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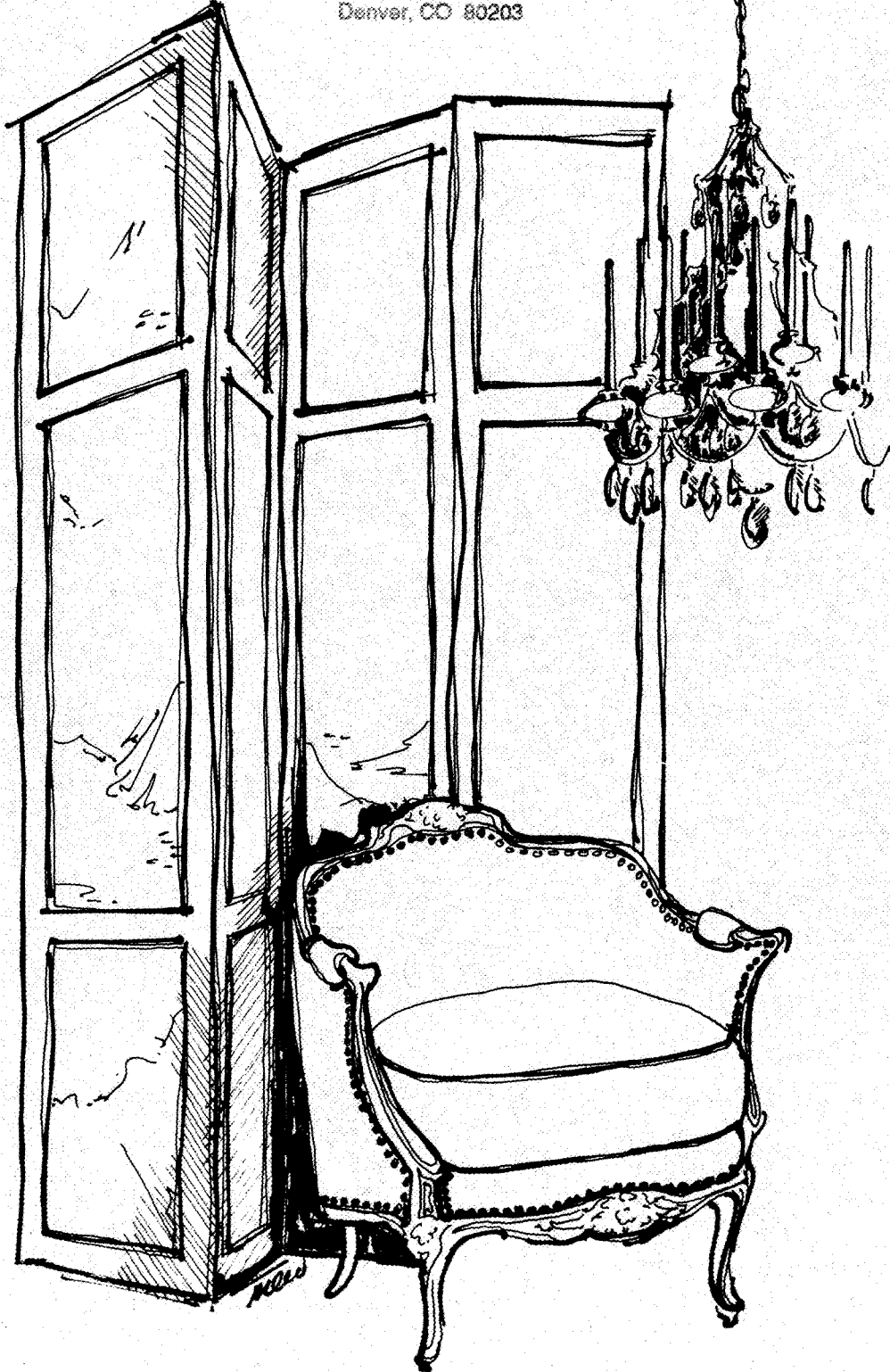
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## Periods and Styles

Throughout the ages furniture designs have represented a way of life. Whether an authentic antique, a reproduction, an adaptation, or this year's modern, furniture tells a story about people and their cultures.

