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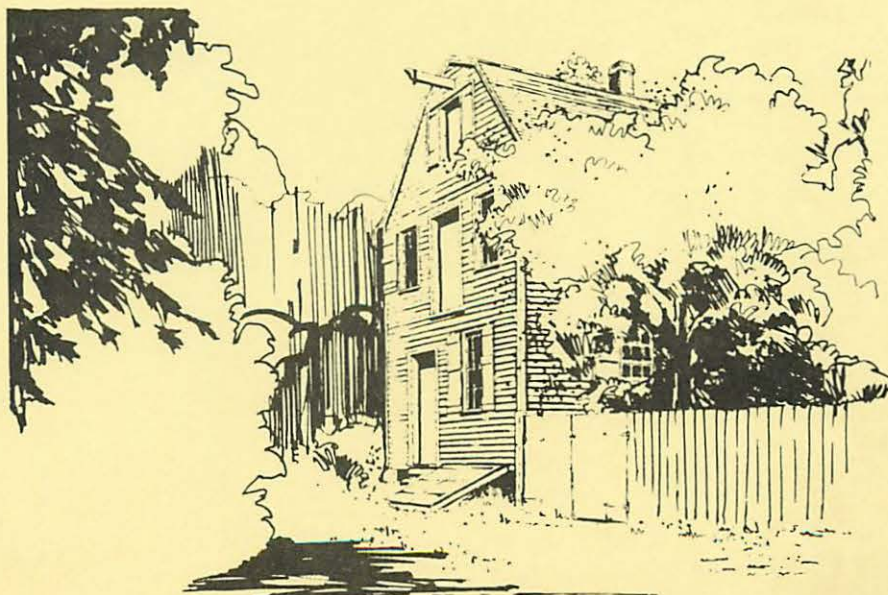
Gardens of Shelburne Nova Scotia 1785-1820

Nova Scotia Museum

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Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

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NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM
Curatorial Reports

The Curatorial Reports of the Nova Scotia Museum contain information on the collections and the preliminary results of research projects carried out under the program of the museum. The reports may be cited in publications but their manuscript status should clearly be indicated.

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Fig. 1 Frontispiece, Everyman his Own Garden.

INTRODUCTION

Part of the program of the History Section of the Nova Scotia Museum is the restoration of designated historic houses and the acquisition of appropriate period furnishings. This study is a result of research carried out when restoring Ross-Thomson House in Shelburne, N. S. (Fig. 2).

To a historian the study of a garden may seem an unusual way to learn about the past. A study of a garden in a particular area becomes a complete cultural study of a way of life in a particular time and place. This study covers the geographic location of Shelburne during the period 1785-1820.

This report originated in the form of a paper which was delivered to the Association for Preservation Technology Conference which was held in Halifax in September 1974.



Fig. 2 Ross-Thomson House c.1785, Shelburne, N.S. Sketch by B. Donovan.

I Why Restore or Reconstruct a Garden?

A great deal of time, effort and money is spent in order to restore a historic house. The work on Ross-Thomson House in Shelburne has been no exception. The building was constructed between 1783 and 1785. Half the structure, the gambrel roofed section, was operated as a store by George and Robert Ross from 1785. The gable roofed part of the building provided living quarters for the Ross Brothers and later for Robert Thomson and his family. Thomson was the Ross' clerk and he, and later his son, Robert Ross Thomson, continued to operate the store until about 1880. Ross-Thomson House is the only original store remaining in the town.

To restore such a building, the structure had to be examined and stabilized; building stabilization had to be closely supervised, original paint colours had to be determined and matched; as much information as possible had to be obtained about the inhabitants of the building; the history of the town had to be studied; the function of the building and its rooms had to be determined. When this information was assembled it was then necessary to recreate a clear picture of a late 18th century store and house of Shelburne, N.S. An inventory for the store had to be drawn up, using all the available primary source material available. Stock for the store had to be collected and furnishings for the house had to be acquired.

As we were using the period 1785-1820 for our restoration period, assembling these goods and furnishings was no simple task. Having attempted to restore the building as accurately as possible, it was opened to the public BUT we had 20th century hybrid tulips growing in the garden. If a building is worthy of restoration then the natural surroundings of the building are worthy of restoration as a complement to the structure and an integral part of the setting.

Ross-Thomson House is on its original site on Charlotte Lane. Would there have been a garden in this yard? From what we had read about the town and early life in Shelburne it seemed probable. The subject intrigued History staff and the thought has blossomed forth into a fairly extensive study.

Ross-Thomson House, although restored, seemed a bit dead. It

needed something alive, - even an appropriate arrangement of flowers would have added a great deal. The whole house needed animation.

There had been a recent push by the Education Section of the Nova Scotia Museum to have educational and interpretive programs in our Historic Houses. Here was the perfect opportunity. We could use the produce of an herb and vegetable garden in a working restored kitchen to teach early Nova Scotian cooking methods and herbal remedies. This educational aspect becomes more than just a history lesson but involves many other disciplines, especially botany, the study of planting, maintaining and harvesting a garden. The study of identification of plants, the study of plant use and the study of food preservation could all be included in educational programs on gardens. All sorts of possibilities for uses of a garden come to mind.

Ann Leighton in her article in Antiques, August 1966, says that gardening may seem an odd way to study history but gardens do have a story to tell. She suggests that gardens had to produce food, medicines, flavourings, cosmetics, insect repellents, air fresheners and painkillers.¹ Many questions then arise. What kinds of food did they eat? What medicines did they need? From what ailments were they suffering? What fashion of the time dictated the use of cosmetics? What repellents did they use to ward off insects? What insects were they trying to combat? By answering questions like these we can interpret a garden in the historical sense.

A garden can be a valuable asset to any building for aesthetic, historical and educational purposes.

II Outline of Study

A. Primary Assumption

We had the idea of restoring a garden but a problem arose. How do we approach the subject? How do we find out what was grown in the yard of Ross-Thomson House. Our research in restoring the house turned up only a very few documents about the Ross Brothers and the Thomsons. We had found no reference to the furnishings of the house and very little about the store. We had had to rely on information about the town and on stores whose account books survived in order to restore the shop. None of the documents which have survived make mention of a garden in the yard of Ross-Thomson House but none mention the absence of a garden. Until new evidence is turned up we are assuming that Ross-Thomson House is typical of houses in Shelburne and that it had a garden.

B. Preliminary Documentary Evidence

While assembling information for the restoration of Ross-Thomson House we had found several references to the need for locally grown fresh food during the early period of the settlement. Provisions were being supplied by the British Crown for the first two years of the town's development but no fresh greens or vegetables were included. The surrounding territory of Shelburne was unsettled. There were in the earliest period, after 1783, no farms to supply the large population of the town. We found some very early references to the existence of gardens. In a letter dated July 1, 1783, only two months after the arrival of the first settlers, James Courtney writes from Port Roseway (later Shelburne) to Mr. Cunningham and he says "We have our town lots which is (sic) just large enough for a good house and small garden".² The yard of Ross-Thomson House is typical in size and shape of others of the period in the town.

C. Aims

In order to carry out a study it is necessary to set down the aims of the project. Ours were as follows:

1. To determine what plants were cultivated in gardens in the Shelburne area during the period 1785-1820.

2. To determine how gardens were planted (i.e. plans, layouts, methods of planting, cultivating, harvesting, drying and the tools used).
3. To determine the uses of garden harvests in cooking and other domestic purposes.
4. To plant a typical Shelburne garden to provide resources for historical interpretation, educational programs, interior floral arrangements.

