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NEARLY ALL IN THE FAMILY:
NATHAN WINSLOW AND HIS FAMILY NETWORK

During the disruptions in European trade caused by Jefferson's 1807 Embargo and the War of 1812, many Americans found that goods formerly acquired abroad might be made at home with a profit. Most of the nation's new manufacturing projects were modest in size, however, because the process of gaining incorporation and limited liability was complex, and ordinary individuals had difficulties amassing capital for more ambitious undertakings. Financing was usually accomplished through a business partnership. Even men of great wealth looked close to home for additional money. In Boston, for instance, much of Francis Cabot Lowell's support for his innovative textile mill complexes came from relatives, most notably his brother-in-law, P. T. Jackson.¹ Entrepreneurs found it advantageous to belong to a solid extended family.

Portland lacked Cabot wealth, but as Maine's largest and fastest-growing town, it provided a congenial atmosphere for new concerns. Among those taking advantage of the period's expansion was Nathan Winslow, merchant, inventor, and industrialist. In the process of developing his business interests, Winslow helped bring major changes to the area's way of life. The originator of one of the earliest cookstoves patented in the United States, he began Portland's first stove foundry, which he later expanded to provide other new types of home heating. He also became a pioneer in the food processing industry in Maine, launching the first corn-canning operation in the United States.

Although the key individual in these concerns, Winslow was never truly alone in his undertakings. His story is not only an example of the transition from merchant to industrialist in the early nineteenth century but also a case study of the role an extended family plays in such a process. Winslow was born into a complicated web of interrelationships, and he made good use



Fore Street, the meeting-place where southern Maine conducted its thriving commerce with the rest of the world. Despite these broad connections, business enterprise in Portland, as in much of the new nation, was often conducted on a personal, indeed, kinship basis. Nathan Winslow's rise from merchant to manufacturer illustrates this. Elwell, *Portland and Vicinity*.

of that system. His career demonstrates how much a supportive body of family and coreligionists could mean to a successful businessman in the early national period.

Some master craftsmen and small manufacturers joined formal trade and craft associations looking for a network of financial support and business contacts. Apparently Winslow's family connections were sufficient to preclude need for any such group. He never joined the Maine Charitable Mechanics' Association, an organization founded for the benefit of skilled workmen like him and chartered at a time when he was still getting his business going. Nathan was as much a "mechanic" as many others who were members, but neither he nor any of his brothers belonged.² They already had a system of support similar to that which the association was trying to build.

Two important facets of the Winslow family network were its local presence and its size. The latter was a matter of mathematics: Nathan was from a family of eleven; his father had nine brothers and sisters; his grandfather had six. Most of these siblings had survived to adulthood, had married, and had

children of their own. Many lived in the vicinity of Portland. Great-grandfather James Winslow had brought his wife, four sons, and three daughters north from the Plymouth area (they-claimed Mayflower descent) in 1728. They had settled in what was then part of the original Falmouth, on the banks of the Presumpscot River in an area which now includes parts of Westbrook, Falmouth, and the Deering section of Portland. Not all descendents were living there still, but most remained in touch.

Further cohesiveness came from the family's membership in a minority religion. James Winslow was the first convert made by Quakers in Falmouth. His children had also joined the Society, forming the nucleus for a growing community of Friends. According to Quaker practices, the Winslows held religious meetings in their home until there were enough local Friends to build a Meeting House in the neighborhood. For a while, individuals from as far away as Brunswick and Harpswell were members of the "Falmouth Monthly Meeting." Delegates also attended two region-wide monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings for Society business.

Like many other minority groups, the Quakers insisted on conformity. Individuals might be read out of the meeting if their behavior was not in accord with accepted principles including marriage within the Society. Marriage within the Friends, on the other hand, could multiply family ties. In this one generation, Nathan and his brother Isaac married sisters: Comfort and Sarah Hussey. Three of the Winslow sisters were wed to Jones family men, including a father and his son. Two more Winslow brothers, Isaiah and John, married cousins, both granddaughters of the Winslows' aunt. While Thomas Jones was from Brunswick and took his bride there, the other Jones brothers-in-law settled locally. Names on old maps of the area read like a catalogue of Winslows and Winslow in-laws.

The religious group was like an extended family, with many members related by blood or marriage as well as through a common belief.³ Nathan's father, John, had journeyed to Salem for his bride, Lydia Hacker. Her family later located in

Brunswick and made marriage ties with a Vassalboro family. Notes of Monthly Meetings frequently mention the preparation of a letter of recommendation for a member to another meeting, to which he might be transferring or from which he might be selecting a spouse. Both partners had to be found acceptable before a couple could be “joined at meeting.” Under such circumstances, it is little wonder the Winslows did not need the Charitable Mechanics.

