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William Cobbett in the Maritimes

I

It is well known that William Cobbett (1763-1835), the great English radical - Tory controversialist, spent six formative years (1785-1791) in the Maritimes, chiefly New Brunswick, but his biographers and other scholars give the period only perfunctory attention.¹ A new assessment of the most distinguished person who ever lived in New Brunswick is perhaps timely.

It is impossible to give a completely accurate factual account of Cobbett's early years partly because the main sources are his own reminiscences often written many years later and frequently vague and even contradictory, especially regarding chronology. What follows is a mixture of fact and some extrapolation.²

Cobbett was born in March 1763, but throughout his writings he shaved three years off his age claiming March 1766! His father was a modest farmer-innkeeper, and Cobbett was "bred at the plough-tail . . . in the Hop-Gardens of Farnham in Surrey", enjoying a happy rural, Anglican boyhood. At fourteen he ran off to Richmond where he characteristically spent his last three pence on Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, a purchase that caused "a sort of birth of intellect". He worked for a while at Kew Gardens, but soon returned home. At nineteen he visited Portsmouth where the sight of "the grand fleet . . . riding at anchor at Spithead" inspired an unfulfilled desire to go to sea.³ He was now completely "spoiled for a farmer", and it is not surprising that about a year later, May 6, 1783, he abruptly went off to London where he landed a job as a "quill-driver" or clerk to a lawyer in Gray's Inn. A few months as "a galley-slave" in the "dungeon" office induced in him a healthy aversion to lawyers that soon persuaded him to take the King's shilling.⁴

Like many turning-points in Cobbett's career, his enlistment and subsequent posting to North America were accidental. During a Sunday walk he chanced to see a Royal Marine recruiting poster, repaired to

Chatham, and joined. The next morning he was surprised to learn he had actually enlisted at the depot of "a marching regiment", the 54th Regiment of Foot, or the West Norfolk, the county name just given in 1782. It was too late to change, but his captain mollified him thus: "By Jesus! my lad, and you have had a narrow escape," and continued with a glowing description of the glories of Nova Scotia where the body of the regiment was stationed. The date was early 1784, probably late January or early February.⁵ A dreary year of poverty-stricken barrack life followed which Cobbett typically devoted to the grammatical and literary study and general self-education begun with *A Tale of a Tub*, and to a mastery of his military duties that resulted in his promotion to corporal and clerk of the depot under Colonel Debbeig. Escape came in March 1785 when he sailed from Gravesend to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to join his regiment. His love-hate affair with the New World had begun.⁶

The voyage was "short and pleasant" and the stay in Nova Scotia "but a few weeks". On July 9, 1785, the citizens of Windsor officially bade a warm farewell to the 54th which had been stationed at Fort Edward for two years, and on July 23, the *St. John Gazette* reported: "On Wednesday and Thursday last arrived three vessels from Windsor, having on board four companies of his Majesty's fifty-fourth regiment of foot, who are to garrison this place and St. Anns [Fredericton], in the room of the fifty-seventh, who are under orders to embark for Halifax." The crossing had been very stormy and Cobbett suffered a minor tragedy with the loss of his well-thumbed *A Tale of a Tub* overboard into the Bay of Fundy.⁷

Cobbett recalled that he remained in St. John's (*sic*) "and at other places in the same province" for more than six years. It is clear that the regiment was at some point split, with headquarters in the newly created (November, 1785) capital, Fredericton, and a detachment in Saint John. How long Cobbett stayed in the port city is a question, the evidence somewhat conflicting. As the historian of the 54th has remarked, "The regiment's doings during the next few years are hard to follow." Cobbett was certainly quartered for some time by Fort Howe and was probably posted to Fredericton about July 1787. Meanwhile he seems to have been promoted to sergeant fairly late in 1785 or early 1786, and to sergeant-major at the end of 1786 or very early 1787. He met his future wife, Ann Reid, in Saint John in February 1787, and he met his New England, Loyalist sweetheart near Fredericton about July 1789. (More on Cobbett's romances later.) The final chronology is certain. Cobbett

and the regiment left New Brunswick in September 1791 aboard H.M.S. *Resistance*, arrived at Spithead October 30, disembarked November 3, and were quartered at Portsmouth.⁸

