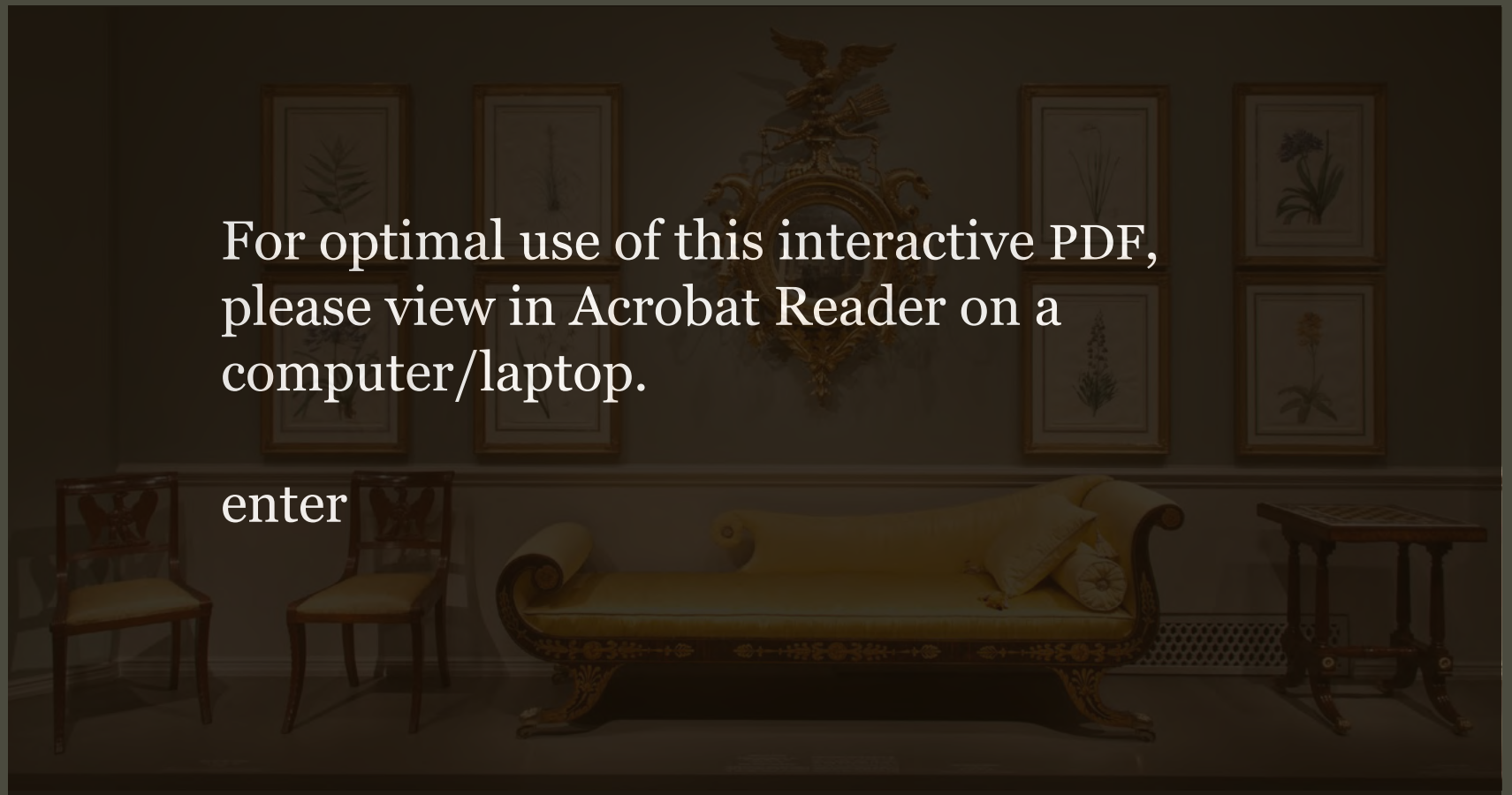

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Masterpieces of American Furniture

FROM THE KAUFMAN COLLECTION

1700–1830

National Gallery of Art

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Masterpieces of American Furniture from the Kaufman Collection, 1700–1830 offers visitors to the nation's capital an unprecedented opportunity to view some of the finest furniture made by colonial and post-revolutionary American artisans. This presentation includes more than one hundred objects from the promised gift, announced in 2010, of the collection formed by Linda H. Kaufman and the late George M. Kaufman. From a rare Massachusetts William and Mary japanned dressing table to Philadelphia's outstanding rococo expressions and the early and later classical styles of the new federal republic, the Kaufman Collection presents a compendium of American artistic talent over more than a century of history. This promised gift marks the Gallery's first acquisition of American decorative arts and dramatically transforms the collection, complementing the existing holdings of European decorative arts.

The interior of the Kaufmans' house in Norfolk, Virginia (pages 2 – 3, 5)

The Kaufman Collection represents five decades' pursuit of the highest quality in American craftsmanship. The Kaufmans made their first acquisition in the late 1950s with the purchase of a chest of drawers to furnish an apartment in Charlottesville when George was completing his MBA at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business. Natives of Norfolk, Virginia, they returned afterward to their hometown. By the early 1970s their collection had grown as had their passion for excellence. As the young couple's interest increased, they frequented the major museums with rich holdings of American arts. They learned from curators at institutions including Yale University Art Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Winterthur Museum. The Kaufmans focused on the finest objects made by pre-revolutionary craftsmen as well as those working in the new federal republic. Their extensive collection provides rich insight into the stylistic preferences of patrons and the skills of artisans in the nation's major coastal urban centers — Boston and Newport in the Northeast, New York and Philadelphia in the Mid-Atlantic, and Baltimore, Williamsburg, and Charleston in the South. The depth, variety, and superior quality of this furniture offer a glimpse at a social, fashion-conscious society in America.