Nathan was born in March 1785, the third child and second son. New siblings arrived approximately one every two years: the baby of the family, named John for his father, was nearly eighteen years Nathan’s junior. As the elder John Winslow and his wife were very active Quakers, religion was important in the household. A proper education was so valued that the Friends established their own school in the neighborhood. Nathan, ten at the time, may have attended the new school or may have spent time, like his older brother, with distant Friends in order to complete his studies.⁴

Nathan’s father, in addition to running the farm, was a “mechanic” who sometimes worked as a blacksmith and was known for his taste for tinkering. Around 1814 John Winslow advertised a factory for manufacturing cards — brush-like tools for carding wool. Quite likely the enterprise was a response to the shortages of the war years. The family network proved useful in marketing, and the cards were first sold through the store of John’s nephew, Joseph Pope.⁵ While the card factory was probably not in operation during Nathan’s childhood, growing up with a mechanical father no doubt made an impression on the son, who gained some knowledge of metalwork around the smithy.⁶

Nathan was twenty-one years old in 1806 when he advertised the beginning of his own commercial enterprise, in partnership with Batchelor Hussey who seems to have been related by marriage.⁷ Winslow’s partner was possibly related to Samuel Hussey, one of Portland’s most respected Quaker merchants. Even without a link through marriage or a Hussey partner, Nathan would have known Samuel Hussey through

membership in the Falmouth Meeting. In addition, Winslow's uncle, Isaiah Hacker, had been engaged in business with Hussey and another Quaker, John Taber.⁸ The new business, selling factory cotton, hardware, and groceries, along with spermaceti oil and candles, was set up in a Fish Street store "occupied by Samuel Hussey."⁹ While the network provided a partner and a store in which to set up operation, it also contributed a source of goods: Nathan's older brother Jeremiah was employed in the whaling industry.¹⁰

Nathan may have begun the manufacture of candles from spermaceti at this time or even earlier, since the firm of Winslow and Hussey had the candles for sale. The partnership ended in 1809, but two years later Nathan once again took up advertising, announcing a new concern and also reminding the public that "He carries on the Soap and Candle Manufactory in the Stone building on Green Street."¹¹

The reason for this new appeal to customers, after an interval of two years, was no doubt an awareness of increased responsibilities. Two days after the advertisement first appeared, Nathan Winslow and Comfort Hussey were joined in marriage at Falmouth Monthly Meeting. The union added more mesh to the family network, providing a direct tie with one of the town's prominent merchants. Though Samuel Hussey was hurt by the Embargo, he was not among the many who were ruined. Hussey had closed his accounts with the Tabers just in time to escape a default that rocked Portland's economy in 1807. And if the tale of his paying his debts to Taber with Taber's own worthless notes is true, he wasted little sympathy. Hussey served as wharfinger (manager) of Union Wharf as late as 1823. He continued to live in his large home on Congress Street and retained real estate in the business district, including the store rented by Nathan. He was also able to help his son-in-law with cash by taking a mortgage deed on some of Nathan's property.¹²

The new venture which Nathan advertised just before his wedding was another merchandising concern, with goods much like those carried earlier. The location was different: just

below the “Hay Market” at the corner of Middle and Federal streets. The new notice had at its head a picture of a whale, a motif which he would use for years and which would also grace the store, enabling him to offer goods “at the sign of the whale.”¹³

Nathan’s second business partner was his next-younger brother, Isaac, who had tightened the family bonds with the Husseys by marrying Comfort’s younger sister the previous year. Isaac assumed a junior partnership in the firm, now called Nathan Winslow and Company, in November 1816. The brothers advertised that they would be carrying cards from the elder Winslow’s factory — one more family contribution to the concern. This partnership may have been purposely temporary, since the nineteen months it existed was the time necessary to plan and construct a new whaling vessel built in Portland for Isaac and Jeremiah. Nathan played a role in getting it registered in May, 1818. Isaac joined Jeremiah as shipmaster in Le Havre that summer. Reorganization of the store in Portland gave Nathan an opportunity to remind his customers of the excellent quality of his oil, which, he stressed, was obtained directly “from those carrying on the whale fishery.”¹⁴

Like other merchants of his time, Winslow included a wide range of products among his offerings. He continued to offer a limited selection of groceries and the sperm oil well into the 1820s, but added to this inventory iron and steel, mill saws, and agricultural plows, indicating a trend toward hardware. In the fall of 1819, he advertised a shipment of stoves.¹⁵

This was an important step. A few Portland hardware and commission merchants had imported metal heating devices since early in the century,¹⁶ but the heyday of the stove, for both heating or for cooking, lay in the future. Winslow had an advantage over other local merchants in seeing first-hand the comfort and economy a stove could give, because Portland’s Meeting House had led the town’s other houses of worship in installing one. Despite initial resistance, by about 1820 stoves were common in churches.¹⁷

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Nathan & Isaac Winslow,

OFFER for sale at their store, No. 1, Exchange-
Row, just below the Hay Market,

Winter and Summer strained Spermaceti OIL,
by the cask and retail. Families who wish can have
it put up in tin canisters from 3 to 10 gallons each; a
large assortment of brass and japanned LAMPS, pock-
et Lanterns, &c

Also—A general assortment of
Groceries, Hollow & Hard Ware,
among which are best of German Mill Saws, and best
of English Anvils, Vises and Shovels by the dozen or
single—An assortment of cotton Factory YARN from
the most approved factories.

20 Tons of assorted Russia, Sweden and English
IRON
1000 Lbs. of blistered and Cast **STEEL**, of a superior
quality, spike & nail Rods, Plough moulds and Crow
bars

50 boxes Spermaceti **CANDLES**,

150 do mould & dip tallow do.

8 Hhds Muscovado **SUGAR**

4 boxes Havana do.

6 chests Souchong **TEA**

5 casks fresh Smyrna **RAISINS**

26 bbls superfine fresh **Flour**

26 boxes 7 by 9 & 8 by 10 window **Glass**

10 bbls prime **PORK**

A constant supply of Saco **NAILS** of every size.

A large assortment of Machine and Hand
SAWS, from JOHN WINSLOW and Co's. approved
factory.