The best designs of each era have lived, been copied, modified, and used again and again. You are fortunate to live in a period when there is such a variety of furniture from which to choose. The styles being designed and produced offer almost custom choice — never before known.

There is furniture of good design in every price range if you know what to look for. The choice is much easier if you begin with a furnishings plan — one that fits your home, your family, and the way you wish to live. Such a plan not only helps you to know what pieces of furniture are needed, but will also help guide the selection of just the right styles for your home.

## Style Terminology

Due to differences in interpretations, terms relating to styles are often confusing. *Style* usually refers to the use of certain design characteristics. *Period* designates a measure of time when these characteristics were popularized. However, these terms are used interchangeably in the furniture world.

*Fashion* should be thought of as a changing thing which comes and goes with the seasons. Acceptance of a fashion is determined by the customer's desire for something new and different.

Design characteristics help identify furniture of the various periods. These characteristics are copied or adapted by designers and manufacturers in creating today's styles.

Manufacturers identify their products with descriptive names which may also be confusing to the consumer. However, there are three broad areas on which the furniture world, in general, does agree on the basic characteristics: *Traditional*, *Provincial* and *Contemporary-Modern*.

Traditional includes those styles with design characteristics typical of master craftsmen of past generations. The terms period and style usually refer to either an original or a reproduction which contains enough of its characteristics to make its origin clear. Much of the traditional furniture was first designed for royal courts and nobility. Through the years it has been associated with elegance and formality.

It was only natural that the court styles of each country should be copied in simplified versions for the masses. This furniture is referred to as provin-

cial, country, or rural. The French and Italian Provincial and Early American are typical examples of this style. Each of them has two qualities in common: simplicity and comfort designed for informal living.

Contemporary and its counterpart, Modern, include a broad group of designs that are adapted for modern methods of production and present-day living. Contemporary is inspired by traditional styles, while modern breaks completely all ties with previous designs. The beauty of both lies in simplicity of line, smooth contours, and effective use of time-proven as well as new materials and new technology. Much of it is small in scale, light in appearance, versatile in use, and easy to care for.

## Selecting a Style

The task of selecting the right style furniture for you and your family is made simpler by first deciding on the atmosphere you wish to create. Is it one of formality, of casual informality, or something in between? With this decision as your guide, you are not likely to limit your choice to any one style but to select a combination of compatible styles that seem to belong together.

## Development of Furniture Styles

Styles of furniture have developed gradually over a long period of time and have reached different areas of the world at widely spaced intervals. The forces that influence the way people live also influence their furnishings.

Economic status, artistic development, religion, politics, technology, communications, the climate, and available materials have affected the development of the furniture of each era and country.

Current furniture designs usually date back to about the fifteenth century. However, ideas and motifs are often borrowed from the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians.

As the nations of Europe developed, their peoples began to erect large buildings, chiefly castles, churches, and monasteries. Architecture became an important mode of expression, and architectural details were applied to furniture. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Gothic style flourished and furniture followed the same theme. Furniture was large and heavy with extensive carving. It was characterized by architectural detail, pointed arches, and religious motifs.

A new movement called the Renaissance, meaning new birth, began in Italy during the fourteenth century and reached its height during the last

half of the sixteenth century. The Renaissance spread to each country and stimulated an era of cultural development.

Furniture designs reflected the new interest in the arts by becoming more refined in form and more graceful in proportion. The techniques of ornamentation followed the development of an appreciation of the artistic.

Following the Renaissance, the decorative arts flourished in France, then in England and surrounding countries. While the early settlers of America were predominantly English, there were also Dutch, Scandinavian, German, French, and Spanish. They brought with them furniture and ideas from their homelands. American furniture styles are a blending of many influences.

The styles you see today in stores, homes, and showrooms have been largely influenced by furniture designs of the last three centuries.

Therefore, an overview of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, followed by a summary of the important furniture styles of each era, will provide a better understanding of the different styles, their relationship to each other, and their influence on today's furniture.

## Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century was a brilliant and boisterous era. Bold and adventurous men were exploring and settling new lands. In Europe there was religious and political unrest. A new wealth was changing the style and manner of living, especially for the upper class.

