by: Jean Ferris Bette Baxter

Major John Coffin emigrated to New Brunswick as a Loyalist in 1783. Arriving in the Port if Saint John on the ### Britain on Sept 26. It is surprising that such a prominent man should have so little recorded of him. Most of what remains is ensconced in recondite sources.

Coffin is acclaimed as having become the first full General in Canada. It took Coffin many years to achieve this status, as King George III harboured a special grudge against him for having betrayed the courage of his natural son in battle.

Politically, he enjoyed many offices: a member of the Legislative Council and the Provincial Parliament; Superintendant of Indian Affairs; Chairman of the Quarter-Session of Kings County; Kings County Magistrate and the Commissioner of Indians.

A few personal incidents survive in writing as testimony to his firey character. He was one of the bravest patriots to fight in the Revolutionary War. The rebels must have been a great deall provoked by his courage and temerty as his person was priced at $10,000.00. Accounts endure of several duals of honor in which he engaged himself. And at one time he single-handedly fought a bear while travelling down river on the Saint John with his small daughter and a boatman. Another a adventure tells of how he hid beneath the skirts of the lady who was later to become his wife, in order to avoid capture in Charleston, South Carolina.

Major Coffin was a native of Boston. Born there in 1756 in his father's house. His father was a gov't official. The Their house was situated on the east side of Rainsford's Lane--later incorperated into Harrison Ave.

From the moment General Coffin set his bold foot on New Brunswick shores in Oct 1783, we are ###### plauged with conflicting accounts of his where-abouts. Did he remove his family to Beau Bear Point on the mouth of the Nerepis or did he spend his first winter in Saint John? Ensign Henry Nase, an early settler in N.B., built Gen. Coffin a house at Carleton Placein Saint John , below the Reversing falls; across and down a bit from Indian House. Captain Henry Edward Coffin ########## that his father (Maj. John) sent four men up-river to construct a house over the winter. In May 1784, the Coffin family left Carleton for their new home on the Nerepis. It was named Alwington Manor, the traditional name for the Coffin estates.

The first Alwington Manor is in Devonshire, England. This manor has been in the Coffin possession since before England's war with William the Conqueror. A very massive and beautiful stone mansion. On Wolfe's Island at Kingston#, Ont. there is a third Alwington Manor, erected by one of several daughters of General Coffin, Cardine, who married the Baron de Longueill.

NEREPIS ESTATE----

The origional owner was Captain Beamsley Perkins Glazier, a pre-loyalist immigrant who arrived in Halifax in 1745, where he served in the sixtieth regiment. On Oct. 25,1765, Glazier received a grant of 5000 acres on the Nerepis River, as an acknowledgement of his services to the Saint John River Society, and for his term as acting military govenor at Pensacola, Florida.

Beth
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A further 1000 acres was granted him on June22/1784.

With the 1783 peace agreement,Glazier's regiment was dispersed and Glazier was destined for England. Before his departure, he contacted his brother Benjamin(who had an estate six miles below F'ton) for the settling of his personal affairs, and to turn over to him the deed to the Nerepis Estate. A "Courer-de-bois" was dispatched to summon him to Halifax but he didn't arrive until after the ship had sailed.

During the journey, Glazier sold his estate to Gen. Coffin- a fellow passenger. Glazier died of an illness before reaching England. The date of the transaction is not known. ACCORDING TO LOCAL TALES, COFFIN WON THE ESTATE IN A CARD GAME. BUT COMPARING THE TWO MEN'S CHARACTERS, IT SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. MAJOR FLEWWELLING IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE DEED MAY HAVE BEEN STOLEN FROM GLAZIER.

Glazier is believed to havedied in 1783, yet 1000 added acres were granted to him in 1784.These acres were not included in the Coffin Estate.

1786-- Coffin granted another 1000 acres in conjunction with Mather Byles, Henry Nase, and Nathaniel Whitworth.

Just before Gen. Coffin acquired Glazier Manoe, overtures were made by the government to escheat the property on the grounds that Glazier had not fulfilled his obligations he had incurred on acceptance of the grant. And this was that he should make the land tennatable and obtain settlers within a given length of time. Elias Hardy, a prominent N.B. lawyer, was employed to investigate the situation. At that time the Loyalist Gov't was eager to escheat as many of the old grants as possible to accommodate the Loyalist settlers.

Mr. Hardy claimed Glazier's Manor was partly escheatable as not having been fully settled. It wasshown, however, that in1779, Nathaniel Gallop and others had made considerable improvements, built dwellings, barns, outhouses, etc., but the Indians had burned their houses and destroyed their crops, taking advantage of the distracted state of the country following the American Revolution. The settlers were driven away and others deterred from coming.

