

Art & Industry in Early America

*Rhode Island Furniture, 1650–1830*



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*Rhode Island Furniture,  
1650–1830*

PATRICIA E. KANE

*With*

Dennis Carr  
Nancy Goyne Evans  
Jennifer N. Johnson  
Gary R. Sullivan

Yale University Art Gallery  
*New Haven*

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Frontispiece: detail of cat. 101; page xiv: Charles Blaskowitz, *A Topographical Chart of the Bay of Narraganset in the Province of New England, 1777*. Engraving, 36 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 25 $\frac{3}{16}$  in. (93 × 64 cm). David Rumsey Historical Map Collection; page 8: detail of cat. 5; page 34: detail of cat. 60; page 66: detail of cat. 50; page 96: detail of cat. 41; page 114: detail of Evans essay, fig. 5

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## Director's Foreword

In seeking a royal charter for the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in 1663, the petitioners to King Charles II extolled the labor and industry of their fellow colonists—traits that had enabled them to prosper since their arrival in the New World in 1636—noting “upon their labour and industrie, they have not onlie byn [only been] preserved to admiration, but have increased and prospered.” Allusions to industry surface time and again throughout early Rhode Island history, and the term certainly applied to the craftsmen who created the furniture that made domiciles more comfortable and luxurious and that provided a valuable source of income in the venture cargo trade. Indeed, two furniture makers, Eleazer Trevett of Newport and Philip Potter of Providence, who were involved in making and shipping furniture to the southern colonies and the Caribbean, undertook these risky and potentially lucrative endeavors in sloops fittingly named *Industry*.

The dynamic cabinetmaking trade in colonial and early Federal Rhode Island has intrigued scholars of American decorative arts for more than a century. Despite the considerable interest it generates, however, there has not been a major survey on the subject since the 1965 *John Brown House Loan Exhibition of Rhode Island Furniture*, at the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence. Most recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's excellent 2005 exhibition *John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker*, curated by Morrison H. Heckscher, highlighted the work of Townsend and some of his Newport contemporaries. Now, with *Art and Industry in Early America: Rhode Island Furniture, 1650–1830*, the Yale University Art Gallery presents the most comprehensive selection of Rhode Island furniture ever assembled, including not only acknowledged masterpieces but also objects from areas that have heretofore received little scholarly attention.

The Gallery's own collection of American furniture, the core of which was formed by a substantial gift from Francis P. and Mabel Brady Garvan beginning in 1930, is particularly strong in the period and region covered by this exhibition. Included in the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection is a magnificent desk and bookcase owned by prominent Providence merchant John Brown (cat. 60), whose maker, Daniel Spencer, has not been accurately identified until now. The recent identification of this craftsman—based on a careful reexamination of the object and an analysis of its marking system—is just one of the exciting discoveries presented in *Art and Industry in Early America*. Also included in the Gallery's collection are a high chest signed by John Townsend and dated 1759 and a shell-carved bureau table that can also be attributed to Townsend. These and about three-dozen other pieces make up the Gallery's small but significant holdings of furniture from the colony.

*Art and Industry in Early America* is the culmination of more than a decade of research conducted by the Gallery under the direction of Patricia E. Kane, Friends of

American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts, whose scholarship and dedication to the project have made this exhibition and publication possible. This groundbreaking study has shown that there are many new insights into this important school of American furniture making still to be gained through the reexamination of surviving objects and the careful combing of the historical record. In its mission to share research and scholarship with ever-widening audiences, and in an effort to encourage further study, in 2010 the Gallery launched the Rhode Island Furniture Archive (<http://rifa.art.yale.edu>), a website documenting more than 5,000 pieces of furniture and 1,800 furniture makers in Rhode Island, from the time of the first European colonization through the early nineteenth century.

*Art and Industry in Early America* gathers over one hundred compelling works from the archive, including some of the most iconic pieces of American furniture ever created—many from the two great centers of Rhode Island furniture making, Newport and Providence—such as elaborate block-and-shell case pieces long appreciated for their craftsmanship and design innovation. These are presented side by side with objects made in smaller towns, as well as simple pieces intended for export. Great works by the much-celebrated Townsend and Goddard families of cabinetmakers are contrasted with the work of hitherto unknown makers discovered during the course of research. As the first major survey of Rhode Island furniture to include objects from the seventeenth century, the exhibition and its attendant catalogue also provide context for Rhode Island's golden age of cabinetmaking and explore the fairly robust furniture-making trade that had developed in the colony by the turn of the eighteenth century. Pieces made after the American Revolution demonstrate the gradual decline of the handcraft tradition in the nineteenth century, as small shops serving local markets gave way to a wholesale market economy.