STYLES

WILLIAM AND MARY STYLE
(c. 1710 – 1735)

QUEEN ANNE STYLE
(c. 1735 – 1760)

CHIPPENDALE OR ROCOCO STYLE
(c. 1750 – 1780)

FEDERAL OR EARLY CLASSICAL STYLE
(c. 1785 – 1810)

LATE CLASSICAL OR EMPIRE STYLE
(c. 1805 – 1830)

1

WILLIAM AND MARY STYLE
(c. 1710 – 1735)

The William and Mary style, named for the English monarchs William III (reigned 1689 – 1702) and Mary II (reigned 1689 – 1694), is characterized by bold turnings and more attenuated proportions than earlier seventeenth-century styles, and surfaces ornamented with highly patterned veneers or painted decoration. This William and Mary dressing table (1) is the earliest piece of furniture in the collection. The ball feet, trumpet-shaped legs, and curvilinear crossed stretchers are earmarks of this early eighteenth-century style. The table would most likely have been used in a bedroom with a small looking glass on top. The painted decoration is a rare survival of a technique called japanning, modeled after Asian lacquer work that was popularized in England by the last quarter of the seventeenth century with the publication of *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing* (London, 1688) by John Stalker and George Parker. By the 1710s a number of English japanners made their way to the colonies, primarily Boston, and decorated high chests, dressing tables, and clock cases in both the William and Mary and Queen Anne styles. Many of the motifs for this decoration were drawn from Stalker and Parker's work, but the rare, remarkably well-preserved hunting scene on the top of this dressing table, is unlike any decoration known to date on American japanned case furniture.

2

QUEEN ANNE STYLE
(c. 1735 – 1760)

Following the William and Mary period, the Queen Anne style was named for the English monarch in whose reign (1702 – 1714) it became popular. Though this style appeared earlier in England, by about 1730 – 1735 it was embraced by colonial craftsmen. One of the major changes that distinguished this style from earlier ones was the introduction of generously curved cabriole legs ending in pad feet, trifid feet, or pointed slipper feet. There was little surface ornament in this period, though sometimes carved, inlaid, or gilt shells were added to chairs and case pieces. Chairs have serpentine crest rails rounded at each end, rear stiles and splats shaped to fit the sitter's back, solid splats, and compass-shaped (or rounded) seats. The Queen Anne style reached its fullest expression in Philadelphia, as seen in the side chairs made there around 1740 – 1760 (2): almost every element is curvilinear. With carved shells in the crest rail and the center of the front seat rail, and trifid feet, these Philadelphia chairs are a symphony of curves. The leaflike carving that cascades down the knees of the cabriole legs anticipates the Chippendale style with its elaborately carved surfaces.

CHIPPENDALE OR ROCOCO STYLE
(c. 1750 – 1780)

The Chippendale style, named for the English designer Thomas Chippendale (c. 1718 – 1779), emerged in Great Britain in the 1740s and flourished in the colonies in the mid-to-late eighteenth

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century. It is also called “rococo” in reference to the European style characterized by scrolling, intricate forms. The plain curvilinear shapes of the Queen Anne style were ornamented with carved floral, foliate, and shell-like motifs, sometimes strong and robust, and other times delicate and trailing. Chair splats were pierced, often with intricately detailed designs; cabriole legs terminated in ball-and-claw feet, and occasionally “hairy paw” feet. Some of the most elaborate Chippendale furniture was produced in Philadelphia, where wealthy patrons desired furniture such as high chests and dressing tables with applied foliate ornament.

The form and ornament of the side chairs made for John and Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader in 1770 – 1771 (3) are derived primarily from *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker’s Director* (London, 1754, 1762), a book of furniture designs published by Thomas Chippendale. Referred to as “ribband [ribbon] back” chairs in the *Director*, they are perhaps the closest to English models of all the Philadelphia seating furniture in this period. The overall design of these chairs is the most ornate of any American rococo seating furniture. Especially unusual is the treatment of the seats, upholstered half over the rails with carving on the lower exposed portion. The superbly carved cabriole legs terminate in rare hairy paw feet. Only seven chairs from this set are known to have survived to date; they represent the epitome of taste and fashion in the colonies.

FEDERAL OR EARLY CLASSICAL STYLE (c. 1785 – 1810)

Before the American Revolution broke out in 1774, styles were

changing in Britain where Scottish architect Robert Adam introduced new fashions with his classically inspired designs. Archaeological excavations in Italy and Greece spurred a keen interest in the classical world, and books illustrated with detailed drawings of antiquities undoubtedly influenced architecture and interior decoration. Ancient Roman wall paintings and Greek vases provided decorative motifs.

The Revolutionary War initially precluded major changes in style on this side of the Atlantic, but by the early 1780s classical taste began to appear in the work of American artisans. The neoclassical style is also called Federal in America because it began to appear here on the eve of the establishment of a new republic with a federal government. With its light and linear forms it differed dramatically from the Chippendale style, capturing the attention of urban patrons and craftsmen. Instead of boldly carved foliate ornament, furniture makers favored motifs from antiquity and patterned veneers and inlay.