Gov. Parr in 1783, assured Col. Glazier that his lands would not be escheated in view of the exertions he had made. Gen. Coffin then undertook to settle it and thus save the manor from forfiture. He induced a considerable number of persons to settle on his lands, amongst them, Henry Nase who had served with him as an officer in the Kings American Regiment. In the course of the first year, Gen. Coffin expended over &1200 sterling on the manor.

Coffin's residence was situated at Beau Bear Point at the mouth of the Nerepis near Fort Boishebert.

ALWINGTON MANOR---

Three stories high, with two tall chimneys symetrically disposed with respect to the rest of the house.An ell extended outwardfrom the facade, and from the ell, a wide verandah graced by arched openings. Whether this is the front or the back of the house is a matter of speculation. It was common in those days for the houses to face the waterways, as this was the primary mode of travel.

Sometimes, however, houses located on frequently used roads faced approach from that direction. A road passed up in the back of Alwington, but it attracted little # traffic as the main road to Fredericton was on the opposite side of the river. So we can assume that Alwington faced the river. The General's Son's house, just up river faced the river.

Alwington was well known for its hospitality & many distinguished guests crossed its threshold. The Duke of Kent was one of the most renowned(1794). Before the erection of Saint Peter's Church in 1796, not far from Alwington Manor, it is said that the Alwington Manor barn was used for the church meetings. Gen. Coffin put his estate up for sale in 1811 as advertised in----
THE ROYAL GAZETTE & THE NEW BRUNSWICK ADVERTISER

" The Manor of Alwington, in the parish of Westfield, Kings Co., containing 6000 acres. Well covered in pine and spruce spars. Great quanities of the finest ship timber and other hard-wood as yet un-culled. Possessing several ~~####~~ convenient places for ship-building. An excellent Salmon and Herring Fishery. A large Grist mill and Saw mill that are doing an extensive business. Four well settled farms, each having extensive meadows, with high and low intervales sufficient to maintain a large stock, together with a navigable river running through the center of the estate. The well-known local advantage of this property and its commanding prospects render further description unnecessary.

Terms of payment will be made easy to the purchaser"
The Manor did not attract a client and the Coffins continued there until 1817. On Jan. 10/1816 Coffin sold to William Belyea.

That part of Alwington Manor now known as Woodman's Point extended from the NerepisCreek to that property owned by Jacob Belyea, and running back up the Nerepis to Mill Creek, including the house and barn then known as Alwington Manor. It also included the Mill situated at Mill Creek.

From William Belyea's hands, the property passed into possession of his brother-in-law, James Brittain. Alwington is reputed to have burned at the time of the Brittain's occupation. The foundation stones are still visible at Woodman's Point.

In 1817 Coffin transported hisfamily to England where they stayed. He himself returned annually to N.B. to superintend his estate. From 1829 until his death May 12/1838, he lived on th this side of the ocean. On the Nerepis road at Sagwa, he built a log house and it is said that he resided there until his death.

LOG HOUSE----

Round logswere used in the construction, joined by mortise-and-tenon. Other logs were hand-hewn and carved with roman numerals to arrange them. The nails were hand hewn. After the evening repast, the men would gather aroundthe huge brick fireplace in the common room and forge nails as a past-time.

Split lathes were also used in the building of the house, and brich-bark as an insulation material. Behind the house a few stones mark the spot where some suggest a small garrison may have stood.

The house was a mere one and a half story with a single central chimney and no ell. The windows were double sash with six panes above and below. Origionally, this tiny house sat 100 feetback from the road, perched on a small hill on the same spot that Little's have their home.

The Little's house is about ninety years old, having been built by Johnston Lingley. The Little's house allegedly sits upon the original fieldstone of Coffin's house. Their foundation measures about 18' by 30'(about the size of the section that was moved). Tradition has it that the Coffin house was much larger, the piece described here being but a part of the origional. Otherwise it would be difficult to c conceive of a General having lived here. A glance at the mound beneath the Little's house suggests the base of quite a substantial sized building, and may in fact, represent the ground work of the Coffin home.

It is not known exactly when the Coffin house was removed, but it must have been more than ninety years ago, before the construction of the Little's home. With the aid of 17 yoke of oxen, Thomas Lingley sr. moved the house off the hill. Soon ~~a fterwardsa new extension housed guest bedr~~ooms Soon afterwards a new extension was built, doubling in bulk the size of the house. A verandah and an ell were added as well. The new extension housed guest bedrooms as the building now operated as an inn and coach-house. In later years, the additions were removed. Thos. Lingley Jr. and his sister Ada lived here until at least into the 1930's.

