

II. New Brunswick Loyalist

Lewis Fisher and his family found little comfort in their arrival at Saint John. Before the influx of the loyalists, the town had consisted only of Fort Howe and the trading post of the merchants Simonds, Hazen & White. The spring and summer fleets disgorged about 6,000 loyalists on the shore, mostly civilian refugees, with the fall fleet adding another 1,200 persons to the mix, largely the officers and men of the provincial corps and their families. A crowded and chaotic encampment of tents and crude log shelters confronted Lewis Fisher and the other men of the Third New Jersey Volunteers when they landed at Saint John, then known as "Parrtown".¹ The British Government had done shockingly little to prepare for the coming of the loyalists. It had not even surveyed the lands of the St. John River valley where it intended to settle the men of the provincial regiments. The British had dispatched an exploratory party up the river in the spring which had identified the lands above St. Anne's Point—a huge, largely vacant tract of rich farm land—for the settlement of the regiments, but without surveyed lots nothing could be granted or occupied.²

Discouraged by the prospect of Saint John and anxious to get closer to their lands, some of the officers and men of the Third Battalion and the King's American Regiment made a fateful decision to hire a schooner to take them up the St. John River to St. Anne's Point (present-day Fredericton). Mary Barbara Fisher later recalled simply their motivation for leaving Saint John, Lewis Fisher "did not like the place so he thought it best to come up with the others". The schooner left almost immediately, before the end of September, with the loyalists and their families paying four dollars a head for the privilege. After eight days sail up river, the captain refused to go any further "saying as he was a stranger on the river he would be lost in the wilderness so he landed them all out on the shore" near Oromocto. He would not accept more money to take them on to St. Anne's Point so they camped there for the night while the schooner returned down river. The men and their families set off the next day and, finding some canoes, travelled by canoe and on foot to St. Anne's Point, a large clearing

¹ Ronald Rees, *Land of the Loyalists* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 2000), p.74.

² Earle Thomas, *Greener Pastures: The Loyalist Experience of Benjamin Ingraham* (Belleville, ON: Mika, 1983), pp.125-127.

on the south shore of a broad bend in the river which had been the site of a French Acadian village between 1700 and 1759, when British forces burned it during the Seven Years War and expelled the Acadians. Hungry and exhausted, the loyalists arrived on October 8th and pitched their tents on the riverside for the night.³

Their situation was precarious. There were only three houses in the tiny settlement; the farmhouse of Philip Weade, the log cabin of Oliver Thibodeau, and the trading post of Simonds, Hazen & White, run by Benjamin Atherton. Winter fast approached and the closest King's Provision Storehouse was in Saint John.⁴ Without title to land, let alone tools or supplies with which to build a cabin, Lewis Fisher and his family faced the prospect of enduring the winter in a tent without a covering for the floor. Mary Fisher later recalled "as it was very wet and cold, winter was coming so fast they had no time to build and nothing to build with, or to make a floor but the ground".⁵ Six inches of snow fell on November 2nd, a mild foretaste of the following winter which was the worst in living memory. The Fishers used a large rug to keep the snow out of the tent and stones for a fireplace to keep warm and cook. During the frigid nights, boards were heated by the fire and applied to the children to keep them from freezing to death in their sleep.⁶ Under these conditions, the loyalists suffered unimaginably. Mary Fisher told her grandchildren that "many died, women and children, young and old. The men set out to look for a place to bury their dead with axes and spades they found a clear spot on the place afterwards known as the Parkers' land...they gave it the name of the Royal Provincial Burial Place and many of them lie there. It was a hard winter to those that left good homes".⁷ In spite of the hunger and cold, none of her children died. Even the youngest son Peter, born in June 1782, survived the bitter winter.

Spring brought renewed hope but hunger persisted. The men entrusted with bringing the first supplies up the river after the thaw turned traitor, returning to the

³ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, PANB, MC 1, Fisher family history file.

⁴ Earle Thomas, *Greener Pastures*, p.129.

⁵ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, PANB, MC 1, Fisher family history file.

⁶ Peter Fisher, *The First History of New Brunswick*, pp.11-12, 127.

⁷ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, PANB, MC 1, Fisher family history file.

United States to sell the goods. The loyalists discovered wild brakes which were edible, commonly called fiddleheads, emerging from the ground and providing some sustenance. Many of the those who survived the winter “partook of weeds which poisoned them causing death in some cases”. Mary Fisher ate some of the deadly weeds, later attributing her survival to a kind providence and the timely aid and care of Dr. Charles Earle, the only physician among the settlers. In search of food, Lewis Fisher “went up to Captain McCoy’s (there being no person home but an old colored slave woman who stated that her master and servant had gone out with a bag to see if they could obtain some potatoes or meal as they had nothing in the house except a half box of biscuit for themselves) and had to return home being unable to obtain any article of in the form of food for himself and family”. In the woods, however, the Fishers “discovered large patches of beans, among the fallen trees, a pure white bean with a black cross on it and how they were preserved after passing through so severe a winter seemed to them a mystery. They called them a gift from Heaven”. Mary Fisher planted some of the seeds but the “remainder of the beans were used for food which preserved their lives until supplies came by a vessel. They also called the beans the Staff of Life and Hope of the Starving”. She later recalled that she had felt the want of tea very keenly, and had used an article called Labrador for drinking instead, and that hemlock bark also was used to brew a distasteful tea.⁸