The shape of seating furniture also saw a dramatic difference with vase or urn-shaped backs and square, tapered legs. A letter written in 1787 from Bostonian David Spear to his fiancée, Marcy Higgins, on Cape Cod suggests this startling change:

> Mr. Bright, . . . is to make all the mahogany furniture . . . and I doubt not but that we shall have very good furniture from him — the chairs are different from any you ever saw but they are very pretty, of the newest Taste. (Robert Bartlett Haas, "The Forgotten Courtship of David and Marcy Spear, 1785 – 1787," *Old Time New England* 52 [Winter 1962], 70.)

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This New York armchair illustrates this change in style with its urn-shaped back encompassing delicate drapery swags (4). Oval-back chairs such as the beautifully painted examples once owned by Elias Hasket Derby, a renowned merchant of Salem, Massachusetts, were rarer (5). Echoing English precedents, painted chairs decorated with naturalistic flora and peacock feathers were likely designed for use in new-fashioned oval or octagonal rooms whose doors opened onto terraces and gardens. These elite late-eighteenth-century painted chairs were the forerunners of many of the fancy painted chairs produced in the first half of the nineteenth century for a more extensive popular audience.

Changes in architecture and the lifestyle of the leisure class also resulted in the introduction of new types of furniture such as ladies' worktables, sideboards, and large dining tables. The New York sideboard (c. 1793 – 1795) (6) was made for Connecticut patron Oliver Wolcott Jr. (1760 – 1833). From Litchfield, Connecticut, Wolcott was the first comptroller and secretary of the Department of the Treasury (1795 – 1800) under George Washington. The overall form of this sideboard is typical of New York Federal sideboards, but its bold inlaid decoration is distinctive and makes it the most elaborate known example. Richly patterned veneers, bellflower swags, and even larger drapery swags with fringe and tassels ornament the front; elaborate bellflower inlay trails down the tapered legs. The sideboard was likely the result of client-craftsman collaboration, definitely meant to impress Wolcott's political friends and Connecticut neighbors.

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LATE CLASSICAL OR EMPIRE STYLE (c. 1805 – 1830)

The first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed another significant change in style. The classical world continued to be the primary source of inspiration, but now its influence came via France and its new emperor, Napoleon. Hence, this later classical style is called the Empire style. Its influence was felt in England through Thomas Hope, the son of a Scottish banking family, who had lived on the Continent. Shortly after his move to London he published classically inspired designs in his book *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). This new style soon appeared in more widely distributed English and French publications that reached a broad American audience.

Unlike the light and linear Federal shapes, the Empire style reintroduced curvilinear forms favoring more robust proportions. Some chairs and couches imitated ancient prototypes like Grecian *klismos* chairs (7) (see 18) and *curule* stools, side chairs (8), and settees (see 19). Grecian taste was ubiquitous as ladies wore dresses inspired by classical Greek styles while reclining on "Grecian" couches (9) with scrolled ends. The ornament was also derived from antiquity and included sculptural animal-paw feet as well as dolphins and hippocampi (sea horses) that appear on mirror frames. Highly patterned veneers, now accented with gilded decoration, continued to be used to brilliant effect. Bold foliate carving returned. New types of furniture came into fashion, such as pier tables (placed against a short wall, called a pier, separating two windows), center tables (placed in the middle of a parlor), and great round mirrors surmounted with eagles (see 32).

COASTAL URBAN CENTERS

BOSTON

NEWPORT

PHILADELPHIA

BALTIMORE

WILLIAMSBURG

CHARLESTON

10

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BOSTON

By about 1725 the coastal region of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was a flourishing mercantile area with Boston at its hub. First- and second-generation English settlers looked to their motherland for the latest fashions as various artisans arrived to fulfill the needs of this growing colony. In 1730 the population of Boston was approximately 13,000, with upward of one hundred craftsmen who created a wide variety of furniture for an increasingly sophisticated and affluent community. Imported English furniture served as models for artisans trained in the colony, and the plentiful timber resources—walnut, maple, cherry, white pine, poplar, and chestnut—provided fine hardwoods and secondary woods for the extensive furniture trade.

This stately Boston Queen Anne high chest (10) is a superior example of Boston craftsmanship and one of the finest of its kind, with carved and gilt shells, cabriole legs and pad feet, and curvilinear broken scroll pediment. The highly patterned veneered surface of the facade with inlaid stars in the tympanum recalls the William and Mary style, while the carved and gilt shells and fluted pilasters are features of the stylish new Queen Anne style.

Marble-top side tables were rare in the eighteenth century and this remarkable example represents some of the finest Boston workmanship (11). The stylized foliate carving on the cabriole legs and the ball-and-claw feet with distinctive raked-back talons are indicative of Boston style in the Chippendale period. When this table was offered to the Kaufmans, the condition of the mahogany frame was so pristine that its age was questioned. No family history came with the table but upon close scrutiny a small red-

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edged label bearing the name “Sever” was found glued inside the frame. Research revealed that William Sever (1729 – 1809), a wealthy merchant of Kingston, Massachusetts, was known to have owned an unusual turret-top tea table along with Chinese porcelain teawares and a silver teapot. A c. 1900 photograph of the front hall of the Sever house depicted the very same marble-top table. It was well preserved because it had never left the family home until 1951, when the contents of the house were sold at auction.

