

Timber Wanted – The subscriber will purchase Four Thousand Feet Hardwood Plank, four to five inches thick, and six thousand feet of Hackmatack, same thickness to be straight and sound. Also – one hundred tons of Hackmatack Timber, to side twelve inches with the roots on. All to be delivered at his ship yard for which cash will be paid. – C Boultenhouse.¹⁹

Christopher continued building one or two vessels per year until 1866 and only sporadically after that. His final vessel was the 287-ton brigantine GEM launched on October 13, 1875 and registered at Sackville on October 18. The GEM was owned by Christopher (48 shares) and his son Capt. Bedford Boultenhouse (16 shares). On November 1, 1875 the brig GEM left Amos Seaman's wharf at Minudie, N.S. loaded with deals for Liverpool, Capt. Boultenhouse at the helm.²⁰

Other members of the Boultenhouse family were also shipbuilders. In addition to Christopher's father, Bedford Boultenhouse who built three vessels, his brother William constructed 12, brother John built 10 and John's two sons; John jr. built one and Bedford launched seven. Christopher's sons Amos and William built one schooner in 1859. In total the shipbuilding Boultenhouse family constructed 94 vessels making them one of the leading shipbuilding dynasties in the Province.

The Boultenhouse family was interconnected by marriage to other area shipbuilders. Christopher's sister, Mary Ann, married James Purdy, the father of shipbuilder Henry Boultenhouse Purdy. Another sister, Sarah, married shipbuilder Charles Dixon.²¹ Additionally Oliver Boultenhouse (1825-1861), the oldest son of Christopher's brother William,

was the foreman at the Charles Dixon yard.²²

The *Chignecto Post* issue of December 7, 1876 reported: "The death of Christopher Boultenhouse, Esq. is recorded in today's issue. He had been in declining health for some months. For nearly half a century he has been connected with the business affairs of this place, being one of the pioneers in the shipbuilding industry". Shortly after his death on December 2, 1876 a warrant of appraisal was issued to evaluate his estate. Listed under the assets in the Shipyard was a "Keel partly made" valued at \$3.00.²³ The old shipwright was planning on building vessel number 61.

Footnotes

1. PANB- MC3047 Donald P. Wright fonds, file MS3G, item #10 Boultenhouse family
2. Alec Purdy - Bedford Boultenhouse, loyalist...., unpublished manuscript
3. The Boultenhouse Family - Tantramar Heritage Trust website
4. Glenna Metchette - *The Descendants of William Boultenhouse* - unpublished manuscript
5. W.C. Milner - *History of Sackville*, NB - page 72-73
6. *Ibid*, as well in F.C. Jonah "Early History of Sackville" - The Tantramar Vol. I No.5, April 1915
7. Edward Anderson's diary - Albert Anderson fonds, Mount Allison Univ. Archives #8317 3/2
8. *Journal of Capt. George C. McAllister* by Mary Hill, published January 1931
9. The Acts of the General Assembly of Province of NB - 1841, page 54
10. The Mount Allison Univ. Dendrochronology Laboratory completed computer analysis of the timbers in building in September 2006. The main support timbers were larch logs cut between 1839-1841.
11. Dale E. Alward, *Down Sackville Ways*, May 1978, published April 2003 by the Tantramar Heritage Trust
12. The Boultenhouse Family - THT website <http://heritage.tantramar.com>

13. *The Borderer*, Vol XXI No.1 November 16, 1876
14. Dale E. Alward, *Down Sackville Ways*, May 1978, page 26, published April 2003 by Tantramar Heritage Trust
15. New Brunswick Museum - Archives and Research Library, Dibblee Collection, F154
16. Glenna Metchette - *The Descendants of William Boultenhouse* - unpublished manuscript
- Letter William Morice to John Morice, March 5, 1860 - *The White Fence*, Newsletter of the Tantramar Heritage Trust No. 21, January 2003.
17. W.C. Milner - *History of Sackville*, NB - page 77
18. Journals of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick 1862, NB Museum NB Government Collection F118, Mount Allison University Archives. D. MacLeod fonds, accession 7721 catalogue 16/1
19. *The Borderer*, April 7, 1865
20. Diary of Gilbert Seaman
21. Glenna Metchette - *The Descendants of William Boultenhouse* - unpublished manuscript
22. Charlotte J. Dixon Hart, Dixon Family Papers - Charles and Sarah Dixon, 1920, Mount Allison University, Bell Pamphlet File
23. Inventory of the Estate of Christopher Boultenhouse Esq. 27th day of December 1876 - PANB micro reel #11551, file RS74A - Probate Record of the will of Christopher Boultenhouse

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Cover photo courtesy of Phyllis and Ralph Stopps

Boultenhouse Heritage Centre

Christopher Boultenhouse

(c1802-1876)



Shipbuilder

by Al Smith



The Loyalist Boultenhouse family traces its Sackville origins to Bedford Boultenhouse (1762-1848) a carpenter from New Jersey.¹ In 1784 he emigrated to Nova Scotia, locating initially near Annapolis then to Wallace and finally settling near Sackville by 1794.² Bedford married Charlotte Harper (1770-1836), the youngest daughter of Yorkshire farmers Christopher and Elizabeth Harper, in Sackville on August 26, 1794.³ Bedford and Charlotte settled at Wood Point and raised six children: John (1795-1873), Mary Anne (1799-1858), Christopher (c1802-1876), William (1803-1860), Rebecca (1805-?) and Sarah (1808-1884).⁴

Bedford Boultenhouse reportedly owned a 120-ton vessel (probably a schooner) as early as 1812 that traded between Sackville, Dorchester and Passamaquoddy.⁵ By 1824 he had established a small shipyard at Wood Point. Sackville merchants William Crane and Charles F. Allison contracted Bedford to build the 129-ton brig CHARLOTTE, launched November 20, 1824. Son Christopher, by then 22 years old, undoubtedly worked with his father building the brig and learning the skills of a shipwright.