During the first part of the century, furniture design was dominated by the elegance of the Renaissance but gradually changed to the Baroque — a massive, ornate style which had its origin in Italy. The Baroque reached its height in France under Louis XIV and moved on to Holland, England, and then America, changing as it spread by taking on regional or national characteristics.

For the first time people began to expect furniture to be comfortable. They also began to think about beauty. By the end of the century most of the pieces of furniture we know today had made their appearances.

In America the colonists were devoting all their time to getting established. Their furniture was of necessity simple and often crude in construction. Local woods were used, especially pine, oak, and fruitwoods. Typical pieces are wainscot, slat, and banister chairs, trestle tables, chests, and the settle.

The style changes in Europe were reflected in America as the colonies grew and prospered. However, in the beginning, due to slow communications, as much as two decades elapsed

before new ideas of design were used by American craftsmen.

The styles that are today referred to as "Early American" are really based on those of the very last of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth century. Outstanding styles of this era were the French Louis XIV, the English Jacobean and William and Mary, and the American Early Colonial.

## Eighteenth Century

In the area of decorative arts, the eighteenth century was one of the richest the world has ever known. People were ready for houses and furniture designed to reflect the elaborate social customs of the day.

Industrial development and international trade created a prosperity that affected all nations, and a great part of the wealth was spent on lavish living.

A rapid exchange of ideas was brought about by expansion in foreign trade and migration of craftsmen. The oriental influence and foreign materials, especially mahogany, played an important role in furniture designs of the first half of the century; the discovery of Pompeii and the use of satinwood influenced furniture designs of the latter half.

This century has been called the golden age of cabinet making. New pieces and new designs appeared to meet the needs of the social life of the era. This was the beginning of the elegant traditional furniture as we know it today.

Styles were set in France, migrated to England, and then found their way to America.

In France the furniture styles changed from the massive, ornate Baroque of Louis XIV to the delicate decorated Rococo of Louis XV, then to the neo-classic of Louis XVI and Directoire.

The Queen Anne period, often referred to as the age of walnut, ushered in a golden age in English design. Then, there was a rapid succession of styles named after master craftsmen of the period. These included Thomas Chippendale, Robert Adams, George Hepplewhite, and Thomas Sheraton. Since furniture pattern books made their appearance along with these cabinet makers, their furniture designs were widely copied. These styles are often referred to as Georgian since they enjoyed popularity during the reign of the three Georges.

The colonies were eager to adopt the rapidly changing manners and customs of their mother country. They readily accepted the idea of hierarchy of social rank. Aristocracy in America reached its height between 1750 and 1800.

Many wealthy colonists imported furniture. However, talented American craftsmen copied

foreign versions with skill and imagination. Consequently, American homes had both original and American versions of Queen Anne, Chippendale, Sheraton, and Hepplewhite during the Colonial and Federal periods.

America's most outstanding contribution to furniture designers of the period was Duncan Phyfe. While he was influenced by other craftsmen, he developed a style of furniture that was uniquely his own. Goddard, Townsend, Savery, and others also made fine furniture during this period.

## Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century was one of decorative conflict. It was the era when families of social prestige and wealth, such as the Vanderbilts and the Astors, built and furnished elaborate homes combining styles with a free hand.

Industrially, mass production was replacing individual craftsmanship. Names like Hitchcock, Eastlake, and Morris were associated with machine production.

A wave of classicism, inspired by the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii, and social unrest began at the end of the eighteenth century and continued into the early nineteenth century. This classic trend found expression in the Louis XV and French Empire styles; the Adams, Sheraton, Hepplewhite, and Regency styles in England; and the Federal furniture of the colonies. During this time design elements borrowed from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome were used in American architecture and furniture.

About the middle of the century, the Gothic influences reappeared. The Victorian and Louis XV styles of the later half century combined elements of both Gothic and Renaissance styles. Louis XV and XVI styles reappeared in Europe, England, and America.

By the end of the century traditional methods and designs were yielding to a vogue for experimental forms of simpler lines, new processes, and new materials.

## Twentieth Century

Every style of the past was at one time "modern," and each one had good and poor examples. While many contemporary designs draw upon ideas of the past, they are still a part of the modern style in its broadest interpretation.

