

English Mirror, 1725  
Walnut

English Mirror, 1750  
Walnut, gilding

English Mirror, 1770  
Mahogany, gilding

English Mirror, 1750–1775  
Parcel gilding

English Mirror, 1750–1775  
Walnut, gilding

English Mirror, 1725  
Pine, gilding

New York Mirror, 1790–1805  
Mahogany, gilding

American Girandole Mirror, early  
19th century  
Pine, gilding

Girandole mirrors were named after the candelabra, or girandoles, that were often attached to their frames to maximize the light reflected from their curved surfaces. Such a large convex mirror often appeared above a sideboard in a dining room or parlor, where it would brilliantly reflect an impressive display of silver on the table.

English Circular Reflectors, mid to  
late 18th century  
Brass

Reflectors helped diffuse candlelight  
for reading, writing, or perhaps  
sewing and could be repositioned as  
candles burned lower. While this  
reflector is brass, others were made  
with tin, mirrors, or glass.

Probably Spanish Capstan  
Candlesticks, ca. 1500  
Brass

Nuremburg Candlesticks, ca.  
1670–1690  
Melchior Schuster  
German, active 1667–1692  
Brass

Northwestern Europe Cluster-Column  
Candlesticks, 1650–1675  
Silvered brass

London Candlesticks, 1748  
John Café  
English, active 1740–1757  
Silver

Sir Isaac Newton

English, 1642–1727

*Opticks, or, A treatise of the  
reflexions, refractions, inflexions  
and colours of light; Also two  
treatises of the species and  
magnitude of curvilinear figures.*

London: Printed for Sam. Smith, and  
Benj. Walford, printers to the Royal  
Society ... , 1704

1st ed., 1st issue

Loan from Department of Special  
Collections, General Library  
System, University of  
Wisconsin–Madison

Connecticut Panel Chest, 1670–1700

Possibly by Peter Blin

American, active 1675–1725

Oak, pine

Boston High Chest, 1700–1720

Pine, burl maple, walnut

Philadelphia High Chest, 1770–1780  
Attributed to shop of John Pollard  
American, 1740–1787  
and Benjamin Randolph  
American, active 1762–1792  
Mahogany

Philadelphia Pier Table, 1770  
Attributed to John Pollard  
American, 1740–1787  
Mahogany

*Portrait of a Woman with Pearls,*  
1731–1746

Attributed to John Smibert

American, b. Scotland, 1688–1751

Oil on canvas

John Smibert was the first formally trained, successful painter to come to the colonies. The silk gown and strand of pearls in this painting reflects Smibert's skill in rendering light through paint.

London Bowl, 1720

Thomas Mason

English, active 1712–1745

Silver

American Mantlepiece, ca. 1930

Painted pine

Philadelphia Fire Screen, 1770  
Carving attributed to the shop of  
Nicholas Bernard  
American, b. England, d. after 1783  
and Martin Jugiez  
American, b. England, d. 1815  
Mahogany, textile

Fire screens served as a shield from the extreme heat and glare of the fireplace and a dramatic focal point for the display of needlework. While practical, the screen showed its owner's wealth through costly materials like mahogany and silken thread. It also put on view a craftsman's skills of carving and a daughter's schooling in the fine art of needlework. It thus combined use and display—and gendered skills—in a unique way that is long forgotten.



London Coffee Pot, 1736  
Francis Spilsbury  
English, active 1729–1739  
Silver

Philadelphia Pagoda Andirons,  
1760–1775  
Daniel King  
American, 1731–1806  
Brass

The design of these andirons is a mixture of Chinese and American stylistic elements. The heads mimic the unique rooflines of Chinese pagodas, and the ball-and-claw feet and curved legs show fashion-able European design. Known today as chinoiserie, this fanciful mixture was common in the eighteenth century. This popular design was probably adapted from a bedpost in Chippendale's *Director*.

*Mrs. John Mason and Her Son*, 1829  
Thomas Sully  
American, 1783–1872  
Oil on canvas

Philadelphia Easy Chair, 1770  
Attributed to Richard Butts  
American, active 1770–1780  
Mahogany

Specialized furniture such as the easy chair was found near a fireplace in a private part of the home, such as a bedchamber. Its high back and wings warded off the bitter chill of a drafty home by enclosing the sitter in the fire's soothing heat. With its deep cushioned seat covered in a warm woolen fabric, the easy chair created a comfortable place for the elderly and infirm to rest.