III General Overview

A. General Overview of the History of Shelburne

The first stage of our study involved a review of what we had uncovered about the history of Shelburne in order to gain a general overview of the town and its early development, and the way of life of its inhabitants. A great deal of the groundwork had been laid as we had been working with this material when restoring the house. It is important to have an accurate historical picture of the town so that when one studies a specific part of a town such as gardens, one can see how that part fits into the whole.

At the close of the American Revolution a great many Loyalists, from all parts of the Thirteen Colonies gathered in New York for evacuation to territory which remained under the British Crown. A group of these Loyalists formed an organization called the Port Roseway Associates for the purpose of settling the area of Nova Scotia called Port Roseway (later Shelburne). With the assistance of Governor Sir Guy Carleton and the British Government, 5,000 evacuees from New York arrived in Port Roseway in May of 1783. During the spring and summer of that year British transports brought thousands more settlers to the new town which was named Shelburne. British surveyors divided the land and settlers literally drew lots. Provisions and building supplies were provided for two years by the British Crown. By the fall of 1783, the population of Shelburne has been estimated as being between 10,000 and 16,000, double that of Halifax and larger than Montreal or Quebec at that time. The population consisted of many types of people; well-to-do and well-educated people with their slaves; merchants who came to make a quick penny; some few

unfortunates who were penniless because of the treatment they received for remaining loyal to the British Crown; the disbanded loyal regiments from the Thirteen Colonies; and the British military who were in charge of the evacuation of New York and the division of lands in Shelburne. As New York had been the evacuation point for Loyalists on the eastern seaboard, people arrived in Shelburne from areas ranging geographically from Georgia to New England. Although the population has been estimated as reaching upwards of 14,000 in 1783, within five years the population had diminished to less than 1,000. People left for a variety of reasons. The words of a contemporary of Loyalists describes the situation very well. The Rev. James Munro of Antigonish, Nova Scotia toured this province in 1795. He has these words to say about the town of Shelburne:

This large colony, the largest I suppose that ever came into the province at one time began to form a large Town to accomodate themselves in, and some of them having plenty of money Began to build large and elegant Houses...While they did not duly and rightly consider what way they should live in a future day, or from sources they should draw their subsistence. They no doubt thought it would become the mart of nations because alongside the Best of Harbours. Its true the Harbour is exceed good yet something more is to be considered and taken into the account than a good Harbour in building a large Town and an elegant House. The inhabitants of the Town may buy their Imports and make proper returns. Therefore it would have been necessary to have considered the quality of the lands in the neighbourhood of this large town They were to raise whether good farms could be made of them or not...But people ought to consider well before they lay out much money and calculate their profits rather below than above probabilities and not to calculate upon a large scale lest they should be disappointed. I grant that the pieces of land that have been cultivated, and the Gardens they have made; have produced amazingly well...But these spots took a great deal of labour before they come to bear, and more so than could be laid out upon large farms...But upon the whole, and to make the best of it was a rash step, a measure without forecast and what is confirmation of it. Some of these who had been at great expence in building went off leaving their Houses unfinished, so that there was scarce a vessel that went out of the Harbour to the States for awhile, but carried some of them away that the Town in a short time was deprived

of its Inhabitants in great measure...And tho a good many worthy citizens might leave the Town and might have been of great service to it had they staid; yet there were many that went away that their leaving it was of great advantage to the place. But let us come to those who remained who in general are an industrious sober set of people, live in a decent manner and live Sociable. The Gentlemen in the Town dine together in a decent and genteel manner upon Beef and mutton the produce of the place upon good provisions, in fulness without superfluity, and cheerfulness without levity, and a hearty glass without intemperance. They know their sources or line of Business and follow it with care attention and diligence, and each in their Sphere make a decent living and the town appears to be in a thriving way and is visibly this year past...In the Town are good gardens full of garden stuff. Roots, such as turnip, carrot, parsnips, onions, and cabbage but the cabbage do not answer well by reason of grub or maggot that cuts them off at the root. Salads as lattice, Beets, parselly, Radish. There are cucumbers, pumpkins, squashes, musk and water mellons Berries such as gooseBerries raseberries and currants in the greatest abundance I ever saw and of the best quality peace and Beans of different kinds are found there. Most Apples and Pears already with the best red cherries.³

From sources such as this we gain a fairly clear picture of the town and the use and importance of kitchen gardens during those early years of the town's history. According to Munro and other sources gardens were a necessity when supporting farms were non-existent, and government provisions far from satisfactory.

Captain William Booth was a Royal Engineer who was posted in Shelburne 1787-1789. In his diary Booth writes "The farmers who are the men most desirable in every young country are off, or at least very few are remaining."⁴ Booth goes on to point out:

The great necessity there was to court and indulge those most valuable people to so young and difficult a country...If they were disappointed in their hopes on viewing what was destined to them should they attempt to sacrifice their last shilling before they could with cheerfulness view a small appearance of any harvest; now much more difficult must it then be for those who are totally ignorant of the industrious Farmer's plough & Harrow.⁵

Because of the apparent absence of supportive farms, individuals in the town must have had kitchen gardens. Booth also tells us how inefficient and insufficient the government provisions were:

Speaking to my servant whom I have always found a clean and honest man on the subject of provisions that had formally been allowed to the Loyalists and that I had been informed of abuses committed by the person drawing them and which proved in great measure the cause of their being taken off. He said to his knowledge there had been abuses committed even by people in office for he remembered a man (whose name he mentioned) that had the assurances to draw provisions for two of his dogs and gave their names on the list for that allowance.⁶

The government provisions when available were insufficient and were abused but when they were no longer available, gardens and locally grown produce provided the only solution. Everyone who had land would probably have attempted to plant and harvest some small garden in Shelburne.

B. General Overview of History of Gardens

It is important to have a general overview of the history of the area. It is equally important to have a general idea of the history of gardens. There are many books available on the subject.

It is often difficult to find someone who is a gardener and a historian. This particular historian is certainly not a gardener. One feels considerably ill at ease digging into territory which belongs to botanists. In order to combat the handicap we began to read of other garden studies that had been carried out from the historical point of view. Articles in Antiques by Louise Fisher⁷ and Ann Leighton⁸ and their respective books An Eighteenth Century Garland⁹ and Early American Gardens, for Meate and Medicine¹⁰ all proved inspiring and informative. Eustella Langdon's book Pioneer Gardens at Black Creek Pioneer Village¹¹ also proved helpful in setting up this study and suggesting possible sources of information.

We consulted many secondary sources to familiarize ourselves with gardens and gardening through the years so that we would know what to look for in our research. Most of the secondary sources have been most adequately dealt with by Meredith Sykes and John Stewart in their article "Historic Landscape Restoration in the

United States and Canada: An Annotated Source Outline"¹² which was published by APT in 1972. The Sturbridge Village pamphlet Early New England Gardens 1620-1840¹³ by Rudy Favretti helped us put the gardens of Shelburne in perspective in relation to early gardens of New England (i.e. Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay) and their English derivatives. Favretti provides us with an excellent explanation and description of English cottage-type gardens (Fig. 3) which developed on this side of the Atlantic at Plymouth. This kind of garden provided the householder with a kitchen garden near the house, which contained herbs, salading and some vegetables. Larger crops were planted some distance from the house. Favretti notes these gardens as being simple with a central path of grass or gravel with irregular beds which were well cultivated and neatly maintained. Were these types of gardens planted in Shelburne? The set-up of lots seems to indicate the answer to that question would be, yes. Each settler of Shelburne was given a house lot, a farm lot, and a water lot. We have already made reference to Mr. Courtney's statement about the house lots being big enough for a garden. There is evidence in Shelburne of kitchen gardens. Favretti also mentions flower gardens which developed from the English manor-type garden. In Shelburne the size of lots indicates the possibility of the existence of small flower gardens 'to look at'.

