

1996

## A Distinctive Chest of Drawers: using Material Culture to Interpret the Past and the Present

Jessica Williams Johnston  
*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Johnston, Jessica Williams, "A Distinctive Chest of Drawers: using Material Culture to Interpret the Past and the Present" (1996). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1539626027.

<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-0jf5-1w79>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

A DISTINCTIVE CHEST OF DRAWERS  
Using Material Culture to  
Interpret the Past and the Present

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of American Studies  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Jessica Williams Johnston  
April, 1996

APPROVAL SHEET

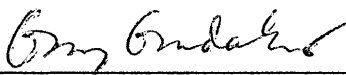
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

  
Author

Approved, April, 1996

  
Barbara Carson

  
Grey Gundaker

  
Jon Prown

DEDICATION  
for my family

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
ABSTRACT	viii
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER I. IDENTIFICATION OF THE OBJECT	10
CHAPTER II. EVALUATION OF THE OBJECT	25
CHAPTER III. CULTURAL ANALYSIS: INTERPRETATION OF THE PAST	32
CHAPTER IV. THE OBJECT'S VALUE IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT	56
CONCLUSION	67
APPENDIX	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	74

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Barbara Carson and Jon Prown, under whose guidance this investigation was conducted. Their insights, criticism and patience have been invaluable. The author would also like to thank Grey Gundaker for her careful reading of the manuscript and John Watson for his evaluation and analysis of the musical aspects of the keyboard instrument. Thanks are also due Toby Chieffo for her fine photography.

Sharon Prunty, John Parks and Wallace Hanlin, all of West Virginia provided a great deal of information and assistance while compiling the genealogy of the Hays and Hanline families.

The author would especially like to thank her family for their constant support (and Prodding!) throughout this endeavor.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figure

1. Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
2. Detail of top portion of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
3. Detail of Keziah Hays signature on Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
4. Detail of incised decoration and turned bulbous leg of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
5. Detail of incised decoration and inlaid initial "T" on column of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
6. Detail of keyboard instrument of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
7. Detail of compartment hidden behind side panel of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
8. Detail of holes cut into divider behind piano portion of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.
9. Cross section drawing of Grant County chest of drawers/piano mechanism. Drawn by John Watson, 1995.
10. Chest of drawers organ in the collection of the Berks County Historical Society, Pennsylvania, from Brunner, Raymond J. *"That Ingenious Business" Pennsylvania German Organ Builders*. Birdsboro, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1990, p. 186.
11. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, clothespress, 1780, from Burke, Susan M. and Matthew H. Hill. *From Pennsylvania to Waterloo: Pennsylvania-German Folk Culture in Transition*. Ontario, Canada: Joseph Schneider Haus, 1991, p. 14.

12. Lancaster County wardrobe, 1779, from Garvan, Beatrice B. and Charles F. Hummel. *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of Their Arts 1683-1850*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982, p. 23.
13. Corner cupboard, northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, 1790-1810, from Bivins, John and Forsyth Alexander. *The Regional Arts of the Early South*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1991, p. 154.
14. Blanket chest, West Virginia, 1801, Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum Decorative Arts Photographic Collection.
15. Cotton Quilt, 1971. In the collection of the Center for Southern Folklore, Memphis, Tennessee, from Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990, p. 61.
16. Cotton Quilt, 1971. In the collection of William Arnett, Atlanta, Georgia, from Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990, p. 66.
17. Twined bags made by the Osage Tribe, Oklahoma, early 20th century from Fane, Diane Ira and Jacknis. *Objects of Myth and Memory: American Indian Art at The Brooklyn Museum*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1991, p. 306.
18. Abstract shapes used for decorative purposes on western basketry, from LaFarge, Oliver. *Introduction to American Indian Art*. Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1931, p.78.
19. Designs on southwestern pottery, from LaFarge, Oliver. *Introduction to American Indian Art*. Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1931, p. 77.
20. Chair-table with drawer, probably Marshfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1700, from St. George, Robert Blair. *The Wrought Covenant*. Brockton, Massachusetts: Brockton Art Center/Fuller Memorial, 1979, pp. 30-31.
21. Joined chest, probably Dedham, Massachusetts, 1635-85, from St. George, Robert Blair. *The Wrought Covenant*. Brockton, Massachusetts: Brockton Art Center/Fuller Memorial, 1979, pp. 60.



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to apply the proposed model for artifact study developed by E. McClung Fleming to a mid-nineteenth-century object made in the area encompassing present-day West Virginia and Maryland. This object, a chest of drawers loosely styled in the Empire fashion, functions as a storage case but also as a crude musical instrument resembling a piano.

The study will identify basic properties of the object—its construction, material, design, function and history—and will compare it with other objects made in the West Virginia/western Maryland region and to objects with similar decorative elements, design and construction.

The discussion will then move forward to a cultural analysis of the past; assumptions will be made concerning the society in which the piece was constructed and where it was housed. The object will provide evidence of the community's rich German and Anglican cultural traditions as well as the importance of music to the agrarian society.

Finally, modern material culture scholarship concerning issues of nineteenth-century parlor society, musical traditions and immigrant interaction will be examined. Using conclusions reached in Chapter 3, suggestions about where the chest of drawers/piano fits with modern scholarship will be offered.

A DISTINCTIVE CHEST OF DRAWERS  
Using Material Culture to  
Interpret the Past and the Present

## INTRODUCTION

What can an object tell the late twentieth-century observer about the society in which it was made and used? A material object can be seen as an expression of its maker, mirroring the society which produced it. Conversely, an artifact can also be viewed as an active agent which not only reflects its society but also actually affects the communities with which it comes into contact. To quantify and promote objects as important cultural barometers, some scholars have developed models for a precise and systematic study of artifacts.

In the following pages, a detailed analysis of an object will be conducted using the scholarly model first published in the 1974 *Winterthur Portfolio* under the title, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model" by E. McClung Fleming, a professor at The University of Delaware's Winterthur Program in Early American History and Culture. Through this application, it will be determined whether Fleming's model provides the student with an appropriate systematic method of analyzing an object. The object which will be explored using this model is a distinctive chest of drawers/piano constructed in the mid nineteenth century that functions not only as a storage container, but also as a

musical instrument (figs. 1 and 2).<sup>1</sup> The chest emanated from Grant County, in present-day West-Virginia and is today in the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

Fleming's two-part model is predicated upon the fact that societies use artifacts and objects on a daily basis; they are imperative to human survival and self-realization. To understand people we must acknowledge and understand the artifacts that are left behind. The first portion of Fleming's survey entails an analysis of five properties he claims are inherent in every object: history, material, construction, design and function. In the second portion of the model, four operations are to be performed on these five basic properties: identification, evaluation, cultural (societal) analysis and interpretation. A careful and thoughtful exploration of these four operations will "yield answers to most of the important questions we want to ask about an artifact."<sup>3</sup>

Consumers are well aware of objects such as chests of drawers, tall case clocks and tea cups. It is when an individual moves beyond this basic inspection, however, that an object takes on a bigger meaning and contains more nuances. Only after consumers invoke the rest of Fleming's model and trespass into other more advanced levels of examination and

---

<sup>1</sup> Although the keyboard contained within the chest of drawers does not closely resemble a conventional piano, it will be referred to as a piano in a generic sense throughout the body of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> The accession number of the chest of drawers/piano is 1991.438.

<sup>3</sup> Fleming, E. McClung, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," in Schlereth, Thomas J. *Material Culture Studies in America*. Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1982, p. 166-167.

interpretation will an object become a useful tool in providing information about the past. For example, tall case clocks are obviously mechanisms to tell time. Further exploration of these objects, however, turns the time pieces into useful societal and cultural indicators that create schedules and regulate labor patterns. Prior to the advent of relatively inexpensive mechanized clocks, people did not desire temporal exactitude in their daily routines. Once time pieces became more prevalent, however, time was reconceptualized. In eighteenth-century Virginia, plantation owners such as Landon Carter and George Washington used clocks to measure their slaves' productivity and at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, an enormous clock with chimes could be heard throughout the property. This clock became the vehicle for the control and regulation of the slaves' daily outputs.<sup>4</sup>

As consumers today inspect and analyze a historical object, they bring to their interpretation personal experiences influenced by twentieth-century life. Anthropologist James Deetz states, "total objectivity is not to be expected in human judgment, and the best we can do is recognize and account for those subjective biases we carry with us."<sup>5</sup> We must also understand that an object not only influences and is influenced by the society which made it, but it also impacts societies

---

<sup>4</sup> Sobel, Mechal. *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 21, 56, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Deetz, James, *In Small Things Forgotten*, New York: Schuster and Schuster, 1987, p. 6.

which subsequently use the object. Additionally, the manner in which the object is used is also dictated by the necessities of these subsequent societies. The scope of this paper will focus primarily on the Grant County chest of drawers/piano in its original mid-nineteenth-century context rather than its later life.

In the first chapter, the chest of drawers/piano is identified to determine its history, craftsmanship, design and function—characteristics of every object. Chapter 2 begins with an evaluation of the object which focuses on its aesthetic qualities and craftsmanship through a comparison with like objects. It is essential to understand these basic characteristics of the piece before engaging in the Fleming model's more theoretical aspects. In the third chapter, a cultural analysis of the object is performed. This critique represents a broad evaluation of the object's function as a tool and as a means of communicating ideas such as status, emulation or cultural preferences. It is a means of interpreting and understanding the past and the mid-nineteenth-century society in which the chest of drawers/piano resided. As Fleming states, "the purpose in cultural analysis is to isolate characteristics common to the group that enable the researcher to make inferences of a general nature about the society that produced and/or used the body of artifacts."<sup>6</sup> The cultural examination, by placing the object within its larger context, provides the

---

<sup>6</sup> Fleming, "Artifact Study," p. 169.

basis for interdisciplinary study to determine how the object relates to larger ideas of religious or political beliefs, modes of entertainment or even gender issues.

The cultural study of the chest of drawers/piano incorporates a societal examination of the area in which the object was produced and used. This investigation is problematic because by the mid nineteenth century, cultures in the West Virginia region were muddled and societies were intermingled. No longer was there a distinct German or Anglican society. Instead, through their constant interaction, a heterogeneous "American" society was being developed. Aspects of traditional Anglican and Germanic traditions are, however, present in the chest of drawers/piano and these traditions are explored. In Chapter 3, the role of farming in the lives of this mid-nineteenth-century West Virginia society is investigated because farming was the occupation of the probable owners of this object as well as the majority of residents in the area. Some speculation about the piece's intended function for storage and as a musical instrument are offered. The maker, unaware of conventional piano construction, went to great lengths to construct his own instrument and incorporate it into an already highly functional object. His diligence and inventiveness suggest that music was an important part of his life or the lives of those for whom this work was made.

According to Fleming, after this cultural analysis is completed, it is important to interpret the object in relation

to present-day culture—to apply modern sets of values and interpretive ideas to the object. Just as the goal of the evaluation and cultural analysis portions of Fleming's model is to interpret the past using the piece, the objective throughout the interpretive phase of the model is to use the object as a means of interpreting the present. In this final phase of interpretation, various theoretical and factual aspects of the chest of drawers are to be compared with related current scholarship.

In Chapter 4, important aspects of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano, such as its musical features and its display of different immigrant traditions will be explored in relation to modern interpretive ideas on these subjects. For example, the most extensive scholarship written on nineteenth-century music is Kenneth Ames's *Death in the Dining Room*. Ames analyzes the important role parlor organs played in the mid-to-late-nineteenth-century urban society. The existence of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano and the length its maker went to create its unique keyboard instrument suggest an alternative look at music as it existed in a rural community.

The Grant County chest of drawers/piano exhibits aspects of German construction and decoration, but was created by a person of English descent. Twentieth-century scholarship has grappled with different theories concerning the patterns of interaction followed by immigrant societies and established populations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. In



his article entitled, "Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley," Edward Chappell argues that the Rhenish Houses in Page County, Virginia, provide evidence that the English culture gradually dominated that of the Germans after 1810. While the Germanic houses retained some traditional characteristics, the German settlers largely abandoned their architectural style in favor of the typical British I-plan house.<sup>7</sup> More recently, however, scholars such as Richard White have adopted a slightly different approach to acculturation that implies that societies come together and through a process of cultural understanding, learning and accommodation, create a middle ground where evidence of the previous cultures still exists. In Chapter 4, the Grant County chest is analyzed in conjunction with these different theories about acculturation and accommodation.

Also in Chapter 4, the idea that the chest of drawers/piano is an active object that acts back and impacts communities which come into contact with it is explored. In Ian Hodder's *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* Hodder writes, "Material culture does not just exist. It is made by someone. It is produced to do something. Therefore it does not passively reflect society – rather, it creates society through the actions of individuals."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Chappell, Edward. "Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley: Rhenish Houses of the Massanutten Settlement," in Upton, Dell, ed. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Hodder, Ian, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology*, second edition, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 6.

It is my intent that through the evaluation of this unique artifact the reader will gain an understanding not only of the chest of drawers/piano, but of the cultural traditions surrounding it and the modern scholarship to which it relates. Above all, the information the object provides and the discussion it fosters will attest to the belief of material culture scholars that objects have a great potential for understanding individuals, societies and an entire culture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE OBJECT

To begin the analysis of the object, we ask the question: what is it? The first phase of Fleming's model, identification, identifies the most basic characteristics of the piece - construction, material, design and function. A cursory glance at the Grant County chest of drawers/piano reveals a chest of drawers constructed of a variety of woods and designed loosely in the Empire style (fig. 1). Most likely, the mid-nineteenth-century owners of the object used their chest of drawers/piano as a storage unit. The chest's provenance, presented to the current owner by oral history, suggests that the nineteenth-century family was living in what is presently the state of West Virginia. This provenance is supported by the existence of the signature of "Keziah Hays" on one of the chest's drawers. She lived in West Virginia in the nineteenth century, and her lineage and connection with the object is further discussed in the following pages.

#### CHEST OF DRAWERS: APPEARANCE

The primary wood of the case is cherry, while the secondary woods are white pine, yellow pine, chestnut, oak, poplar, and

walnut. The piece consists of two sections; the upper section hangs two inches over the lower and contains three drawer tiers. The bottom section contains six tiers of graduated drawers. The top two tiers contain four drawers each. The far left drawer of the top tier is signed on the back panel in red pencil with the name "Kezia[h] Hays" (fig. 3). The middle two tiers each have two drawers. All of the drawers have glass pulls, except for the top tier of drawers in the bottom section, which have brass pulls. All drawers are equipped with locks and have flat fronts with etched drawer blades and stiles.