The first schooner of the season brought corn, meal, and rye to the starving loyalist settlers, inspiring them to join together to build log houses to shelter them through the next winter. With few tools and little lumber at their disposal, the homes they built were by necessity crude and makeshift. Mary Fisher told her grandchildren that they had had no “bricks with which to build chimneys and fireplaces (stoves being out of the question); they had no lime and had to make mortar out of the yellow clay. The chimneys and fireplaces were made of stone. Shingles and clapboards, or even boards of any kind they had none to cover the houses with on the outside and roofs. They covered the roofs of the houses with bark supported by poles and the windows comprised four panes of glass each”. Dr. Earle’s house was the first completed,

⁸ “Memorandum of the Fisher Family from 1783: Information and Reminiscences of the Fisher family & c.”, by Georgianna Fisher, revised by William Fisher; and “History and Reminiscences of the Fisher Family & c. & c.”, NAC, Sir George Parkin papers, MG 30, D 44, Vol. 76.

probably a tribute to his care for the settlers and leadership over the winter. Mary Fisher recalled that “they planted potatoes on the burnt land, which turned out well” and shot pigeons in the fields.⁹ With the opening of navigation on the St. John River in the spring, the main body of loyalists who had wintered at Saint John began to move up the river in numbers to take up the lands allotted to them by regiment all along the river between Maugerville and Woodstock. The spread of sails upon the river must have cheered the hearts of the lonely survivors of that first winter at St. Anne’s Point. Starvation never again claimed so many of them as it had during the winter and spring of 1783 and 1784, but many lean years still lay ahead.¹⁰

Perhaps the event in 1784 to have the greatest long-term impact on Lewis Fisher and his family was the creation of New Brunswick. Great Britain divided the old colony of Nova Scotia in half, creating the new colony of New Brunswick on 18 June 1784 in order to provide a closer and more responsive government for the loyalists who had settled in the St. John River valley. The British appointed Colonel Thomas Carleton the first Governor of the province and in November he arrived in Saint John. After the river had frozen solid in January, he travelled upriver by sleigh to inspect the colony. Carleton chose St. Anne’s Point as his capital in April 1785 and renamed it Fredericton, in honour of the second son of King George III. Carleton chose St. Anne’s Point for its central location and strategic value as the head of navigation on the St. John River and lynchpin of land-based communications between Halifax and Quebec City. The placement of a capital inland would also promote the settlement and development of the interior and make it a bulwark against American encroachment. The selection of St. Anne’s Point ensured that the new town would flourish with the establishment of government, legal, educational, and military institutions.¹¹

Still, it is clear from the recollections of loyalist settlers that Indians loomed large in their imaginations, although the isolation of the community perhaps magnified the threat posed by them. The allegiance of the local Indians had shifted back and forth

⁹ “History and Reminiscences of the Fisher Family & c. & c.”, NAC, MG 30, D 44, Vol. 76.

¹⁰ Lilian M. B. Maxwell, *The History of Central New Brunswick* (Sackville: Tribune Press, 1937), pp.64-66.

¹¹ W. S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick: A History*, pp.45, 57; and W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, p.17.

between the British and the American forces during the revolutionary war depending upon which side offered the most inducement, so the loyalists can be forgiven for placing little trust in them. Benjamin Ingraham's daughter Hannah, a neighbour of the Fishers on Forest Hill, recalled seeing forty canoes on the river one time as the Indians came to town to sell furs. Another time when alone in the house, she pretended that her baby sister had smallpox to scare an Indian away.¹² Mary Fisher similarly recalled that "they were in great dread of the Indians who were seen coming around the neighbourhood and they feared" an attack by them.¹³ Indeed, Fredericton endured "a mild state of siege" in 1786 when a large party of Maliseet Indians from up river encamped about the town in order to monitor the trial of two white settlers charged with the murder an Indian. Both of the men were found guilty and one was hanged, causing much discontent among the loyalists.¹⁴

Lewis Fisher was entitled to land as a loyalist. Sir Guy Carleton (older brother of the Governor Thomas), who had commanded the British forces during the evacuation of New York, had intended to settle the loyalist corps together by regiment. Most of the regiments, however, did not like the blocks of land allotted to them and petitioned for other grants of land. When coupled with the lack of preparation for the influx by the government, chaos ensued.¹⁵ Lewis and most of the men of the 3rd Battalion who had come up to Fredericton in the fall decided to stay there. After that first hungry winter, the establishment of a King's Provision Storehouse there was probably the key factor in their decision. Determined not to suffer again like they had, the men had commenced building log homes in the spring even though they did not hold title to the land. Mary Fisher's reminiscences imply that this was a communal effort.¹⁶ The completion of these homes, however crude, provided another incentive for the men to

¹² M. V. Tippet, "Story of U. E. Loyalist: Reminiscences of Hannah Ingraham", *Annual Transactions of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, 1904-1913* (Brampton, ON: Conservator Book Department, 1914), p.120.

