



Fairfield Notes

A Closer Look at the Past Issue 1, July 15, 2020

The Fairfield Homestead Heritage Association welcomes you to our new digital newsletter! Safety measures in response to the Covid-19 virus have closed Fairfield House for visitors this summer. *Fairfield Notes* has been started to share more of the fascinating history of the Fairfield family and their historic house by means independent of an actual visit and tour of Fairfield House.

It will be a way to look more closely at the collections of artifacts and archival material that once were part of the lives of the Fairfield family. Fairfield House staff is working to prepare *Fairfield Notes* that will come to you in August and later in 2020. The publication will keep you up-to-date about other digital and social media events that the staff is now developing. This material has been researched and edited by Emma Wyse. We hope you enjoy! We'll welcome your suggestions and questions.

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.

Collections associated with Fairfield House: When the Fairfields made the donation of their homestead and some acres of land to the Province of Ontario, the house contained heritage material that became two distinct collections.

There were **archival materials**, which were moved to Queen's University Archives for appropriate care.

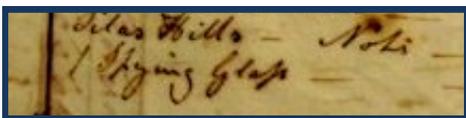
The **artifact collection** associated with Fairfield House is tightly defined as the furniture and small artifacts found within it in 1973 or known to have belonged in it during its first 100 years.

✦ Artifact Spotlight: *The Spying Glass* ✦

The artifact (F180) in this issue's "Spotlight" brings together both Fairfield collections. Visitors touring Fairfield House can read a photo enlargement of the front page of the 1820 inventory of Stephen Fairfield's estate. They see listed all Stephen's items of value: land holdings, furniture, household gear, farm equipment, and livestock – a rare glimpse into the 1820 Fairfield world.

But wait, there's more! There's a surprise is on the back of the document. After a listing of accounts owed Stephen, one last object was added:

"1 Spying Glass", valued at £1.



Above: Spying Glass inventory entry. At right: Top part of 1820 Inventory, starting with land. Note "Writing Desk & Book Case" valued at over £12.



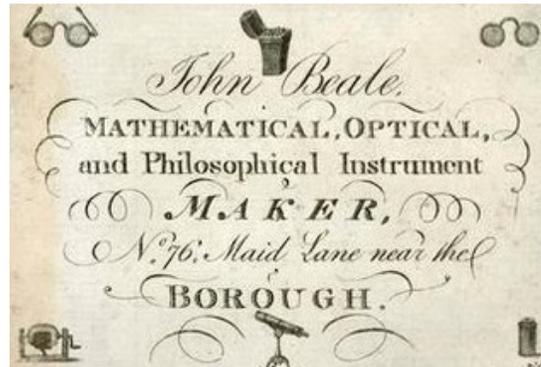
Inventory of the goods chattels lands & tenements of Stephen Fairfield deceased. Ernest Town Decr 27. 1820

200 Acres land lying 3 corners Amherstburg	87	100	—
160	—	50	—
20	4	—	—
1/2 half lot N: 67 Ernest Town	114	50	—
1/3 Acre	—	100	—
200	—	150	—
200	5	175	—
200	6	75	—
200	—	75	—
200	8	50	—
200	4	100	—
11 Beds Bedding & Bed Stands	—	650	—
6 Cherry Tables	—	100	10
10 Pies	—	10	10
1 Writing Desk & Book Case	—	2	10
2 Chests	—	12	10

The Details: Stephen's Spy Glass

This is a single pull spyglass. That is, a single brass tube, 18.5 inches long, that can be extended from the wood-clad barrel. When fully extended the spyglass measures 36" with eyepiece and, when collapsed for travel or storage, it measures 20.5". The diameter of the barrel is 2 3/8 inches.

The spyglass was made by John Beale, clearly identified by the inscription "John Beale/ Camberwell/ Day or Night" engraved in the brass tube near the eyepiece. Beale was in Camberwell (absorbed into south London in 1889) in 1811 and by 1822 was in Clerkenwell. A circa 1805 trade cut shows the range of his products.



Left: Eye piece, with the sliding brass cover in the open position.

Right. Slide in closed position to protect the eyepiece when not in use.



These dating clues tell us that the spying-glass was less than ten years old when listed in the December 1820 inventory. The "day or night" capacity may have depended on additional eyepieces. Only the one eyepiece has been found in Fairfield House. The general condition of the spyglass shows years of wear. The wood has lost its finish and has a lengthwise crack. The brass tube is loose. There is no way to know the uses found for this spyglass by Stephen or other members of the Fairfield family. Did it have years of service on sailing vessels or on shore watching traffic on the lake? Would the children have been allowed to handle it?