Incised decoration embellishes the facade of the chest. These geometric designs run along the base, down each side and along the dividing piece separating the upper and lower portions. The linear shapes and patterns are carved in low relief (fig. 4). The "X" patterns which appear on the base are each variations of one another; the most basic is a simple "X" dividing a square into four equal quadrants. Building on this design, other squares have these same descending triangles placed in different quadrants. In the space closest to the bottom corner, there are three concentric circles arranged in a bull's eye design. On the right side, three-inch square and circular designs are spaced equidistant from one another. The left side contains ornamentation which mirrors that of the right side. Along the sides, variations of similar "X" designs appear, along with slightly different incised square-triangle designs, some contained within a circle. One of these three

inch designs lacks the square/"X"/triangle motif. Instead, it is in the pattern of a cross incised within a circle. Two other smaller concentric circles pass through the cross. Along the space separating the upper and lower portions, an alternating design pattern of circular motifs occurs. These are smaller and comparatively plainer than those on the sides and the base. These designs, if placed contiguously and replicated in a continuously running frieze, would create an oval and diamond design (fig. 5).

Flanking the bottom portion of the chest are two turned columns. On the top portion of each of the columns, an initial is inlaid with a white putty-like substance. On the left column, this initial is a "T" and on the right side, this initial is a "D" (fig. 5). Along the left and right sides of the interior of the lower portion of the chest of drawers, the words "left side" and "right side" are written in white chalk. On the removable middle drawer of the upper portion, a large "X" is written in red pencil.

#### CHEST OF DRAWERS: CONSTRUCTION

The construction of the chest of drawers portion of the chest of drawers/piano consists of three top boards flush screwed to the upper edges of the case sides. Drawer moldings are nailed and screwed in place. Pinned mortise-and-tenon flat paneled sides comprise the sides of the chest. Drawers in the upper overhung section of the chest are supported on nailed-on

runners and also on a diagonal brace that, in turn, is nailed to a mitre-jointed open frame that surrounds the second drawer. The third drawer is false; its purpose is to conceal the keyboard section (fig. 6).

The lower section of the chest of drawers incorporates two side turned columns that are rabbeted and screwed to the overhung underside of the upper case. Drawer stiles and blades are mortise-and-tenoned into place and additionally pinned. Drawers in the lower portion are supported on mortise-and-tenon joined frames which, in turn, are nailed to the interior case sides and back. The case sides are lined with screwed-on poplar liners. Thin sprig-nailed drawer stops appear on the interior of the back panel. The bottom drawer conceals a secondary bottom board, which has a large cut opening at the center that creates a hidden well.

The case rests on a thin base supported by four turned bulbous-shaped feet, which are inscribed on the top with four concentric rings. The legs are mortise-and-tenoned into the base. The base protrudes along the front and each of the sides and has an extending square piece on either of the front corners. Square pegged into each of these extending square pieces is a turned column.

The maker used a variety of joints in the construction of the seventeen drawers, the most common being a dovetail with medial wedges. Round shouldered dovetails were also employed. Each of the drawer bottoms are deeply chamfered.

#### CHEST OF DRAWERS: HIDDEN CONSTRUCTION ELEMENTS

Like the concealed instrument, there are other hidden elements on this artifact, most of which have no known purpose. The maker's fascination with secret spaces manifests itself in covert compartments located beyond the view of the casual beholder. There are two hidden spaces behind hinged doors on the side panels of the chest of drawers. Each door hides a compartment running the width of the object. This hidden chamber is separated into two equally sized compartments, each containing a removable shelf (fig. 7). Each of the four smallest drawers has a false lock to provide unrestricted access to a center removable drawer stay. A narrow piece of wood in one of these drawer runners has a hollow portion providing hidden storage space for a key.

The largest hidden compartment lies to the rear of the top portion, behind and underneath the space where the piano sits. This empty space, accessible only when the top back board is unscrewed and removed, is concealed from the front by a wooded divider that fits into a groove in the top section of the chest. The space from this divider to the back of the piano is approximately five inches. The divider is removable only by sliding it upward along its grooves. It has four deliberate shapes cut into the wood - one circle, one semi-circular shape, and two slits the size of a credit card's profile (fig. 8). As with the concealed elements, it is difficult to determine the

precise function of these holes. When the piece was first examined in 1991 by John Watson, Conservator of Musical Instrument at Colonial Williamsburg, it was believed that the holes may have provided access for other piano mechanisms that are now missing.<sup>9</sup> When the chest of drawers/piano was examined again in March of 1994 by Watson and others, this theory was dismissed due to a lack of further substantiating evidence. A correlation of these holes and the concealed cavernous space suggests that the holes were intended to provide access to the lower most hidden compartment. The semi-circular hole is enclosed by a vertical chute with no bottom, perhaps allowing the owner to drop coins into some sort of basket lying below. The bottom edge of the chute is chamfered. Some of the structural elements in the lower most hidden compartment are deliberately rounded for no known purpose.

At this time, each of these hidden spaces have no documented reason for being incorporated into the object. Perhaps the keyboard was hidden from view because the Hays-Hanline family lived in a society or belonged to a religious sect that did not allow music. Maybe Keziah Hays was involved in some sort of occupation or pastime which required hiding coins, documents or precious metals. The drawer configuration is deliberate and different from that found in the majority of chest of drawers. Perhaps its unusual arrangement was necessary and a result of

---

<sup>9</sup> When John Watson examined the piece for Colonial Williamsburg on April 29, 1991 he included in his report, "Shaped holes in the partition behind the piano action, one of which leads to an enclosed channel, indicate some sort of further mechanical contrivance now missing."



Keziah's activities. These theories are only speculation, and can only be verified by future study and findings.

#### KEYBOARD: APPEARANCE

As one stands in front of the chest of drawers, its function seems quite clear; it was made as an organized storage facility. However, Fleming urges the observer to look past the obvious in order to fully understand an object, and this is exactly what must be done to properly evaluate this chest of drawers. A cursory glance at this chest fails to detect additional functions of this unique piece of furniture. For example, when the middle drawer of the upper part of the chest of drawers is removed, a piano-type instrument is visible; the keyboard sits in the space behind this false front middle drawer. Its placement indicates the piano was made to be played in a standing position. The keyboard consists of thirty keys (no sharp keys are present) attached to twenty-eight hitchpins with wire.

#### KEYBOARD: CONSTRUCTION

The keyboard is constructed unlike a conventional piano.<sup>10</sup> The action is intact as are fragments of soft iron and brass strings. The action works on the basic mechanical principal of the Zumpe action (more generally known as the English single-

---

<sup>10</sup> Many of the interpretations and technical information of this keyboard reflect the research of John Watson, Conservator of Musical Instruments, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

action), invented by Johannes Zumpe, an eighteenth-century English harpsichord and piano maker of German origin. Zumpe's square pianos were made with a light action and a tone similar to an eighteenth-century clavichord.<sup>11</sup>

The piano portion of the object does not appear to have a bridge that was glued down and if one did exist, the weight and friction of the strings held it down. White-pine capped walnut keys make contact with the hammer directly. "The zig-zag-shaped keys pivot on a continuous horizontal wire and contact the leather-hinged hammers directly with a piece of yarn tied around the key at the point of contact. A rail under the front of the keys stops the motion of the key before the hammer contacts the string, allowing the hammer to bounce away from the string (fig. 9)."<sup>12</sup> Watson believes the maker invented this action, probably without prior formal knowledge of existing piano designs. The string layout, however, is similar to conventional square pianos; the hammers are similar to those of early square pianos, but without the leather or cloth hammer head covering. There is a thin slab-cut ribbed white pine soundboard on the right side of the piano.<sup>13</sup> The sound produced by this instrument is not loud and has a strong "tinny" characteristic.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ripen, Edward M., Denzil Wraight, et. al. *Early Keyboard Instruments*. New York: WW Norton and Co., 1989, p. 267.

<sup>12</sup> Watson, John R. "A Catalogue of Antique Keyboard Instruments." *Early Keyboard Journal*, p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

## THE CHEST'S FAMILY HISTORY

Identification of the maker and owner of the chest of drawers/piano is crucial to the further interpretation of the object. While the history of the chest is largely unknown, the presence of the "Kezia[h] Hays" signature or inscription on the reverse of one of the smaller drawers suggests it was owned by the family of Keziah Hays.<sup>14</sup> It is possible this inscription designates another Keziah Hays, but present research indicates the signature represents the individual subsequently described. If this assumption is correct, the inscription roots the piece temporally in the mid nineteenth century. Research shows that this Hays family resided in what is today known as Grant County, West Virginia, a sparsely populated rural community located in the northeastern part of the state. Prior to the redrawing of geographical borders, the county was located within the boundaries of Hampshire County, Virginia. When West Virginia became an independent state in 1863, the area then became a part of Hardy County, West Virginia. In 1866 its borders were drawn as they appear today.

When Colonial Williamsburg purchased the Grant County chest of drawers/piano in 1991 from an antiques store in Winchester, Virginia, little was known of the history of the object or the family who owned it. An oral tradition provided by John Parks,

---

<sup>14</sup> The Keziah Hays described here was listed in the Virginia Census as illiterate. The name written on the back of the drawer is a very sophisticated signature, most likely by the hand of a literate person. Therefore, it is possible that someone else wrote her name. Perhaps the maker wrote her name as he constructed the piece, to designate the intended buyer.

the gentleman who sold the piano, states that it came through the Hays-Hanline family of Grant County, West Virginia. Park's uncle, Wallace Hanline, remembers playing with the piece as a young boy in the early part of the twentieth century. Parks said that the chest of drawers/piano had come through the distaff side of his great-great grandmother whose maiden name was Hays. This tradition, while brief and largely undocumented, is a clue to the piece's history that fits with the name, Keziah Hays (Refer to Appendix A).

Research of Virginia census records located a Keziah, age 86, living with Kidd and Mary Hays in Grant County, West Virginia in 1850. The previous 1840 census lists several Hayses, but no Keziah. However, there is one name, Electious (spelled also as Elictious, Elenerous and Elexis in various documents) that appears in 1840, but not in 1850. In 1840, Electious is specified as between the ages of eighty and ninety with a wife between the ages of seventy and eighty. Also in the 1840 census, an individual named Kidd Hays first appears; he is between the ages of thirty and forty with a wife between twenty and thirty. In the 1830 census, Electious Hays is listed as having one son between the age of twenty and thirty living at home. From this information, it is possible to infer that Electious Hays had a wife named Keziah and a son, Kidd, who moved out of the house and married between the years 1830 and 1840. Between the years 1840 and 1850, Electious Hays died and his wife, Keziah Hays, moved in with her son, Kidd and his wife

Mary. Keziah and Electious are also listed as having a daughter, Rebecca Catherine Hays (1807-1881) who married Martin Abraham Hanline on October 19, 1871. This union produced a son by the name of Job M. Hanline who later married Keziah [Kesiah, Kezziah] Ellen Kitzmiller. Job and his wife had a son named Archibold Obediah Hanlin(e), whose grandson, John Parks sold the chest of drawers/piano in 1991.<sup>15</sup>

Like a majority of the inhabitants of Grant County, the Hays and Hanline families were farmers. Samuel Henline [sic], the first member of his family to travel to America, was born in the state of Hess, Germany. Prior to 1790, he immigrated to the United States and settled in Hagerstown, Maryland. Later, he acquired acreage near Mt. Storm, West Virginia, property that was farmed by five subsequent generations. Both the Hanline and the Hays families remained in the area. When Keziah Hays's daughter, Rebecca Catherine married Martin Hanline, they moved to Keyser, West Virginia, a town near present-day Mt. Storm. Wallace Hanlin, the great-great-grandson of Samuel Henline today lives on the original homestead in Mt. Storm and continues to farm the land.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> The following sources were used to compile the Hays/Hanline genealogy: 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850 Virginia Census; 1870, 1880, 1900 West Virginia Census; 1843b, 1844a, 1845, 1846, 1847b Hardy County Personal Property Tax. Sources located at the Virginia State Archives; Oral tradition recounted by John Parks; Discussions with Sharon Prunty, Grant County, West Virginia Genealogist; *Grant County, Our Heritage*, p. 165, publication information unknown.

<sup>16</sup> Grant County, West Virginia. *Grant County, Our Heritage*, p. 165.

#### THE CRAFTSMAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS UNIQUE PIECE

The sulfur inlaid initials of "T" and "D" which appear on the flanking columns of the chest do not match with any of the individuals enumerated in the Hays-Hanline genealogy. Instead, these initials most likely match those of the chest's creator. In a society which had strong Germanic traditions, it was not unusual for a cabinetmaker to inscribe his name, initials or those of the intended recipient into case pieces. Intricate details such as well-executed wedged dovetails, paneled backboards, deeply chamfered dustboards, and ruler-precise measurements suggest that the piece was made by a trained carpenter or cabinetmaker. Formal aspects of the object imply that the craftsman may have lived in an urban area at some point or was trained by someone familiar with urban furniture making techniques. The measurements of drawers and various boards detailed earlier in this chapter are very exact; pieces of wood are cut in inch, half-inch, and quarter-inch increments. Similarly, the exact formal program of geometric designs and linear drawer placements suggests that the maker owned and utilized measurement tools. The piano mechanism, like the entire case, is constructed with meticulous attention to detail. Construction elements such as this suggest that the piano and the case were made by the same hand.

No information remains which definitively identifies the maker of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Research based on the two sulfur initials and the Keziah Hays inscription

provides clues suggesting who made and owned the piece. These clues strongly suggest that the cabinetmaker responsible for the chest of drawers/piano may have lived in Cumberland, Maryland, the closest urban area to Grant County. The link between Grant County and Cumberland was strong; many farmers living in either Grant or Hardy County, West Virginia, traveled to Cumberland to sell their produce and shop for durable goods.

Census records from 1850 indicate a Thomas D. Davis working in Cumberland, Maryland as a cabinetmaker.<sup>17</sup> This name matches the initials inlaid into the two columns of the chest of drawers/piano; Davis's profession and geographic location strongly imply that Davis made the piece. Tracing Davis's ancestry makes this attribution stronger. In 1797, another Thomas Davis, most likely the father of Thomas D. Davis, was apprenticed to Balser Conrod, a German.<sup>18</sup> Conrod worked in western Maryland and was trained as a house carpenter, joiner and cabinetmaker. Allegany County land records show a land transaction occurring in 1850 between Thomas D. Davis (son) and a Thomas Davis, possibly a transfer of land between father and son. Through the apprenticeship to Balser Conrod, the elder Davis learned Germanic cabinetmaking traditions which he passed on to his son, Thomas D. Davis, the maker of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Such a transfer could explain the presence of Germanic construction practices such as wedged

---

<sup>17</sup> In the 1840 census, Davis is listed simply as a merchant, but ten years later, his profession is changed to a cabinetmaker.

