Harstead, William Cumming and Alexander McKenzie were clearly substantial workshops. Equal in terms of size to the workshop of the Blenchenden brothers was probably the establishment of John Mitchell, who died in 1800.

The black workshop master

Although three black craftsmen are recorded as having served apprenticeships in Britain, only one black craftsman, Francis Moore, was found to have been running his own workshop in Jamaica. Francis Moore was unique: because he was not only one of a few blacks to serve an apprenticeship in England, he was also the only one to return to the West Indies and set up a workshop as a joiner.⁵²⁴ Moore's workshop was in St. Catherine's, which probably suggests that he lived in, or near, Spanish Town. His workshop was in operation for most the 1730s and was certainly of a good sized establishment at his death in 1739. He had

⁵²² Whilst it is certain that black slaves were making furniture, no slave is listed as a cabinet maker or joiner in any probate, or other source, with the exception of Francis Moore.

⁵²³ The only evidence of a white woodworker employing another white woodworker appeared in the probate of the cabinet maker, Henry Drysdale. In this probate, Drysdale owed '*a salary*' of £50 to Robert Lyons a carpenter, both craftsmen lived in the parish of St Andrews, increasing the likelihood of Lyons being an employee of Drysdale.

⁵²⁴ Francis Moore, Joiner, Probate, 1739. IR1 10/157 1724, Francis Moore A Negro born to Thomas Burnford Cit & Joiner, £15. Francis Moore also appears in the inventory of Anthony Cooke as a debtor, the debt not being settled because Moore was dead when the probate of Anthony Cooke was taken. Anthony Cooke, Ironmonger, Probate, 1739.

26 slaves, most of whom worked his land and looked after his animals, but another three were listed as carpenters and certainly contributed to the wealth he had generated through his workshop. In 1739 his estate was valued in excess of £1,600, of which a third party disputed £600. His stock in trade included over 30 chairs, eight tables, eight cupboards and three writing surfaces, giving the appearance of a well established and successful business. However, little else can be gleaned from his inventory, other than that he had several pieces of furniture made of walnut, others of mahogany and one or two others from manchineal. Moore would have been familiar with walnut and mahogany from his apprenticeship in England, but the inclusion of manchineal was unusual.⁵²⁵ After Moore's death, no other black masters were found in the Jamaica records, although it is likely that many black or mulatto carpenters did practise. However, no probates were found for black or mulatto craftsmen.

Co-partnerships

Co-partnership occurred for many reasons, but most were usually associated with the need for financial support.⁵²⁶ This was how businesses were able to overcome cash flow shortages and carry bad debts for very long periods.⁵²⁷ In England such arrangements were just as likely; Thomas Chippendale was propped up by various partnerships.⁵²⁸ At the death of James Rannie in 1766, Chippendale's business would have gone into liquidation but for the intervention of Rannie's former accountant, Thomas Haig, who gained £2,000 of credit from Rannie's widow.

The nature of these Jamaican furniture making partnerships is difficult to ascertain. Of the 14 co-partnerships discovered, nine were with named partners, but these were not names associated with the furniture trade in Jamaica. It can therefore be assumed that these were financial backers rather than individuals involved in the cabinet trade themselves. This was certainly the case in the partnership of Patmore and Graham. Joshua Patmore was a carpenter who died in 1793, and his partner, William Graham,

⁵²⁵ Hinckley, Lewis, 1960, p. 60.

⁵²⁶ Campbell, R., 1747 (Reprint 1969), p. 26.

⁵²⁷ Gilbert, Christopher, 1978, pp. 236-238, 255.

⁵²⁸ Beard, Gilbert, 1986, pp. 164-169; Gilbert, Christopher 1978, p. 31. Chippendale entered into two partnerships one with Rannie and another with Haig. On both these occasions the partners were purely financial supporters. Other great English partnerships that were created for financial reasons were Ince and Mayhew, Norman Whittle and Saunders, while Vile and Cobb were supported by William Hallett.

was listed as one of the administrators and referred to as 'esquire.'⁵²⁹ Graham was not involved in woodwork and sought the return of his investment on the death of Patmore.

Other partnerships of a similar nature to that of Patmore and Graham were uncovered in the study and the majority were found to have been made for financial reasons. Despite the existence of these co-partnership agreements, they were still quite rare in the woodworking trade in Jamaica. Several partnerships between craftsmen were also unearthed. One partnership was formed between two coach and chaise makers, Hugh Parry and George Guy, which ceased when Guy died in 1761.⁵³⁰ The three other partnerships between craftsmen were all furniture related and the partnerships were all dissolved on the death of one of the partners. William Ashbridge was in partnership with a close relative named Duncan Ashbridge, until the former's death in 1763, after which the business appears to have ceased.⁵³¹ The business was clearly related to house building as partition walls were listed as well as other jobs that appeared to have been in progress when William died. The partnership between Duncan McLean and John Sibbald conveys little information beyond the fact that the two worked together until John Sibbald's death, when his wealth was estimated to be £392.17.0, with £259 due to his co-partner. Yet when Duncan McLean died six years later is wealth was only valued at £100.⁵³²

The most illuminating of the partnerships to be found was that of the joiners Thomas Sheppard and Robert Pitchard of Port Royal. Their partnership came to an end in 1730 on the death of Sheppard.⁵³³ Thomas would have been in his early thirties when he died, as he had served an apprenticeship in 1716.⁵³⁴ If we assume that the apprenticeship was registered during the first year he served his master, then he would have completed his training by the time he was 22, in 1723. No information has been uncovered revealing Pitchard's background, but both craftsmen were able and broad in the work they undertook. On the death of Sheppard, we are presented with a very rare glimpse into the stock in trade and workings of a workshop that was still functioning and continued to do so for a further four years. The furniture in stock, finished or

⁵²⁹ Joshua Patmore, Carpenter, Probate, 1793. Nothing more is to be found of Mr. Graham, reinforcing the idea that he was nothing to do with the woodwork trade.

⁵³⁰ George Guy, Coach Maker, Probate, 1761.

⁵³¹ William Ashbridge, Carpenter, Probate, 1763.

⁵³² John Sibbald, Probate, Carpenter, 1740; Duncan McLean, Carpenter, Probate, 1747.

⁵³³ Thomas Sheppard, Joiner, Probate, 1730.

incomplete, was very diverse. Two 'new' bedsteads had just been finished as had '6 leather chairs,' a further 12 unspecified chairs were also new, along with a cupboard. However, a couch and a new desk remained unfinished. These few objects stood along side many other items of furniture that ranged from sconces and 'Weather glasses' to '4 alter tables' and '9 hand tea tables.' Other materials, were also listed relating to the work Sheppard and Pitchard produced: the workshop had a glue pot as well as a parcel of blacking and turtle shell. The furniture the couple produced appears to have been made in at least two timbers, as mahogany and cedar were both represented (unfortunately they were listed together) and valued at a substantial £150. As a point of comparison the carpenter George Pearce, had 79ft of mahogany that was valued at 19s two years earlier.⁵³⁵ Using this estimate it can be calculated that Sheppard and Pitchard had 70,000 feet of timber in stock.

When the Sheppard and Pitchard partnership came to a close each partner's half was worth £281. Robert Pitchard's probate four years later reveals that he had expanded the business further, as by this point it was valued at £804. Some £150 of the original value of the partnership was put down to the value of their slaves, and this increased to over £600 at Pitchard's death. In making a comparison between the two probates we can see that the same slaves remained in Robert Pitchard's service after Sheppard's demise. 'Tewksbury,' the most valuable slave, had increased in value from £40 to £70 over the four years, and 'Preston' had also increased from £35 to £45 in the same period. 'Soney,' however, had been devalued from £30 to just £20. 'Tewksbury,' although it is not stated, probably worked in the shop. His name, along with the name 'Preston' and another slave named 'Shrewsbury' may indicate Robert Pitchard's origins in England.

All the partnerships, mentioned above, came to a conclusion by 1768 and there is no evidence suggests that any more partnerships were set up after that date. Given that in England the comprehensive workshop was developing and that partnerships were an accepted practice in the furniture trade, it appears that the financial support that was needed in Britain was not required in Jamaica in the second half of the century.

⁵³⁴ IR1, 4/180 1716, Thomas Sheppard of Stepney to John Knowles cit & Carpenter £10.

The furniture manufacturer

Campbell's London Tradesman of 1747,⁵³⁶ provides the impression of tightly defined woodworking trades in Britain that worked in harmony for the monetary gain of all craftsmen. The manufacture of certain items of furniture required the cooperation of several types of woodworker and the forethought of the maker to develop the design through drawings, patterns or by common technical language and terminology. Such a method of manufacture meant that the making of one individual object required a great deal of time and communication, and therefore involved great cost. Once a design was established and all parties to it were aware of their part in the production of that object then it was as easy to produce one, as a hundred and one objects of that type. By the mid eighteenth century in Britain we can see a fully established system where craftsmen needed to cooperate and labour was divided within a workshop to maximise speed, continuity of design and the utilisation of skill, albeit often within the same workshop.

In the workshops of England we see this happening first in the manufacture of chairs as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. An indication that the method of manufacture had altered came in the form of large numbers of the same objects appearing in any one furniture maker's workshop. The workshop of Thomas Warden, joiner of London, provides a case in point.⁵³⁷ Warden, who possessed an amazing 550 chairs, stools and couches in stock at his death in 1703, clearly illustrates a change in the trade from the bespoke furniture system of just a few years earlier. Three years later, in 1706, the joiner Robert Loveland also had in stock a large quantity of chairs that were to be caned, but more importantly he had 16 dozen chairs that were apparently all the same.⁵³⁸ Other cabinet work was also being made in small batches after 1724, Lazarus Stiles workshop had '4 card tables, 13 tea tables, 15 hand boards ...' and another 49 pieces of furniture listed in his probate. A clear example of the move to rationalise and make furniture in batches is seen in the probate of Samuel Jakeman. Jakeman, who we know died suddenly in 1731,⁵³⁹ had 414 pieces of cabinet ware in his 'Auction' room, amongst which were 104 tables, 23 desks and 60 tea boards. Jakeman's stock was clearly does not represent bespoke work; this furniture was made in batches

⁵³⁵ George Pearce, Carpenter, Probate, 1728.

⁵³⁶ Campbell, 1747.

⁵³⁷ CLRO, Thomas Warden, Joiner, Orphans Court Records, List B 2439.

⁵³⁸ CLRO, Robert Loveland, Joiner, Orphans Court Records, List B, 2760.

and then put together in batches. In the same inventory we see listed '*a lott of mahogany pillars*' and '*a lott of wainscott ditto.*' Here we have evidence not only of parts being stored, but in two different timbers.

The increase in the varieties of chairs produced in the first decades of the eighteenth century meant there was some need to have patterns from which to work. No examples of such patterns for furniture exist in inventories prior to this division of labour at the beginning of the century. After this date several workshops list amongst their stock in trade, '*pattern chairs*' or just '*patterns*.' An example can be seen in the workshop of Thomas Hood who in 1709 had among the 131 seated objects in his stock, '*the wood for four doz chairs in hand*,' and '*12 odd pattern frames*'.⁵⁴⁰ This provides a clear example of a batch of chairs in the process of being manufactured and the need for patterns to ensure, not only customer choice, but to create standardised parts.

Why do we see so many chairs stockpiled prior to 1724 and yet relatively little cabinet work in comparison? The answer could lie in the supplies of timber. Early eighteenth century cane chairs were predominately made of beech or walnut. Beech was cheap, walnut was not, and as the second decade continued, walnut became increasingly more expensive and scarce. While small amounts of walnut were required for chairs, as the frame would still be made of beech, the cabinet work was prohibitively expensive because of the large amount of walnut timber required. Although walnut was being cut into veneers it was still expensive, so it is understandable that these early workshops did not hold large stocks of walnut timber nor cabinet work, as the craftsman could not afford to have such a stock. The introduction of mahogany after the Naval Stores Act of 1724 brought about a new and more liberal climate to the furniture industry. In this post 1724 period, mahogany was in abundance and cheap and therefore the furniture makers could afford to hold stocks of chairs and cabinet ware. When a furniture maker has a plentiful supply of timber then instead of crafting furniture on a 'one off' basis, he can begin to manufacture several, or dozens of the same object at the same time.

⁵³⁹ *Gentlemen's Magazine*, July, 1731, Samuel Jakeman drowned in the Thames.

⁵⁴⁰ PRO, Thomas Hood, Joiner, Probate 5, 366, 1709. Another example of patterns being listed in an inventory can be seen in Samuel Jakeman's probate.

Turning from Britain to Jamaica we find a different pattern emerging. Despite the fact that large stocks of timber were available to the furniture maker in Jamaica during the whole of the eighteenth century, no evidence has been found of any parts listed in any workshop; only unfinished or incomplete work was listed. We can only guess that either the recording of parts was deemed of no consequence, as timber was so cheap, or that no such batches of parts existed. Given that there is no evidence to suggest otherwise we must assume that the latter was the case and that at the end of the eighteenth century Jamaican furniture makers were still producing furniture in relatively small numbers on a commission or one off basis. This conclusion is supported by the fact that no furniture patterns or pattern frames were listed in any documentation of Jamaican craftsmen. This implies that there was no batch production taking place and that there was not a particularly large market to service and this assumption needs to be tested. The cheapness and plenitude of timber for furniture making in Jamaica does not allow any direct comparison with the English furniture trade because of this fundamental contextual difference. However, the lack of progress in the Jamaican furniture trade provides the opportunity to speculate on the reasons as to why it appears not to have developed along the same lines as in England.

In Jamaica public works and architecture were developing with the confidence expected of a growing, prosperous and wealthy island. We cannot, therefore, suggest that there was no market for the cabinet maker's goods. A war torn, or politically unstable country tends to shatter the confidence of the consumer, and thoughts of purchasing superfluous comforts such as bookcases and buffets are replaced by the necessity of acquiring food and shelter. Yet Jamaica's internal politically climate was stable and the island had not been invaded for many years, so why were its furniture makers still maintaining a seventeenth century method of manufacture? It is clear that for much of the eighteenth century the Jamaica furniture maker had to compete with English imports of furniture. No matter how good the Jamaican furniture became, these craftsmen found it difficult to compete with these imports, and consequently the number of consumers demanding Jamaican produced furniture was not sufficient or adequate to warrant the development of the new large scale method of production.

At the end of the eighteenth century, primary material emerges to indicate that, at last, furniture making were changing in Jamaica. In the twilight years of the century we can find evidence of furniture being broken down into its constituent parts and produced in batches. John Mitchell was the first to exhibit this method of manufacturing. His probate lists '*10 parts of Pembroke tables.*'⁵⁴¹ A year later the furniture maker John Harstead had adopted a new system which meant there were pieces of the same furniture appearing in large numbers, for example '*7 dozen cartouche boxes*' and a '*Parcel of mahogany table legs.*'⁵⁴² However, in the same probate we see evidence of bespoke furniture still being produced. Harstead, as well as having parts of furniture in stock, also had '*stuff for a library desk*' and '*stuff for a writing desk*' as well as '*stuff for a large clothes press,*' which suggests that only one object of a certain type was being produced at any given moment.⁵⁴³ Only a couple of years later, in 1803, Alexander Goldie had '*70 pr. Chair feet*' and '*7 Setts bed rails*' and John Fisher a year later also had '*20 Mahogany bedposts.*'⁵⁴³ This conveys the impression that the furniture trade in Jamaica was beginning to change; furniture was not only being made in a bespoke manner, but was also beginning to be manufactured in small batches.

Summary

Why this change should begin to take place at this particular point at the commencement of the nineteenth century and not earlier is not at all clear, after all, the imports from Britain and consumer demand for them continued throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. Why then, should the batch production method of furniture making begin to develop so late, if at all? Could the reason have been that the demand for imported goods was not being fulfilled? This appears to be unlikely as the advertisements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries list significant amounts of manufactured goods arriving, as well as the shopkeepers skillfully promoting their stock. Both the suppliers and retailers illustrate that there was a plethora of goods available to the island's consumers.

⁵⁴¹ John Mitchell, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1801.

⁵⁴² John Harstead, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1801.

⁵⁴³ Alexander Goldie, Cabinet Maker, Probate, 1803; John Fisher, Cabinet Maker, 1804.

If we try to understand why this move in the furniture trade occurred, we find that it coincided with an increase in the value and price of slaves, particularly those who were skilled. Could this reason have initiated the process of change? As the price of labour increased then the price of the object must have either increased or the furniture maker's profit margin was reduced. In a competitive retail market, or where imports were plentiful, the increases in labour the cabinet makers wished to enforce would probably have resulted in the over pricing of goods reducing their competitiveness still further. If this was the case, then the cabinet maker had to make the decision of whether to cut his profit margin or manufacture furniture more efficiently.

Chapter Five

Furniture Manufacturing

The English furniture maker, faced with high levels of competition, increasing labour costs and a growing colonial empire to satisfy, had no problem in embracing new methods and forms of production in the early years of the eighteenth century. There was every incentive to develop the process of making furniture. Sub contracting or the division of labour was a stage in that development and had long been common practice by the time of Chippendale. British businesses of the early and mid-eighteenth century saw a movement from craftsmen led workshops to managerially led operations.

The comprehensive furniture manufacturer was a business man brought all branches of the furniture and allied trades under one roof. He probably had some craft background, but above all he was an entrepreneur. He was able to bring all the artisans required for house furnishing together and thereby reduce his costs, maximise his profits and provide a comprehensive service. In cutting the costs of producing furniture, the entrepreneur could also sell his wares cheaper than his competitors, as well as improving the range of goods and services available to the customer.⁵⁴⁴ Compared with this kind of establishment, the craftsmen in Jamaica were outdated and parochial in their approach to the manufacture of furniture.

As we have seen, a certain amount of modernisation of the furniture trade took place in Jamaica at the end of the eighteenth century. Yet we must ask whether there was sufficient demand in Jamaica for the integrated furniture companies that offered such a variety of services and objects as the London firms? The need to run a workshop on this kind of scale was probably not necessary in Kingston. Not only were the number of customers significantly smaller, but the export market for such wares would have also been limited in the Caribbean.

⁵⁴⁴ Kirkham, Pat, 1988, pp. 60-61.

