

The Davistown Museum  
 The Ancient Dominions of Maine: An Archaeology of Tools  
 Historic Maritime I (1607-1676): The First Colonial Dominion

After the Popham Colony's unsuccessful attempt to establish a settlement in "North Virginia" at Fort St. George at the mouth of the Kennebec River, the first of a series of early settlements in the coastal tidewater areas of the Sheepscot and Georges rivers were established at Damariscove Island (1622), Cape Newagen (1623), and Pemaquid (1625). By the 1630s, settlements dotted the Maine coast from Machias (1631) to Kittery (1631). By the early 1670s, Maine's colonial era population was +/- 10,000 people. Blacksmiths and shipsmiths were known to be active at Pemaquid (John Brown, 1625) as well as at Arrowsic on Georgetown Island (The Clark and Lake Co., +/-1650). Every 17th century coastal community in Maine would have required shipsmiths and toolmakers as a matter of survival. Hand-forged iron tools surviving from this era are difficult to date. Possibly some of the reformed steel rasps in the museum collection, along with a small number of items in the following listing, actually date from this period. Colonial era settlements along the Maine coast were brought to a quick halt by the onset of the French and Indian Wars, which began with King Philip's War in 1676. Within a year of the onset of this war, all of the English settlements east of Wells were burned or abandoned. In fact, only a few tools in the museum collections can be identified as dating from this first colonial dominion.

There are no surviving woodworking tools that can be identified as having been used by the first wave of European settlers in Maine. Most of the tools in the first display case were made in the 18th century. Nonetheless, they are similar to those that might have been found in the tool kits of the earliest settlers.

Status Location

**Agricultural Implements**

**TAB1013 Flax breaker**

BDTM MH

Wood (maple?), 45" long, 16" wide, 34" high, unsigned.

Made in Connecticut (?) in the late 17th or early 18th century and brought to Detroit, Maine by the first settlers. An essential tool for preparing flax for the weaver. After "breaking" the flax, it would be cleaned and sorted with the help of a scutching knife and board, ripple and hatchel and then wound on a spinning jenny. For more information on this process, see the reprint on flax dressing available at the Museum.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1013.jpg>

**71903T4 Grub hoe**

DTM MHC-D

Forged iron and natural steel, 9 1/4" long, 4 2/3" wide cutting edge, unsigned.

A typical colonial era grub hoe with a poll-less socket for the handle. It is hand forged and clearly a three quarter inch natural steel cutting edge was hand welded on to the tool. It is probably made from refined wrought iron as silica inclusions are not visible.

**TAB1011 Grub hoe**

DTM MHC-D

Forged iron, 4" wide, 6" high, unsigned, 17th or 18th century.

A generic gardening tool, with early forged rivets. This tool is typical of a gardening tool used by the first settlers in coastal Maine, but could also date from the 18th century.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011\\_p21.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011_p21.jpg)

**TAB1009 Hay cutter**

DTM MH

Forged iron, 16 1/2" long with two blades with a 7" separation between the ends of the two blades, unsigned, 17th or 18th century.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009\\_p21.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009_p21.jpg)

**Blacksmith, Farrier, and Metalworking Tools**

**42801T14 Double calipers**

DTM MH

Brass and forged iron, signed with initials "AWB".

These handmade calipers could be 17th or 18th century and are typical of those found in a blacksmith shop of this period.

**Domestic Utensils**

**81801T2 Cheese whisk**

LPC MH

Forged iron and wood, 30 1/2" long, 7" wood handle, unsigned.

A Colonial era variety for mixing the curds in whey in the cheese making process.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/81801t2.jpg>

**TAB2208 Horn**

DTM MH

Horn and wood, 6" long, 1 3/4" wide at bell, unsigned.

**TK1003 Loom**

DTM LTC

Wood (beech or maple?), 5 1/2' wide, 6' long, 5' in height, unsigned, late 17th or early 18th c..

This loom was brought by the first settlers to Beals Island, Maine, from southern New England (Martha's Vineyard or Connecticut?) in the late 18th century. It was a most essential component of any colonial era farm. On display at the Davistown Museum Annex, second floor of the Liberty Tool Co.