¹³ "History and Reminiscences of the Fisher Family & c. & c.", NAC, MG 30, D 44, Vol. 76.

¹⁴ W. S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick: A History, 1784-1867*, p.78.

¹⁵ Lilian M. B. Maxwell, *The History of Central New Brunswick*, pp.64-66.

¹⁶ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, PANB, MC 1, Fisher family history file.

stay put. And stay put they did. An official report dated 25 November 1785 showed that 659 persons were still living along the river shore at Fredericton between Phyllis Creek and Mill Creek whom depended upon the King's Provision Storehouse for rations.¹⁷

The Crown would have to continue to provide the loyalists with rations until it had granted lands to them. It had promised the loyalists provisions for three years after the evacuation of New York in September 1783 in a decreasing ratio, but it had proved difficult in practice to get the rations to those who needed them. Hunger struck the settlers again in the winter of 1784/1785, compelling them to dig up the potatoes they had planted for food. During that winter Governor Thomas Carleton recommended an extension for the provision of rations to the loyalists, suggesting two-thirds rations for year May 1785-May 1786 and one-third rations for the three years from May 1786 to May 1789. He recorded in July 1785 that he had spent ninety-six pounds for potatoes to be used as seed. When a cargo of provisions was lost at sea in November of that year, Carleton bought eighty-one barrels of flour at six dollars per barrel for the starving inhabitants.¹⁸ Mary Fisher probably referred to this desperate time, when she recalled that one winter Dr. Charles Earle led a party of men on foot with hand sleds to Quebec, returning to Fredericton with bags of flour and biscuit. From its inclusion in her reminiscences, it seems probable that Lewis Fisher accompanied this expedition. She remembered that "the men of those days were hardy, did not fear and disregarded a long, very arduous and dangerous journey...poorly clad and fed, encountering heavy snow storms and passing through the wilderness during the most intensely cold and bitter weather, if they were only so highly favoured as to return safely to their loved ones with some of the bread that perishes".¹⁹

To provide land for the loyalists, Carleton decided to escheat many of the old

¹⁷ W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, (Fredericton: Centennial Print, 1980), p. 16.

¹⁸ Lilian M. B. Maxwell, *The History of Central New Brunswick*, pp.115-117.

¹⁹ "Memorandum of the Fisher Family from 1783: Information and Reminiscences of the Fisher family & c.", by Georgianna Fisher, revised by William Fisher; and "History and Reminiscences of the Fisher Family & c. & c.", NAC, MG 30, D 44, Vol. 76.

grants made by the Government of Nova Scotia before the coming of the loyalists in 1783. Small groups of settlers from New England had settled along the St. John River since the expulsion of the Acadians in 1759, with their largest community fifteen miles down river from St. Anne's Point at Maugerville. Many of these New Englanders had supported the patriot cause in the Revolutionary war so there was little sympathy for them among the new regime. Indeed, many of the larger grantees had never fulfilled the terms of their grants by settling on and cultivating the land. Carleton escheated the townships of Burton and Newton entirely and escheated much of the township of Maugerville in late 1785.²⁰ Lewis's first land grant would be on these escheated lands. In December 1785, the Surveyor-General issued a warrant of survey for a tract of land in the rear of Maugerville, six miles northeast of that town on the Little River. Several of the men named specifically in the warrant were officers of the 3rd Battalion of the New Jersey Volunteers, allotted grants of 400 to 600 acres—the largest going to Captain Samuel Ryerse and Captain William Van Allan. The instructions to the surveyor required him to lay out fifty additional lots of 200 acres each which should front on the Little River or cross it as judged most advantageous for the settlement of the land. The surveyor would insert the names of the applicants as allotted "by draught, or as most agreeable to the parties".²¹

Governor Carleton did not grant of this tract of land, for reasons that are not clear (possibly legal challenges by original title holders), until 26 December 1786 when the fourteen men named on the warrant and four others, including "Lodwick Fisher", received land grants in Maugerville township on the Little River. Lewis Fisher received a grant of 200 acres.²² It does not appear that he ever took up this grant for reasons at which we can only guess. Upon examination, the land on his lot may not have been suitable for farming, or the stand of timber, for many pioneers their only source of

²⁰ Lilian M. B. Maxwell, *The History of Central New Brunswick* (Sackville: Tribune Press, 1937), pp.117-119.

²¹ Records of the Surveyor-General, New Brunswick, Warrant of Survey, 23 September 1785, NAC, MG9 A4, Vol. 2.

