



RELEASE DATE: January 13, 2023

**JOIN OLD YORK FOR A WEBINAR:
From Old York to New York: The Early Furniture of Southern Maine**

York, Maine—Old York Historical Society, in conjunction with the Piscataqua Decorative Arts Society, presents a **free webinar**, presented via Zoom, with **Joel Lefever**, on **Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at 6:30 pm**.

Early settlers in Southern Maine made all sorts of goods, including household furnishings. Yet historians have not attributed a single piece of furniture made in 17th century Maine...until now.

Joel Lefever will present a brief survey of joiners (who made case furniture) and turners (who turned furniture legs and made chairs) active in the Towns of Kittery, Eliot, York, and Portland between 1670 and 1750. The talk will focus primarily on the towns of Kittery and Eliot, which were the center of furniture manufacturing in Maine before 1720.

For the past decade, Lefever has combed through early York County deeds, searching for references to regional furniture makers, whose names are unfamiliar to most scholars. In the early 20th century, antiques dealers and summer residents scoured Maine for examples of colonial furniture. Much of what they discovered disappeared into museum collections, and the history of the furniture largely was forgotten. But now, by combining his recent research with information about pieces that descended in local families, and those in major museum collections, Lefever is able to tell the story of Maine's early furniture makers.

He will highlight the work of joiner Thomas Rhodes, the Wittum family of turners, shipwright Leonard Drowne, turner and joiner John Owen, turner Thomas Cutts, and carver William Dearing. Furniture attributed to these Mainers is found in museum collections nationally, including the Old York Historical Society, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

Joel Lefever, Old York's executive director and chief curator, is a published furniture historian. His interest in American architecture and decorative arts was sparked by a childhood collection of old Antiques magazines, and honed through degrees from Hope College, Holland, Michigan, and the Cooperstown Graduate Program in History Museum Studies in New York. After 20 years at the Holland Historical Trust, Holland, Michigan, he

established Lefebvre Museum Consulting, before taking up the reins at Old York in 2012. He lives with his wife and son in an historic 18th-century house in York.

This lecture is co-sponsored by Old York Historical Society and the Piscataqua Decorative Arts Society.

The lecture is FREE, but registration is required at oldyork.org.

ABOUT OLD YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OYHS is a vital part of the York, Maine, community. The organization maintains 16 buildings and 20 properties including the 17-acre Steedman Woods; employs 5 full-time and 25 part-time employees; houses more than 20,000 artifacts and 50,000 archival materials; and serves thousands of people year round through tours, educational programs, and special events. OYHS receives no Federal, State, or Municipal support, and relies on funding provided through private donations, a modest endowment, and a trust established by Elizabeth Perkins, as well as earned income from ticket sales, programs, memberships.

ABOUT PISCATAQUA DECORATIVE ARTS SOCIETY

PDAS is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote original historical research resulting in publication. Its primary focus is the greater Piscataqua region of New Hampshire and Maine, with connecting links to Massachusetts. The Society is based in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Established in 2001 and holding its first full season in 2002, the Society presents lectures each year that are open to the public. The lectures, which explore topics of interest and current research in the fine and decorative arts of the region, are compiled and published every three to four years.

CONTACT: Janet Blyberg
Membership and Marketing Coordinator
Old York Historical Society
P.O. Box 312
York, Maine 03909
207-363-4974, x. 101
membership@oldyork.org