In addition to the many lenders to the exhibition, the Gallery is especially grateful to those who have supported the website, exhibition, and catalogue, notably Lulu C. and Anthony W. Wang, B.A. 1965; Jeanie Kilroy Wilson; Jane P. Watkins, M.P.H. 1979, and the late Helen D. Buchanan; the Henry Luce Foundation; and an anonymous donor. Additional support has been provided by Jerald Dillon Fessenden, B.A. 1960; Sarah Jeffords Radcliffe; Gayle and Howard Rothman; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Wunsch Americana Foundation; and the David and Rosalee McCullough Fund. Support also comes from the Ballou family; Edgar Berner; Field Cooper McIntyre; Diana and Peter B. Cooper, Esq., B.A. 1960, J.D. 1964; Barbara W. Glauber; Judith and John Herdeg; Frank L. Hohmann III; the late Philip Holzer; Stuart and Rhoda Holzer; Linda H. Kaufman; Martha and the late Stanley Livingston; Bridget and Al Ritter; William Upton; Bruce J. Westcott; the late E. Martin Wunsch; Bernard and

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Rhode Island furniture has long been recognized for its craft and innovation. One might well ask what more is to be learned about a subject that has fascinated so many past and present scholars, not to mention dealers, collectors, and the general public. With exciting new discoveries and fresh perspectives, *Art and Industry in Early America* seeks to better highlight the major contribution the colony and eventual state made to the history of furniture making and to inspire a newfound appreciation for one of the most important schools of furniture making in early America.

Jock Reynolds  
The Henry J. Heinz II Director  
Yale University Art Gallery

## *Acknowledgments*

This exhibition and its accompanying publication grew out of research that began in 2002 when Dennis Carr, then a graduate student in the history of art at Yale, and I conceived of a long-term research project to study the furniture of Rhode Island and its makers from the founding of the colony in the seventeenth century to the dawn of the industrial era in about 1840. The research involved intense work in record repositories and the creation of a census of surviving furniture (subsequently made available online through the Rhode Island Furniture Archive). Dennis and I were grateful for the early support of the late Ralph Carpenter, who provided encouragement and shared his research files. The project also benefitted from the gift of valuable resources from a number of scholars: Liza and Michael Moses donated their photographic archive on Rhode Island furniture to the Gallery; Robert P. Emlen of Brown University shared the late Sara Steiner's research notes on furniture makers in Rhode Island land records; and Anne Rogers Haley donated her research notes on British trade records. As the acknowledgments for the archive show, many individuals, Yale students, and foundations offered critical support in the creation of this resource. The information compiled in the archive has enabled the exhibition organizers to offer new insights into the art and business of furniture making in Rhode Island. In addition to Dennis, who is now the Carolyn and Peter Lynch Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, I am grateful to my other collaborators—Nancy Goynes Evans, independent furniture historian, lecturer, and consultant; Jennifer N. Johnson, the former Marcia Brady Tucker Senior Fellow in American Decorative Arts and now Research Associate at the Gallery; and Gary R. Sullivan, independent scholar and art dealer—for their efforts in shaping the exhibition in planning meetings that took place in the summer of 2013 and the early winter of 2014 and for contributing to the book.

The study of the objects in the exhibition took place over a long period of time. I am indebted to my colleagues at the Gallery, namely Benjamin W. Colman, B.A. 2008, Emily M. Orr, and Diane C. Wright, former Marcia Brady Tucker Fellows, and Caryne Eskridge, current Marcia Brady Tucker Fellow; John Stuart Gordon, the Benjamin Attmore Hewitt Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts; Eric Litke, Museum Assistant; Thomas B. Lloyd, B.A. 1977, and Fred Murphy, Research Volunteers; Charlene Senical, Assistant Business Manager; Nancy Stedman, Museum Assistant; and Mia Taradash, former Research Assistant; as well as to my husband, W. Scott Braznell, ART.A. 1967, for their assistance on many field trips to examine furniture and other help during the course of this research. I am particularly grateful to Jennifer Johnson, who traveled with me to more than twenty-three institutions and private collections to finalize the object exhibition checklist in 2014 and 2015.