IV Assembling Plant List

Having a certain amount of momentum and enthusiasm for the subject after reading of other studies we turned to primary source material. When we were compiling the inventory for the Ross-Thomson store we used newspapers which were published in Shelburne during the first few years of the settlement. There were also advertisements which listed seeds for sale.

A. Newspapers

The newspaper collection at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia contains copies of the Port Roseway Gazetteer and Shelburne Advertiser, the Royal American Gazette, and the Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser. All these newspapers appeared between 1783 and 1785 in Shelburne.

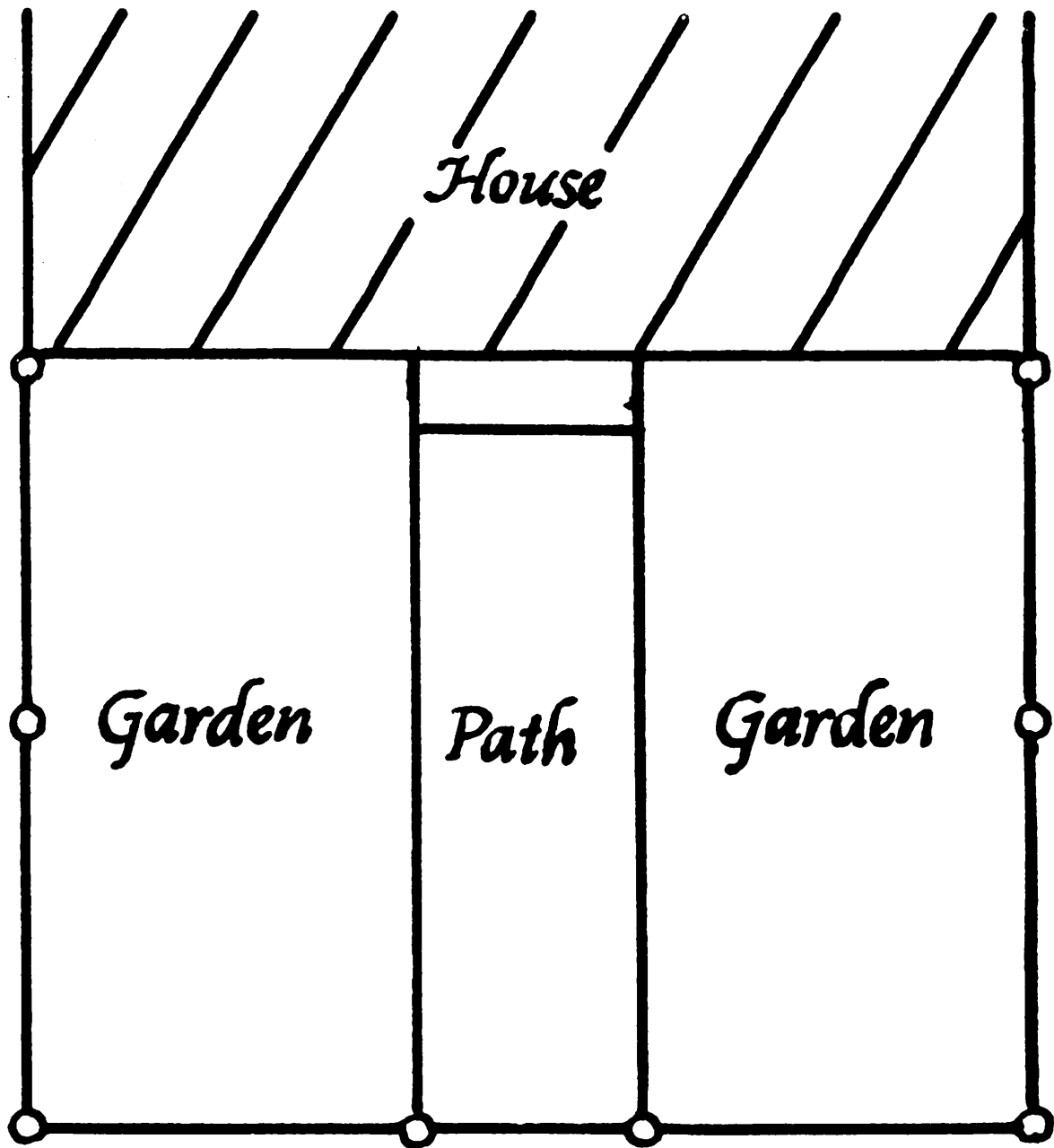


Fig. 3 Cottage-type garden as illustrated in Early New England Gardens 1620-1840.

Large advertisements (Fig. 4) appeared in these newspapers which listed many types of seeds that were available. We assembled a fairly extensive list of herb and vegetable seeds that were sold. (The fact the seeds were sold does not necessarily mean that they grew but if a particular seed was sold for several successive years we can be fairly sure that someone was growing it successfully.) There were three seed merchants whose advertisements appear repeatedly in these newspapers - James Cox (Fig. 5) on John Street and William Allan. John Creighton's advertisements also appear but he was a Halifax merchant who used agents in Shelburne to distribute his products, such as the firm of Sullivan and Mills. Creighton's advertisements in the Halifax papers claim that his seeds were all imported from London.

The list we assembled with the aid of the newspapers includes about 60 herbs and vegetables - 26 varieties of beans, 21 of cabbage, 14 of turnip, 18 of peas, 14 of lettuce, 11 of radish, 7 of cucumber and 9 of onions. From later reading we determined that the wide number of varieties of a particular species were cultivated to allow a harvest over a very long period of time. This is evident from some of the common names of these varieties such as early mazagan beans, indicating that they would mature earlier than some other varieties. Some of the names remained a mystery to this uninformed gardener until quite recently.

We had expected to find lists of flower seeds for sale but there were no specific references to flower seeds as such. At the end of many advertisements we found the statement "a small assortment of flower seeds"¹⁴ Perhaps this tells us that the main concern at the time was for fresh garden vegetables and in this early period flower gardens were not very prominent.

Newspapers of the late 18th century, as a general rule, gave a great deal of press to world news. Usually there is little reference to local events but we did find some interesting comments on the effects of weather on gardens and farms:

The first Thursday morning last may certainly be noted as the first frost this season, as effecting the vegetation and the occassioning of some small appearance of ice. The potatoe vines we belive in general were touched by it; but many garden articles, and particularly pea vines, which for experiment

GARDEN SEEDS.
Just arrived in the ship Chapman; Captain Dawson, and to be sold,
By JOHN CREIGHTON;
At his store, on Mr. Creighton's wharf,
Halifax,—the following
GARDEN SEEDS,
Warranted to be of the last year's growth, and of the best quality:

L ARGE marrowfat	Short prickley ditto,
pease,	Long green Turkey do.
ditto, ditto,	French turnips,
of England do.	Mixed field ditto,
W... ..'s early chan-	Deptford onions,
sons ditto,	White Spanish ditto,
Golden hotspurs do.	Blood red ditto,
Tall marari ditto,	Stratburgh ditto,
Bourneival's ditto,	Silver skin ditto,
Black ey'd ditto,	White beans,
Large egg ditto,	Red ditto,
Broad Windsor beans,	Green ditto,
Yellow dwarf kidney	Round spinage,
cress,	Prickley ditto,
Early masagan ditto,	Early collyflower,
White Canterbury do.	Latt ditto,
Large white black ey'd	Hambro parsley,
dwarf ditto;	Curled ditto,
Toker ditto,	Common ditto,
Scarlet runners ditto,	Green curled endive,
Black speckled dwarf	White ditto,
ditto,	Broad leaved ditto,
Red do. do. do.	Upright fallery,
Long post ditto,	Solid ditto,
Sugar-loaf cabbage,	Scotch kale,
Early barterica ditto,	Brown ditto,
Wrench's dwarf do.	London leeks,
Early York ditto,	Large late brocolo,
Early Dutch ditto,	Late purple ditto,
Hollow drum head do.	Curled green ditto,
Green favoy ditto;	Early purple ditto,
Yellow favoy ditto;	Late green ditto,
Tall winter sugar-loaf	Curled brown ditto,
ditto;	Sweet marjoram,
Cabbage lettuce,	Thyme;
Hardy green ditto;	Balm,
Tennis ball ditto,	Summer favory,
Green Silesia lettuce,	Winter ditto,
Green cross ditto,	Sage and catnip,
white ditto ditto,	Ge-mas gitens,
Brown Dutch ditto,	Asparagus;
Capuchin ditto,	Rapes,
Ball and button ditto,	Anniced,
Royal brown Dutch do.	Carraway,
Long orange carrot,	Flax,
Curled cresses;	Miller in the huck,
White mustard,	Hemp,
Brown ditto;	Canary.
Parfnips,	GRASS SEEDS.
White orris,	Red clover,
Turnip raddish,	White ditto;
Early short top ditto;	Heds grass,
Salmon and salad do.	Trefoll,
Spanish ditto,	Rye grass;
Long prickley cucum-	ALso, a small assort-
ber,	ment of FLOWER
Green Turkey ditto,	SEEDS.

N. B. Any person in Shelburne, who wishes to be supplied with SEEDS by Mr. CREIGHTON, may, by leaving an order with SULLIVAN and MILLS, depend on having them by the first conveyance.

Fig. 4 John Creighton seed advertisement, Royal American Gazette, Shelburne, N.S., May 9, 1785.

GARDEN SEEDS,

*Warranted to be the Production of last Year,
and to be sold in Packages of One and a
Half to Three Guineas each, at the Store
of*

JAMES COX and Co.
JOHN-STREET,

Assorted as follows:

W INDSOR,	Salad Radish,
Beans,	Rape,
Early Masigan ditto,	Mixed Lettice,
Ditto Pease,	Cabbage ditto,
Marrowfat ditto,	Spinage,
Early Horn Carrot,	Green Beet,
Long Orange ditto,	Cellery,
Parship,	Mixed Endive,
Onion,	Early Cabbage,
Leek,	Late ditto,
Early Stone Turnip,	Coliflower,
Mixed Radish, Short	White Broccoli,
Top and Salmon,	Purple ditto,
Turnip Radish,	Parsley,
Mustard,	Savoy, and
Cress,	Mixed Kidney Beans.

L I K E W I S E,

Some **GRASS SEEDS**, of different Kinds,
to be sold as above, for **CASH**.

Fig. 5 James Cox seed advertisement, Port Roseway Gazette and
Shelburne Advertiser, Shelburne, N.S., May 19, 1785.

sake, had been planted late, still flourish and yield their increase.¹⁵

Notwithstanding a very dry season that prevailed here a few weeks since and which many were apprehensive would injure our crops, we cannot learn that it has been the case...on the contrary we are happy that we have it in our power to assert, that the increase of crops this year of every kind of vegetable, and particularly potatoes, exceeds every expectation excepting the single article of summer cabbage, which having suffered the maggot in the root is not in such plenty as last year. This increase, with the amazing success that has attended every crop of both winter and summer grain, as well as the hay harvest must diffuse general satisfaction and joy among all well wishers to the settlement.¹⁶

During this period trade with Halifax was fairly brisk. Mail packets from Halifax to points along the South Shore were becoming fairly regular. Halifax newspapers were available to readers in Shelburne and some Shelburne merchants purchased stock at the Halifax waterfront. As Halifax was an established trade center there was a wider variety of goods available. These goods were distributed throughout the province and reached places such as Shelburne by ship. Because of this kind of contact we also consulted Halifax newspapers in our research. There were many merchants who sold seeds in Halifax. John Creighton who sold seeds in Halifax also distributed his seeds in Shelburne through his agents, Sullivan and Mills. By 1788 James Flynn of Halifax was selling homegrown seeds. For several successive years he managed to scoop the market by a couple of weeks. Other merchants such as James Moody, Thomas Pitman, Robert Hall, and Sam Rudolph, who imported their seeds from London were later in advertising their goods than was Flynn. Perhaps his quantities were not as large but Flynn certainly sold a wide variety of seeds.

In March of 1806 Michael Dalton advertises in the Halifax Weekly Chronicle "Garden Seeds/Michael Dalton/Late Gardener to his Royal Highness the/Duke of Kent/has for sale, a fresh supply of Kitchen Garden and Flower seeds;/also/A fresh supply of Garden Utensils, Flowerpots, & c ...Most of the above Seeds were raised in the Garden near Head-Quarters during the last season".¹⁷

Further study on this Michael Dalton could provide information on the gardens of the Duke of Kent at Prince's Lodge, in Bedford, N.S. Dalton's advertisement does include more flowers than others found during our studies.

B. Diaries, Letters, Papers

After plodding through miles of microfilm with the help of one volunteer researcher, we then turned to other primary sources: the handwritten documents and diaries of the period.

Gideon White was one of the leaders of the Port Roseway Associates who helped found the town of Shelburne. He assembled a great deal of land in the area and collected rents from many people in Shelburne and it seems that he seldom threw out a paper. At the Public Archives of Nova Scotia there is a collection of over 1500 documents and diaries of the White family covering the period 1761-1900. A large proportion of these documents were papers which belonged to White and pertained to the period of restoration. Included in the collection are his day books in which he describes his daily activities of planting, maintaining and harvesting his garden and management of his farm and business activities. These first hand accounts proved to be most helpful. He tells what he was planting and when he was planting, although he does not often mention specific varieties of plants. His daily records consist of short and to-the-point statements such as "Planted out young shoots of apples";¹⁸ "made hot bed planted 3 rows Windsor beans";¹⁹ "sowed early sugar loaf cabbage seed";²⁰ "sett cabbage, cabbage seed, savoy cabbage within gooseberry slips";²¹ "Picked cucumbers for pickles";²² "Planted three beds onions";²³ "Grafted peaches".²⁴

White's documents expanded our list considerably and gave mention to the use of hotbeds and the use of fruit trees. The growth of fruit trees: pear, peach and apple was not mentioned in other sources about Shelburne but fruit trees were common in Halifax. The newspapers mention properties for sale and describe the types of fruit trees on the estates, indicating their desirability to prospective buyers.²⁵ Growth of fruit trees is described by the Rev. Jacob Bailey in 1779 in Halifax:

We enter a spacious gate into a decent yard, with an avenue to the house bounded on each side by a little grove of English Hawthorne at this season in all their blooming glory -

The house consisted of a convenient kitchen - a tight cellar, a chamber and elegant parlour papered and containing two closets - before the door was a little porch with a seat from the eastern windows we had a most charming prospect of Mr. Wenman's garden in which were planted such a profusion of willows, hawthorns, fruit trees of various kinds that they formed a perfect wilderness, extremely pleasing to the sight and grateful to the smell and indeed when we looked out of these windows, we rather fancied ourselves in the midst of a woody country than in the heart of a populous town.²⁶

Fruit trees were common in Halifax and on the estate of Gideon White in Shelburne but this does not necessarily imply that the cultivation of fruit trees was a common occurrence in the yard of a shopkeeper's house such as that of Ross-Thomson House. Gideon White was no typical settler.