NEWPORT

Though Rhode Island’s colonial capital of Newport was a small community in the eighteenth century, it was broadly diverse due to the colony’s long history of religious freedom. With a superior harbor for shipping, it had a wealthy merchant class largely involved in the sugarcane and molasses trade with the West Indies. Imported molasses made from sugarcane grown on plantations in the islands supplied Newport’s lucrative rum industry. In 1769 there were upward of ten distilleries in the town. Hence, the cabinetmakers of Newport had a ready clientele for high-quality furniture, and they were more than able to meet that demand. The patrons and makers did not favor highly florid carved ornament, but instead they preferred the plainer yet distinctive blockfront style that had first appeared in Boston. Only the finest and densest imported mahogany was used for this furniture, where the drawer fronts were shaped from a thick piece of wood and adorned with masterfully carved and applied shells, as seen in this bureau table (12). This specialized form of furniture

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was intended to be used in a bedroom. Having drawers like a bureau, it also served as a dressing table, perhaps with a mirror on top for a woman to arrange her hair or apply makeup.

Another uniquely Newport creation is the mahogany tea table (13) with undulating sides, cabriole legs with intaglio carving, and exquisitely articulated ball-and-claw feet. The talons are carved so that they stand free, leaving a void between the back of the talon and the ball. This is a particular characteristic of Newport furniture seen on very costly pieces. It does not appear in any other region in the colonies.

PHILADELPHIA

By the 1750s Philadelphia was the largest colonial city, having more than 25,000 religious and ethnically diverse residents. In the forefront of sophistication and keenly aware of London fashions, its wealthiest citizens desired more elaborately ornamented objects than those made in other colonial centers. Native-born as well as London-trained artisans were in demand as rich merchants and entrepreneurs sought the latest style.

This magnificent Philadelphia desk and bookcase (14), made between 1755 and 1765, is one of the rarest examples of Chippendale American furniture and exemplifies the rococo taste. The monumental upper bookcase has a frieze of triglyphs and rosettes surmounted by a finely carved pitch-pediment that echoes pre-revolutionary architecture as illustrated in contemporaneous design books. The abundance and quality of the carving attest to its creator's talent as well as to the status that it must have conferred on its owner. Centered in the pitch-pediment is a carved

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mahogany bust (detail, 14) believed to represent the well-known English historian Catharine Macaulay. A prominent political activist in London who supported Englishman John Wilkes, Macaulay was an early proponent of liberty for the American colonists. By the mid-1760s, she was portrayed in numerous English paintings, prints, ceramics, and sculptures, some of which were fashioned as affordable images available to a wide segment of the public. Carved busts of males are found on a small number of richly ornamented Philadelphia case pieces, but this image of a female English political activist is especially unusual.

BALTIMORE

In the middle of the eighteenth century Baltimore was but a small town with a limited number of wooden dwellings; the harbor city of Annapolis was the capital of Maryland. By the time of the Revolution the tide turned as Baltimore merchants grew wealthy thanks to that city's deep harbor, which made it a major commercial port. By the late 1780s the city was growing by leaps and bounds with many new brick houses and an ever-increasing taste for fashionable furniture. Toward the end of the century the elite were building elegant country houses to escape the heat of the summers, and the English fashion for light and elegant painted furniture suited their large entertaining rooms that opened onto porches and terraced gardens. As the nineteenth century dawned and the population continued to grow, Baltimore artisans—especially Hugh and John Finlay—became known for their classically inspired, richly painted furniture. The elegant Baltimore Grecian couch (9) is somewhat of a

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trompe l'oeil (literally, "fool the eye") product, with the frame painted in imitation of imported rosewood and embellished with gilt ornament to resemble costly imported ormolu (gilt brass). Another classical seating form that Baltimore artisans executed in a dramatic manner was the *klismos* side chair (15).

WILLIAMSBURG

The colonial capital of Virginia for eighty years, Williamsburg was a bustling center of activity when the House of Burgesses, the principal ruling body of elected and appointed representatives, was in session. However, in that agrarian society, the population was dramatically reduced during much of the year as the elected officials returned to their plantations elsewhere to manage daily affairs. Through the influence of the royal governors the most fashionable Virginians came to desire English furniture or locally made imitations. This Williamsburg tea table (16) differs from those made in most other colonial regions because it is closely modeled on English "china tables," which had a railing (called a gallery) around the perimeter to keep the teawares in place.

CHARLESTON

In 1775 Charleston was the fourth-largest city in the America with a population of 12,800. The wealthy planters from the surrounding low country spent much of the year in their townhouses in the city. As in Virginia, the plantation economy of South Carolina looked to England for many fashionable products. When not importing English furniture, sophisticated clients

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desired American-made versions of the same furniture that was popular on the other side of the Atlantic, such as tea tables with a central pillar and double chests (or chest-on-chests). Southerners tended to favor the clothes press for storing textiles, including linens and clothing. This Charleston Federal clothes press (17) is one of the most elaborate examples known, with extraordinary figured mahogany veneers and light wood inlay. Made in two parts, both of which are serpentine-shaped across the front, the inlay below the top cornice simulates an architectural frieze balanced at the base with paterae inlay on the straight bracket feet and bellflower inlay on the canted corners of the feet.