II

The captain who had enlisted Cobbett at Chatham had "dwelt long on the beauties and riches of" the "flourishing and plentiful country, Nova Scotia", "a terrestrial paradise", thus Cobbett was left "perfectly enchanted with the prospect of a voyage thither". But disillusionment came as soon as he beheld the "hideous rocks at the entrance" of Halifax harbour. "Nova Scotia had no other charm for me than that of novelty. Everything I saw as new: bogs, rocks and stumps, mosquitoes and bull frogs." His comments frequently have a timeless quality. He likened British North America in general to "the horns, the head, the neck, the shins, and the hoofs of the ox", whereas the United States was "the ribs, the sirloin". Nova Scotia and "that miserable country New Brunswick" were "one great heap of rocks, covered with fir trees", and if that was not enough there was "the horrible climate", seven months of snow and the constant danger of frostbite so that on guard duty it was necessary to wear face masks with holes cut out for the eyes and nose.⁹

Nevertheless, New Brunswick had its compensations. He liked "the great and beautiful river St. John". He admitted that some of the land was "good and productive", and that some "spots far surpass in rural beauty any other that my eyes ever behold." Other attractions included "teeming . . . fish", water fowl and wild pigeons. He recalled that even when the river froze over by about November 7, it remained a source of enjoyment by the skating it afforded. And when the snow came about November 17, at least nine days out of ten were sunny, the "snow, dry as hair-powder screeching under our feet". There was a certain grandeur to the winter; yet when the Spring thaw, heralded by fantastic, shrieking ice-jams, arrived in April the sun brought welcome relief allowing the soldiers to take off their furs and dress as men instead of bears. Summer brought melons "and fine crops of corn and grass". In later life he frequently praised the beauty of the fall foliage in North America.¹⁰

Cobbett's life-long passion for agriculture and gardening was sustained and broadened in New Brunswick. "I have cultivated a garden at Frederickton, (*sic*)," he declared. "I had as fine cabbages, turnips, and garden things of all hardy sorts, any man need wish to see. Indian corn grew and ripened well in fields at Frederickton. And, of course, the

summer was sufficient for the perfecting of all plants for cattle-food. And how necessary is this food in Northern climates!" The fact that turnips survived "even the Nova Scotia snows" made him a booster of turnips for British agriculture. It was New Brunswick that taught Cobbett the value of the self-sufficient goat. The regiment had several, some of which "had gone through nearly the whole of the American War". He, himself, kept one that averaged three and a half pints of milk a day. New Brunswick also began his life-long devotion to the cultivation of maize which in typically immodest fashion, he called "Cobbett's corn".¹¹

Always the vigorous countryman throughout his life, he "found time for skating (*sic*), fishing, shooting, and all the other sports of the country, of which, when I left it, I had seen, and knew, more than any other man." He recalled that he had gone 100 miles through the woods "where no man had ventured before to go alone."¹² He also made frequent trips to visit a Loyalist family whose company, particularly that of one of the daughters (whose attractions outshone those of the countryside), pleased him greatly. All in all "Rural Rides" presage his later celebrated trips through England. His mastery of descriptive, scenic writing certainly dates from his accounts of New Brunswick.

Although Cobbett was later a formidable political enemy of Jeffersonian Republicanism, he did share Jefferson's mystical belief in the goodness of agriculture and the evils of commerce, prejudices that may well have been strengthened or even engendered in New Brunswick. "I hate commercial towns in general," he pronounced, adding, with Saint John probably in mind, "I have always, from my very youth, disliked sea-ports."¹³

III

As the regimental sergeant-major, Cobbett was the senior non-commissioned officer, but his rank did not make him a gentleman and his position in government circles was presumably strictly according to his place in the hierarchy. He did recall that "The Governor [Carleton] who was a very early riser, used to come and see me every morning; and in so far as words went, gave me ample reward in his commendations," that when the regiment left Fredericton, Carleton publicly acknowledged his services, and that in England in 1805 Carleton called "to remind me that he had the pleasure of knowing me in New

Brunswick", but there is no evidence that the relationship had been other than that of general and sergeant-major.¹⁴

Presumably, Cobbett's contact with the Loyalist establishment was minimal.¹⁵ However, he did claim that he became quite famous in New Brunswick, "every good man respected me. I was invited to visit people in all parts of the provinces," and he "had the settling or rather the preventing, of eight or nine law suits." The population was so small that even trivial matters were common knowledge. For example, Cobbett's engagement to Ann Reid was known equally to Governor Carleton and to the obscure Loyalist farming family he had got to know.¹⁶