Christopher Boultenhouse's first forays into shipbuilding were the construction of two small schooners; REBECCA (68 tons), launched July 5, 1825, named after his new bride Rebecca Harris, and ANN (64 tons) launched April 29, 1827. In 1828 the young shipwright constructed his first larger vessel, the brig HOPE (332 tons). Curiously that brig was not constructed at Wood Point but in Sackville below Harris' aboiteau and launched into a tributary (now known as Morice Creek) of the Tantramar River.⁶ It is thought that most of Christopher's early vessels were likely built at Wood Point, but at least two others were built elsewhere.

In the spring of 1831 he constructed the 87-ton schooner TEMPERANCE in the cow pasture of Sackville (Coles Island) farmer Thomas Anderson.⁷ Upon completion of that vessel, launched June 8, he was back at his home base in Wood Point constructing the 191-ton brig WOODBINE, launched November 22.⁸ In the spring of 1832 he was in Dorchester, on contract with master mariner Thomas Crowson, constructing the schooner SEA FLOWER, launched May 31.

Aside from the brig HOPE, constructed in Sackville, most of the first sixteen vessels constructed by the young shipwright were relatively small. Possibly his home base shipyard at Wood Point was too small for the construction of larger vessels, or perhaps he needed access to a larger work force. Whatever the reason, it seems probable that the 133-ton brigantine WOOD POINT, launched April 4, 1840 was likely the last vessel that he constructed at the old Wood Point yard before he moved his operations to Sackville.

His new shipyard in Sackville was located on the banks of the Tantramar River, 1600 feet downstream from Dixon's Landing where, in 1840-41, a new public wharf was under construction by local merchants.⁹ The new location, on a wide bend of the river, gave him a sheltered facility with deep water and plenty of room to build and launch larger vessels. His first barques were most likely constructed at the new yard: barque SARAH BOTSFORD, 296 tons, launched Oct. 13, 1840; barque LORD WELLINGTON, 732 tons, launched October 15, 1841. No vessels were launched in 1842, the year that Christopher purchased the George Bulmer property in Sackville and constructed his large "Greek-revival" mansion. Significantly the main support timbers in that house are larch,¹⁰ not the normal red spruce that you would expect in local home

construction of that period. In all probability Christopher employed his ship carpenters, sawyers and the lumber stocks from the shipyard (which used large quantities of larch in ship construction) to build his new home in Sackville. That fine old building today houses the Boultenhouse Heritage Centre, the only shipwright's home in New Brunswick to become a museum.

Christopher Boultenhouse moved his family to Sackville selling his Wood Point property in 1846 to Chipman Chase, a master ship carpenter¹¹ who apprenticed under him. Rebecca Harris (1804-1849) had married Christopher on March 2, 1824 and raised a family of ten. Just under two years after Rebecca's death (Jan. 15, 1849), Christopher married Arabella Morice and had two additional children.¹²

Christopher built the new shipyard into a large and permanent facility consisting of slipways, a large (175 feet x 40 feet) steam powered mill, blacksmith shop, sheds, loft, stores and dwelling house. A wharf was added by the early 1870s.¹³ Forty-four vessels were built and launched there during the period 1840-1875, making Christopher Boultenhouse one of the most prolific shipwrights in the province having constructed 60 vessels in his lifetime.

Boultenhouse's first full-rigged ship was the 1160-ton ship JOHN DAVIES launched in July 1851. Trying to meet the increasing demand for vessels in the early 1850s he increased the output of the yard from usual one or two vessels yearly to three vessels in 1852, again in 1854 and in 1856. In those years the yard employed hundreds of workers. The year 1856 must have been an exciting one in the annals of Sackville shipbuilding. Shipbuilder Charles Dixon launched the 1465-ton ship SARAH DIXON (the largest vessel built in Sackville) on September 19 at his yard just upstream from Boultenhouse's. Christopher

launched three vessels that year: the 572-ton barque MARY on April 18; the 192-ton, 100 HP steamer-schooner WESTMORELAND, launched July 3 and the largest vessel that he built at the yard, the 1320-ton ship UNCAS, launched October 31.

Following the banner year of 1856 there was a depression in the market for vessels and shipbuilders were forced to sell at a loss. Charles Dixon was forced into bankruptcy following huge losses with the sale of the ship SARAH DIXON. Christopher Boultenhouse initially was able to survive the market downturn due to his good reputation as a quality shipbuilder. He built the 1267-ton ship BROTHERS PRIDE in 1858 and had little difficulty in selling it to Saint John shipowner John Yeats.¹⁴ The bleak market conditions finally caught up to him in 1859 when he closed down his shipyard and was forced to declare insolvency on August 3.¹⁵

The years 1859 and 1860 were exceptionally difficult times for the master shipbuilder. Not only did he have to deal with bankruptcy, but his son Amos (1833-1859) died at home on June 13, 1859 and his oldest son William (1829-1860) drowned with the sinking of the SS HUNGARIAN on February 19, 1860.¹⁶ William had been in England on business for his father regarding his shipping interests.¹⁷ Christopher was able to retain his ownership of the SS WESTMORELAND and through contractual arrangements with the governments of NB, NS and PEI, his vessel carried passengers, mail and freight between Shediac, Summerside, Charlottetown, and Pictou from 1857 to 1863.¹⁸ Possibly through those contracts he was able to emerge from bankruptcy and reopen the shipyard in 1861. An advertisement in the local newspaper in April, 1865 indicates the yard was still anticipating a brisk building season: