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John Case of the Fourth Generation in Simsbury Part 3: Farming for Self-Sufficiency and Profit

John Case's first account book, in which he recorded transactions from 1739 into the 1760s, reveals the bounty of his fields, garden, orchard, pasture lands and woodlots. His farm produced most of the food that his family and their animals needed, fuel to heat their home, and lumber for building. Since grains often served as a medium of financial exchange, they figure prominently in his business record. Indian corn got the most mention, followed by rye, wheat, oats, barley and buckwheat.

Between 1740 and 1767 Case gave seventeen people credit for Indian corn, generally accepting a bushel or two at a time. Once he paid Widow Mary Griffin slightly less than the others, commenting "this bushel of In^d corn was wet and not merchantable." He didn't confide how he and his family made use of the bushel that he couldn't resell. Sometimes the entire debt in an account was paid in corn, as when Case noted "Rec^d of Jonathan Eno by 3 bushels of In^d Corn the balance of his acc^t." In those days the word "corn" signified grain of any sort, so John Case was usually careful in his ledger to distinguish Indian corn from the rest of the grains he traded.

On the debit side, Case's best customer by far for Indian corn was the Reverend Mr. Gideon Mills of the Congregational Church who, over a period of seven years, bought forty-eight bushels and a peck.¹ That they usually were bushels of dried kernels is nicely illustrated by Case's notation that once Rev. Mills carried away "In^d corn in y^e ear so much as to make 6 bushels & a peck after it was shelled." An analysis of the minister's account reveals that the price of Indian corn steadily rose. The approximately 161 bushels Case sold to twenty-seven customers far outstripped the amount that he purchased. Without a doubt, the difference was supplied by Indian corn that Case himself grew.

Case planted his Indian corn in small hills as the Native Americans had taught the Pilgrims to do. He credited Isaac Goff fifteen shillings for "one day at Hilling." Hilling was the term for increasing the height of the planting mounds once the stalks had grown sufficiently.² One benefit of hilling was the stability it gave the stalks during storms.

Samuel Adams Jr. came twice with his hired man to husk corn; Jehiel Messenger and Isaac Goff each came once. If Case had any of the social husking bees that are often written about, the account book bears no witness. The same men, with the addition of Daniel Porter, came several times to "thrash and fan corn." Case had some sort of fanning machine to use to blow the chaff from grain, for he credited Maskel Bacon twice for "covering a fann." He also credited Widow Ann Hays for an old corn sieve.

Case bought a bushel of seed corn from Josiah Alford in 1745. By the 1750s he had begun to sell seed corn to a number of men, including Rev. Mr. Gideon Mills, who seems to have taken up growing the crop by 1753. On one occasion he himself picked three acres of corn for Samuel Cowles and on another occasion he sent Moses, who seems to have been his hired man, to pick corn for Josiah Riley.

The fences around Case's fields weren't always enough to keep out wandering animals. He recorded that Joseph Messenger owed him "2 bushels of In^d corn...for the Damage his horse did in my corn." Nathaniel Messenger reimbursed him for damage done by his hogs and John Slater paid him for "Damage his Cattle did

in my corn some years ago." He charged Ephraim Egelstone not only for damage his cattle did but also for driving them all the way back to the Scotland section of town (now a part of Bloomfield).

Case had a field of corn on the west bank of the Farmington River, shown by his £1 credit to Samuel Adams Jr. for helping to "pick and cart corn from hopmeadow." Another day he paid Adams £1 for "carting corn from y^c River." Elijah Case helped him by "carting a load of In^d corn to Hartford" for £5. Wednesdays were market days in Hartford, but he could have been sending it to a pre-arranged buyer.

Of all the grains imported to New England by Europeans, Case profited the most from English rye. His accounts name thirty-four local people who bought about 110 bushels of the grain. Rye was less expensive than Indian corn and decreased in value over time. He accepted payment in rye from Reuben Slater for the balance of his account. Sergt. Daniel Addams took home "32 Sheaves to make 2 bushel" of the grain, which he would have to thresh and fan (or winnow) himself. As with corn, Case depended on several of his neighbors to help with the harvesting and processing.

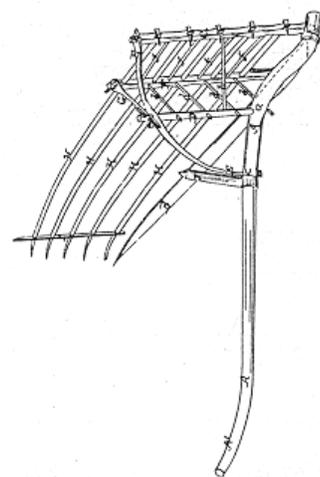
Jemima Barber bought rye mixed with Indian corn; such mixtures used for bread were called maslin or meslin and more commonly consisted of rye and wheat.³ The only mention of already-ground grain was his sale to Isaac Goff of "most a bushel of Rye meal." Generally people ground small batches of grain in a hand quern or with a mortar and pestle or took it to a miller, who might take a percentage of the meal or flour as his toll. Simsbury's first gristmill began operation about 1680 with power supplied by Hop Brook.⁴

Wheat, while it was valued for the fine flour it yielded, was subject to smut or mildew thus was chancy to grow.⁵ This might be what happened to the "bushel of poor wheat" that Widow Esther Holcomb brought Case in 1752. Case had a wheat field in the parish of West Simsbury (now the Town of Canton) as shown by his entry of a charge against Serajah Stratton in 1758 for "damage his horse did in my wheat at Cherry's Brook." As with the other grains, Case had debits and credits for threshing and fanning wheat.