Although he admired the "able Yankee farmers", New Brunswick's "Yankee Loyalist" society shattered his view of the class structure. He found "Thousands of captains . . . without soldiers, and of squires without stockings or shoes." At home he "had never thought of approaching a squire without a most respectful bow: but, in this new world, though I was but a corporal, I often ordered a squire to bring me a glass of grog, and even take care of my knapsack." Similarly, a few years later an English visitor was amazed to find that a veteran Loyalist officer who ended up the senior general in the British army was a huckster on the Saint John wharf.¹⁷

The official Saint John farewell to the 54th was probably not exaggerated when it said that "we cannot see preparations for your quitting the Province, without regret." The document continued that the citizens were "accustomed to see you amongst us, from the infancy of the settlement; you appear almost a part of our establishment; and we feel your departure, like the loss of so many citizens." In a sense, Cobbett and New Brunswick both grew up together, and he certainly had close associations with some local people of his own class. For example, he mentions visiting "an old farmer and his family" for wild pigeon shooting. More important, Cobbett had a romance with a local beauty and almost married her despite the fact he was already engaged.¹⁸

The engagement had taken place in 1787 when he was stationed at Fort Howe. He espied Ann Reid, the thirteen-year-old daughter of an artillery sergeant, scrubbing laundry in deep snow at dawn. Her good looks suggested to him, and her obvious industry convinced him, that she should be his wife. In six months Sergeant Thomas Reid and family went back to Chatham, and four years later Cobbett returned home and

married his faithful fiancée.¹⁹ It proved to be a particularly felicitous union, and ever afterward Cobbett descanted on the advantages of marriage.

In the meantime, however, Cobbett, as he put it, "did a wrong", perhaps the only one he ever admitted! About July 1789, in the course of one of his "rambles", he lost his way and was taken in by a family of New England "Yankee Loyalists" who, some five or six years earlier, had started a new life in what Cobbett described as an outstandingly beautiful part of New Brunswick. The farmer had an exceedingly pretty nineteen-year-old daughter. The combination of the company, the scenery, and the excellent salmon fishing, induced Cobbett to spend all the time he could, for more than two years, with his "Yankee friends". In winter he went by sleigh, in summer by canoe. Sometimes he would paddle all night, spend the day with his beloved, perhaps enjoying a country "frolic" (dance), and then paddle again all night the forty miles to Fredericton. There was no formal engagement, but a tacit agreement grew up, although Cobbett's betrothal was no secret. When it came time to leave for England, Cobbett did so with heavy heart and always believed that if anything had occurred at that time to suggest "fickleness" on Ann Reid's part he would have married the Yankee and lived and died "on the lovely banks" of the "branch-covered creek where she lived".²⁰

IV

The focus for any study of Cobbett in New Brunswick has to be the army. With rare exceptions, Cobbett had contempt for his officers whom he termed incompetent, illiterate, drunken, venal gamblers, unable to "move an inch without my assistance". A new method of drill and weapon handling called "Dundas's System", or "the new discipline", was introduced, and Cobbett said he was obliged to teach it to everybody from the colonel on down, even going to the length of supplying cue cards to the officers. The officers, he opined, "were in everything excepting mere authority, my inferiors." He also called them "supreme jack asses". As G.K. Chesterton remarked, Cobbett was good at "abuse".²¹

Army officers, especially in a backwater like Fredericton, were doubtless given over to excessive drinking and hedonism, but equally doubtlessly the priggish, austere, young Cobbett exaggerated. Many of the officers were ignorant, but it should be remembered that the

estimable Major John André, tragic go-between in the Benedict Arnold affair, had served in the 54th, Colonel Debbieg, the commander at Chatham, an officer of real distinction, had been a confidant of Wolfe, and Cobbett himself admitted that Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the commanding officer under whom he served for a time in New Brunswick and from whom he secured his discharge in 1791, "was a really honest, conscientious and humane man."²²

In contrast to the officers, Cobbett recalled a fellow sergeant called Smaller, "honest, brave and generous to the last degree", who "was more fit to command a Regiment than any Colonel or Major I ever saw." His "blood boiled" to see this natural, untaught gentleman saluting a "stupid sot of an officer whom nature seemed to have designed to black his shoes."²³ Though no egalitarian he did ask the ancient English question, "When Adam delved and Eve span / Who was then the gentleman?", and though no Bonapartist, he did favour, and his own career embodies, the Napoleonic maxim of "*la carrière ouverte aux talens.*"

Experience with civilian authority was no more inspiring. Royal commissioners arrived, probably about 1790, to investigate New Brunswick, but it was Cobbett who wrote their report while they enjoyed "jovial carousing with our officers". Far from receiving any credit for thirty nights of hard work, it was the illiterate adjutant who pretended authorship and graciously granted Cobbett leave to go pigeon shooting as a reward. The Cobbett report has disappeared. Its discovery might well mean an exciting addition to the sources of early New Brunswick history.²⁴

