

DISCOVERING PATRICK HENRY'S LAWYER'S PRESS



Figure 1: Exterior view of the “one large pine press, stained blue”.

INSIDE VIEW



Figure 2: The inside view with reconstructed moveable partitions.

This story started to unfold for me about 40 years ago. The year was around 1982. I had just purchased my first early Virginia settlers' log cabin. It was a typical circa 1840s story and a half cabin located in a holler a few miles from Ferrum, Virginia. The old cabin was in fairly sound condition structurally. My intentions of restoring it and furnishing it with things from that time period were easily attainable. It had a spring for water, no electricity available, and a johnny house. To get to the cabin from our house we had to travel State Route 360 West from Chesterfield County, Virginia until we got to Keysville where we got on State Route 40 West.

We stayed on Route 40 until we turned off onto the road to the cabin just east of Ferrum. This route was mostly a country road that took us through several small towns and crossroad communities. One of those towns was Brookneal. We would usually head up to the mountains on Friday evenings after work and come home on Sunday evenings. During most of the year those trips occurred during daylight hours as the cabin was a 3 ½ hour ride. On one of our earlier trips, I noticed a great looking antique shop by the name of Staunton River Antiques. The nearby Staunton River passed through Brookneal.

Of course, the shop was closed so I did what most antique loving Junkers do – I pulled in, got out, and peeked through all of the windows. I could easily see it was my kind of shop! It was full of primitives, old painted furniture, early wrought iron items, baskets, stoneware, and everything in between. Keeping in mind a majority of the items I had seen were locally made and period correct for our cabin I decided to leave early enough one Sunday afternoon to hopefully catch the shop open.

I did catch it open and not very busy as it was getting close to closing time. As is usually the case, the owner asked me what type of things I was looking for. I told him I was restoring an old log cabin near Ferrum, and I was looking for the type of things that would have been in the cabin for day to day living, nothing fancy. He took my name and number and told me he was Bob Jean and gave me his number.

During the following months I would check with Bob often, so we actually got to be friends. Upon closing his shop one Sunday afternoon Bob invited my wife and I to follow him home to meet his wife and see the great stuff he had in his home. Most of those items were truly museum quality pieces. Bob would call me from time to time to tell me to stop by and check out some new items. I always looked forward to visiting Bob.

Enter “The Press”.

I stopped by one Sunday afternoon, just in time to catch Bob. As I came through the door Bob seemed a little animated and he motioned for me to follow him and said, “I have something I want to show you!” He had a back room where he kept stuff and got some things ready for sale. In the doorway hung an old quilt for a privacy curtain. He flung the quilt aside, motioning me to follow. As I entered the room a large case piece was sitting to our left with its back to the wall. I walked over in front of this huge cabinet with blind doors and original blue paint and just stared for a bit. It was imposing! I said, “Wow!” I continued staring at the piece for what felt like forever. Bob said he had recently bought it from one of his pickers and hadn’t had much time to look at it himself. Bob carefully opened the doors so we could see the interior. Again, I said, “Wow!” It was very dirty and was missing some internal pieces. I could see, and envision, some of what was missing as my father had been a cabinet maker and carpenter his entire adult life. I helped him a lot growing up, so I understood quite a bit about the construction I was studying.

Bob said the picker had recovered the piece from a yard where it had been thrown out, along with all the home’s furnishings, and accessories. Apparently, the occupants had been evicted by the landlord. It was in the out-of-doors, however there was no way of telling how long it had been there as it looked to be in good condition! Bob asked me if I knew what it was. I studied a bit longer and before I could speak Bob said, “It’s not a postal piece either.” I said I don’t think for one minute it is a postal piece. I believe it is a lawyer’s cupboard.

Bob seemed very surprised and asked, “Why do you think that?” I told him I had read a description of an attorney’s cupboard sometime in the past and this piece matched the overall description of that piece. He muttered something like “You are the first S. O. B. to say that.” I could envision the missing parts, shelves, dividers, etc. After a brief period of more studying, I turned to Bob and asked him “Do you know what you have?” Before he could answer I said, “You have Patrick Henry’s lawyer’s cupboard.”

I will never forget his reaction. His eyes opened wide, his arms went down by his side, his eyes stared at me, and he physically shuddered. I asked him how many lawyers were in Brookneal, Virginia around 1800? He said one. So, I sheepishly asked, “And who was he?” Bob stared at the floor and softly replied, “Patrick Henry.” I continued to look at the piece hoping to see some detail that may have helped. After a short period, I asked Bob “Where exactly did your picker find the piece?” Bob said on Route 600. I chuckled and said “Bob, I’m not from around here so I don’t have a clue where Route 600 is.” Bob looked at the floor again and said, “It’s the road to Red Hill.” I laughed out loud and said, “And you don’t think you have Patrick Henry’s lawyer’s cupboard?” He said, “I don’t even want to think about it.”

Some time went by and one Sunday afternoon I stopped in to see Bob. He must have seen me coming because when I came through the door he met me and motioned for me to follow him. So, I did. We went into a small private office, which until that point I hadn’t realized he had. As he took a seat behind an old desk, he motioned for me to sit in the chair across from him. He opened the desk drawer and reached inside, grabbed an envelope, and tossed it to me. He said “read that.” It was a letter in an envelope with some sort of Patrick Henry logo on it and the letter was on matching stationery. The letter was thanking him for letting them (?) see the piece. It went on to say something to the effect that it certainly was possible the piece may have been something like what Mr. Henry may have had. In the absence of having anything like it they would be interested in purchasing the piece. As memory serves me, I remember they offered \$5,500.00 to purchase the piece.

I laughed and asked Bob “What do you think now and what are you going to do?” Bob laughed and said it wasn’t for sale and certainly not for that figure. It took me the next couple of years to restore my cabin. Again, on one occasion during this period, I stopped in on a Sunday afternoon and like before, Bob met me coming through the door. He motioned me to follow him to the office. He pointed to the chair, and he took a seat behind the desk. He opened the top drawer and tossed me another letter with the same logo. The second letter got more serious. It stated since Patrick Henry had such a piece listed in his inventory at the time of his death there was a remote possibility this large piece could have been Mr. Henry’s. Subsequently I learned that Patrick Henry’s inventory taken upon his death in 1799 at Red Hill listed “one large pine press”. It was still on the property in a second inventory in 1802. The second letter also “respectfully” upped the offer to \$12,500.00. Like before, I asked Bob “What do you think now and what are you going to do”? Again, he said it wasn’t for sale.

As the years passed, I sold my cabin and didn’t get to see Bob on any kind of regular basis. Several years later I had written a book on the Richmond area early stoneware makers and ran into Bob at an antiques auction sale in Victoria, Virginia. He bought a copy of my book, and we caught up a little bit, but the press never came up.

Bob and I shared a mutual friend and he used to keep me informed of how Bob was doing. On one visit our mutual friend informed me Bob wasn’t doing very well and his health was deteriorating quite a bit. I asked my friend if Bob still had the big blue cupboard and he told me that he did. I conveyed to my friend the history of mine and Bob’s conversations about the cupboard being Patrick Henry’s. He told me he and Bob discussed the press once or twice before Bob’s death, but Bob casually passed over any connection to Patrick Henry.

About a year or so after Bob passed away his wife also passed away. Our mutual friend called me one afternoon and informed me Bob's estate was going to be auctioned by their daughter. I asked him if the cupboard was in the auction sale, so he forwarded me the auction information indicating it was.