By the 1750s Case had acquired a cradle scythe to harvest grains. He cradled an acre and a quarter of wheat for the Widow Rebecca Riley and an acre and a half of wheat and oats for John Saxton. As one expert explained in 1745, a cradle scythe "lays [the grain] in even Rows, fitter for binding into Sheaves than when it is mowed with a bare Sithe in the confused loose way."⁶ A cradle scythe was heavier than a regular scythe and required quite a bit of skill. A reaper was known by the smoothness of his finished row. If the standing straw left behind was choppy and ribbed, it announced that he wasn't very competent.⁷ Besides Case himself, Eli Strickland and Richard Adams used the cradle scythe. To sharpen the scythe in the field they took with them a rubstone such as the old one that Widow Riley sold to Case.

There are fewer entries having to do with oats. Solomon Terry paid him £1 for four bushels in 1745 and Isaac Goff paid him £2.8.0 in 1754, so the price rose considerably. Again, the Rev. Mr. Mills was his best customer. Most sales were by the bushel, but Samuel Cowles took home seven sheaves. Samuel Smith got credit for binding into sheaves an acre of oats and Gershom Goff got credit for pitching oats.

Case borrowed Daniel Hoskin's oat riddle and had to give him credit when he broke it. An oat riddle was a cylindrical wooden sieve with mesh openings of almost an inch. After being threshed from the grain's kernels, the chaff (hulls and beards), were shaken through an oat riddle to strain out the best chaff for use in bedding. Of all the grains, oats produced the most elastic and dust-free chaff.⁸ Case bought a chaff bed for £3 from Samuel Adams Jr. He had Daniel Brown weave him eleven and a quarter yards of bed tick, the fabric



Cradle Scythe

used to make a case for feather or chaff beds. Jacob Pettibone and Josiah Loomis each wove him two "coverlids," or coverlets. Jonathan Phelps had his daughter Martha do quilting for a day and Joseph Humphrey Jr. sold him bed rails.

Case sold only four bushels worth of barley and never bought any. Barley was valued as a food, but not as much as it had been by his immigrant English forebears as the prime ingredient for beer. Colonials of Case's generation preferred other alcoholic beverages, as will be discussed later. He probably did brew some beer, as he bought a bushel of malt from William Barber and several pounds of hops from John Terry and Daniel Hoskins Jr. He also owned a mesh (mash) tub, which he bought for £1 from Joseph Messenger.

Very little buckwheat changed hands. Case once paid Richard Adams for "2 days cradling Buckwheat," Daniel Porter to thresh it and Samuel Adams for carting some.

In addition to grains, the field crops that his records show he cultivated were turnips, peas, beans, potatoes, tobacco, and flax, as well as grass and hay for his animals. He occasionally accepted cabbages and pumpkins from his customers as barter. Turnips and their greens served as food for both the family and their animals and they, too, were often bartered. To improve his pastures and hayfields Case got seed for clover and herd's-grass from Joseph Higley.

In a society that used large animals for labor, transportation, meat, leather and wool, pastureland and hayfields were of prime importance. One authority estimates that it took four acres of land to keep one cow.⁹ That Case had ample land devoted to pasture and hay is shown by the numerous times he rented pastures to others and boarded their horses and livestock. Richard Adams was a frequent customer. Over five-year period, Case pastured a mare and a bull and boarded as many as three oxen for Adams and arranged for him to have the use of Josiah Riley's bog pasture. Horses and cattle were Case's most frequent boarders, but he accepted other animals, too. He charged Noah Humphrey Jr. £1.5.0 for "wintering a sheep and raising lamb" and he kept sheep for several other people, too. Once he kept pigs for a few days.

In three instances he mentioned what he fed the animals. Gershom Goff's steers got straw and Jacob Pettibone's oxen got bushes and straw. Simon Baxter paid four shilling a week for three weeks for his horse to get "y^e best hay and watering him." The next time Baxter only paid two shillings per week, so he must have concluded that his horse didn't need special treatment.

Case called on a number of local men over the years to help him mow and make hay. Some came themselves, some sent their sons or hired men, and Andrew Robe sent his "Negro." Three black people are mentioned in the account book, never by name. They were most likely slaves. Philip Goss and Widow Mary Griffin each made purchases for their "Negro." Tradition in the Griffin family holds that Mary De Lacy Griffin, widow of the well-to-do sea captain Stephen Griffin, was a part-Spanish woman from the West Indies. At one time the Griffins had three slaves.¹⁰ All of the black people received shoes made by Case and their shoes cost about as much as those ordered for the rest of household. Robe's man got a pair of channel pumps. Of the three, he was the only one sent to do farm work. He was also trusted by Robe with handling money.