**81800-M Paint brush (4)**

DTM MHC-D

Horsehair, leather, and twine, 4 1/2" x 2 1/4"; 4 1/2" x 3"; 5" x 2 1/4"; 5 1/2" x 2 1/4", unsigned.

Early settlers had no hardware stores to visit for brushes -- they had to make their own from materials around the farm. What else would early settlers have used these brushes for?

**TAB1014A Spoon**

DTM MHC-D

Wrought iron, 6 1/4" long, unsigned, 17th century.

This spoon is typical of the utensils used by Maine's first European settlers.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1015a.jpg>

**81801T8 Sugar tongs**

DTM MH

Forged iron, 9 1/2" long, unsigned.

These elaborately decorated sugar tongs are typical of a tool that might have been brought to America by a well-to-do family during the great migration to Massachusetts, 1630 - 1650.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/81801t8.jpg>

**Fishing Implements**

**TAB1015A Fishing spear**

DTM MHC-D

Forged iron, 6 1/2" long, unsigned, mid 17th century or earlier.

Probably a French trade item.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1015a.jpg>

**Hammers**

**TAB1003 Claw hammer**

DTM MH

Forged bog iron, 6" long, 1" square face, 10" wooden handle, unsigned.

The most primitive of the many claw hammers in the Museum collection, this particular claw hammer is exceptional because it shows the distinct layering characteristic of forged bog iron. Farm forged by the earliest settlers, probably in Massachusetts, c. 1650.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003\\_p2.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003_p2.jpg)

**11201T7 Hammer**

DTM MH

Forged bog iron and wood, 8" long, 3 2/8" x 1 3/4" x 1 1/2" head, unsigned.

This primitively wrought iron hammer could have been made by Vikings at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland or at any New England farm with a primitive open hearth forge and access to bog iron. Made directly from the bloom, this soft iron hammer shows evidence of both hand forging and long years of use.

**TAB1002 Hammer**

DTM MH

Wrought iron, 3" width, unsigned, c. 1720-1750.

The soft face has been peened over from use. Similar to hammers in use during the first colonial dominion.

## Knives

011006T1      **Basket knife**      BDTM    MH

Natural steel, 6 7/8" long, 1/2" wide, unsigned, c. 1700.

This is a rare variation of the crooked knife and was solely used for splitting the wood for baskets of ash or other woods. This tool is an excellent example of the use of cementation steel (blister steel - the blisters are clearly visible on the tool) for the production of steel edge tools and other trade items. This tool was almost certainly made in Europe and may have been specifically designed and produced to meet the needs of Native American basket makers during the early days of contact with European traders.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/011006t1\\_p8.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/011006t1_p8.jpg)

## Measuring Tools

72002T5      **Framing square**      DTM    MH

Forged iron, signed with a combination of Roman numerals and dots, 1600 - 1650.

A most interesting example of a primitive backcountry farm-made tool.

TBW1006      **Wantage rule**      BDTM    MHC-D

Boxwood and brass, 11 1/8" long box, rule is 10 1/4" long when folded and fitted into a box, signed "Made by Robert Merchant for Noah Emery, Berwick, [Maine], 1720" in script, dated 1720.

This tool, among the most historically significant pieces of Americana in any Maine or New England museum, is the earliest known signed and dated tool made in Maine. No earlier signed and dated tool has been located in the collections of the Simthsonian, Mercer, or Shelburne, VT museums. This tool is a six-fold rule and was used as a wantage rule for measuring quantities of wine, beer, and ale. The strong alcohol and tannin component of the liquids it measured has given this rule a mellow hue. Its gorgeous box is fitted so exactly to the folded rule that a ribbon is needed to remove it. Additional information about Noah Emery can be obtained by clicking on the "bio" link. While we know something about the recipient of this tool, information about the maker of this rule, Robert Merchant, is not available. Bob Wheeler, the previous owner of this rule, speculates that Robert Merchant may have been a carpenter and toolmaker associated with the many Merchants of Portsmouth, NH. Visitors to this site with additional information about who Robert Merchant was, please contact the Museum.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tbw1006.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/bioEmery.htm>

## Miscellaneous Forged Hardware

92911T9      **Chain**      DTM    MH-D

Hand-forged and welded wrought iron, Seven links, each 4 1/2" long, 2 3/4" wide and one circle at the end, 6 1/2" diameter, unsigned.

All made out of 1/2" diameter stock.

## Other Tools

31012NOM1      **Unidentified tool**      NOM    UNK

Wood, 13" long, 6" wide, 5 1/2" high, unsigned.

This strange tool has channels leading to holes carved into its basin. It has very old patina (looks at least colonial) with traces of pigment remaining. Courtesy of Mike Nelson.

## Unidentified Tools

913108T6      **Unidentified tool**      DTM    MHC-D

Malleable steel and wood, 4 7/8" long, 2 1/2" wide, 2 7/8" blade, unsigned.

## Woodworking: Axes and Hatchets

72708T1      **Ax**      LPC    MHC-D

Forged steel, 6 3/4" long, 5 1/2" wide, unsigned.

This looks to be an early German ax.

111001T29      **Broad ax**      DTM    MH-D

Forged iron, 9 1/2" long, 8" blade, unsigned.

Distinctly and primitively forged, possibly from bog iron, this seventeenth century ax came in the Abiel Walker (Alna, ME) tool kit and was probably made and used by the earliest settlers in coastal Maine. See the Registry of Maine Toolmakers for more information on Abiel Walker.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29\\_p2.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29_p2.jpg)

## Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Woodworking: Axes and Hatchets

### 102409T1 Hatchet

Status Location  
DTM MH-D

Steel, iron, and wood, 13 1/2" long, 3 1/8" cutting edge, unsigned.  
It has a forge-welded edge.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102409T1web1.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102409T1web2.jpg>

### TAB1004 Hatchet

BDTM MHC-D

Forged iron with wrought strapping, 5 1/2" long, notched blade, 3" wide with 4 3/8" strapping, signed with an obscured but mysterious oval touch mark.

Original rivets and handle. It is featured in a photograph on our Museum flyer. Is this an American tool from the First Colonial Dominion or from another culture?

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1004\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1004_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1004\\_p2.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1004_p2.jpg)

### 102904T2 Hewing ax

DTM MH

Forged iron and steel, wooden handle, 8" long, 7" wide cutting edge, 2" long and 1" wide poll, 31" long handle, unsigned.

This ax is typical of those imported from England in the 17th and early 18th centuries. With a lightweight poll, this type of ax soon proved impractical in the huge forests of North America and was supplanted by axes of American design with heavier polls.

Follow the bio link to learn about the similarly designed Wilson Museum Jonesport broad ax. These axes were typical in colonial era shipyards before 1740.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102904t2.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/publications/volume10.html>

### 102904T3 Mortising ax

DTM MHC-D

Forged iron, natural steel, and wooden handle, 9 1/4" long, 15/16" wide cutting edge, 3 5/16" long and 1" wide poll, 24 1/2" long handle, signed with the mark "J254" on handle.

This edge tool has been torturously forged and shows a clearly hand forged natural steel cutting edge. The mark on the handle indicates this tool might have once been in an institutional collection. It was found at a Massachusetts estate. This ax is typical of one that would be found in an early colonial shipyard. It has an obscured signature that suggests it was made by an enterprising colonial blacksmith for New England's shipbuilding industry.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102904t3.jpg>

### 111206T1 Tomahawk

DTM MHC-D

Iron, weld steel with a wood handle, 8" long head, 2 1/4" wide edge, 16 1/4" long handle, unsigned, c. 1680-1750.

.An everyday run of the mill tomahawk with traditional weld steel forging and a more recent handle.

### 42607T5 Trade ax

DTM MHC-D

German steel, 7 15/16" long, 4" wide blade, unsigned.

This 17th century felling ax has a curved light-wieght poll characteristic of European-made axes. It shows no sign of a weld steel-iron interface. Highly pitted, the ax is probably made from one piece of German steel bar stock.

## Woodworking: Boring Tools

### 111006T1 Auger

DTM MH

Malleable iron and wood, 16" long with an 18" long handle, unsigned, c. 1650.