It was an online auction due to the Covid situation and the big blue press was Lot 1. I met my friend at the appointed time for viewing and looked over the piece again after about 40 years. It was about as I had remembered it except a door hinge was broken I did not remember. Other than that, it was untouched since Bob had gotten it. It was full of cast-off stuff.

Figure 3 is an auction photo. The upper hinge on the left door was broken so opening it was not advised.



Figure 3: Inside of press as it looked on auction day.
Internet photo by Winstead's Auction.

Fast forward to auction day. When the smoke cleared, and the bidding had ended, I was the winning bidder. From what I thought I knew of the imposing piece my thoughts were that I had just purchased a national treasure. I felt the two descriptions Bob and the auctioneer had provided were inaccurate. Bob had referred to it as an Overseer's cupboard and the auctioneer had offered his thoughts on it being a linen press. The stated date of "circa 1810" was also wrong, in my opinion. I firmly believe the large old press to be 18th century, circa 1786.

It is my belief this press was custom built for Mr. Henry and at his direction. When Patrick Henry left public office upon his last term as Governor of Virginia in November of 1786, he moved to Prince Edward County to his recent purchase of Pleasant Grove Plantation. Perhaps Henry chose Pleasant Grove upon his retirement from public life to be near Hampden-Sydney College of which he was a member of the first Board of Directors.

Henry remained steadfast in his support for the college and had many lifelong friends and acquaintances there. At Pleasant Grove Mr. Henry also had a new law office where he immediately started in earnest to resume his private law practice.

At this time in Patrick Henry's life, it is recorded he turned down running for other political offices or positions as his personal finances were in much need of rebuilding. It was here he worked on several of his highest profile, and most profitable cases. At this juncture Mr. Henry would have realized a need for furnishing his new law office and this large pine press would have been perfect for such a use.

Figure 4 shows a picture of the press after being cleaned out.



Figure 4: Interior view after discarding the unwanted items.

Here I am going to let the “one large pine press” tell some of its own story.

Looking closely at Figure 4 you will start to see copious amounts of black ink spilled throughout the surfaces of the press. For this to be Patrick Henry’s press it had to have been constructed in the late 18th century, and not the auction suggested date of 1810, as Mr. Henry died on June 6, 1799.

Figure 5 shows the original hinge after having been recently repaired by master blacksmith Alex O’Dell of Orange, Virginia. Since the damaged hinge pieces required removing to facilitate the repair the pieces could be inspected more closely. The early handmade screws are clearly in line with mid to late 18th century handmade examples and demonstrate all the characteristics of such screws.



Figure 5: This photo shows the original hinge after being repaired by master blacksmith Alex O’Dell of Orange, Virginia.



Figure 6: Close view of the hinge repair and screw.



Figure 7: Close up details of one of the wrought hinge screws.

The presence of numerous ink spills, large and small, immediately discounts a use such as a linen press, as does the absence of drawers generally present on such a press. The shallow depth is also unlike linen, and china presses. The depth is a mere 12 ¼”.

Figures 8, and 9, show close ups of some of the excessive ink spills certainly consistent with years of writing or drawing on paper documents. Notice the dado in Figure 8 for the lower dividers. Also notice the ingenious vee groove in the shelf in Figure 9.



Figure 8: Stains from ink spills and bottle ring stains on the bottom shelf.

Figure 9: Heavy ink spill running down and back in one of the original vee channels for a divider.



This ingenious system of grooves allowed for multiple configurations of the compartmental dividers.

Figure 10 shows how the easily removable dividers can be reconfigured to facilitate larger openings. I'm sure there were many masterful enslaved individuals, however, should this press have been produced by such an individual he would have been highly skilled, and well trained. I do believe it's entirely possible such an individual may have been involved, however a master cabinet maker was as well, if for only the apprentice's direct supervision and training



Figure 10: This photo shows the ease of reconfiguring opening sizes.

My first inclination regarding the making of this press was that it was possibly a product of a Richmond cabinetmaker named Henry Mann, or one of his two sons. Mann was working in Richmond at the same time Patrick Henry was there during his last stint as governor. Mann was also heavily involved with Col. John Syme, a prominent influential Hanover County, Virginia resident, and Patrick Henry's half-brother. As a young newlywed Patrick Henry lived in the Hanover Tavern and was born at nearby Studley Plantation. His father's second wife was Col. Syme's mother.

While talking with a friend regarding the Henry Mann connection, the mountain of data, and the many questions, he asked me if I minded him sharing my findings with a couple of his friends. He informed me both were very versed in early furniture, especially southern. I told him please do.

Shortly thereafter my friend called, also forwarding me an email including links with large amounts of information. One of his friends had cleared up many things. The following information will reveal the likely person, or persons, involved in the making of this magnificent press was working in what is referred to as the “James Crow Shop” in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.

It was likely near the town of Boydton, the county seat for Mecklenburg County. Boydton lies equidistant from Henry’s Pleasant Grove law office and his Red Hill Law office, see Figure 11.

These distances are less than a day’s ride on horseback.

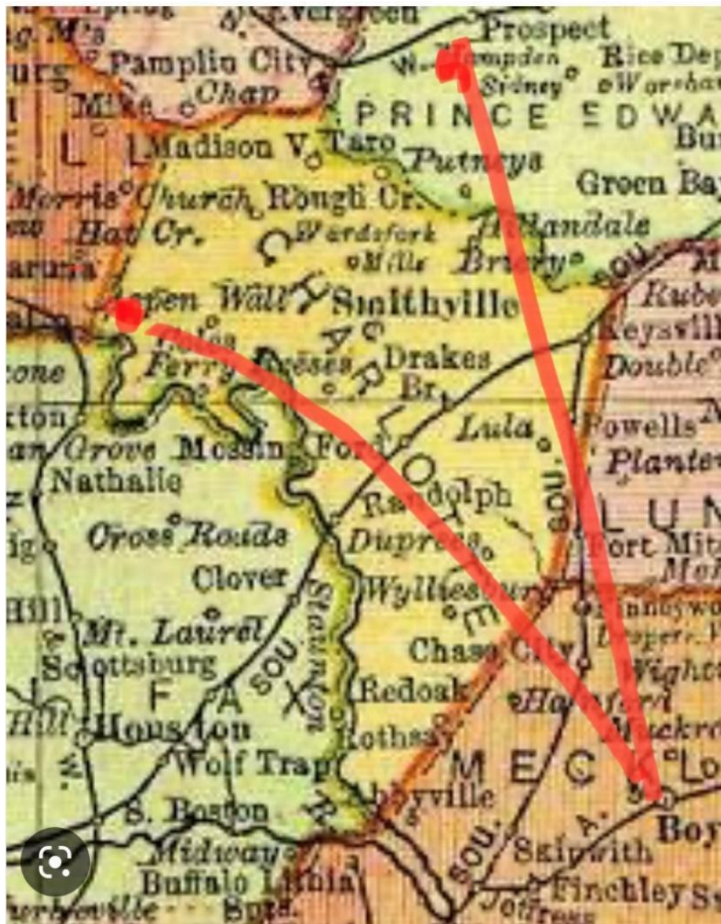


Figure 11: This map shows the similar distances to Boydton in relation to Pleasant Grove near Farmville (right side) and Red Hill near Brookneal (left side).