It is unlikely that a comprehensive manufacturing firm existed at all in Jamaica. However, the need for change was apparent because less expensive manufactured goods could be imported and sold in Kingston for presumably less than the local produce. Furniture had been imported into Jamaica since the first days of the colony, but the cost of such goods was expensive and therefore local craftsmen were able to flourish. The earliest surviving newspapers advertised the arrival of ships laden with goods, including furniture. The arrival of the Lark from Lancaster in 1779 with its '*great variety of Neat Mahogany Furniture*,' for sale, highlights how the English were capitalising on the potential of this market.⁵⁴⁵ Ten years later furniture continued to be imported, from London and Lancaster, in ever increasing amounts, and there seemed little the consumer could not purchase which was not imported from the mother country.

If large amounts of furniture were being imported then the furniture maker in Jamaica had to take note of the price of these goods and those of his own. In the expanding consumer market the Jamaican furniture maker had to look at ways to improve his workshop performance and generally make his workshop efficient. This improvement could happen in many ways: the bringing together of craftsmen in one workshop; the introduction of machinery; or the making of objects in batches. These were obvious strategies to implement and aim to accomplish. However, it is more likely that the Jamaican craftsman did not advance his workshop in this direction, but rather carried on making furniture just as his forefathers had.

As we have been able to establish that Jamaican craftsmen did not embrace change rapidly, it is now important to study their capabilities. How did these craftsmen go about the business of making furniture? In order to establish this, we can use a variety of means one of the first approaches is to examine the language of description applied to furniture. The furniture that was recorded in a workshop inventories gives us a clear idea of the type of work the owner made. The linguistic descriptions used can give us an indication of when an object, or the terminology associated with that object, came in and out of fashion. The fact that an object was recorded as being in a workshop at a certain date helps in dating the life span of a type of object, but denies us any insight into the process of making the object. To understand the objects

⁵⁴⁵ BL Colindale, The Jamaica, 1st September 1779.

more thoroughly, we ideally need them to hand, to be able to examine and analyse them in detail. However, there are no collections of Jamaican furniture in Europe and only a few pieces of nineteenth century furniture in the national institutions in Jamaica. Despite the lack of objects in public collections, objects were found in private residences and these have been used to support the documentary evidence.

For too long furniture historians and connoisseurs have concentrated on the description, style, taste and decoration of the object. Whilst this can bring an enormous amount of knowledge to a subject, it also ignores other sources of information. The furniture historian has frequently forgotten about the tools, construction and materials that were used to create the object which can tell us a great deal more about production and commerce than aesthetics. Furniture makers had to earn a living in the eighteenth century through making furniture, if their production rate was slow then their income was reduced. Necessity being the 'mother of invention,' the craftsmen reduced the time taken to complete an object by cutting corners where the customer was not intended to cast their critical eye. Therefore the bottoms of chairs, the underside of fixed standing objects, and the backs of cupboards and drawers were left in a raw unfinished state. It is sometimes possible to recognise which tools were used, or which were not from the marks and lines of manufacture, providing valuable information about how the object was constructed. This in turn may help us date an object, or place it in some sort of chronology connected with a particular maker or time when such tools were utilised. Separate groups of objects sharing characteristics other than decorative or stylistic similarities, may be also brought together.⁵⁴⁶

Similarly, the craftsman abroad had to adapt his work to cope with new designs or types of furniture with which he was neither familiar, nor had been trained to construct. The colonial craftsmen had to accommodate European ideas of construction and design to strange and exotic woods. Any cases where these constructional and material developments took place could be juxtaposed with their European counterparts, enabling us to understand the conditions and problems the colonial craftsman endured in order to emulate European furniture. Using these three approaches we can attempt a much better

⁵⁴⁶ Gilbert, Christopher; Murdoch, Tessa, Ed., 1994, p. 4. This was the case with the John Channon exhibition held at the V&A in 1994. By studying objects that all had brass inlay, a whole group of makers were discovered to be working at the same date as John Channon.

understanding of how the furniture maker went about his craft, and obtain a clearer understanding of why the objects look the way they do. Although there are relatively few objects to examine, there are surviving records that, in addition, provide us with clues as to the tools and material that were used in the furniture trade.

Procurement of materials

Settling into a new environment necessitates the sourcing of supplies in order to survive. The furniture maker, when first settling in Jamaica, would have been presented with just such a task. Finding sources for the supply of timber and any metalwork he would apply to the furniture was an urgent pursuit. Obviously, timber was the most important material in the furniture maker's workshop. Understanding what materials were available to the furniture maker is paramount in reconstructing the colonials and what the furniture maker could produce. The furniture makers of the northern American states, for example, were often reduced to using softwoods and white hardwoods that meant that the ornamentation of furniture with richly carved crest rails, aprons and motifs was not always possible, unless timber of a different type was imported from foreign lands. In these temperate states, where only softwoods would grow, the furniture was decorated in another manner, using paints and colour to make the furniture more interesting and enticing.⁵⁴⁷

In England during the early years of the eighteenth century, furniture was adorned with decorative imported hardwoods, while the carcase was constructed from indigenous hardwoods, such as beech and oak, or softwoods from the Baltic. Softwoods did not grow in Jamaica, and any that appear in probates of the eighteenth century were confined to the builders and house carpenters who used these materials for roof and house frames as well as for other building purposes.

The hardwoods available to the Jamaican craftsmen were many and varied, and the need to paint furniture was unnecessary as the local timber was rich in colour and lent itself to carving and turning. In England the

furniture maker had been used to the limited supply of such exotic timber, whereas in Jamaica, '*the land of water and wood*' there were 'exotic' timbers available in overwhelming quantities and of a far superior quality. Whilst veneering was a matter of necessity in Britain, due to the cost and scarcity of good quality hardwoods, in Jamaica hardwoods were bountiful. This abundance of material not only meant veneering was an unnecessary and a redundant skill, but given the climate, veneering would have also been an imprudent and probably unsuccessful technique to pursue.

If there was such an abundance of timber in Jamaica then we need to know which timbers were being employed by the furniture makers and why. Although mahogany was by far the most important of the timbers used by furniture makers, it was not the only wood to be utilised. Other timbers, such as cedar, manchineal and satinwood, were also part of the furniture makers' stock. Once we have identified these woods and can explain why they were used, then we can use this information to help us to explore and identify the furniture itself.

Mahogany

Mahogany was, without doubt, the most important commercial timber of the eighteenth century and was indigenous to Jamaica and the Caribbean region.⁵⁴⁷ However, its commercial potential was not fully recognised until the 1720s when the Naval Stores Act of 1724 made the timber viable for export to Britain. The earliest records of mahogany being brought to Britain are from the beginning of the century, but the taxation on such imports was so high that there was no gain to be made by merchants for its transportation. However, after 1724 this timber became not only suitable for commercial trading, but also proved an important milestone in the history of furniture.

Although Jamaican mahogany has long been recognised as the best of all the mahoganies, the stocks available were rapidly used up to satisfy the desire for this timber in England. As early as the late 1740s it

⁵⁴⁷ Fales, Dean A., 1972. Most painted furniture in America appears to come from the Northern States, where tropical woods do not grow, but softwoods do.

⁵⁴⁸ Swentenia Mahogani is indigenous to the Caribbean and nowhere else, other mahoganies that grow in Central America are not a 'true' mahogany.

was said that the timber was already scarce on the island, and this contributed to a change in the trade. Indeed it is likely that after this date, the mahogany timber that was sent to England and which appears in the customs records as '*Jamaica mahogany*,' was more likely to have been Spanish mahogany from either Cuba or St. Domingo. Sheraton in his 1803 Cabinet Dictionary,⁵⁴⁹ stated that Jamaican mahogany had not been available for 40 years or more and was supposed to have disappeared from the workshops of England, as it was practically extinct in Jamaica. While Jamaican mahogany may have vanished in the workshops of England, it is not true that it was no longer available in Jamaica. Mahogany survived, but not enough to make its felling commercially viable for export. However, in Jamaica the price of labour to cut trees down was not great and therefore the timber continued to be used.

In an advertisement of property sales in The Cornwall and Chronicle General Advertiser for 1766, an estate was advertised for sale, based in the parish of Hanover. The advertisement not only located the property but also explained the nature of the soil, and that the premises '*abound with cedar and mahogany*'.⁵⁵⁰ Even as late as 1823, another property for sale, this time in Trelawney, again was described as '*abounding with Mahogany Trees and Cedar Trees*'.⁵⁵¹ These remote parishes clearly had mahogany trees that could be felled and sold commercially. Two further advertisements illustrate that the timber was not only in demand, but that it was also used in the furniture trade on the island until very late in the century. In 1790, an advertisement read: '*Wanted 5000 feet of good Jamaican Mahogany*,' and in the same year George Seddon's vendue store was selling new furniture, '*made of the best Jamaican Mahogany*'.⁵⁵² The quality of mahogany on the island must have been renowned, as, when the merchant Jacob Cox corresponded from the Bahamas with his friend and fellow merchant in Philadelphia, he asked him to send '*a dressing table of Jamaican mahogany*'. One month later the Philadelphian merchant replied, surprisingly quickly, '*I have sent the dressing table made neat of Jamaican mahogany the price is ten pounds, I think tis quite too high but he [the joiner] says tis the Common price...*'⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ Sheraton, 1803, p. 98.

⁵⁵⁰ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle and General Advertiser, 21st December, 1776. The advertisement was clearly informing the potential buyer that there was some commercial value in the trees on the estate.

⁵⁵¹ BL Colindale, Jamaica Journal, 17th May, 1823.

⁵⁵² BL Colindale, Daily Advertiser, 11th March, 20th December, 1790.

⁵⁵³ Evans, Nancy Anne, 1963, pp. 106-107.

We have already stated that Thomas Sheraton thought that Jamaican mahogany had long since declined, yet the island managed to continue to satisfy, in part, its own needs for the timber long after the commercial deforesting of the timber had ceased. Although Jamaican mahogany was still available there was plenty of mahogany arriving in Jamaica from other parts of Central America and the other islands of the Caribbean. This ready supply of timber from different parts was available not because of the Jamaican furniture trade, but because Jamaica was used as a trading post for the other foreign Caribbean islands to sell mahogany to England without incurring the heavy duties due by selling it directly.

Honduran, Spanish, Cuban, St. Domingan as well as Jamaican mahogany were being offered for sale or being stored in the wharves of Kingston and Montego Bay, awaiting shipment to Britain. Curiously, no evidence has been uncovered to prove that furniture was made in Jamaica from any type of mahogany other than Jamaican. Yet it seems highly likely that the cabinet makers only a few hundred yards away were taking advantage of the vast amounts of mahogany arriving at the harbour in Kingston. However, since Jamaican mahogany was considered the best due to its density, the furniture makers were hardly going to advertise their own goods as being made from a timber that would have been perceived as inferior to the native grown timber. While the modern scientist may find the identification of Jamaican and Cuban mahogany difficult to distinguish under the microscope, the craftsmen working with the wood would have been able to see and feel through their tools that the two were a world apart. The appearance of mahogany in the furniture maker's workshop was standards almost universally stock from the 1720s onwards. To the local craftsmen it was cheap and a magnificent wood to work with - quite the perfect material.

The fact that many types of mahogany were arriving and departing from Jamaica is important. Not only do we now know that Jamaican mahogany was available to the cabinet makers of the island, but also that at the same time they could use mahogany from other parts of the region. Consequently, when examining pieces of furniture thought to be Jamaican, we cannot dismiss pieces that are not made of Jamaican mahogany, and we must examine mahogany furniture of any type for other clues as to its origins.

Cedar

West Indian cedar, or credrella, is a timber that is indigenous to the region and was used extensively throughout the colonial period, not just in furniture making but also in house building. The shingles to the houses of the island were often made of cedar because of its enduring properties. The popular myth built up regarding cedar furniture in the West Indies is that furniture made using this wood came from Bermuda. This myth stems from the lack of knowledge of Jamaican furniture, and a book published in 1971, which suggested that most furniture made in Bermuda is of cedar.⁵⁵⁴ Given the lack of information, it is not difficult to understand why any furniture from the rest of the region is deemed Bermudan. The inventories of Jamaican craftsmen occasionally refer to cedar furniture in their workshops. Several workshops had cedar chests or boxes, while other types of objects are rare. Only one cedar desk was listed⁵⁵⁵ and another craftsman, unusually, had three square cedar tables.⁵⁵⁶ The presence of cedar furniture in domestic houses was not a regular feature of inventories, but neither would it have been considered rare. Cedar appeared in homes and furniture workshops throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. In 1714 John Gardner owned a cedar chest, and 80 years later a Robert Bayley had in his possession a cedar cupboard. The enduring appearance of cedar throughout the period under study was not due to its attractive appearance but rather its natural odour, which kept moths away and also kept clothes smelling fresh.

Considering its usefulness, it is surprising more furniture was not made using this timber. Only a small amount of cedar furniture appears in the primary material. In contrast, there is a disproportionate amount of the cedar timber listed in the furniture maker's workshop. While only six workshops listed any type of cedar furniture, over 20 had stocks of cedar. It is clear from this analysis that when an object was described in a probate it was listed according to its primary material, that is the timber that covers the top, sides and front of the object. Even in today's auction houses we may find the same method of identifying and cataloguing an object. The secondary timbers are often ignored, or deemed of little importance, and

⁵⁵⁴ Hyde, Bryden, 1971.

⁵⁵⁵ Robert Duncan, Carpenter, Probate, 1766.

⁵⁵⁶ Henry Ponton, Carpenter, Probate, 1753.

this appears to have been the case in Jamaica in the eighteenth century too. No description has been found that describes a piece of furniture as having been made using two or more woods.

While the pieces of furniture in the cabinet maker's workshop do not describe cedar furniture we know that cedar was used. In the Blenchenden workshop, the German diarist described the naked servants working in mahogany and cedar.⁵⁵⁷ Here we have evidence that this material was part of the cabinet makers business. It is clear that if cedar furniture was not being produced, but the timber was in stock and being worked on, then the timber was being used on the interior of many objects. This is important for our understanding of Jamaican furniture. Not only should the expert or collector examine furniture that was constructed of any true mahogany, but they now must also consider any piece that has credrella as its secondary timber. An example of this can be seen in a mahogany bureau that has credrella as its secondary material. This bureau has been examined by a number of American scholars and dealers who are of the opinion that the object is not American. The use of mahogany and cedar on British furniture is also unheard of and would suggest it was not British either. However, its form is strongly associated with British bureaus, and therefore it is likely this piece is Caribbean, if not Jamaican (See Illustration 57).

Satinwood and manchineel

Both manchineel and satinwood were rarely used in the workshops of Jamaica, but they need to be mentioned as both timbers are indigenous to the region. Satinwood, while popular in Britain during the latter decades of the eighteenth century, was never found in the workshops of Jamaica, and only one inhabitant was found to own a piece of furniture that was veneered with this timber. Hinton East died in 1793 and amongst his possessions were a satinwood card table and another inlaid satinwood table. These two pieces were probably imported, or commissioned abroad, as no evidence survives to suggest that veneered furniture was ever produced on the island in the eighteenth century. Most satinwood that was used in England came from the East Indies, but the West Indies also has its own variety of the timber.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Levy, Catherine Mary, 1984, p. 35.

⁵⁵⁸ Boulger, G. S., 1908, p. 271; Howard, A., 1948, pp. 532-537. East Indian satinwood (*Chloroxylon Swietenia*) is mainly from Central and Southern India and Sri Lanka; West Indian satinwood (*Fagara Zanthoxylum*) whilst similar in appearance is a different species.

However, its emergence as a commercial timber was restricted in Jamaica because of the problems of veneering, and the cost of producing a solid satinwood table would have been prohibitive. Given the cost of the satinwood in England, especially as the material was in great demand, it would appear the timber was exported rather than utilised.⁵⁵⁹

Manchineel was only similar to satinwood in one respect, it was poisonous. The dust of satinwood is supposed to be carcinogenic, while the sap of the manchineel tree is highly toxic and burns the skin on contact. Prior to mahogany becoming familiar to the furniture maker manchineel timber was often mistaken for mahogany. The joiner Francis Moore had a small manchineel table in his probate and two years later William Hugh lists a manchineel table in his probate. Despite its availability and ability to be made into highly desirable furniture, the timber was considered too awful to use and the more familiar mahogany continued to be used instead.

Many other exotic timbers were available to the colonial craftsmen in Jamaica, yet very few appear to have been brought into commercial usage in the eighteenth century. Timbers such as partridgewood, Jamaican greenwood and bulletwood, as well as many other types, were not used by craftsman, or even recognised for their potential, until the nineteenth century, when they were used to great effect (See Illustrations 1 & 2).

Locks, hinges and handles

The furniture maker not only required timber to make his furniture, but he also had the need to purchase, or have made, the metal fittings to make the furniture serviceable. Hinges, locks, castors, handles and perhaps mounts may have all been required to finish off a piece of furniture. The internal market for such fine metal ware would have been limited, and it is therefore likely that these items were imported. An advertisement in The Cornwall Chronicle in 1781 confirms as much by listing items for sale that had just

⁵⁵⁹ It is so rare to find an object made of Satinwood in the primary material that to make a comparison with mahogany is impossible.

arrived from Bristol and London. The advertisement specified many fittings, including brass table hinges and cupboard locks, brass desk and drawer locks, as well as nails and tacks for upholstery.⁵⁶⁰

Merchants sold metal ware from early in the century just as they sold craftsmen's tools. Generally, the same merchants that sold carpenters' and joiners' tools also sold furniture fittings. Long lists of merchants' stocks included locks, hinges and handles as well as nails, tacks and bolts. Seemingly, the merchant was able to supply the most insignificant of things to the island in order to satisfy his customers. Just as merchants had stocks of fittings and tools, so did shopkeepers and ironmongers. The quantity and variety of stock held by the merchant in comparison to the ironmonger would indicate that the merchant supplied the ironmonger, and the ironmonger in turn sold his wares to craftsmen and the public. If this was the case, then the merchant was probably supplying all the ironmongers of the island or even region. Should a provenanced object be found, then it is possible that its fittings would be similar to other objects of a similar date.