Despite everything, Cobbett remained a proper British soldier, proud of his insignia of rank, "my worsted shoulder-knot, and my great, high, coarse, hairy cap". It was this pride that ended his military career. Apart from the few comrades who shared something of his innate ability he found the privates and non-commissioned officers as degraded as the officers, being generally "the most beastly drunkards". He complained that "liquor was so cheap, that even the soldier might be drunk everyday," adding characteristically, "yet I never, during, the whole time, even *tasted* of any of that liquor." But the common soldiers knew no better and were victims of what he came to call the "System". And the system, he discovered, was corrupt. Later he wrote rather plaintively in reply to attacks on his reputation, "I do not hate England; on the contrary, it is my love of England that makes me hate them," i.e., the

corruptors and the corrupted. The quartermaster, it turned out, was keeping one quarter of the regimental provisions for himself, without any undue breach of the ethics of the day.²⁵

Cobbett's complaint was received with terrified incredulousness by the older sergeants, who were not given to rocking the boat, and with stern refusal by his superiors. Fearing a court-martial if he persevered openly, Cobbett enlisted the aid of a friendly, honest corporal, William Bestland (the only other sober person in "*the whole regiment*"), and despite the danger of being "flogged half to death" if they were discovered, while the rest of the regiment "were boozing and snoring, we gutted no small part of the regimental books, rolls, and other documents." The regiment returned to England in 1791, Cobbett refused a commission, secured an honourable discharge, and set about bringing "certain officers to justice for having, in various ways, *wronged both the public and the soldier.*" Of course, Cobbett was naively pointing at the tip of the accepted iceberg of eighteenth-century patronage. The government and the army were not at all cooperative, and he was forced to drop the prosecution to save Bestland, still a corporal, from likely savage, official retribution. Himself in some danger for this and other activities that worried a ministry already alarmed by the outbreak of the French Revolution, Cobbett retired to France with his new bride. But it was only a temporary retreat. Cobbett was launched on the career as *enfant terrible*, one of the world's greatest controversialists, gadfly of the establishment, lifelong enemy of corruption, what he later designated "The Thing".²⁶

The army had had a lasting effect on Cobbett. As one scholar has justly written, "It is possible to see in the whole of Cobbett's career his experience as a Warrant Officer still at work," adding that he was "essentially a traditionalist". This is probably true despite Cobbett's strictures on the army. His cold, often realistic, view of his "betters", "the epaulet gentry", at close quarters was combined with a basic respect and pride which I myself have noted in more recent times during a stint as a British non-commissioned officer. He claimed he "was, perhaps, more attached [to the army] than any man that ever lived," and like so many who have served, even grudgingly, he never stopped talking about it. In later life he would refer to himself as an "old soldier". His later criticisms of the army and, indeed, of other English institutions and policies, were always made more in sorrow than in anger. Thinking back during the Napoleonic Wars to his officers in New

Brunswick, he asked tersely, "Is it any wonder that we experience defeats!"²⁷

Several of Cobbett's traits, not already mentioned, developed in New Brunswick. One was a sense of duty. His 100 mile forest trip was to prevent (successfully he claimed) desertions to the United States (recent draft-dodgers in reverse!) by demonstrating that he personally could follow any fugitive. Another was extreme, but perhaps justifiable, egotism allied to a continuing autodidacticism — *The Times* later correctly styled him a "self-taught peasant". Despite his youth, irrepressible natural ability caused him to rise rapidly to sergeant and then sergeant-major. He soon had "the affairs of the whole regiment to attend to; all its accounts, its parades, its guards, its everything." He studied geometry and fortifications and in two months "built a barrack for four hundred men, without the aid of either draughtsmen, carpenters, or bricklayers, the soldiers under me dug the stones, burnt the lime, dug the sand, or rather wheeled it up from the river; built the chimneys, cut the trees, sawed the boards and timber, split the shingles, made the sashes for the windows; and with nothing given me but the iron work and the glass for windows . . . (and) without any architect."²⁸