Case himself sometimes went to mow and make hay for other farmers, especially when he was young. A bachelor of twenty-five in 1744, he charged Joseph Fowler £1 for "2 days mowing and find entertainment for myself." In later years he often sent Moses to mow and rake hay. Case bought rakes from Benjamin Holcomb and Jacob Davis. Every so often people bought grass from Case. Grass for a load of hay cost Ashbill Goff £2. As with all field crops, Case both paid for carting and charged for the service. One winter he sledged a load of hay to Rev. Mr. Mills.

Keeping meadows in good shape to be pastures involves periodically removing the bushes from them. Case credited ten men, including Andrew Robe's Negro, with cutting bushes. One time he stated that the bush cutting was done in Terry's Plain, which is on the east side of the Farmington River.

A typical eighteenth-century New England farm supported one horse, two oxen, three or four cows, one or two swine and a flock of nine or ten sheep.¹¹ John Case had at least this number of animals. It is impossible to determine how many cattle, pigs and sheep he had at a specific time, but he definitely had an "old mare" and a horse and he seems to have had two pairs of oxen.

He purchased pigs, both sows and hogs. He only twice mentions selling any. Most years he called on William Eno to spay the swine, but once Jacob Pettibone came. Likewise, he referred to calves, heifers, cows, steers, oxen and bulls. William Case, Josiah Riley and Sergt. Daniel Adams provided bulls to service his cows. He sold beef, as told in part two of this article, but rarely sold cattle on the hoof.

Case recorded selling mutton and wool by the pound, and sheep; he had men come to shear sheep. Henry Grimes was the only one he credited for "breaking wool," that is, separating the various types of wool contained in each fleece.¹² Thomas Holcomb combed worsted, meaning that he prepared long-staple fibers that were spun into fine worsted yarn. Widow Ann Hays's daughter carded short-staple wool fibers.¹³ Widow Hays and her daughter spun for him, as did Henry Grimes. Someone in the Gershom Goff household knitted a pair of worsted stockings and several others knitted stockings of unspecified type; a pair from Widow Hays were tow (coarse linen). Case also debited some customers for yarn and stockings that they got from him. He provided Widow Hays with a woolen sheet and he bought £1.5.0 worth of woolen rags from Dr. Samuel Lee.

Eleven of Case's customers got credit for weaving.¹⁴ Jemima Barber was the only woman named, but Thomas Holcomb's and Gershom Goff's unnamed daughters also wove. Case described most of the fabric as "plain cloth" and it varied in length from the twenty-eight yards woven by Thomas Holcomb to as little as a yard and a half. The plain cloth from Jacob Pettibone was for "woman's wear." The weavers also produced "shirting." Daniel Hoskins Jr. wove ten yards of "Check shirting" and he is the only weaver who produced "fine cloath." In addition to the bed tick and coverlets mentioned earlier, the weavers produced sacking, bags and something he described as "7 yards of aprons." Much of the fabric seems to have been woolen, but some he specified was linen or tow.

In addition to the homespun fabric, Case occasionally accepted in trade and sold several types of imported yardage, such as, chintz, shalloon, holland, silk and velvet. He also traded in notions and accessories like ribbon, buttons, pins, handkerchiefs and neckcloths.

Case didn't record how many acres he devoted to flax, the source of linen, but a number of entries show he grew and processed it. Preparing the flax plant's fibers for the spinning wheel involved about twenty laborious and often dirty steps.¹⁵ Case hired local men to pull, brake and dress flax. The plant, root and all, was pulled out of the ground and then retted, or soaked, by one of several methods to rot the stalks a bit and loosen the fibers. Then the stalks were beaten using a flax-brake, a hand-powered wooden contraption with a pounding arm that was brought down with force on the stalks to break up the unwanted woody parts. Case acquired an old flax-brake from John Slater Jr. for three shillings. An important part of dressing the flax fibers was hatchelling, which combed the shorter fibers out of the longer ones and aligned them lengthwise. This was done by drawing the strands through rows of long iron or steel teeth set in a board. Isaac Barber made 120 hatchel teeth for Case, charging him £9. John Slater charged £1 to set hatchel teeth.

Of the five people who received credits for spinning the long flax fibers into "lining yarn," as he calls it, Widow Ann Hays and her daughter are mentioned the most. They probably stayed for a time with the Case family while they spun, but one entry is for spinning they did "att home." Jemima Barber got credit for spinning "11 runs of Tow yarn." Tow is inferior linen made with short fibers.

Two of John Case's customers were clothiers. A clothier's trade was the finishing of woven woolen cloth by cleansing it of dirt and oils and thickening it. Newington resident Israel Boardman was a clothier who is said to have had a mill in Simsbury, most likely a fulling mill.¹⁶ He had credits for dressing two pieces of cloth for Case. Simsbury's Jonathan Noble got £3.10.0 in credit for dressing eleven and three-quarters yards at

six shillings a yard and for other dressing. Case also credited him with "pressing 11 yr^d of plain Cloath" and "Colouring yarn." In his reckoning, Case prefaced Jonathan Noble's name with "Mr." signifying that he had a high standing in the community. Incidentally, Case himself owned a coloring tub, which he had cooper Jacob Davis mend, and he bought the dye indigo from William Willcoxon Jr.