Only five craftsmen had stocks of metal ware in the probates studied. These were all furniture makers and fell into two distinct time periods. The three earliest furniture makers appear to have been based in Port Royal in the 1720s. Then there appears to have been a gap, or lapse, of 50 years before other furniture makers once again had good stocks of fittings. The large time span between the two groups may indicate that furniture makers did not need to stockpile these goods in this period as shops provided for their needs, whereas this was not necessarily the case in the early years of the century. Alternatively, the lack of fittings appearing in the probates of the mid eighteenth century could illustrate that they were expensive, or in short supply.

⁵⁶⁰ Winterthur, Cornwall Chronicle, 25th August, 1781.



Illustration 57

Mahogany bureau with credrella secondary timber, circa 1775-1785.

Other than the use of timber this bureau is typically British.

Photographed and owned by Sumpter Priddy III.

However, the purchase of fine fittings for furniture made in Jamaica might suggest that the furniture was considered worthy of such expense. Would craftsmen have gone to the extreme of putting good quality brass fittings on to furniture that was not worth the effort, or that was not likely to recompense them when the object was sold? This is only likely if fittings in Jamaica were exceptionally cheap and plentiful. If this was true, then the object evidence might provide the proof. It is only after this has been determined that we can move on to a more plausible assumption. This being that during the middle of the eighteenth century metal fittings were in short supply or expensive. Therefore, if we examine furniture from that date we would expect to find furniture, although well constructed, fitted with metal ware that was crude and rudimentary. An example of this can be seen in a card table from the mid-eighteenth century. Although the table is well made and stands on fine ball and claw feet its fittings are made from wrought iron and are not in sympathy with the quality of the woodwork. However, late in the eighteenth century we find furniture with exactly the same type of fittings one would expect to see on late English eighteenth century furniture. This clearly indicates that metal ware for furniture was readily available on the island at this period. Clearly, one object can not map out the state of imports of metalwork in the middle of the eighteenth century, but it may be indicative of the short supply of metal fittings.

Design sources

It is unfortunate that in England, let alone Jamaica, little is known about the process of selling furniture by the furniture maker. If we assume firstly, that the maker made goods that the consumer would then purchase, without the use of intermediaries, we must suppose that he had a preconceived idea as to what was acceptable in terms of design. This perception would be continually in a state of enhancement and evolution as the furniture maker became more confident, aware of his competitors and of the imported objects that were entering the country. This evaluation was necessary for him to survive, if his goods became outdated or too expensive then his services and stock would soon be redundant. We have already seen how quickly the Jamaican furniture makers copied their British counterparts in using new materials, such as mahogany, and we have also seen that the tools that were being imported into Jamaica were more

than adequate for the job of making sophisticated furniture. However, the use of materials and tools like the masters of England does not necessarily result in fine, accurate or even desirable furniture. It has, though, been proven that some of the craftsmen in Jamaica were likely to have been excellent furniture makers, but what inspired them?

Those craftsmen who served apprenticeships, especially in London and Lancaster, would probably had the opportunity to view objects of the latest taste and by the finest makers of the time. Clearly, the technical abilities of these apprentices could not have extended to making furniture of an identical nature, although some may have, but they would have copied, simplified, adapted or interpreted these pieces. This re-configuration would have taken place to fit the owners' needs and pocket, or more likely to accommodate the makers' own lack of knowledge or skill.

The same furniture makers that had served apprenticeships in great furniture making towns and cities would also have probably been aware of the printed sources of the period. These design books rarely need to be read, most were pictorial and were used to inform makers of the latest taste and fashions. They become standard pattern books in England, customers could flick though these folios and choose elements of different objects and then commission the chair, table or object of their desire. The question of whether any design books appeared in Jamaica needs to be investigated. If we find such material then we have a clear route of dissemination. However, should this material not be evident then we must assume that inspiration and designs for furniture in eighteenth century Jamaica, were executed by mimicking those objects that were brought to the island.

Printed material was uncommon in furniture makers' probates, with only 20% of the makers even owning a book, and when they were listed they were rarely listed by title but rather as a '*parcel of books*' or some '*old books*.' Popular books, unsurprisingly, were related to divinity, with the Bible being in 1½% of the furniture makers inventories. Those books related to the trade of an individual were rarer. A handful of carpenters owned books on architecture; but unfortunately none give the title, stating only their content. A further four carpenters possessed a copy of the '*Dictionary of Arts and Science*,' which was the sub-title for

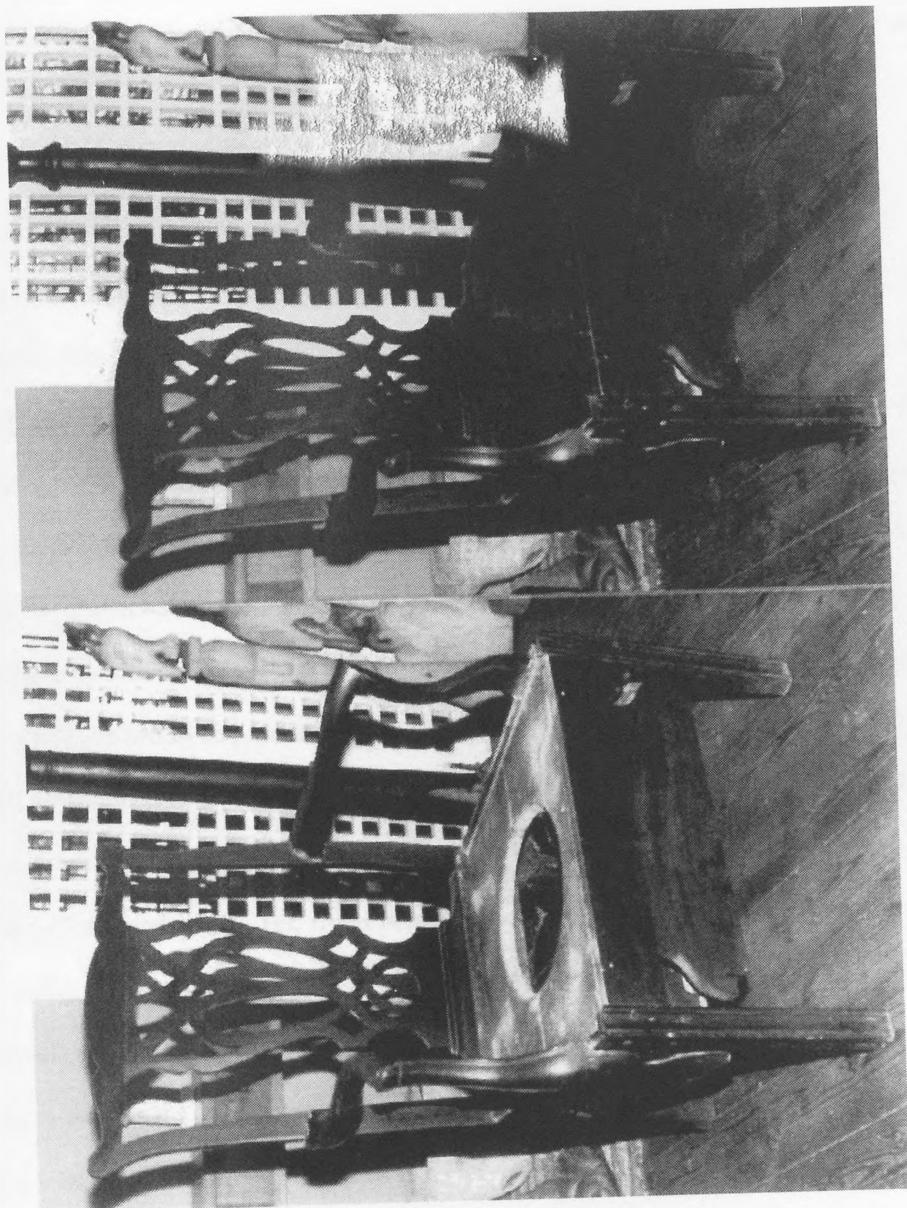


Illustration 58

A Chippendale style commode chair, circa 1770, found in Jamaica. This chair, although missing part of its front apron, is a finely crafted piece of furniture, particularly the termination of the arms. Photographed by the author. Private Collection.

the Encyclopedia Britannica. Only two books were found that appear to have been related to the furniture trade. In 1782 Alexander McKenzie died in possession of a book entitled the '*Trades Companion*,' and 18 years earlier Jonathan Satterwaite appears to have owned a copy of Chippendale's 'Director.' It is likely that the '*Trades Companion*' cited was in fact the Tradesmen's Daily Companion, which was published in 1742.⁵⁶¹

Satterwaite's ownership of a book entitled '*Chippendales Book of Carving Chairs & Co*' must clearly refer to Thomas Chippendale's work The Gentleman & Cabinet-Maker's Director.⁵⁶² The significance of the appearance of this work in Jamaica cannot be underestimated. Satterwaite is first recorded on the island of Jamaica in 1757 when he acted as the administrator in the probate of Alexander Cross.⁵⁶³ If Satterwaite had brought the book over from England when he left prior to 1757, then Satterwaite could have either purchased the first or second edition of this book. Given that the subscribers were listed in the first edition and no Satterwaite was then present, it is more likely that he purchased the second edition, which was printed in 1755. However, if his copy were the third edition, which was published in 1762 then this copy would have had to be purchased locally or ordered and sent direct from Britain, as Satterwaite was then living in Jamaica. If Satterwaite had ordered his Director from Britain then he must have been aware of its existence prior to trying to purchase a copy. If, however, the book had been sent to him from Britain, then who sent it and why? Yet, if the book had been sold in Jamaica, there are no records of a book retailer holding stocks of any books that were related to the furniture trade. However, this cannot exclude the possibility that the Director was not for sale at some stage in Kingston. We may never know the answer, but whatever the case, Chippendale's folio of designs could be seen in Jamaica by the end of 1764.⁵⁶⁴ Significantly, the same book has not been recorded in America until 1766. Jonathan Satterwaite's ownership of a copy of the Director is the first recorded furniture design book appearing in the British Americas. Heckscher in his article on the subject of design books in America, suggests that this was because the '*elegant folios were too costly to import on speculation.*'⁵⁶⁵ These books were certainly costly, and the Satterwaite copy of the Director therefore makes a statement about some of the furniture

⁵⁶¹ Huge, William, Tradesmen Daily Companion, 1742, T. Harris, London. No copy of this book is held in the British Library.

⁵⁶² Chippendale, Thomas, 1762 (Reprint 1966).

⁵⁶³ Alexander Cross, Probate, Carpenter, 1757.

⁵⁶⁴ Satterwaite died in December 1764.

makers in Jamaica. Not only were they well informed as to the latest taste, but could afford costly folios. Given that this book did exist in Jamaica, then we can make the assumption that some furniture in the colony was made according to the patterns in the book (See illustration 58).

While little is known about Jonathan Satterwaite, it is thought that he may have come from Lancaster, and the tools in his workshop certainly were capable of executing the fine designs that were at his fingertips. If Satterwaite was from England, which is most likely, and he was making furniture according to the designs of Chippendale, then we have little chance of finding a physical manifestation of his efforts which would be indisputably Jamaican. An Englishman making furniture according to English designs in mahogany would be hard to trace, especially as we already know that the furniture company, Gillows, who exported furniture to Jamaica, is recorded as having several copies of Chippendale's book (See Illustration 59 & 60).⁵⁶⁶

Despite the presence of the Satterwaite copy of the Director in Jamaica, relatively few design books appear in the probates of the time. Generally, we can see that the process of realising design must have been through seeing objects and then simulating those objects for the local market.

Design books give an indication of sources for maker's ideas and where and how quickly design ideas spread. However, they do not tell us how those designs were replicated. Usually we could turn to the objects available and compare them to the original scheme for an answer. Given that only a few Jamaican eighteenth century objects survive, and many types and genre are absent altogether, then we must search for evidence of these pieces in the workshops of the makers. The tools the Jamaican furniture makers possessed can inform us of the capability of an individual, and perhaps suggest the type of objects he was able to construct.

⁵⁶⁵ Heckscher, Morrison H., 1994, p. 174.

Tools of the trade

During the first half of the eighteenth century the manufacturing of tools in America or the Caribbean was not undertaken.⁵⁶⁷ English manufacturers produced good tools cheaply and thereby reduced the need for a centre of manufacture to be established on the other side of the Atlantic. London in the early eighteenth century, and then later Birmingham, were the main exporters of woodworking tools for the colonial craftsman and they were universally recognised as centres exporting fine tools at moderate prices.⁵⁶⁸ The combination of a strong supply source, the lack of raw materials, and poor transportation and communication between the plantations of the Eastern Sea Board, made the conditions for setting up an American tool manufactory difficult.⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, the Virginian Council President, James Blair, made exactly this point, stating that colonials in America did ‘*not make a saw, auger, grimlett, file, or nails, iron steel; and most tools in the Country are imported from Britain.*’⁵⁷⁰ However, while certain tools were imported, particularly those that were made from steel, others were produced locally. Rules, squares, bevels and even benches and lathes could be, and were, made by the craftsman himself, but evidence to suggest the forging and casting tool metals was being undertaken has not been found. Other tools of the trade, like saw horses, jigs and benches, were produced, and the more progressive even ventured to turn their own tool handles and make the blocks for the plane irons, mainly because these were all made of wood. Even those makers who were prepared to be as self-sufficient as possible, still recognised the importance of British imports in maintaining a supply of chisels, gouges, plane irons and saws.⁵⁷¹

Several merchants and shopkeepers in Jamaica were known to have been retailing tools for the trade. An early probate, dated 1676, for the shopkeeper Thomas Marshall, lists several tools including several gouges and six chisels for sale.⁵⁷² A few years later, in 1714, the merchant William Lodge had imported a substantial amount of woodworking tools. The quantities involved were staggering and included ‘*16 Doz*

⁵⁶⁶ Beard, Gilbert, 1986, pp. 341-344.

⁵⁶⁷ Bridenbaugh, Carl, 1990, p. 41.

⁵⁶⁸ Winterthur, *Cornwall Chronicle*, 25th August, 1781. In this advertisement of a ship lately landed from London was listed jack, try and smoothing planes as well as other carpenter's and cooper's tools.

⁵⁶⁹ Gaynor, James; Hagedorn, Nancy, 1994, pp. 2-4.

⁵⁷⁰ BL, King's MS 206, James Blair, 1768.

⁵⁷¹ Gaynor, James; Hagedorn, Nancy, 1994, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁷² Thomas Marshall, Shopkeeper, Probate, 1676.

*sorted plains, 575 sorted files, 129 Doz sorted gooses and chisels, 68 Doz sorted plain irons, 20 Carveing tooles, 9 Hand vices, 4 Doz & three pr of Pinchers, 20 Doz & 9 Gimbletts, 9 Doz augers sorted etc...*⁵⁷³

These tools represented some of the stock of this merchant, but the odd numbers of some tools may have indicated that he sold the tools retail. Other merchants sold tools in the eighteenth century but not on the same scale as Lodge. The merchant, William Huge, like Lodge had stocks of tools amongst his stock in trade, including '4 Doz Gimbletts, 11 Chisels, 5 pr Carpenters Compasses' as well augers, saws and pincers.⁵⁷⁴ Some 50 years later another merchant also had in stock woodwork tools which, though modest, still illustrate the importing of such goods into the country throughout much of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷⁵

William Lodge's substantial stock of tools may imply that he supplied the local shops with a variety of tools, or alternatively, he supplied the craftsmen with the tools of their trade directly. While other merchants had stocks of tools, the vastness of Lodge's stock went unsurpassed throughout the rest of the eighteenth century. Some merchants in the eighteenth century were well stocked with the fundamental carpenter's tools, but the more specialised tools were not present in these merchants' stocks. However, in scrutinising the probates of Jamaican ironmongers we find that they held an array of woodworking tools that, whilst not large in number, were extremely specialised. Anthony Cooke, an ironmonger in Kingston, had in stock '20 smoothing plaines, 13 Bead plaines, 3 fore plaines, 3 long plaines, 4 Carpenter joyners, 2 plough plaines' as well as other woodworking tools.⁵⁷⁶ Robert Hope, another ironmonger, likewise, in 1746, had a wide range of tools on offer. The specialised nature of his tools can be seen in the planes he held in stock, they included, '3 pr. Grooving plaines, Cistricall ditto, 7 Rabbit ditto, 1 bead ditto, 10

⁵⁷³ William Lodge, Merchant, Probate, 1714.

⁵⁷⁴ William Huge, Merchant, Probate, 1741.

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Goodman, Merchant, Probate, 1797.

⁵⁷⁶ Anthony Cooke, Ironmonger, Probate, 1739. Hummel, Charles, 1982, pp. 100-102. Bead planes were used to create a bead on the outside edge of a piece of work. The fore plane is another name, although not common, for a Jack plane.

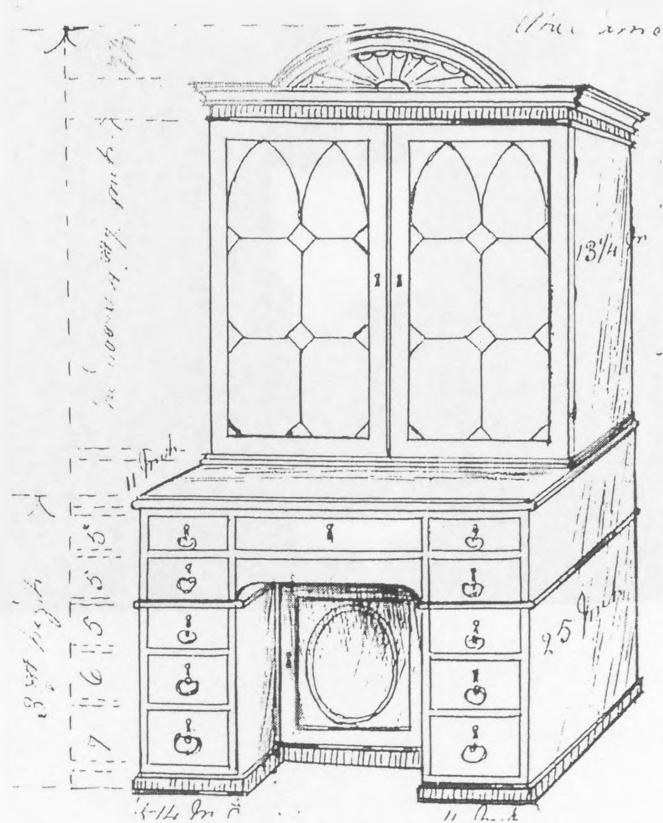


Illustration 59

This Gillows sketch of a bureau bookcase, 1788, is very unusual in the layout of the drawers either side of the centre section. The centre drawer pulls out to reveal a writing surface.