LONEWATER FARM----

first named the Admiral's House was by the coffins' son Admiral John Townsend Coffin. Construction of if is generally attributed to the Admiral. The Admiral took up residence in 1832, having come to Canada to be near his father. He returned to England in 1834 with his wife- Sophia Donaldson of Saint John.

Exactly when the Admiral sold the farm, no one knows. Nor do they know if he stayed in England prior to his father's death.

Some letters in the Prov. Archives written by him over a land dispute, indicate he was in N.B. the year the Gen. died so the estate may have been in his possession at that time.

LIST OF OWNERS OF LONEWATER FARM----

Admiral Coffin	Mary Eccles
Robert F. Hazen	Geo. Eccles
Robert N. Hazen	Sodon (1903)
James Brittain	R.M. Burden
Joseph Belyea	Margaret B~~elyea~~

← Albert McGovern (farm) + Jeffrey Oland (house)
Oland (whole thing)

Dept. of Health

The Manor house sits 200' away from and facing the river. The building is spacious with two wings extended out from the rear. The central block is 40' by 42'. The ells each 40' by 16'. The foundation is 9' high by 2' thick, composed of brown sandstone(ship ballast) and fieldstone. The building materials (logs, nails, spikes, and shingles) are all hand hewn. Birch bark was used for insulation beneath the shingles. The timber used in construction was mainly pine and spruce.

The two ells of the house originally contained a woodhouse, an icehouse, a dairy and a coach-house. Above, there are bedrooms. One ell has a basement which may have housed a cellar or vegetable room.

A verandah embraces three sides of the house. The glass is believed to have been added by R.M. Burden. The verandah origionally had three wide stairways.

Within the house, the rooms on each floor surround a central hall or lobby. Ceilings are high. The main floor has seven rooms. The windows on the main floor were French, opening out onto the verandah. The shutters, closing on the inside of the windows, were of solid oak. Stone marble mantles were over the fireplaces in the two front rooms that faced the river. The main floor had seven doors of solid mahogany, allegedly imported from England.

The door and window frames are of simple molded trim, a pattern followed in the panel running along the base of the walls and the edges of the ceilings. The walls at one end of the main central hall are elegantly ###### curved to accomodate the large doorways. In one front room was an elaborately carved mirror, reputed to be an origional possession of the house. Each floor had four fireplaces, twelve in all. As well as many closets.

The walls carry through the three floors. All are plastered, perfectly balanced until modern heating was installed. The heat now being evenly distributed, the plaster is settling and cracking.

A spiral staircase connects all three floors. It leads below to the basement which served as slave quarters and a kitchen. Five rooms were disposed around a central #### hall in the basement, including an L-shaped kitchen with a brick oven and fireplace, two other rooms and a vegetable room that had a sand floor. In one of the larger rooms on a wall facing the river, hung shackles to be used if the needed to punish or confine the slaves. The door to the upstairs bore an exterior lock to prevent the escape of the slaves at night.

The floor of the basement hall carried a heavy trapdoor under which is an undergroung dirt room rumoured to be a dungeon. ~~Cemented off now~~, It's dimensions being 8' by 16'. Cemented off now, on the left side of the dungeon (towards the Campbell Road) there was once a secret tunnel leading to the river.

Q: Who were the old residents of Westfield who had played in the tunnel as children?

On the top floor of the house were six bedrooms. The two front bedrooms facing the river had simple look-outs. Step-ups to the high placed windows.

The ceiling above the spiral staircase curves very gracefully downward. This theme is accentuatedby the cresent-shape entablature of the window flanking the stairway.

A ladder is the sole means of access to the attic. There one can see the naked frame-work of the house. Hand-hewn beams supporting the roof taper at their upperends, the broader bases supplying added fortifacation. The peaks of these logs are pinned together with large wooden pegs, using the technique of mortise and tenon. Each of these beams are carved with a ##### Roman Numeral tho' not placed in numerical order.

The two giant chimneys slant in two dimensions to prevent water seepage. The roof pitch is between 110 - 120 degrees.

Traces of a canal remain through the marsh, rumoured to have been dug by the Admiral's men. Two trees are planted close to the manor which are still alive. A white mullberry tree from France, one of two in N.B. The other being a Lime tree, one of two in Canada. The other being in B.C.

It has also been said that Coffin moved to Beau Bear Point in May ~~##~~ 1784. The source of this information is the ~~MEMOI~~ MEMOIR OF GEN. JOHN COFFIN by his third son Henry Edward Coffin.