In the White collection we find very little reference to the growth of flowers. White seemed more concerned with his fruit trees and vegetables. However, this letter to Gideon White suggests that he was at least contemplating a flower garden:

Your esteemed favour of the 8th Inst. I duly received together with your memo'm for garden seeds, I have taken some little pains to collect the different articles but cannot compleat (sic) it entirely - as to the roots...Pink, tulip, Baham, Sage & c. I am informed by Gardeners it is too soon to transplant them the frost being still in the grounds. What I have sent I believe are fresh and hope will prove agreeable to our expectations.²⁷

We know what he wanted and did not receive but we do not know what he did receive. His mention of Pinks and Tulips indicates some interest in flowers which he could not obtain locally.

Captain William Booth, we noted earlier, was a Royal Engineer posted in Shelburne 1787-89. During his stay in Shelburne he did a few watercolour views of the town. We were fortunate enough to have one given to us which had found its way to Australia and all

the way back to Shelburne. This particular watercolour was done in 1787. We tried to find out what we could about William Booth and his works. While we were trying to track down some information about this man we found out that a diary of his was the property of Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. This diary turned out to be five volumes of notes kept during his two year stay in Shelburne. He describes his daily life, his work as surveyor and map maker, his eating habits, his garden and what his man, Graves, pulled up from the garden. While Booth was in Shelburne, his wife, Hannah, became ill and he describes the herbal remedies prescribed for her, such as cream of tartar in water and wine with sugar; peppermint water, chamomile tea. Her body was rubbed with flowers of the mustard when she had pains and spasms. During the last stages of her illness she suffered severe fever and was given a poultice of mustard and vinegar. She died in Shelburne, whether as a result of the herbal remedies or the sickness is not clear.²⁸

Shelburne newspapers of 1786 reported a problem with cabbage grubs. William Booth confirms that problem still existed three years later. On June 21, he says:

Vegetation sadly destroyed by Grubs this Season, they are numerous. The Grubs destroy all the Cabbage Plants, Lettuces and beans. Cutting the stalk clear through They attack the cabbage in particular not one in a hundred escape them. The grub is followed by a white maggot to the full as destructive to the cabbages at their root. Whole beds of young carrots destroyed this year as soon as the least appearance of them is seen this is done by some insect smaller than a maggot.²⁹

Booth illustrates his diary with a very detailed pencil drawing of this grub which apparently plagued most of the gardens of the town.

Booth's contribution to this garden study has been in his descriptions of his meals and the preparation of fresh garden foods. For breakfast he has honey on toast with butter. At 12 o'clock he takes a little weak broth. In the afternoon he has bread and butter and drinks licorice root boiled in water. He says he has very modest dinners of mutton, hot or cold, when he can get it and the latter he has with oil and vinegar. He says that he

seldom drinks more than two glasses of wine per day, that being well chosen madeira.

The entry of March 18, 1789 is most interesting (Graves was Booth's servant - he was probably a Black):

Graves got up some parsnips with some difficulty from the Garden of the house I last lodged in. They did not answer our expectations being mostly dwarfs. Transplanting them I am inclined to think did not succeed so well in that ground. - Last year they were not transplanted, and were very fine for this country.

The carrots were remarkably fine last season though not equal ours at home.

Pease turned out indifferent.

Beans were very good.

All kinds of salleting but indifferent particularly the lettuce cucumber poor with little flavour.

Pole beans excellent.³⁰

Booth was not a wealthy man, unlike Gideon White. His way of life in Shelburne may have been more typical than White's. The information gained from his diary will be more valuable to our study for that reason.

From sources that have been mentioned we have assembled a list of over 75 vegetables, herbs, trees and some flowers and their many varieties giving a total of almost 200 varieties of plant growth that we know were cultivated in Shelburne during the period 1785-1820.

For comparison we also consulted primary sources which did not deal specifically with Shelburne. Simeon Perkins, an early settler and merchant of Liverpool, N. S., kept a diary in which he describes the life of that seaport from the late 1760's to about 1812. This diary has been published by the Champlain Society. Perkins tells about his garden and its produce and the use of some herbal remedies. The information in this Liverpool record is very similar, with few exceptions, to the Shelburne list.

The Shelburne list of plant material contains very few flowers. With continued research and the discovery of other documents and sources of information we may be able to solve the dilemma of the flower garden. We did expect to find references to flowers but we did not find very much. Perhaps flower gardening was considered

women's work. As yet we have not found a literate housewife whose papers have survived.

C. Historical Literature

The early 19th century home of Richard John Uniacke is part of the collection of the Nova Scotia Museum. The house stands today as it did in 1815 with its original furnishings. Uniacke was a lawyer and prominent political leader of Nova Scotia. He served as a member of the Legislative Council for 22 years, until his death in 1830. His library which has been retained in the house indicates his broad reading interests. Included in this collection of books are over thirty volumes on gardening, food preservation and herbal remedies, most of them published before 1820. These books, we believe, will prove to be gold mines of information although time has not permitted us to examine each volume thoroughly.

Because the Uniackes were in possession of these volumes we have reason to believe that others of their economic status could have had such books. The influence of books such as these could have been widespread throughout Nova Scotia. There were many residents of Shelburne of similar economic status and they could have had one or all of these books. The surviving account books of some stores in Shelburne indicate the sale of many books imported from England.

This most valuable and highly informative collection of books includes volumes such as Everyman His Own Gardener published in London in 1782. This book is actually a gardener's calendar with monthly instructions for the work necessary in all phases and types of gardens including "The Kitchen and Fruit Garden, Pleasure Ground, Flower Garden, and Shrubbery, Nursery, Green-House, and Hot-House".³¹ This particular book includes long lists of "Kitchen Garden Plants, Fruit Trees, Flowering Shrubs, Annual, Biennial...and Perennial Fibrous Rooted Flowers, Bulbous and Tuberos Rooted Flowers".³² Results of comparing these lists with the Shelburne list have proved interesting. All the plants on our Shelburne list are found in Everyman His Own Gardener. Mawe and Abercrombie list many varieties of plants and they give information about how to plant, cultivate and

harvest the produce. The most extensive list of plants at the back of the book shows that there were a great many flowers and shrubs cultivated in Pleasure Gardens in England to which we found no reference.

For simple plant identification purposes we have found Philip Miller's Gardeners and Botanists Dictionary (Fig. 6) most helpful. This four volume work was partially written and revised by Thomas Martyn in 1807. These volumes have helped to sort out some of the species and varieties of plants. We have actually managed to identify most of the 18 varieties of beans by scientific name. Miller describes the varieties and explains which variety can be harvested first, such as early mazagan bean, the earliest maturing variety. He then lists other varieties in their order of maturation. The small Spanish, the Toker and lastly, "The best of all for table when gathered young, sweetest best, the Windsor bean".³³ Identifying plants by their scientific names is often a difficult task because of the wide range of common names for the same species. Since 1737 when Miller's dictionary was first published there have been many changes and new discoveries made in classification and scientific names. Miller's terminology differs greatly from that which is used today. Our next step must be to identify these plants with their 20th century names so that we can locate samples and seeds and plant them in our garden.

In addition to Miller's detailed descriptions of plants there are recommendations for medicinal and culinary uses of plants. He includes lengthy instructions for the propagation and culture of each species and all its varieties.

John Mills published a five volume series in 1767 entitled A New System of Practical Husbandry. The fourth volume is devoted entirely to gardening. Mills claims that gardening is a branch of husbandry to which many great men of wealth and education have devoted much time throughout the history of man. Mills recognizes Miller and his work as "the guide of Europe in this branch cultivation".³⁴ Miller suggests that the "reader must judge between us".³⁵ Mills discusses the Kitchen Garden and the use of vegetables, salading, sweet herbs and plants cultivated in hot-beds,

GARDENER'S AND BOTANIST'S
DICTIONARY;

CONTAINING

THE BEST AND NEWEST METHODS OF CULTIVATING AND IMPROVING THE
KITCHEN, FRUIT, AND FLOWER GARDEN, AND NURSERY;

OF PERFORMING THE

PRACTICAL PARTS OF AGRICULTURE;

OF MANAGING VINEYARDS,

AND

OF PROPAGATING ALL SORTS OF TIMBER TREES.