Boynton, Lindsay, Gillows Furniture Designs, 1995, Bloomfield Press,

Sketch 139, no page numbers given.

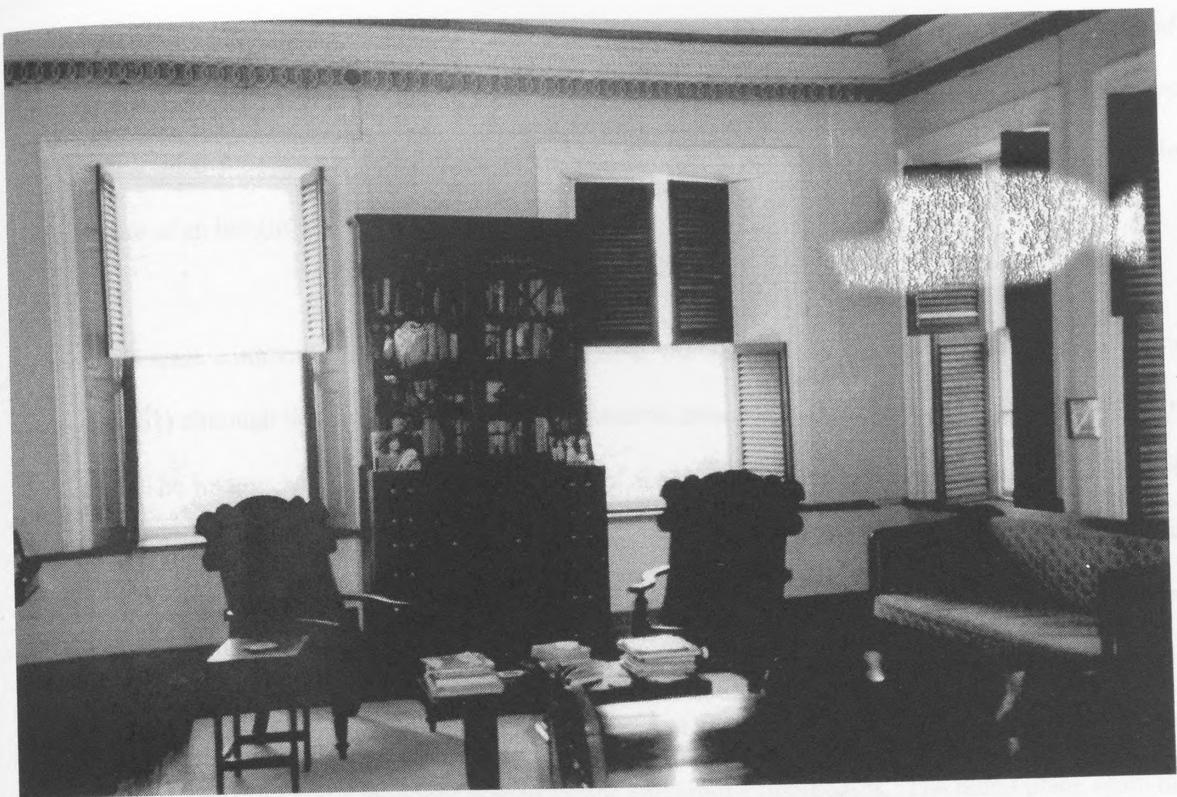


Illustration 60

This bureau bookcase that was found in Jamaica, has the unusual feature of having the sets of drawers down either side of the writing slope. While it is unknown whether this was made by Gillows, this characteristic is very much Gillows.

Photographed by the author, Private Collection.

Balection, 5 Plough ditto, 2 moving Filisters, 7 Cornish ditto and finally an ‘upright ditto.’⁵⁷⁷ Further in the probate were ‘3 Smoothing Plaines, 2 Carpenters Joyntors, 1 long Carpenter Joyntor, 5 pr. Sash and Filisters and 1 moving raising.’ Some of these planes are so specialised (such as the ‘Cistricall’) that we do not know what function they performed in the woodworker’s workshop. However, several others do give us more of an insight into how the woodworker crafted.

Sash planes were commonly used in the making of sash window frames, as was the filister plane, (See Illustration 61) although this had a fence, fixed or adjustable, attached to the sole to guide the plane and the worker.⁵⁷⁸ The joyntor was used to join two pieces of wood together by means of a tongue and groove. This tool could be purchased in pairs, but was also available with a movable fence that was able to make both the tongue and the groove using the same plane. Other forms of the joyntor were developed so that the one plane had two narrow irons and an adjustable fence: whichever the combination, the tool served the same purpose.⁵⁷⁹ The long joyntor, as listed in Hope’s probate, served the same function as the joyntor, except it was longer and was commonly used to tongue and groove floorboards. The rabbit plane again had an adjustable filister and allowed the woodworker to cut out rebates, while the plough plane, as its name suggests ploughed out a groove in the wood. These tools were as likely to have been used in the workshop of the carpenter who made door and window frames, as on the furniture maker’s bench.

However, it is not just the presence of a tool in a workshop that was significant. In the case of carving gouges, chisels and moulding planes the number of tools can ascertain the virtuosity of the maker.⁵⁸⁰ Robert Pitchard, one of the Port Royal joiners, had in stock from 1734 some 138 moulding planes as well as 54 carving gouges. He also has three ‘*plow plains*.’ Pitchard clearly had three different sized planes as he would have needed to cut several gauges of grooves in the bottom of drawers, to attach tops to carcasses and for rebating panels on the sides of cabinets and doors of cupboards. Pitchard also had many gimblets of different sizes. These tools, that look like a modern day corkscrew, were used to bore holes in

⁵⁷⁷ Robert Hope, Ironmonger, Probate, 1746. Salaman, 1975, p. 340, 89, the Balection plane, is a moulding plane, more usually spelt Bolection. Salaman, 1975, p. 323, Cornish planes were probably cornice planes, being a two cut moulding plane.

⁵⁷⁸ Proudfoot, Christopher; Walker, Philip, 1984, pp. 28-30.

⁵⁷⁹ Gaynor, James; Hagedorn, Nancy, 1994, p. 53.

⁵⁸⁰ It must be remembered that the tools are only indicative of what can be achieved at the bench and not what was necessarily executed.

the timber for screws and dowels. Pitchard clearly used dowels as he had a '*Dowling stock*,' which would have allowed him to hammer small pieces of timber though a pre-drilled hole so that all his dowels were the same diameter. The stock of furniture listed in his probate again would allow us to think that it was mortise and tenoned together and then pegged with these dowels. A wide range of mortise and firmer chisels were available for him to select the perfect size to work out the mortise, while a '*fine tennant saw*' was used to saw out the tennon. Other tools at his bench remain a mystery such as '*23 bedstick thin plains, 3 old raising plains*' as well as a '*Cornish plain*'.

Six years later the carpenter James Stewart appears unusually to have had the tools in his tool chest listed. These comprised, '*14 Joiner Plains, Carpenters ditto, 4 saws, 4 adzes and 2 axes, 3 Hammers and one pr. Pincers and 2 Carpenters Rules, 12 pr former and Gouges & Chizels and 13 files, 2 pr. Compases, chalk line, Spring Stock and 5 Augers.*'⁵⁸¹ From the tools owned, Stewart was clearly no furniture maker, but the list does perhaps illustrate what a carpenter would have been expected to have in the way of equipment for his trade. Another carpenter, James Kerr, again had tools that would indicate that he did carpentry rather than furniture making. This can be seen by the presence of '*5½ dozen large gimbletts*' as well as '*1 large square*' and a '*2 broad Axes and 1 Hatchets.*'⁵⁸² However, other tools in his possession such as a '*tennant saw*,' a '*Rabbit plain*' and '*Grooving plain*' would give the impression that he also did house joinery as well as house building.⁵⁸³

The carpenter, Jonathan Satterwaite, who died in 1765, was obviously not a carpenter at all, as his list of tools is very specialised and is indicative of a skilled furniture maker. His tools included 56 moulding planes, 2 plough planes, 2 glue pots as well as 165 chisels and gouges.⁵⁸⁴ John Miller, another carpenter who was probably a furniture maker, has listed in his probates not only the tools he owns, but significantly, also moulding planes. The various shapes of the profile of the mouldings were described, presenting us with a glimpse of the type of work he probably produced. Unfortunately, no furniture was included in the probate and therefore we can only guess as to what tools, such as the '*8 ogees plains*' and the '*7 quarter, 1*

⁵⁸¹ James Stewart, Carpenter, Probate, 1740.

⁵⁸² These tools would indicate that Kerr was chopping timber up and building houses. In his probate it also lists '*Whip Saw files*,' these would have been used to sharpen the saw of a pit saw.

⁵⁸³ James Kerr, Carpenter, Probate, 1746.

quarter round, 5 bead, 1 cross grooving, pair of snipe, 14 pairs of hollow, toothing, bedmould* and many other planes, were used to make. This comprehensive list of tools was valued at £16, which was an unusually high amount.⁵⁸⁵

Joseph Stafford whose probate was drawn up in the same year as Miller, had a similar list of tools, which also included a dovetail saw, a spoke shave and 3 dozen hollow and round planes. Hollow planes were the most useful of all the moulding planes, and therefore, appeared regularly in lists of old tools. The hollow plane was sold with its round corresponding partner, and there were as many as 18 pairs in differing sizes. It is rare to find a complete set, as most furniture makers at the time only purchased all the odd or even pairs. What is important about Joseph Stafford's probate is that the '3 Doz Hollow and Rounds plains' that were listed suggest that he possessed a full set.⁵⁸⁶ If this is the case then it is the only known case of a craftsman owning such a compliment in the Americas.⁵⁸⁷ John Miller was also the only Jamaican craftsman documented in the eighteenth century to own a spoke shave and dovetail saw; he was therefore probably a fine craftsman. This is borne out by the fact that he was employed to repair the Court House, as a debt appears to that effect in his probate inventory.

Finally, the cabinet maker John Mitchell in 1801, appears to have converted his own timber as he had '7 Old Whip Saws' and 'New Whip Saws Compleat.' As well as whip saws, there were also cross cut and frame saws all implying that timber was sawn up for use in the workshop.⁵⁸⁸ Indeed there were '6 Side Board Tops' listed among the workshop possessions. Unfortunately, Mitchell's list of tools is not detailed, and the only other specific tools that can be gleaned from the list of goods and chattels were the '75 moulding planes.'

⁵⁸⁴ Jonathan Satterwaite, Carpenter, Probate, 1765.

⁵⁸⁵ John Miller, Carpenter, Probate, 1773. A bedmould plane was a moulding plane that had two irons cutting two different moulds. The snipe, or snipe bill, is a plane that is used to trim a quirk, which is a groove sunk beside a bead.

⁵⁸⁶ Proudfoot, Christopher; Walker, Philip; 1984, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁸⁷ Hurmmel, Charles, 1982, pp. 108-110. The Dominy workshop which was found intact and moved to Winterthur, was found to only have 11 hollows, whilst another American craftsman, Richard John, tops the list with 12 pairs of hollows and rounds. John Miller mentioned above was also close to having a full set, listing 14 pairs of hollows.

⁵⁸⁸ Whip saws were expensive, but by the late eighteenth century their value was greatly reduced. However, the ownership of nine saws, that were used to convert logs to planks, often utilising saw pits was a large number to have in one workshop.

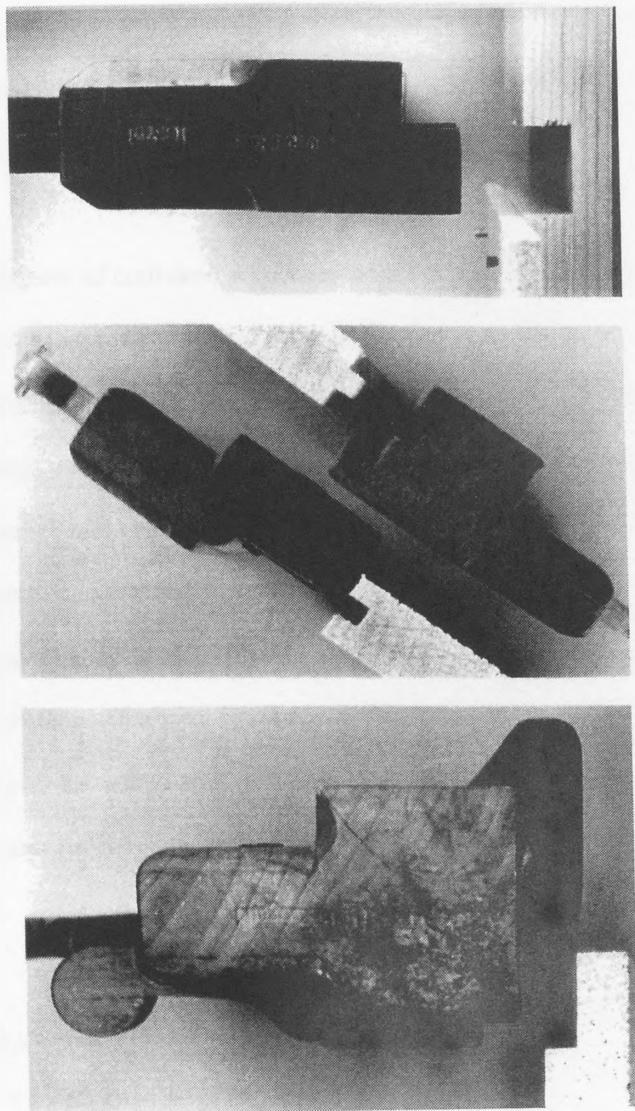


Illustration 61

Fillister plane with a fixed fence, a pair of joynter planes for tongue and grooves and a rebate plane for planing out rebates. Gaynor, James; Hagedorn, Nancy, *Pictorial Dictionary Essay of Woodworking Tools*, 1994, p. 104.

From the tools that are listed in the probates of these craftsmen, we may be able to ascertain the type of work a craftsman was involved in. If the furniture was also documented in the same probate, then we can also begin to surmise the type of decoration that was possibly employed on that object. In the absence of a list of furniture, the tools can indicate the nature of the craftsman's work and help us understand how some of it would have been constructed. Moulding planes, carving gouges and saws can help illustrate the nature of a craftsman's work, just as large gimblets and augers, whip saws and axes suggest an entirely different kind of trade.

The numbers of craftsmen who were found to own tools unsurprisingly were high. Nearly half the cases where detailed information survives in the form of a probate list tools. There was no information provided in craftsmen's probates in the first two decades of the eighteenth century and, while values of tools fluctuated over the eighteenth century, generally the second and third quarters of the century illustrate that the average tool chest's value did not alter, remaining at around £6. It was only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and first decade of the nineteenth that the value of tools increased, or became more expensive, rising to £13. A large number of the probates listed tools collectively, and titled '*tools, tools in the workshop, sundry tools, a parcel of tools,*' or a '*tool chest.*' These various labels for sets of tools give us no clue as to the nature of the workshop equipage and are therefore frustrating to the scholar. Despite those that list tools collectively, the remaining accounts do help us to understand the craftsmen and their work.

Innovation and machinery

Just as the presence of tools can illustrate what the furniture maker could and could not do, the presence of machinery can present us with a whole different set of issues. Although the end of the eighteenth century was a remarkable period in the evolution of manufacturing and consumption in Britain, it was also remarkable how slowly this change affected the furniture industry.⁵⁸⁹ Comprehensive manufacturing companies did emerge at the end of the eighteenth century, but these were entrepreneurial companies where

⁵⁸⁹ Kirkham, Pat, 1988, p. 109.

furniture makers of all trades gathered to make traditional furniture, rather than factories full of machines manufacturing goods. Despite the slow acceptance, the process of industrialisation was undoubtedly beginning to influence methods of manufacture, speeding up and standardising repetitive processes. We see large amounts of parts and objects that were identical, we see the gradual mechanisation of the conversion of timber into boards, planks and veneers; yet we do not see the machine taking the place of the craftsmen, at least not yet.⁵⁹⁰ The furniture industry remained a craft based trade in London, and this continued to be the way business was conducted until the advent of machines that could mechanise and rationalise production. The industrialising of the woodwork industry did not happen within the time scale of this work, and its full force was not witnessed in Jamaica until beyond the mid nineteenth century.

However, in England, just as the joynting plane had evolved from two planes into one, we begin to see early machines simplifying the work. Machines, however simple, were introduced to standardise repetitive but important jobs, but also to remove the mundane and boring tasks, such as drilling, sawing and planing. This mechanisation began to take place in England, but was there a need for such machinery in a colony that had slaves doing the boring, intensive and mundane work? In this colonial climate of cheap and plentiful labour the need for mechanisation seems bizarre and remote. Why would a Jamaica craftsman wish to invest hard earnt money on speculating on the benefits of a machine that reduced flexibility and that a slave could be forced to do anyway?

If the machine could produce accurate work that a slave or any craftsman found difficult to produce time and again then we have a motive. Machines in Jamaica had to produce work accurately and efficiently to be worth the capital investment of the manufacturer. The slave who was asked to do repetitive and mundane work was of limited ability if he had not been trained to use certain tools or been allowed to think of solutions to avoid errors in production. A more limited number of slave workers did have this education, but they would not have been wasted on simple and labour intensive work, such as operating a machine. The machine operator, could not be expected to think of the process the timber was undergoing and

⁵⁹⁰ Edwards, C., 1993, p. 25. It was not until 1781 that the first mechanised saw was being utilised in England.

therefore the machine's task had to be simple and easily operated. If machines were to be useful in a Jamaican workshop then they not only had to be accurate and cheap, but also simple to operate.