Nase's diary clearly states that the writer was occupying himself with building a house for Coffin in the summer of 1783.

Aug. 7 1783---Raised Major Coffin's house
Sept. 4 1783-- Finished covering Maj. Coffin's house
Sept. 26 1783-- Major arrives in the Britain with his family and very much pleased with his house.
Oct 3 1783-- Maj. Coffin makes me a present of a horse.
Oct 12 1783-- went with Maj. Coffin to Beaubear Point , was delighted with the situation and land etc.

From Dr. Adino Paddock to Edward Winslow Aug. 12, 1783:

I..... Poor Nase is distracted about Maj. Coffin. We have a report by Campbell that he is killed (in a duel). For God's sake let us know if it is true. I hope not. His house is raised. Nase is very industrious.

The location of the house must be deduced from still other sources. A letter from Edward Winslow to Ward Chipman, July 7 1783, is more specific.....

II..... I have taken three town lots on the West side of the river in the most delightful situation I ever saw, for myself, Maj. Coffin, and Col. Ludlow; on condition to build a tenantable house on each within six months. Coffin's is already in some forwardness, and my own and Maj. Murray's will soon make a figure. Should our farms in the general division, fall at a distance from this, we cannot lose by the exertion. The houses will cost but a trifle and those who are obliged to come without such covering prepared will gladly pay the expense.

It has been suggested by some that Coffin's town house was only built to be rented out to tenants. However, letters from Coffin to Winslow dated 1784-May 24, April 20, May 5, May 15--- are all addressed from Carleton except the first which is sent from Parr town. Thus is it more probable that he himself was living in the house, rather than tenants, at this time. This assertion is strengthened by the implications of the letter of April 20, wherein he speaks of the anticipated arrival of Edward Winslow's father(a plan which did not materialize as the man died before his scheduled departure from Halifax).

COFFIN'S LETTER--APRIL20-- It never was my intention that he should come here until the middle of summer. By that time my house will be comfortable and his place on the river in the same order

And again in June(senior Winslow died June 9)---
(---Not a line from you or your father. My house has been vacant these ten days for his family. The sight of his place now would increase his health and spirits to that degree as to enable him to take hold of the plough.)

Altho' Coffin does not indicate each time where his house lies, the first seems to be the one he is preparing up-river and the second may be his town-house, which Henry Edward Coffin says the family left in May 1784 to await the arrivals of the Winslow. 31st?

An unmarked newspaper clipping in the Archives of the N N.B. Museum stated that the Coffin's house lay at Carleton at the mouth of the Saint John River, below the falls across and down a little below the Indian House.

We might conclude that Henry Nase built Coffin's house in Saint John and not at Beaubear Point, altho' he may have helped Coffin in the construction of Alwington Manor. If indeed the place was built by Coffin.

Alwington Manor was not the ordinary house one might expect to find in N.B. at this time in history. It's style is reminiscent of the south, a rare thing where very few of the Loyalists from the Southern States, most being New England bred. Gen. Coffin was from Boston. This raises the question of how he might have been influenced by Southern architure as to style Alwington Manor after it. Perhaps Coffin did not build it as is commonly assumen. Such a question is worthy of consideration. Glazier owned the estate first; might he not have built upon the property?

Glazier was also born Mass. probably at Ipswich where he was christened July 4, 1714. He also lived at Newburyport. It is known that he served for a time at Pensacola, Florida as acting military govoner. Therefore, his contact with Southern architure is assured. He came to Halifax in 1745. He was then at least 31 years old. It was all of twenty years before he acquired the Nerepis estate. So it is doubtful that after so many years seperation from what was probably a brief exposure that he would so lastingly affected by southern forms as to build upon their principles.

A more likely explanation for the singularity of Alwington Manor lies in the fact that Gen. Coffin's wife, as of 1781, WAs Miss Ann Matthews of South Carolina, daughter of the govenor at that time. It could easily be imagined that Mrs. Coffin influenced her husband in the building of their home, driven by longings for her Southern home. And where the MEMOIRS do say that Coffin sent four men up-river to build a house over the winter of 1783-84, one would be more apt to credit the construction of this house to Coffin.

Alwington Manor was burned in later years, when the Brittains lived there.The property was sold first to William Belyea in 1816, and later to James Brittain. It must have existed as late as 1839 for Geo. N. Smith, an employee of the Crown Land Office(and therefore quite reliable)recoeded it in a painting (the only surviving description of the manor.) To support this date against the thought that Smith may have copied this from an earlier sketch, a letter survives dated

Betty

March 26,1839 written by Admiral John Townsend Coffin from Alwington House.
Q: Was he living there or merely visiting?
Q: Why was he not receiving mail at Lonewater Farm?
Q: Had it been sold by this time(Lonewater Farm)?
There is even a record of James Brittains death at Alwington Manor, age 78, April 2, 1864.