BY THE LATE

PHILIP MILLER, F.R.S.

GARDENER TO THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF APOTHECARIES AT THEIR BOTANIC GARDEN IN CHELSEA,
AND MEMBER OF THE BOTANIC ACADEMY AT FLORENCE.

TO WHICH ARE NOW FIRST ADDED,

A COMPLETE

ENUMERATION AND DESCRIPTION OF ALL PLANTS HITHERTO KNOWN,

WITH THEIR

GENERIC AND SPECIFIC CHARACTERS,

PLACES OF GROWTH, TIMES OF FLOWERING, AND USES BOTH MEDICINAL
AND ECONOMICAL.

THE WHOLE CORRECTED AND NEWLY ARRANGED,

WITH THE ADDITION OF ALL THE MODERN IMPROVEMENTS IN LANDSCAPE GARDENING, AND IN THE
CULTURE OF TREES, PLANTS, AND FRUITS,

PARTICULARLY IN THE SEVERAL KINDS OF HOT HOUSES AND FORCING FRAMES:

WITH PLATES EXPLANATORY BOTH OF THEM, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF BOTANY.

BY

THOMAS MARTYN, B.D. F.R.S.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF BOTANY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOI. I. PART I. A—CIV.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, JOHNSON, G. AND W. NICOL, R. BALDWIN, W. J. AND J. RICHARDSON,
S. HAYES, R. FAULDER AND SON, T. PAYNE, W. LOWNDEN, J. WALKER, G. WILKIE AND J. ROBINSON,
CUTHELL AND MARTIN, R. LEA, W. RYMER, HOOD, AND SHARPE, J. TAYLOR, E. JEFFERLY, W. CLARKE
AND SONS, G. ROBINSON, C. LAW, WHITE, LONGMAN, HURST, REES AND ORME, CADELL AND DAVIES,
J. MURRAY, W. STEWART, J. BOOTH, BAGSTER, AND J. BOOKER :

BY RAYNER GILBERT, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, CLAREMONTWELL

M DCCC VII.

Fig. 6 Title page, Gardener's and Botanist's Dictionary.

fruit gardens, vines and the culture of hops.

In Volume V Mills discusses the making and managing of fermented liquors and he also discusses the uses of some of the dye plants. The fifth volume provides us with a valuable index to the plant material which he describes in the whole series of books.

An interesting contrast can be drawn between books written about plants and gardening in the 18th century and those written in the 17th century. Mawe, Abercrombie, Mills and Miller describe the plants and suggest methods of propagation in rather scientific terms. Nicholas Culpeper, on the other hand, includes in his descriptions the heading Government and Virtue of plants. For example, he states that "beans are plants of Venus";³⁶ "carrots belong to Mercury";³⁷ "the moon claims the dominion of the cabbage".³⁸ This mystical terminology forms no part of the works of the 18th century. The authors seem to be studying plants from a much more technical point of view and are getting away from the herbals such as that written by Culpeper. In Nova Scotia, however, the herbal was still used. Books such as Domestic Medicine or a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines were still popular. Buchan describes the medicinal uses of many plants but he does not use the same sort of mystical language as that of Culpeper.

For the literate gardener and housekeeper in Shelburne some of the information in books such as those mentioned above would not apply to the growing season of Nova Scotia. For specific information on the growing season local people would have had to rely on the locally published almanacs which included monthly instructions for gardeners.

D. Illustrative Material

Conversations in Botany, a very small book published in London in 1820 is most interesting because of the colour plates and descriptions of plant material (Fig. 7). It reads something like a Dick and Jane reader with conversations about plants carried on between Mother and Edward. The illustrations in this book include many plants which were sold by Nova Scotia merchants and available to residents of Shelburne. This illustration material was most

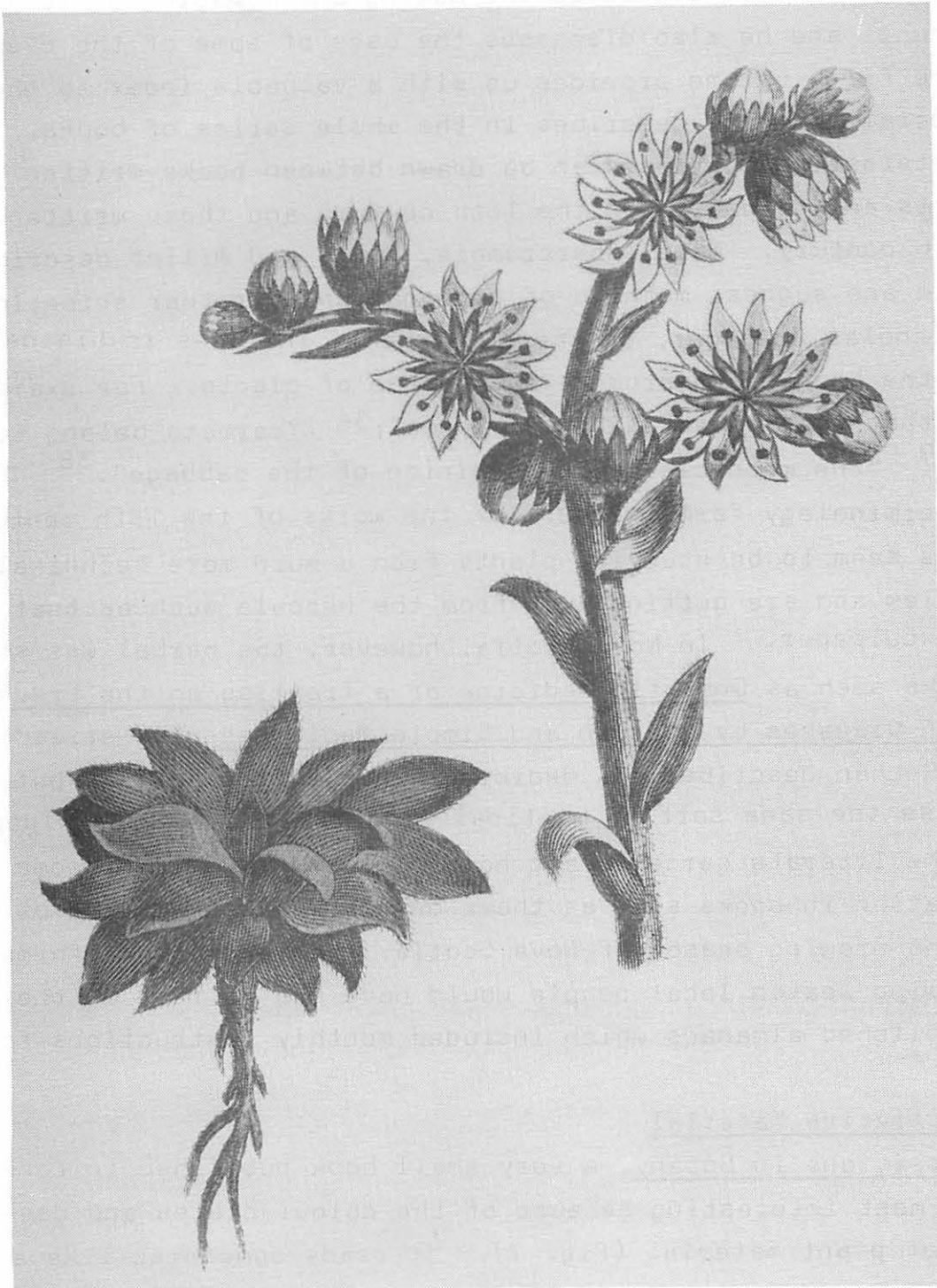


Fig. 7 Houseleek as illustrated in Conversations in Botany.

informative to the non-gardening historian. The illustrations included houseleek, trefoil, poppy, ground ivy.