Case used his oxen for plowing and other field labor and also for carting. For example, for £10 he carted a load of pork to Hartford and brought back a hogshead of molasses for Rev. Ebenezer Mills. Another time he brought a load of tar to Hartford. He also hired others to cart for him.

John Case charged for the use of his horses once or twice a year beginning in 1751 when Ichabod Miller needed his "horse and mare" to harrow. Most of the time, though, his customer used his horse to go somewhere. Destinations in Connecticut included Salmon Brook, Cyder Brook, Hartford, Hartland, Farmington, Suffield, Windsor, and Wallingford. The purpose of Jacob Davis's trip to Canaan in 1756 was to get iron. The longest and only out-of-colony journey was to Albany, New York; Joseph Grimes paid £7.10.0 in November 1755 for use of the horse to go there. Case rented someone else's horse four times. Three times he went to Hartford and once in 1743 he paid Timothy Adams a shilling for "your mare to warn training," probably meaning that he rode the mare to inform the local militia of a training day. Once he became a constable, Case and his horse delivered writs of attachment and execution from the local magistrates to quite a few local men, most of whom were being sued for debt.

When it was time to slaughter any of the large animals, John Case sometimes had help. One time he debited Serajah Stratton's account seven shillings for "half a day to kill his ox," then credited him the same amount the next month for helping him with the same chore. Case always used the verb "kill," rather than slaughter. Since this job took half a day it probably included butchering. Case sold beef, veal, mutton and pork. He also dealt in suet, tallow and grease, especially grease for making soap.

Along with fields and pastures, the Case family had a kitchen garden to provide vegetables for their own consumption. Case paid Sergt. Daniel Adams once for plowing his garden and another man for tending his garden for half a day. In 1752 he charged Newington clothier Israel Boardman £3 for "use of a garden east of y^e street." Boardman also paid him £12 for "use of the house" that same year and fifteen shillings for "pasturing his mare in y^e Meadow and home lott from 20th of April to 1st day of June." (The next year clothier Jonathan Nobel paid Case £4 for "the use of half of y^e house" for five months.)

In addition to dressing cloth for him, Boardman repaid Case with twenty-three pounds of dead feathers. A dead feather is one that is molted by a fowl rather than being plucked from it. They are somewhat less desirable than the plucked feathers for use as stuffing in bedding. It would be hard to imagine a colonial farm without a flock of chickens and some ducks, geese and turkeys, but the account book mentions only two hens, which were a payment from Reuben Slater.

In one instance Case rented some of his land, one acre to Ichabod Miller, a blacksmith, for £4 in 1748. He himself had rented "2 acres of land to plant" from Elias Slater for £2 the year before.

An apple orchard, along with a vegetable garden, was a feature of every farm family's home lot. Even the Native Americans cultivated apples, European imports, by the 1700s.¹⁷ Apples were used fresh and dried and they were made into cider and vinegar.

John Case employed men to trim his apple trees and pick his apples. He himself went to "shake apples" for Reverend Mills and for Widow Rebecca Riley. Case both bought and sold apples by the bushel. As a young man he assisted Joseph Fowler with making cider, spending one day "cutting the cheese." The apples were ground to a pulp, called pomace, usually in an animal-powered mill. Then the pomace was taken to the press and put in layers several inches deep enclosed in twisted straw. The layers of pomace and straw were called "cheese." With pressure the liquid cider was squeezed from the cheese.¹⁸ The solids remaining in

the cheese could be fed to livestock.

At first Case used Sergt. Daniel Adams's cider mill to make cider for himself, but he seems to have acquired his own mill before long. He charged Micah Case for the "use of cyder mill to make 9 barrels." Occasionally Case bought cider from others, sometimes bringing his own barrel to be filled, but he sold at least twice as much as he bought. A sale to Thomas Barber 2nd was for a barrel of boiled cider and it cost £3.10.0 compared to the usual £2 for a barrel. Fresh cider was boiled until it was a sweet concentrate, similar to the way maple sap is reduced to make maple syrup (which was never mentioned in the ledger). This cider concentrate made delicious desserts, especially with dried apples. The other sweeteners noted in the ledger are honey, sugar and molasses.

In conjunction with cider sales, a good many wooden barrels changed hands. Several of Case's customers were coopers since he credited them with barrels and hooping barrels. The going rate for a cider barrel was between sixteen shillings and £1. Evidence is strongest that Noah Case, Jacob Davis and Thomas Barber 3rd were coopers; Solomon Terry also hooped barrels. The Connecticut Code of Laws of 1650 stipulated that a barrel was to contain twenty-eight gallons.

As mentioned earlier, colonials of the fourth generation didn't make much beer. Barley was hard to grow in New England and apples thrived. The preferred drink of everyone, wealthy, poor or middling, young and old, was cider. Plain water was thought unhealthful to drink and some of it was. Some streams were polluted by waste from grist mills, saw mills, fulling mills, tanning operations, flax retting and many other industrial practices. Cider was fermented to preserve it, but its alcohol content was low compared to other common beverages.