The term *organic* is often used for those modern designs that attempt to break with past traditions. This style has evolved through a series of efforts to create beauty in a functional form. The effort began toward the end of the nineteenth century and was

given impetus by the architectural designs of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in the early part of the twentieth. By 1925 there was widespread interest in this new style of furniture, both in America and Europe.

At the present time there are many interpretations of the modern style. New shapes and forms have been introduced. Modern materials and technology have changed traditional construction methods. The functional emphasis has stimulated production of dual-purpose furniture, modular units, wall-hung furniture, and furniture scaled to fit apartment living and today's smaller homes.

Wood is still the most popular material, but glass, metal, and plastics are also used. Beauty is provided through structure and materials rather than surface ornamentation.

Many artists and craftsmen have contributed to the development of the modern style. However, a few of them should be mentioned since their influence is so prevalent in the market at the present time. Some of them are Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breur, Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen, Edward Wormley, Jens Risom, Bertoia, Estelle and Erwine Laverne, George Nelson, and T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings.

Interest in traditional styles of furniture continues. The fine originals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have become more valuable with the passing years. Many of these are now preserved for study in museums. "Antiquing" has become a fascinating venture for many people. Others actually prefer an authentic reproduction to the original.

Much of the furniture on the market is traditional in styling. Designers have borrowed traditional characteristics but modified and scaled them to fit today's homes. These designs are referred to as contemporary.

There is a wide selection of furniture available on today's market. You need to be able to select the styles that are most appropriate for your home and way of life.

## Combining Styles of Furniture

"Putting furniture together" may be compared to dressing for a party. The dress-up occasion calls for silks, satins, jewels, and furs. The casual get-together suggests denims and play clothes or just everyday apparel.

Like parties, most furniture falls into three major classifications — *formal*, *semiformal*, and *informal*. On the formal side we find the stately elegance of most eighteenth century English, with Regency

close behind. At the opposite extreme is Provincial furniture with varying degrees of formality.

By keeping the quality of formality or informality in mind, it is usually easy to achieve a pleasing combination of furniture pieces. To the formal styles you would add formal fabrics, such as satin, damask, and velvet; rich wood finishes; full-length draperies; and elegant floor coverings. With the informal styles, choose the gaily printed chintz; the nubby-textured fabrics; the softer tones of fruitwood, pine, and maple; tweedy floor coverings; and simple window treatments.

Since there is always overlapping of styles, the periods that follow each other in development can usually be blended safely. For example, Early American will combine nicely with Colonial American and the more elaborate Colonial with Federal.

By today's standards a room in one style of furniture is monotonous. There are no set rules for blending, but these general principles can guide you in combining furniture successfully.

1. One style of furniture should dominate, but a few well-chosen pieces of another style for contrast will add interest.
2. The style of the house, the way you and your family live, and your personal tastes may

dictate the style you wish to have predominate.

3. A more interesting and lived-in appearance may be achieved by using some old pieces along with new furniture.
4. The woods may also offer a cue in combining. They do not necessarily have to match, but they should be compatible.
5. Pieces of about the same characteristics and scale are usually compatible when used together.
6. Color can be the ingredient that unifies a grouping made up of different styles.
7. Don't copy someone else. Remember, you are selecting and combining furniture to fit your house and the way you and your family live.

Many styles offered by today's manufacturers combine with ease. The way you select and combine the styles is an important way to add individuality and a touch of personality to your home.

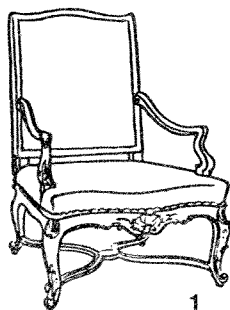
Furniture styles of the past three centuries are presented in a chronological order in the following chart. Those styles that have had the greatest influence on today's furniture are included. Additional references are given for those interested in a more comprehensive background and description of the various styles of furniture.