In Halifax in 1830 Maria Morris (later Maria Morris Miller), a native of Halifax, set up a school of instruction in art. She had been a student of W.H. Jones. With the help of Titus Smith, a botanist who collected the plant material for her, Maria Morris did a series of watercolours of flowers of Nova Scotia (Fig. 8). This collection of watercolours is now the property of the Nova Scotia Museum. There were four series of lithographs printed between 1840 and 1867 of some of the originals. Included in Miss Morris' works were several plants to which we found reference in Shelburne - such as mallow, strawberries, aster, wallflower and rue.

Other illustrations of flowers may be found in books such as Flower Painting Made Easy by Thomas Parkinson (Fig. 9).³⁹ Ten plants to which we found reference in Shelburne appear in this beautiful book. The hand coloured engravings include carnation, july flower, pink, convolvulus minor (Fig. 10), larkspur, African and French marigold, sweet William (Fig. 11) and columbine (Fig.12).

V Consulation with Botanist

Throughout the time we have been carrying out this research on early gardens we had some difficulty in identifying actual plant material or recognizing some of the surviving plants on our roadsides. Fortunately, the Nova Scotia Museum is not only a museum of history but also a museum of science. Our botanist has been most helpful in locating plants and their early varieties. Since 1965 a weed survey has been conducted to identify weeds which are growing in Nova Scotia. This survey, which was continued on a larger scale in 1971, resulted in a catalogue of weeds and geographic location of their growth in Nova Scotia. In examining this list we have found many escaped garden plants.

We can now locate many of the plants on roadsides and fields which can be transplanted to and cultivated in a garden. These plants which we can locate and which are still growing include purslane, sweet William (Fig. 11), garden columbine (Fig. 12), black mustard, garden lupine, caraway, angelica, catnip, hyssop,

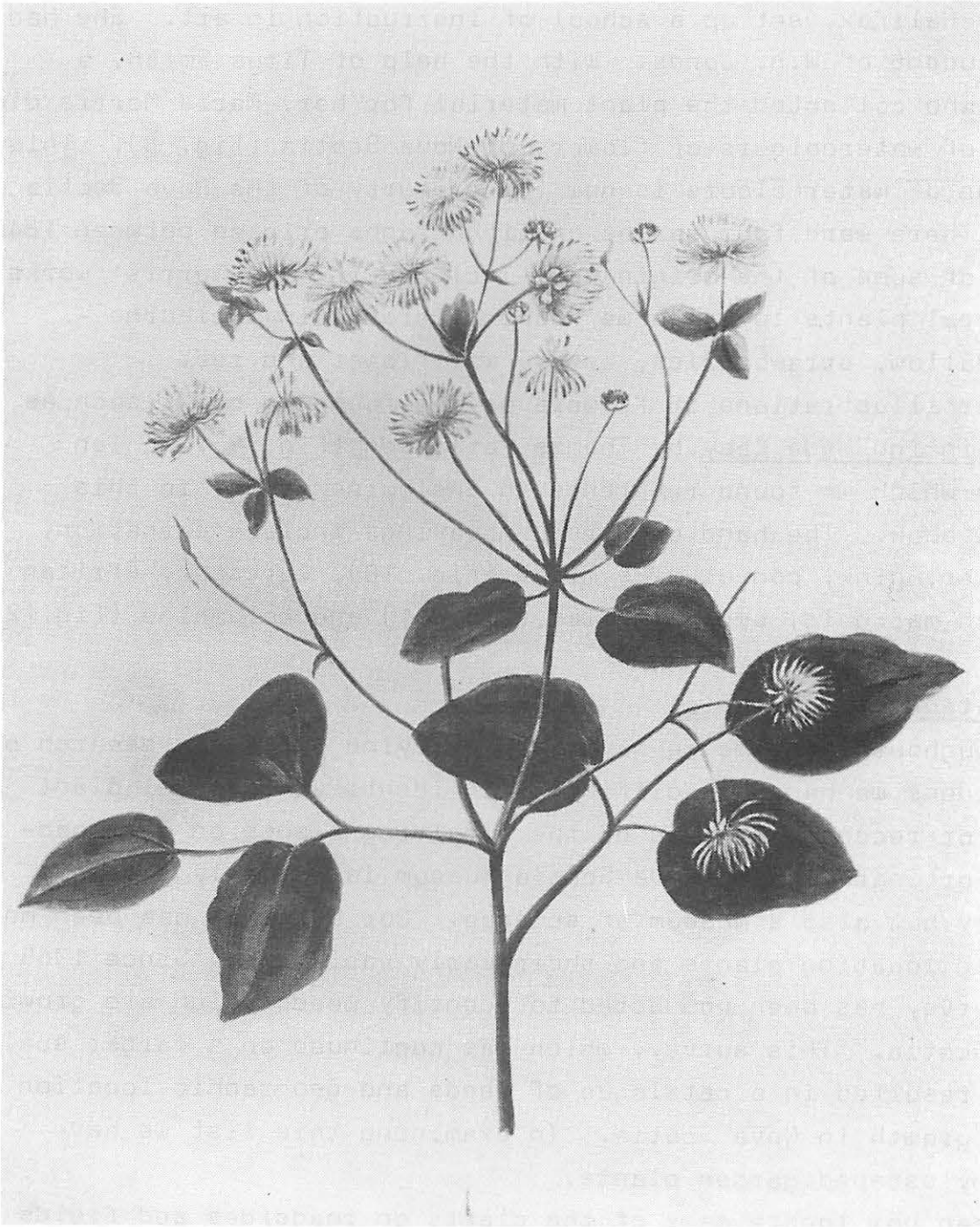


Fig. 8 Common Rue as illustrated in a water colour by Maria Morris Miller.



Fig. 9 Title page, Flower Painting Made Easy.



Fig. 10 *Convolvulus Minor*, Plate 37, Flower Painting Made Easy.



Fig. 11 Sweet William, Plate 51, Flower Painting Made Easy.



Fig. 12 Striped Columbine, Plate 53, Flower Painting Made Easy.

thyme, chamomile and yarrow. All of these also appear on our Shelburne list and their growth has survived up to the present time.

The actual collecting of plant material becomes a much easier job when we have the expertise of a botanist and his assistants to do the job. With their assistance we hope also to examine gardens of Shelburne to determine what plants are still cultivated in the gardens of some of the original homes in the town. Examination of these gardens for this plant material and layout may be most beneficial to our study. The Shelburne Landscape Club have also been of some help locating some of these surviving plants in their gardens.

There are problems when consulting botanists, horticulturalists and gardeners. It is a relatively easy task to ask the older residents of a town what was grown in their grandmothers' gardens. To document such a list with historical evidence is quite another matter. With this particular study it was an impossible job because no one living today has first hand knowledge of gardens before 1820. Unfortunately, many people who are unaccustomed to working with historical material cannot make a distinction between 1790 and 1890. Anything that existed prior to 1890 is old - whether it existed in 1883 or 1783. In the minds of many people gardens of 1890 are simply old gardens. This can be a frustrating problem for a historian but it is no less difficult for the botanist. He has to deal with a historian who can hardly tell the difference between a tulip and a daffodil.