A person who was to operate the machine could not be a skilled slave, as the skilled slave was a valuable resource that was best exploited in other areas of production. Owning a skilled slave and allowing them to work on a machine would have defeated the object of having a machine in the first place. The machine operator was to be just that, someone who operated the machine, and in turn became part of the machine itself. The skill in working with the machine was knowing the machine, and this only came about by working with it over a long period.⁵⁹¹

It is under this sort of criteria that the machine manufacturer had to convince manufacturers of all goods in Jamaica to accept the machine as an improvement. While the necessity for such acceptance may have been justified in the sugar industry, it was not a realistic proposal in the furniture business. If we discount those woodworkers that possessed lathes, only two furniture makers record having any sort of machines in their workshops. The carpenter David Reid was engaged in building some sort of wind machinery when he died, and therefore does not seem to have been contributing to the mechanisation of the furniture trade.⁵⁹² However, the carpenter, John Harstead, appeared to have been very progressive in the methods he employed to make wooden objects.⁵⁹³ Harstead, of St. James, had several machines which were described as '*a machine for boring cartouche boxes compleat*' and '*1 large Lathe with wheel tools and a chest compleat*' as well as a '*machine for striking ovals*'. The exact nature of what Harstead was producing is difficult to ascertain, but it was probably a box that was bored on top to receive a cartouche design that had been pre-stamped using the stamping machine. The box using some sort of cam on a lathe may then have acted as a primitive form of circular saw to cut the box in two. Harstead's inventory catalogues a substantial list of unfinished and finished goods including '*7 doz cartouch boxes*', which could be assumed to have been the product of the cartouche machine (See Illustration 62).

⁵⁹¹ Edwards, C., 1993, pp. 12-17.

⁵⁹² David Reid, Carpenter, Probate, 1769.

⁵⁹³ John Harstead, Carpenter, Probate, 1801.

Harstead's probate is also interesting for another reason, it is the only probate that gives some sense of how a workshop was laid out. The probate appears to be broken up into several rooms and this is reflected in the type of goods listed in each of the sections. Harstead clearly had several rooms for cabinet making, the first of which contained all the benches, and the second room appears to have been the repository for his own private goods, including his own cabinet making chest. Of the remaining two rooms, one was where the stamping machine was used, presumably because it made a noise, and the other space was for converting timber as there were a number of whip saws, a pit and sawing stools [horses].

Although, we will never know the exact nature of the boxes produced by Harstead, they may have been boxes that had a cartouche stamp on its top surface, or alternatively they may have been oval boxes. Whatever the case, John Harstead was very unusual in having machines in use in Jamaica at this early date. In fact so rare were machines in the woodwork trade, that we can only find further evidence of machinery in use as late as 1825. An advertisement recommending the services of a saw mill, in the Jamaica Journal, was the first public acknowledgement of their use.⁵⁹⁴

The Jamaican furniture industry throughout much of the eighteenth century had, to varying degrees, been in touch with taste and fashion from Britain. The adoption of new genres of objects and the transmission of style all had an impact on the trade relatively quickly. Yet in the acceptance of the machine, the island's craftsmen were remarkably slow to adopt and develop new methods of production. They could clearly see little gain, and great expense involved, even at a time when the cost of slave labour was increasing. Perhaps the arrival of the Breeze saw mill in the 1820s only came about because of the banning of the slave trade and the talk of ending slavery on the colony.

The absence of machines in the manufacture of furniture prior to 1820, allows us to dismiss any object, or part of an object that demonstrates signs of machine made elements from this study. The familiar kerf marks of the circular saw blade, the vertical ones of a band saw, or the pitch marks of a thickness planner should not be present in any object predating the end of George III's reign. Therefore, albeit in a negative

sense, the absence of mechanisation in the woodwork trade allows us to study the marks and tools found in probates with the reassurance that these were the only tools used in the making of furniture up until 1820.

Summary

By looking at the furniture maker's workshop, and examining the tools he worked with, we can gain an idea of the type of furniture he was capable of producing. It has been found that some makers in Jamaica had comprehensive stocks of tools. The furniture maker was not restricted in the number and type of tools he could access and use. If we were to take a similar examination of tools in an English workshop, the list of tools would not be very different. Given most tools were imported from England, it is probably true to say the array of hand tools would have been virtually identical. The tools available to the craftsmen in Jamaica were not different from those of a British craftsman, and therefore the objects produced would only be different because of the knowledge of the man who held those tools. However, the presence of identical tools, while not helping us to separate a Jamaican workshop from a British workshop, does imply that both, potentially, were as able as one another.

If we turn our attention to the timber being used in Jamaica we also find great similarities with British furniture making. The common hardwood used by the British furniture maker was mahogany, this was also the case in Jamaica. However, in Jamaica this timber was abundant and the veneering of furniture was not prudent or necessary. Jamaican furniture was often made out of solid wood and if a secondary material was used then it was probably cedar, or credrella, which not only was cheap but was also scented which may have had the benefit of keeping termites away. Timber type can help in the identification of Jamaican objects, the use of solid mahogany and the inclusion of cedar for drawer linings and dust shelves may be a characteristic of Jamaican furniture. The metal fittings that were used to hinge and hold a variety of parts together were much like those used in Britain, except for the period of the mid eighteenth century. While some more rural Jamaican craftsmen may not have had access to British imports, this would not have differed from the predicament of the British rural craftsmen. Furthermore, unlike the British

⁵⁹⁴ The first appearance of any form of mechanisation in Jamaica seems to be the sawmill that first appears advertised in 1825 in the Jamaica Journal, 12th March, 1825. It burnt down in August 1843, IOJ, P/945/JA 1843.

vernacular object which was probably made from a local indigenous timber, the Jamaican piece would still be made of mahogany, or another tropical hardwood. Here again we may have a small opportunity to distinguish the vernacular furniture of Jamaica from that of Britain.

Although design source material has been limited, the presence of Chippendale's Director so early in the colony is clearly significant. If Jamaican furniture was being produced following the drawings of Chippendale, then how can we separate Chippendale furniture that was imported from that which was made locally? Chairs would be particularly difficult to distinguish given that there is little or no secondary material to examine, while cabinet work may reveal that secondary timbers and fittings were different. We have already seen that a number of craftsmen from Britain worked in Jamaica and were highly skilled. These craftsmen may have seen and made other pieces of fashionable furniture and would have known how to interpret the design source folios. Consequently, we can again see little reason to separate the work of a Jamaican and British craftsman. The craftsmen of Kingston appear to have been just as skilled and informed as any furniture makers in Britain. However, we see also that Jamaican furniture makers did not embrace change, machinery or innovation; and moves to rationalise the making process did not take place until the closing years of the eighteenth century.

This chapter has examined timber, metal fittings and published material for guidance as to what constitutes a Jamaican piece of furniture and what it should look like. We have also seen that tools and the method of manufacture could also help to recognise the Jamaican craftsman's work. However, if we used all these criteria and analysed furniture found in Jamaica, we would identify many pieces of furniture that could not only be Jamaican, but American or British. Certain pieces are more readily identifiable as Jamaican, as they usually do not have European models, and therefore we can call these Jamaican or a creolised form developed for the colony. However, what begins to emerge is that eighteenth century Jamaican furniture was not that different from eighteenth century British furniture. We see similar objects, made of identical materials using the same tools and the same fittings. Designs were copied from English models or from books that were just as available as in Britain.

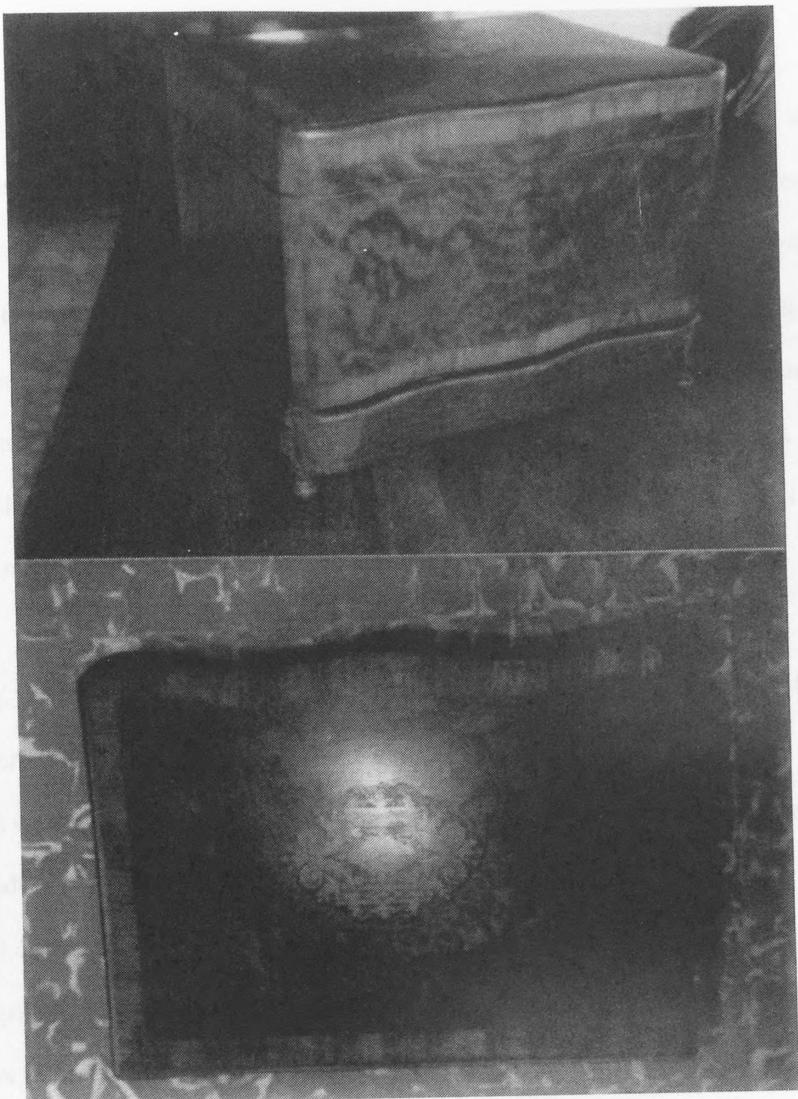


Illustration 62

This box with a cartouche that has been stamp out and then let into the top could be like that described in

John Harstead's probate of 1801. Photographed by the author, Private Collection

Conclusion

This thesis is entitled 'Furniture of eighteenth century colonial Jamaica,' we have found that not only was furniture from Britain imported, but there was a substantial local trade. Prior to this research no scholarly work had taken place on this subject, nor had any such attention been given to the importation of furniture to Jamaica. This thesis focused on those two points and it has been realised that influence on the Jamaican furniture trade was not just confined to British imports. The rich culture integration of the community has shown that national identity had its effect on the trade and the types of furniture that could have been available. English, Scots, French, Americans and probably several others had an affect on the form and style of furniture made in Jamaica.

Precarious living, prevailed in Jamaica, illness, war, slave rebellion and weather all took their toll on the residents and altered their outlook on life. While the economic histories of Jamaica tell us the island was rich, we find this wealth does not necessarily mean healthy living. Both rich and poor had very short lives and creating conditions of comfort were foremost in the development of a distinctively Jamaica lifestyle. Creolised people began to create a Jamaican lifestyle suitable for living in the tropics, which gradually adopted and adapted western and African traditions. Although transference of style and the description of language appears to have been rapid, the adoption of fashion that did not take into account comfort was unacceptable in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The creolisation of life can be seen in the houses, furnishings as well as the furniture on the island.

The furniture makers on the island were in demand, and it appears they were short in numbers for most of the century. A significant number of furniture makers served apprenticeships in Britain and were probably very skilled. Whilst these makers were not supplying furniture to aristocrats they were supplying rich planters and merchants, who would have been demanding and knowledgeable consumers. Indeed it proves to be the case that the Jamaican furniture makers in terms of their stock in trade, tools, materials and training were equal to their British counterpart, and therefore quite competent to compete with imports. However, after the American Revolution an increase in imports from Britain and the increase in the price of

slaves forces the furniture maker to consider other methods of making furniture, rather than continuing to make bespoke objects.

The research has highlighted three categories of furniture that are found in Jamaica. First, furniture that we find in Jamaica, this includes furniture that was imported or brought over as private cargoes throughout the colonial period. This furniture is easily recognisable as it is identical to that which may be found in Britain or America.

The second category, is furniture that was made in Jamaica by craftsmen who were trained in another country. The largest in this group are those British craftsmen that travelled to Jamaica, having had training prior to their departure to the tropics. While British craftsmen were the largest group it has been shown that other groups also brought their skills to the island, these included Americans and the French. While it is easier to distinguish French or American influences, it is difficult to separate the output of British craftsmen working in Jamaica from furniture which was imported from Britain. It has been demonstrated that craftsmen in Jamaica had the same tools, materials and knowledge as their British counterparts and therefore British eighteenth century furniture found in Jamaica is as likely to have been made in Jamaica as imported.

The third and finally group are those objects that were made in Jamaica, which are readily identifiable as a Jamaican style. Jamaican furniture that was made by craftsmen who were second or third generation, and given the precariously short life in Jamaica these were probably not great in number. Although the numbers of established family firms would increase the further into the nineteenth century we examine.

The development of a characteristically Jamaican style, was also seen in the planters home. Like the furniture the architecture was adapted to conform to the needs of the local population, the internal loggia of the Palladian villa became the piazza of the plantation house. The centre of the piano nobile, in the Jamaican house, became the dining room, whilst the circulation of air was allowed to enter the house from all sides, just as would be seen in an Italian Palladian villa. The development of living spaces to cope with

the local conditions was the process of creolising, upholstered furniture being replaced by solid seated chairs, furniture detached from the walls or elevated from the floor are just a few examples and adaptations necessary to achieve a level of comfort.

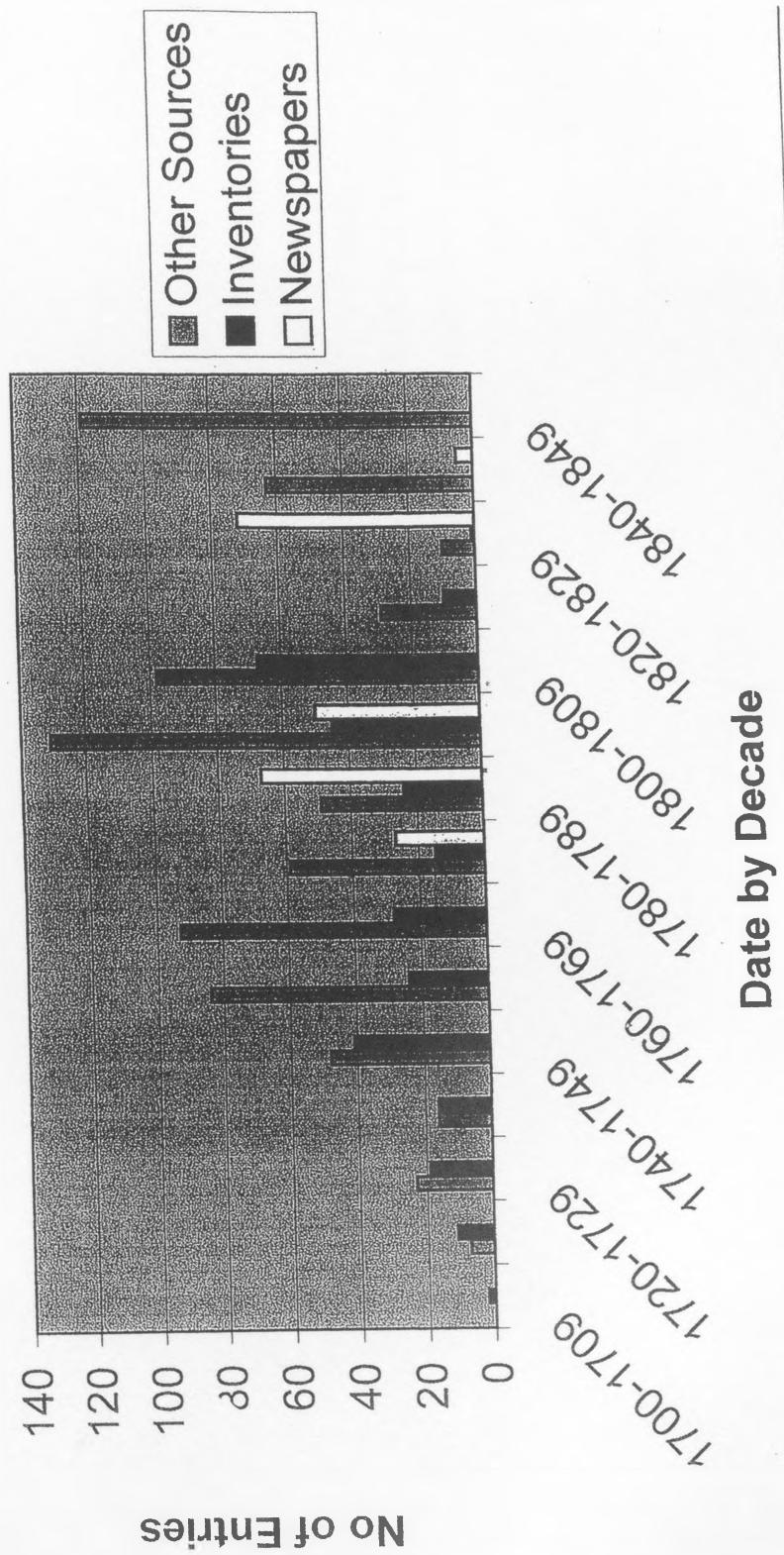
Objects have been used throughout the text to support the documentary material. It is in this way that we have been able to gain a clearer image of the type of furniture that could be seen in Jamaica. Zimmerman's model, identified at the beginning of this work, has been a useful approach, once it was inverted. In the absence of a collection of objects the approach this research develops could be a useful means to identify the nature of the objects sought in other fields of study. Once that has been achieved then finding objects would be easier, as is the case with this work. The methodology could also be a refreshing approach to examining furniture when there is a collection of objects to hand. In not analysing the objects until contextual and documentary evidence has been studied the objects may well be able to raise new issues. All to often in recent research the direction of the examination has been dictated by what the objects reveal and not by what the contextual material determines.

The methodology however does have its drawbacks, this research has been fortunate in the wealth of information available, and that has allowed us to speculate and draw conclusion. Different object types may not be so fruitful, however, for any research on a colony that produced its own decorative arts this methodology would have some advantage.