<sup>18</sup> The apprenticeship took place in either Washington or Frederick county, both located in the western portion of the state of Maryland.

dovetails and sulfur inlaying in the Grant County chest of drawers/piano (Refer to Appendix B).<sup>19</sup>

The 1820 census of Washington County, Maryland, lists a Thomas Davis (father) with two males under the age of ten, one being Thomas D. Davis (son), born in 1814. This census also identifies the head of the household as engaged in manufacturing rather than farming. An individual trained as a house carpenter, joiner and cabinetmaker would be listed as someone occupied with the manufacture of objects.<sup>20</sup>

Because both father and son were engaged in the business of cabinetmaking, either of them could be responsible for the object. However, the Empire stylistic features of the chest suggest it was constructed after 1830 and was therefore more likely made by the younger Thomas D. Davis (son), most likely between 1840 and 1860.<sup>21</sup> Keziah Hays died sometime between 1850 and 1860, making this construction time frame further plausible.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Hardy County (adjacent to Grant County) Personal Property Tax Lists for 1787 includes a Thomas Davis who owned six horses, mares or colts and seven cows.<sup>19</sup> This Davis was a mason, a trade similar in nature to a house carpenter, joiner and cabinetmaker. Given the close proximity of the borders of the states of Maryland, Virginia and present-day West Virginia in this area, it is possible that this Davis was the father of the Davis who was apprenticed to Conrod. Such a relationship provides a link between Hardy County (later Grant County), where the chest originated, and Allegany County, where Thomas D. Davis resided. It also suggests a possible relationship, either personal or blood related, between the youngest Davis and the family in which the chest descended.

<sup>20</sup> 1810 and 1820 *Washington County, Maryland Census*, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

<sup>21</sup> The maker of the piece has employed Empire details to his unique object. In America, the Empire fashion was particularly popular between the years 1810 and 1830. The style originated in France during the reign of Napoleon I and was characterized by the employment of classical and Egyptian motifs. The maker of this piece has followed the Empire characteristics loosely as exhibited by the turned feet and columns. Therefore, the piece was probably constructed sometime after 1810, most likely circa 1840 or 1850. Generally, styles were popular in rural areas such as Grant County and even Cumberland, Maryland long after their popularity waned in cities.



Perhaps the chest was purchased for her from Davis by her children. The proximity of the Davis family in Cumberland to the Hanline family in Grant County made a friendly, professional, or familial relationship possible.<sup>22</sup> Thomas D. Davis (son) had a daughter named Keziah. While this Keziah is not the same Keziah Hays whose name is found on the chest of drawers/piano, the common first names provide a further link between the two parties. The Hays family, engaged in farming, undoubtedly traveled to Cumberland to sell their produce and while there, very possibly bought or commissioned the chest of drawers/piano from the younger Davis.

---

<sup>22</sup> 1850 *Allegany County, Maryland Census*, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

CHAPTER TWO  
EVALUATION OF THE OBJECT

Using the Fleming model, I discussed the basic properties of the object—the materials, maker, design, function and construction of the Grant County chest. I identified characteristics of the object relating to these five basic properties. Some, the materials and construction, for instance, are relatively straight-forward, while others, such as the history surrounding Davis and the Hays-Hanline family, are more speculative. The next step in Fleming's model is to make "factual comparisons of one object with others of its kind in quantifiable terms, . . . as determined through objective research."<sup>23</sup> Such comparisons will be made of objects sharing geographic proximity, functional and temporal similarity and cultural likenesses. This task is difficult because the form and decoration are rare. Therefore, in the following pages, loose comparisons are made. Davis's construction techniques, stylistic details and the decorative elements employed are also investigated to foster a more complete understanding of the artifact's place in a material culture continuum.

Comparing this artifact to overtly similar pieces is difficult because concealing a piano-type instrument within a

---

<sup>23</sup> Fleming, "Artifact Study," p. 168.

chest of drawers was not a popular practice in the nineteenth century. One other chest of drawers/instrument is at the Berks County Historical Society in Reading, Pennsylvania. Designed in the Empire style, like the Grant County chest (fig. 10), it is believed that this chest of drawers/piano was made in northeast Berks County, Pennsylvania, an area heavily populated by German immigrants. The chest's Empire-style turned side columns and feet loosely resemble the style of the Grant County piano, but while the drawers of the latter actually function, the bottom three drawers of the Berks County piece are removable panels that allow access to the pipes and to the action. The maker of the Berks County organ is unknown, but as with the Grant County piano, there are several construction characteristics that imply a Germanic background.<sup>24</sup>

#### CONSTRUCTION AND DECORATION

Davis, a man of Anglican descent, has taken an Empire-styled object and infused Germanic aspects of construction and decoration.<sup>25</sup> Typical of Germanic construction traditions is the use of wide boards for the drawer sides and drawer bottoms. Both of these elements are present on the Grant County piano along with another Germanic convention, the deep chamfering of thick drawer bottoms to sufficiently fit into side grooves.

---

<sup>24</sup> Brunner, Raymond J. *"That Ingenious Business" Pennsylvania German Organ Builders*. Birdsboro, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1990, p. 186.

<sup>25</sup> The attribution of Thomas Davis as a person of Anglican descent is based upon the Anglican names given to him, his ancestors and his descendents. Refer to Appendix B.

Davis also employed the use of wedged dovetails, a practice Germans utilized so that the dovetail joints would remain firmly entrenched in the adjoining piece of wood.<sup>26</sup> Anglican construction techniques generally did not include the utilization of wedges when incorporating dovetail joints into a furniture form.

Decoratively, the sulfur inlaid initials found on the top of the columns have origins in Germanic traditions. The practice of inlaying letters, particularly in sulfur, can be seen on a number of pieces emanating from areas with large German populations such as Pennsylvania and the Valley of Virginia. A clothespress made in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1780 by a craftsman trained in German cabinetmaking traditions exhibits similar inlaying (fig. 11). On the front of this piece, a sulfur inlaid inscription describes for whom it was made and the maker, "ChRISTIAN SchNEIDER 1780 ELISABEDh SchNEIDERIN."<sup>27</sup> A more elaborate example of sulfur inlay is a wardrobe or schrank made in 1779, also from Lancaster County. On the doors of this wardrobe, a name and date appear along with elaborate decorative elements (fig. 12).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, a piece originating in the northern Shenandoah Valley between 1790 and 1810 is inlaid in

---

<sup>26</sup> Garvan, *The Pennsylvania Germans*, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Burke, Susan M., Hill, Matthew H. *From Pennsylvania to Waterloo: Pennsylvania-German Folk Culture in Transition*. Ontario, Canada: Joseph Schneider Haus, 1991, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Garvan Beatrice B. and Charles F Hummel. *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of Their Arts\_1683-1850*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982, p. 23, described on p. 31. The makers and owners of this wardrobe were of Swiss origin. The piece is inscribed GEORG HUBER ANNO 1779 and has bird and crown decorative pictures, swastikas and running vines.

light wood near the upper cornice with the initials of the owner, "AW" (fig. 13).<sup>29</sup>

Another example of sulfur inlaying can be seen in a blanket chest originating in Hardy County, West Virginia, the parent county of Grant County (fig. 14).<sup>30</sup> This chest is a standard size, roughly thirty-four inches high, fifty-four inches wide and twenty-five inches deep. Using sulfur, the maker of this chest inlaid vertically the following phrase, "Read Thes Up/And Read Thes Down." Horizontally, the letters read, "March . 1 Jacob Wilkin His Cheast A.D. 1801/Godfrey Wilkin Hardy County And State of Virginia." On the side appears the phrase, "Wel Don." Like the Grant County chest of drawers/piano, the maker, Godfrey Wilkin, has identified himself using white inlaid letters. Similar to the Grant County chest of drawers is Wilkin's fascination with multiple drawers. The paneled front section of the chest is hinged and it opens to reveal seven drawers. The ethnic origin of Wilkin is unknown, but the putty inlay and the blanket chest form suggest traditional Germanic construction and decorative characteristics.

The decorative elements appearing along the edges and borders of the Grant County chest of drawers cannot be assigned to any one cultural tradition. The cross and circle designs that appear on the bottom left and right sides resemble a Celtic

---

<sup>29</sup> Bivins, John and Forsyth Alexander. *The Regional Arts of the Early South*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1991, p. 154.

<sup>30</sup> This chest is currently in the possession of the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. It is also included in the Winterthur Museum's Decorative Arts Photographic Collection, Acc. Number 66.942.

wheel-cross that has been a Christian symbol since at least the eighth century in Scotland, Ireland and England. African traditions include a similar motif – the cross in a circle is the Kongo sign of the cosmos and the continuity of human life. God is imagined at the top of the symbol, the dead at the bottom, and water in between. The points of the cross stand for the four moments of the sun and the circumference of the cross symbolizes the certainty of reincarnation.<sup>31</sup>

If each of the segmented half-arc designs inscribed below the upper portion of the chest were placed side by side, the resulting design would be similar to the oval-and-diamond composition that was a standard motif in neoclassical designs. One group of early nineteenth-century neoclassical Baltimore tall-case clocks prominently feature this continuously running oval and diamond frieze inlaid into the veneer.<sup>32</sup> This same design also appears in Germanic artistic traditions, as evidenced by its presence on a decorated weaving frame from East Prussia.<sup>33</sup> The folklorist, Henry Glassie believes that geometry, manifested in such patterns, signifies the unifying force of the universe. "It represents the fusion of the ordering force of the universe and the ordering force of the human mind."<sup>34</sup> These designs

---

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit*. New York: Random House, 1983, p. 109.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, Jane Webb, "A Large and Elegant Assortment:: A Group of Baltimore Tall Clocks, 1795-1815." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Volume XIII, No. 2, November 1987, pp. 32-103. Two of the sixteen clocks are not pictured in their entirety, so it cannot be determined if they have this same design.

<sup>33</sup> Schlee, Ernst. *German Folk Art*. New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1980, p. 122.

<sup>34</sup> Glassie, Henry. *The Spirit of Folk Art: Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art*. New York: Abrams, 1989, p. 143.

favor the strong, firm definitive lines of geometry rather than amorphous shapes, and vague and unclear forms. Indeed, geometry is a theme in the handiwork of many cultures. African-American quilt makers readily utilize diamonds, squares, and bands of colors and patterns in their designs<sup>35</sup> (fig 15, 16). American Indians have similarly relied upon geometric shapes to decorate their textiles and pottery. Figs. 17, 18 and 19 illustrate, in order, a wool and cotton bag made by the Osage tribe in Oklahoma;<sup>36</sup> abstract shapes used for decorative purposes on western basketry; and designs on Southwestern pottery.<sup>37</sup>

Geometric borders and designs similar to those on the Grant County chest of drawers appear on high-style as well as folk objects created prior to the nineteenth century. Similar low relief, geometric designs appear on Massachusetts tables, chair-tables, boxes and joined chests from the seventeenth-century. In *The Wrought Covenant*, Robert B. St. George illustrates pieces with decorative semi-circular forms, intersecting compass arcs, and diamond motifs resembling those on the Grant County chest of drawers/piano (figs. 20, 21).<sup>38</sup>

The proliferation of similar geometric designs within myriad traditions illustrates the propensity of human beings to

---

<sup>35</sup> Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990, p. 60, 61, 66, and 73.

<sup>36</sup> Fane, Diane and Ira Jackins. *Objects of Myth and Memory: American Indian Art at The Brooklyn Museum*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1991, p. 306.

<sup>37</sup> LaFarge, Oliver. *Introduction to American Indian Art*. Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1931, p. 77, 78.

<sup>38</sup> St. George, Robert Blair. *The Wrought Covenant*. Brockton, Massachusetts: Brockton Art Center/Fuller Memorial, 1979, pg. 30-31, 60-62.

decorate and embellish. Decoration is a commonplace activity driven by personal expression as well as consumer taste. The motifs on the chest of drawers/piano resemble those found in many contexts around the world. In some of these contexts these motifs are symbols that communicate specific concepts while in others, the designs are simply decorative. It is unknown if the symbols on this piece have specific meaning or if they just serve as decoration.

Fleming's model next stresses the importance of the cultural analysis of an artifact, stating, "to examine in depth the relation of the artifact to aspects of its own culture . . . embraces the largest potential of artifact study." The purpose of cultural analysis is to "isolate characteristics common to the group that enable the researcher to make inferences of a general nature about the community that produced and/or used the body of artifacts."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Fleming, "Artifact Study," p. 169.



## CHAPTER THREE

### CULTURAL ANALYSIS: INTERPRETATION OF THE PAST

#### FORMAL ASPECTS

The previous chapter loosely compared certain aspects of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano to objects sharing similar features. Since this piece does not exhibit traits closely mirroring other chests of drawers, the application of the second portion of Fleming's model, evaluation, was perhaps not as effective as Fleming intended. In this chapter, the third portion of Fleming's model will be invoked. An analysis of the Grant County and Cumberland communities will be conducted in order to use the chest of drawers/piano in an attempt to hypothesize about the culture in which it was made and used.

Chests of drawers have served a variety of purposes, most popularly as containers for the storage of textiles and clothing. As a greater variety of goods became available to consumers living in America and abroad during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these pieces became more highly specialized and incorporated more drawers. These different compartments facilitated the organization of one's possessions. Early German immigrants to America had different customs concerning large case pieces and they usually stored their

belongings in large case pieces called kleidershrank or schrank. But by the early nineteenth century, these large, architectonic forms began to be replaced by chests of drawers. However, throughout this transformation from one form to another, German cabinetmakers incorporated the traditional characteristics such as wedged dovetails, full dustboards and thick backboards which were discussed in the previous chapter.

#### GERMAN IMMIGRATION INTO VIRGINIA AND WESTERN MARYLAND

As mentioned previously, the chest of drawers/piano exhibits certain Germanic details and was at one point owned by a partially German family, the Hays-Hanline family. Because the father of the maker of the chest of drawers/piano was apprentice trained by a German cabinetmaker, Balser Conrod, the Germanic influences of his father's mentor are apparent. To understand the piece properly and to make assumptions about the community which made and used the object, it is necessary to investigate the immigrant population living in the vicinity of Grant County and Cumberland. The 1850 census of Cumberland, Maryland's Allegany County, shows that 5,017 of the county's 22,045 residents were born outside the United States, the majority descending from Germany. Large numbers of immigrants like the Hanline family lived in the surrounding Grant and Hardy Counties of West Virginia and the area to the south—the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The large numbers of immigrants came to this rural region for a variety of reasons.