London Tankard, 1680  
Silver  
E.L. Mark

London Tankard, 1686  
Silver  
I.C. Mark

London Tankard, 1697  
Francis Singleton  
Active 1668–1702  
Silver

New York Table, ca. 1775  
Mahogany

Newport Slant-top Desk, ca.  
1760–1770  
Red cedar

Trade routes between England and the colonies opened up new markets for American furniture. For example, this desk was made of tropical woods (perhaps from Jamaica) that were imported into Newport. Finished products were then shipped in a vigorous export trade.

Exeter Chocolate Pot, 1740

Pentecost Symonds

English

Silver

The silversmith began making this chocolate pot with a small disc of silver and then raised the shape by using a hammer to form the silver. After each course of shaping, the silver had to be softened through heating. When the piece reached the desirable shape and form, the artisan smoothed the surface through light hammering, known as planishing. Next, the silversmith cast or fabricated the spout, base, rim, and handle and soldered them onto the pot. The final polishing was an arduous hand operation often done by apprentices under the watch of a master silversmith.

Edinburgh Tea Kettle, Stand, and  
Lamp, 1749

W. Aytown

English

Silver

Two techniques were available to create decorative surfaces on silver objects. Repoussé involved making the design on the surface of the metal through pushing the silver out from the inside. Chasing detailed the surface of the metal from the outside. Silversmiths often sent objects requiring these special skills to other shops for completion.

## English Mirror, 1725–1750

### Walnut

Most mirrors in the colonies were constructed in England of blown-glass plates. A mirror maker used a blowpipe to produce a cylinder of glass, which was cut down the middle, heated, and spread into a flat plate. This glass spent several weeks hardening in a furnace before passing through a final smoothing and polishing process. To turn the glass into a mirror, a maker spread a layer of mercury over a layer of tin foil. He covered this surface with a sheet of paper and then pressed the glass down. After carefully pulling out the paper and applying weights to squeeze out the excess mercury, he placed the mirror in the sun or near a fire to dry.

*Portrait of a Lady*, 1765–1767

John Wollaston

American, b. England, ca. 1710–1775

Oil on canvas



European silk, 1730–1750  
Brocaded silk  
Loan from Helen Louise Allen  
Textile Collection

Silk is one of the world's most enduring and sought after symbols of luxury and beauty. Silk production began in China in about 2640 B.C.E. The process is lengthy, intricate, and requires perfect conditions. Colonists in America tried to produce silk and failed.

Each silkworm cocoon is made of a silk filament that can be up to 1000 meters long, and although it may appear to be as fragile as a spider's web, it has the tensile strength of 65,000 pounds per square inch. Each tiny filament is triangular in cross-stitch, which gives it the characteristic luster of light dancing across the woven fabric.

Newport Block-front Bureau Table,  
1750–1770

Attributed to Job Townsend

American, 1699–1765

Mahogany

While American furniture was inextricably linked to European stylistic sources, some designs were of American origin such as the block-front shell motif seen in this Chippendale bureau table. This form was found primarily in Newport, Rhode Island in the eighteenth century and is distinctive from other American regional styles from the period.

Thomas Chippendale

English, 1718–1779

*The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's*

*Director: being a large collection  
of the most elegant and useful  
designs of household furniture in  
the Gothic, Chinese, and modern  
taste*

160 engraved copper plates

London: Printed for the author, 1754

On display plate 12

Loan from Department of Special  
Collections, General Library  
System, University of  
Wisconsin–Madison

Thomas Chippendale published a number of designs current in London in the middle of the eighteenth century. His book allowed a patron to commission a whole printed design or combine several parts of different designs into one. Today we often call the rococo style of delicate foliage and shellwork “Chippendale.”

Philadelphia Side Chair, 1745–1750  
Attributed to Samuel Harding  
American, d. 1758  
Walnut  
No. 1 of set

This chair has an elegant silhouette created from the elongated proportions and curvilinear elements that are a hallmark of the Queen Anne style. This chair demonstrates the early influence of the rococo through its shell motif, legs, and ball-and-claw feet.

Philadelphia Shell-eared Side Chair,  
1752

Attributed to the Marshall Carver  
Mahogany

The carving on this Chippendale side chair from 1752 is drastically different from the carving on the chair on its right, which was made only a few years earlier. Design elements of the Queen Anne have been abandoned for those of the rococo. The pierced splat and the highly successful integration of the shell motif into the overall composition are additional features found in Chippendale furniture.