Some Context for Stephen's Spy Glass

In 1608, a Dutch optical lens maker offered his government an instrument with an arrangement of two lenses that magnified distant objects. He thought this device would be an aid for the Navy. The technology provided people with previously impossible sight and vision and allowed for the advancement of strategic planning.

The *Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* cites the earliest reference to a "spying-glass" to date to 1682, and the more commonly phrased "spy-glass", to 1707. In most of the historical references from the *OED*, the term "spy-glass" is used in reference to surveillance, spying, and reconnaissance work often conducted in battle.

Almost immediately after 1609, this technology was been applied to astronomical observations. Neither word "spying-glass" nor "spy-glass" were included in *Johnson's Dictionary* of 1755. The word "telescope" was there, defined as "a long glass by which distant objects are viewed." As an example of its use, Johnson quotes Isaac Watts: "The telescope discovers us distant wonders in the heavens, and shews the milky way ... to be a collection of little stars."

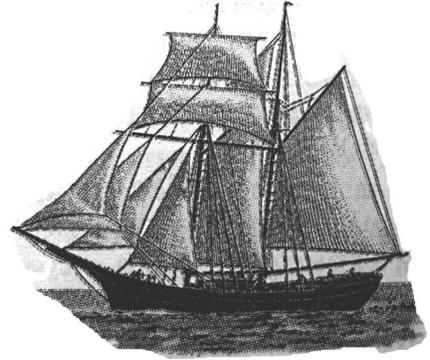
What is the difference between spy-glass and a telescope? In short, spy-glasses are a type of telescope with a specific range of magnification suited to a specific purpose, which is seeing across far distances on land or at sea. The spy glass was designed to be more portable than most other telescopes, and was a favorite tool of soldiers, pirates, and sailors. The magnification range of a spy-glass is 10x to 25x. In comparison a telescope, which was designed first in the early 1600s, is used to see planetary bodies and needs to have a higher magnification, somewhere between 30x to 50x.

The Fairfields on the Lake

The spy-glass was a tool of mariners. Fairfields did have interests in shipping on Lake Ontario. Stephen's brothers in Bath, William and Benjamin, had owned a schooner, that was burned in the fall of 1812 by the American fleet headed by Admiral Chauncey.

Among the Fairfield Papers, there is a sale agreement, dated September 20th 1816, for Stephen Fairfield's purchase of a schooner called *the Lasister* from Harman Pruyn for £150.

The Lasister was described as "having one deck and two Masts, her length sixty four feet, her breadth fifteen feet, [and] her depth four feet four & a half inches." Although Stephen was the owner, the document tells us that a man named William Lowery was its master.



The Fairfields' Other Optical Artifact: the Kaleidoscope



From the FHHA's **2020 Summer Newsletter** (in case you missed it)

Standing on a table with light shining through the frosted glass end, the kaleidoscope treated the viewer to color patterns that changed as the brass end drum was rotated. What 5-pointed pattern would be next as the red, green, blue, orange, and clear glass chunks, twists, and tubes, were given a tumble?

The Fairfields' kaleidoscope became part of the household about 1875. Its stamped mark identifies it as made in Providence, Rhode Island by G. C. Bush & Co., under a patent revised in 1873. It is a 10.5 inch tube of heavy cardboard, covered in black pebbled paper, with brass container for the end housing the decorative glass. At the eye-piece end, it stands 14 inches tall.

The turned post of the stand once had a wire arm to support a small light to shine through the glass. This is now gone. So are two of the spokes used to turn the drum to change the view. These are just signs of the many hours of enjoyment the Fairfields had from their kaleidoscope.

News and Events

Canada Historic Places Day in July!

Fairfield House is one of the 550 sites participating in this online adventure that started July 4 and continues through August. The theme is "Every Place, A Story". July offers a Selfie contest.

Learn more about sites and the contest at
www.historicplacesday.ca.

Tag your selfie on social media with #historicplacesday and search the hashtag to discover new historic sites that you may never have heard of before. All from the comfort of your home! The August focus will be "Events".

Look for news in our next edition of ***Fairfield Notes!***



Take a 'selfie' at Fairfield House!

We are looking to expand our readership and engagement with social media, but first we want hear from YOU!

What is your most used type of social media? Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

Let us know which type of media you'd like to see us expand into.

We'll welcome any ideas or questions you might have. We will do our best to answer questions in a future issue of *Fairfield Notes* or with an email.

Send us an email at fairfield1793@gmail.com.

You can also phone us at 613-384-2813 during July and August.



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.

Membership fees and donations are eligible for charitable tax receipts.



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



Name (s): _____

Address: _____

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Phone Number: (home) _____ (work) _____

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

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Donation _____

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

Mailing Address: 14 Harcourt Place Amherstview, ON K7N 1L5