While the research into the furniture trade brought about some conclusive results other areas of study could only be speculated upon. Further research on the venture cargo trades of New England and Rhode Island would advance our knowledge of furniture in the region, as well as shed light on the New England venture cargo trade. Other research on American loyalist would be another promising area of research that could influence the results of this work. Yet most importantly for this work is the further quest for more objects and evidence that will tell us more about the Jamaican furniture trade. This research is the seminal work on the subject and it can be hoped that others can and will expand on the subject, and that the regions decorative arts will be given more serious attention.

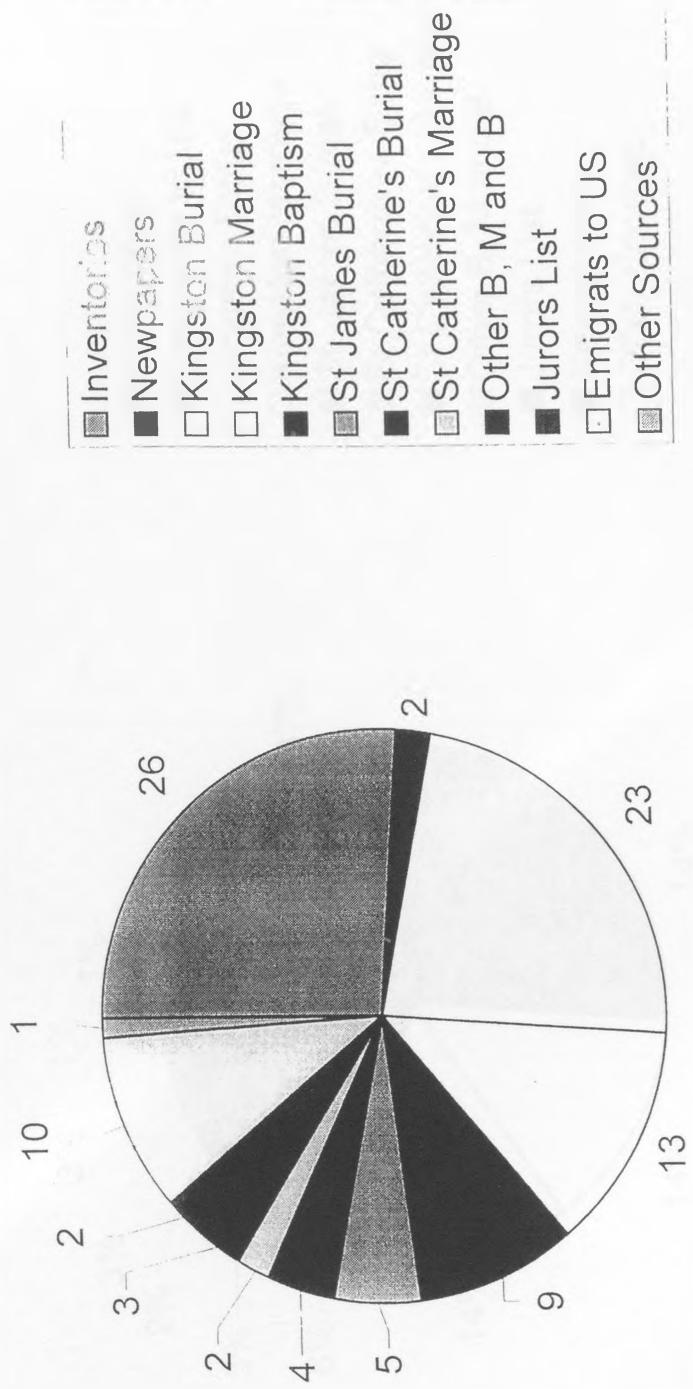
Appendix 1

Distribution of Information by Date

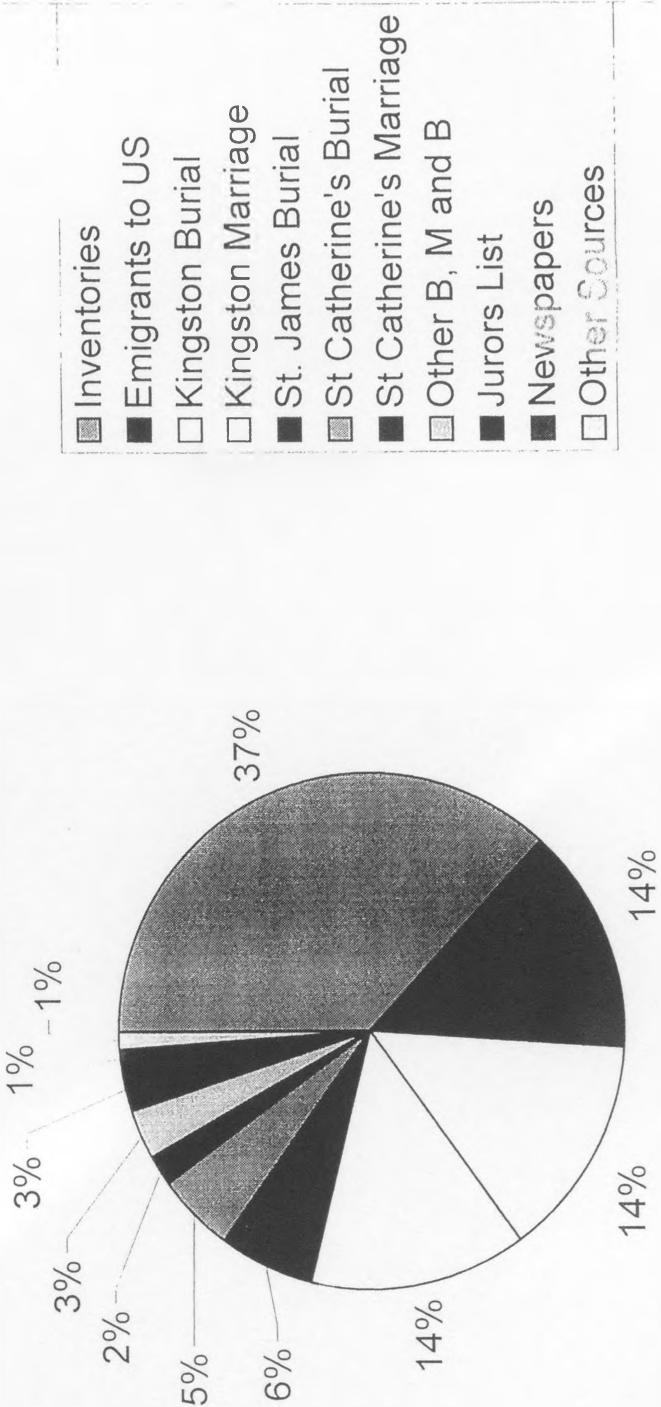


Appendix 2

Source & Percentage of Information, 1700-1849

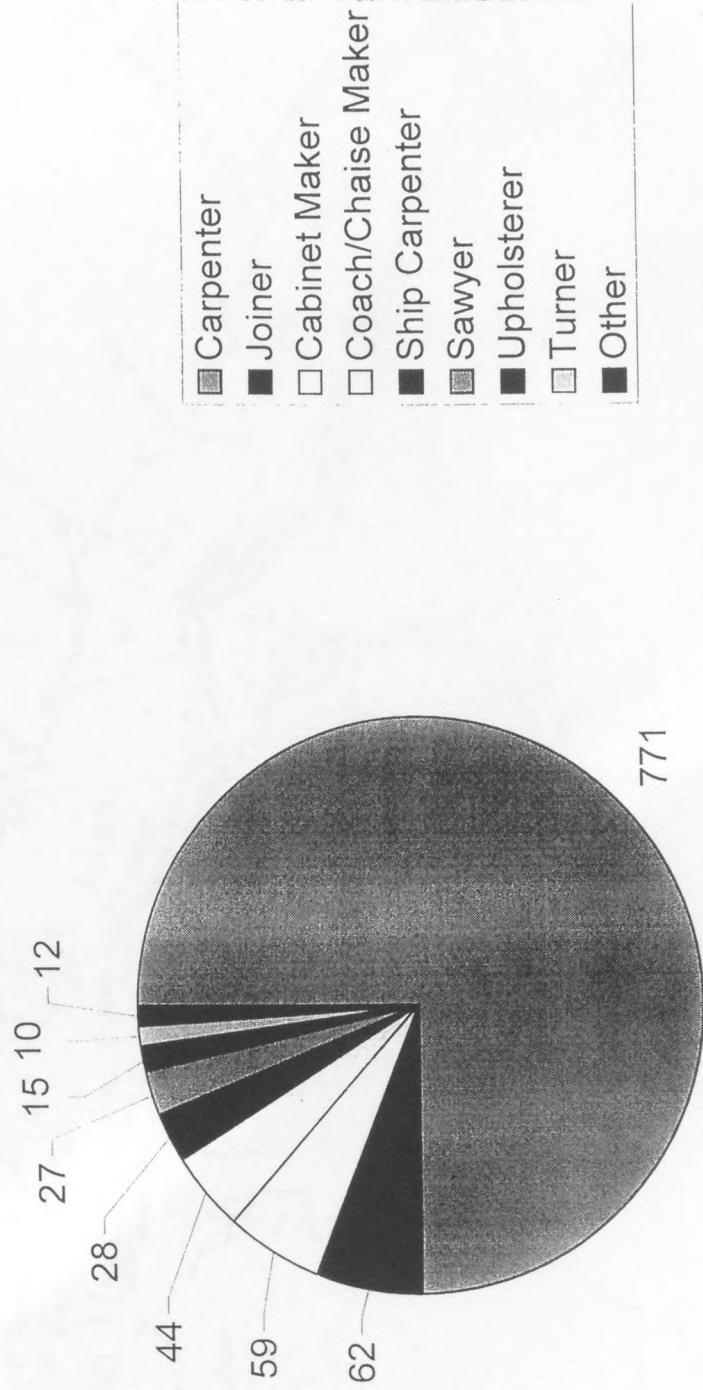


Sources & Percentage of Information, 1700-1810



Appendix 3

Number of craftsmen on database, 1700-1850



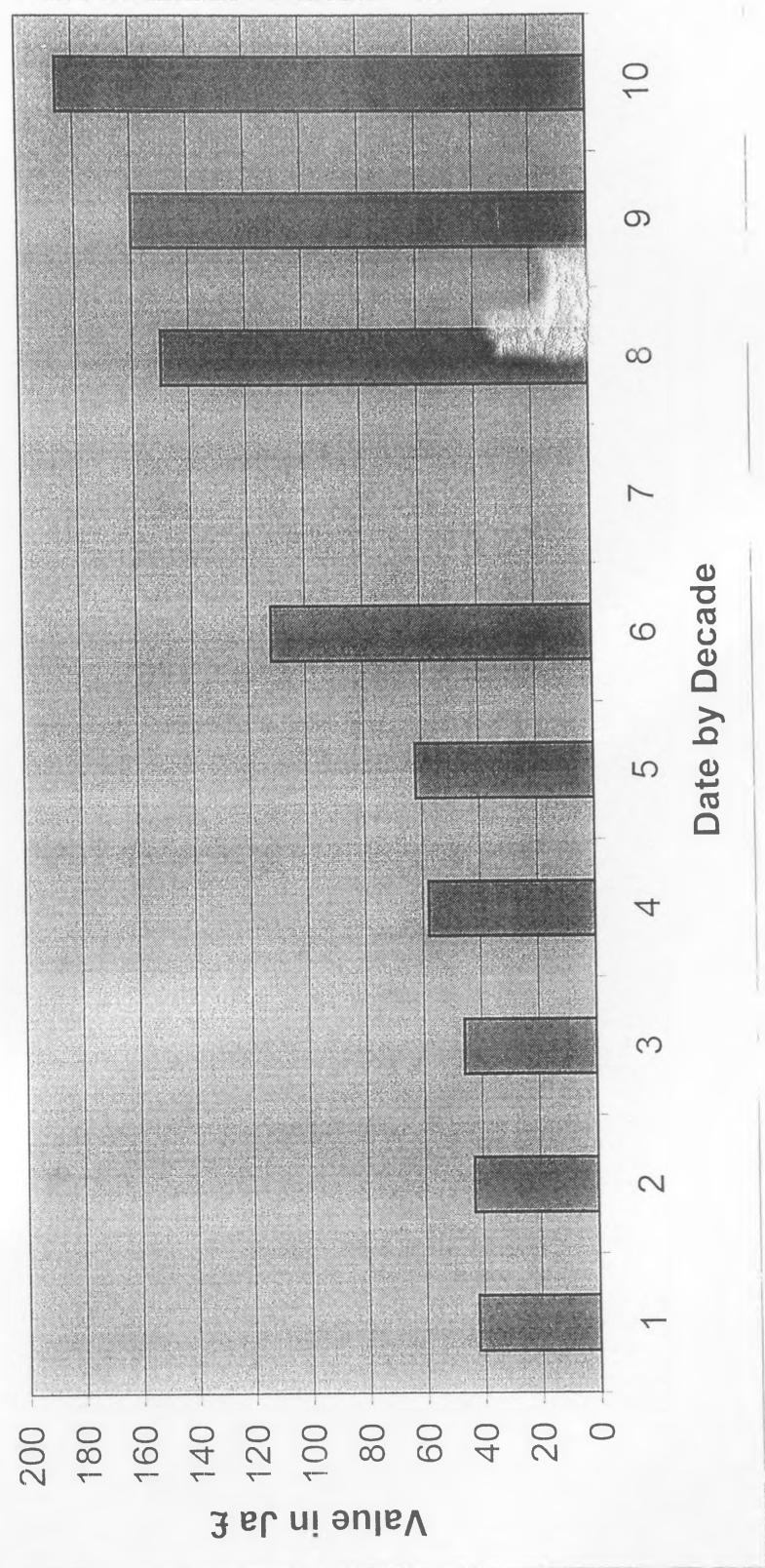


Map of Jamaica, illustrating the concentration of craftsmen in the Kingston throughout the eighteenth century,

David Buisseret, Historic Jamaica from the Air, 1996, Ian Randle, Jamaica, p. 56.

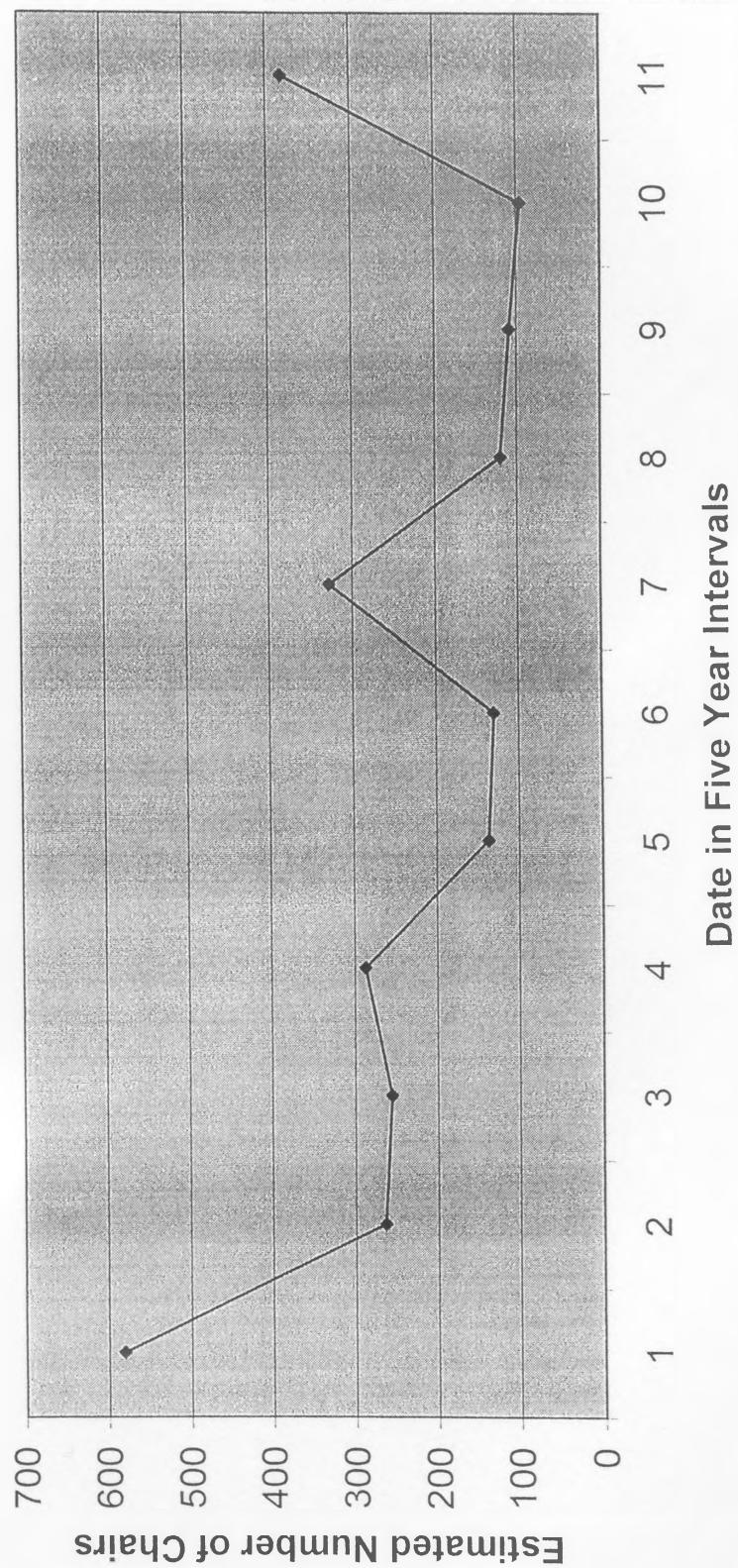
Appendix 4

Value of Skilled Slaves by decade as recorded in 18th century probates



Appendix 5

Exports of chairs from Britain to Jamaica from 1699 to 1749, as documented on British customs records (Cust 3)



Appendix 6

**List of craftsmen who served Apprenticeships,
and who later migrated to Jamaica
(Arranged Numerically According to Apprenticeship Date)**

Inland Revenue One

Name	Apprentice Date	Trade	Date in JA
John White	1714	Carpenter	1715
Jacob Miller	1714	Carpenter	1727
Thomas Sheppard	1716	Joiner	1730
John Phipps	1717	Carpenter	1727
John Burrell	1717	Carpenter	1728
Robert Beard	1718	Carpenter	1731
John Spurling	1718	Carpenter	1731
Abraham Carter	1719	Carpenter	1731
John Simmonds	1720	Coachmaker	1732
James Fisher	1720	Joiner	1724
Thomas Cursworth	1720	Upholsterer	1723>
William Singer	1722	Carpenter	1735
Walton Steveens	1723	Upholsterer	1733
William Lewis	1723	Carpenter	1735
William Waddell	1724	Joiner	1729
Francis Moore	1724	Joiner	1739
William Warren	1725	Joiner	1735
John Welsh	1728	Carpenter	1744
John Miller	1728	Carpenter	1772
John Diker	1730	Carpenter	1757
William Lush	1730	Carpenter	1734
John Dakers	1730	Carpenter	1775
James Taylor	1735	Carpenter	1747
John Coughling	1736	Carpenter	1747
George Thompson	1737	Carpenter	1753
Mathew Nutter	1737	Carpenter	1771
John Pearson	1741	Turner	1759
John Whally	1741	Carpenter	1758
Richard Osborne	1741	Carpenter	1756
Lauchlin McLean	1742	Carpenter	1756
William Knight	1743	Carpenter	1757
Samuel Benge	1744	Upholsterer	1796
Ralph Richardson	1745	Coachmaker	1754
William Moore	1746	Carpenter	1751
Joseph Harris	1746	Carpenter	1783
Jonathan Sharpe	1749	Joiner	1758
Thomas Phillips	1751	Coachmaker	1767
Peter Johnson	1751	Carpenter	1766
John Mitchell	1752	Cabinet Maker	1800
Alexander Morrison	1753	Carpenter	1768
John Humphries	1753	Coachpainter	1780
Thomas Brown	1754	Carpenter	1794

Inland Revenue One Continued:-

Name	Apprentice Date	Trade	Date in JA
George Hewitt	1755	Coachmaker	1776
William Coates	1755	Carpenter	1785
John Boyd	1757	Carpenter	1759
William Gosling	1757	Carpenter	1769
Richard Hodges	1757	Carpenter	1775
James Baker	1757	Ship Carpenter	1779
David Thomas	1757	Carpenter	1782
David Reid	1758	Carpenter	1769
William Harris	1758	Carpenter	1766
Robert Duncan	1759	Carpenter	1766
John Powell	1759	Upholsterer	1780
James Brown	1760	Carpenter	1780
William Dickson	1761	Carpenter	1790
Joseph Stafford	1766	Carpenter	1772

Date in Jamaica is the date they were either last known to be in Jamaica or the date of the probate.