Philadelphia Side Chair, 1765–1775  
Carving attributed to the shop of  
Nicholas Bernard  
American, b. England, d. after 1783  
and Martin Jugiez  
American, b. England, d. 1815  
Mahogany

This fully developed rococo chair was made following plate 14 in Thomas Chippendale's *Director*. The intricate carving is executed with precision and displays the essence of rococo ornamentation that includes carved organic foliage, scroll feet, and perfect proportions. This chair is the epi-tome of Philadelphia high style and represents the most expensive type of chair that could be commissioned at the time.

Rhode Island Chairs, 1800–1810  
Mahogany

Philadelphia Card Table, 1765–1770  
Attributed to Richard Butts  
B. England, active in America,  
1765–1780  
Mahogany

Massachusetts Card Table,  
1800–1815  
Attributed to John Seymour  
American, b. England, 1738–1818  
and Thomas Seymour  
American, b. England, 1771–1848  
Satinwood

The makers of this table were a father-and-son team of cabinetmakers who moved from England to Maine to Boston, where they had an influential business. Card tables were common pieces of furniture that did not have to be ornate, complicated, or expensive, and many furniture stores kept them in stock. The wealthy, however, would order them to be custom made, often with ornate carvings and detailing.

London Candlesticks, 1713  
David Willaume  
French, active in England, 1658–1741  
Silver

New York Playing Cards, 1830s  
L. I. Cohen Company, American firm  
active 1832–1871  
Paper  
Loan from Wisconsin Historical  
Society, Museum Collection  
1976.85

Continental Candle Sconces, 18th  
century  
Brass

The circular molded backplate  
supports a scrolled candle arm with a  
circular bobèche and urn-form candle  
socket. Wall sconces were used to  
move candle light higher on the wall.



Boston or Newport Tea Table,  
1740–1760  
Mahogany

Philadelphia Tea Table, 1779  
Attributed to Thomas Affleck  
American, 1740–1795  
Carved by John Pollard  
American, 1740–1787  
Mahogany  
Owned by Levi Hollingsworth

This tea table, with its carved pie crust edge and naturalistic intertwined acanthus and frond carved cabriole legs, was owned by Levi Hollingsworth, a spirits merchant. He acquired the table in part trade with seven gallons of liquor.

New York Tea Table, 1760  
Mahogany

Philadelphia Side Chairs, 1772

Carving attributed to Nicholas  
Bernard

American, b. England, d. after 1783  
and Martin Jugiez

American, b. England, d. 1815  
Mahogany

London Candlesticks, 1714

Louis Mettayer

English, b. France, active 1700–1739  
Silver

London Tea Set, 1788

Henry Chawner

English, 1764–1851  
Silver

London Tea Caddies, 1762  
Attributed to William Alexander  
English, active 1747–1762  
Silver

Tea caddies stored and guarded valuable loose tea leaves. Each container would be filled with a different type of tea such as green or black, allowing the hostess to mix her own blend at the table in front of guests. They were sometimes lined with lead in order to preserve the freshness of the tea. The smaller caddy with a hinged top was used for the tea leaves that remained at the bottom of a cup. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word “caddy” is derived from the Malaysian word “kati” that refers to a unit of measure, a weight equal to about one and a third pounds.

*Portrait of Joshua Winslow, 1769*

John Singleton Copley

American, 1738–1815

Oil on canvas

The tea that landed in the Boston harbor as a protest against British taxation (the Boston Tea Party) was en route to Joshua Winslow, one of the principals in the British East India Company.

Dinner table set out for twelve  
persons with eight attendants  
Frontispiece from Thomas Cosnett's  
*The Footman's Directory, and  
Butler's Remembrancer*

London: printed [by S. Gosnell] for  
the author, 1825

Courtesy Winterthur Library, Printed  
Book and Periodical Collection,  
Winterthur, Delaware

Cuisine during this period was increasingly varied and relatively abundant compared to previous eras. An elegant dinner party began with an opening course of as many as twenty-one dishes. A main course continued that overabundance; each course should contain as many dishes as had been offered before. The dessert course was the pièce de résistance of the dinner party with each host competing to create ever more fanciful and creative arrangements out of molded jellies, exotic fruits, and confections made in the shapes of temples and palaces. Dessert should also contain a matching number of dishes.