²² Land Grant Book, vol. 2, grant 92, PANB, RS 686, on-line database. At least nine of the other men named in this grant had served in the 3rd Battalion of the New Jersey Volunteers. All of them were officers or non-commissioned officers except for Lewis Fisher.

income, may have been inadequate for sale or ravaged by fire. Captain Samuel Ryerse sold his large tract of land in 1792 and moved ultimately to the shores of Lake Erie in Ontario, having been “disappointed both in soil and climate” with his land on the Little River in New Brunswick.²³ Lewis and Mary Fisher had added a fourth child, David, to their young family in 1785 and may not have wished to abandon the comfort of their log cabin on the flats below Fredericton, the support and friendship of their comrades with whom they had endured much, or the proximity of the King’s Provisions, to homestead again in the wilderness. Fredericton would have been a bustling village by 1786 with the establishment of the seat of government. The settlement there of many officials of the new government and officers of the disbanded regiments on half-pay pensions from the Crown would have provided a ready source of income for a man willing and accustomed to hard work. Lewis may have found employment as a tradesman, building homes for the growing village or cutting timber for the busy carpenters. He may have sold his Maugerville lot to one of the others bound for that tract and continued to squat on the land below Fredericton. Indeed, Lewis might have been reluctant to settle on a tract of land with ten to fifteen former officers and non-commissioned officers from his regiment and few other former privates.

Governor John Parr of Nova Scotia, before the separation of New Brunswick, had ordered a survey of St. Ann’s Point in the summer of 1784 which laid out a town site named Osnaburg below the present town on the lands where the loyalists had camped. Governor Carleton on his arrival in early 1785 revoked this plan and instead expropriated the farms of Philip Weade and Oliver Thibodeau, recognizing their superior location for a town, and ordered a new town site surveyed on the plain. Lieutenant Dugald Campbell completed the survey in March 1786 laying out the “town plat” that forms the centre of downtown Fredericton today. Lewis Fisher did not receive a lot in the new town, many of which went to officers of the disbanded regiments. In addition, the survey reserved 2,000 acres of land surrounding the town to support a free school or academy.²⁴ This upheaval in town planning certainly delayed

²³ Phyllis A. Ryerse, *Captain Samuel Ryerse, Bergen County, New Jersey* (Port Dover, Ontario: s.n., 1975), p.53.

²⁴ W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, (Fredericton: Centennial Print, 1980), p. 17-20.

by a year or two the granting of land to the loyalist rank and file settled below the town. The “Heddon grant” of 24 March 1788 finally recognized the situation prevailing outside the town plat. Local historian Lilian Maxwell has observed that this grant “was laid out in an irregular manner because the first arrivals had already settled there before the town was laid out”. Because it conformed to the original settlement, most of the lots below the town were small. None were larger than the twenty-one acres granted to Benjamin Ingraham and most were smaller than ten acres. In this grant, “Ludwick Fischer” and twenty-nine others shared lot 29, only fifty-six acres in total, which lay just below Fredericton, in between the present University Avenue and Salamanca station. Lewis and the other grantees did not own this land freehold but as a perpetual lease in support of the academy. The combined annual rent for lot 29 was one pound and eight shillings—his share was a very modest six pence, charged retroactively from 13 May 1786.²⁵

We do not know the exact size of this lot but can surmise that it was probably little more than one acre²⁶, enough to provide for a garden or small wood lot but insufficient to support a family. Sometime between 1788 and 1792, Lewis Fisher moved from the flats up nearby Forest Hill where he squatted on 58 acres of land, or rented it from the leaseholder Daniel Lounsbury. This land lay outside the bounds of the Heddon grant, bordering on the west of the quarry lot that was granted about this time to Judge John Saunders. Here the old trail along the river shore turned away from the St. John River and ran up through the quarry lot to the top of Forest Hill and over to and across Mill Creek from whence it descended again to the riverside.²⁷ Daniel Lounsbury, an original settler who had spent that first harsh winter in Fredericton,

²⁵ Lilian M. B. Maxwell, *The History of Central New Brunswick*, pp.96-104; and Land Grant Book, vol. B, grant 154, PANB, RS 686, on-line database [actual grant checked by Elizabeth Morrison on microfilm for amount of 6 pence]; and *The Acts of the General Assembly of Her Majesty's Province of New Brunswick, 1786-1836* (Fredericton, NB: John Simpson, 1838), Cap 26, Schedule A, p.268.

²⁶ Records for lands leased from the College before 1800 suggest that a standard rate was 6 pence per acre.