* The above articles will be sold very low for cash
or approved credit.

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An *Eastern Argus* advertisement, November 13, 1816, displaying the "sign of the whale," under which Nathan Winslow conducted business with his next-youngest brother, Isaac.

Within a few months of Winslow's foray into stove dealing, interest was furthered by a visit to Portland by William T. James, of New York state, who held a government patent on a stove and was traveling to tout his invention. He must have brought along handbills describing his product's advantages, because both Nathan Winslow and another Portland firm took out advertisements in the next *Portland Gazette* with enough identical wording to indicate a common source. Conversations with James may have encouraged Winslow to think about cookstoves. The patentee, the advertisements read, had "sold nearly two thousand in the city of Troy. ... " Ten months later he announced that not only did he have "the greatest assortment of STOVES ever offered in Maine," but he was "in daily expectation of receiving from the furnace a large number of Cook STOVES of his own invention, which he flatters himself will be found to combine more advantages than ever before offered to the public. ... "18

If Winslow began work on his own cookstove only after talks with William James, he worked quickly. His patent was granted on May 23, 1820.¹⁹ It was only the fifth ever given for a stove designated specifically for cooking, although it is likely that many of the earlier stoves had been meant for use in kitchens. James's grant, for example, was listed by the patent office simply as a "stove," but local advertising had stressed the product's utility for cooking and heating wash water.

Between the text and the rough cuts which served as illustrations for Winslow's newspaper advertisements, one can learn much about the new stove. Basically it was a low box on legs, with decorative oval motifs cast into front and sides. The firebox was centered in the lower section, an oven above it. On the ends were open "roasters," each with a spit turned by a handle at the front. Set on or into the top were "boilers," or covered pans, in three sizes: two smaller ones to the left, and a large one to the right of the stovepipe extending from the top.

In his write-ups, Winslow stated the advantages of his stoves over fireplaces and other stoves. In favor of stoves in general, he emphasized the economy involved. There would be

great savings on fuel, at that time “a matter of greatest importance,” which would “undoubtedly in a few years be a much greater object than at present.” Supplies of firewood in the coastal cities were already low by the 1820s, and prices rose as wagonloads were hauled from greater distances. He also suggested that using iron stoves might save the cost of one chimney per house — apparently assuming that funnels would be sufficient.

As for his particular product, he insisted it would work as well with dry hemlock as with more expensive hardwoods or coal. Another savings for people “commencing housekeeping” was that the stoves came equipped with boilers and pans, necessitating no further expense in “kitchen furniture.” Other advantages were in the variety of tasks performed on the stove — boiling, baking, roasting, toasting, and frying. Altogether there would be “heat for washing and dinner for twenty or thirty cooked at the same time.” If one were preparing a smaller meal, there were dampers which might shut heat off from some of the boilers and a roaster. The legs were removable, so that the stove might be set into a fireplace or moved out into a shed to reduce interior heat while cooking in the summer months. Savings of fuel and the other positive points outweighed the major objection to closed stoves: “the gratification of seeing a greater portion of the fire.”²⁰

The new stove stimulated local competition. In less than a year, a rival firm was also selling its own cookstove, one which did let people see “a greater portion of the fire.” To that end, the front of the firebox had doors which might be folded open.²¹ Although a few merchants continued to offer imported stoves, the two manufacturing firms handled the bulk of the stoves available in Portland in the 1820s.

Winslow had thus made a career change. He continued through most of the decade to sell whale oil, along with a large range of hardware, but he also manufactured iron goods, both cast and wrought. Along with his own stoves, he built some on purchased patent rights. He also made metal ovens to be set into the brickwork beside a fireplace, plows of his own design,

Light and Heat

Applied to domestic purposes with economy.

NATHAN WINSLOW,

Has for sale at No. 1, Exchange Row, just below the Hay-Market,

SPERMACETI OIL,

of an excellent quality for Lamps, with a

GREAT VARIETY OF

Lamps and Lanthorns, and the greatest assortment of cast-iron STOVES ever offered in Maine, calculated for Parlours, Kitchens, Counting-Rooms, Shops and Vessels, among which are, Franklin's, Geo. W. Brown's, Wm. T. James and Lane's Patent).

PATENT



HE HAS LIKEWISE,

A large number of COOK STOVES, of his own invention, which will be found to combine more advantages than any before offered to the public, as can be attested by many who have them in use. — The objection to Cook Stoves for roasting meat cannot be made to these, as the roasting is as perfect as by a fire; two large pieces can be roasted at a time on spits exposed to a free current of air. — Those who wish to purchase an article so important in domestic use, are requested to call and examine for themselves.

Those about commencing house keeping, will find a great saving in Kitchen Furniture, as all necessary Cooking utensils are attached to the Stove, and those who are building can save the expense of one chimney by procuring one of them.

He likewise can furnish sheet iron and the Funnel for Stoves of all sizes, with copper and all other kind of apparatus for cook Stoves at short notice, having procured the best of workmen for that purpose.

ALSO—FOR SALE AS ABOVE, a general assortment of

Groceries, Bar Iron and Steel,

And a large supply of

MILL and CROSSCUT SAWS,

which will be warranted to prove good.

Jan. 16.

Important to Farmers.

MADE AND SOLD BY

N. WINSLOW,



No. 1, Exchange-Row,

Portland.

WELBORN'S, alias Wood's patent cast-iron PLOUGH, which by the report of the various Agricultural Societies stands the highest of any now in use in the United States.

May 2.