The German immigrants first came to America from the Palatinate region of Germany, a fertile section of land located along the Rhine River. They came to America to escape harsh economic conditions, political oppression, and religious persecution. The Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697), and later the War of the Spanish Succession caused economic inflation as well as a rise in the number of standing armies. Additionally, the social class structure of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany was particularly rigid, denying social mobility to those born into the lower economic classes. Immigrants came to America to seek a better life through the ownership of inexpensive, fertile land, which could be passed to their children.<sup>40</sup>

Early German immigrants to America were lured by William Penn to Pennsylvania with promises of freedom as well as a good lifestyle in a land of plenty. Beginning in 1730, some of the German population living in areas such as Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey were drawn southward by further guarantees of good land and high prices for their wares. From these northern states, many emigrants traversed across the narrow neck of western Maryland (near Cumberland) into the Shenandoah Valley. As they moved southward, they traveled down the "Great Wagon Road," an established Indian road which cut through the Valley of Virginia between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Appalachian Mountains to the west. As southward migration

---

<sup>40</sup> Garvan and Hummel, p. 15.

continued, some groups settled in rural areas along the route while others continued to travel even further south.<sup>41</sup> German immigrants also spread westward across the valleys of the south branch of the Potomac and assisted in the development of Hampshire, Hardy, Pendleton and Grant Counties in present-day West Virginia.<sup>42</sup> Other German immigrants remained in the western tip of Maryland and populated Allegany, Frederick, and Washington Counties.

Wherever Germans settled, the location of their communities required four things: proximity to other Germans, availability of land from speculators, nearness to Pennsylvania, and the prior establishment of English communities in the area.<sup>43</sup> For economic and psychological support, the German immigrants turned first to their families and then to other immigrants. Within settlements, these individuals formed tight social orders from their similar ethnic backgrounds. Families were particularly close, as illustrated by the frequent practice of naming children after family members—usually grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and sponsors.<sup>44</sup> A letter written to a woman living in Hardy county illustrates these strong ties and the popular practice of assigning family names to their children. The woman writes, "I would give any thing if I could

---

<sup>41</sup> Gusler, Wallace B. "The Arts of Shenandoah County, Virginia 1770-1825." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*. No. 2, Vol. V, Nov. 1979, pp. 6-35, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Wayland, p. 93, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Kessel, Elizabeth Augusta. *Germans on the Maryland Frontier: A Social History of Frederick County 1730-1800*. Houston, Texas: Rice University, Dissertation, 1981, p. 93.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 247, 265.

se [sic] you all again and more aspersively [sic] my little name sake or you call it my name sake but Brother Samuel's wife said that you called it after her but our names are alike."<sup>45</sup> This same familial cohesiveness is apparent among the Hays-Henline families. Grant and Hardy County censuses of 1840 reveal that when Keziah's husband died, she went to live with her son and daughter-in-law.<sup>46</sup> Also listed as living in the same area are numerous other family members, suggesting that their family's cohesion was propelled by living near one another.

#### OTHER IMMIGRANTS

Along with German immigrants, large numbers of Scots-Irish and English immigrants chose to settle in the area of Western Maryland, the Valley of Virginia and present-day eastern West Virginia. It is important to investigate these Anglican settlers because the chest of drawers/piano does not derive completely from German traditions. The Empire-styled form and the bulbous turned legs suggest English, rather than a total Germanic influence. Additionally, Davis was of Anglican descent. English settlers living in eastern Virginia, for reasons echoing those of the Pennsylvania Germans, moved westward searching for larger amounts of land. In eastern Virginia, large plantations dominated the landscape, forcing newcomers to look elsewhere for their own tracts of land.

---

<sup>45</sup> Mary Trumbo to Anna See, South Mill Creek, Hardy County, Virginia, See Family Papers, 1821-1819 College of William and Mary Swem Library Manuscript Collection, 39.2 Se3. Hereafter referred to as See Family Papers.

<sup>46</sup> An account of this arrangement begins on page 15.

The Scots, Presbyterian by faith, faced threats to their religious and civil rights that were similar to those the Germans experienced. They were transported to northern Ireland in the early seventeenth century and denied both their civil and religious rights under the Test Act of 1704. Like the Germans, they were drawn to Virginia hoping to escape the feudal wars, failing economies, and a famine which occurred in Ireland during the 1720s. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, these immigrants had established an Anglican/Scots-Irish community in Western Virginia.

How did these different immigrant cultures interact in their new American communities? Were the communities marked by cultural segregation in which individuals could retain their European heritage and customs? Did residents of one community resent an influx of foreigners? According to Klaus Wust, in, *Virginia Germans*, by 1830 Germans living in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia abandoned their standard German language for English. In their own communities, however, they retained their Germanic dialects for communication between one another.<sup>47</sup> Did the German immigrants feel they had to act and live in a more "Anglican" manner in order to be accepted into these communities? Account books, inventories and newspapers from the time and region in question are examined to get a sense of

---

<sup>47</sup> Wust, Klaus. *Virginian Germans*. Charlottesville, Virginia: The University of Virginia Press, 1969, pp. 137-142.

cultural interaction in the region in which the chest of drawers was made and originally used.

An 1850-1852 account book kept by Absolom Lee, a cobbler who worked in Hardy County, West Virginia, illustrates this presence of people with diverse backgrounds in the area and their interaction on a professional level. The individuals listed in his transactions suggest he had a broad cultural clientele. The names of customers, ranging from Joseph Ashenfelter and Susan Mathias to John Cleaver and Albert Jackson Lee illustrate the presence of those of both German and English or Scots-Irish descent. As a businessman, Lee did not discriminate against those of a different ethnicity. This practice was also evident in the ledger of Franklin Taylor, a merchant from the Luney's Creek region of Hardy County. This ledger covers the years 1831 to 1852 and includes Anglican names such as Alexander Scott and James Stafford and German names such as Samuel Brumbache and George Kaneister. The ledger also lists one seemingly French name, George Burgoyne.<sup>48</sup>

On a personal level, such unimpeded interactions between immigrant cultures are not as apparent. Many established residents of the Grant County region resented German immigrants and blamed them for problems which arose in the society. At least a portion of the established population of Allegany County was opposed to the large numbers of foreigners arriving in the

---

<sup>48</sup> Account Book of Franklin Taylor, College of William and Mary, Swem Library Manuscript Collection, MsV Ac 23.

area. Anti-immigrant sentiments were expressed both in religious as well as political arenas. In 1847, the congregation of Christ's Church located in Cumberland, Maryland, and originally founded in 1794 by German immigrants, gave notice to its German-speaking parishioners that all services would henceforth be conducted in English; no longer would services in German be allowed. Instead of creating an additional German church, these immigrants chose to submit to Anglican traditions.<sup>49</sup>

By following Fleming's model and looking at the Grant County chest of drawers/piano as a way of interpreting the past, construction was not significantly affected by the animosities outlined above. This is not to say that these animosities did not exist, but just that they do not seem to have limited the design and construction of the Grant County chest to only one cultural tradition—Anglican, Scots-Irish or German.

Similarly, the owners of the chest of drawers/piano are descended from different immigrant societies. Keziah Hays's daughter, Rebecca Catherine Hays (of Anglican descent), married Martin Abraham Hanline, the son of German parents, Keziah Kitzmiller and Jacob Hanline. Davis was trained in the use of Germanic construction techniques, despite his Anglican heritage. So, even though animosity existed in the region, intermarriage

---

<sup>49</sup> Stegmaier, Harry I., Jr. et. al. *Allegheny County: A History*. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Print Company, 1976, p. 166.



occurred, as did an intermingling of cultural traditions in the form of apprenticeship education and furniture production.

#### FARMING

What can a chest of drawers/piano possibly tell the twentieth-century beholder about a nineteenth-century farming community? Most likely it will not relate much information about specific farming practices such as crop rotations or fertilization techniques, but, if Keziah Hays bought the object for its musical capabilities, the piece implies that at least one family was perhaps interested in musical entertainment after the farming was done. Similarly, the chest of drawers/piano, with its specific drawer configuration and numerous secret spaces, also suggests that Keziah or her family was involved in some sort of occupation or pastime in addition to farming.

In this cultural analysis, it is necessary to explore the role of farming because this occupation was so much a part of the Hays-Hanline family's life and the lives of a majority of others living in the region. By tracing Keziah Hays's genealogy, we know that she lived in present-day Grant County, West Virginia and she was a member of a farming family who claimed average economic prosperity. The area around Grant County in the mid nineteenth century was demarcated by small-scale general farming and a society of middling property owners. The Hays-Hanline family fits this description, as they owned only a limited number of acres and only a few mules.

Agriculture in the region was diversified and unspecialized. Grains and livestock comprised the majority of goods grown with wheat, rye and corn as the major crops. Vegetable and other garden crops provided sustenance in family diets. Most of the small farm labor force came from the families who resided on the land.<sup>50</sup>

The northern Shenandoah Valley and western Maryland, the area from which the Hays-Henline family descended, had been populated by small-scale farmers long before the chest of drawers/piano was made. In the 1790s, a traveler named Isaac Weld remarked of the northern Shenandoah Valley,

the cultivated lands in this country are mostly parceled out in small portions; there are no persons here . . . possessing large farms; nor are there any eminently distinguished by their education or knowledge from the rest of their fellow citizens. Poverty also is as much unknown in this country as great wealth. Each man owns the house he lives in and the land which he cultivates, and every one appears to be in a happy state of mediocrity, and unambitious of a more elevated situation than what he himself enjoys.<sup>51</sup>

The majority of the population of Grant County, or the county from which it broke in 1866, Hardy County, were employed in occupations relating to farming – either as a farmer or as a

---

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, Robert D. *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society and Development in the Preindustrial Era*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1991, pg. 117.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

farm laborer. The Hays-Hanlin(e) family had a small to moderate tract of land upon which grew a variety of grains and perhaps some livestock. In the 1820 Hardy County Census, Elenerous Hays, (Keziah's husband), was listed as having one son between the age of ten and sixteen and one between sixteen and seventeen. In this same census, he listed two members of his household engaged in agriculture, most likely himself and his eldest son. In the 1843 Hardy County Personal Property Tax records, Elictious (a form of Elenerous) Hays is listed as having four horses, foals or mules, a number suggesting that his estate was not small but was moderate, and comparable to others living in the area.

In the 1870 West Virginia Census, Rebecca Hanline, age sixty-two, the daughter of Elenerous, listed herself and her thirty-one year old son, Job, as farmers. At this time, each of their estates were worth a relatively hefty \$3000 and their personal estates were valued at \$500 and \$2000 respectively. Over one hundred years later, the farming tradition continues within the Hanlin family as Wallace Hanlin, the great-great-grandson of Keziah Hays, remains engaged in cultivating the land today at age sixty-seven. Wallace remembers playing with the chest of drawers/piano when he was a young, suggesting that the object continued to be a part of a farming community for generations.

The presence of the Keziah Hays inscription or signature on the chest of drawers/piano indirectly tells the researcher that

it resided within a farming community for more than one generation. While the piece itself gives the researcher little information on which to hypothesize about the role of farming in an entire community, it does allow the reader to speculate upon the involvement of one family in some sort of additional pastime. This leisure activity was perhaps one in which the whole family engaged once the farming was done or one in which Keziah was involved during the time her family was in the fields.

#### MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTS

Using the Grant County chest of drawers/piano to hypothesize about the role music played in the lives of an entire society is futile. Its rarity limits such assumptions to be made only about the importance of music to Davis, the Hays-Hanline family, and perhaps the communities in which they lived. Although Fleming's model urges the reader to use the object to hypothesize about the community in which it was used, so little is known about the chest of drawers/piano that in order to investigate some of these questions, additional research must be done. In the course of this research and analysis, however, the chest of drawers/piano raises more questions than can be answered. For example, did Keziah Hays buy or commission this piece? Was it part of the dowry she brought to her marriage. Or, did another family member acquire the chest for Keziah? Did she simply want an instrument to accompany their family's

singing, or did she want to display her family's wealth by conspicuous consumption? If the goal in owning the chest of drawer/piano was to convey their wealth to visitors, why did they choose a musical instrument that was hidden from view? Was owning a storage piece more important than owning a musical instrument? Was music frowned upon in the community in which the Hays-Henline family lived and therefore, did they seek to conceal their instrument? Why did the Hays-Henline family buy such an unusual instrument when the price of a standard piano was dropping significantly? If the object was made in Cumberland, what was the relationship between the urban setting and rural Grant County?

Since the chest of drawers/piano gives the researcher hints as to its original owner, the musical traditions of the area in which Davis and the Hays-Hanline family lived can be explored. In addition, by investigating the broad musical traditions of the nineteenth century and of the immigrant populations living in the area surrounding Grant County, assumptions can be made about the influence other keyboard instruments had on nineteenth-century musical traditions, both in urban and rural settings. Nineteenth-century musical instruments and traditions will be explored using letters, music, and account books.

Music played a significant role in the entertainment of German, English and Scots-Irish descendants living in the area north of the Shenandoah Valley. Contemporary letters, music and

account books convey the importance and popularity of music in the region around Grant County. Consequently, Davis and most likely the Hays-Hanline family, were aware of song and melody as a form of human expression. Because he went to such great lengths to invent the keyboard contained within the Grant County piece, Davis was undoubtedly thinking about music when he created his unusual object capable of serving as accompaniment.