²⁷ Captain H. F. G. Woodbridge, “Episodes re. Forest Hill”, talk to the York-Sunbury Historical Society, 21 March 1934. For the interpretation that follows, I am indebted to Elizabeth Morrison of Fredericton who diligently researched land records for traces of Lewis Fisher and shared her findings with me.

acquired a lease to 76 acres sometime shortly after the Heddon grant in 1788. Lounsbury sold 18 acres of this land to Colonel Harris William Hailes in March 1798 for sixteen pounds. No record survives of the transfer of the other 58 acres to Lewis Fisher but it possibly took place in two stages because subsequent land records always refer to it as two lots of 25 and 33 acres. A list of the tenants of the College dated December 1827 refers to both of these lots as “formerly held by Lewis Fisher under a lease in perpetuity”, but states that Daniel Lounsbury originally leased them as part of his 76 acre lot.²⁸ Record of a land transfer from Lewis’s daughter Sarah to her daughter Georgianna dated 6 April 1875 still refers to the 25 acre lot as “that certain piece or parcel of land formerly occupied by the late Lewis Fisher and on which the said Sarah Fisher now resides”.²⁹

There is some evidence to suggest that Lewis Fisher built his home on Forest Hill in the year 1792. Photographs of this home in the Woodbridge collection at the Provincial Archives show a comfortable 1 ½ story structure built of squared timbers with two windows on the front and two windows on the side. Shingled outer walls and a brick chimney were modifications of a later date. When the home was dismantled about 1930, a timber marked “May 1782” was found. Since 1782 is clearly too early, it is possible that it really read “1792”.³⁰ Lewis Fisher petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick for land on 6 December 1792, perhaps indicating the proximate time that he and his family moved out of the small cabin he had built in the spring of 1784 on the flats. His petition reads: “That as your petitioner has a large family to support he humbly asks some portion of the lands in the rear of

²⁸ University of New Brunswick Archives, “List of Tenants of the College and the Lands they Occupy”, December 1827, and Miscellaneous Documents, deed of transfer from Daniel Lounsbury to Harris W. Hailes, March 1798. The “List of Tenants” shows the rent on the two lots was 2 pounds 10 shillings for the 25 acre lot and 3 pounds 7 shillings on the 33 acre lot. This computes to 6 pence an acre under the original terms—multiplied by 4 as per the terms of the 1820 College Act for lands outside of the bounds of the Heddon grant.

²⁹ Land records, 6 April 1875.

³⁰ Captain H. F. G. Woodbridge, “Episodes re. Forest Hill”, talk to the York-Sunbury Historical Society, 21 March 1934; and PANB photographs P32-15 and P32-40. Woodbridge’s talk is probably the source for Lilian Maxwell’s remark that Lewis Fisher built his first home on the road up Forest Hill, which led to the sawmill and was the highway to Saint John (*History of Central New Brunswick*, p.97).

the lots of Doctor Charles Earl[e] and James Ackerman. Your petitioner knows not the number or bounds of any particular lot therefore leaves it entirely to your Excellency's bounty. He humbly hopes your Excellency will take his case into consideration". It is signed "Lewis Fisher", not Ludwick or Lodewick, and is apparently in his own hand. A notation on the petition by an official states that it was for one of the back lots on the academy lands.³¹ Indeed, the petition is significant for what is left unsaid. Normally, if the petitioner had squatted on ungranted lands it would say so in the petition and describe the improvements made by the settler—land cleared, dwellings erected. Specific lands are not requested by Lewis but there is assumption that the Lieutenant-Governor, or more likely the Surveyor-General, is aware of his "case" which perhaps indicates disputed title to lands he is already settled upon.

If there was disputed title to the land originally granted to Lounsbury, there is no evidence to suggest its resolution except that Lewis Fisher's ownership of the lease on the 58 acres on Forest Hill was generally accepted by the College and others by the time of his death in 1816 and thereafter. Indeed, College records from the 1820s and 1830s show his heirs as responsible for the rents of 2 pounds 10 shillings and 3 pounds 7 shillings for the two lots.³² Nothing indicates that his petition of 1792 met with any success. It is perhaps significant the subsequent deeds and official records often refer to the lots "occupied" rather than owned by the late Lewis Fisher. In any event, by the early 1790s he needed more land to support his growing family which numbered seven children with the birth of the twins Nancy and Sophia in 1791 (not counting the eldest Mary who was still with her grandparents in New Jersey). The land on Forest Hill provided enough acreage to feed his family and ready timber to sell for hard currency. Indeed, the timber may have attracted Lewis to Forest Hill while he still lived below on Salamanca plain. His land was close to the old Mast Road which was used by the Royal Navy to transport white pine masts and spars to the Saint John River. With the establishment of a sawmill at the mouth of Mill Creek, Lewis was probably cutting timber on Forest Hill in the 1790s with the aid of his elder sons and selling it to the

³¹ Lewis Fisher to Thomas Carleton, 6 December 1792, New Brunswick Land Petitions, PANB, RS 108, reel F1038.