Appendix 7

Transfer of skilled Woodworkers between America and Jamaica

Key

JA = Jamaica
 SC = South Carolina
 GA = Georgia
 VA = Virginia
 NY = New York
 MA = Maryland
 PA = Pennsylvannia
 > = After this date
 < = Before this date
 - = Unknown

Woodworkers going to Jamaica from America

Name	Trade	UK	US	SC	JA
Peter Dugue	Ship Carpenter	-	-	<	1697-1721
John Gale	Carpenter	-	-	1697	d.1712
James Anderson	Carpenter	<1736	GA>	-	d. 1762
William Williamson	Cabinet Maker	<	MA 1758	-	1766
Robert Burrough	Carver	1731	-	<	1766
James Young	Joiner	<	-	1753	1774
Barrow Johnston	Upholsterer	<	-	1774	d.1787
Alexander Drysdale	Carpenter	-	GA1780s-		d.1790
Thomas Smith	Carpenter	<1775	VA	-	d.1791
Robert Robertson	Carpenter	Scot	VA1775	-	1802
William Thompson	Carpenter	-	VA1790s	-	d.1804
John Boyd	Upholsterer	Scot	-	1802	d.1816
John Fisher	Cabinet Maker	1750s	-	1760-84	d.1804

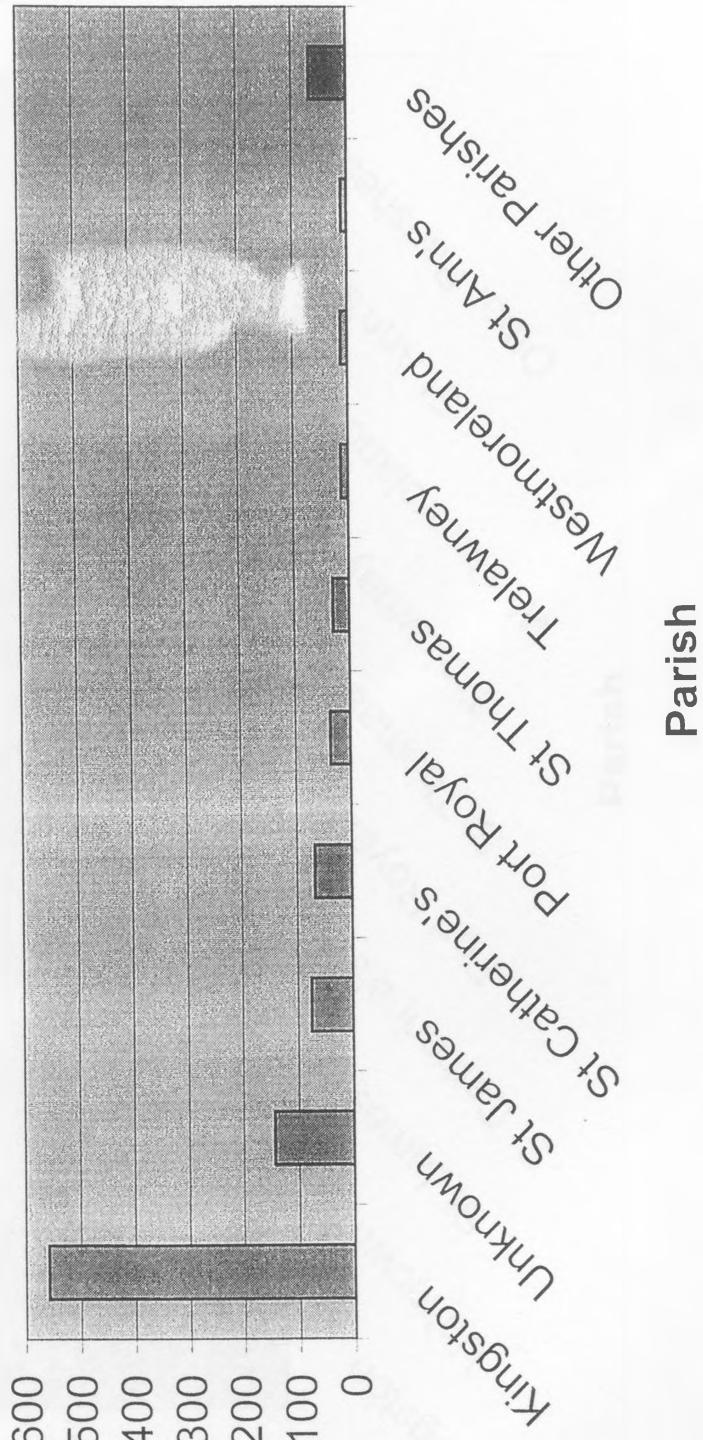
Woodworkers coming from Jamaica to America

Name	Trade	UK	JA	SC	US
John Walker	Carpenter	-	1670s	1689/90	-
John Clayton	Clockmaker	<	<	1743	-
James Thorn	Carpenter	-	1758	-	NY1758
Thomas Coleman	Upholder	<	1757	1766-69	-
Edward Ashwood	Ship Carpenter	<	<	-	GA1776
William Tweed	Ship Carpenter	Scot	1775	1778	-
George Richmond	Carpenter	Scot	1780	-	VA1792
William Armstrong	Coachmaker	Scot	1760s	1788-1805	-
Robert Glover	Carpenter	-	<	-	GA1805
Charles Henry Miot	Carpenter	-	1787	1814-22	-
Samual Benge	Upholsterer	<	1788	-	PA1789

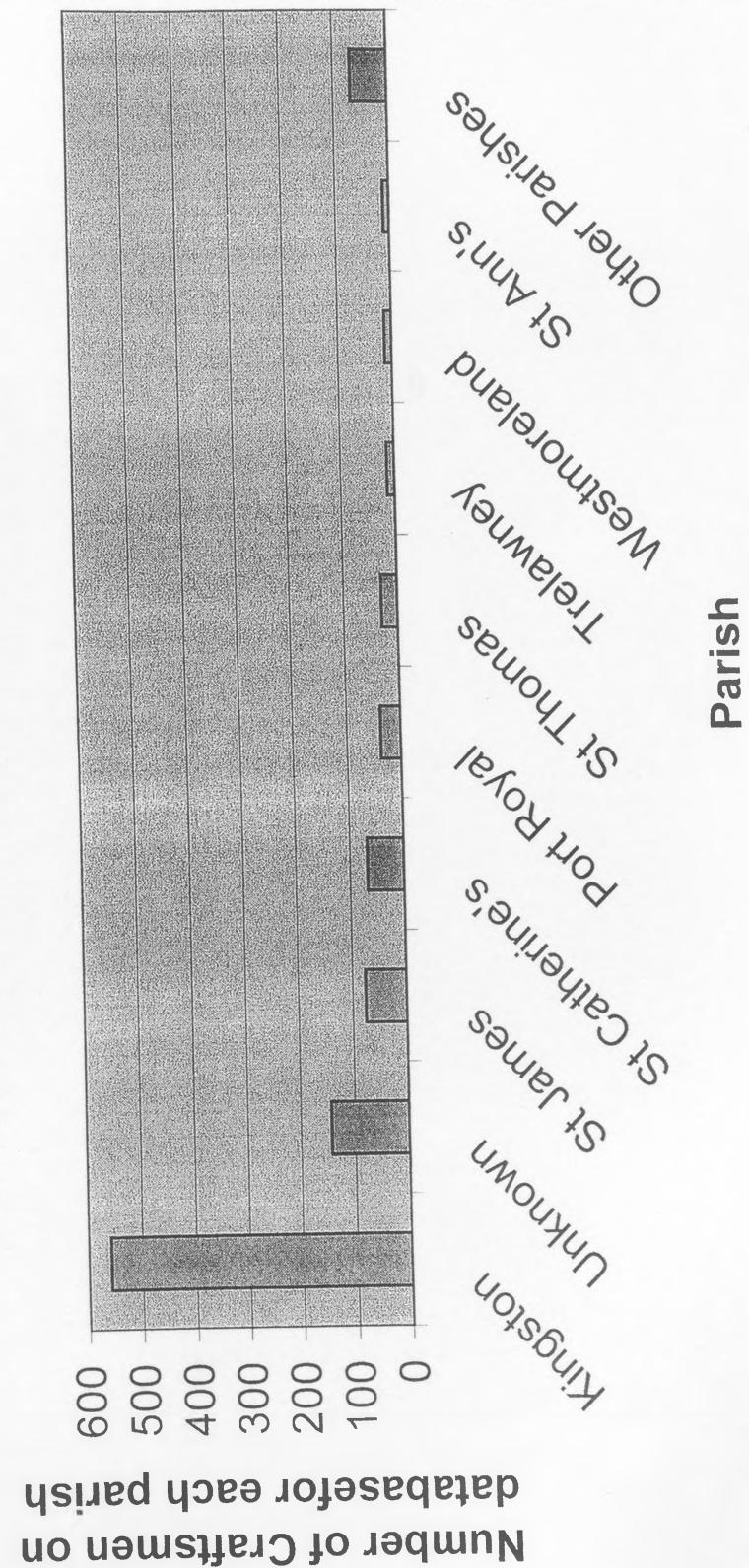
Appendix 8

Parishes in which Craftsmen were registered on
their probate or found to be residing

Number of Craftsmen on
database for each parish

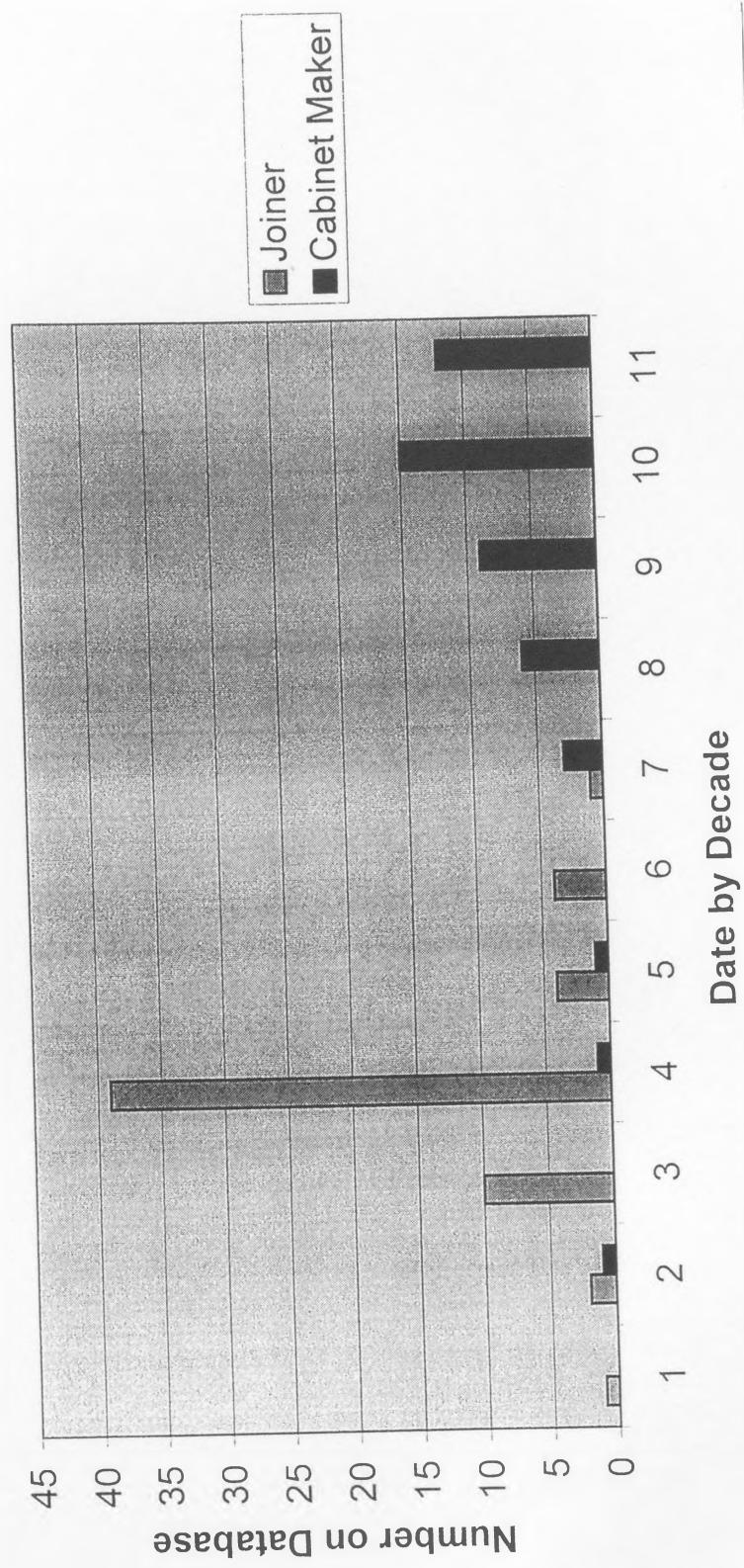


Parishes in which Craftsmen were registered on
their probate or found to be residing



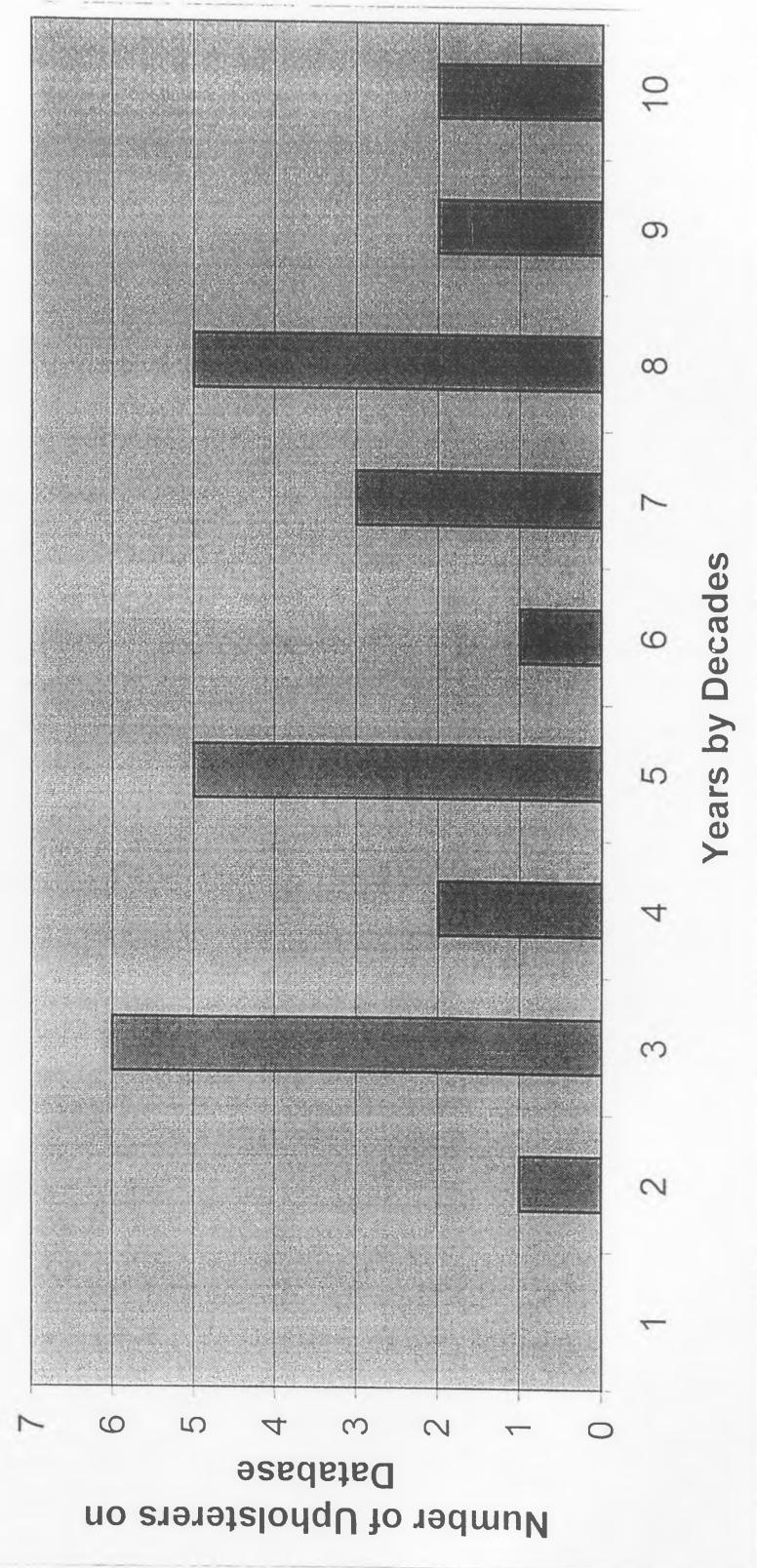
Appendix 9

The number of joiners and cabinet makers documented as
working in 18th century Jamaica



Appendix 10

Distribution of Upholsterers, in Jamaica during the 18th century



Appendix 11

This appendix describes Jamaican made objects that are depicted in this thesis. Those objects that were imported are not included. For those objects that have either a provenance or a known maker then as well as a description there will accompany a short biography of the maker. Those objects that may appear in several illustrations, such as the Windsor chair, will have one generic description in this appendix. All the objects below have been examined by the author, illustration numbers refer to that in the text and all dimensions are in metric.