TYPES OF FURNITURE

SEATING FURNITURE

TABLES

DESKS

CHESTS

LOOKING GLASSES

CLOCKS

2

3

4

18

7

15

SEATING FURNITURE

Chairs

Stools, chairs, and couches (or sofas) have always been a principal piece of furniture in any interior, and throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries their shape and ornamentation changed as different styles became popular. Sometimes the change was subtle, as from the Queen Anne (2) to the Chippendale (3) style, and sometimes more dramatic as from the Chippendale to the Federal (4) and Empire (7, 18) styles.

One of the most distinctive shapes of side chairs in the Empire style is known as the *klismos*, after the ancient Greek word for this type of chair. Different regional centers interpreted the *klismos* in various ways. A painted example from Baltimore (15), a brass-inlaid chair from Philadelphia (18), and another, dramatically shaped chair from Boston (7) show each city's preference for design and ornament. The brilliantly painted Baltimore chair (15), attributed to the noted craftsmen John (1777 – 1851) and Hugh Finlay (1781 – 1831), has the style's characteristic deeply swept back and broad tablet top. The Philadelphia chair (18) presents a different profile and is embellished with cut brass set into rosewood panels and ebony accents. The deeply curved back and tablet top of the Boston example (7) rely mostly on carved ornament to unify the design, as with the three-part drapery swag across the back that echoes the curves in other parts of the chair. The carving on the tablet top, front seat rail, and legs makes this particular Boston *klismos* an outstanding example.

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Settees

A rare form in all periods is the settee, a small couch usually designed to accommodate two people. This New York example (19) derives from the ancient *curule*, a seat with X-shaped supports that also inspired stools in the early nineteenth century. The carved drapery swags and lightning bolts tied with a delicate ribbon on the crest rail are typical ornament for New York furniture of this period. A cushion would have most likely been used on top of the caned seat to protect ladies' sheer Greek-style dresses from damage.

Grecian Couches

Among the new forms derived from antiquity was the Grecian couch (9), characterized by an asymmetrical profile, one end being higher than the other. With scrolling ends these fashionable couches were made in every major city along the Eastern seaboard and were available for a variety of prices. This example of about 1810 – 1830 highlights the preference for painted furniture in Baltimore. Recalling more expensive materials, the frame of this Grecian couch is "grained" to resemble costly rosewood and painted in imitation of more lavish ormolu (mercury-gilded brass).

TABLES

By the end of the eighteenth century new types of tables evolved to suit current architectural styles and meet the needs of a growing population with increased leisure time. Ladies' work tables were

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one of these new specialized creations, as women had more time for needlework and sewing projects. At this time larger rooms specifically for dining could accommodate multipart dining tables. Other innovations of the Empire period included pier tables, meant to be placed on the narrow wall or "pier" between two windows, and center tables. Both pier and center tables often had marble tops.

Tea Tables

Tea, coffee, and chocolate drinking were among the most popular social customs. By the mid-eighteenth century tea tables were made in most regions and they remained popular well into the nineteenth century. Different shapes of tables—rectangular, oval, and circular—were used to hold tea services. Both American ingenuity and British influence can be observed in the tea tables made in the different regions, such as the distinctive examples from Philadelphia, Newport, and Williamsburg. The Philadelphia example (originally owned by Michael and Miriam Simon Gratz, married 1769) and the rare Williamsburg example (16) recall English precedents with the gallery, or railing, around the perimeter of the top. The Newport table (13) is an original American creation with curvilinear sides, intaglio carved knees, and rare undercut ball-and-claw feet. The circular Philadelphia table (20), with a central pillar, has a mechanism below the top (known as a birdcage) that allows the top to turn—perhaps making it easier to pass along a freshly poured cup of tea.

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Gaming Tables

Playing cards was a popular leisure activity in the eighteenth century. By the 1790s more and more card tables were produced, usually in pairs. Federal card tables, with variously shaped tops and square tapered legs, were designed to be stored against a wall and, at first, appear to be half a table. For use as card tables, they were moved into the room. The top was flipped open and rested on a leg that was swung out to support it. Made, signed, and dated by Robert McGuffin of Philadelphia in 1807, this card table epitomizes the light and linear Federal style in its form, geometric ornament, and use of expensive veneers (21). The sixteen satinwood rays on the top show superior craftsmanship. The dark wood ovals, ellipses, and thin, dark inlaid lines (called stringing) further articulate the masterfully designed undulating shape of the tabletop.

The form of card tables changed in the Empire period. Instead of four legs with one that would swing out to support the top, now there was a central pillar atop four splayed and curved legs. The folded top would rotate on the frame, then flip completely open to rest flat. A brilliantly decorated Baltimore card table (22) exemplifies the post-revolutionary taste for painted furniture in that city. It was likely one of a pair and perhaps even part of a larger suite of painted furniture.

Another unusual form that reflects the penchant for playing backgammon and chess is seen in a delicately fashioned gaming table attributed to the renowned Boston cabinetmakers John

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and Thomas Seymour (23). Unique in American furniture, this compact little table has three uses—as a small occasional table when the sliding top is turned to a plain surface, for playing chess when the top is flipped open to reveal the checkerboard side, and for backgammon when the top is removed and the backgammon playing surface appears. Elaborate satinwood veneers and narrow, light-and-dark line inlay appear on the sides. The chess pieces are likely original to the table.