Cobbett's life, as always, was Spartan and industrious. He has left us a graphic account of his daily routine in the army, particularly his early rising, punctuality and "husbanding well my time", to which he attributed his rapid promotion. "If I had to mount guard at ten, I was ready at nine." He got up "in summer, at daylight, and in winter at four o'clock." After shaving and dressing, he ate "cheese, or pork, and bread". He then "prepared my report" and was left with a couple of hours for reading before regimental duties returned. The historian of the 54th writes that in summer the regiment did parades and exercises from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m.; dinner was at 4 p.m., and from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. there were further parades. In winter two route marches were undertaken each week. Cobbett's duties, were, he claimed, of "a greater quantity and variety . . . than . . . were ever the lot of any other living man," yet in "time snatched by minutes" he taught himself English and French grammar.²⁹

In New Brunswick, Cobbett, the perennial schoolmaster and textbook writer, emerged. In Saint John, he became acutely conscious of the disabling nature of grammatical ignorance. Even many officers, such as a second lieutenant of artillery who later became Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, M.P., he branded as illiterate. It was in Saint John that Cobbett

taught grammar to his friend Smaller who as a result was promoted to sergeant. Cobbett saw education as the supreme means of self improvement, and years later when he came to write his best-selling *A Grammar of the English Language*, it was inscribed as being "Especially for the use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-Boys". Early in the book he noted that just as young soldiers have to learn the different parts of the musket from the sergeant before they can begin serious exercises, so pupils must learn the different parts of speech before they can express themselves well. Sambrook has suggested that the army not only affected Cobbett's character, but "perhaps did something, too, to shape the brisk 'paradeground' peremptoriness of his prose style." He also was to write a popular grammar for Frenchmen, *Le Tuteur Anglais*, a spelling book and a French-English dictionary. Even while in New Brunswick he produced, for the edification of his comrades "a little book on *arithmetic*; and it is truly surprising in how short a time they learned all that was necessary for . . . that necessary department of learning."³⁰

Despite G.K. Chesterton's arguments to the contrary, it is difficult not to sympathize with *The Times*' charge that Cobbett's "pretensions" to consistency were "laughable".³¹ Contradictory descriptions of Maritime scenery and ambivalent attitudes towards the army have already been quoted. Towards the end of his life when he undertook and published his *Rural Rides* his criticisms of the colonies became harsher because he hated the draining emigration of English country-folk and the evil policies he believed were driving them to it. Thus in 1830 Prince Edward Island was described as "a rascally heap of sand and rock and swamp". He added, anticipating J.S. Mill, "Those villanous (*sic*) colonies are held for no earthly purpose but that of furnishing a pretense of giving money to the relations and dependents of the aristocracy." If English taxes were withheld most of "those horrible regions" of British North America "would be left to the bears and the savages in the course of a year." Recalling, perhaps, his Fredericton days, he also criticized the power of the church and "clerical insolence".³²

Cobbett's New Brunswick period might be termed his finishing school and university, the formal versions of which he dismissed as purveyors of useless "Heddukasion" or "dens of dunces". Many of his always dogmatic opinions were either formed or confirmed by his New Brunswick stay. His love of the army combined with his severe criticism of its faults is an obvious example. Connected with this were his hatred of

corruption, "The Thing", and the shortcomings of the class society. When Cobbett took up a lengthy residence in the United States in 1793, he immediately became a trenchant critic of the young Republic and a foe of the Revolution that had brought it into being — attitudes doubtless formed by his earlier relationship with Loyalist society.³³

Cobbett's New Brunswick experience almost certainly resulted directly in his discovery of his true *métier*. His first published work, *The Soldier's Friend*, which appeared in London in 1792, was an effective exposé of corruption and the common soldier's grievances.³⁴ Cobbett remained the "soldier's friend" for life. For example, there is his opposition to flogging which began in New Brunswick and played a part in its eventual abolition.³⁵

Above all, New Brunswick revealed Cobbett as the enemy of what we would term "the establishment", as the champion of the underdog, and as the supreme British patriot. Carlyle would later dub him "the pattern John Bull", which in many ways he was both in character and in ruddy, robust physique — Hazlitt called him the archetypical English farmer.³⁶ Finally, we can perhaps grant William Cobbett the status of "honorary New Brunswicker". He was not the last to serve his apprenticeship in the land of fir and snow and then make his fame and fortune on a broader stage. Until his death he used his New Brunswick experiences, and indeed his whole life, with an almost Joycean obsession, as raw material for his art, his writing, his causes.³⁷