His friend suggested I may want to do some research on the Crow Shop at MESDA (Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts) in Winston Salem, North Carolina. He also told me to pay close attention to the feet as my press had, in his opinion, a direct connection to the Crow Shop's style. I believe he was exactly correct.

Figure 12 shows the comparison of the press' foot and the feet of three pieces from the Crow Shop. The likely same sized augured holes, and overall profiles, are so undeniably similar it is highly unlikely this press was made anywhere other than the James Crow Shop.



Figure 12: This composite photograph shows the actual foot, bottom right, as it compares visually to three examples of the Mecklenburg, Virginia Crow Shop pieces in MESDA, or their database. The cardboard pattern is a direct tracing of the foot on the blue press.

Photos by author courtesy of MESDA.

Family lore strongly suggests Patrick Henry’s document desk was “made on the plantation” (assuming this referred to Red Hill) at the time of it being gifted to the Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation. This is certainly very possible. Present in Patrick Henry’s inventory at his death were many of the tools needed to facilitate cabinet work, though some of the same tools were necessary for just about every building project encountered on a large working farm. The presence of the tools also indicates one or more craftsmen qualified in their usage.

Several of the same tools were also present at Pleasant Grove during Henry’s stay there. Patrick Henry was quite accustomed to moving and certainly may have simply taken his tools along with his family from place to place.

Figure 13, part of the 1799 inventory of Henry’s belongings, generically lists 3 hand saws, however in the 1802 inventory it lists likely the same 3 saws by type, such as whip saw. A whip saw is a pit saw for sawing logs into lumber.

Figure 13: Red arrows indicate some of the tools required to facilitate cabinet making. All copies of inventoried items courtesy of Red Hill.

- 9 axes, ←
- 35 hoes,
- 1 chariot & harness for 4 horses,
- 1 ride’g chair & harness,
- 3 mens saddles & bridles,
- 1 womans do. do.
- 3 ox carts,
- 2 Lock chains,
- 13 plows, hoes & gair,
- 3 hand saws, ←
- 1 frow, ←
- 4 chisels & 6 augers, ←
- 1 pr. old cart wheels,

- 1 portmantua,
- 1 candle stand,
- 2 four feet walnut tables,
- 1 Walnut press,
- 1 Tea bord, 3 waiters & 1 bre. Basket,
- 1 Walnut side bord,
- 1 ditto knife box,
- 1 flax hackell,
- 7 large Maps,
- 1 Arm & 12 plain Walnut chairs,
- 2 Walnut desks,
- 5 Small Walnut Tables
- 1 Cheretree chest of drawers,
- 1 Small Cabinet,
- 1 Walnut box & looking glass,
- 2 green winsor chairs,
- 1 Walnut chest of drawers,

Also included in the 1799 inventory was blacksmith's tools, again indicating at least one individual capable of performing blacksmith's work – such as the “H” hinges on the large pine press. It should be noted Henry's father came to America as a Scottish immigrant. Henry's mother was also Scottish though born in America. It was the Scottish and Irish people that brought about the use of the word press when describing a large cupboard or case piece, see Figure 15, item 6.

Figure 14, lower left photo, shows the press and individual tool names in the 1802 inventory.

4	pr andirons, much injured
2	pr tongs & 1 shovel
3	mens saddles very much worn
1	womans saddle
4	trunks
1	pine writing desk
2	tables
1	large pine press
6	butter pots & # jugs
1	130 gallon still Virginia made
1	30 gallon London still
1	large iron kettle
1	gallon measure
7	large maps
2	ox carts & 2 chains
1	waggon & geer
1	tea board & 3 waiters
1	bread basket
1	candle stand broke
1	mahogany knife case (struck out on Mrs. Winston & Capt. Joseph Scott.)
1	pine knife box & 8 old knives & forks
1	pr horsemans pistols, broken locks
1	check reel
1	large decanter
1	small "
2	tea canisters
2	bottle sliders
4	flat irons, very indifferent
4	screw augers
1	hand saw
1	pr sheep sheers
3	nice brass candlesticks
4	iron candlesticks
3	pr snuffers
1	crosscut & 1 whip-saw
1	brass scale
2	bar-sheer plows

Figure 14: This is part of the 1802 inventory showing the more proper basket names of the tools.

- a business that prints or publishes books.
"the Clarendon Press"
Similar: publishing house
- the process of printing.
"the book is ready to go to press"
- 3. newspapers or journalists viewed collectively.
"the press was notified"
Similar: the media, the newspapers
- coverage in newspapers and magazines.
"there's no point in demonstrating if you don't get any press"
Similar: reports, press treatment
- 4. an act of pressing something.
"the system summons medical help at the press of a button"
- a closely packed crowd or mass of people or things.
"among the press of cars he saw a taxi"
- **DATED**
pressure of business.
- **BASKETBALL**
any of various forms of close guarding by the defending team.
- 5. **WEIGHTLIFTING**
an act of raising a weight to shoulder height and then gradually pushing it above the head.
- 6. **SCOTTISH · IRISH**
a large cupboard.

Figure 15: This photo shows the origin of the term press, item 6, as it relates to a cupboard.

In keeping with the strong family lore, and their insistence of the presence of skilled individuals capable of manufacturing Henry's pine document desk the same assumption must be made for this large pine press. However, based on what is known of the James Crow Shop workmanship and judging by the quality of the construction of the large press, it is my firm belief this press was made by the Crow Shop personnel.

1	pr. old Steelyards & 2 iron Spits,
1	pr. new do. 1 bell mettle skillet
	A parcel of Tin ware,
	One large pine press,
	A parcel of Tubs, pails, &c.
1	Loom, Warping bars, &c. &c.
4	flatt irons & 1 flax wheel,
2	pine tables & 6 pr. cott. Cards,
1	fortepeano,
	A parcel of rum hds. Casks, &c.

Figure 16: This segment of the 1799 inventory lists "one large pine press" in an area of the list with items not of the "Big House" furnishing variety.



Figure 17: This photo shows literally identical feet and base construction of the two pieces. The proportions are nearly identical as well. Left photo James Crow Shop desk by author, courtesy of MESDA.

Comparison of the two inventories in Figures 16, and 18, seems to indicate the 1802 version was much more organized and more closely grouped by similar types and likely usages in the home, office, and farm.

Patrick Henry was very fond of walnut furniture as indicated by the heavy presence in his inventory, and their varied uses. His home was furnished predominantly throughout with walnut pieces, to include small household items. The pine pieces listed are small tables, desk(s) and “one large pine press”.

It is my belief Patrick Henry used pine pieces predominantly in his offices and was fully aware of the use and abuse he was going to deliver upon those pieces. Patrick Henry likely consciously selected lesser priced more utilitarian pine pieces to suit this purpose.

This grouping of walnut pieces is in the 1802 inventory, Figure 18.