Light and Heat

Applied to domestic purposes with economy.

NATHAN WINSLOW,

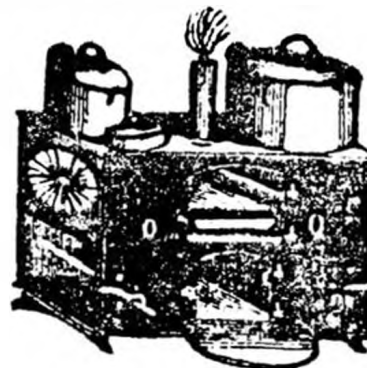
Has for sale at No. 1, Exchange Row, just below the Hay-Market,

SPERMACETI OIL,

of an excellent quality for Lamps, with a

GREAT VARIETY OF

Lamps and Lanthorns, and the greatest assortment of cast-iron STOVES ever offered in Maine, calculated for Parlours, Kitchens, Counting-Rooms, Shops and Vessels, among which are, Franklin's, Geo. W. Brown's, Wm. T. James and Lane's Patent.



HE HAS LIKEWISE,

A large number of COOK STOVES, of his own invention, which will be found to combine more advantages than any before offered to the public, as can be attested by many who have them in use. — The objection to many Cook Stoves for roasting meat, cannot be made to these, as the roasting is as perfect as by a fire; two large pieces can be roasted at a time on spits exposed to a free current of air. — Those who wish to purchase an article so important in domestic use, are requested to call and examine for themselves.

Those about commencing house keeping, will find a great saving in Kitchen Furniture, as all necessary Cooking utensils are attached to the Stove, and those who are building can save the expense of one chimney by procuring one of them.

He likewise can furnish sheet iron and the Funnel for Stoves of all sizes, with copper and all other kind of apparatus for cook Stoves at short notice, having procured the best of workmen for that purpose.

ALSO—FOR SALE AS ABOVE, a general assortment of

Groceries, Bar Iron and Steel,

And a large supply of

MILL and CROSSCUT SAWS,

which will be warranted to prove good.

Jan. 16.

and oven doors “of a new and highly improved pattern.” Later, he built and installed hot-air furnaces with pendulum grates, “an invention of his own,” according to local advertisement.²² When temperance leader Neal Dow built an addition to his house in 1834, he had a wrought iron balcony installed across the front, and noted that he had paid Nathan Winslow \$17.76 for it.²³

Winslow still rented his father-in-law’s store, but with his business well established, he apparently relied less on the family. When he had decided to produce his stove, he had taken “subscriptions” in advance from outside the family. Further, his two ventures into partnership in the 1830s were with men neither family members nor Quakers.²⁴ The first new partnership is especially noteworthy because of an apparent snag in the family network at the time. The youngest Winslow brother, John, set up a stove and hardware store in Portland in March 1830, together with Isaiah Jones, stepson of one sister and husband of another.²⁵ John was thus working within the family, but competing with Nathan. Insofar as Nathan took his next partner the following year, effecting a merger of his concern with that of a newcomer, it seems obvious that the two brothers were deliberately operating separately. True family networking would have united John’s business (and capital) with that of Nathan.

It is not clear what John, now twenty-seven, had been doing up until this time. Possibly he had worked in Nathan’s store and there developed his own ideas about the hardware business. Neither Winslow was likely to let himself be dominated. Nathan was by then a successful inventor, merchant, and manufacturer whom one contemporary characterized as “unrelenting.”²⁶ If one can judge by John’s bold, distinctive signature, he too had a mind of his own.²⁷ His business advertisements were more innovative than those of his contemporaries in that he changed copy somewhat more often and made greater use of illustrations.²⁸ An inheritance from their father may have made possible John’s new firm, whose name, John Winslow & Co., indicates that Isaiah Jones was less insistent on recognition than was John.²⁹

That Nathan could be unbending when he felt himself correct was shown by his role in the anti-slavery movement in the early 1830s. Quakers had long been opposed to slavery, but Winslow took a leadership position. As an active organizer, he helped form antislavery societies at the local and county levels, calling meetings and working to draft constitutions. He attended the 1833 meeting of the American Antislavery Society in Philadelphia and added his name to that group's Declaration of Sentiments. He also corresponded with William Lloyd Garrison and entertained visiting abolitionist speakers in his home.³⁰

It was Nathan Winslow's abolitionist activity which occasioned the few notations on his character that have survived. Writer John Neal considered him a "desperate unrelenting Quaker-abolitionist" and described an encounter in which Winslow refused Neal's "protection" and was "pitched headlong into the gutter and rolled over in the mud and then allowed to escape." Behavior such as this inspired family genealogists to remark on Nathan's "moral and physical courage."³¹

There are no similar accounts to indicate how customers or business associates reacted to Winslow's anti-slavery activities. Given the antipathy toward abolitionism which prevailed in Portland at the time, his position can hardly have helped trade. On the other hand, the family and religious ties helped compensate. Samuel Hussey's name appeared on calls for meetings, and he too entertained Garrison. Comfort Winslow was in accord with her husband and father. Not only did she provide hospitality for visiting speakers, but she opened her house to members of the Portland Female Antislavery Society. Also, Isaac was home from France long enough in 1833 to attend the Philadelphia meeting and record his name among the signers of the Declaration of Sentiments.³²

Abolitionist activities and family affairs were gradually distanced from business in the 1830s. In part, this reflected Winslow's growing financial and commercial prominence in

the larger Portland society, and perhaps a growing disassociation with the Society of Friends. It was also a response to growing competition in the stove-making and mercantile business. Brother John was not the only man to take advantage of the expanding market in which Nathan had pioneered. In 1829, Franklin Manning set up operations on Fore Street, with a stock of groceries, hardware, and agricultural implements similar to Winslow's early offerings. At first his heating devices were restricted to "Soap Stone Cooking Furnaces with iron grates," hibachi-like items which were also available at Nathan Winslow's. However, by late 1830, the new firm claimed to manufacture stoves from New York and Philadelphia patterns, as well as all kinds of equipment for stoves.³³ It is not surprising that the two men formed a partnership. By combining their firms they eliminated duplication and concentrated their energies and capital on new undertakings.

