

# **THE FURNITURE HERITAGE OF SAINT JOHN RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITIES: ETHNICITY AND REGIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA 1763–1851**

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This dissertation investigates the contributions of various immigrant groups to the establishment of distinctive regional furniture heritages within a single valley in North America. The Saint John River flows through northern Maine, southern Quebec and western New Brunswick. Non-indigenous groups first settled the valley following the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755. Within a century, two distinct valley cultural regions were visible. In the northern reaches Maliseet, Acadian, French Canadian, and American residents influenced furniture design. In the southern valley Mi'kmaq, New Englanders, English, Scottish and Irish all left their mark on furniture styles. Furniture is used to ascertain the boundaries of ethnic regions within the valley and to show interaction and exchange between those cultures entering the valley over a broad period of time.

It is a complex topic and requires the reader have background not only in European and North American furniture histories (French, British and New England) but also native material culture traditions. The topic of Canadian identity formation is always a hot one, as Canada has primarily been historically identified as a colony, and, thus, under the thumb of the Brits. This thesis is revisionist in nature and highly controversial (in its use of furniture as evidence, as it contradicts past ethnic studies and states Canadian identity is complex and must be studied prior to Confederation to be understood).

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