4	sober, 12 yrs. middle size
1	bay, 17 yrs. middle size
1	gray, 4 yrs. middle size
1	gray mare, 4 yrs. middle size
1	bay mare, 7 yrs. middle size
1	dark bay mare, 10 yrs. Do.
1	small bay mare, 18 yrs.
1	gray horse colt, 3 yrs.
1	gray mare colt, 3 yrs.
1	black mare colt, 2 yrs.
2	gray colts, 1 yr.
2	suckling colts
5	yoke of oxen
128	head of cattle
186	head of hogs
38	head of sheep
9	feather beds & furniture
8	table cloths, part much worn
1	black walnut Press
2	black walnut desks
2	black walnut square tables
1	black walnut Side board
5	black walnut small tables
1	black walnut chest of drawers
13	black walnut chairs
3	Windsor chairs
1	Scotch carpet much worn
SILVER PLATE.	
1	ladle
1	doz. table spoons
1	doz. tea spoons

The box lists 21 individual walnut pieces and there are several more misc. pieces on other pages. They are also in the 1799 list but scattered throughout the list. The pine pieces are not closely positioned on the list with the walnut pieces possibly indicating they were not in close proximity to the nicer walnut home furnishings at the time of compiling the inventory. Patrick Henry’s Red Hill office is several hundred feet from the house thus likely accounting for the inventoried pieces to be differently positioned on the list.

Figure 18: Portion of the 1802 inventory showing walnut pcs. Copies of inventory lists are courtesy of Red Hill.

Something to keep in mind pertaining to the large press, Henry's pine desk, and his pine document cabinet, would be the fact that Henry's Red Hill law office survived a devastating fire in 1919. The fire destroyed his home and everything of his still in it, with only a handful of personal items having been saved. His office survived unscathed due to the physical separation of the two.

There was also an auction nine years previous on Tuesday, December 20, 1910. Pictured here is an original program for the auction sale. At the time of the auction Henry's law office was as he had left it at the time of his death. That would be 111 years. Patrick Henry's great-granddaughter, Lucy Gray Harrison, had bought out the remaining heirs and was living in the house at the time of the auction.

Knowing that she was going to significantly expand Red Hill it is easily conceivable Lucy realized the monetary importance and value of her great-grandfather's personal belongings. This expansion was completed in 1912. Many of the items the day of the auction were purchased by family members and subsequently returned to Red Hill over the years.

After the fire in 1919 Lucy fully converted Henry's law office into her living quarters until the replacement home was constructed. It is entirely feasible that between the auction of 1910, and the fire of 1919 Lucy sold off or gave away many items to better utilize her diminished living area.

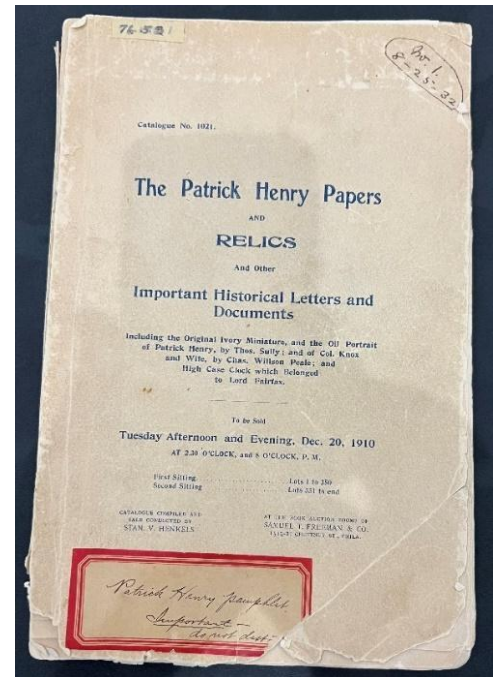


Figure 19: Photo of the original auction book from 1910.

Pictured below, in Figure 20, is what was said to be Henry's desk which now resides at Patrick Henry's Scotchtown in Hanover County, Virginia. Photo courtesy of Cody Youngblood, Curator at Red Hill in Brookneal, Virginia.



Figure 20: This desk was said to be that of Patrick Henry's, purchased at auction at Red Hill in 1910 by Scotchtown in Hanover County, Virginia.

While there is no existing physical proof this was Patrick Henry's desk, the fact it was in the 1910 sale, cataloged as such, coupled with eyewitness accounts of the day, and family lore, it should be accepted until information comes to light to the contrary.

Over the next several pages I will present many facts, physical evidence, and sound reasoning in making the case that this masterfully produced pine press is in fact the lawyer's press of the great American patriot, and founding father, Patrick Henry. I personally happen to be one of those individuals that trusts nothing to coincidence. There is a reason behind every occurrence.

It is my belief this press was built shortly after Mr. Henry left public office in Richmond, Virginia and settled at Pleasant Grove in Prince Edward County, Virginia sometime in late 1786. During this period at Pleasant Grove Patrick Henry worked on some of his most famous and successful legal cases including The British Debts Case dating to the Revolution. Patrick Henry clearly realized he needed to immerse himself back into his private law practice due to his financial condition.

This situation likely created a need to furnish his new law office to make it into the workspace he desired. This may have played a part in Henry ordering a painted pine piece of furniture instead of his more favored walnut. Henry was an extremely intelligent individual and availed himself very easily to the proper individuals he wished to facilitate his specific desires. I'm sure this was the case when he ordered this large press from the locally renowned cabinet shop of the Crow family nearby.

There is certainly quite a bit more in determining a place of origin than just a perfectly matching foot. Here I will show, and discuss, several more identifying details common between this press and products of the Crow Shop.

Figure 21 shows the same style of reinforcing the feet as found on most, if not all, of the known pieces from the Crow Shop. Nails are often found driven through the blocks causing splits yet still tight and holding properly. This likely suggests gluing as well.

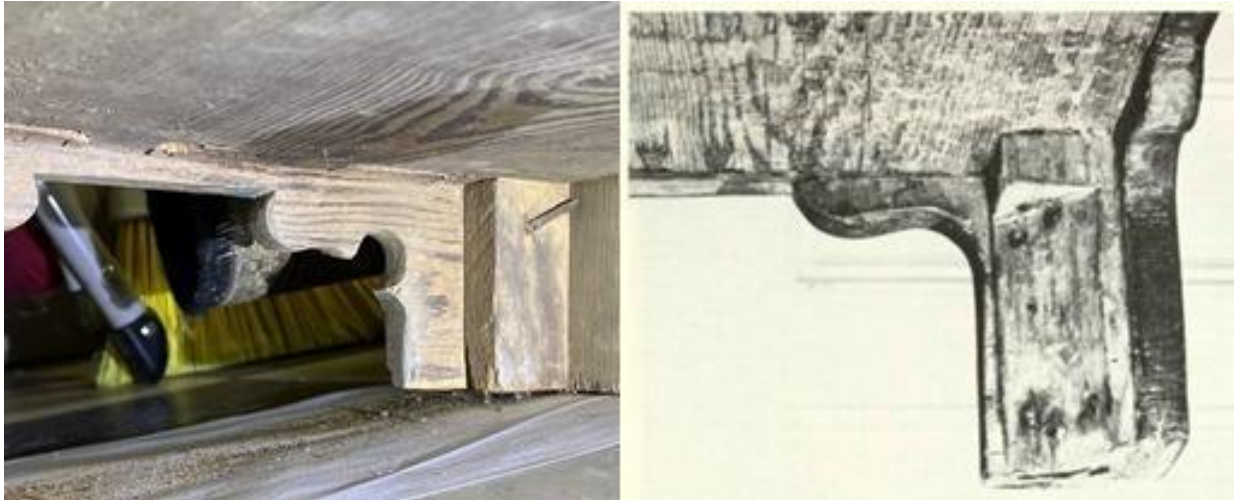


Figure 21: This photo shows the similarities of the cove blocks used to strengthen the feet. Most were nailed and possibly glued. The right example being of a previously shown James Crow Shop piece.