Colonial Connecticut strictly regulated the distribution and sale of liquor. Without a license, John Case could not have sold liquor by the quart or gallon as he did. Three of his ledger notations concern metheglin. He sold a quart to Joseph Humphrey Jr. and another to the Messrs. Phelps. Metheglin was an alcoholic beverage made of fermented honey and water, like mead, but with various herbs and spices added for flavor. He could have made the drink himself since he kept bees, however he credited John Saxton for "money accounted with his wife for Metheaglon," so Mrs. Saxton may have made the drink.

His accounts show that eight men bought quarts of brandy, which sold for one or two shillings. Isaac Goff considered it medicine and bought a quart when he had measles. Case doesn't specify the type of brandy. It's possible that some was locally made apple brandy, but most likely it was imported.

Rum got the most mention by far in the account book and on a paper tucked between its pages. No fewer than thirty-five men bought rum from Case by the quart or the gallon. As a historian of beverages pointed out, "The colonists consumed rum when drawing up a contract, selling a farm, signing a deed, buying goods or settling a suit."¹⁹ It was taken straight or used as part of various punch recipes. Rum came from the West Indies or the many distilleries in the Boston area.

Case benefited from owning woodlots to supply him with firewood. He sold practically no wood, but credited a number of men for carting loads of wood for him. One time he used Jonathan Buttolph's oxen "to fetch 2 load of wood." In addition to fuel, he used some of this wood to construct fences. Several men worked at "holing posts" to receive the fence rails and he paid Ashbill and Isaac Goff for "gitting Rayles and make a fence." He paid John Hoskins for "slats for a gate."

Andrew Robe sent his Negro for "2 days make a fence at cherry's brook." This entry and several others show that Case was beginning to farm land in the parish of West Simsbury, now the town of Canton, where Cherry Brook is located. In June 1755 he paid Jonathan Holcomb £1 for "a day to Cherry's Brook to lay out land."

Candlewood was another product of forest land. Whole trees were cut down only for candlewood,

resinous splints used as substitutes for candles.²⁰ His customer Dr. Samuel Lee bought this item.

It's clear from his accounts that Case was felling timber and assembling lumber for building projects. He mentions a shop and a barn and it is known that he built a new house for himself about 1756.²¹ The shop must have been finished about 1747, as he had John Terry install glass in the windows, and in 1749 Samuel Adams Jr. worked "about leather" in the shop.

Logging was winter work for farmers; moving timber was easier when the ground was frozen. The draught chains he recorded would be used by his oxen or horses to twitch, or drag, the timber from his woodlot. During the winter of 1753/54 Case began harvesting timber in a major way. He called on eight men to fell, hew and cart timber for him that season.

Sergt. Daniel Adams spent half a day in January "to help git a plate" and Samuel Adams Jr. spent a January day "after plate." Plates were horizontal timbers used to support rafters, ceiling joists, and other structural members.²² Plates ran the entire length of the building and the old growth forests of Case's time yielded these tall trees. These large beams were squared with a chisel edged axe or an adze.²³ He credited Haynes Woodbridge £1.2.0 for selling him an axe.

Timber meant for smaller pieces of lumber was sawn. Case may have owned an interest in a sawmill because he charged Stephen Pettibone Jr. for use of a sawmill. Several other men paid him for sawing boards.

Later in 1754 and the next year he himself accumulated thousands of feet of boards and other lumber. Benjamin Sweeney sawed him 740 feet of board and 72 feet of slitwork. Slitwork was used as studs in walls.²⁴ He bought 400 feet of chestnut board for £4.18.0, 365 feet of square board for £5.5.0, 345 feet of wane board for £4.4.0 and 180 feet of plank for £2.14.0 and much more. He bought shingles by the thousands, too.

In April 1754 at least ten men assisted him with framing a barn. Samuel Tuller came the most number of days in April and he is also credited with being there for "raising." In July and August the two men who most frequently came to assist him, Isaac Goff and Samuel Adams Jr., spent several days "boarding barn," that is, covering the outside. It appears that Goff laid a floor and made stables. Adams, Noah Case and Thomas Marvin worked at shingling.

No doubt John Case worked alongside the men, and his growing family was there to watch. His firstborn, John Jr., was seven years old that spring. Sadly, his second child, Giles, had died in February. Seth was four, Sarah was two, and Asa had just had his first birthday. Later his wife Sarah gave birth to Mary, then a second Giles, George, twins Levi and Judah, and lastly Abigail, born in November 1763.

John Case's father didn't live to see this barn. The senior John Case died in December 1752. Case recorded in his account book that he paid Thomas Marvin £1.10.0 for "making a coffin for my father." He paid Jacob Pettibone for digging graves for his father and his son Giles, who lie beside each other in Simsbury Cemetery in the center of town.

Considering the date of the son Giles's illness, Ensign Brewster Higley probably was the medical person who attended him. Case wrote "the above acc^t is Ballanced on ac^t of En^s Higleys Doctoring my family when sick." The Higley family history relates that Higley, an ensign in the militia, was a self-taught physician and surgeon who owned a human skeleton and who "enjoyed considerable neighborhood patronage."²⁵ Dr. Isaac Phelps's account was similarly balanced for "doctoring," and Jacob Read was credited for doctoring, too. Dr. Josiah Topping received credit for "a portion of Physick," and Dr. Samuel Lee pulled John Case's tooth and two of his son John's. Doctors Hezekiah Phelps, Daniel Hooker and James Poisson had accounts, but never gave any medical service. A Dr. McLean of Hartford is mentioned in John Saxton's account.