The result was the partnership of Winslow and Manning, formed on July 1, 1831. At Winslow's "old stand" on Middle and Federal Streets, Winslow and Manning expanded their activities. In addition to merchandising imported stoves and those of their own making, the co-partners offered to sell and install "Furnaces ... for heating churches and houses on an improved plan (as practiced in New York and Philadelphia)"³⁴

Winslow and Manning dissolved by mutual consent in 1834, and after three years of operating on his own again, Winslow took another partner, again not related. Together, Thomas Tolman and Winslow ran Nathan Winslow and Company for five years.³⁵ By this time, stoves were accepted as necessary; the question was not whether, but which, to buy. Seventeen firms were listed in the city directory of 1837 or advertised in Portland papers that year as manufacturers or dealers in stoves — eight times as many as ten years earlier. Not all weathered the depression, but the frequent starts of new firms indicated a recognized need for heating equipment.

Meanwhile the family had problems. The death of the older John in 1829 at age seventy-eight was probably not dis-

ruptive, but the following years brought losses in the next generation. In early 1834, Nathan's brother Isaiah drowned in the Presumpscot River, near the farm and card factory which he had taken over. That summer, Isaiah Jones, brother-in-law and business partner of the younger John, died. The firm, now called John Winslow's, continued. Traveling in the south in the spring of 1836, John, too, became ill. The trip was cut short, but John breathed his last at the home of his wife's sister in Massachusetts. Death claimed the young widow the following year, the same year Samuel Hussey died. Two years after that, Nathan's mother, having outlived her husband for a decade, also passed on.³⁶

The several family tragedies placed demands on Nathan from a business perspective. The Winslow card factory closed, ending that source of supplies to the store's inventory. John's passing left a commercial concern in the hands of a young widow with an infant (born ten days after his father's death). Her brother, William Cobb, assumed responsibility for the business, forming John Winslow and Company. Nathan seems to have attempted to protect his sister-in-law by purchasing the building in which the firm was located. That this was something of a financial burden is suggested by a mortgage Winslow gave to his father-in-law, Samuel Hussey, a few months later. Samuel's own death came within a year, and Nathan's subsequent sale of the building next to his store to two of his wife's sisters may represent a settlement of that financial obligation.³⁷ He continued to occupy the structure and to rent both this and the adjoining building, assuring a small income to those women.

By 1842 Nathan's wife, Comfort, had contracted tuberculosis, her health becoming so poor that drastic measures seemed called for. She and a daughter, Louisa Sewall, sailed with Isaac Winslow to Madiera for a change of climate. There Comfort died in January 1843. Seven months later, nineteen-year-old Frederick Winslow, the couple's third and only surviving son, also died.³⁸

The departure of Comfort Winslow coincided with the sale of Nathan Winslow and Company to Winslow's business partner. Nathan began to wind up loose ends. Soon after, he undertook to settle the affairs of John Winslow and Company, which had changed hands and then closed. This left Nathan with a large assortment of hardware and stoves in his building. Late in 1842, he put them up for sale "at greatly reduced prices," in order to close the firm's accounts that season.³⁹ Although stoves and furnaces were in increasingly widespread use by that time, larger firms located closer to sources of iron and producing new and improved models provided stiff competition for small local foundries. Winslow may well have realized that the coming of the railroad would bring an altered business climate.

Moreover, other challenges were at hand. Some time earlier, Isaac Winslow had returned home with information about a French method of preserving food in sealed cans and the brothers determined to develop an operation in the United States. The old blacksmith shop and card factory building on the family farm provided a base of operations. The farm, now operated by sister Lydia's husband, Caleb Jones, produced vegetables on which they might experiment.⁴⁰ The family network was once again operating in force.

In 1849, at the age of sixty-four, Nathan married Mary Belcher Vaughan and settled in her part of town, on outer Danforth Street.⁴¹ Unlike his first marriage, which had served to tighten the family/Friends network, this union brought about a major reshaping of the system. Mary was not a Quaker, and Nathan was consequently disowned by the Meeting. The break may not have been altogether precipitate. Nathan's involvement in the affairs of the Society had never been as marked as that of some of his family. (Brother-in-law Caleb Jones had served as Clerk frequently and was in that capacity when Nathan was read out of meeting.) Moreover, all three of Winslow's daughters had been disowned earlier, the two older ones for marrying "outside," and Harriet for "departing from plainness ... and keeping company with one not of our

Society.”⁴² Obviously, Nathan and Comfort had not maintained a completely traditional Quaker home.

The break with the Quakers would have meant little to Winslow’s business activity by then. Major schisms had rent the American Friends, and the sect was diminishing in numbers and in importance.⁴³ Moreover, to balance the cutting of one set of ties, family expansion by marriage extended the network in other ways.