Massachusetts Dining Table,  
1800–1810  
Mahogany

London Candlesticks, 1763–1764  
Ebenezer Coker, active England  
1740s–1770s  
Silver

An extraordinary number of objects are needed to set a table and host a meal. In addition, domestic servants were required to prepare the food, polish the furnishings, set the table, and wait upon the guests. Dinnertime for the wealthy, served at increasingly late hours, could last into the early morning, creating a costly reliance on candlelight.

New York Chairs, 1795–1805  
Mahogany

New York Sideboard, 1790–1800  
Mahogany

Two popular methods of dining were service à l'anglaise and service à la française. The former called for a symmetrical food arrangement set on the dining table, and the latter required a food assemblage on the sideboard. Although the elite were the only ones practicing these methods, the service à la française demanded a much larger number of servants causing expenses to spiral.

English Knife and Spoon Boxes, 1780  
Mahogany and silver

Boxes such as these guarded valuable flatware like knives and spoons on the sideboard.

London Toast Rack, 1834  
Storr and Mortimer, English  
silversmith firm active 1822–1839  
Silver

This object is specifically designed to hold six pieces of toast. One might imagine that its owner cared particularly about the presentation of foods; perhaps the owner considered that a toast rack was the only “civilized” way to keep toast dry. The tradition seems to have emerged in the 1700s. A visitor to England, who was a native of Switzerland, remarked: “A kind of bread and butter is usually eaten with tea, which is toasted by the fire and is incomparably good. You take one slice after the other and hold it to the fire on a fork till the butter is melted,



so that it penetrates a number of slices all at once; this is called toast.” (Sara Paston-Williams, *The Art of Dining: A History of Cooking and Eating*. London: National Trust, 1993, 243.)

London Plates, 1801  
Paul Storr  
English, 1771–1844  
Silver

London Dish Cross, 1772  
Aldridge and Green, English firm  
Silver

The function of a dish cross was to keep food hot on the table or the sideboard. The heat comes from the spirit-lamp in the center of the dish cross that holds fuel to keep a flame burning. The arms of the dish cross extend to hold any standard sized dish and are completed with ornamental brackets that support the dish. Dish

crosses were also used to give extra height to centerpiece creations.

New York Mirror, 1795–1810  
Mahogany, gilding

The carved surface decoration, elaborate crest design, urn-finials, and ball-on-garlands seen at the top of this mirror are features typical to the Federal Period looking glass. The eagle was a particularly popular design motif during the first decades of America's new democracy. Giltwood frames were more than double the price of plain hardwood frames.

*Washington at the Battle of Princeton,*  
1779  
Charles Willson Peale  
American, 1741–1827  
Oil on canvas

The first artist to paint George Washington from life, Peale commemorated his role in the battle of Princeton. Peale replicated this painting several times after he painted the original, adding a variety of changes to the image in the process.

New York George Washington  
Mourning Andirons, 1800  
Attributed to Richard Whittingham  
American, b. England, 1747–1821  
Brass, iron

These short-legged andirons, nicknamed “firedogs,” exemplify contemporary people’s reflection upon George Washington’s actions on behalf of the new country.

Washington died in 1799. The nation declared a year of mourning, during which he was quickly elevated to legendary status among the American people. Americans attempted to keep Washington’s memory— a powerful symbol of the new nation—alive through sermons, literary tributes, and artistic representations.

Philadelphia Armchair, ca.

1765–1780

Attributed to John Pollard

American, 1740–1787

Mahogany

Owned by Charles and Hannah

Harrison Thomson

Charles Thomson had a long and distinguished career serving the American revolutionary cause and the new nation. As Secretary of the Continental Congress, he was in the midst of philosophical and political debates about British colonists' rights and liberties. Nonetheless, he was not financially successful and probably could not afford this extraordinary armchair made by John Pollard, one of Philadelphia's great craftsmen. His wife, Hannah Harrison Thomson,

probably owned these chairs before marriage.

*Portrait of Captain Thompson, 1800*

Charles Balthazar Julien Fevret de  
Saint-Memin

American, b. France, 1770–1852  
Charcoal on tinted paper

The discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii prompted a revival of interest in Roman profile portraiture. One of the most prestigious portraitists in the Federal period, Saint-Memin drew the Roman-style profiles of leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Meriwether Lewis. Saint-Memin rendered faces with the physiognotrace, an illuminated screen used to trace a person's profile, invented in 1786 at Versailles. Eighteenth-century natural

philosophers compared physical features and attributed certain moral traits to differently shaped facial features.