On the last page of the account book, someone carefully recorded the birth dates of John and Sarah Case's children. That person also wrote "Captain John Case departed this life May the 24th 1776, aged 58;

Sarah Case, wife of Capt. John Case, departed this life December 19th 1805, aged 81; Seth Case departed this life June 4 1813 in the State of Ohio." Not mentioned was the death of John Case Jr., who died at age thirty a year after his father. John Case's account book rests in the archives of the Simsbury Historical Society.

By Mary Jane Springman

Notes

1. Rev. Gideon Mills resided in Simsbury from 1743 until 1755. See Noah A. Phelps, *History of Simsbury, Granby and Canton from 1642 to 1845* (Hartford: Press of Case, Tiffany and Burnham, 1845), 72.
2. Jerald E. Brown, *The Years of the Life of Samuel Lane, 1718-1806* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2000), 168.
3. Howard S. Russell, *A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1976), 25, 53, 93, 132-133.
4. Lucius I. Barber, *A Record and Documentary History of Simsbury* (Simsbury, Connecticut: The Abigail Phelps Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1931), 92-93.
5. Russell, 132.
6. William Ellis, *Agriculture Improv'd or The Practice of Husbandry Display'd*, vol. 2 (London: T. Osborne in Gray's Inn, 1745), 16. (Found on Google Books.)
7. William Fream, *Elements of Agriculture: A Text-book Prepared Under the Authority of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1892), 206. (Found on Google Books.)
8. Henry Stephens, *The Book of the Farm*, 2nd ed., vol.1 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1852), 414, 456, 474. This book explains the special qualities of and uses for types of straw and chaff. (Found on Goggle Books.)
9. Brown, 153.
10. Mary Jane Springman and Betty Finnell Guinan, *East Granby: The Evolution of a Connecticut Town*, (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1983), 66. From Duane N. Griffin, *Genealogy of the Descendants of Sergeant John Griffin*, (n.p., 1971). Stephen Griffin was the grandson of John Griffin, one of the first settlers of Simsbury.
11. Brown, 152.
12. John Luccock, *An Essay on Wool: Containing a Particular Account of the English Fleece* (London: Printed for J. Harding, St. James Street, 1809), 139-141. (Found on Google Books.)
13. Stephens, 211. This book explains combing and carding wool.
14. Customers credited with weaving are: Jemima Barber, Daniel Brown, Gershom Goff, Thomas Holcomb, Daniel Hoskins Jr., Francis and Josiah Loomis, Nathaniel Messenger, Jacob Pettibone, Jonathan Phelps, and Justice Joseph Willcockson.
15. Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), 173. This book has a twenty-one page chapter "Flax Culture and Spinning." (Found on Google Books.)
16. Henry R. Stiles, *The History of Ancient Wethersfield*, vol. 2 (New York: Grafton Press, 1904), 2:123.
17. Russell, 107, 146. Russell cites Charles J. Taylor in his *History of Great Barrington* (Great Barrington, 1882),52: "By 1770 the whole length of the Indian path between the settlement of the Stockbridge tribe at Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and the Scaticoke village at Kent, Connecticut, nearly 40 miles along the Housatonic, was said to be lined with apple trees. They stood at irregular intervals, sprung from apple cores thrown away by traveling natives who had promptly learned to enjoy the Englishman's fruit."
18. Ben Watson, *Cider, Hard and Sweet: History, Traditions, and Making Your Own*, 3rd ed. (Woodstock, Vt.: Countryman Press, 2013) 67.
19. Tom Standage, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* (New York: Walker & Company, 2006), 115.
20. Springman and Guinan, 11
21. The house that John Case built stands at 12 Eno Place. After suffering financial difficulties, he sold it in 1774. In her unpublished 1936 study "A Record of the History of Some of the Old Homes of Simsbury," Abigail Eno Ellsworth wrote, "It was a very solid well-built house, with all the rooms paneled. He sent to England for many things, among them the bulls eye glass for the front door, and practically bankrupt himself doing it, so in 1774

Oxen in the Service of the Government

In the fall of 1755, in the midst of the French and Indian War, British troops and colonial militia forces constructed Fort William Henry at the southern end of New York's Lake George. It was to be a staging ground for attacking the French army's Fort Saint Frédéric to the north, at Crown Point on Lake Champlain.

John Case entered this notation on an unnumbered page near the beginning of his account book, "Our team Went into the service to Lake George the 6th day of May 1756. Isaac Goff set out to go to drive our Team the 12th day of May 1756. Our Team was in y^c government service 135 days. Isaac Goff drove them 129. Y^c team Wages £550, Isaac's Wages £251. Our Team Returned Home the 17th day of Sept. 1756."¹ What job his team of oxen and teamster Isaac Goff were sent to Lake George to do in 1756, John Case doesn't say.