³² University of New Brunswick Archives, Rent Books, 1830s, and "List of Tenants of the College and the Lands they Occupy", December 1827.

nearby sawmill. Some biographical sketches of his son Peter Fisher who followed in the lumber business mention briefly that his father had engaged in the same trade.³³ In addition to this land, Lewis Fisher also acquired a lease to half of one of the ten acre “pasture lots” just south of the town plat, located along the eastern side of the present day York Street, south of George Street and north of Montgomery Street.³⁴

Lewis Fisher petitioned for land again on 18 May 1803 probably encouraged by the petition in 1801 of his eldest son Henry. His next eldest sons Peter and David, aged 20 and 18, joined with Lewis in the petition which requested, “Having never received any Lands from Government, most humbly Pray that your Excellency may be pleased to direct their being Registered as Applicant for a lot of 200 acres to each of them on the right hand side of the Road continued from the New Maryland Settlement. To commence with the lot applied for by Henry Fisher, being the second lot on the right side from the former Allotment and to continue along the said side of the said road”.³⁵ These lands, recently opened up for settlement, formed part of the land reserved for the support of education. The Provincial Government had created the “College of New Brunswick” on 18 June 1800 out of the former Academy and endowed it with an additional 5,950 acres of land south of the town. Under the terms of the Act, the College would lease this land out in perpetuity to provide revenue for its support. In reality the College of New Brunswick was still a Grammar School or Collegiate School providing “secondary education” for students who had attended an elementary school and in preparation for higher education.³⁶ The four Fishers (Henry, Peter, David, and Lewis) received grants of land varying between 160 and 241 acres in the New Maryland settlement on the outskirts of Fredericton. The youngest son Michael Fisher also subsequently received a grant of 200 acres nearby on the road to Hanwell. It seems that only two of the sons took up residence for any length of time on these lands. Peter

³³ Graves papers, PANB.

³⁴ W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, (Fredericton: Centennial Print, 1980), p.41.

³⁵ New Brunswick Land Petitions, PANB, RS 108, reel F1043. It is possible that this petition is in the name of his young son Lewis Jr., aged 8 in 1803.

³⁶ W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, (Fredericton: Centennial Print, 1980), p. 20.

resided in Fredericton becoming a blacksmith and merchant. David moved to Saint John where he became a Surveyor of Lumber. Indeed, their lots may have gone to their brothers as part of their father's estate arrangements. Henry and Michael settled on and farmed this land, beginning a long connection between the family and New Maryland, a farming community south of Fredericton where descendants of Lewis Fisher still live today.³⁷

Fredericton in the late 1780s would have resembled a boomtown of quickly-built cottages, muddy streets, and commerce which depended upon government spending and the pensions of retired officers on half-pay for its livelihood. The most enterprising of the loyalists had been quick to establish businesses. Mary Fisher recalled that an inhabitant named Cairns opened the first store in a house near the site where the Anglican church was later built, selling tea for two dollars per pound, fish for a penny each, and butternuts at two for a penny. Cornelius Ackerman and Abraham Van der Beck opened the British American Coffee House in 1784 or 1785, and then built the Golden Ball Inn in 1786 when the new governor took over their first establishment. Gabriel Van Horne kept a tavern called the Royal Oak, selling liquor and providing a resort for some "disreputable people" and, at least in Mary Fisher's view, other "notoriously bad characters". John and Duncan McLeod opened McLeod's Inn at the ferry landing on the St. John River, catering to travellers and river traffic.³⁸ Wages were high in this government town which had a surplus of gentry and half-pay officers but lacked those who worked with their hands. Lawyer Jonathan Bliss advised a client in 1794 to abandon his unoccupied land grant near Fredericton: "There is no tenant upon it. Labour is now so extremely high in this country that it would not be advisable to save the land from escheat, as it is called, by having men to clear and improve the quality of land required by the grant, if this could be done at any rate". Such conditions

³⁷ Land Grant Book, vol. D, p. 95, grant 442, PANB, RS 686, on-line database. Provincial land grant map No. 126 shows the relative positions of the seven lots granted to Lewis and his four sons.

³⁸ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB), MC 1, Fisher family history file; and W. Austin Squires, *History of Fredericton: The Last 200 Years*, (Fredericton: Centennial Print, 1980), pp.22, 98. The merchant was possibly John Cairnes.

boded well for humble folk like Lewis Fisher and his sons.³⁹

Religion also took root, lest it be thought that Fredericton was purely a town of tavern-keepers and goers. Though the colony suffered a shortage of trained clergy, Rev. Samuel Cooke, a much respected Church of England missionary, arrived in 1786 thanks to the support of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Before the construction of the first church, Rev. Cooke held service in the King's Provision Storehouse.⁴⁰ The Anglicans built the first church in 1788 on the Green close by the river. Bishop Charles Inglis, visiting from Nova Scotia, performed divine service in it for the first time on 13 August and confirmed fifty-five persons.⁴¹ He remarked in his journal that he "observed no idle or discontented people at Fredericton. All seemed to be busily employed, each thought his own employment and his farm the best". Inglis marvelled that the abundant forests held enough white pine "to supply the navy with masts and spars of all dimensions, for centuries to come. The white pine grows here to a larger size than perhaps any other part of America, and it is contiguous to this river, down which it may be easily conveyed to a harbour".⁴² The wealth of timber hinted at the future of the town and the province, and the Fisher family.

