

PROMINENT FAMILIES OF THE PERIOD

JOHN FIELD 1773-1880

He established a thriving business and a thriving family both of which contributed significantly to a maturing community.



The home of Corelli Collard Field, son of John Field King Street West c. 1890.

WHO HE WAS:

John Field was born in Somersetshire, England. After being apprenticed as an assistant in a number of stores in Taunton he went into business for himself in London. He learned the retail trade well and passed his Cobourg business to sons and grandsons.

HOW HE GOT HERE:

Field was almost 50 when he first visited Cobourg to assess the potential opportunities immigration might offer and to find a suitable location for opening a store. Two years later he returned with his wife Martha Woodbury (1780-1857) and their family. The rolling hills of Northumberland attracted Field because they reminded him of his native Somerset. John and Martha had 11 children. Almost all resided in Cobourg. **Many were members of the Congregationalists, leading the locals to nick-name the Congregational Church, the Field Church.** There are still descendants of the Field family living in Cobourg.



*Myra Field Kerr,
daughter of Wm
and Martha Field*

WHAT HE DID HERE:

With a partner, Field opened up a general variety store in a small frame building at the south-east corner of King and Third Streets. They moved to Bagot Street when Victoria Hall was built and in 1893 moved again to 360 William Street. By the 1840s Field had built a handsome Regency house (323 King Street West) and a three story brick commercial block that housed his dry goods store until 1933.

John Field was described as a prudent and careful manager of his business. He accumulated large real estate holdings including farms and town buildings with a considerable sum in mortgages. He was responsible for the construction of the Taunton Block on the east side of Division Street just south of King in 1858.

The Field store was passed on to his sons, John Collard and Corelli Collard Field and in 1898 to a third generation, John P and Fred with their brothers Harry and Cyrus. **The store at its peak covered over 8000 square feet containing goods from all over the world.**



Field and Brother's storefront on north side of King Street opposite Victoria Hall

One unidentified local described the atmosphere of the store as, "the smell of quality, when you opened the door; there was an odour, a pleasant odour, bringing with it in some way, the atmosphere of rich salons of Paris or the fabled importing houses of London of another day". He went on to say "A cap or tie from Field and Brothers curried a distinctive air and out wore any of the perhaps flashier but cheaper products of other smaller establishments."