In the spring of 1756 the Colony of Connecticut began raising troops for the expedition against the French at Crown Point. Upon reaching Fort William Henry, however, the expeditionary force learned of the French victory at Oswego, New York, and decided not to proceed to Crown Point.² John Case was not called up until October of that year, when he was named the second lieutenant for the ninth company of Major General Phineas Lyman's first regiment.³ A genealogy of the Case family says that John Case served in the Campaign of 1756.⁴ However, a study that documented Connecticut's role in the war says of the officers appointed in October "no evidence has been found that they were commissioned or that the company was raised." The lateness of the season was given as a reason for this.⁵

In 1757 the French laid siege to Fort William Henry and began a bombardment. The British and colonials garrisoned in and around the fort surrendered. As the evacuation began, the Indian allies of the French attacked, massacring hundreds and taking captive women, children and black servants. The fort was destroyed by the French. The story of Fort William Henry inspired the plot that James Fennimore Cooper used for his novel *The Last of the Mohicans*.

John Case advanced in the Simsbury militia until he became captain of the third company, or train band, in 1762. His ledger shows that he bought himself a sword and two pistols. He purchased in 1746 gun parts from blacksmith Serajah Stratton: a three foot, eight inch gun barrel, a set of brass riggings for a gun and a gun lock. He also purchased a gun from Jehiel Messenger and during the settlement of Stratton's estate in 1762, he accepted "a gun or firelock" in payment of the deceased man's outstanding book debts. The "pound of powder" that he got from Francis Loomis was probably gunpowder.

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1. The order of John Case's sentences has been rearranged and some punctuation has been added for clarity.
 2. Gregory T. Furness, "Crown Point (Pointe à la Chevelure): An Outline History." www.historiclakes.org/crown_pt/furness.html (April 13, 2013).
 3. Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 vols. (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co, 1877) 10:556.
 4. Ruth Cost Duncan, *John Case and His Descendants*, (Simsbury: Simsbury Free Library, 2000), 17.
 5. Albert C. Bates, ed., *Rolls of Connecticut Men in the French and Indian War, 1755-1762*, 2 vols. (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1903) 1:92, 108.
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sold it to Jonathan Eno, moving back into the old house on the west side of the highway." This older house has since been torn down.

22. Steven J. Phillips, *Old-House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture, 1600 to 1940* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994), 124-25.
23. Eric Sloane, *Museum of Early American Tools*, (New York: Ballentine Books, 1964), 14-19, 26-27.
24. James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 18.
25. Mary Coffin Johnson, *The Higleys and Their Ancestry*, (New York: D Appleton & Co., 1896), 101.

John Case and Iron Refining

A small slip of paper tucked into John Case's account book states that the partnership between "Smith & Caldwell's" began on August 13, 1768, and was dissolved in February 1769. Nothing in this note hints at the financial setback that John Case experienced because of his involvement with Charles and George Caldwell, the owners of the blast furnace in Salisbury, Connecticut, and the short-lived iron works in the parish of West Simsbury, now the town of Canton. Because of his business association with the Caldwell brothers, in July 1770 Case had to surrender four parcels of land containing more than 303 acres to the Colony of Connecticut.¹

The history of the Salisbury furnace is well known but the existence of the West Simsbury iron works has been generally overlooked. Salisbury, in Litchfield County in the northwest corner of Connecticut, had a much-prized iron mine that provided ore for local bloomery furnaces that smelted it. A company that included a young Ethan Allen bought one of these bloomeries and replaced it with a more productive, but more labor intensive, blast furnace. It was the first in that area. By 1763 Ethan Allen and his partners had sold their blast furnace to the Caldwell's. George Caldwell ran a store in Salisbury and saw to the running of the blast furnace and Charles Caldwell, who lived in Hartford, oversaw the iron works and store on the property in West Simsbury.

According to Simsbury land records, the iron works property was bounded by the Farmington River, a highway, lands owned by Thomas Dyer and Nathaniel Willcockson, and a parcel called "Case's Grant."² The latter was most likely the land that John Case had inherited in 1752. Among the bequests of land that he received in his father's will was "one hundred and sixty acres of lands in that woodlot att y^c Cherry's brook which was my hon^d fathers Division lot in y^e West Mountain."

American colonists were most anxious to develop industries despite the restrictions and taxes placed on them by Great Britain. An open letter from the Town of Lebanon to the Connecticut General Assembly in the *Connecticut Courant* in May 1768 called for the colonial government "to promote the manufacturing of Iron," establish a "Glass-works," and more. The Caldwell's and their associates saw an opportunity in the fledgling iron industry.