In the descriptions of the various Crow Shop pieces at MESDA it is noted several times that the shelves and drawer slide components are secured by half dovetail joints. This is also the case on the large press. Figure 22 shows where two of the original horizontal shelves were forcibly pushed downward until the upper point of the half dovetail ripped the holding edge outward until it cleared enough to come out. Like other pieces the upper molding of the press is nailed on, and the base molding is shaped on the foot piece.



Figure 22: This photo shows the upper dovetail part of the joint ripped out, to the left, enough for the original shelves to slide from the 90-degree base upon their forced removal.

The large nails used to attach the large tongue and grooved backboards appear to have been made by the same hand as well. It may have been an in-house blacksmith making the necessary hardware.



Figure 23: This photo shows one of the smaller nails attaching the top molding. It is so well placed it is barely visible, top center right.



Figure 24: This photo shows two nearly identically wrought large nails, the left example was found on the back of a James Crow Shop piece in storage at MESDA, the right example is on the blue press. Note the small nail on the right example driven down through the top into the upper molding.

The press happens to be constructed of some of the rarest of the rare material. It is constructed from burly heart pine, often referred to as curly heart pine. It is a genetic occurrence appearing in old growth pine very rarely encountered. Figure 25 shows a company that specializes in burly heart pine. Here is a link to their YouTube video; <https://youtube.be/gOQTNURTD0>. It is very short and extremely interesting.



Figure 25: This is a company that specializes in burly heart pine.



Figure 26: This panel shows several burly heart pine wide boards cut from river recovered old growth logs and newly sawed into beautiful lumber.

As stated, I believe this press pre-dates Henry's arrival at Red Hill. I also believe this press pre-dates the construction of Patrick Henry's document cabinet or desk. In fact, I believe it may have been the inspiration or model for the individual on the plantation credited with the document cabinet's construction. Again, one must accept the family history regarding this piece until further information disproves their lore. Henry's document desk is also made of similar burly heart pine.



Figure 27: This photo shows the design similarities and identical internal divider materials and construction.

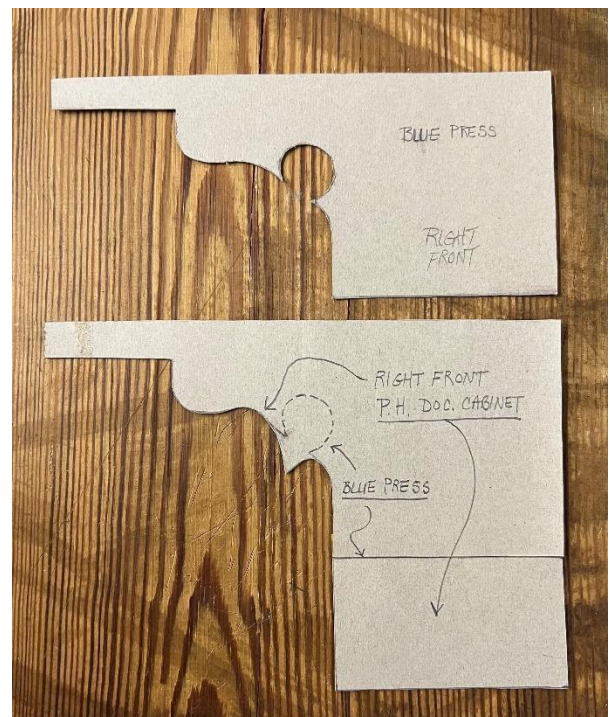
Figures 28 and 29 easily show the commonality of the two pieces of office, or utilitarian furniture, desired and used by Patrick Henry.



Figure 28/29: These two photos show a striking form resemblance, and rare material type.

Figure 30 shows the ease of which a pattern can be created by simply tracing the desired feature. Sans a small hand auger, a simple point or peak can be easily added.

Figure 30: This photo shows two direct tracings I cut out from the right front foot of each piece. The two are virtually identical in overall size.



Henry's document cabinet is in the E. Stuart Grant Museum Room in the Patrick Henry Red Hill Gift Shop. Like the press, the document cabinet is all pine and strewn with sloppy ink stains, again suggesting Henry's knowledge of how he would be using this piece as well. It is entirely acceptable that an individual on the plantation was skilled enough to copy the techniques to make this piece, however, it has a very complex internal design and was quite complicated to assemble. The workmanship suggests to me an accomplished cabinetmaker had to be involved at some level. It also shares a similar foot construction with the press, see Figures 21 and 32.



Figure 31: This is the outside view of Henry's document cabinet. Moldings, wood type, and the bracket feet are close in design to the large press as well.

Figure 32: This foot is on the document cabinet. The cove block has been replaced with a block similar to what was lost.



Figure 33 shows the similarities and the relative ease of copying the construction in creating the document desk/cabinet and the press. It also shows the burly heart pine used (same source?). It is my belief the two pieces were more likely made in the Crow Shop. They both share several dimensions, component measurements, materials, and techniques. Factoring in two centuries of drying and shrinking dimensions are not exact but easily within small fractions of an inch.



Figure 33: This plate shows the inside of the four panels of the press (1, 2, 5 & 6) and the two doors of Henry's document cabinet (3 & 4).

After his death in 1799 it was said that Henry's wife Dorothea took the document cabinet, along with other pieces of furniture, and some family items, across the Staunton River to Seven Islands Plantation where their daughter lived. The desk was subsequently gifted back to Red Hill by the Scott family where it resides today. Due to the size and design of the large press it is unlikely it was removed from Henry's law office. There are several dates ranging from about 1817 to 1839 written in pencil on various parts of the press.

Two of Henry's sons inherited Red Hill, the oldest of which was three at their time of inheritance. The year 1817 (faded and may not be correct) is the earliest suspected date I have found. This date is correct for Henry's son (elder of the two) to have taken over the reins of the day-to-day operation of Red Hill. This son died young, and his co-inheritor and his wife moved in and took over the operation of Red Hill. The large old press was most likely left right in place at least until the 1910 auction. As previously mentioned, Henry's law office remained as he left it until that auction.

All of the Henry family belongings were lost in the house fire in 1919. Personal belongings and furniture items in the hands of other family members and whatever was in the law office were the only things that survived. Fortunately, quite a bit of those items have found their way back to Red Hill. One of Patrick Henry's personal account books, I believe there may have been two, or more, was in the 1910 auction and sold as a "lot" that day for a whopping fifteen dollars.

Henry kept great detailed records of his transactions and financial expenditures. I had the opportunity to read one of Henry's account books at the Library of Virginia. It included many, many entries involving mundane and ordinary day-to-day transactions as well as important items and events such as the purchase of Red Hill Plantation.

Henry did not hesitate hiring riders and freight movers to do his bidding. One particular entry in Henry's account book found on page 36, Figure 34, may provide some insight as to the appearance of Drury on the back of the press, see Figure 36. The only connection to Henry and someone named Drury I found in researching this press is seen in line 4, that of Drury Lacy.