## I. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

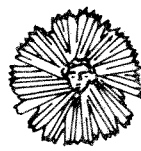
### STYLE CHARACTERISTICS TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION

1. Louis XIV 1643-1715  
French Court Furniture  
(Formal)

- Built for grandeur rather than comfort
- Elaborately decorated
- Decorated with carving, gilding, inlaying, metal mounts, (ormolu), Boulle work, lacquer
- Elaborate tapestries



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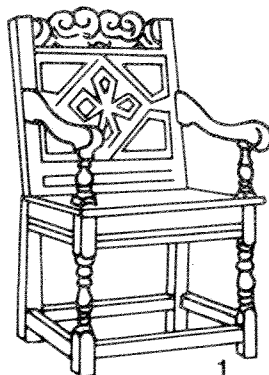
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1. Louis XIV
2. Rayed Sun
3. Shell Motif
4. Boulle Work

2. Jacobean 1603-1689

English  
(Informal)  
James I  
Charles I  
Cromwell  
Charles II  
James II

- Influenced by Elizabethan
- Early Jacobean — straight lines, strap work, split spindles
- Cromwellian — severely simple, undecorated
- Carolean — curvilinear influenced by Flemish Baroque; used caning
- Wood — primarily oak



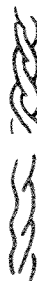
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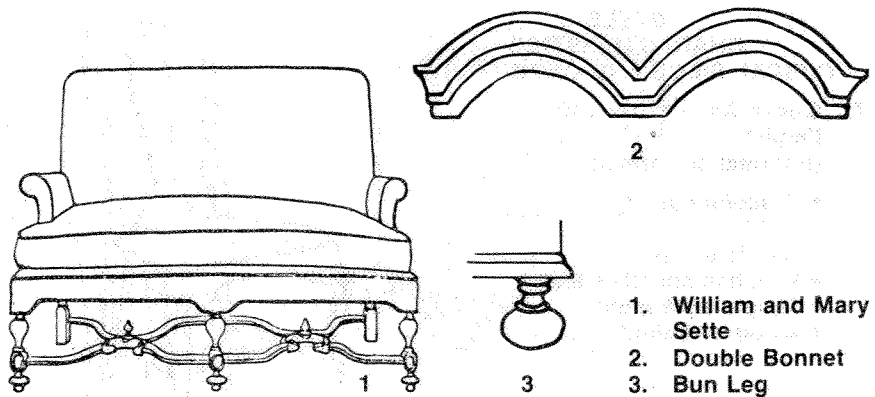
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1. Wainscoat Chair
2. Elizabethan Legs
3. Jacobean
4. Legs

**STYLE  
CHARACTERISTICS  
TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**3. William and Mary 1689-1702  
English  
(Informal)**

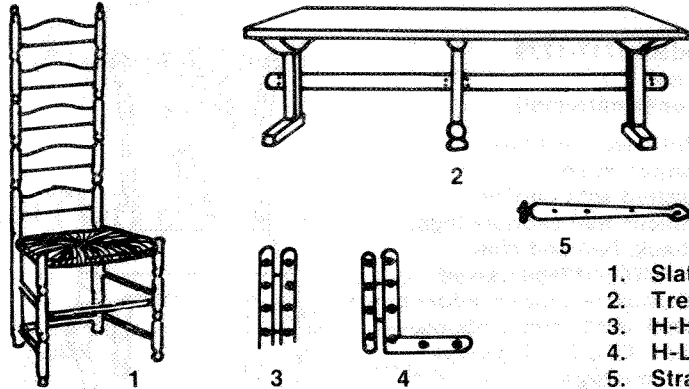
- Simple, light, comfortable
- X stretchers with finial
- Spiral and trumpet leg
- Club, bun, scroll foot
- Veneering and cross banding
- Decorative elements — marquetry inlay, Chinese lacquer
- Wood — walnut



1. William and Mary Sette
2. Double Bonnet
3. Bun Leg

**4. Early American 1620-1725  
(Informal)**

- Simple straight lines
- No decoration on early pieces
- Tables — gate and trestle
- Chairs — Banister, slat, ladder back
- Settle