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The conservation, movement, and photography of the objects involved the talents of many colleagues. Conservation was undertaken by Gallery staff, including Theresa Fairbanks Harris, Senior Conservator of Paper at the Yale Center for British Art; Ashley Jehle, Conservation Fellow in Objects; Ian McClure, the Susan Morse Hilles Chief Conservator; Cynthia Schwarz, Assistant Conservator of Paintings; and Carol Snow, Deputy Chief Conservator and the Alan J. Dworsky Senior Conservator of Objects. Freelance conservators and conservators at other institutions worked on objects for the exhibition, including Tad Fallon and Randy Wilkinson, Fallon and Wilkinson, Baltic, Connecticut; Susan Holbrook, B.A. 1990, Holbrook and Hawes, LLC, Bethany, Connecticut; Nancy C. Britton, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Hugh Glover, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Massachusetts; and Mark Anderson, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware. Loans were handled by Amy Dowe, Senior Associate Registrar. Photography was organized by John French,

Director of Visual Resources; Kathleen Mylen-Coulombe, Rights and Reproductions Coordinator; and David Whaples, Visual Resources Coordinator, working with photographers Anthony De Camillo, Thomas R. DuBrock, Chris Gardner, Richard House, and Tracey Kroll, who created beautiful images for the majority of objects in this catalogue. GuyMark Studios produced the videos in the exhibition. Thomas R. Raich, Director of Information Technology, assisted with the digital aspects of the exhibition. Burrus Harlow, Director of Collections, and Jason DeBlock, Manager of Collections, oversaw the movement of objects with the assistance of Anthony Florio, Sue Hochgraf, David Norris, Vicki Onofrio, Thomas Philips, Thomas Reilly, and Nancy Valley of our Collections Department. Jeffrey Yoshimine, Deputy Director for Exhibition and Collection Management, and Clarkson Crolius, Exhibitions Production Manager, with the help of museum technicians Patrick Brown, Peter Cohen, Ryan Cyr, Andrzej Dutkanicz, Mark Greist, David Marshall, Alicia Van Campen, William Warden, and Kevin Wigginton, oversaw the installation of the exhibition designed by Stephen Saitas, of Stephen Saitas Designs, New York. Charlene Senical, Assistant Business Manager, kept the budget on track. Jill Westgard, Deputy Director for Advancement, and Brian P. McGovern, Associate Director of Advancement, helped with the fund-raising effort spearheaded by Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director. Colleagues at the Gallery graciously made works from their collections available for the exhibition, including Jane Miller, Senior Museum Assistant, Coins and Medals; Mark D. Mitchell, the Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture; Keely Orgeman, the Alice and Allan Kaplan Assistant Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture; and Elisabeth Hodermarsky, the Sutphin Family Senior Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings. The creation of the book, exhibition labels, and related promotional materials was overseen by Tiffany Sprague, Director of Publications and Editorial Services, and Julianna White, Editorial Assistant. Christopher Sleboda, Director of Graphic Design, designed the publication and the exhibition graphics.

I convey heartfelt thanks to all the individuals and foundations that have supported this exhibition and are recorded in the director's foreword. Our biggest debt of gratitude goes to the lenders who agreed to part with their objects for the duration of the exhibition. Without their generosity, this exhibition would not have happened.

Patricia E. Kane

The Friends of American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts  
Yale University Art Gallery