With heat produced by charcoal intensified by a blast of air, the Caldwell's Salisbury furnace produced crude pig iron that was suitable for casting products. To further refine the metal into bar iron (also called wrought iron), which was pliable and could be beaten or rolled thin without causing it to fracture, it was reheated and hammered in a finery forge. The iron operation at West Simsbury was no doubt a finery forge. A furnace and a forge were often situated at a distance from each other so that they did not compete for the water, wood for charcoal, and the large work force that they both needed. The Chapman's said in a petition to the General Assembly in 1767 that they employed "about 50 hands."³

An advertisement in the *Connecticut Courant* in 1768 lists some of the items offered for sale in each place. The workers at the blast furnace produced "Pots, Kettles, Pot-Ash Kettles, Waggon and Chair Boxes, cast Backs for Chimneys, Clothier's Plates, mil'd Rounds and cast Trundle Heads." The workers in West Simsbury produced "the best Barr Iron, Cart Tire, Waggon Tire, Shear Moulds, Mill Iron of all Kinds, Saw-Mill Plates, &c." The mercantile stores at each place sold a wide array of goods, many of them imported from England. There was tinware and crockery, numerous types of fine fabric, lace, handkerchiefs, salt, ginger, copperas, alum, brimstone and more.⁴

The Caldwell's iron venture developed financial problems almost immediately. According to historian Robert B. Gordon, the brothers appealed to the General Assembly for a loan of £1,200 to cover operating expenses. When this proved insufficient, they mortgaged part of their operation to a wealthy New Yorker then returned to the General Assembly for more money, lest the Salisbury furnace fall under the control of New York.⁵ A prosperous British merchant based in Boston, Richard Smith, bought the West Simsbury iron works



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property with all its buildings, tools and dam in 1768.⁶ He also acquired an interest in the Salisbury furnace and both stores. Within several years Smith was able to wrest the business from the Caldwells, who both went bankrupt.

Smith didn't hold onto the West Simsbury iron works very long, however. On January 15, 1770, the *Connecticut Courant* reported on disastrous flooding in the Hartford area, concluding with "And we hear the Iron works in Simsbury, are entirely swept off with the flood, together with one or two houses which stood contiguous to the river there with several bridges of considerable importance that stood upon the same river, and with great difficulty the large and commodious Store which contain'd a great quantity of English Goods was saved."

It was when the General Assembly called in its loan to Charles and George Caldwell and their associates, Joseph Hatch and Samuel Chapman of Tolland and John Case of Simsbury, that Case had to surrender land to the colony in repayment to avoid being sent to the jail in Hartford. Assessors valued the four land parcels together at £224.13s.2d Lawful Money.⁷

British merchant Richard Smith took over the debts of the company. The list of debtors he published in the *Connecticut Courant* named over 650 people, forty-seven of them living in Simsbury.⁸ Smith did not replace the finery forge in Simsbury; instead, he built another in the Robertsville section of Colebrook. During the Revolutionary War, Smith went back to England and the Colony of Connecticut used the Salisbury furnace to cast cannon, shot and other war essentials. Upon Smith's return to America the new State of Connecticut returned the ownership of the furnace to him.

1. Simsbury Land Records 11:101. Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, (Hartford: Press of the Case Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1885) 13:369-370.
2. Simsbury Land Records 9:349, 11:36-37.
3. "Salisbury Mines and Iron Works" in *Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the Year 1850* (Washington: Office of Printers to House of Rep., 1851), 428. (Found on Google Books.)
4. *Connecticut Courant*, October 31, 1768, 4.
5. Robert B. Gordon, *A Landscape Transformed: The Ironmaking District of Salisbury, Connecticut* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25-33.
6. Simsbury Land Records, 11:36-37.
7. Simsbury Land Records, 11:101. Hoadly, 13:369-370
8. *Connecticut Courant*, June 11, 1771: 3; June 25, 1771: 3,5.

The Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, run by the National Parks Service in Saugus, Massachusetts, has a recreated blast furnace and forge like those on that site from 1646 to 1668. It is open to the public, except for winter months. See the Website at www.nps.gov/sair/index.htm.

Update on the Smallpox Cemetery Thomas F. Howard is pleased to say that his mission to return the headstones that were taken from the smallpox cemetery in 1939 has been successful. For the history of the cemetery, please see Mr. Howard's article in the Summer 2008 issue of this publication, "Mysteries Surround East Granby's Smallpox Cemetery: A Relic of an Eighteenth-Century Scourge." Coincidentally, doodles in John Case's eighteenth-century account book spell out "Smallpox" and "Innoculation."

Abijah Rowe's House

Abijah Rowe's account with John Case is of particular interest because the Rowe house is now the home of Granby's Salmon Brook Historical Society. According to the Society's Website, the house "was probably built by Nehemiah Lee circa 1732, sold in 1750 to his son-in-law Peter Rowe, and then to Peter's brother Abijah Rowe in 1753." Both the Rowe men were blacksmiths, as their accounts indicate.

Abijah Rowe (spelled "Roe" in the ledger) bought a number of pairs of men's, women's and boy's shoes from Case between September 1751 and May 1757. One was a pair of turned pumps. He also got a pair of stockings through an arrangement with "Messrs. Owen." Blacksmith Rowe was credited between 1751 and 1759 with providing Case with a bell, a steel trap, two augers, a ring and staple, and a pitchfork. There is no reckoning of the account.

Rowe's brother Peter also bought shoes from Case, including a pair of channel pumps. He repaid Case with a calf skin, a steel trap, shoe buckles, old tenor money, and a financial arrangement with Philip Loomis. His account was reckoned and balanced on February 19, 1756. Their brother Joseph also had a small account.

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