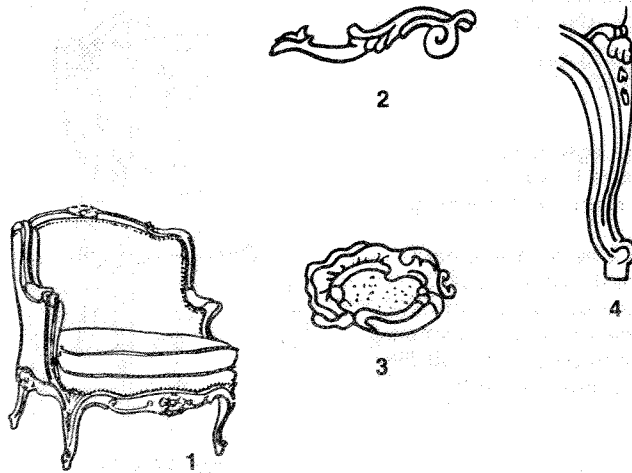
1. Slat-Back Chair
2. Trestle Table
3. H-Hinge
4. H-L Hinge
5. Strap Hinge

## II. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**STYLE  
CHARACTERISTICS  
TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**5. Louis XV 1730-1760  
French  
(Formal)  
French Provincial based on this style  
(Informal)**

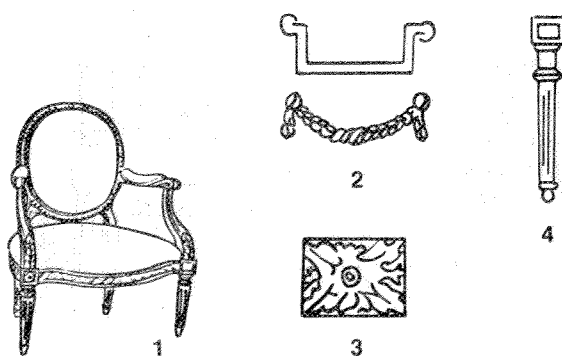
- Decorative
- Light in scale
- Rococo — rock and shell was dominant motif
- Cabriole leg
- Curved scroll front
- Painted and gilded furniture popular
- Popular woods — walnut mahogany and ebony



1. Louis XV
2. Asymmetrical Detail
3. Rococo Motif
4. Cabriole Leg

**6. Louis XVI 1760-1789  
French  
(Formal)  
Italian Provincial has same basic lines  
(Informal)**

- Inspired by Grecian designs
- Graceful combination of straight and curved lines
- Legs without stretchers
- Motifs were rosettes, garlands, festoons, urns, lyre
- Shaped backs — design often woven to fit

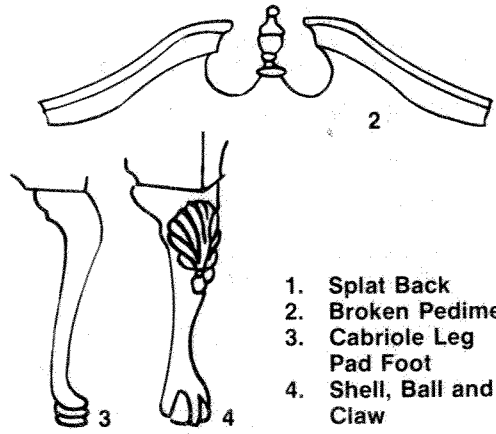
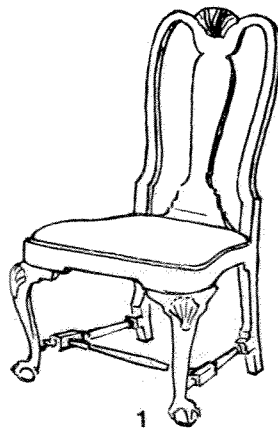


1. Louis XVI
2. Symmetrical Mounts
3. Rosette
4. Fluted Leg

**STYLE CHARACTERISTICS**  
**TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**7. Queen Anne 1702-1712**  
 English  
 (Informal or Formal)

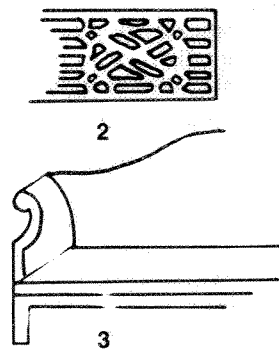
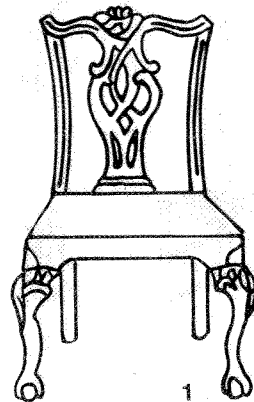
- Graceful curves
- Light scale
- Cabriole legs
- Pad, ball and claw feet
- Simple shell motif
- Wood — walnut