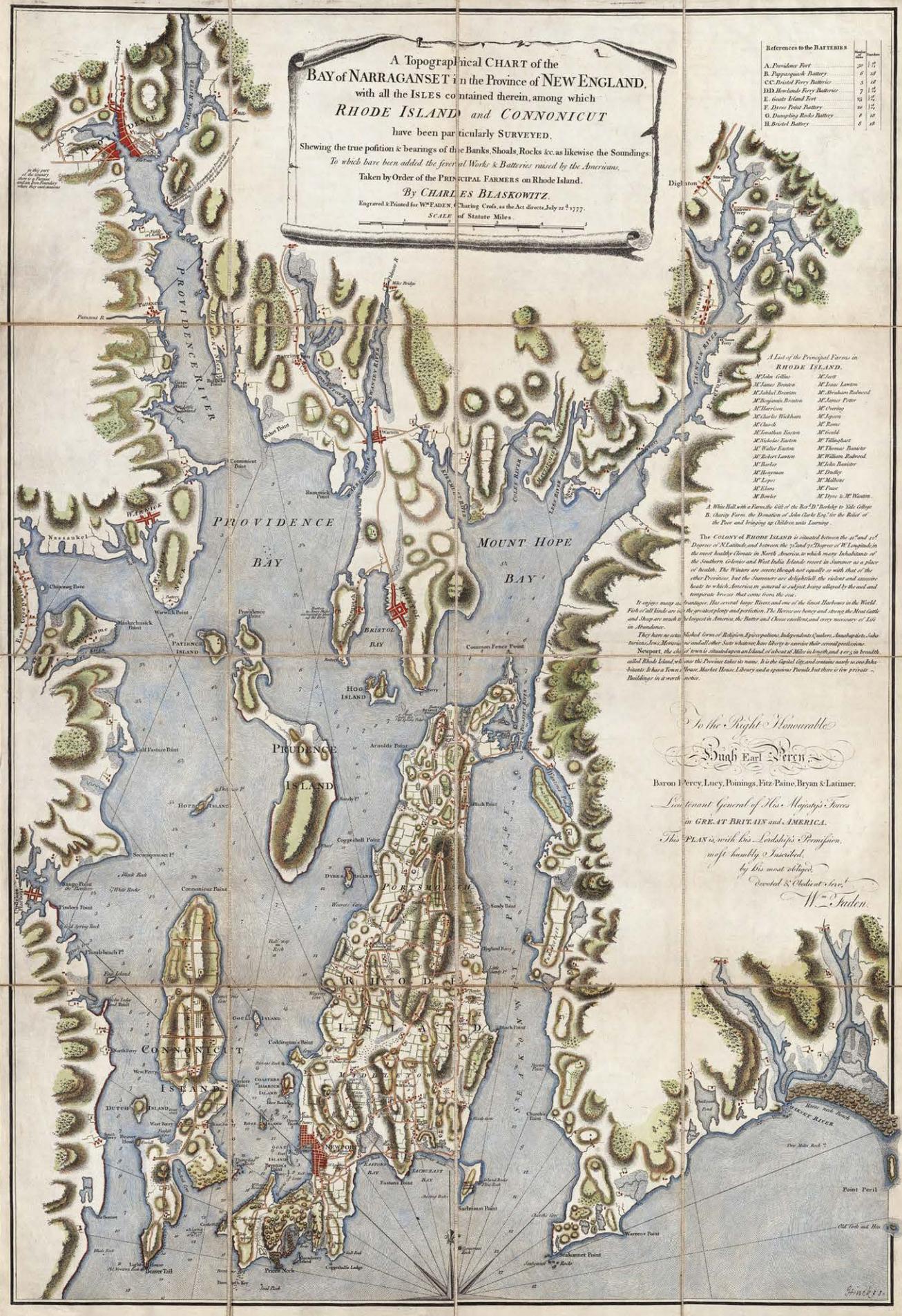
## *Lenders to the Exhibition*

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Jeanie Kilroy Wilson  
Winterthur Museum, Garden, and  
Library, Delaware  
Wunsch Americana Foundation,  
New York  
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven,  
Connecticut

A Topographical CHART of the  
**BAY of NARRAGANSET** in the Province of **NEW ENGLAND**,  
 with all the ISLES contained therein, among which  
**RHODE ISLAND** and **CONNONICUT**  
 have been particularly SURVEYED.  
 Shewing the true position & bearings of the Banks, Shoals, Rocks &c. as likewise the Soundings  
 To which have been added the several Works & Batteries raised by the Americans,  
 Taken by Order of the PRINCIPAL FARMERS on Rhode Island.  
 By **CHARLES BLASKOWITZ**.  
 Engraved & Printed for W<sup>o</sup> FADEX, in King Street, as the Act directs July 22<sup>d</sup> 1777.  
 SCALE of Statute Miles

References to the BATTERIES

A. Providence Fort	10
B. Pigeon-hole Battery	15
C.C. Pointed Ferry Battery	18
D.D. Howland's Ferry Battery	7
E. Goat Island Fort	12
F. Dover Point Battery	14
G. Dismal Swamp Battery	16
H. Bristol Battery	6