MUNDAY HOUSE-------The Provincial Archives possesses letters of Gen. John Coffin concerning a land dispute with two men named Lingley. Those of March 14-1832, Jan. 1- 1833, Feb. 9-1833, Mar. 8-1833, May 27- 1833, Sept. 9- 1833, all indicate his residence at the said Munday House. And in another letter May 23-1831, the General clearly states that he is residing at The Munday Farm. A reference states the Munday farm is on the southwest side of Glazier Manor. This was before Coffin purchased the property from Nathaniel Munday and incorporated it into his estate.

The source of this information maintains that Munday house was the same log house erected on the Nerepis road by Coffin.
Q: What happened then to the Munday home?
Q: Or had Munday established buildings on his land?

The above source states that Stan Lingley told her of the Mundee well on his property to which Alma Little has water rights to.

DORCHESTER-----
In Winslow Papers, was found a letter of John Coffin to Winslow, dated July14, 1806, from Dorchester. Dorchester seems to have been the name of Gen. Coffin's residence in honor of his old commander, Sir Guy Carleton, later known as Lord Dorchester. In a letter May 13, 1799- Coffin states to Winslow " My wife and Cary are in town." This indicates that Dorchester lay outside the city.

Q: Did Coffin live in a place called Dorchester between 1799and 1806? If so, where is it?

A letter of Coffin's Dec. 27,1785 is mailed from Beaubear Point. The MEMOIRS say the Duke of Kent visited Coffin at Alwington Manor June 1794.

Q: Was Dorchester a subsequent home? Or could it have been the Admiral's house-Lonewater Farm?

Almost everyone has accepted without question, the popular belief that Admiral John Townsend Coffin built Lonewater Farm. Nothing seems to confirm that. Perhaps Glazier or Gen. Coffin built it.
Firstly, there is the problem of whether or not Glazier actually lived on the Nerepis. The researcher,B.E. Paterson did not think so as did others. Glazier spent most of his time serving at Halifax.

In Canada almost forty years, he was granted leave of absence from duties in Aug. 1764. Three years were spent inspecting the lands along the Saint John River and promoting their settlement. His first grant of 5000 acres at Westfieldwas approved Oct. 25, 1765. So he was free for at least 2 years to settle his estate.

LILLIAN M.B. MAXWELL---" "hile stationed at Pensacola, Glazier captured a Spanish pirate" ship from which he used some silver candle-sticks to melt down to make door-knobs for his manor at the mouth of the Nerepis". Her Grandmother had told her that she had seen the door-knobs.

The house of "Main John" Glazier, son of Ben and nephew to Beamsley, built in 1804 or1803 at Lincoln below Fton, is very similiar in style and size to Lonewater. The likeness between the two may be traced to familial ties and a common background. The Glaziers home in Newburyport, Mass.; The Coffin's in Boston. Both families are exposed to similiar styles.

If the Indians burned the farms constructed on the Manor in Glazier's time, why spare the Manor itself? Yet if it had not been destroyed, the stir would not have gone unrecorded. The Manor House recorded in the Archives indicate the house was constructed about 1766 by Col. Glazier. E.J. Journey states the house was built by Admiral Coffin and his brother Henry Edward.

John T. and Henry Edward Coffin each received grants of 500 acres on Salmon River, Westmoreland Co. Sept. 12, 1821 and came from England ## and Halifax respectivelly to settle their new estates. It seems improbable that Lonewater was built that year. The two brothers were in N.B. for many years that went unrecorded. John T.'s departure from England in 1832 " to be near his father" was not after any prolonged absence. He could have built Lonewater a nytime in those years. John T'S return to England for good in 1834 was another mis-conception. The records show he was here in 1838-1839. Why would he build here with no children at that time? Especially with his estate on the Salmon River?

Major Coffin's family rapidly increased in size to eight plus two dying in infantsy. Finding Alwington too small Dorchester(Lonewater) was then built.

When the Coffins moved to England in 1817, the Gen. might have decided a smaller house would suit his purposes better when he returned each year to tend his estateand built his last house at Sagwa passing Lonewater on to his son (eldest?) ~~would have taken it over when he first ##~~

his last house at Sagwa passing Lonewater on to his son (eldest?)

If Glazier had built the house, surely the Gen. would have taken it over when he first acquired the Manor. Why take the trouble to build anew?

Jan 14/80

Bette Baxter