1. Splat Back
2. Broken Pediment
3. Cabriole Leg
4. Pad Foot
- Shell, Ball and Claw

**8. Chippendale 1717-1779**  
 English  
 (Formal or Semiformal)

- Graceful, medium scale
- Solid appearance
- Embellished with carving
- Early pieces had cabriole legs, fiddle back, ball and claw
- Later — straight legs carved cabriole, bow — shaped ladder backs
- Used shell motif, fret, ribbons, pagodas, "C" and "S" curves
- Wood — mahogany

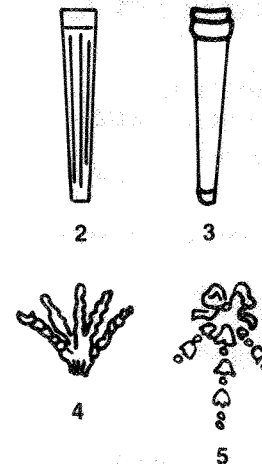
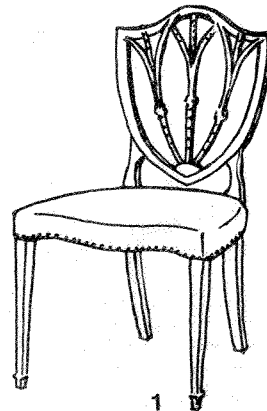


1. Yoke-Pierced Splat Back
2. Fret Work
3. Rolled Arm
4. Mount

**STYLE CHARACTERISTICS**  
**TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**9. Hepplewhite 1760-1786**  
 English  
 (Formal)

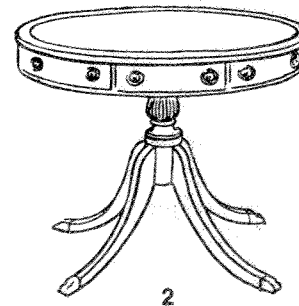
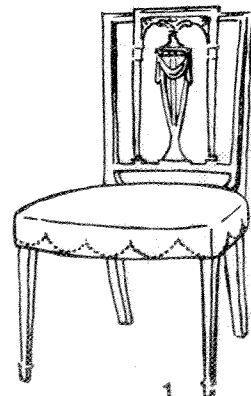
- Graceful and light scale
- Usually square tapered legs
- Sometimes round with reeding or fluting
- Shield back was his trademark
- Decorated with wheat husks, swags, Prince of Wales feathers
- Extensive use of inlay and veneer
- Wood — mahogany was favorite
- Rosewood, stainwood, tulip wood inlay



1. Shield Back
2. Reeded Leg
3. Turned Leg
4. Wheat Motif
5. Husk Motif

**10. Sheraton 1751-1806**  
 English  
 (Formal)

- Simplicity was the keynote
- Seldom used stretchers
- Legs were round or square tapered, reeded or fluted
- Made specialty of sideboards
- Used veneering expertly
- Favorite motifs were delicate swags and small urns
- Wood — satinwood

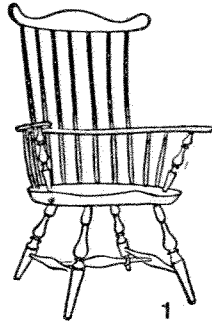


1. Vase Back
2. Pedestal Table

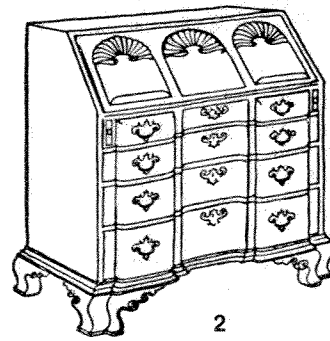
**STYLE  
CHARACTERISTICS  
TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**11. Colonial 1720-1790  
American  
(Formal and Informal)**

- Influenced by Queen Anne, Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton
- Ranges from simplicity to rich ornamentation
- Motifs often shell, pendant, acanthus leaf, pineapple
- Block-front desk, rocking chair, low post bed, of American origin
- Informal pieces usually in pine, walnut, oak, maple, fruitwoods
- Formal pieces in mahogany or walnut