- A List of the Principal Families in  
**RHODE ISLAND.**
- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| M <sup>r</sup> John Collins       | M <sup>r</sup> Isaac Loomis                 |
| M <sup>r</sup> James Brewster     | M <sup>r</sup> Benjamin Brewster            |
| M <sup>r</sup> Nathaniel Brewster | M <sup>r</sup> James Foster                 |
| M <sup>r</sup> Harrison           | M <sup>r</sup> Orono                        |
| M <sup>r</sup> Charles Wickham    | M <sup>r</sup> John                         |
| M <sup>r</sup> Clark              | M <sup>r</sup> Rose                         |
| M <sup>r</sup> Jonathan Easton    | M <sup>r</sup> Josiah                       |
| M <sup>r</sup> Nicholas Easton    | M <sup>r</sup> Timothy                      |
| M <sup>r</sup> Walter Easton      | M <sup>r</sup> Thomas Bunker                |
| M <sup>r</sup> Robert Latham      | M <sup>r</sup> William Redwood              |
| M <sup>r</sup> Barker             | M <sup>r</sup> John Bunker                  |
| M <sup>r</sup> Heyman             | M <sup>r</sup> Drayley                      |
| M <sup>r</sup> Lyman              | M <sup>r</sup> Melan                        |
| M <sup>r</sup> Paine              | M <sup>r</sup> Paine                        |
| M <sup>r</sup> Barker             | M <sup>r</sup> Dyre & M <sup>r</sup> Winton |

A White Hill with a Farm the Gift of the Rev<sup>d</sup> D<sup>r</sup> Berkeley to Yale College  
 B. Cherry Farm the Donation of John Clarke Esq<sup>r</sup> to the Relief of  
 the Poor and bringing up Children into Learning

The COLONY of RHODE ISLAND is situated between the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>d</sup>  
 Degrees of N Latitude and between the 71<sup>st</sup> and 72<sup>d</sup> Degrees of W Longitude in  
 the most healthy Climate in North America in which many Inhabitants of  
 the Southern Colonies and West India Islands resort in Summer as a place  
 of health. The Winters are severe though not equally so with that of the  
 other Provinces. And the Summers are delightful the richest and easiest  
 boats to which America in general is subject being allowed by the cool and  
 temperate breezes that come from the sea.

It enjoys many advantages: Has several large Rivers and one of the Great Harbours in the World.  
 Fish of all kinds are in the greatest plenty and perfection. The Rivers are long and among the most fruitful  
 and deep in America. The Butter and Cheese excellent, and every necessary of Life  
 in Abundance.

They have an excellent Method of Religion Episcopalian Independents Quakers Anabaptists like  
 Quakers, Unitarians, and all other Sects whatever have liberty to exercise their several professions.

Newport, the chief town is situated upon an Island of about 20 Miles in length and a 2 or 3 Miles breadth  
 and Rhode Island, which the Province takes its name. It is the Capital City and contains nearly 10,000 Inhabitants.  
 It has a Town House, Market House, Library and a spacious Parade but there is few private  
 Buildings in it worth notice.

To the Right Honourable  
**Duqu<sup>e</sup> Earl of Devon**  
 Baron Percy, Lucy, Pinnings, Fitz Paine Bryan & Laumer,  
 Lieutenant General of His Majesty's Forces  
 in GREAT BRITAIN and AMERICA.  
 This PLAN is with his Lordship's Permission,  
 most humbly Invented  
 by his most obliged  
 Servant & Obedient Son,  
**W<sup>o</sup> Faden.**

# *Introduction*

PATRICIA E. KANE

THE COLONY OF RHODE ISLAND WAS SETTLED in 1636, somewhat later than the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies and at about the same time as the Connecticut Colony.<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island was smaller and more religiously diverse than its New England neighbors. Roger Williams, who was among the first group of settlers to come to Providence, had been driven out of Massachusetts for having what the magistrates and ministers there regarded as heretical views—believing the local Indians should be paid for their land, supporting religious toleration, and espousing the separation of church and state. These beliefs, shared by Williams and his followers, made Rhode Island a destination for Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious sects that were treated with hostility in Massachusetts.

As Dennis Carr writes in his essay in this volume, furniture makers were among the earliest settlers to Rhode Island, but because of the small size of the colony, less furniture was made there than elsewhere in New England—and consequently less survives. There is no distinctive style of seventeenth-century Rhode Island furniture like the so-called sunflower chests from the Wethersfield area of Connecticut, numbering more than one hundred examples, or the Plymouth Colony cupboards and chests of Massachusetts, with their characteristic sawtooth and turned ornament.<sup>2</sup> The Rhode Island Furniture Archive at the Yale University Art Gallery records fewer than fifty objects believed to have been made in colonial Rhode Island between 1650 and 1700. A handful of examples of joined furniture from the Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), area have distinguishing floral ornament and are so far the only identifiable regional group of seventeenth-century Rhode Island furniture (see cats. 5–6).