Fredericton had come of age by the turn of the century. Within a decade the temporary structures had given way to more substantial homes and businesses. The presence of the colonial government and military garrison assured a modest level of prosperity to those who worked in town, harvested the forest, or tilled the soil. The wife of Brigadier General Martin Hunter, commander of the garrison, described Fredericton to a friend in 1804: "the view...is magnificent, the river both up and down,

³⁹ Jonathan Bliss to Benedict Arnold, 22 January 1794, quoted in Barry K. Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: A Traitor in Our Midst* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p.198.

⁴⁰ M. V. Tippet, "Story of U. E. Loyalist: Reminiscences of Hannah Ingraham", *Annual Transactions of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, 1904-1913* (Brampton, ON: Conservator Book Department, 1914), p.120. Rev. Cooke drowned with his son while crossing the St. John River in 1795.

⁴¹ NAC, Inglis family papers, MG23 C6, Vol.1, letter book, p.89, Bishop Charles Inglis to Archbishop of Canterbury, 13 September 1788.

⁴² NAC, Inglis family papers, MG23 C6, Vol. 5, part 2, Journal, 7-14 August 1788.

the rich valley, and its snug little cottages, terminated by the distant pine-clad mountains. This is called a town, but in fact a much prettier thing—a village scattered on a delightful common of the richest sheep pasture I ever saw, and flocks grazing close up to our door. There are altogether about one hundred and twenty houses, some very pretty, all comfortable-looking, and almost everyone has a garden”.⁴³ Travel was still primitive. Rough roads connected Fredericton with Maugerville and Saint John but the river was still the surest form of travel. Schooners plied the river in spring, summer, and fall from Saint John to Fredericton. When the river froze solid in winter, it provided a clear and level highway for horse-drawn sleighs.

Lewis Fisher had probably attained a level of self-sufficiency and comfort by the turn of the century to rival what he had lost in 1776. He had a large family and his elder sons had reached an age where they could assist him in farming or lumbering. Mary gave birth to their last child, Sarah, in January 1800, and it was about this time that their second eldest daughter, Elizabeth, returned to visit her older sister Mary and grandparents in New Jersey and stayed there.⁴⁴ In spite of the early struggles, Lewis and Mary Fisher provided a basic education for most of their children. One of the advantages of living near Fredericton was that schooling was available almost from the beginning of the settlement. Hannah Ingraham recalled going to school in town on snowshoes from Forest Hill, not long after coming to New Brunswick, and another year, hauling her brother, who had chopped off his toe while cutting wood, back and forth from school on a hand sled.⁴⁵ Schoolmaster Bealing Stephens Williams and his wife Charity (Oulton) Williams had come to Fredericton in the late 1780s or early 1790s and kept a school which some of the Fisher children may have attended. While the Fishers received an elementary education, it is likely that cost prohibited them from attending the Academy or Collegiate School which catered to the gentry. Bishop Inglis

⁴³ Mrs. Hunter to Elizabeth Bell, 7 August 1804, in A. Hunter and E. Bell, eds., *The Journal of General Sir Martin Hunter* (Edinburgh, 1894).

⁴⁴ These two events may not be unrelated. Elizabeth’s departure for New Jersey may have been caused by an unwanted pregnancy. See below.

⁴⁵ M. V. Tippet, “Story of U. E. Loyalist: Reminiscences of Hannah Ingraham”, *Annual Transactions of the United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada, 1904-1913* (Brampton, ON: Conservator Book Department, 1914), p.119.

described it in September 1798 as a “Grammar School and intended as the foundation of a public seminary or college. The price of tuition is high, and above the reach of the lower classes”.⁴⁶ Their son, Peter Fisher, however, became a fine stylist and author of two books describing the history of New Brunswick and its natural resources. All of their other sons succeeded in commerce or agriculture so that it is likely that they had a good grasp of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The marriages of their elder children also must have brought happiness to Lewis and Mary in their later years. Peter married Susannah Williams, the daughter of the schoolmaster Bealing S. Williams, in 1807 and Henry married Eunice Mary Sewell the following year. Daughters Jane and Nancy married in 1814 and 1815—the latter marrying merchant Richard Earle, the nephew of Lewis’s company commander in the New Jersey Volunteers—Captain Edward Earle.

Lewis Fisher and Mary Barbara Till’s religious denomination is not clear. In New Jersey, his parents were Lutherans and their first two children were baptised in the 1770s in the Lutheran Church at Ramapo.⁴⁷ No baptisms appear for his children in the extant church registers for Fredericton, few of which survived from this period. From subsequent evidence, most of the Fisher children worshipped in the Church of England or, occasionally, the Methodist Church.