It is difficult to assess the contribution that Nathan’s new wife offered to this. Although Mary’s father had been very wealthy and a large landholder before the Embargo, most of his property had gone to settle debts. The marriage may have brought Winslow some interest in what lands remained, but he also took on responsibility, not only for Mary, but for her older sister, Olivia.⁴⁴

Nathan’s daughters’ husbands, on the other hand, again added to the system. Two of them, Samuel Sewall and Edward Fox, were lawyers. Fox was from an old Portland family of traders that had imported stoves long before Nathan did.⁴⁵ Fox served in his legal capacity in various Winslow operations. Sewall established his household in the Boston area, but kept a hand in Portland affairs. One example of a cooperative family enterprise involved the development of Commercial Street in the early 1850s. When the new street was being planned, the proprietors of Union Wharf — Fox, along with Alpheus Shaw and Rufus Horton (husband of Nathan’s sister Sarah) — had valuable real estate in what had been mud flats. The lots were sold in 1851, with Jeremiah Winslow and Samuel Sewall among the purchasers. Nathan erected stores there and eventually purchased part of Sewall’s land, which was near the offices of his canning company. A few years later, Nathan erected another block of stores opposite Custom House Wharf.⁴⁶

In June 1848, Jeremiah loaned Nathan \$30,632.27, taking a mortgage on nine pieces of property in Westbrook and Portland, including Nathan’s former home on Congress Street. With funds at his disposal, Winslow continued to experiment with canning. With examples of French vegetables in sealed

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jars and English tinned beef to study, the Winslows were not working without precedent. Indeed, they may have learned something from local firms then beginning to preserve fish in tins. Still, it was twelve or thirteen years from the time of the first attempts to put up “green” corn until Nathan Winslow and his nephew John Winslow Jones started their factory in 1852; and another decade passed before patents were obtained. (In 1862, four different patents, for various parts of the process, were granted.)⁴⁷

The patent listings reflect again the family cooperation that went into the work, the grants being made to Isaac Winslow but assigned to J. W. Jones. Nathan had died the year before, but he doubtless had played a large role in developing the process. Although twentieth-century historians credit Isaac with being the first person to preserve corn in tin cans, at least one contemporary who talked with Nathan Winslow about the business stated that the latter had made the experiments. Both brothers were probably involved in the earliest trials. Nathan, as an inventor with experience in metalworking, was the logical person to find a way to make the cans. Nathan’s expertise was likely channeled into designing and sealing the “canisters” and carrying the early experiments forward to develop a commercial concern. The company was called N. Winslow & Co., and the labels bore the names of Nathan and his nephew, not of Isaac.⁴⁸

The first factory was located in the old family farm. John Winslow Jones was in charge of operations there, while Nathan maintained offices on Union Wharf and attended to marketing. As was the case with stoves when he first manufactured them, canned vegetables were so little known that a demand had to be created. Winslow advertised locally, paying for the advertisement with cans of corn. He also shipped a few samples to S. S. Pierce in Boston. One natural market was the provisioning of ships; Isaac first became interested in this aspect of the trade while buying supplies for whalers. Before long, agents for the new firm were located in ports as far away as San Francisco and Melbourne, Australia.⁴⁹

As his long career drew to a close in 1861, Nathan Winslow might well have felt pleased with his life's work. His estate was sufficient to care for his widow and her sister and to provide something for his grandchildren and his surviving daughter.⁵⁰ Developments in fields in which he had pioneered showed that his initiatives had been in the right directions. The stove dealership he founded was in new hands, but still in operation. He had shown that stoves could be made in the Portland area, and numerous individuals had followed his lead. Commercial Street was booming, with a new railroad and extended wharfs. The buildings he had erected there now stood among many others. The food processing company was doing well, safely in the hands of John Winslow Jones; and a younger Jones brother, Augustus, was ready to join the firm.⁵¹ Though less extensive, the family network continued.

The importance of these family ties was considerable. Connections with relatives by blood or marriage and with the extended "family" of Friends provided money, supplies of goods, and housing for his early commercial operations. Although kinship and religion seemed less necessary — indeed at times a burden — as he grew more established, Winslow nevertheless forged newer, even closer, business ties with family in his later years.⁵² That he left his shares in the cannery to his nephew-partner rather than to grandchildren testifies to the strength of the extended family.⁵³

Was Nathan Winslow's career typical of Portland business enterprise? Further research may indeed prove that such networking was critical to the early nineteenth-century business world. Certainly other Portland entrepreneurs used family connections when doing business.⁵⁴ Family networks were not always the secret to success in Portland. Asa Clapp, an orphan, settled in Portland at some distance from his influential Boston in-laws and yet became the city's wealthiest merchant. His sons, Charles Q. and Asa W. H., often joined forces for business purposes during these same years, but just as often they formed partnerships with non-relatives.⁵⁵ Others, however, were less fortunate. Both Joseph Noble and Eleazar Wyer, two major partners of the stove foundry which rivalled Nathan Winslow's in the 1820s and early 1830s, were from Massachusetts; and each came to Portland in his twenties, without local family ties (although each married a local woman.) Both were among the charter members of the Maine Charitable Mechanics Association.⁵⁷ While it would be difficult to make a case that the failure of their company was due to lack of family networking, the possibility exists. Certainly Nathan Winslow's situation was more helpful. Although it would appear that neither he nor his brothers lacked real abilities, the network they formed of cousins, in-laws, and other Quakers enhanced their chances of success.