Center Tables

The center table, a form introduced in the Empire period, became the focal point of the parlor throughout the nineteenth century. Inspired by tables depicted in Roman frescoes and mosaics, center tables with great paw feet and multistone tops imported from Italy were the ultimate in high-style Empire fashion. Philadelphian Edward Coleman (died 1841) owned one of these tables (24) and its mate, which graced the double parlor in his home. In 1826 Coleman traveled abroad, presumably to purchase furnishings for his recently acquired townhouse, and acquired the tops for his tables in Italy. When the tops arrived, he chose the most renowned craftsman in town, French émigré cabinetmaker Anthony Quervelle, to fashion the elaborate mahogany frames. The bold scrolled legs with massive paw feet, carved acanthus leaves, and trailing grapevines are characteristic of Quervelle's finest work.

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DESKS

The standard form of desk throughout most of the eighteenth century was one with a slant or fall front. With three or four drawers in the lower section for storage, the desk has a slanted lid that opens and is supported by narrow slides that pull out at each side of the top drawer. Inside is a writing surface in front of small drawers, pigeonholes, and a central locking compartment for more secure storage. If clients wanted additional storage for books, they might order an upper section with doors and interior shelves.

A prime example is the most imposing desk and bookcase ever made in Philadelphia, about 1755 – 1765, which owes an enormous debt to English design sources of the mid-eighteenth century, most especially Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (14). The desk's profusion of ornament and the quality of its execution are beyond compare.

The two-part desk with a separate upper section enclosed by tambour doors was a new type introduced in the Federal period and mainly preferred in the Boston area (25). In 1797 a young girl at school in Salem, Massachusetts, described this style in a letter to her mother:

> Dr. Prince has a new kind of desk . . . . The lower part of it is like a bureau then there is a desk that doubles together like a card table and back of that is a parcel of drawers hid with doors made in reeds to slip back and in the middle a plain door — 'tis the handsomest thing of the kind I ever

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saw and the most beautifully varnished . . . . (Joseph Kevin Ott, "John Innes Clark and His Family — Beautiful People in Providence," *Rhode Island History* 32, no. 4 [November 1973], 131.)

Attributed to the immigrant English father and son cabinetmakers John and Thomas Seymour, this Boston tambour desk has a hinged writing surface that opens forward to rest on slides that pull out from either end. With just two long drawers in the lower section, it is raised on square tapered legs and ornamented with a light wood inlay of bellflowers trailing down the legs and crotch-grained veneer on the drawer fronts.

In the Empire period desks followed a style created in the Federal period, but now classical columnar legs became the fashion and, as in the eighteenth century, a separate bookcase rested on the desk (26). The large glazed doors had colorful fabric gathered behind them to protect books from dust. This highly embellished writing table with bookcase is unusual for its overall form as well as for the quantity of high-quality brass and ebony panels known as buhlwork. This term describing cut brasswork derived from the name André-Charles Boulle (1642 – 1732), the master French craftsman whose sumptuous brass inlaid furniture is closely associated with Louis XIV. A few similarly ornamented Philadelphia case pieces survive. They presumably came from the same shop — possibly that of the London-trained immigrant cabinetmaker Joseph Barry (1757 – 1839), who advertised in 1824: "2 Rich sideboards Buhl [*sic*] work and richly carved."

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CHESTS

Because closets were not standard in most homes, a variety of case furniture, having drawers fitted within a dovetailed box or frame, was made to store clothing and other textiles. From lift-lid chests, three- and four-drawer chests, two-part high chests standing on cabriole legs, dressing tables on cabriole legs (often made *en suite* with high chests), chest-on-chests, and clothes presses, consumers had a wide range to choose from at a variety of prices.

The high chest is not a distinctly American form as it was also produced in Britain in the early 1700s, but it had a much longer life in the colonies. It was made in almost every region throughout much of the eighteenth century and with a variety of proportions and ornament. A fine high chest from Philadelphia (27) has a profusion of decoration including carving on the cabriole legs that terminate in strong ball-and-claw feet representative of the Chippendale style. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century such elaborately embellished high chests with lavish carved and applied foliate ornament became a hallmark of Philadelphia furniture. Immigrant carvers from London, as well as native-born ones, ventured to Philadelphia to supply a ready market in search of high fashion. New Englanders' taste did not favor such elaborate carved and applied features. The relative simplicity of the Newport high chest (28), often adorned with only a single carved shell and sometimes intaglio carving on the knees (if the patron wished to pay more for that), stands in marked contrast to its Philadelphia cousin.

The chest-on-chest (called a double chest in the South) consists of a chest of drawers on another chest of drawers (29). The upper

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case sometimes has a flat top; for more money a client could have an elegant broken scroll pediment topped with three turned finials. At first glance this Providence blockfront chest-on-chest resembles Newport block-and-shell case furniture (12), but a closer examination reveals distinct differences from Newport craftsmanship. For example, the convex shells on the top drawer of the lower case are carved from the solid drawer front rather than carved separately and applied, as occurred in Newport. The original owner of this chest-on-chest was the Providence merchant John Brown (1736 – 1803), who with his three brothers founded Brown University.

Another type of furniture used for storing textiles is the clothes press. Like the double chest, it also consists of two sections: a chest of drawers and an upper case with doors concealing sliding trays with sides but no front boards. Sometimes these trays would have a baize (woven fabric) cover tacked across the back so that valuable textiles were protected from dust. By the mid-eighteenth century this predominantly English form was popular mainly in the South, but by the Federal period northern coastal centers like New York also produced clothes presses. A large-scale one made in New York heralded the new republic with four inlaid eagles — two on either end of the top drawer and one on each door of the upper section (30).