Date	Description	Amount
1790	To Boarding & Learning English till Nov. 10 1791	21 12 6
1791	To paid Miza Lacy	10 0 6
	To paid Drury Lacy	3 5 6
	To bedding	6 - -
	To paid butler Haynes for Taylor's Work	
	To my Account for necessarys at Martinsmiths	
1792	as your Guardian	
May 31	To Cash for Taylors & Rochet money at Dnt. Warfield	18 - -
	To 11 yds Cloth for coat	15 - -
	To 4 yds Cord duroy 2 1/6 of Rachel's pattern	14 - -
	To 4 yds Cheviot 10/- 1 1/2 yds Coating of	19 - -
	To 4 yds Fustian 2 1/6	10 - -
	To 3 yds Linen of - 2 Hats 8/6 - 3 p. Wash 1/8	17 - -
	To 2 p. shoes 12/- 2 hand 4/6 - 2 wheels Linen 1/8	19 3 - -
	2 9 d. 12 d. 11 o. 1 d. 1 o. 1 d. 1 o. 1 d.	

Figure 34: This is a photo of an entry in Henry's account book courtesy of The Virginia State Library, taken by the author. It is filled with information pertaining to his guardianship of his orphaned nephew Johnny Christian. Johnny was Patrick Henry's sister's son.

		Dr		
36	JOHN HENRY CHRISTIAN/ORPHAN			
1790 APRIL	TO BOARDING AND LEARNING ENGLISH 'til NOV 14 th , 1791	21	12	6
1791 NOV 14 th	TO PAID ELIZA HENRY	10	4	6
	TO PAID DRURY LACY	3	5	6
	TO BEDDING	6		
	TO PAID CURTIS HAYNES FOR TAYLORS WORK			
	TO MY ACCOUNT FOR NECESSARYS AT MARTIN SMITHS			
	AS YOUR GUARDIAN			
1792 MAY 31	TO CASH FOR TAYLORS ^{WORK} AND POCKET MONEY AT Doe! ^M (DOCTOR)			
	WARFIELD			

Figure 35: Page 36 of Henry's account book outlines and details many things associated with his raising of his nephew Johnny Christian, to include even his pocket money.

Figure 35 (Figure 34 transcribed) outlines Henry's responsibilities on behalf of his nephew. The date does however align with Henry's time at Pleasant Grove in Prince Edward County, and near Drury Lacy.

As shown in Figure 35 Mr. Henry pays Drury Lacy for the actual teaching of the English as Drury Lacy was the Vice President and acting President of Hampton-Sidney College for the years 1789 to 1797, and taught languages. The name Drury is among the 1,000 to 1,500 most rare, and least used names. The execution of the name Drury is quite crude. It starts with a cursive upper-case D, followed by a crude printed capital R, a lower-case u, another upper-case R and a lower-case backwards "y".



Figure 36: The name Drury was crudely painted on the back of the large press.

Of course, there is no way of telling by whom, and when, the name Drury was added to the piece. It appears as it has been there a very long time and easily could be as old as the piece. It may somehow be possibly linked to an enslaved individual as there is also a small hex sign scratched in the surface of the press near the bottom of the left side, Figure 37.

The six-point hex sign is said to be a sign for good and one of the most important symbols. It is said to have originated in the RA Congo region of Africa and brought to America by slaves. Many of the enslaved individuals in Southside Virginia were said to have originated from this region of Africa.

Again, it is difficult to say when, or who scratched the symbol on the press though it looks to have been there a long time as well. The name Drury and the hex sign had to have been applied by someone with access to the press. The adding of the name Drury could indicate involvement in the making, or assisting in the making, of the piece, or possible ownership of the piece sometime after Henry's death. The sheer mass of the press would surely hamper someone from applying the name as some form of graffiti, or mischief.



Figure 37: This is the hex sign scratched into the left side of the press. It is said to have likely originated in the RA Congo. It is shown with a similar example found on a public library floor in Harlem, New York.

The “one large pine press” is extremely massive, heavy, and difficult for any one person to manipulate it in any form. For whatever reason, it was intentional. I spent countless hours researching the name Drury and a connection to Patrick Henry and the only connection I could find was the aforementioned example written in his own hand. The records of Henry’s enslaved individuals are incomplete, lost, or never existed, thus finding one by the name of Drury did not happen. I could not find any reference to a free person of color in the immediate area by that name either.

I am sure there exists a possibility that some craftsman or slave working on the project in the James Crow Shop could have been named Drury and applied his name as an act of pride for helping with a great piece of furniture for a famous man. It is not some coincidence it is there; there is a reason. Things like this are often encountered thus many scenarios are possible. The interior of the press is literally covered by ink spills, see Figure 38.

It is easily seen this press was some form of workstation for an individual such as a lawyer, or attorney. The shallow depth, changeable interior design, ink stains, and spills, all preclude this press from being used for clean linens or china.

Figure 39 shows various components of Patrick Henry’s known document desk or cabinet. The massive amounts of ink spills present on Henry’s document desk also clearly indicates years of similar writing use. Components of these two pieces of furniture, having been made in the same basic style, and of the same base materials, easily look as if they were components of one piece of furniture.



Figure 38: This composite photo shows the excessive ink spills and stains scattered throughout the large blue press.

Figure 39: This composite photo depicts the identical types of ink spills and stains found in the blue press. These are the shelves, drawers, and surfaces of Patrick Henry's Document writing desk or cabinet.



Pay close attention to the drawer bottom in the lower right corner. It has what appears to be a red sealing wax stain, like those found in the blue press, Figures 40 and 41.

Figure 40 illustrates how Patrick Henry, or someone like him, used this press. It shows sealing wax drops, ink stains, and charring of an under-shelf surface from a grease pot or candle used to melt his red sealing wax of the day. For those of you that do not know about the act of officially sealing a legal document wax was melted and allowed to drop in a specific area, usually beside a signature of someone performing a service, such as an attorney, attesting to facts contained therein the document. Similar to today's notary. The person performing the act had their own specific official seal denoting they were acting in an official or professional capacity.

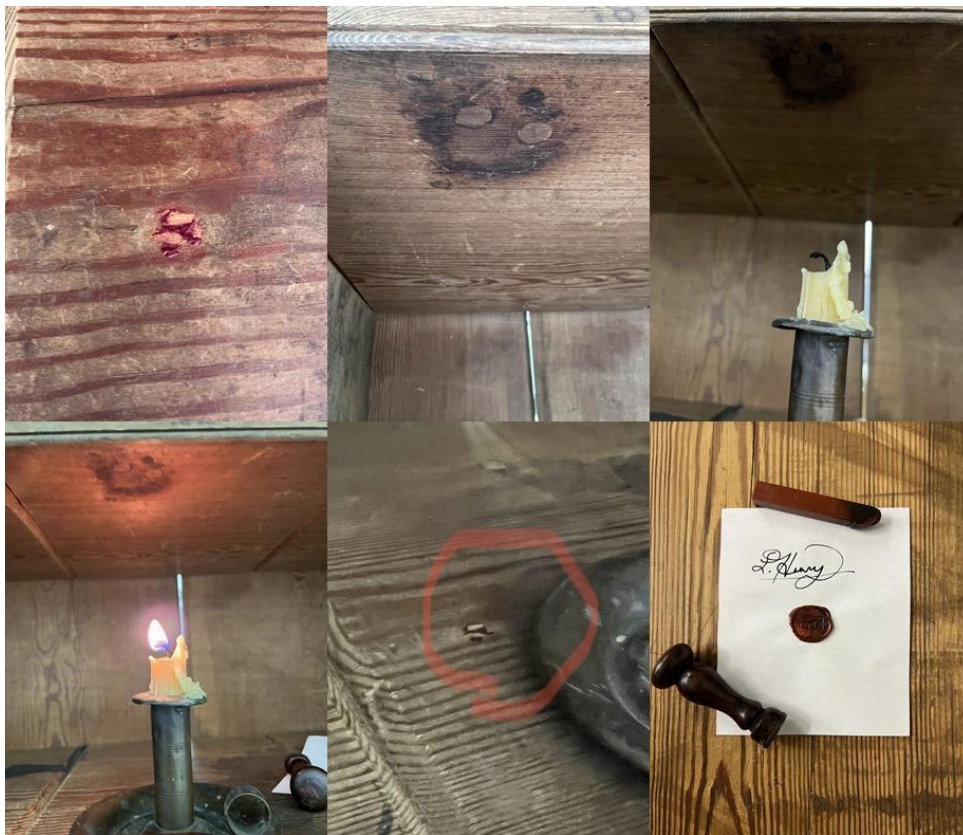


Figure 40: This composite photo shows red sealing wax and stains similar to the example in Henry's document desk. See Figure 40. It also indicates the type of situation Patrick Henry would have performed using this press in the act of affixing his seal on legal documents.