NOTES

¹The other textbook case of early textile industry financings, Almy and Brown of Rhode Island, involved a cousin and a son-in-law of the merchant-shipper, Moses Brown.

²*Eastern Argus*, September 13, 1815; membership lists at Maine Charitable Mechanics Association library, Portland.

³Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1683-1763* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1948), 69-71, and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience: Society in Rhode Island, 1636-1680* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1974), 89-92, make mention of Quakers' doing business with one another in earlier times. The latter notes that this was true of other

religious groups as well. Both the Society of Friends and the economy had since changed, but close business ties remained constant.

⁴Ernest R. Rowe, *et al.*, *Highlights of Westbrook History* (Westbrook: Westbrook Woman's Club, 1952), 101. At age fourteen, Jeremiah went to New Bedford to live with the Rotch family. Jeremiah Winslow, letter published in *Mercury* (New Bedford) in 1856, scrapbook in library of Whaling Museum, New Bedford; Thierry Du Pasquet, "Le Père Winslow," ms., Whaling Museum.

⁵Daniel F. and Frances K. Holton, *Winslow Memorial* (New York: Mrs. F. K. Houlton, 1888), 883; *Eastern Argus*, April 14, 1814.

⁶It is not clear whether the older Winslow was also the inventor of a "Patent Self-feeding Brick Press" in 1826 or if this was the work of the younger John. The latter is more likely, insofar as the patent was granted a J. Winslow of Portland (the farm was in Westbrook at that time) and as the ambitious proposal of future exhibitions in Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia seems more the plan of a man of twenty-three than of one in his mid-seventies. U. S. Patent Office, *Subject Matter Index of Patents, 1790-1873* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), 148; *Eastern Argus*, October 6, 1826.

⁷*Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, Sept. 14, 1806. Nathan's mother's sister had married a Hussey of Vassalboro. Minutes of Falmouth Monthly Meeting (FMM), Mar. 2, 1801, ms., Maine Historical Society. Records of that town show that Batchelor Hussey declared marriage intentions there in 1817. Also a local gravestone is to "Jane, wife of ..." Vassalboro Vital Statistics, p. 56, and Vassalboro Cemetery Inscriptions, Bay Rd. Cemetery, ms. (Copies at Maine Historical Society.)

⁸William Willis, *History of Portland*, 1865 ed. (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1972), 310. The firm was dissolved before 1807, when the Monthly Meeting settled debts with the "late firm of Hussey & Taber." FMM, May 28, 1807.

⁹*Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1811.

¹⁰Du Pasquet, "Le Père Winslow," 14-16; Thierry Du Pasquet, *Les Baleiniers Français au XIX^{ème} Siècle, 1814-1868* (Grenoble: Terre et Mer, 1982), 85.

¹¹*Portland Gazette*, September 25, 1809; October 6, 1811.

¹²FMM, October 8, 1811; Holton, 885; William Goold "John Taber & Son and Their Paper Money," *Collections and Proceedings of the Maine Historical Society*, 2nd Series, Vol. IX (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1898), 130-131; Portland directories, 1823 (Thayer and Jewett editions); Cumberland County Registry of Deeds, book 156, page 518 (CCRD 156/518).

¹³*Portland Gazette*, October 6, 1811.

¹⁴Holton, 886; *Eastern Argus*, November 13, 1816; June 30, 1818. Jeremiah had gone to France in 1816-17 to establish the whale industry there. Du Pasquet, "Le Père Winslow," 18-27; Du Pasquet, *Les Baleiniers Français*, 83.

¹⁵*Eastern Argus*, October 11, 1819.

¹⁶*Portland Gazette*, September 24, 1804.

¹⁷William Goold, *Portland in the Past* (Portland: B. Thurston & Company, 1886), 338-9.

¹⁸*Index of Patents*, 1460; *Portland Gazette*, December 26, 1819; *Eastern Argus*, October 31, 1820.

¹⁹*Index of Patents*, 1472. He would not have needed to build a prototype before applying for the patent, but a small-scale model had to be sent along with drawings.

²⁰*Eastern Argus*, January 16, 1821; *Portland Gazette*, October 23, 1821; February 24, 1824.

²¹Wyer and Noble ad, *Portland Gazette*, August 8, 1822.

²²*Portland Advertiser*, November 19, 1834; *Eastern Argus*, August 7, 1821; *Portland Gazette*, December 16, 1823; *Eastern Argus*, July 1, 1836. The grate was patented July 2, 1836. *Index of Patents*, 635.

²³Neal Dow, "Memoranda of Expense of My House," ms., photocopy in author's possession.

²⁴CCRD 156/58; real estate ad, *Portland Advertiser*, May 14, 1833; *Eastern Argus*, October 23, 1821.

²⁵*Eastern Argus*, April 23, 1830.

²⁶John Neal. *Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869), 403. Neal and Winslow disagreed on many matters.

²⁷John was clerk of the Falmouth Monthly Meeting in 1829-32 and again in 1835, and signed each month's minutes.

²⁸See both the *Portland Advertiser* and the *Eastern Argus*, 1830-1836, *passim*.

²⁹*Eastern Argus*, March 12, 1830. The agreement was for a "co-partnership."

³⁰Edward O. Schriver, *Go Free: The Antislavery Impulse in Maine, 1833-1855* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1970), 19; *Portland Advertiser*, April 30, 1833; May 4, 1833; February 4, 1835; Holton, *Winslow Memorial*, 883.

