



Fairfield Notes

A Closer Look at the Past Issue 4 December 2020

The Fairfield Homestead Heritage Association welcomes you to our new digital newsletter!

Do you know any fellow history enthusiasts who might be interested in *Fairfield Notes*?

Please forward them a copy and suggest they send an email to

fairfield1793@gmail.com to be added to our mailing list.

This issue's material has been researched and edited by Emma Wyse and Barb Snyder.

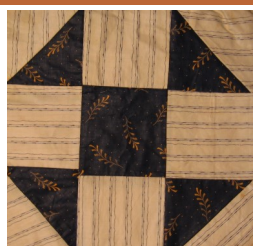
Fairfield quilt photographs by Emma Wyse.



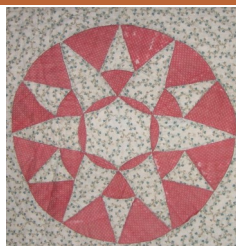
Artifact Spotlight: *The Quilts*



Pieced block waiting to join a pattern



Swallow in the Path,
F491.4 a-i



Harvest Sun,
005.001.070



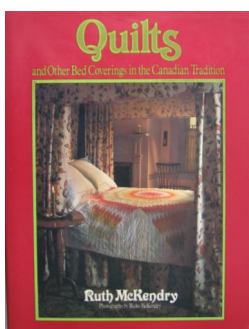
Variable Star,
F491.3



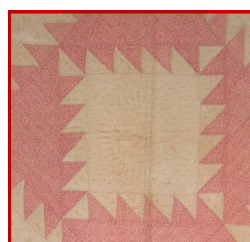
Swallow in the Path,
F491.4a-i

With the arrival of wintery weather, we bring you a special—and especially cozy—edition of *Fairfield Notes* with a focus on some of the quilts in the collection. Clearly, piecing quilts was an art form and a pastime practiced by women in the Fairfield family over many years.

Clever arranging of fabric pieces produced a fascinating visual variety (remember the kaleidoscope) with many names to match. Ruth McKendry's wonderful book, *Quilts and Other Bed Coverings in the Canadian Tradition* is filled with the traditions of handmade bedding of early Ontario and will provide hours of exploration of illustrated quilt patterns. It was an important source for this issue of *Fairfield Notes*.



The book includes a photograph of the Fairfield high post bed (F003) in the first floor bedroom (McKendry, 44). The quilt on the bed has the “Delectable Mountain” pattern done in pink and white cotton. This pattern was most popular during the 1840s to 1860s (127), which gives us a potential date range for its creation.



005.001.073



Warmth Beneath the Decorative Layer



What is a quilt?

A quilt consists of a three layers which are secured together by stitches. Between the decorative top fabric layer and the backing fabric, there is an insulating layer to trap body heat.

At left, the cotton batting middle layer (marked by the red ovals) peeks out of a well-worn Fairfield quilt with a **Log Cabin** top made from a variety of fabrics that were at hand.

Learn more about this quilt (005.001.071) on page 2.



Log Cabin Quilts

The Fairfield collection has three intact Log Cabin quilts, shown below. Plus, there's a dozen pieced Log Cabin blocks (F497 A-L) that were never assembled, shown in the borders of the page.

These 8.5" square blocks are closer to the initial flurry of activity: gathering fabric, sorting, deciding what to use, then cutting strips of plaid, satin, polka dot, velvet, floral print, horseshoe pattern, hounds tooth, and checks. All blocks used different fabric combinations; the constant was a red center.

Strips of fabric build around that center to create the characteristic Log Cabin block, which has light and dark triangular halves. The arrangement of light and dark in the final quilt top produced a variety of overall patterning in Log Cabin quilts.

Each of the finished Log Cabin quilts at Fairfield House has a different light/dark effect.

Read about Log Cabin Quilts Online

“Log Cabin Quilts: Inspirations from the Past”, article by Jane Hall, 2004. Hall looks at the pattern in North America and British Isles, where she found “the pattern is often called ‘Canadian Logwork’”. The pattern’s origin is not Canada, but may be ancient Egypt! (https://www.womenfolk.com/quilt_pattern_history/logcabin.htm)

“Log Cabin Quilts – A Short History”, blog by Susan Ellis, found at AQSblog.com.



005.001.086



005.001.085

Above left. This Log Cabin quilt is the finest in materials. It has more uniformity of colour than the one pictured to the far right (005.001.071) and it has been nicely finished with a pink satin backing which is still in pristine condition.

Center. Quilt 005.001.085, although much worn on the edges (see page 1), would still present a very lively appearance when fully spread on a bed.