Little is known about the life of Mary Barbara Fisher after her husband’s death. She was mentioned in a petition by Henry George Clopper on 24 July 1822 requesting fifty acres of land “in the rear of lands occupied by the widow of Lewis Fisher and Aaron Levi” which shows that she still lived on Forest Hill.⁴⁸ The discovery about this time of an archaic English law from the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) that prevented Colleges from leasing lands for a period longer than twenty-one years had an impact on her leaseholds from the College of New Brunswick. The provincial assembly drafted new legislation which allowed the tenants to purchase their lands from the College for a sum that would produce the equivalent interest to their annual rent. Lands outside the bounds of the Heddon grant, however, were subject to a fourfold increase in the

⁴⁶ NAC, Inglis family papers, MG23 C6, Vol.2, letter book, p.152, Bishop Charles Inglis to Dr. Morice, 28 September 1798.

⁴⁷ Herbert S. Ackerman and Arthur J. Goff, *Ramapo Church Records, 1755-1900* (Englewood, NJ: Bergen Historic Books, 1997, reprint of 1944 edition), pp.127, 129.

⁴⁸ University of New Brunswick Archives, Minutes of the College Senate, 24 July 1822.

rent.⁴⁹ While many tenants took advantage of this Act to purchase their lands outright, Mary Fisher may have lacked the capital to do so and the new higher rents may have proved too steep for her, because she apparently sold the 33 acre lot about 1827 to the printer George K. Lugin. From about this date, the College rent books show the remaining 25 acre lot in the name of her son Michael Fisher. They also show that Michael had no intention of paying the rent whose arrears, at 2 pounds 10 shillings per year, had amassed to more than fifteen pounds by 1833. In the following year, her grandson the young lawyer Charles Fisher assumed the responsibility for the payment of the rent from his uncle.⁵⁰ The nature of these machinations is not clear but it seems that the family either resented the fourfold increase in rents in the early 1820s and stopped paying rent, or perhaps had never paid it at all. Charles Fisher, with a legal and political career on the rise, and as a graduate himself of King's College in 1830, perhaps felt compelled to put his family's reputation and claim to this land on a sounder footing.

In her later years, Mary Fisher lived with her unmarried daughter Sarah and granddaughter Georgianna Fisher in whom she instilled a strong sense of her family's past. Georgianna Fisher later wrote down her recollections of conversations with her grandmother in what has proved to be the best source for the early history of the Fisher family, and perhaps of Fredericton.⁵¹ The old Fisher home that was built in 1792 was apparently on the larger 33 acre lot so they must have moved to a smaller house on the

⁴⁹ *The Acts of the General Assembly of Her Majesty's Province of New Brunswick, 1786-1836* (Fredericton, NB: John Simpson, 1838), Cap 26, Schedule A, pp.264-269.

⁵⁰ University of New Brunswick Archives, Rent Books, 1827-1856. Charles Fisher also apparently reacquired the lot sold to George Lugin from his estate in 1835. The rent books appear to begin in 1827 and that is the same year that a list of College tenants was prepared (cited earlier) which perhaps indicates that the College started to take a greater interest in the collection of its rents from 1827 on. The College Accounts for 1837 and an investigative committee formed by the Assembly in that year show that delinquent rents were still a problem ten years later.

⁵¹ Untitled Fisher Manuscript, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB), MC 1, Fisher family history file; and "Memorandum of the Fisher family from 1783: Information and Reminiscences of the Fisher family & c.", by Georgianna Fisher, revised by William Fisher, New Brunswick Museum (NBM), Manuscript F2-5; and "History and Reminiscences of the Fisher Family & c. & c.", NAC, Sir George Parkin papers, MG 30, D 44, Vol. 76. The two texts are very similar; see the appendix.

25 acre lot sometime before 1827. Sarah and later Georgianna Fisher continued to live in this one-story home until the close of the nineteenth century.⁵² Towards the last few years of her life, Mary Fisher received a small annual pension of ten pounds from the province as a widow of a revolutionary war veteran. She died in 1841 in her ninety-second year.⁵³

Perhaps the best tribute to the lives of Lewis and Mary Barbara Fisher is found in their son Peter Fisher's *Sketches of New Brunswick* from 1825:

"Many of those Loyalists were in the prime of life when they came to this country; and most of them had young families. To establish these they wore out their lives in toil and poverty, and by their unremitting exertions subdued the wilderness, and covered the face of the country with habitations, villages, and towns...I have not noticed these circumstances as if they were peculiar to the settlers of New Brunswick; but to hold up to the descendants of those sufferers the hardships endured by their parents; and to place in a striking point of view, the many comforts they possess by the suffering, perseverance, and industry of their fathers."⁵⁴

⁵² Captain H. F. G. Woodbridge, "Episodes re. Forest Hill", talk to the York-Sunbury Historical Society, 21 March 1934.

⁵³ York County General Sessions, Schedules of Persons entitled to receive the Provincial Allowance under the Provisions of the Act for the Relief of Old Soldiers of the Revolutionary War, and their Widows, January 1840 and January 1841, PANB, RS 160, on-line documents, P2-02-1840 and P2-03-1841A.

⁵⁴ Peter Fisher, *The First History of New Brunswick, with notes by W.O. Raymond*, (Woodstock: Non-Entity Press, 1980; reprint of the edition published in 1921), p.12.