The wooden handle is probably a replacement. This is an unusual hand forged auger with a curved cutting edge that is lipped and tapers from 3/4" down to an openly folded 1/3 curved and twisted iron bar stock about 1/8" thick.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111006T1\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111006T1_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111006T1\\_p3.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111006T1_p3.jpg)

### TAB1010 Stone drill

DTM MH

Forged iron, 8 1/2" long, unsigned.

This stone drill has clearly been re-fashioneded from a used blacksmith rasp, 17th or 18th century. Typical of the type of tool early settlers would have used to drill a mooring hole.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1007.jpg>

## Woodworking: Edge Tools - Forged

**100109T1 Adz**

DTM MH

German steel, 6" long, 1 1/2" wide, 3" wide cutting edge, signed with a complex of circles, lines, and arches.

An attached tag states: "16th - early 17th century pre-1640 French or Basque mfg iron adze. Recovered from the Quarry Cache/Site, Union, Maine in the 19th century. As of date, one of the earliest recovered European metal artifacts from Maine, only exception is a 16th century/very early 17th century Basque brass metal kettle, Maine State Museum, Augusta, Maine." Donated by Will West.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/100109T1web1.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/100109T1web2.jpg>

**81101T9A Chisel**

DTM MH

Forged iron, wood, and pewter ferrule, 10" long, 3/8" wide blade, unsigned.

This late 17th century (?) tool is clearly forged and typifies the more primitive edge tools that New England's first settlers would have used before the era of imported cast steel English tools.

**42602T4 Drawknife**

BDTM MHC-D

Forged steel and leather, 10" wide, 4 1/2" wide blade, unsigned.

This hand-forged tool has been carefully refashioned from file steel. The short chubby handles are in the English style and are made of carefully cut and glued leather. This nifty tool is difficult to date -- probably made in the 18th century. It is displayed in the Maritime I case because it is so typical of the home made tools of the early colonial period. This tool is, in fact, exactly what a small drawshave in the tool kits of the first New England settlers could have looked like.

**71903T1 Gutter adz**

DTM MH

Natural steel, 10 1/4" long, 3 1/2" wide mouth, 1 1/4" deep curved blade, unsigned.

Clearly manufactured by a blacksmith working directly from the bloom, this tool has the telltale silica inclusion of reworked bog iron. A distinct welded forged iron cutting edge extends 4 1/2" to a narrow flat polled body. A classic example of a rare form of a colonial era adz. It was probably for making rain gutters and wooden drains. It was found in an old New England carpenters' tool chest ca. 1885-1900, but is much older than that.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/71903t1\\_p1\\_LippedAdz.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/71903t1_p1_LippedAdz.jpg)

**102904T1 Slick**

DTM MH

Forged iron and steel, 39" long including an 11" long handle, 3" diameter ferrule, 4 1/4" wide, unsigned.

This clearly hand-forged slick has a hand chamfered wrought socket and appears to be late 17th or early 18th century. It was found in Massachusetts and is possibly made of bog iron directly from the bloom. It shows no sign of a weld steel cutting edge. Almost certainly used in a New England shipyard, this tool predates the advent of the water powered circular saw used in shipyards and mills after 1825. It is the largest slick ever located by the Liberty Tool Co. It is used for cleaning up the sides of large mortises in construction and shipbuilding, and for leveling surfaces as on the deck of a ship. Slicks are particularly useful to shipwrights in areas that cannot be reached by an adz. They are often pushed by the shoulder, hence the swollen top of the wooden handle.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102904t1\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/102904t1_p1.jpg)

**Woodworking: Edge Tools Made in Maine**

**TBW1010 Adz**

DTM MH

Forged iron and wood, 4 1/4" long with a 4 3/4" handle, 1" wide blade, unsigned, c. 1740 - 1780.

Small hand adze, use unknown. The original handle has been replaced. This tool was found on the beach in Addison, Maine, and may have been made in Maine, though it has been speculated that it could have had a Viking origin. Formerly part of the Bob Wheeler collection.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tbw1010.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tbw1010p2.jpg>

**Woodworking: Other Tools**

**TAB1005 Bark spud**

DTM MH

Forged iron, 10 1/4" to the end of the socket, unsigned, 17th or 18th century.