Most of the German-speaking immigrants brought with them to America a strong written and oral music tradition. In Germanic Pennsylvania, music was an integral part of the daily life. In addition to a religious music spirit, there was a prolific folk music tradition. Songs and ballads were sung within the home or in community settings to the accompaniment of a piano, violin or a German zither.<sup>52</sup>

A large number of these German folk songs were written about important aspects of life in a farming community. Farming songs expressed a reverence for the soil and for the animals which helped them in their labors.<sup>53</sup> As a family of Germanic origin living off the land, possibly the Hays-Hanlin(e) family sought an instrument they could use as accompaniment. During one of their regular trips to Cumberland to sell their wares, Keziah or another family member may have come across the chest of drawers/piano and purchased it for their home. Their personal

---

<sup>52</sup> Philadelphia Museum of Art. *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of the Arts 1683-1850*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>53</sup> Boyer, Walter E., Albert F. Buffington, and Don Yoder, eds. *Songs Along the Mahantongo*. Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, 1964, p. 98

desire to incorporate music into their daily lives, coupled with an increasing popularity of pianos, may have encouraged the Hays family to buy the Grant County chest of drawers/piano.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, music played an important role in the lives of immigrants other than Germans. Jack Larkin, in his study of everyday life in America from 1790 to 1840, describes music making and dancing as activities engaged in by people of all social classes. He writes that many of the settlers from the British Isles brought ballads with them when they came to America. Some of these songs, most of which described everyday events, were put into print; others were replicated through oral tradition. Throughout the early nineteenth century, Americans were particularly interested in music, especially home-played and sung melodies. Music and dancing were popular at harvest time, weddings, house or barn raisings and quilting parties.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the Hays-Hanline family procured the chest of drawers/piano so they could have similar musical accompaniment in their home. Changes in attitudes toward secular music may have also encouraged the desire to have a musical instrument such as the chest of drawers/piano.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century Americans began to adopt a particularly enthusiastic attitude towards music. To facilitate the incorporation of music into church

---

<sup>54</sup> Larkin, Jack. *The Reshaping of Everyday Life 1790-1840*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988, p. 269.

services, organs were installed to help choirs amplify and improve their performances. This interest in non-secular music and instruments also spread into area homes, and as the Grant County chest of drawers/piano suggests, instruments for accompaniment became household fixtures.<sup>55</sup> In a letter written in Hardy County during the year 1856, a man named Silas See wrote to a woman living in Pendleton County, located due south of present-day Grant County, West Virginia. At the bottom of this letter, See drew musical notes accompanied by the verse, "Scotland's burning look out fier cast [?] on \_\_\_ when thiss [sic] you see remember me."<sup>56</sup>

In another letter from Silas See to his sister, he writes a poem resembling musical verse. "George is done cutting up his corn he is gone to muster to day up at Cowger's Mill tomarro [sic] him and me are a going up to the singing school at the church."<sup>57</sup> The reference to the singing school, an institution aimed to train church singers for worship services further illustrates the importance of music in the life of a family living near the Hays-Hanline family.<sup>58</sup>

A letter from Mary Trumbo to Anna See in Hardy County also includes a lyrical verse. "then I went out a spourting [sic] and I fell in a courting when the world went sowell [sic] with

---

<sup>55</sup> Loesser, Arthur. *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954, p. 465.

<sup>56</sup> Swem Library Manuscript Collection, See Family Papers

<sup>57</sup> Silas See to Anna See, 1859, See Family Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life*, p. 254.



me then o then when the world went so well with me then.”<sup>59</sup> The aforementioned ledger of Franklin Taylor contains a hand-written version of the musical score of the first strain of Coquette Cotillion, a verse written by W.H. Sting. Originating in France, the cotillion, or quadrille, was a four-couple dance in which pairs danced in predetermined patterns.<sup>60</sup> The reference to song in areas surrounding Grant County suggest that music was indeed important to some people in the area. While these examples do not mean that music was important to everyone living in the Grant County vicinity, it does indicate the probability that music was also important to the Hays-Hanline family.

Conventional pianos gained popularity in the nineteenth century among Americans, particularly middle-class, urban populations who found the instruments increasingly affordable. An advertisement for piano-fortes appeared in the 1864 *Cumberland Alleganian*, the newspaper of Cumberland, Maryland. In this ad the firm Grovesteen and Co. of New York touted a new seven octave rosewood piano-forte, which “for volume and purity of tone are unrivaled by any hitherto offered in this market. They contain all the modern improvements, French Grand Action, Harp Pedal, Iron Frame Over-strung Bass, &c., and each instrument being made under the personal supervision of Mr. J. H. Grovesteen, who has had a practical experience of over thirty years in their manufacture.”<sup>61</sup> The prices of these pianos

---

<sup>59</sup> Mary Trumbo to Anna See, South Mill Creek, Hardy County, Virginia, See Family Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life*, p. 241.

<sup>61</sup> *Cumberland Alleganian*, Wednesday October 5, 1864.

ranged from \$275 to \$325; a free descriptive circular was available upon request, further disseminating information about the instruments throughout the area in which Thomas Davis lived.

For many of the same reasons that pianos were revered, parlor organs became popular in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. While these dates are later than the assumed production date of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano, it is important to understand that the parlor organ's popularity in the nineteenth century is intrinsically tied to earlier ideas of music. These changing attitudes are apparent in an advertisement for parlor organs made by the Boston firm of Mason and Hamlin. In bold print at the bottom of their ad, the firm claims, "Mason and Hamlin: Church, Chapel and parlor Organs." In 1866, an advertisement appeared in the *Cumberland Alleganian* for organs made by the same firm in which they declared forty different organ styles, adapted to sacred and secular music, with prices ranging from \$80 to \$600.<sup>62</sup> Parlor organs were priced considerably less than pianos, thereby attracting working and middle-class consumers.

There is a strong chance that Davis was familiar with advertisements such as those for the Grovesteen Piano-Fortes and the Mason and Hamlin organs and was therefore aware of the increasingly popular instruments. It is possible that after seeing these ads, his own inventiveness inspired him to create a keyboard instrument and encase it in a chest of drawers.

---

<sup>62</sup> *Cumberland Alleganian*, January, 1866.

Although the Grant County chest of drawers/piano seems a one-of-a-kind instrument, nearly unique by traditional musical standards, Davis went to great lengths to create it. Watson's 1995 examination report of the chest of drawers/piano shows certain evidence that Davis was undoubtedly unaware of conventional piano construction of the mid-nineteenth century and he apparently designed the piano mechanism while it was being made. The instrument contains twenty-eight hitch pins, allowing for only twenty-eight possible keys. However, thirty keys are apparent in the final version. Possibly, the bottom one, two or three keys were never used because the end product makes these keys almost inaccessible to the player. Additionally, the final form contains twenty tuning holes and pins even though twelve more holes are available but do not hold pins.

Other details of the piano mechanism which indicate Davis's unawareness of piano design include: "the use of hardwood (walnut) for the key lever and a softer material (white pine) for the key tops [conventional piano-making reverses this process]; the use of a continuous horizontal pivot for the keys making individual removal impossible; no damper system; and no soft padding for the keys."<sup>63</sup> Although this was probably Davis's first attempt at making a piano-like instrument, he was probably aware of other instrument construction. The keyboard

---

<sup>63</sup> Watson, John R. Report, "A Few Interesting Details and Observations: Chest of Drawers Piano," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. September 28, 1995.

utilizes an appropriately thin and ribbed soundboard, similar to those used in the design of dulcimers and fiddles.

As someone living in a society with a large number of German immigrants schooled in Germanic construction traditions, Davis was most likely aware of instruments such as dulcimers (also called scheitholts or zithers), which work on a diatonic scale; each note represents the whole tones of a musical scale. Its final product is similar to a keyboard having only white keys, like the Grant County keyboard. Dulcimers have been found in Pennsylvania as early as the 1770s and many have been found throughout the Shenandoah Valley and in surrounding areas such as Frederick, Maryland.<sup>64</sup> The dulcimer usually has three to five strings and an irregular wide-spaced fret pattern which produces the diatonic whole-note scale. It can be plucked or played with a bow.<sup>65</sup> A similar instrument, the hammered dulcimer, could also have influenced Davis. This instrument is commonly thought to be the forerunner of the piano because both instruments have numerous strings and require that the strings be struck with a slender wooden stick to produce a sound.<sup>66</sup> Watson believes Davis intended to invent a keyed version of a hammered dulcimer when he constructed the Grant Count chest of drawers/piano. Such an instrument is easier to play because a wooden key is easier to find and hit than a narrow string.

---

<sup>64</sup> Smith, Ralph Lee. *The Story of the Dulcimer*. Crosby, Tennessee: Crying Creek Publishers, 1986, p. 15-16.

<sup>65</sup> Irwin, John Rice. *Musical Instruments of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, second edition*. West Chester, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1983, p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Watson's opinion is based on the instrument's diatonic scale as well as the use of a thin, ribbed soundboard similar to those used in dulcimers.<sup>67</sup>

It is impossible to understand exactly why Davis created the chest of drawers/piano the way he did but there are reasonable explanations for his procedure. His unconventional achievement suggests that: (1) while he was aware of the advertisements for organs and pianos in his area and was familiar with actual instruments, he was unable to afford a professionally-built product. Therefore, he built his own version of the piano using available resources. (2) Davis had an inventor's spirit and chose to alter the operation and encasing of the traditional instrument or he was inspired to create a keyed hammered dulcimer. (3) Davis made this piece for himself, combining various stringed instruments with which he was familiar. He was not pleased with his final product and thus put it up for sale. When the Hays family was in Cumberland to sell their wares, Keziah saw the object and purchased it, not knowing the unconventional nature of the keyboard. <sup>68</sup>(4) Although unlikely, a fourth scenario is that Davis never had first-hand exposure to an organ or piano. The absence of sharp keys on the instrument suggests that Davis was not particularly

---

<sup>67</sup> Watson, report.

<sup>68</sup> By not including the half-steps of the sharp keys, Davis put the instrument player at a possible disadvantage. Traditional non-folk musical scores could not be played correctly without these keys, severely limiting one's repertoire. The musician trained on the chest of drawers/piano could not make an easy transition between that instrument and the common piano and the common piano-player would be frustrated at the combination chest and piano.

familiar with the detailed construction of a piano and perhaps never came into contact with one. Perhaps he had seen a piano at some earlier point in his life. When he strove to imitate it, he was not successful in recreating exactly what he remembered. Instead, he combined what he could recall and infused these ideas with properties of other instruments with which he was familiar.

However unlikely, this fourth scenario is plausible because a similar situation is described by Margaret Bayard Smith, a noted Washington socialite of the early nineteenth century. She remarks in a letter written to her sister in 1808, her astonishment at two U.S. Senators who were unfamiliar with piano music. She writes, "the other evening Susan and I were very much diverted by two most venerable senators, who came to drink tea with us. I perceived Judge R. minutely surveying the firte pianno [sic], and supposed he might be fond of musick [sic], so asked Susan to play for them. . . . and what I supposed to be attention, . . . I afterwards found out to be astonishment, for I believe it was the first time they had seen or heard such a thing. They looked and looked, felt all over the outside, peeped in where it was open, and seemed so curious to know how the sound was produced, or whence it came."<sup>69</sup> She later explains that these men, "lived in the backwoods

---

<sup>69</sup> Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, portrayed by the family letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, Gaillard Hunt*, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 52.

[Kentucky],” and were therefore not familiar with such instruments.

For whatever reasons Davis produced the chest of drawers/piano for himself or for his client, it is necessary to notice how important music was to his family and most likely to the Hays-Hanline family. The chest of drawers/piano was passed through the Hays-Hanline family until it was sold by one of the family's descendants in 1990. Such a long lineage and provenance suggest its importance to the family who owned it. Whether it was a novelty or not, its prominence as a chest of drawers or as an instrument that entertained a family, the object was significant to its owners. Its importance merits its study and suggests that this middle-class farming family enjoyed spending time together, playing tunes and perhaps singing along after long days in the fields. While it is impossible to make generalizations based upon only one artifact, the chest of drawers/piano suggests that melodies and songs played an important role in the time one farming family spent away from their daily chores.

Pianos and social implications surrounding the instrument were an important part of nineteenth-century American life. Current scholarship has addressed many of these issues, including the matriarchal use of the piano to unite her family. In the following chapter, such scholarship will be explored as will other theories pertaining to immigrant interaction and an object's ability to affect its community. Fleming's model urges

the researcher to make these associations and to investigate where a historical object fits with current scholarship.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE OBJECT'S VALUE IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT

The investigation of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano has moved from a basic description of the object and of objects having similar characteristics to an investigation of the era and region in which it was produced and used. This exploration provides a possible explanation of the object's intended function within the Anglican/Germanic society. In short, we have interpreted the object in its historical context. As was concluded in the preceding chapter, it is not possible to understand everything about the historical context surrounding the chest of drawers/piano from the piece itself. Instead, a reciprocal relationship exists where information can be also gleaned from the historical, factual research to which the object points. As Fleming proposes in his model of artifact study, the "cultural analysis was concerned with the relations of the artifact to its culture, interpretation is concerned with the relations of the artifact to our culture."<sup>70</sup> In order to properly conclude the analysis of the Grant County chest of drawers/piano, additional questions relating to modern scholarship must be posed. What is the significance of the

---

<sup>70</sup> Fleming, "Artifact Study," p. 172.

combination musical instrument and chest of drawers with its unique incised decorations as an artifact today? Where does it fit into a modern society?

By carefully examining the chest of drawers/piano and the historical research conducted, assumptions can be made about the community in which this object originally existed. Specifically, the piece can contribute to a further understanding of three current scholarly topics: musical traditions in a nineteenth-century domestic rural setting; interaction between two or more cultural traditions; and a material culture object's ability as an active agent to affect a society.

#### NINETEENTH-CENTURY CULTURE SURROUNDING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In analyzing the Grant County chest of drawers/piano in conjunction with current theories, one issue that must be examined is the extent to which music and musical instruments influenced nineteenth-century society. The most extensive current scholarship on this subject is Kenneth Ames's study of nineteenth-century parlor organs in *Death in the Dining Room*. Ames performs a detailed analysis of nineteenth-century parlor organs and the advertisements promoting them. Asserting his beliefs, he explores the relationship of the parlor organ to the dominant social values of the nineteenth century. While parlor organs may seem an irrelevant comparison to the Grant County chest of drawers/piano, both instruments provided musical

accompaniment and both existed in the mid to late nineteenth century.