V

Cobbett returned to the Maritimes only once. On June 6, 1800, the packet, *The Lady Arabella*, arrived in Halifax from New York en route for England. An absence of nine years, spent mostly in the United States, had made a big difference. Cobbett was now a well-known journalist and writer, and his feud with Dr. Benjamin Rush, resulting in the legal action that made him flee the republic, had made him a popular celebrity. During his short visit Cobbett dined with the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America, the Duke of Kent. It must have been a source of gratification, but certainly not of awe, for the ex-sergeant-major to be received by royalty and to learn that his authorship of the commissioners' New Brunswick report was well known to many, including the duke who praised him for it. Perhaps during the meal Cobbett had thoughts similar to those expressed by *The Times* thirty-

five years later; "He ended by bursting that formidable barrier which separates the classes of Englishmen from any beneath them."³⁸

During those thirty-five years of life remaining to him, Cobbett, with his Proustian obsession for the past, frequently revisited New Brunswick in his imagination — at times the proud, young sergeant-major strutting on parade, at times brooding about his lost Loyalist sweet-heart "on the lonely banks of [the] branch-covered creek", at times hearing again the mystic cracking of the Spring ice and enjoying the "conceit" that he was "still the same age".³⁹

NOTES

1. G.D.H. Cole, *The Life of William Cobbett* (London, 1927), the best biography; James Sambrook, *William Cobbett* (London and Boston, 1973), the best short biography; Asa Briggs, *William Cobbett* (Oxford, 1967) good, but very brief; W. Baring Pemberton, *William Cobbett* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949), competent, but largely ignores New Brunswick; G.K. Chesterton, *William Cobbett* (London, 1926), not much on New Brunswick, but stimulating and reveals as much about Chesterton as Cobbett; Marjorie Bowen, *Peter Porcupine* (London, 1935), superficial. The following can be consulted with some profit: Edward Smith, *William Cobbett* (London, 1879), John W. Osborne, *William Cobbett* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1966), Mary Elizabeth Clark, *Peter Porcupine in America: The Career of William Cobbett, 1792-1800* (Philadelphia, 1939), E.I. Carlyle, *William Cobbett* (London, 1904). Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Cobbett* (London, 1913) and A.M.D. Hughes, ed., *Cobbett. Selections, With Hazlitt's Essay and Other Critical Estimates* (Oxford, 1923) contain useful selections of Cobbett's writings, but best of all is William Reitzel, ed., *The Autobiography of William Cobbett* (London, 1947), which strings together Cobbett's scattered autobiographical writings in a logical sequence. Parts of the Reitzel volume were reprinted in *The Atlantic Advocate*, L (March, 1960 and April, 1960), 65-71, 56-62 and some excellent illustrations were included. The only serious account of Cobbett in New Brunswick is S.D. Scott, "William Cobbett", *Acadiensis*, V (April - July 1905), 182-215. It consists largely of quotations from Cobbett, is not always adequately footnoted, but is useful. Wallace Brown, "William Cobbett in North America", *History Today*, XXII (October, 1972), 685-691 discusses Cobbett's career in both the Maritimes and the United States in a popular fashion. There is a brief but rewarding discussion of Cobbett's thought, contrasted with Burke's, in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London, 1958), 3-20.
2. Unfortunately an important source, the files of early New Brunswick newspapers, are incomplete.
3. William Cobbett, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America* (Fontwell, Sussex, 1964), p. 17 (this book is a reprint with a good introduction by J.E. Morpurgo); William Cobbett, *Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1970), pp. 139-140, 24, 25 (this is a reprint of a 1927 book with an introduction by G.D.H. Cole. It contains *The Life . . . of Porcupine* and several other of Cobbett's writings conveniently collected together. Henceforth this volume will be cited as Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*.)
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 29-30. See also Cole, *Cobbett*, ch. 2 and Briggs, *Cobbett*, ch. 2.
5. C.T. Atkinson, *The Dorsetshire Regiment: The Thirty-Ninth and Fifty-Fourth Foot And the Dorset Militia And Volunteers* (Oxford, 1947), I, 41; Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, pp. 31-32; *Cobbett's Political Register* (London), XV, (June 17, 1809), 901. The name of this periodical changed from time to time, but I will follow the example of Cole and Reitzel and consistently cite it as the *Political Register*, henceforth abbreviated to *PR*.

6. Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, pp. 32-35.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 35; *The Nova Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) July 12, 1785; Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, p. 141; John Purdy, ed., *The New Sailing Directory* (London, 1827), p. 101n. The 54th had served in America during the Revolutionary War. In November 1783 it was evacuated by General Sir Guy Carleton from New York to Nova Scotia and according to one authority was stationed at Fort Cumberland, at least for a time. Atkinson, *Dorset Regiment*, I, 39-40.
8. Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, p. 35; *Saint John Gazette*, September 30, 1791 (this edition contains Mayor G.G. Ludlow's farewell to the regiment); Atkinson, *Dorset Regiment*, I, 41, 43; Cobbett's manuscript book, "Of Vulgar Fractions" (Beinecke Library, Yale University) is dated Fort Howe, January 26, 1789: thus at that date Cobbett was presumably in Saint John and it is quite likely that Cobbett moved back and forth occasionally between Fredericton and Saint John; *Saint John Globe*, January 3, 1920; *PR*, XV (June 17, 1809), 897-915. According to Hughes, ed., *Cobbett*, p. 49, the 54th had remained an extra two years in New Brunswick because of the Nootka Sound Crisis.
9. Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, pp. 32, 35; *PR*, LXXI (March 12, 1831), 657-658.
10. William Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men* (London, 1926) pp. 142-143 ¶142; *PR*, LXVII (January 24, 1829), 99-100; William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (Pub. T. Nelson & Sons, n.p., n.d.), p. 22.
11. Cobbett, *Year's Residence*, pp. 126 ¶186, 148 ¶241; William Cobbett, *Cottage Economy* (London, 1926), pp. 141-142 ¶189, 194-200 ¶258-265; *PR*, LXIII (November 22, 1828), 642-664.
12. *Ibid.*, XV (June 17, 1809), 913.
13. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, 526, 592; Scott "Cobbett", p. 214; *PR*, XXXVIII (March 17, 1821), 731 (here he quotes with approval Jefferson's description of farmers as "God's chosen people"). Cobbett also had much in common with Andrew Jackson.
14. *Ibid.*, LXIII (November 22, 1828), 663, 661; XV (June 17, 1809), 914.
15. It does seem that by 1800 Jonathan Odell and Ward Chipman knew Cobbett personally — see Odell to Chipman, March 3, 1800 and March 20, 1800, Ward Chipman Correspondence, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John — but there is no evidence of a relationship in the 1780's. By 1800 there were many New Brunswick and Nova Scotia subscribers to Cobbett's American magazine, *Porcupine's Gazette*, and his legal misadventures with Dr. Benjamin Rush were followed with interest. E.g., see *The Royal Gazette* (Halifax), June 17, 1800.
16. *PR*, XV, (June 17, 1809), 913; Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 148 ¶149.
17. Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, p. 35; the general was John Coffin.
18. *Saint John Gazette*, September 30, 1791; *PR* XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1102.
19. Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 105, ¶95. See also H.A. Cody, "A Romance of old Fort Howe - William Cobbett", undated typescript, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, and Gerald Keith, "The Legend of Jenny's Spring", New Brunswick Historical Society *Collections*, XLVII (1963), 48-54. According to Keith who invoked the help of Montreal businessmen, Frank Cobbett, a direct descendant of William, the site of the romance was "the Rockland Road area." It seems the spring was named after a water pedlar called Jenny, but it was also known at one time as "Cobbett's well."
20. The romance is recounted in Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, pp. 143-150 ¶143-151. The problem of the location of the Loyalist family is of minor interest to New Brunswick historians, but its solution would involve much exploration and perhaps even archaeology, a lot of effort for meagre results. Scott, "Cobbett", p. 199, favours the Nashwaak as does W.S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick, A History: 1784-1867* (Toronto, 1963), p. 86, but Scott admits the case for the Oromocto, and Blissville has also been suggested — see *The Daily Sun* (Saint John), March 17, 1885. However, Cobbett says it was at the head of a creek which seems to rule out Blissville. I myself suggest Tay Creek as a possibility. For a possible description of Cobbett's journey to the family see *Rural Rides*, p. 216.
21. *PR*, XV (June 17, 1809), 901, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1100; Chesterton, *Cobbett*, p. 7. For "the new discipline" see Sir David Dundas, *Principles of Military Movements, Chiefly Applied to Infantry, etc.* (London, 1788), cited by Reitzel, ed., *Autobiography*, p. 239n. According to Scott, "Cobbett", p. 204, the system was introduced while Cobbett was a corporal in Saint John.
22. Atkinson, *Dorsetshire Regiment*, I, 41-43; *PR*, LXIII (November 22, 1828), 661, XV (June 17, 1809), 915. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a bold romantic explorer, went on to an Irish hero's death in Newgate, see *DNB*.