³¹Neal, *Wandering Recollections*, 403. According to family history, Nathan's home was surrounded by a mob when Stephen S. Foster took refuge there during the disturbance in 1842. Holton, *Winslow Memorial*, 885; *Portland Advertiser*, September 30, 1842. Another source has Foster taken to "the Chase house," next to the First Parish Church. Helen Coffin Reedy, *Mothers of Maine* (Portland: Thurston, 1895), 239-240. It was the Winslows who then lived at Congress and Chestnut, next to the church. See also Edward Elwell, *Portland and Vicinity* (Portland: Greater Portland Landmarks, 1975, reprint), p. 40.

³²*Portland Advertiser*, February 2, 1835; Neal, 401-2; *Portland Advertiser*, April 14, 1834; Schriver, *Go Free*, 19.

³³*Eastern Argus*, May 26, 1829; January 1, 1831.

³⁴*Portland Advertiser*, January 2, 1832. *Eastern Argus*, August 21, 1834; January 22, 1834. It is tempting to speculate about reasons for the end of the firm; did the two disagree over business practices? Was Nathan's abolitionist activity a problem? Or were there personality conflicts? It might be noted that most partnerships among stove dealers of the period were of relatively short duration. Manning's next venture, Manning and Cheney, lasted 18 months. George Cheney subsequently formed Cheney and Nelson, which was dissolved in ten months. *Portland Advertiser*, September 17, 1834; *Eastern Argus*, July 1, 1836; July 7, 1836; May 4, 1837.

³⁵*Eastern Argus*, May 6, 1837; *Portland Advertiser*, October 29, 1842. Tolman remained at the same location for another decade. When his sons took space in the new Lancaster Hall building in 1852, the move marked the end of more than four decades of continuous business "at the old stand." *Eastern Argus*, May 5, 1852.

³⁶Holton, *Winslow Memorial*, 883-886; Willis, *History of Portland*, 410.

³⁷CCRD, 151/487; 156/518.

³⁸Holton, *Winslow Memorial*, 885-6; *Portland Advertiser*, March 16, 1843.

³⁹*Eastern Argus*, April 3, 1839; April 20, 1839; *Portland Advertiser*, December 21, 1842.

⁴⁰Manuscript report on Winslow Packing Company, Maine Historical Society; "Early Corn Canning," *Portland Board of Trade Journal* 1 (May 1888): 12.

⁴¹Portland city directories, 1850, 1856, 1858. Though different street numbers on Danforth are given, the Winslows did own their home. CCRD, 312/117.

⁴²FMM, December, 1849; August, 1836; March, 1839; September, 1847. See also Women's Minutes of the latter dates.

⁴³In Portland, the big Meeting House on Federal Street was sold in 1849. By 1864, attendance would be down to seventeen. Willis, *History of Portland*, 409. A new Meeting House in Westbrook was on Winslow farm land donated by Caleb and Lydia Jones (FMM: deed dated Oct. 15, 1845).

⁴⁴CCRD, 312/118-119 and 312/123.

⁴⁵*Portland Gazette*, August 7, 1805; August 13, 1806; July 13, 1807.

⁴⁶CCRD, 231/547, 550-2; 305/453; *Portland Advertiser*, October 4, 1853. Jeremiah visited Portland that year. Du Pasquet, *Les Balieniers Français*, 128. *Portland Transcript*, June 26, 1858.

⁴⁷CCRD 210/256; 258/9 *Patent Office Report, 1862*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1863), 121.

⁴⁸Louis C. Hatch, *Maine: A History*, Vol. III (New York: American Historical Society, 1919), 675; Richard A. Hebert, *Modern Maine: Its Historic Background, People and Resources* (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1951), 441-442; Frank B. Copley, *Frederick W. Taylor, Father of Scientific*

Management, Vol. I (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1969), 38; report on Winslow Canning Co.; "Early Corn Canning"; N. Winslow & Co. label (Photocopy: provenance unknown).

⁴⁹"Early Corn Canning"; report on Winslow Canning Co.; N. Winslow & Co. label.

⁵⁰CCRD, 312/115-123, explain part of the settlement. Louisa and Lucy both died in the 1840s, as did Harriet's first husband. Harriet and Samuel Sewall then married.

⁵¹Report on Winslow Packing Company; "Early Corn Canning." Another source of pride may well have been Nathan's oldest granddaughter, Lucy Ellen Sewall, who was to be graduated in 1862 from the New England Female Medical College. Like her grandfather, she was a pioneer. Holton, *Winslow Memorial*, 885-886.

⁵²Though there is little "proof" except his daughters' separations from the Meeting, in those years he may have begun to be disturbed by changes among the Friends. This could explain the apparent problem with his brother John, who was active in the Meeting then. However, his own break with the Friends was at a time when he was working with the Joneses, who remained in good standing.

⁵³Report on Winslow Canning Co.

⁵⁴Willis, *History of Portland*, 804-805.

⁵⁵"Clapp Family," in Hatch, *Maine: A History: Biographical*, I, 126-128; Joyce K. Bibber, "Charles Q. Clapp, 1799-1868," in *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine* Vol. 5, No. 5 (Augusta: Maine Historic Preservation Commission. 1988).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Edwin A. Churchill, "Crafts in Transition: A Case Study of Two Portland Silversmiths in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 24 (Winter 1985): 298-337; Lucius M. Boltwood, *History and Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Noble of Westfield, Massachusetts* (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1978), 742-743.

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