Sealing wax was also used in the sealing together of envelopes for mailing. The predominant color in the 18th century was red due to vermillion being used with shellac or beeswax.

Figure 41 shows an example of Patrick Henry's signature and an 18th century example of a wax stamp that would have had Henry's signet affixed to it. Government officials and attorneys were the predominant users of this process during this period, of which Patrick Henry was both.

Figure 41: This composite photo shows the wax sealer drops and stain found on the work shelf of the press. It also shows a brief YouTube video you can look up showing the process. It is short and simple.

<https://youtu.be/Cjcez07A9qA>



There are extant examples of Patrick Henry's stamp as governor of Virginia, see Figure 42.

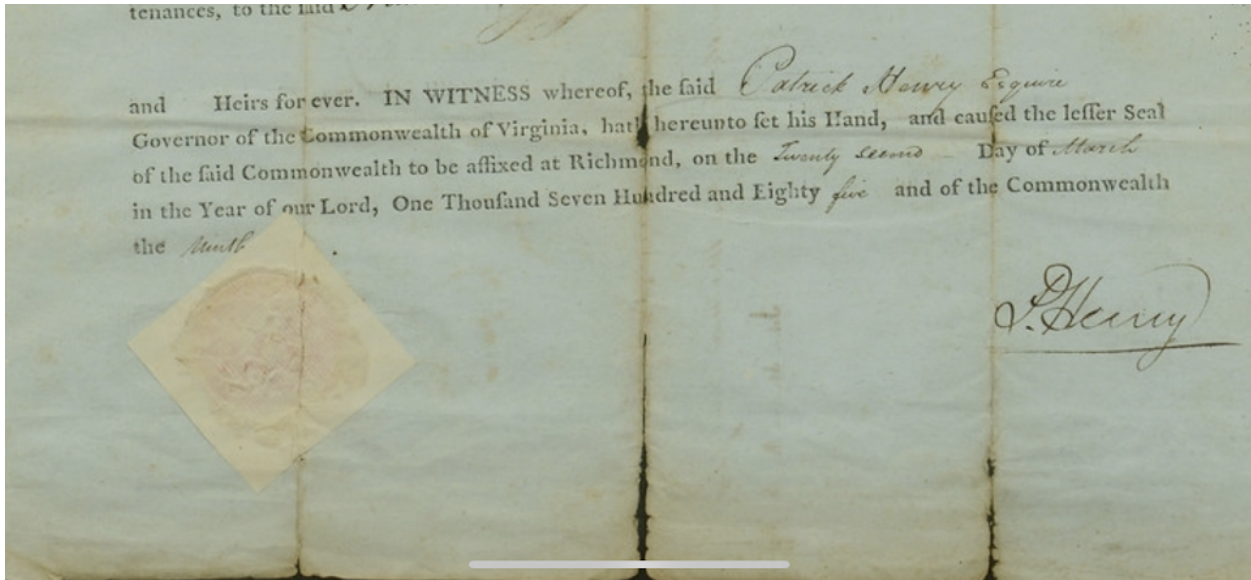


Figure 42: This is a portion of a land grant signed and sealed by Patrick Henry as Governor of Virginia in 1785. It is a portion of a photo of lot 406 from Case Auctions of Nashville, Tennessee included in a July 19th, 2014 public auction sale. Patrick Henry used his powers as governor to affix the Commonwealth's seal. As an attorney and governor Henry was quite used to sealing documents.

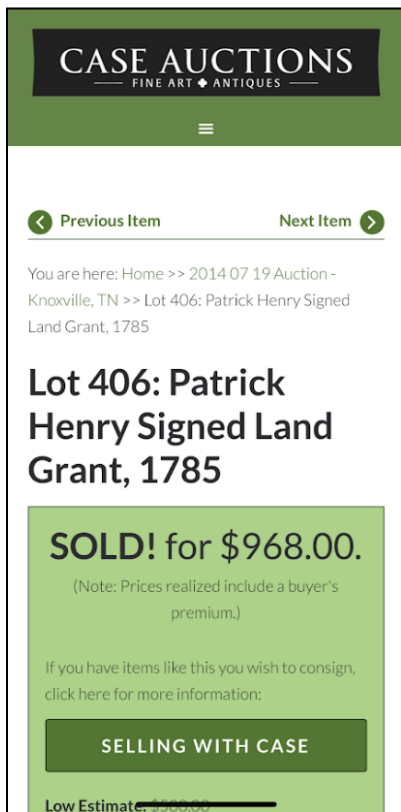


Figure 42 contains information on a legal document and an example of the use of a wax seal to certify the legal legitimacy of this public document.

Figure 43 shows the realized price of the item at public auction. The vast majority of citizens of the day never had occasion to use sealing wax and if they did it was to seal an occasional letter.

Figure 43: This photo gives the lot information and selling price of the document.

Figure 44 depicts something like Patrick Henry would have set up for the use of his sealing process based on the evidence supplied by the large blue press.

Some of the most compelling contributing evidence pointing to the large blue press in fact being Patrick Henry's is the "known" and "unknown" places where this piece has silently spent the entirety of its days.



Figure 44: This photo depicts something like the configuration, and use, as dictated by the physical evidence of the press. Here Henry would have performed the sealing process on legal documents, etc. The flexibility of the ingenious moveable compartmental dividers is also on display.

Figure 45 is a map documenting the only known places where this press has “lived” in direct relation to Red Hill.

- **Orange** designates where Bob’s “picker” found the press.
- **Red** designates Red Hill, Henry’s home.
- **Green** designates the locations of Bob Jean’s Staunton River Antiques shop, Bob’s personal home at the time of the discovery, and the location of Bob’s house at the time of their estate auction.

This auction has been the only known time this piece has been offered for sale in the public domain. Give that some serious thought. This is about a 226-year period of being a silent piece of the surrounding countryside of a sleepy little town in Southside Virginia known as Brookneal. This constitutes the entirety of what is openly known. Collectively these marked locations represent a distance of less than 5 ½ miles. Perhaps someone may come forward in the future that can provide some other information or history of this press. There is no way of determining who, or how many people may have seen the press while it was in the stewardship of Robert “Bob” Jean.