23. *PR*, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1110. Cobbett was grateful to Smaller for having saved his life when they became lost in the New Brunswick woods. According to Bowen, *Peter Porcupine*, 43, Cobbett had another friend among the troops, John Fletcher.
24. *PR*, XV (June 17, 1809), 913, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1102-1105, LXIII (November 22, 1828), 661-662. In this last reference Cobbett says that the commissioners were to "Take account of the population, and of the condition of the several settlements, of the state of the improvements" etc. In 1800, the Duke of Kent said that thousands of pounds had been spent on the report. The duke had it copied in 1800 and took the original back to England with him. However, it is unknown to the Nova Scotia archivist and to the Registrar of the Royal Archives, Windsor, where the duke's papers are lodged. Cobbett has stated that one member of the commission was called Dundas; nevertheless, it seems most unlikely that this commission was in fact the one investigating the Loyalists's losses.
25. *PR*, XV (June 17, 1809), 901; Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, p. 143. (Presumably he did drink beer which he endorsed enthusiastically in another context, *Cottage Economy*, pp. 12-48 ¶20-76); *PR* XV (March 25, 1809), 432.
26. *Ibid.*, XV (June 17, 1809), 901-903, 900; Cobbett, *Life of Porcupine*, pp. 127-138 (an account of the court-martial); *Rural Rides*, p. 215. The New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, has an account of the court-martial catalogued, William Cobbett, *Charges made by William Cobbett . . .* MacNutt, *New Brunswick*, p. 86, writes, citing PRO WO1/1051, that Cobbett charged the officers with hiring out soldiers to Loyalist settlers and pocketing the wages. The gutting of the regimental books, etc. may be perused in "State of His Majesty's 54th (or W. Norfolk) Regiment of Foot," (August 24, 1787 - December 25, 1788) and other documents in a MS in Cobbett's hand in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.
27. Cobbett, *Year's Residence*, p. 9 (Morpurgo's introduction); *PR*, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1099, XV (June 17, 1809), 900-901.
28. *Ibid.*, 913 (Carleton had selected Fredericton as the capital partly because desertions from the inland location would be difficult - MacNutt, *New Brunswick*, p. 57); *The Times*, June 20, 1835; *PR*, XV (June 17, 1809), 913, LXIII (November 22, 1828), 662-663. The barrack Cobbett built is probably the one marked #13 on Dugald Campbell's plan of Fredericton. It was pulled down in 1845.
29. Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 40 ¶39; Atkinson, *Dorsetshire Regiment*, I, 42; *PR*, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1093.
30. *Ibid.*, 1100-1110; William Cobbett, *A Grammar of the English Language* (London, n.d.), p. 17 12; Sambrook, *Cobbett*, p. 41; quoted by Cole, *Cobbett*, p. 53. The arithmetic was never published (see f.n. 8), but it was probably Cobbett's first book. For Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, an eventual pal of George IV, see *DNB*.
31. Chesterton, *Cobbett*, p. 74; *The Times*, June 20, 1835. One of the most notorious of Cobbett's turnabouts concerned Thomas Paine — see Brown, "William Cobbett", p. 691.
32. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, p. 534 and see also *PR*, LXXI (March 12, 1831), 657-659; *Rural Rides*, pp. 535, 537.
33. Briggs, *Cobbett*, p. 10; Cobbett, *Year's Residence*, p. 9. (Morpurgo's introduction); Brown, "William Cobbett", pp. 689-691. Cobbett wrote, *Life of Porcupine*, p. 22, "My father was a partizan of the Americans," but he soon rejected his father's opinion.
34. In 1805 Cobbett said he did not write it; in 1832 he said he did — Cole, *Cobbett*, p. 43. Cole concludes that he probably wrote the final draft even if other hands had contributed to earlier versions. Sambrook, *Cobbett*, p. 44 is pretty sure of Cobbett's authorship.
35. Anon, *A Short History of the Dorsetshire Regiment* (Aldershot, 1922), p. 11; *PR*, XXXII (December 6, 1818), 1100. For protesting the flogging in June 1809 of some mutinous militia, Cobbett was sentenced to two years in Newgate — See Briggs, *Cobbett*, ppp. 35-37.
36. Cole, *Cobbett*, p. 12.
37. E.G. Purdy, ed., *New Sailing Directory*, p. 101n. where a storm in the Bay of Fundy is a metaphor for a storm in British Politics, and *PR*, LXVII (January 24, 1829), 99-100 where the distresses of a New Brunswick winter are a metaphor for the distresses caused by paper money in England.
38. *The Royal Gazette and the Nova Scotia Advertiser* (Halifax), June 10, 1800; Smith, *Cobbett*, I, 53; *PR*, XXXII (December 6, 1817), 1103; *The Times*, June 20, 1835.
39. Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 150; *PR*, LXVII (January 24, 1829), 100.