As indicated in the previous chapter, parlor organs became increasingly popular among primarily urban middle-class nineteenth-century consumers. In *Death in the Dining Room*, Ames describes the relationship between parlor organs, the emerging urban parlor society, and the increasing nineteenth-century ritual in which residents called upon one another for social visits. Such visits took place in a parlor, and the focal point of this room was usually a parlor organ. To sustain and participate in such calls, individuals had to be in an economic position to afford some leisure time and the visitors' homes had to be in a relatively close proximity. The Hays-Hanline family most likely met neither of these two prerequisites. Because there are significant differences in terms of the geographic areas and social classes in which each instrument existed, the analysis of the Grant County piece opens up a new segment of possible nineteenth-century musical interpretation. Scholarship written by Sally McMurry on city parlors and country sitting rooms points out that luxuries like leisure time and geographic contiguity were not available to many of those living in rural areas, especially those who spent long days in the fields. The average farm family lived in relative geographic isolation; this distance precluded members from imitating these city social practices. Therefore, many farmers objected to the inclusion of

a parlor in the layout of their homes, believing the rooms were a waste of their precious economic and spatial resources.<sup>71</sup>

As farmers, the Hays-Hanline family probably did not have a specified parlor in which to place their chest of drawers/piano. Instead, all living space in the house was most likely used daily, by all members of the family; no room was designated for only the entertainment of guests and for use on special occasions. A nineteenth-century social commentator, "Hawk Eye," in the 1855 article entitled "Our Farmers' Farm Houses," declares that "halls and parlors are luxurious nuisances, only to be indulged in by those living in or near towns . . . Everything about the farmer's house should be plain and substantial, and expressive of his everyday life."<sup>72</sup>

The second argument Ames proposes relates to the sense of dominance and control the parlor organ afforded women. Ames believes that by playing the parlor organ for her guests and for her family, the lady of the house could display her accomplishments and unify her family. Advertisements portraying three generations gathered around the parlor organ implied the togetherness and cohesion the instrument could bring to the family. Once again, it is important to realize the social and geographic context in which Ames makes his argument. Did Keziah Hays use the chest of drawers to similarly unite her family in music? Was it a mechanism for her to show her musical

---

<sup>71</sup> McMurry, Sally, "City Parlor, Country Sitting Room: Rural Vernacular Design and the American Parlor, 1840-1900," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Winter 1985, pp. 269-270.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

accomplishments to friends and family? The answers to these questions are unknown. Because the Hays-Hanline family did not own and use the instrument in the same manner Ames's subjects used parlor organs, similar assumptions can not be made. Undoubtedly the advertising messages highlighted in Ames's study were not as effective for those living in a rural, farm setting where women rarely enjoyed idle moments. A parlor, used in an urban context for primarily leisurely pursuits, was seen as the opposite of the productive kitchen. On a farm, women had a greater opportunity for dominance in the production of both crops and daily meals and other essential domestic duties; there was less of a need for the familial control imposed by a musical instrument.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, it is less likely that the Grant County chest of drawers/piano was procured by Keziah Hays for the same reasons the women in Ames's study purchased parlor organs. By analyzing the chest of drawers/piano in relation to the Ames article, the opportunity for research of additional nineteenth-century musical traditions is identified.

#### IMMIGRANT INTERACTION

Throughout the twentieth century, scholars have grappled with the interpretation of immigrant interaction in early America. The Grant County chest of drawers/piano directly relates to these issues because it was created in a region where different immigrant populations interacted with established

---

<sup>73</sup> McMurry, p. 270.

residents. The chest's maker and original owner, as described in Chapter 2, were members of these intermingling societies. Each of these populations, from the Germans to the English to the Scots, brought to the area around Grant County specific ideas about family, religion and labor practices. They also brought with them traditional approaches to things such as the manner in which they chose to furnish their homes. By exploring the chest of drawers/piano as it relates to these communities, it is not possible to determine definitively whether one community dominated another or whether immigrant societies came together to create separate, new cultural traditions. But, it is possible to determine which pattern is best explained by the existence of this nineteenth-century object.

Earlier in the twentieth century, scholars believed that societies followed the pattern of acculturation, "the process in which one group becomes more like another by borrowing discrete cultural traits." This acculturation usually "proceeds under conditions in which a dominant group is largely able to dictate correct behavior to a subordinate group."<sup>74</sup> In his article entitled, "Regional Preferences and Characteristics in American Decorative Arts: 1750-1800," Charles F. Montgomery focuses on decorative art objects of both German and English descent. He discusses the two classes of objects separately, affording no influence of one upon the other. When Montgomery describes case

---

<sup>74</sup> White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. x.

pieces, he mentions shranks that were used by Germans for storage of their belongings. In a separate section, he discusses the chest on chests and dressing tables favored by the English. There is no mention of an interaction of pieces for use by the two different cultures<sup>75</sup> The work of John Will, a German pewterer living in New York, is described by Montgomery as having little evidence of any German influence; total Anglicization is suggested.<sup>76</sup>

In an article written in the 1980s, Edward Chappell describes the immigrant and established populations' interaction taking place in Page County, Virginia, through the study of houses in the region. Page County, located south of Grant County in the Shenandoah Valley, experienced the same intermingling of with German, English and Scots-Irish traditions. Chappell argues that the immigrant interaction followed a pattern of acculturation that resulted in the gradual rejection by the German settlers of their cultural heritage in favor of English traditions. When Swiss Mennonite settlers first arrived in the region, they built traditional German-style dwellings, "Flurküchenhaus," which had rooms arranged around an off-center fireplace. Throughout the first seventy-five years of the habitation of Page County, their house styles began to change and incorporate more elements of English-style houses. Their homes began to employ Georgian-style central passages and

---

<sup>75</sup> Montgomery, Charles F. "Regional Preferences and Characteristics in American Decorative Arts: 1750-1800."

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.,

double-piles. After 1800, Chappell believes that the Germans increasingly abandoned visual symbols of their ethnic backgrounds and adopted the English I-house as their plan. Chappell relates this architectural transformation to other social changes. For example, after 1830 the German language was no longer used in the valley. "Members of the Germanic community became increasingly susceptible to the acculturative pressures of the dominant ethnic group."<sup>77</sup>

The Grant County chest of drawers/piano, unlike the Rhenish houses studied by Chappell, does not exhibit evidence of the gradual disappearance of Germanic traditions. Instead, its physical characteristics more closely fit the more current scholarly belief of "accommodation." This theory of accommodation challenges the idea of acculturation proposed by Chappell. Richard White in *The Middle Ground* argues that accommodation is the process of cultural interplay resulting in a "middle ground" which is created jointly by two or more communities after a period of shared experiences and exposure. White's study, although based on American Indians in the Great Lakes region, recites ideas of assimilation which contradict those of Chappell and Montgomery. His book begins with the quote,

Stories of cultural contact and change have been structured by a pervasive dichotomy: absorption by the

---

<sup>77</sup> Chappell, Edward A. "Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley: Rhenish Houses of the Massanutten Settlement," in Dell Upton, *Uncommon Places*, p. 42.



other or resistance to the other. A fear of lost identity, a Puritan taboo on mixing beliefs and bodies, hangs over the process. Yet what if identity is conceived not as [a] boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject?<sup>78</sup>

White believes there exists a middle ground where, "diverse peoples adjust their differences through [what amounts to] . . . a process of creative, often expedient misunderstandings. From these misconceptions arise . . . the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground."<sup>79</sup> Davis produced the chest using elements of his English background as well as Germanic construction techniques indirectly taught to him by his father's mentor, Balser Conrod. In the Grant County chest of drawers/piano one can see traces of both German and English attitudes toward design, but the final form is a unique one which cannot claim one tradition over another. Even the family which owned the chest, the Hays-Hanline family, is an example of intermarriage between English and German settlers.

#### OBJECT AS ACTIVE AGENT

Certain aspects of the chest of drawers/piano also relate to a third material study conducted by Ian Hodder, entitled *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology*. Hodder presents insightful scholarship arguing

---

<sup>78</sup> White, p. ix

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. x.

that an object is not a passive agent, but instead an active one which can impact an individual or a society. As the title infers, his tenets are applied to the discipline of archaeology in which he explores the relationship between the individual and society, but his convictions can be applied to all artifacts. He argues that a society cannot be understood without the exploration of individuals and the objects they produce. Additionally, single objects cannot be viewed as passive reflections. Instead, "material culture can act back and affect the society and behaviour which produced it."<sup>80</sup> In understanding and interpreting the past, cultural meanings, intentions and purposes need to be examined. The accepted scholarship with which Hodder disagrees, processual archaeology, focuses only on the effect behavior has on material culture. Processual archaeology fails to recognize that material culture acts back and itself influences behavior within a society. Moreover, this two-way relationship is further affected by the individual culture and history.<sup>81</sup>

Applying Hodder's scholarship to the chest of drawers/piano, the object acts back upon the culture which made it to affect change on the West Virginia and western Maryland society in which it was produced and housed. The Grant County chest of drawers/piano relates to Hodder's argument in that it most likely impacted the life of at least one individual:

---

<sup>80</sup> Hodder, *Reading the Past*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 14, 15.

Keziah Hays. For example, owning the chest of drawers/piano made added activities possible for Keziah. She had a place to both store and organize her possessions. She also had an instrument she could play and possibly use as a diversion from her farming duties or use to unite her family in music. Also, she had secret spaces and holes in which she could hide a variety of treasures. Although its form has not been duplicated and its keyboard never mass-produced, the artifact should not be overlooked as a by-product of its culture. As a material culture object, the Grant County chest of drawers/piano affects the behavior of those around it. Its importance is verified.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the preceding pages, Fleming's model for the detailed study of an artifact has been applied to a nineteenth-century chest of drawers/piano. Exploring each facet of the model, from identification to evaluation to interpretation, fosters a greater understanding of the object as well as the society in which it was made and used. Similarly, the model prompts the observer to analyze the object's relationship to current material culture scholarship. Fleming's model provides a systematic approach to the evaluation and analysis of a rare material culture object. The model is a useful tool for fostering discussion about this object and for understanding its relationship to related current scholarly theories. The model's strict step-by-step outline makes the study somewhat restrictive, and by urging the researcher to constantly look beyond the object, it is easy to lose sight of the artifact itself. Nonetheless, the model does force the researcher to conduct more than a simple analysis of the piece's construction and decoration and gain a more thoughtful understanding of the context in which the object was made and used.

The application of the model to this artifact raises many questions and prompts further research into the traditions of

this Grant County community. For example, what exactly is the purpose of all the secret spaces? Why is the keyboard hidden from casual view? Was the Hays-Hanline family involved in a religious sect that did not allow music in the home? Why do all the drawers except those on the top tier of the lower portion have functioning locks? What, if any, meanings are contained within the incised geometric patterns decorating the piece? What relationship does the chest of drawers have to the family's farming occupation? These questions may never be answered, but the existence of this object illustrates the importance of artifacts in gaining a better understanding of past societies.

In the first chapter, clues given by the chest of drawers/piano in the form of the Keziah Hays signature or inscription and Davis's inlaid initials on the columns root the object temporally and geographically. The second portion of Fleming's model urges the exploration of the object in its original context. Research of the region from which the chest emanated suggests that German, English and Scots-Irish immigrant communities interacted with established populations. These conclusions are drawn from an investigation of primary source material from the area in and around Grant County, West Virginia as well as secondary research done on this region. The chest of drawers/piano existed in this society and the same intermingling of traditions is apparent in the object's construction, decoration and the heritage of Thomas Davis.

In Chapter 3, outside research conducted on Keziah Hays and her family suggest that farming played a major role in their nineteenth-century lives and in the lives of others in their community. Therefore, to further interpret the object in its original context, it is important to understand how farming may have influenced their lives. Because Davis made such an extraordinary effort to invent a complicated keyboard instrument, the chest of drawers/piano suggests that music was an important part of the life of at least one family living in this farming community.

The "interpretation" portion of the Fleming model allows the researcher to relate the artifact to modern culture and to fit the object with current scholarship. In Chapter 4, the Grant County chest of drawers/piano is analyzed in conjunction with scholarship written about nineteenth-century musical traditions, theories of American immigrant interaction in the nineteenth century and the theory that an artifact has the ability to modify and influence the societies with which it comes into contact. By viewing the Grant County object alongside these current works of scholarship, a more thorough analysis of the object as it relates to modern society is achieved.

The Grant County chest of drawers/piano proves a fascinating test of Fleming's model. The chest exhibits distinctive decorative elements and construction techniques and fails to follow conventional object form. The originality of

this object used by a middle-class rural farming family provides the opportunity for exploring a vernacular tradition often ignored by mainstream scholarship. Past decorative art studies have largely focused on high style, urban pieces which typify broad stylistic trends. American decorative arts collections are filled with such archetype pieces as slick, formal mahogany sideboards inlaid with paterae, bellflowers, and oval shields, and camelback sofas with graceful lines. Such objects, because of their popularity and proliferation, are easy to identify and to fit within a stylistic continuum. Certain decorative attributes make it easy to identify the region or cultural traditions in which these popular objects originated. These pieces are put on display because they depict the stereotypical aspects of American decorative arts in terms of regional, temporal, or stylistic classifications. Much of mainstream decorative arts scholarship is concerned with identifying these traditions and labeling the works according to the date and place of their construction. As a result, many traditions manifest themselves in the forms of objects are stereotypically compartmentalized.

The importance of a non-conventional object such as the Grant County chest of drawers/piano cannot be underestimated. This artifact celebrates the work of an inventive cabinetmaker whose creativity resulted in a combination of a storage piece and a musical instrument. Instead of meticulously replicating typical stylized forms, Davis has infused his own ideas and

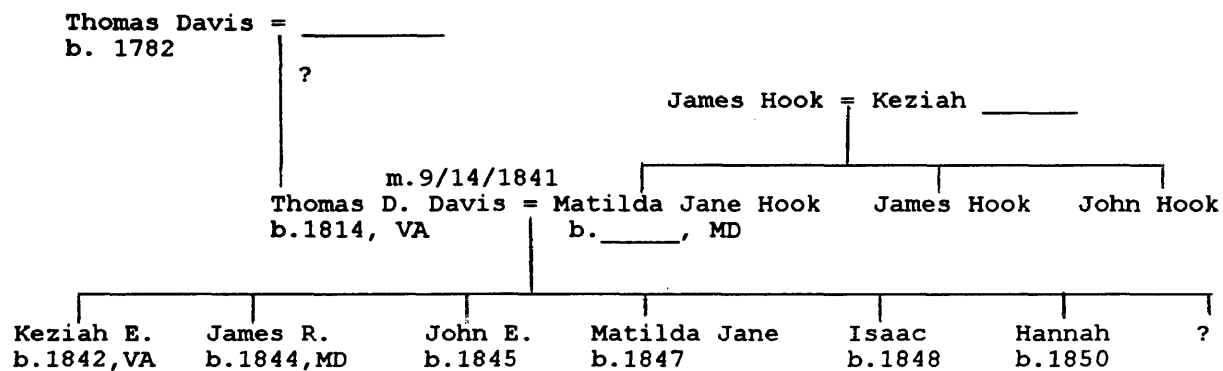
ambitions into the chest of drawers/piano. Most importantly, the information gleaned from applying Fleming's artifact study model to the chest of drawers/piano is proof of the importance of understanding material culture. Objects made and used by men and women can raise questions about communities and communicate aspects of the lives of those in the community which would ordinarily be overlooked. Artifacts offer important insights into a civilization's history by revealing its customs and traditions.





## APPENDIX B

GENEALOGY OF THE THOMAS D. DAVIS FAMILY  
OF CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND<sup>83</sup>



<sup>83</sup> Sources: United States Census, Virginia 1850, Vol. M 432; United States Census, Washington County, Maryland, 1810, Vol. M 252; United States Census Washington County, Maryland 1820, Vol. M 33; United States Census Allegany County, Maryland, 1850, Vol. M 432; General Index to Deeds, etc. Allegany County, Maryland, 1843-1851.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PRIMARY SOURCES

*Cumberland Alleganian*, Wednesday October 5, 1864.

*Cumberland Alleganian*, January, 1866.

