

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 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 reforged 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

71903T4	Grub hoe	DTM
<p>Forged iron and natural steel, 9 1/4" long, 4 2/3" wide cutting edge, unsigned.</p> <p>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.</p>		
TAB1011	Grub hoe	DTM
<p>Forged iron, 4" wide, 6" high, unsigned, 17th or 18th century.</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011_p1.jpg http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1011_p21.jpg</p>		
TAB1009	Hay cutter	DTM
<p>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.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009_p1.jpg http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1009_p21.jpg</p>		

Axes

72708T1	Ax	LPC
<p>Forged steel, 6 3/4" long, 5 1/2" wide, unsigned.</p> <p>This looks to be an early German ax.</p>		
111001T29	Broad ax	DTM
<p>Forged iron, 9 1/2" long, 8" blade, unsigned.</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29_p1.jpg http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/111001t29_p2.jpg</p>		

Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Axes

Status Location

102904T2 Hewing ax

DTM

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

Forged iron and natural steel, wooden handle, 9 1/4" long, 15/16" wide cutting edge, 3 5/16" long and 1" wide poll, 24 1/2" long handle, marked "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>

42607T5 Trade ax

DTM

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

This 17th century felling ax has a curved light-weight 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.

Blacksmith and Farriers' Tools

42801T14 Double calipers

DTM

Brass and forged iron, marked 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.

Boring Tools

111006T1 Auger

DTM

Malleable iron and wood, 16" long with an 18" long handle, , ca. 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_p3.jpg

Domestic Utensils

81801T2 Cheese whisk

LPC

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

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, , 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>

Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Domestic Utensils

Status Location

81801T8 **Sugar tongs**

DTM

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>

TBW1006 **Wantage rule fitted into a box**

BDTM

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

This tool, among the most historically significant pieces of American in any Maine or New England museum, is the earliest known signed and dated tool made in the United States. No earlier signed and dated tool has been located in the collections of the Smithsonian, 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>

Edge Tools - Forged

100109T1 **Adz**

DTM

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."

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

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

011006T1 **Basket knife**

DTM

Natural steel, 6 7/8" long, 1/2" wide, unsigned, circa 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

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.

102409T1 **Hatchet**

DTM

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

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

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

102904T1 **Slick**

DTM

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

Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Edge Tools - Forged

Status Location

111206T1 Tomahawk

DTM

Iron and weld steel with a wood handle, 8" long head, 2 1/4" wide edge, 16 1/4" long handle, unsigned, ca. 1680-1750.
.An everyday run of the mill tomahawk with traditional weld steel forging and a more recent handle.

Fishing Implements

TAB1015A Fishing spear

DTM

Forged iron, 6 1/2" long, unsigned, mid 17th century or earlier.
Probably a French trade item.

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

Flax Dressing Tools

TAB1013 Flax breaker

BDTM MH

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

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>

Hammers

TAB1003 Claw hammer

DTM

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, ca. 1650.

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003_p1.jpg

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1003_p2.jpg

11201T7 Hammer

DTM

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

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

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

Planes

81602T2 Beading plane

DTM

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 moulding plane

LPC

Wood with forged steel blade, 10 14" 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.) (pg. 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_p2.jpg

83102T1 Moulding plane

DTM MHC-D

Birch (?) with forged steel blade and a replaced wedge, 10 3/8" long, 1 3/4" wide, stamped "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 ca. 1650.

Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Planes
Status Location
BDTM MHC-D

31102T1 Rounding plane

Wood, 10" long, 5/8" wide, signed "JO. FULLER PROVIDENCE".

This plane was made by Joseph Fuller of Providence, RI (information from Pollack, 4th Ed.) It is one of the most important planes in the Museum collection and a classic example of the 18th century florescence of planemakers in southern New England.

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/31102t1_p1.jpg

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/31102t1_p2.jpg

Unidentified Tools

913108T6 Unknown

DTM

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

Woodworking Tools

TBW1001 Adjustable plough plane

NOM

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

Pollak 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>

TBW1010 adz

DTM

Forged iron and wood, 4 1/4" long with a 4 3/4" handle, 1" wide blade, unsigned, ca. 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>

TAB1005 Bark spud

DTM

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 (axe, drawknife, sod cutter, spud, bowie knife and frame saw)

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005_p1.jpg

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/tab1005_p2.jpg

81101T9A Chisel

DTM

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.

72002T5 Framing square

DTM

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

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

71903T1 Gutter adz

DTM

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 carpenter's tool chest ca. 1885-1900, but is much older than that.

http://www.davistownmuseum.org/pics/71903t1_p1_LippedAdz.jpg

TAB1001 Hand saw

DTM

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

Distinctive 18th c. handle, ca. 1720. 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_p5.jpg

Davistown Museum Inventory of Tools - Maritime I

Woodworking Tools

Status Location

TAB1004 Hatchet

BDTM

Forged iron with wrought strapping, 5 1/2" long, notched blade, 3" wide with 4 3/8" strapping, 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_p2.jpg

TAB1006 Mallet

DTM

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>

TAB1014 Plough plane

BDTM

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

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

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.

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>

TAB1010 Stone drill

DTM

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

This stone drill has clearly been re-fashioned 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>