Low light sources in the 1700s were different than the bright, overhead artificial lights of today's interior environments. People saw each other around fireplaces and candles when light came from below or at table level and viewed each other's outlines frequently.

*Portrait of Major James Fairlie, 1787*

Ralph Earl

American, 1751–1801

Oil on canvas

Continental Army Major James Fairlie, aide to Baron von Steuben, like many officers, wished to be painted in uniform to reflect upon their important role in building a new nation.

New York Desk and Bookcase with  
Bust of John Locke, 1760–1770  
Mahogany, basalt

John Locke  
English, 1632–1704  
*Essay Concerning Human  
Understanding*, vol. 1, 17th ed.  
London: Printed for John Beecroft,  
1775

John Locke, the English philosopher who helped transform eighteenth-century thought about how humans perceive ideas through senses and logical reflection, was widely read in the American colonies. His bust on the desk's pediment is made of black basalt, an imitation of Greek

pottery made famous by Josiah  
Wedgwood.

Philadelphia Desk and Bookcase,  
1770–1775  
Attributed to John Pollard  
American, 1740—1787  
Mahogany, black cherry, yellow  
poplar, Atlantic white cedar, pine

This desk shows some of the most  
sophisticated attributes in the  
cabinetmaker's repertoire. The  
customers chose the costly extra  
finishing touches as an expression of  
wealth and use of time. Leather  
bindings showed the importance of  
books;



the mirror would help reflect candlelight for evening writing and study. Candles and mirrors were a symbol of enlightened thought itself—clarity and vision.

London Inkstand, 1782  
Wakelin and Taylor, English firm  
active 1776–1796  
Silver

*Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Russell* (pair),  
1784  
Charles Willson Peale  
American, 1741—1827  
Oil on canvas

These portraits tell a story of social standing: the couple depicted here, Thomas and Ann Russell, were painted exactly as they wanted people to view them—as refined and confident. Thomas Russell had another copy of these portraits

painted and sent them to his brother, whom he had not seen in thirteen years. Since he had never introduced his brother to his wife, by sending him these portraits he showed his brother that he was doing well in Philadelphia. Portraits were a popular way of silently and tastefully exhibiting one's importance, wealth, and social position.

London Harlequin Taper Stick, 1752  
John Café  
English, active 1740–1757  
Silver

Taper sticks were used in various ways, including melting wax for sealing letters with a personal stamp, illuminating the way to bed, or lighting tobacco for a pipe. This

particular taper stick incorporates a human harlequin figure with his arms upraised to support the taper. The use of an anthropomorphic stem in taper sticks was a popular motif of the period and was a revival of a style originally introduced to England during the reign of William and Mary (1689–1702).

American Mirror, 1750–1775  
Mahogany

London Candlesticks, 1744  
Peter Archambo  
English, d. 1768  
Silver

Additions or redo

New England Candle Stand,  
1675–1725  
Pine, maple

Candle stands with a central pedestal were a likely design source for round tea tables. Without multiple wooden legs to block their position, a group might sit closer and be more intimate.

English Mirror, 1725  
Pine and gilding

Massachusetts Paneled Chest,  
1670–1700  
Oak

Seventeenth-century furniture used moldings to break up flat surfaces into panels and create shadows.

Thomas Rowlandson  
English, 1756–1827  
*Disappointed Epicures*, 1809  
Hand-colored etching  
Gift of the Louis and Annette  
Kaufman Trust, 2001.116.31

Electric Fireplace Insert  
Loan from Fireside: Heart and Home  
(Madison Fireplace)

American Girandole Mirror, early  
19th century  
Pine, gilding

Girandole mirrors were named after  
the candelabra, or girandoles, that  
were often attached to their frames

to maximize the light reflected from their curved surfaces. Such a large convex mirror often appeared above a sideboard in a dining room or parlor, where it would brilliantly reflect an impressive display of silver on the table.

Massachusetts Paneled Chest,  
1670–1700  
Oak

Seventeenth-century furniture used moldings to break up flat surfaces into panels and create shadows.

London Tankard, 1680  
Silver  
E.L. Mark

London Tankard, 1686  
Silver  
I.C. Mark