*General Index to Deeds, etc. Allegany County, Maryland, 1843-1851*, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

*Hardy County Personal Property Tax 1843b, 1844a, 1845, 1846, 1847b*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Reel 185.

*General Index to Deeds and Deeds of Trust, Hardy County, West Virginia*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Reel 182, p. 19, 20, 25, 26.

*United States Census Allegany County, Maryland 1850*, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland, Vol. M 432.

*United States Census, Hardy County, West Virginia 1870*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. M 593.

*United States Census, Hardy County, West Virginia 1880*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. T 9.

*United States Census Virginia, 1820*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. M 33.

*United States Census Virginia, 1830*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. M 19.

*United States Census, Virginia 1840*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. M 704.

*United States Census, Virginia 1850*, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. M 432.

*United States Census Washington County, Maryland Census 1810*, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland, Vol. M 252.

*United States Census Washington County, Maryland Census 1820*,  
Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland, Vol. M 33.

Franklin Taylor Account Book, College of William and Mary, Swem  
Library Manuscript Collection, MsV Ac 23.

Mary Trumbo to Anna See, South Mill Creek, Hardy County,  
Virginia, "See Family Papers," 1821-1819 College of William  
and Mary Swem Library Manuscript Collection, 39.2 Se3.

Absolom Lee Account Book, 1850-1852, College of William and Mary  
Swem Library Manuscript Collection, MsV Ac23.

Silas See to Anna See, 1859, "See Family Papers," 1821-1819  
College of William and Mary Swem Library Manuscript  
Collection, 39.2 Se3.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES

Ames, Kenneth. *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of  
Victorian Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press,  
1992.

Bivins, John and Forsyth Alexander. *The Regional Arts of the  
Early South*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Museum of  
Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1991.

Boyer, Walter E., Albert F. Buffington, and Don Yoder, eds.  
*Songs Along the Mahantongo*. Hatboro, Pennsylvania:  
Folklore Associates, 1964.

Brunner, Raymond J. "That Ingenious Business" *Pennsylvania  
German Organ Builders*. Birdsboro, Pennsylvania: The  
Pennsylvania German Society, 1990.

Burke, Susan M. and Matthew H. Hill. *From Pennsylvania to  
Waterloo: Pennsylvania-German Folk Culture in Transition*.  
Ontario, Canada: Joseph Schneider Haus, 1991.

Bushman, Richard. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses,  
Cities*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Chappell, Edward. "Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley:  
Rhenish Houses of the Massanutten Settlement," in Upton,  
Dell, ed. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular  
Architecture*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia  
Press, 1986.

Fane, Diane and Ira Jackins. *Objects of Myth and Memory:  
American Indian Art at The Brooklyn Museum*. Washington:  
University of Washington Press, 1991.

- Fleming, E. McClung. "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 1974, p. 153-173.
- Garvan Beatrice B. and Charles F. Hummel. *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of Their Arts 1683-1850*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982
- Glassie, Henry. *The Spirit of Folk Art: Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art*. New York: Abrams, 1989.
- Grant County, West Virginia. *Grant County, Our Heritage*, 1985.
- Gusler, Wallace B. "The Arts of Shenandoah County, Virginia 1770-1825." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*. no. 2, Vol. V, Nov. 1979, pp. 6-35.
- Hodder, Ian. *Reading the Past: Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology, second edition*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Irwin, John Rice. *Musical Instruments of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, second edition*. West Chester, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1983.
- Kessel, Elizabeth Augusta. *Germans on the Maryland Frontier: A Social History of Frederick County, 1730-1800*. Houston, Texas: Rice University, Dissertation, 1981.
- LaFarge, Oliver. *Introduction to American Indian Art*. Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1931.
- Larkin, Jack. *The Reshaping of Everyday Life 1790-1840*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988.
- Loesser, Arthur. *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954.
- McMurry, Sally, "City Parlor, Country Sitting Room: Rural Vernacular Design and the American Parlor, 1840-1900," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 1985: 261-280.
- Mitchell, Robert D. *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society and Development in the Preindustrial Era*. Lexington, Kentucky, University Press of Kentucky, 1991.
- Philadelphia Museum of Art. *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of the Arts 1683-1850*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Ripen, Edward M., Denzil Wraight, et. al. *Early Keyboard Instruments*. New York: WW Norton and Co., 1989.

- Schlee, Ernst. *German Folk Art*. New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1980.
- Smith, Jane Webb, "A Large and Elegant Assortment:: A Group of Baltimore Tall Clocks, 1795-1815." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Volume XIII, No. 2, November 1987, 32-103.
- Smith, Ralph Lee. *The Story of the Dulcimer*. Crosby, Tennessee: Crying Creek Publishers, 1986.
- Sobel, Mechal. *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- St. George, Robert Blair. *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988.
- . *The Wrought Covenant*. Brockton, Massachusetts: Brockton Art Center/Fuller Memorial, 1979.
- Stegmaier, Harry I., Jr., et. al. *Allegheny County: A History*. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Print Company, 1976.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit*. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
- Ward, Gerald W.R. *American Case Furniture in the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Art Gallery, 1988.
- Watson, John R. "A Catalogue of Antique Keyboard Instruments." *Early Keyboard Journal*, 94.
- Watson, John R. Report, "A Few Interesting Details and Observations: Chest of Drawers Piano," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. September 28, 1995.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

## VITA

### Jessica Williams Johnston

Born in Winter Park, Florida, November 11, 1969. Was graduated from Winter Park High School, June 1987; A.B., Duke University, 1991, Dean's List. Upon graduation, completed a graduate internship at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. M.A. candidate, College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1993-1996, with a concentration in American Studies.

In September 1994, the author entered the Masters of Business Administration program at the College of William and Mary. M.B.A. degree expected, May 1996. Following graduation, the author will assume the position of the Director of Public Affairs at the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Florida.

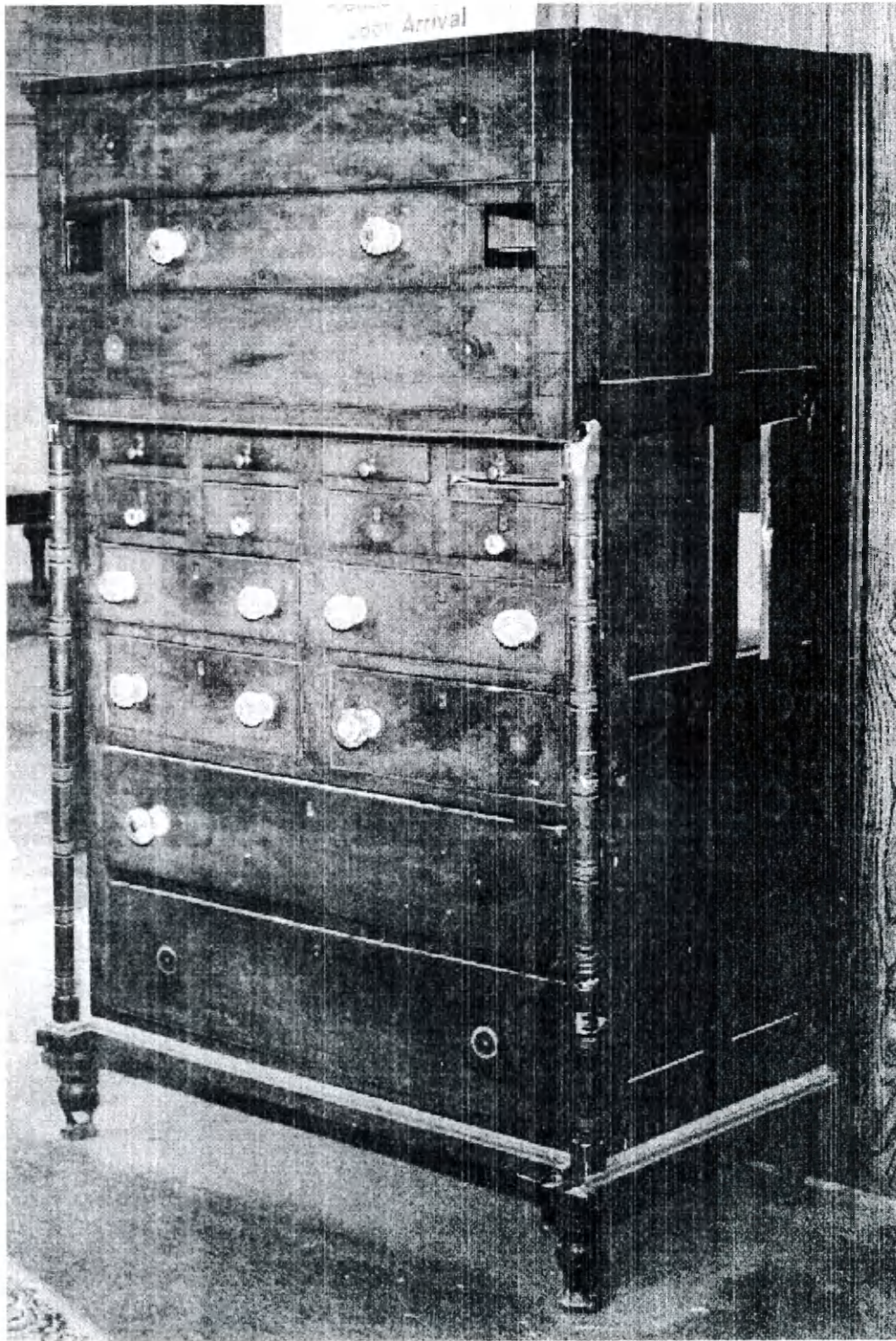


Figure 1. Grant County Chest of Drawers/Piano H: 62.2" W: 37.6" D: 22.5".  
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation



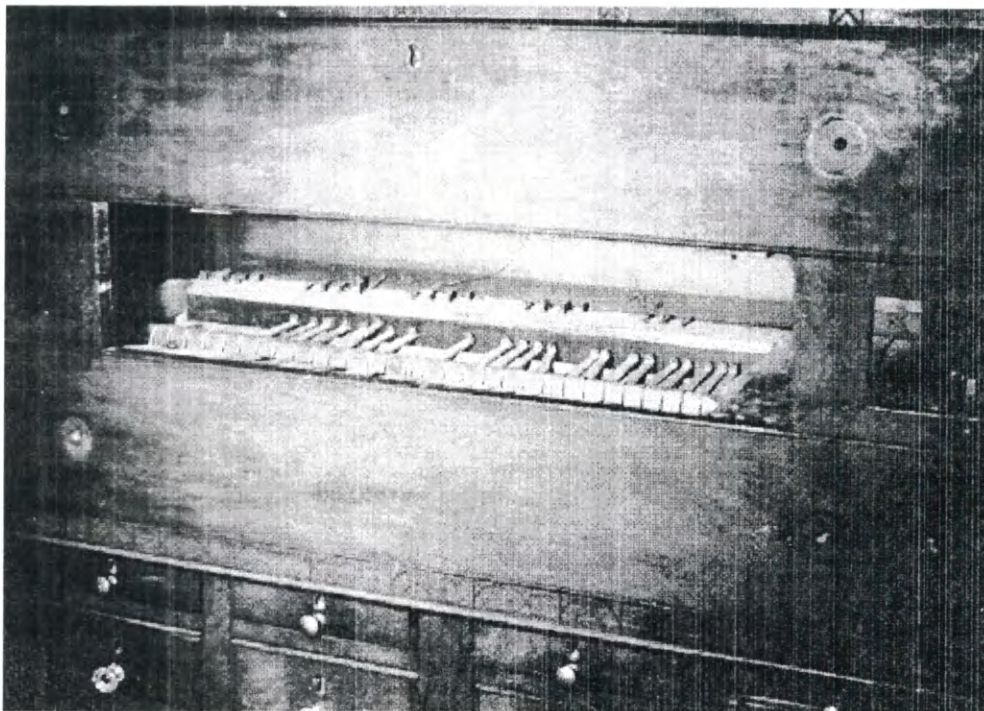


Figure 2. Detail of top portion of Grant County Chest of Drawers/Piano. Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



Figure 3. Detail of Keziah Hays signature on Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.



Figure 4. Detail of incised decoration and turned bulbous leg of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. *Photograph by Toby Chieffo.*



Figure 5. Detail of incised decoration and inlaid initial "T" on column of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.



Figure 6. Detail of keyboard instrument of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. Photograph by Toby Chieffo.

Figure 7. Detail of compartment hidden behind side panel of Grant County chest of drawers/piano.  
*Photograph by Toby Chieffo.*



Figure 8. Detail of holes cut into divider behind side panel of Grant County chest of drawers/piano. *Photograph by Toby Chieffo.*





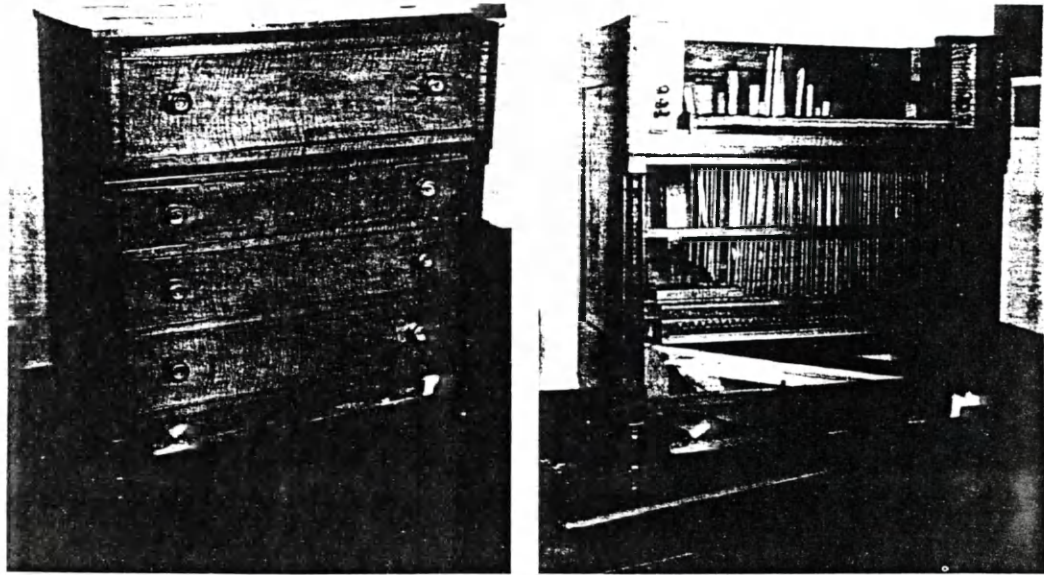


Fig. 10. Chest of drawers/organ in the collection of the Berks County Historical Society, Berks County, Pennsylvania.



