

sign of naval property: three cuts made with a hatchet in the bark of the tree, the three cuts coming together to form an arrow-shape with the tip pointing upwards.

Writing in his diary on 14 March 1888, E.D. Davison Sr. of Bridgewater, recalled seeing three and four-foot diameter white pines cut in Queens County, Nova Scotia, during 1836 and 1837. He believed them to be the last of those marked by the Surveyor General's "engineers" near Wentworth's Brook, Port Medway River. "The finest ones were Lot No. 45 at the foot of Poltis Falls." He remembered standing and without moving, counting from two to twenty white pine giants, "and often a lovely clump of red oak amongst them." He grieved that their like would never be seen again and that boards cut from them received such a pittance of a price in the 1830s compared to their worth, had they been available, fifty years later, when spruce lumber was selling for a "far better price" than that received for the magnificent pines of the pre-settlement forest.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to reserving individual pine trees, the British government began setting aside large tracts of ungranted land as timber reserves for naval use. In 1774, vast forested areas in Nova Scotia (including sections which would later form part of New Brunswick) were designated as reserves: Shediac, the Miramichi area, the upper St. John River and areas on the Stewiacke and LaHave rivers.<sup>16</sup> Following the recommendations of Charles Morris, Surveyor General of Land in Nova Scotia, the whole of Cape Breton Island, by then part of Nova Scotia, was also set aside as a timber reserve in 1774. New instructions were issued to Governor Francis Legge the following year, advising him "to ignore previous instructions in regard to the disposal of Crown Lands...and timber reservations...and to grant lands freely to refugees from the American colonies."<sup>17</sup> These emergency regulations did not apply to Cape Breton, so it remained, for the time being, a timber reserve.<sup>18</sup>

These timber reserves gave impetus to the masting industry. One of the first contractors for masts was William Davidson, who went to the upper St. John

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15 Davison Family papers. MG1, Vol. 255, PANS.

16 Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, pp. 350-351.

17 Fergusson, *Lumbering in Nova Scotia*, pp. 10, 11.

18 For a discussion of land grants in Cape Breton after 1784, see E.H. Cameron, "Imperial Policy in Cape Breton, 1784-1795," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* [hereafter *Collections*], XXXI (1957), 38-63.