Right. This quilt top has been arranged in the **Barn Raising** pattern. Can you spot how its single blocks differ from those of the other two quilts?



005.001.071. Barn Raising pattern

Traditionally the centers of Log Cabin blocks are red, a symbol of a fiery hearth “in which the light must never go out.” (McKendry, 111). But, there’s more.



More About Log Cabin Block Centers

The black or gray centers of the Barn Raising quilt suggest a cold or empty hearth. Susan Ellis, in her American Quilters Society blog, wrote that in the United States “anecdotal evidence, based on oral folklore, suggests that . . . a Log Cabin quilt with a black center hanging on a clothesline was meant to

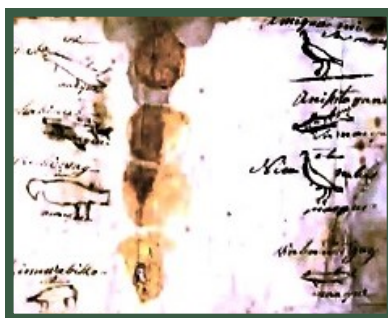
signal a stop for the Underground Railroad.” She also noted that a “yellow center represented a welcoming light in the window.” (<http://aqsblog.com/log-cabin-quilts-a-short-history>)

38th Queen’s Archives Lecture

This lecture took place online on November 27. The second presentation was *“Dirty Deeds?: The History of the 1796 Fairfield-Chippewa Deed in and Beyond Queen’s Archives”*, delivered by Michael Borsk, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History.

“Fairfield-Chippewa deed”?

This document seems to be “Fairfield” only to the extent that it was among the many manuscripts found in Fairfield House after the death of the last Fairfield resident. It was unique: a very large sheet of paper, written in French, and bearing 14 totem signatures.



The actual business recorded by the deed involved two daughters of Ebenezer Allan and his wife Sallie and Chippewa representatives. The land was in the Thames Valley, an area beyond the documented range of the Ernestown Fairfields.

How this document came into and then stayed in Fairfield House is a mystery.

Thanks, however, to Michael Borsk’s research, the significance of the document has been established within contexts of the rights of indigenous women, of property and sovereignty claims, and of policies of the Crown.

At Left: Totems of the some of the Chippewa signers of the 1796 deed.

You can watch the Lecture online at YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qggv3dQQE>

Christmas Season First

In 1843, the first commercially printed holiday greeting card was printed in London. Sir Henry Cole, a prominent British civil servant, wanted an efficient way to respond to the many people sending holiday greetings to him. According to an article by Isis Davis-Marks in online *smithsonianmag.com* (Dec 4, 2020), Cole hired an artist, had 1000 lithograph cards printed, and hand-colored. In 2020, fewer than 30 of the 1000 original cards are known to survive.

Davis-Marks reports that in December 2020, two of these cards have been for sale. At a Christie’s London auction on December 9, there was one along with a signed proof; the estimated selling price was in the range of “\$6,720 to \$10,552”. The Boston-based consortium selling the second card suggested \$25,000 as its price.

But we know that Cole’s 1843 message remains priceless:

“A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You”.



Fairfield House Pewter Ornament



Ornaments are available at this time for \$10 each, plus shipping costs. The Fairfield House ornament is finely detailed, 2 inches wide, and 1 1/4 inches tall. As a fundraiser, the FHHA has acquired from Downtown Kingston the Fairfield House ornaments remaining from its 2019 holiday sale of architectural ornaments.

You can let us know what you’re ordering at email: fh1793b@kos.net or by phone: 613-389-1907. The order form is ready for you on page 4.



Become a Friend of Fairfield House.

Our Association aims are:

- * To promote the preservation of the Fairfield Homestead, including the House, the associated collections, and landscape for the study, education, and enjoyment of present and future generations.
- * To provide programs for the discovery and appreciation of the heritage of the Fairfield Homestead and its neighbouring region.

We carry out these aims both by volunteer work and by fund-raising.

As a **Friend of Fairfield House**, you have the opportunity to join a group that supports these objectives and be involved in the future directions of development and programs. **If you can volunteer, please let us know of your interest.**

Call Fairfield House at (613)384-2813 during the season. At other times, call (613)389-1907. Email: fairfield1793@gmail.com

Membership fees and donations are eligible for charitable tax receipts.



I wish to be one of the Friends of Fairfield House.

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Please check for the year 20__ : New _____ Renewing _____

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Please make cheque payable to **Fairfield Homestead Heritage Association, or simply FHHA.**

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Fairfield House Pewter Ornament Order Form



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Questions or to make other arrangements, phone 613-389-1907.

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