An essential component in the tool kit of the early settlers of the Davistown Plantation (ax, drawknife, sod cutter, spud, bowie knife, and frame saw)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005\\_p2.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005_p2.jpg)

**TAB1006 Mallet**

DTM MHC-D

Wood burl, 2 1/3" wide, 2" high, length including handle 6", unsigned.

Ageless, but typical of a tool an early settler would own, possibly for a musket ball starter.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1007.jpg>

**TAB1012 Shaving horse (bench)**

BDTM MH

Wood (maple), 57" wide, 17" tall, 4" wide clamp, unsigned.

A commonplace tool on any working farm in the 17th or 18th century. Used with a drawknife for shingle making, the shaving bench was also used for many other tasks. This is probably 18th century but is of the same design as those used in the 17th century.

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1012.jpg>

**Woodworking: Planes**

**TBW1001 Adjustable plow plane**

NOM MH

Wood (beech), 1" wide with 1 1/8" wide fence, signed "I. NICHOLSON LIVING IN WRENTHAM".

Pollak (2001) says this stamp was done between 1733 and 1740. This tool is amongst the rarest of early American tools, I. Nicholson tools being rarer than those of his father F. Nicholson. It is particularly noteworthy that Nicholson moved to Union, Maine, late in his life. There is no record of his making any tools while living in Union. (This tool is no longer in the museum collection as it was loaned only for our opening exhibition.)

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tbw1001.jpg>

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/info#/toolPloughPlane.html>

**81602T2 Beading plane**

DTM MH

Oak with forged iron blade, 10 5/8" long, 7/8" wide compound bead, signed with owner's initials.

Is this English or American?

**50402T1 Complex molding plane**

LPC MHC-D

Wood with forged steel blade, 10 1/4" long, 2 5/8" wide, signed "Robert Wooding".

This late 17th century plane by one of England's earliest planemakers was found in Maine. Unsprung, this plane has to be worked at an angle and is more difficult and inefficient to use compared to later "sprung" planes, which could lie flat on a wood surface to work up a moulding. This plane is heavily and erratically chamfered and lacks rounded chamfers at each end, making it more awkward to use -- but also easy to date as one of the earliest signed hand planes by a known English or American maker.

Goodman (1993) states that Wooding worked from 1693 to his death in May, 1727 as a joiner. Four of his apprentices also became significant planemakers (William Cogdell, John Jennion, Thomas Phillipson, and Robert Fitkin.) (Goodman 1993, 464). This plane was formerly in the Bob Wheeler collection and is now loaned to the Museum by the current owner.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/50402t1\\_p1.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/50402t1_p1.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/50402t1\\_p2.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/50402t1_p2.jpg)

**83102T1 Molding plane**

DTM MHC-D

Birch (?) with forged steel blade and a replaced wedge, 10 3/8" long, 1 3/4" wide, signed "JB" twice upside down in 17th or 18th century script.

This complex moulding plane is heavily chamfered. A survivor from the 17th century, this tool has a southern New England provenance and is typical of a hand plane c. 1650.

**TAB1014 Plow plane**

BDTM MHC-D

Tropic wood with brass stringers, hand forged iron depth adjustment, 8" long, 8 1/2" screws, unsigned.

A double wheeled screw-armed plough plane, no blade or wedge, probable European origin. The age of this plane is unknown, but a similar tool could have been in the tool chest of a coastal Maine carpenter during the first colonial dominion (1620-1676).

<http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1014.jpg>

**TAB1015 Rabbet plane**

DTM MH

Wood unknown (fruitwood?), 8 1/2" long, tapered to 1 5/8" width at base, unsigned.

Representative of a typical homemade hand plane of the period.

**Woodworking: Saws**

**TAB1001 Hand saw**

DTM MH

Forged iron and/or steel, 12" long, unsigned.

It has a distinctive 18th century handle, c. 1720. It could be as early as 1675 or as late as 1780.

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1001\\_p4.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1001_p4.jpg)

[http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1001\\_p5.jpg](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1001_p5.jpg)