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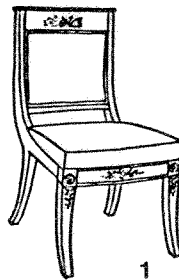
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1. Windsor Chair  
2. Block-Front Desk

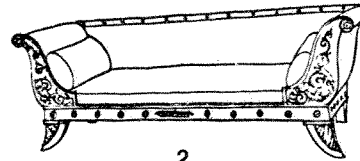
**III. NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**12. Directoire 1789-1804  
French  
Empire 1804-1820  
French  
English Regency 1810-1820  
American Federal 1781-1830  
(Formal — had many characteristics in common)**

- Used classic forms
- Combined straight lines and curves
- Large unadorned wood surfaces
- Legs often splayed
- Wood — mahogany, rosewood



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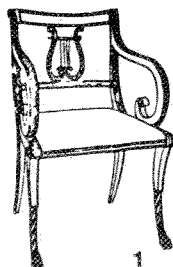
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1. Chair — Curved Lines  
2. Sofa — Rolled Arms

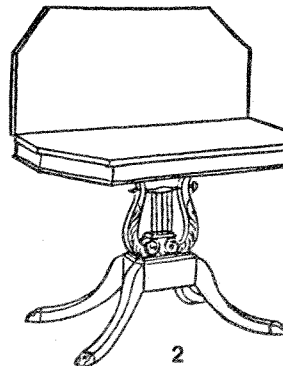
**STYLE  
CHARACTERISTICS  
TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

**13. Duncan Phyfe 1768-1854  
American Federal  
(Formal)**

- Combined straight and curved lines
- Chair and sofa backs feature low, rolled top rails
- Lyre motif is distinctly Phyfe
- Decoration usually fluting or reeding
- Wood — mahogany



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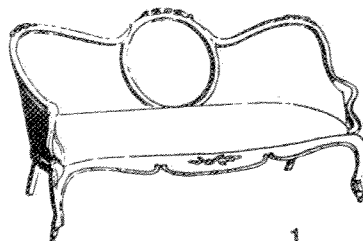


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1. Chair — Lyre Back, Splayed Legs  
2. Lyre Base, Splayed Feet

**14. Victorian 1837-1901  
English  
(Formal)**

- Made in sets
- Favored carved motifs of flowers, leaves, and scrolls
- Chair backs, oval horseshoe-shaped
- Plush and mohair upholstery
- Marble tops on tables, dressers, chests
- Wood — walnut, mahogany, and rosewood



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1. Victorian — American Style  
2. Victorian — English Style

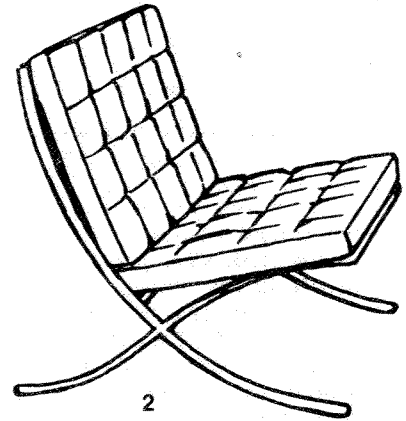
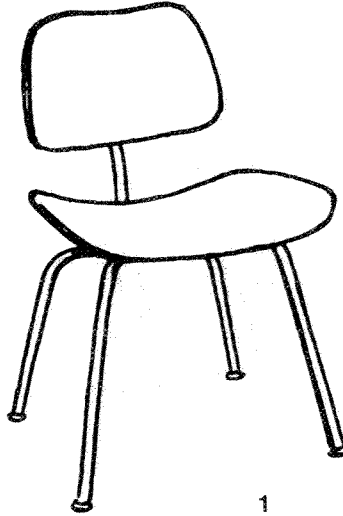


# IV. TWENTIETH CENTURY

**STYLE  
CHARACTERISTICS  
TYPICAL PIECE AND DECORATION**

15. Contemporary-Modern 1925-  
German  
(Informal)

- New shapes and forms introduced
- Modern materials and technology used
- Beauty provided through structure and materials
- Little surface ornamentation
- Form follows function



1. Charles Eames
2. Mies van der Rohe

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