Illustration 1 Ralph Turnbull Games Table

Circa 1830

Yacca Wood with Specimen Tabletop

L 85 x W 34.5 x H 75

Ralph Turnbull thought to have been born in north the east borders between England and Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century arrived in Jamaica 1813/14 and had established a business by 1815. Ralph's brother Cuthbert also practised as a cabinet-maker as illustrated in contemporary newspapers. They clearly fell out, only to re-establish their relationship on the death of Ralph's wife and two sons in 1838 and 1844. He was left with one daughter. Ralph Turnbull's furniture is usually labelled and follows a similar design to that shown, tables and boxes with specimen woods from Jamaica in the interior or on the top surface. As well as labels, Turnbull furniture has occasionally been accompanied by a sheet of paper that illustrates all the timbers of the specimen top signed in Turnbull's hand. The most famous of these was the piece that was sold to Governor Sligo in the 1830s, Sligo is reputed to have visited Turnbull's workshop in Hanover and Port Royal Street, Kingston during his tenureship.

The table illustrated is typical of the tables Turnbull executed. The top section usually includes backgammon and chest board. The chest board is placed at the bottom of the well and the backgammon board on the reverse side to the tabletop. The top itself is veneered with yacca wood and crossed banded possibly kingwood. The side leaves are hinged by rule joints, which in turn are supported by carved stylised brackets. The top section is supported on a single square and canted column with ovolu and ogee mouldings to the top, middle and bottom. The platform again is yacca wood veneered onto a mahogany carcase. The feet are carved with upturned Ionic capitals. Further mouldings, bead or bead and stick are located around the base of the tabletop and the bottom edge of the platform.

Illustration 2 James Pitkin Specimen Miniature Chest

Circa 1830s

Mahogany with Specimen Interior

L 30.5 x W 23 x H 33

James Pitkin is first recorded in Jamaica in 1838 as marrying Amelia, again he appears in the birth register as having a son in 1844. His workshop, as described in his trade label, states that it was located in North West Corner of Church Street and Water Lane, Kingston. Pitkin, probably in the 1860s went into partnership with William Lee, who co-incidentally married Ralph Turnbull's only daughter and child.

The straight-sided box supports a sarcophagus shape lid, which hinges back to reveal hidden compartments. The box is constructed in mahogany and veneered in curl mahogany the lid is framed in tightly carved bead moulding, this moulding is also apparent around the base of the chest and on the outside frame of the two doors. The chest sits on four white ceramic feet. The interior consists of three drawers (one being a false drawer front), each drawer being veneered in different woods. Each drawer is fitted out differently, the bottom drawer has a writing slope, the middle is fitted with sewing equipage and the top drawer remains empty. The label is located on the inside of the lid.

Illustration 3 Goss Side Table

Circa 1770s

Mahogany

L 152 x W 74 x H 84

The botanist Philip Goss is said to have owned this table, however, this has not been proven, the table's maker remains unknown. The side table is constructed of solid mahogany; the four cabriole legs terminate in lion paw feet with knees carved with shallow incised carvings depicting acanthus leaves. The table is constructed using a typical mortise and tenon frame construction, with the top screwed onto the frame. A cornice of various running mouldings including ogee, bolection and ovolo frames the top.

Illustration 4 Mahogany Cellaret on Column and Tripod Legs

Circa 1800

Mahogany

L 46 x W 38 x H 81

Mahogany cellaret, constructed in the solid with through dovetails. The top and bottom is rebated onto the carcase, the lock and escutcheon having been replaced. A reeded moulding has been applied to the bottom edge of the box. The interior has lost its original interior, but some ghost marks and notches indicate it was indeed used as a cellaret. The box sits on a turned column that then terminates into tripod legs. These legs are also reeded.

Illustration 7 Open Fretted Swan Neck Pediment

Circa 1780s

Mahogany

L 47 x W 38 x H 47

This top section of a bureau bookcase found in Jamaica could have been made in Jamaica, but this remains far from certain. The carcase is probably constructed by means of dovetails and made in solid mahogany with the back rebated into this frame, timber in the back was not ascertained. The thirteen pane doors are typical of the period, however the broken swan necked cornice is of significance. The only one of its type found in Jamaica the open fretwork and the elaborate terminating scroll being of fine craftsmanship. Similar examples can be found in Charleston, South Carolina (Southern Furniture, 1997 p.382).

Illustration 8 Late Eighteenth Century Armoire

Circa 1790s

Mahogany

Dimension Unknown

Solid mahogany armoire, mortise and tenon construction held by mahogany pegs. The austere exterior of the armoire is reminiscent of the 'Directoire' period. The frame constructed doors with flush panels are held onto the carcase by characteristically French barrel hinges. The cornice lifts free from the main section, whilst the interior is plain, having only a hanging rail, it is unclear whether this is correct.

Illustration 11 Jamaican Sopha

Circa 1800

Mahogany

L 228 x W 94 x H 91

The primary and secondary timbers of this sopha are made of solid mahogany, indicating that it is more likely to have been made in Jamaica than America or Britain. The original upholstery has been lost, but clearly there is evidence of a pallaise instead of a stuff-over seat. The serpentine shape back and the scrolling arms with straight Marlborough legs is similar to those that can be found in Britain, America and contemporary caricatures of the period in Jamaica. The underframe is supported by H-stretches.

Illustration 12 Yacca Wood Sopha Table

Circa 1820

Yacca with Yacca Veneer

L 112 x W 54.5 x H 76

This sopha table is made of solid yacca wood with yacca wood veneers applied. The table dismantles into three parts the platform, column and top section, each section being held together by tapering pegs. The legs are attached to the platform by dovetail housing joints, possibly the gauge marks suggesting there are diminishing dovetail housings. The column is housed though the platform and wedge by a peg. The column is formed in the manner of a cannon, which again is attached to the top section by a mortise and peg. The drawer is constructed around the peg; therefore the drawer is constructed in a very usual and non-conformist manner. The table top, the top section carcase and the drawer all have ebony stringing on all four sides. The top elevation has a rather usual design, which is all executed in yacca wood. The design has been said to be either Masonic or has African origins and symbolises fertility, no evidence has proved either correct.

Illustration 25 English Style Mahogany Table

Circa 1710-1720

Mahogany

L 107 x W 55 x H 79

This table sometimes referred to as a tavern table is made of solid mahogany and held together by mortise and tenon joints with mahogany pegs. The top is also of mahogany and has an ogee moulding to the edge. The table is typical of an English table of similar design except in the use of mahogany for its construction, which would be extremely rare. Another example of this type also in mahogany was purchased by MESDA in 2001, however, the original owner of the MESDA table was a West Indian planter and could have been of Caribbean origin too.

Illustration 27 Jamaican Gate Legged Table

Circa 1710-1720

Mahogany

L 178 x W 46 x H 72.5

Mahogany gate legged table of large proportions. Eight turned legs, consisting of four gates support the table and two six foot long leaves. The jointing mechanism is standard mortise and tenons with mahogany pegs, the gates swivelling on dowels. The table is unusual in being constructed on mahogany, examples of a similar design can be found in America in walnut and English models can be found in oak.

Illustration 32 Japanned Corner Cupboard

Circa 1730

Substrate Timber Unknown

Dimensions Unknown

Although this japanned cupboard is typical of corner cupboards produced in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there is strong evidence to suggest that such objects were made in Jamaica up until the late 1720s. This example was not examined closely and therefore the timber utilised on the substrate, shelves and back are not known. Should the timber be indigenous to Jamaica then it is likely this example was made locally.

The corner cupboard has coopered curved doors that have then been gessoed and lacquered using shellac, goldleaf and pigments. The design on the doors is familiar to those seen in Europe, being chinoiserie possibly following the design patterns of Stalker and Parker. The interior is painted a sage green and the three shelves are scalloped on the front edge. The hinges are placed on the exterior face of the doors.

Illustration 33 Jamaican Beaufett

Circa 1810

Mahogany

L 104 x W 51 x H 129

This three shelved beaufett sits on a cupboard. The cupboard is of a standard panel construction, as are the two doors each of which have field panels. On the two front canted corners of the cupboard are two split columns. The cupboard stands on turned feet. The shelves on the cupboard are supported by turned uprights, which are offset, at each level allowing the shelves to become reduced in width, the narrowest being at the top. The top shelf has turnings that terminate in stylised pineapples, connecting the turnings is a gallery of turned mahogany. The other two shelves have an enclosed gallery, but only on the back elevation. Each shelf has mouldings around the front and sides, but none to the back. The key escutcheons are cast brass cartouches, which are nailed to the doors. The finish to the beaufett is not original.

Illustration 34 & 48 Jamaican Sideboard

Circa Late 18th Century

Substrate and Veneered in Mahogany

L 183 x W 61 x H 102

Whilst this design is commonly seen in English examples (Ralph Edwards, 1966, pp. 477-478) these particular pieces are Jamaican. Their mahogany carcasses and rather crude proportions and construction seem to be at odds with their Sheraton design. One of the sideboards lacks a gallery, which are usually found on such pieces, however, both have four drawers which are arranged as should be expected. In these typical examples the right-hand drawer acts as a cellaret, complete with zinc paper lining. Despite the drawers being veneered in mahogany with a boxwood type stringing incorporated the rest of the objects are not veneered. The top surfaces are in the solid, the bow fronts being shaped to mirror the front elevation of the carcase. The six Marlborough legs, which consist of four to the front, break the front elevation into three sections, terminate in a spade or Marlborough foot. Both sideboards have had the centre sections altered or show modifications. The plated handles are original on both pieces.

Illustration 35 Bedstead with Solomonic Columns

Circa 1880s

Mahogany

L 208 x W 158 x H 254

This Jamaican bed with canopy is made of solid mahogany, both the head and footboard are predominantly turned with a serpentine moulded top rail. The turnings are all open double Solomonic columns, which demonstrate the skill of the craftsman who made this bed lucidly. The bottom two legs are finished with urn shaped finials, whilst the top section is plainly constructed with a rounded cornered cornice. Again short finials hang down from the canopy. The hangings are clearly not correct, but the starch posts allow us to view the frame.

Illustration 36 Low Back Windsor Chair

Circa late 18th century

Mahogany

L 58 x W 48 x H 82

The low back Windsor chair is the commonest of the types of Windsor chairs found in Jamaica. This, like many of this type, is made of mahogany, the spindles, legs, arm rest and seat all being of mahogany. The turned sections are all located into sockets into the seat. Many varieties of this low back exist in Jamaica, different leg turnings, spindle profiles and back construction mean many similar chairs exist. Whilst many mahogany Windsor chairs were imported from America and Britain they were also made on the island. It is difficult to differentiate imports from locally produced Windsor's chairs, however, indigenous chairs appear to have seats with the grain direction moving from front to back. It is usual for the grain direction to move across the seat from side to side. Whilst this appears to be the most obvious characteristic of a

Jamaican Windsor chair other telling signs include crude turnings and a more rudimentary jointing method for the arm rest.

Illustration 47 D-End Dining Table

Circa 1800

Mahogany

L 109 x W 58 x 72

This D-end dining table is constructed of mahogany with an apron that is veneered in mahogany, cocking beading being attached to the bottom edge of the apron. The apron is constructed in the solid, which is then jointed into the legs. The Marlborough legs and the tabletop are both made from solid mahogany.

Numerous houses and inventories list or have a pair of these tables with the accompanying centre table with its two deep leaves and swinging legs to support these leaves. The three tables can be set up to form a large table with D-end shaped ends, hence the name. The need for a table of this form can be explained by the position of the dining table in the centre of the main social room in the interior. Clearly, when these tables were not in use it was a design requirement that the table should be folded away and the space liberated.

Illustration 49 Concertina Action Card Table

Circa 1780s

Mahogany

L 72 x W 36 x H 70

This game table sits on four cabriole legs with knees carved with incised acanthus leaves. Characteristically this ornamentation appears to extend beyond the knee and into the reverse curve of the cabriole form. The leg terminates into a ball and claw foot, which appears weak; the ball is a semi-sphere and the claws rather shallow in detail. The tabletop is turreted and hinged and folded from the centre, but no counter recesses have been included, as one might expect. The serpentine front and back is again crude, the turret being reflected in the apron, but rather abruptly is not introduced into the serpentine shape itself. The impression being that the apron of the table has not been completed. The table extends by the means of a concertina action, again rather than following the normal convention of achieving this with the use of either knuckle joints or diminishing housing joints, the maker has chosen to use iron hinges. The consequence is the table is not secure when in the open position.

Although this table's maker had pretensions of being sophisticated, it is revealed that the construction, the action and the understanding of the design of table were not fully comprehended.

Illustration 50 Jamaica Sideboard on Tripod Legs with Turned Columns

Circa 1830s

Mahogany

L 280 x W 76 x H 107

This enormous sideboard sits on two turned columns with sabre tripod feet to each column. The front and side aprons are straight with a running reeded mould that is only interrupted by the leg posts. There are no drawers to the front or the sides therefore despite it's large size this piece of furniture is purely a serving table. The top is solid mahogany with a raised solid frieze to the back. However, the main characteristic of this piece of furniture is its size, it is nearly three metres in length and over one metre in height. Whilst this example is unusual in its size the form can frequently be found in Jamaica.

Illustration 51 Plantation Chair with Leather Seat

Circa 19th Century

Mahogany

Dimensions Unknown

Plantation chairs were a common feature on a Jamaican piazza in the nineteenth century. The back crest rails have been found with many different designs and motifs, but the more common variety is plain with

no decoration or shaping. This example has a centre panel, which is intricately carved with a basket weave design with turned face plate roundels attached.

Slinging and nailing a piece of leather between the crest rail and the front seat rail forms the seat of the plantation chair. The consequence is the chair allows the sitter to recline in an informal posture, this reclining position can be further accommodated by the addition on some chairs of swivelling arms that extend so the sitters legs can be raised off the ground. In raising your feet off the ground the sitter could relax in the knowledge that insects could not climb up their legs. These chairs were very popular not only in the Caribbean but also in the East Indies. Their success lies in the fact that they were comfortable, practical and cheap.

Illustration 56 Metamorphic Library Chair

Circa 1820s

Material Unknown

Dimensions Unknown

The construction of this chair is clearly inspired by Morgan and Sanders metamorphic library steps and chair, which was published in Ackerman's Repository in 1811 (Collard, 1985, p. 20). The chair transforms into a set of steps when the top is lifted forward. However, whilst Morgan and Sanders version is solid and impressive the Jamaica example is shaky and awkward in its design. It is likely the maker of this chair had not seen such a design and was either reliant on the client to illustrate the design or by seeing the form in pattern sources of the period.

Illustration 58 Chippendale Style Commode Chair

Circa 1770s

Mahogany

D 46 x W 61 x H 99

This Chippendale commode chair is a rare example of an eighteenth century object still located in Jamaica. The chair's primary and secondary timbers are both in mahogany. The stylistic appearance clearly illustrates that a cabinet-maker who was very competent and accomplished made the chair. The arms and how they move into the arm support is very skilfully achieved while the open fretwork splat is also executed very well. Generally the chair conforms to all the norms of a metropolitan chair, with the exception of the secondary woods all being constructed of mahogany. It is difficult to be certain that this chair was made in Jamaica, but given the existence of Chippendale Director in the late 1750s it is possible.

Illustration 62 Cartouche Box

Circa 1800

Mahogany with Burr Veneer

L 34 x W 25 x H 25

The exact construction of this box is unknown due to the veneering on all four sides and it's top. The veneer although it looks similar to amboyna, is not and remains undetermined. The box front is of a shallow serpentine shape, whilst the other three sides are kept straight. The box is veneered with cross banding of kingwood around the edge. On the top a cartouche has been set into the veneer, which appears to have been stamped rather than sawn. The base of the box is elevated by means of a plain ebonised frieze, similar to that on the canted edges of the top surface. The whole object stands on small ebonised turned feet.

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Abbreviations

BL = British Library, London

BL Colindale = British Library Newspaper Repository, Colindale, London

BPL = Boston Public Library

CLDS = Church of the Latter Day Saints, South Kensington, London

CLRO = Corporation of London Record Office, London

DU = Duke University, North Carolina, USA

HSP = Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

IOJ = Institute of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica, WI

IRI = Inland Revenue I

JNA = Jamaican National Archive

MESDA = Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston Salem, North Carolina, USA

NAL = National Art Library

NMM = National Maritime Museum

RIHS = Rhode Island Historical Society

PHS = Philadelphia Historical Society

PRO = Public Record Office, London

SRO = Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh

V&A = Victoria and Albert Museum

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