Figure 11. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, clothespress, 1780.



Figure 12. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, wardrobe, 1779.



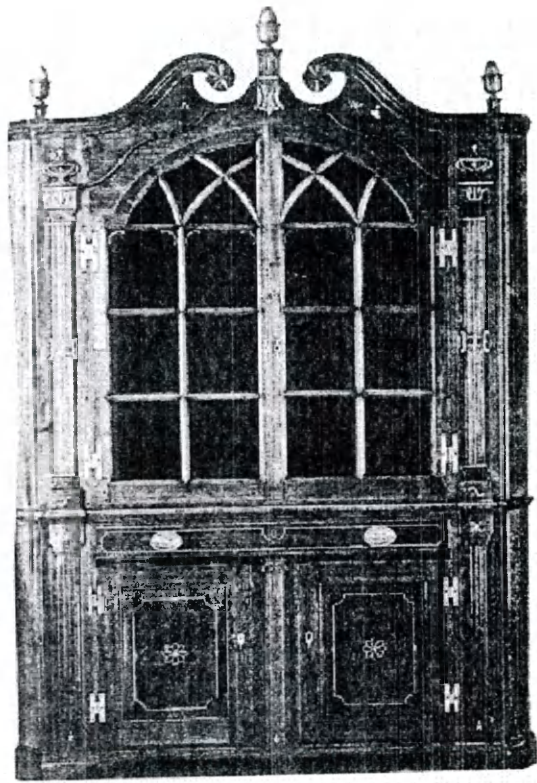


Figure 13. Northern Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, corner cupboard, 1790-1810.

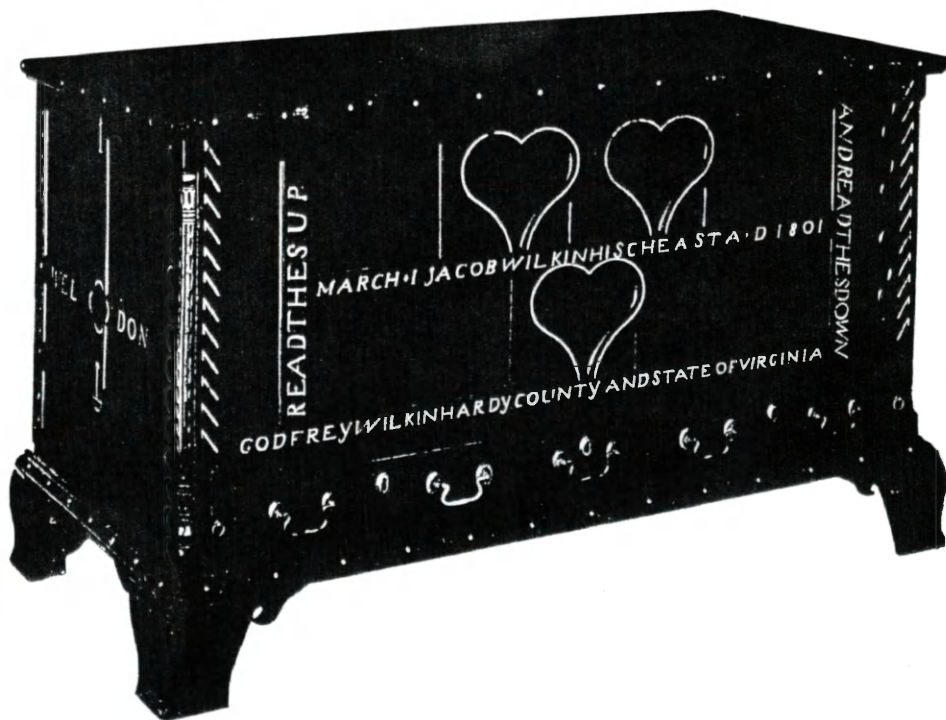


Figure 14. West Virginia blanket Chest, 1801.



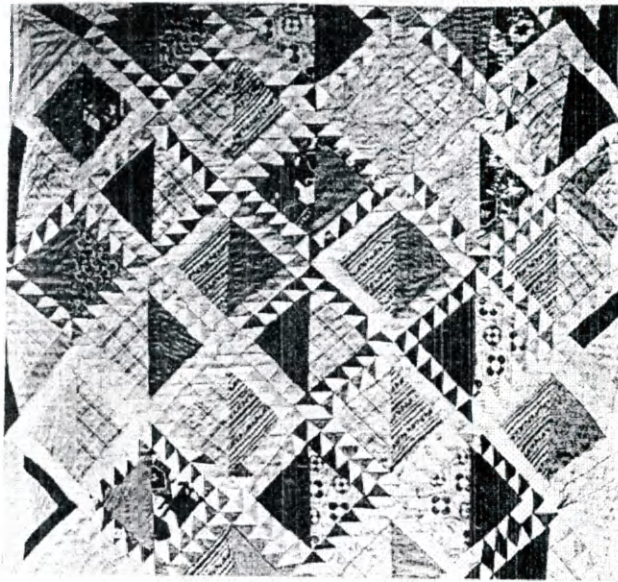


Figure 15. Cotton  
Quilt, 1971.

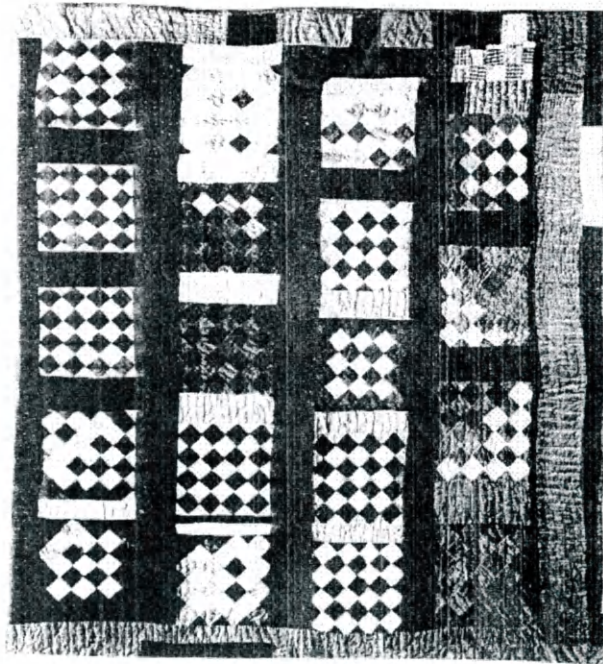


Figure 16. Cotton  
Quilt, 1971.

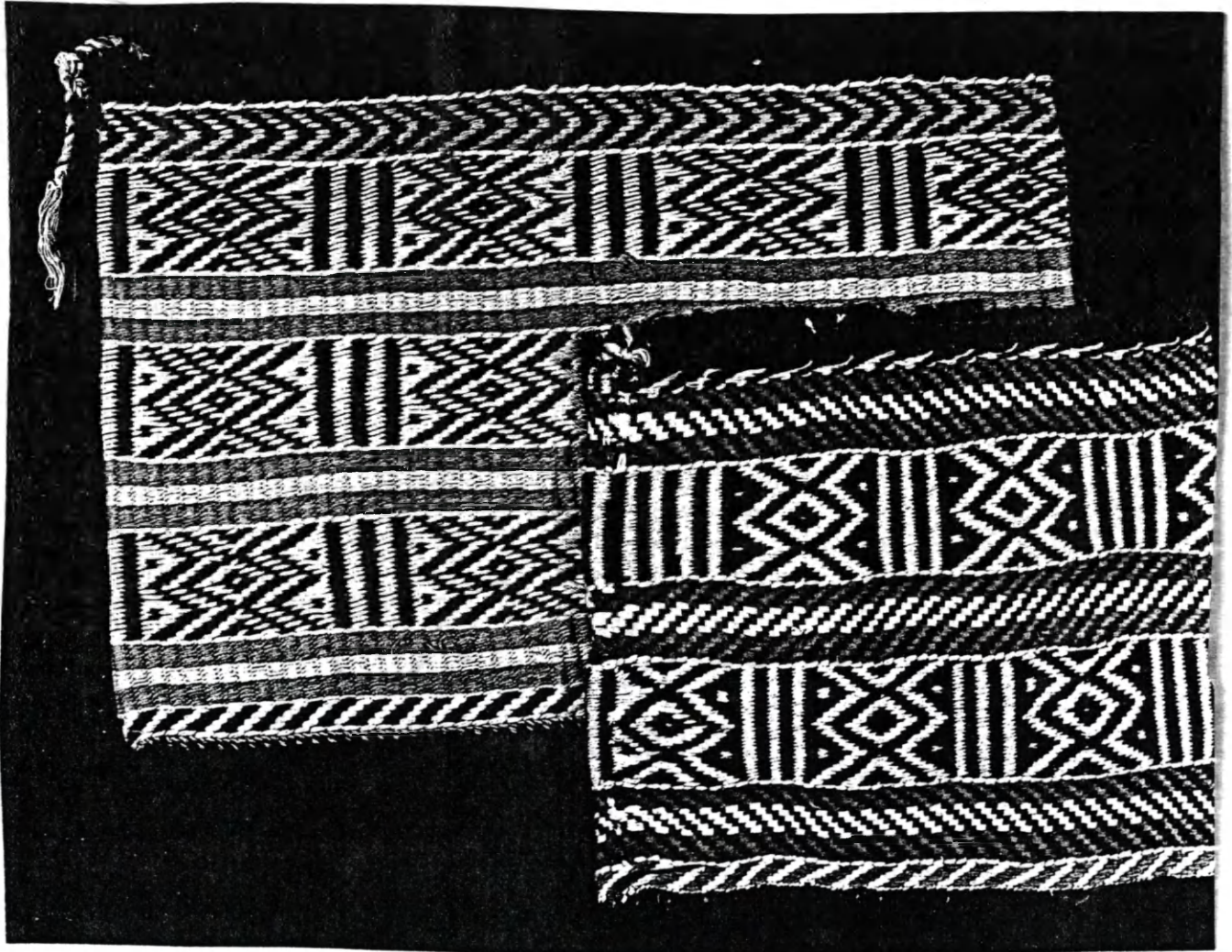


Figure 17. Twined bags made by the Osage Tribe, Oklahoma, early 20th century.



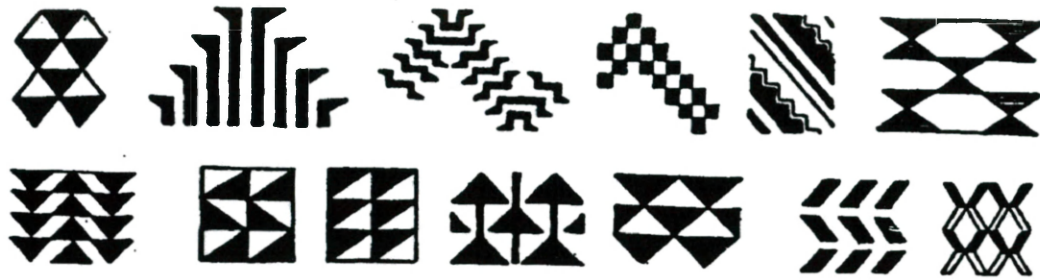


Figure 18. Abstract shapes used for decorative purposes on western basketry.

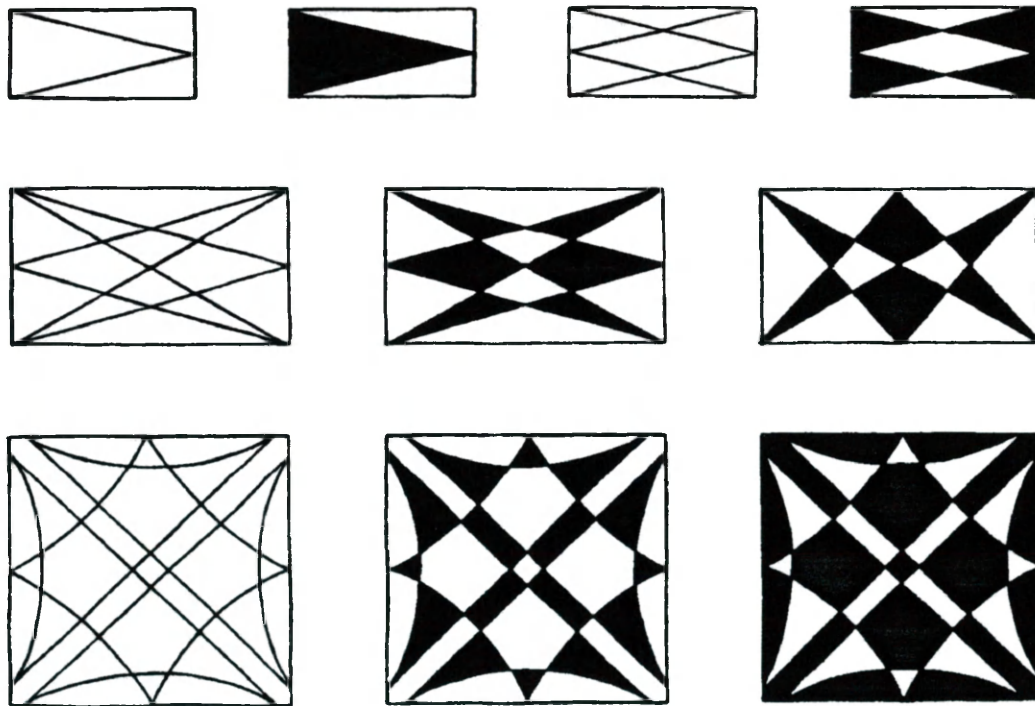


Figure 19. Designs on southwestern pottery.



Figure 20. Chair-table with drawer, probably from Marshfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1700.

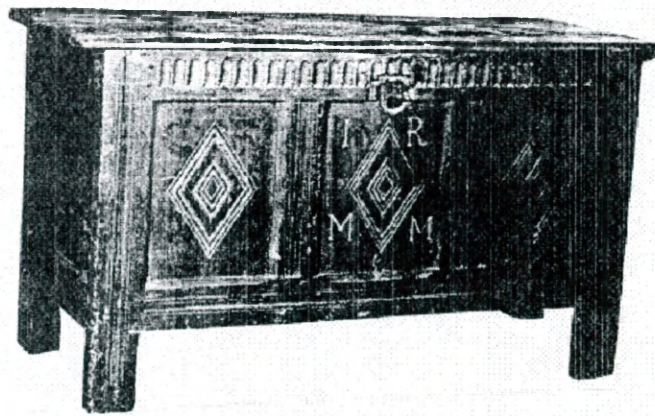


Figure 21. Joined chest, probably from Dedham, Massachusetts, 1635-85.