It should be noted that there is a location marked as Winston-on-the-Staunton which is adjacent to the Red Hill designation. Winston-on-the-Staunton, built on the eastern side of the Red Hill property, by Patrick Henry’s son, Edward Winston Henry (1794 - 1872), likely sometime around 1817. His son, Edward, Jr. lived in NY, though buried at Winston, and his grandson, Dandridge Yuille “D.Y.” Henry lived at Winston until his death. Edward, Jr. died sometime before 1904, and D.Y. in June of 1950. Ormonde Smith, an early member of the board at the Red Hill Memorial Foundation, and personal friend of “D.Y.” Henry’s, was responsible for documenting the presence of the large blue press and the fact it was on the property and still in the family as late as 1950.

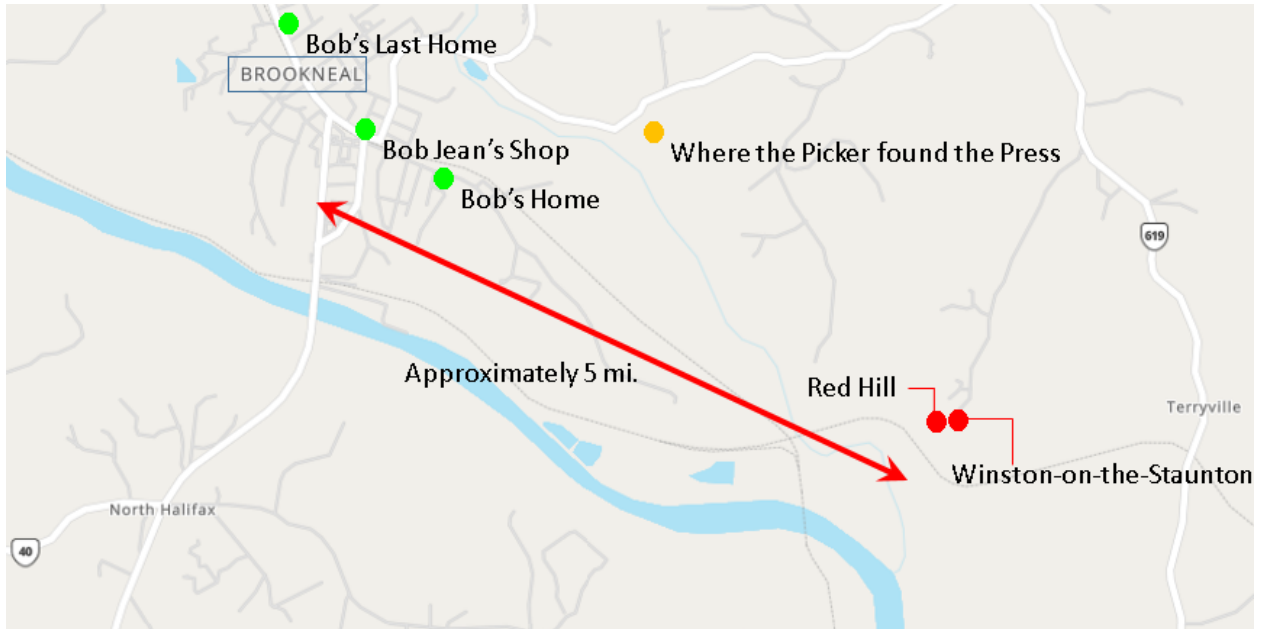


Figure 45: This map shows the only publicly known physical locations for the blue press.

This old “one large pine press” was produced sometime around 1785 to 1790, attributable to the James Crow Shop of nearby Mecklenburg County. The aforementioned 4 places, excluding Red Hill, are the only 4 places this piece has knowingly occupied time and space.

Ladies and gentlemen, providing that you hold any interest on the subject, it is time for you to decide, based upon the facts and evidence presented, whether this “one large pine press” was, in fact, that of the Founding Father, and great American patriot, Patrick Henry. Considering the preponderance of the corroborating evidence, and acting in the capacity of a reasonably prudent individual, it should not be a difficult decision in reaching the conclusion that in fact it was Mr. Henry’s.

After reading and analyzing the preponderance of the evidence one paralegal informed me it was in fact more difficult for her to not believe the press belonged to Mr. Patrick Henry of Virginia.

Before reaching your final decision there is one more huge piece of late developing evidence to be presented and considered, and likely the most important as well. As is often the case, significant facts are revealed as a result of individuals coming forward to contribute critical input after being contacted in the matter pending.

Upon sharing my findings with Mr. Cody Youngblood, curator at the Red Hill-Patrick Henry National Memorial, his initial email response is shown in Figure 46. The information he provided is certainly extremely significant in solidifying the connection between Patrick Henry and his “one large pine press”. In return I emailed a response to Mr. Youngblood inquiring about a documented inventory existing of D. Y. Henry’s belongings. Figure 47 is a copy of his email in response to that specific request.

Figure 46: This screenshot of the email sent to the author by Mr. Cody Youngblood, curator, of the Red Hill-Patrick Henry National Memorial in Brookneal, Virginia clearly establishes the connection of the press as having been owned by Patrick Henry, and clearly not a dining room piece of furniture.

This was a great read! You've done thorough research and I applaud you for tracking down this wonderful information.

I've done some extra research on my end which you might find useful. Since the press may come back to us, I figured it only fair for me to do what I can!

In 1950 at the death of Dandridge Yuille "D. Y." Henry in 1950, a great-grandson of Patrick Henry, a "one pine press, stained blue" was found to be in the dining room of D. Y.'s home. This home was Winston-on-the-Staunton. This information on the press's location came from Ormonde Smith, an early trustee of the Foundation who personally knew D. Y.

Winston-on-the-Staunton, also called "Winston", was built by Patrick Henry's son Edward Winston (1794-1872) in 1832. Winston was originally part of Red Hill, but Edward and his brother John agreed to split the property in two for each of them to live on. Descendants of Edward Henry lived on the property until 1950 when D. Y. died, and the house burned to the ground shortly thereafter.

We have several photos of the interior of Winston before it burned, but unfortunately none of them show the dining room. I have no doubt, however, that the press D. Y. Henry owned is the same one that came from Patrick Henry that is now in your possession. This is because Winston borders Red Hill on its eastern side and many items were passed down to Henry descendants at Winston.

Figure 47: This email in response to my email requesting a copy of any inventoried items of Mr. D. Y. Henry's explains how the information was recorded.

The "inventory" is actually a list of Patrick Henry items in private collections, which was compiled in the 1980s by one of our former directors.

I have attached a digital copy of that list with the press's entry. The other entries have been omitted for privacy reasons.

I'll keep you posted if I find anything else!

Cody Youngblood

Curator

Red Hill-Patrick Henry National Memorial

Figure 48 details the origins of the information and the individuals responsible, and the years for the recording of this important information.

<u>Inventory of Patrick Henry Possessions</u> Compiled by Patrick Daily			
<u>OWNER</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
(31) D. Y. Henry	1 small table, 2" x 3" walnut One pine press, stained blue (dining room piece)	Brookneal, VA	Ormonde Smith 1950

Figure 48: This is a digital copy of the recording of the information specifically listing the “One pine press, stained blue (dining room piece)”, and the individuals responsible for the recording of the information.

In reality the “one pine press, stained blue” (dining room piece) descended directly in the Henry family until at least the year 1950.

In closing I submit to you the entirety of the preceding information clearly presents an extremely strong case in establishing the owner, and originator, of this “one large pine press, stained blue”, to be none other than the larger-than-life American patriot and Founding Father Patrick Henry of Virginia. This press is clearly unique in form, and stature, and simply put is a National Treasure.