VI Planting the Garden

Now that the study of gardens in Shelburne is practically completed we have a great deal more information available. A documented list of plant material is available so that we can now assemble a planting list for the garden of Ross-Thomson House.

We hope to have the services of a paid gardener to plant and maintain a garden which will reflect the gardens of Shelburne 1785-1820. The details of this arrangement remain to be made.

VII Expansion of Study

The collections of the Nova Scotia Museum include seven historic

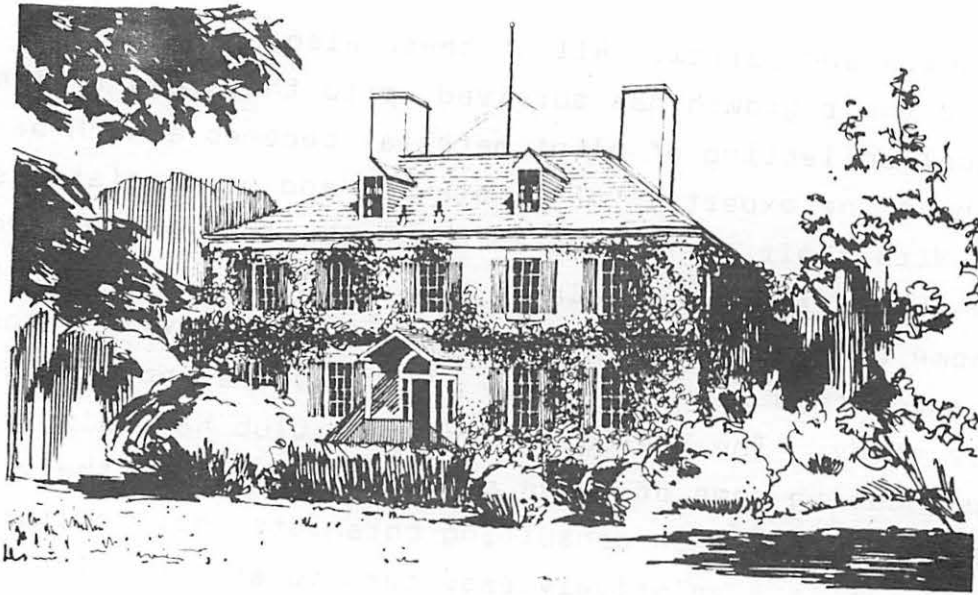


Fig. 13 Prescott House, Starr's Point, Kings Co., N.S. Sketch by B. Donovan.



Fig. 14 Rosebank Cottage, Ross Farm, New Ross, Lunenburg Co., N.S. Sketch by G. Halverson.

houses, a working farm, a village, a grist mill, a carding mill and a woolen mill. All these buildings have been restored and furnished. They depict wide ranging lifestyles in many locations across Nova Scotia. Collectively they cover approximately one hundred years of the history of the province.

The idea of restoring or reconstructing a garden at Ross-Thomson House has met with some interest within the Nova Scotia Museum. The study which has been described in this report deals with a specific geographic location and a specific historical period. The next step in our garden study must be to expand it and to eventually include each of our historic houses.

The existence of restored or reconstructed gardens at our historic houses will show the visitor living examples of many types of gardens which existed at various times throughout the history of the province. Prescott House, at Starr's Point, Kings County (Fig. 13), is the very grand Georgian home of the fruit grower, Charles Ramage Prescott. The style of this house indicates very formal flower gardens and orchards. Rosebank Cottage at New Ross, Lunenburg County (Fig. 14), was built at almost the same period as Prescott House. It is a simple cottage, the home of a farmer. The gardens would have been planted with simple herbs and vegetables. Although the historical period is the same, the gardens of these two houses would differ for economic reasons. Gardens at other historic houses would vary greatly.

In order to plant gardens, indeed if there were gardens at all the historic houses, a detailed study will be necessary. This type of study, as with all historical research, takes a great deal of time. Reconstructed or restored gardens cannot appear without the necessary documentation.

Hopefully, we will be able to continue this study on other historic houses so that we can provide a wider base for interpretation of our historic houses.

APPENDIX

Plants, seeds available in Shelburne, N. S. 1785-1820:

Aniseed
Angelica
Apple
Asparagus
Aster - China
Balm
Basil - Sweet
Beans - English
 scarlet runner
 bush
 pole
 mixed kidney
 broad Windsor
 yellow dwarf kidney
 early mazagan
 white Canterbury
 large white
 black eyed dwarf
 toker
 black speckled dwarf
 red speckled dwarf
 large pod
 white battersea
 Dutch runners
 early yellow
 hotspur
 dwarf marrows
 horse
 early negra
 mumfords
 yellow speckled
 early hotspur
Beets - white
 red
 green
Broccoli - large late
 late purple
 early purple
 large green
 curled green
 curled brown
Cabbage - early sugar loaf
 savory cabbage
 early cabbage
 large cabbage

early battersea
wrench's dwarf
early York
early Dutch
hollow drum head
green savoy (curled)
yellow savoy (curled)
large battersea
deep red
early yorkshire
heart shaped
Imperial
red Dutch
flat Dutch
broglie
Russia
scotch cattle

Chammomile

Candytuft

Canary - grass

Caraway

Carnation

Carrots - early horn

long orange

red

orange

Catnip

Cauliflower - early

large

late

Celery - upright

solid

Cherry

Columbine

Convolvulus minor

Coriander

Corn salad

Cress - curled

garden

Cucumbers - long prickly

green turkey

short prickly

long green turkey

white spine

southgate

spanish
Endive - green curled
broad leafed
battersea
white
curled
Batavia
early curled
Feverfew, Featherfew
Fennel - Sweet
Garlic
Gooseberry
Grass - pepper
German Greens
Hawthorne - English
Hemp - Russia
Hyssop
Kale - Scotch
Brown
Larkspur
Lavatera - mallow
Lavender
Leek
Lettuce - cabbage
hardy green
tennis ball
green Silesia
green cross
white cross
Brown Dutch
Capuchin
Bull and Button
Royal Brown Dutch
imperial
grand admiral
Drumhead
Egyptian
Love Apple
Lupin - long blue
yellow
Marigold - French
African
Marjoram - sweet
pot

Melon - Italian
fine catelope
Roman
musk

Mignonette

Mint

Mustard - Black
white
brown

Nasturtiums

Onions - Deptford
White Spanish
Blood red
Strasburg
Silver skin
Madiera
reading
Welch
London

Orris - white

Parsley - Hamburgh
curled
common

Parsnip - common

Peach

Pear

Pea - green garden
early
marrowfat
large marrowfat
dwarf English
golden hotspur
Imperial
black eye'd
large egg
Charlton
Dwarf marrow
early frame
early hotspur
Boundivale
Royal Oak
Glory of England
Dutch Sugar dwarf
Wrench's late dwarf

Peppermint

Pink

Plum - green gage
Poppy
Potatoe - English white
 Blond
 Blue
Pumpkin
Purslane
Quince
Radish - short top
 salmon
 turnip
 salad
 early short top
 spanish
 long top
 red turnip
 early purple
 scarlet salmon
 black spanish
Rhubarb
Rose - Damascena
Rue
Sage
Savory - summer
 winter
Spinach - round
 prickly
Squash
Stocks - Gilliflowers - Julyflower
 10 weeks
Strawberry
Sweet Pea - Painted Lady
 Purple
 Painted
Sweet William
Thyme
Trefoil
Turnip - early stone
 French
 mixed field
 best winter
 yellow Aberdeen
 white globe

red seed
purple seed
large yellow Aberdeen
red topp'd
White Norfolk
Laplard
early white
early Dutch
green
Yorkfield

Wallflower

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