

# PROMINENT FAMILIES OF THE PERIOD

## FREEMAN SCHERMERHORN CLENCH 1795-1877

*His furniture is admired worldwide.*



WHO HE WAS, AND HOW HE GOT HERE:

Freeman S. Clench left his home in Schenectady, and moved to Canada in 1816. After the War of 1812 many Americans were heading for the mid-west, but Clench, for reasons unknown (though he was rumoured to be fleeing the sheriff), headed north. He settled in Kingston for a few years, where he worked as a cabinet maker and married Eliza Cory in 1820. In 1824, he moved his family to Cobourg and established a cabinet-making



*Freeman S. & Eliza Cory Clench  
(paintings by Paul Kane)*

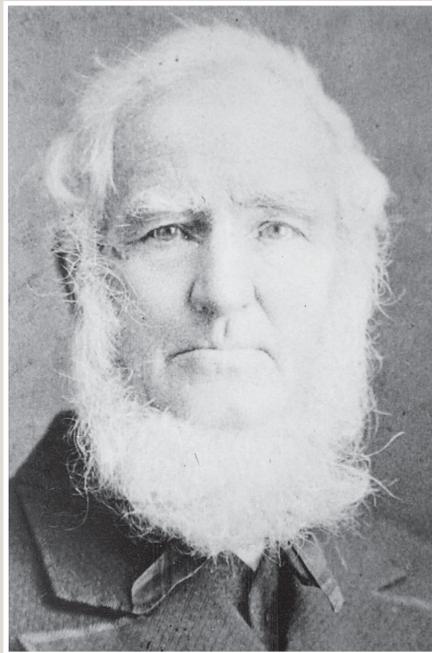
business that **produced furniture that rivalled the best in the colony.**

Today his pieces are much sought after by collectors.



## WHAT HE DID HERE:

Clench owned about an acre and half of land where Victoria Hall now stands. In 1838 he sold the property to the newly incorporated town as the site of the municipal market. For a time his house probably served as the first town hall. About 1848 he built a house he called "*The Chestnuts*", now addressed as 134 King St. West. The family continued to own it until 1899.



### **Clench prospered in Cobourg.**

In the 1861 census he owned a two-story frame house, two coaches, two horses, a cow and \$6000.00 invested in his business. The family's rising position was recognized by his wife who noted in a letter that her sons were now being educated alongside the sons of gentlemen. Two daughters, Harriet and Eliza, were educated at a ladies college at Hamilton. At any given time he employed a number

of craftsmen and assistants. The business expanded to include a retail outlet on Division Street, where they brought in furniture from other manufactures to sell alongside their own.

During the mid-1830s **Paul Kane was one of his employees.** Kane painted furniture - but years later, after he had become a celebrated artist, he returned to marry Clench's daughter, Harriet.



*"The Chestnuts" 134 King St. West*

Three Clench sons, Thomas, William and Cory, worked at various times in the business. William left Cobourg. Cory eventually apprenticed as a printer with Richard D. Chatterton, later becoming editor of the Cobourg Star with H.J. Ruttan. That left Tom Clench as his father's only partner. Freeman S. Clench continued to work until shortly before his death in 1877. Mrs. Eliza Clench died in 1888.

Tom inherited the business and immediately sold it. Very soon after, he fell to his death when he slipped off the Port Hope Railway viaduct while returning to Cobourg on foot. The viaduct was often used as a pedestrian walkway. His sister, Eliza, married lawyer John Douglas Armour, whose distinguished career culminated with his being raised to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1902, and three months later being appointed to the Alaska Boundary Commission.