LOOKING GLASSES

Mirrored (i.e. silvered) plate glass of the pre-revolutionary period was always imported, usually from England, as were many of

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32

the frames for looking glasses (31). However, the frame of this rare example is decidedly of American, specifically Philadelphia, manufacture. The presence of American yellow and white pine and the use of solid rather than veneered mahogany point to its native origin. The arched surround of the mirror plate suggests the Queen Anne style, yet the scrolled side pieces and carved and gilt fruit and foliage trailing down the sides evoke the Chippendale style of looking glasses. The mirror's long history of ownership by Nicholas and Mary Middleton Ridgely of Dover, Delaware (married 1736), further substantiates its native colonial origin.

Large round mirrors (32) with arms for candles were also popular in the Empire period. They came to be known as "girandoles," a name derived from the French word for branched candelabra, and were often ordered in pairs to be hung on short walls (piers) between the windows of front and back parlors. These particular mirrors have an interesting history: the Kaufmans owned one and subsequently acquired its mate, which had been previously owned by a descendant of the original purchaser. Family tradition stated that the mirrors were made for Gideon Putnam, who built Putnam's Tavern and Boarding House in Saratoga Springs, New York, about 1802 – 1803. They were said to have been made to hang in the tavern's ballroom for a celebration commemorating Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's victory on Lake Erie in September 1813 during the War of 1812. Certainly the sea horses and bow and quiver, all surmounted by a victorious eagle, were appropriate symbols for such an event.

33

34

CLOCKS

Timekeeping devices were essential in early America to ensure punctual attendance at town meetings, to keep track of the moon phases, and in the case of merchants in port cities, to know high and low tides in order to anticipate the arrival of ships. Some clock movements were made to run for thirty hours before winding while costlier, more technologically advanced versions would run for eight days before needing to be wound. The movements were always made by highly specialized clock- and watchmakers, and the cases that housed the movements were crafted by local cabinetmakers who rarely signed or labeled their work.

The Willard family of Grafton and Roxbury (now part of Boston), Massachusetts, was perhaps the best-known clock-making family in New England during the Federal period (33). Simon and his brother Aaron were the principal craftsmen, who made movements for tall clocks and other innovative timekeepers such as their "banjo" wall clocks and table-top "lighthouse" clocks. The cases for their clocks were fashioned by some of Boston's best cabinetmakers, including John and Thomas Seymour.

Some elaborate wall clocks are termed "girandole clocks" because of their likeness to the large round mirrors called girandoles (34). While the maker of the movement of this clock, Lemuel Curtis, worked in Concord, Massachusetts, the elaborately carved and gilt case with superbly reverse-painted glasses was most likely made in Roxbury or Boston. The round reverse painted

glass is titled “Perry’s Victory,” referring to the Battle of Lake Erie in which the American fleet under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry defeated the British fleet during the War of 1812.

French mantel clocks featuring George Washington and other heroes were designed to appeal to Americans’ renewed sense of patriotism following their victory against Britain in the War of 1812. The banner below the unusual silvered dial on this clock bears the famous phrase from Henry Lee’s eulogy of the great general and first president, who died in 1799: “WASHINGTON. First in WAR, First in PEACE, First in the HEARTS of his COUNTRYMEN.”

SELECTED WORKS

Dressing Table
Boston
1710 – 1730
cherry and maple; paint; gesso and gold leaf; brass

Pair of Side Chairs
Philadelphia
1735 – 1760
walnut

Pair of Side Chairs
Philadelphia
1770 – 1771
mahogany

Armchair
New York
1785 – 1800
mahogany with light wood inlay

Side Chair
Boston or Salem, Massachusetts
1790 – 1800
maple; paint

Sideboard
made and labeled by William Mills and Simeon Deming
(active 1793 – 1798)
New York
1793 – 1795
mahogany with mahogany, satinwood, and curly maple veneers and light wood inlay; brass

Side Chair
Boston
1810 – 1825
mahogany with mahogany veneer

Side Chair
attributed to Duncan Phyfe (1770 – 1854)
New York
1815 – 1820
mahogany and ebony; brass; cane

Grecian Couch
attributed to John Finlay (1777 – 1851) and Hugh Finlay
(1781 – 1831)
Baltimore
1810 – 1830
walnut and cherry; paint; gold leaf

High Chest
Boston
1735 – 1750
walnut with walnut veneer; gesso and gold leaf; brass

Side Table
Boston
1760 – 1765
mahogany and Pennsylvania limestone

Bureau Table
Newport
1760 – 1775
mahogany; brass

Tea Table
attributed to John Townsend (1733 – 1809)
Newport
1760 – 1770
mahogany

Desk and Bookcase
Philadelphia
1755 – 1765
mahogany; glass; brass

<< 14 (detail)

Side Chair
attributed to John Finlay (1777 – 1851) and Hugh Finlay (1781 – 1831)
Baltimore
1815 – 1825
maple; paint; cane seat

Tea Table
Williamsburg
1765 – 1775
mahogany

Clothes Press
Charleston
1785 – 1800
mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay; brass

Pair of Side Chairs
Philadelphia
1810 – 1820
mahogany with mahogany and rosewood veneers and ebony inlay; brass

Settee
New York
1805 – 1815
mahogany

Tea Table
carving attributed to Nicholas Bernard and Martin Jugiez
(active 1762 – 1783)
Philadelphia
1765 – 1775
mahogany

Card Table
signed and dated by Robert McGuffin (1779/1780 – after 1863)
Philadelphia
1807
satinwood with satinwood, mahogany, and rosewood veneers; brass

Card Table
attributed to John Finlay (1777 – 1851) and Hugh Finlay (1781 – 1831)
Baltimore
1815 – 1825
mahogany; paint; gold leaf

Gaming Table
attributed to John Seymour (1738 – 1818) and Thomas Seymour (1771 – 1848)
Boston
1798 – 1805
mahogany with satinwood veneer; brass; Moroccan leather; ivory; baize

Center Table
frame made by Anthony Quervelle (1789 – 1856), top imported from Italy
Philadelphia
1827 – 1830
mahogany with mahogany veneer; various marbles and semiprecious stones; brass; gold leaf

Tambour Desk
attributed to John Seymour (1738 – 1818) and Thomas Seymour (1771 – 1848)
Boston
1793 – 1798
mahogany with mahogany, satinwood, and maple veneers; brass; ivory; paper; enamel on copper

Writing Table and Bookcase
Philadelphia
1815 – 1830
mahogany with ebony and mahogany veneer; brass; ormolu (gilded brass)

High Chest
Philadelphia
1750 – 1765
mahogany and *sabicu* (a hardwood imported from the West Indies); brass

High Chest
attributed to John Townsend (1733 – 1809)
Newport
1765 – 1770
mahogany; brass

Chest-on-Chest
Providence
1775 – 1785
mahogany; brass

Clothes Press
New York
1790 – 1815
mahogany with mahogany and *sabicu* veneer
and light wood inlay

Looking Glass
Philadelphia
1740 – 1755
mahogany and white pine; gesso and gold leaf
George M. and Linda H. Kaufman

Girandole Mirror (one of a pair)
New York
1810 – 1825
white pine; wire, gesso, and gold leaf; glass

Tall Clock
movement by Simon Willard (1753 – 1848)
Roxbury, Massachusetts
1790 – 1800
mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay;
brass; steel; iron; paint

Girandole Clock
movement by Lemuel Curtis (1790 – 1857)
Concord, Massachusetts
case and reverse painted glasses probably made in Boston,
1813 – 1820
mahogany veneer on white pine; glass; paint; gold leaf;
brass; iron

GLOSSARY

Ball-and-claw foot the lower termination of a cabriole leg featuring a ball grasped by animal-like talons ending in claws

Blockfront the shape of the front of a piece of case furniture with convex projections on each side and a concave indentation in the center

Bracket feet supporting members of case furniture beneath the base molding; can be either straight on the outside edge, or ogee (with a reverse curve); typically the inner edge has a similarly shaped profile

Broken scroll pediment (also variously called a "swan's neck" or "ogee" pediment): the topmost element of a double case piece of furniture that has a reverse curve on each side (concave then convex) arching up to terminate in a scroll

Cabriole leg the most characteristic leg found on Queen Anne and Chippendale furniture; it curves outward at the top with a broad "knee" and then curves inward tapering to a thinner ankle, and terminates in one of a variety of feet—pad, trifid, slipper, ball-and-claw

Crest rail the topmost, horizontal member of the back of a chair

Crotch-grained a V-like pattern in a highly figured piece of wood (usually walnut or mahogany), created at the juncture of a branch off the main trunk

***Curule* chair** a piece of seating furniture with an "X" or cross-shaped base, derived from an ancient Roman precedent

Intaglio carving ornament created by incising the decoration without carving away a significant amount of the primary material (such as wood)

Japanning a type of painted ornament, often with raised decoration, done in imitation of Asian lacquer; popularized in England in the late seventeenth century and found on Boston furniture of the first half of the eighteenth century

Klismos the ancient Greek word for a chair with deeply curved side seat rails and rear stiles and a wide, usually curved top called a tablet top

Pad feet circular feet at the base of a furniture leg (typically cabriole), sometimes raised up on a smaller disk

Paterae inlay an oval inlay with alternating light and dark fanlike, triangular sections

Pitch-pediment the topmost portion of a double case piece of furniture in the form of a triangle or pyramid

Rail a horizontal member in a piece of furniture, framing the seat or capping the back of a chair or sofa

Slipper foot the termination of a cabriole leg in a pointed foot

Splat the central vertical, or sometimes horizontal, member in the back of a chair

Stile the outer vertical supporting member of a chair or a chest

Stretcher the horizontal member below the seat rail of a chair (or the rail of a table) that joins and stabilizes the legs

Tablet top the broad, often concave, curved top member on the back of a late classical or Empire chair

Tambour thin vertical strips of wood, glued to a canvas backing, to form the doors enclosing the interior of a Federal desk or sideboard

Triglyph an architectural term referring to a design motif consisting of three narrow vertical bars, usually repeated in a frieze beneath a cornice

Trifid feet feet carved in three parts, as if they have three toes, as the termination of a cabriole leg

Turret-top semicircular projection applied around the perimeter of a few rectangular Massachusetts tea tables; also refers to the round, projecting corners of Queen Anne and Chippendale card tables

All works are the promised gift of George M. and Linda H. Kaufman, unless noted otherwise (no. 31).

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Masterpieces of American Funiture from the Kaufman Collection, 1700 – 1830

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