With the exception of some tables, stools, and banister-back chairs, furniture made in Rhode Island between 1700 and 1740—often identified as the William and Mary, or Baroque, style—has not been well understood.<sup>3</sup> Many more early eighteenth-century dressing tables, high chests of drawers, and slant-front desks survive from Massachusetts than from Rhode Island, and Rhode Island examples of these forms

often have been misattributed to Massachusetts or New York. Rhode Island makers typically divided their burl-veneered facades with vertical bands of inlay (see cats. 8, 10–12, and 14), a decorative treatment also found on New York and later Massachusetts case pieces.<sup>4</sup> Veneered clock cases with movements made in Newport by William Claggett have also been misidentified as Boston casework.<sup>5</sup> Other details identify Rhode Island case furniture. The high chests tend to have a three-part drawer configuration near the top of the upper case as well as attenuated turned legs. The presence of chestnut and yellow poplar, favored by Rhode Island makers as secondary woods, and histories of ownership in Rhode Island (or nearby areas of Connecticut and southeastern Massachusetts) are additional factors that support attributions of case pieces and clock cases to Rhode Island.

Rhode Island framed chairs (put together with rectangular mortise-and-tenon joints) with turned front legs constitute another category of early eighteenth-century Rhode Island furniture heretofore incorrectly identified.<sup>6</sup> Like case furniture, these chairs have often been miscataloged, attributed to Massachusetts or Portsmouth, New Hampshire.<sup>7</sup> Characteristic features of Rhode Island examples are bulbous turnings surrounded by hollows at the tops of the front legs and bulges on the crest rails where they overhang the splats (backs), creating a disjointed transition (see cat. 43). Again, Rhode Island pieces are scarcer than those made in Massachusetts, whose furniture makers are known to have shipped framed chairs in the export trade.

Most scholarship on Rhode Island furniture has focused on the period from 1740 to 1780—that is, furniture in the Queen Anne and Chippendale styles—with Newport and, to a lesser degree, Providence receiving the most attention. This era was the golden age of Rhode Island furniture making, led in Newport by the brothers Job and Christopher Townsend and their descendants and apprentices, including John Goddard, an apprentice of Job's who married one of Job's daughters, and John Townsend,

the son of Christopher.<sup>8</sup> Early in this period, a few Providence and Bristol makers produced furniture ornamented with compass-star inlay and light and dark stringing (thin strips of inlaid wood in contrasting colors; see cats. 38–40), decorative motifs more popular in Massachusetts. As with the earlier veneered case furniture, these also have been misidentified as Massachusetts work.<sup>9</sup> During this period, evidence abounds of Rhode Island furniture makers participating in the export trade, shipping furniture to Canada, New York, the southern colonies, and the Caribbean (see, for example, cat. 27, which was shipped to Canada). The colony's furniture for export included not only chairs (including Windsor chairs), the most popular export items, but also desks and tables.<sup>10</sup> At the outset of this period, case pieces and tables tended toward an austere silhouette, with sleek, serpentine-curved cabriole legs on slipper or pad feet (see cat. 30). By the 1750s, however, the claw-and-ball foot—a sphere grasped by a claw—had become an alternative foot style. Sometimes the talons were undercut (see cat. 32), a feature in the British colonies of North America unique to Rhode Island. At about the same time, the shell motif, for which Rhode Island cabinetwork is renowned, began to be used. This classic element of Baroque design was carved by Rhode Island craftsmen out of dense mahogany with a voluptuousness and fluidity rarely matched elsewhere. Combining the shell with the block-front form that was developed in Boston in the late 1730s—in which the facade is characterized by three vertical sections, two convex and one concave, of equal width (see cat. 57)—Rhode Island makers created some of the great masterpieces of American furniture. The earliest Rhode Island example dated by its maker is a bureau table by Edmund Townsend (cat. 51) made in Newport in 1764.<sup>11</sup> Furniture with block-and-shell decoration, including tall case clocks, some with the white painted dials introduced in the late eighteenth century (see Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 10), were still being made in Rhode Island well after the American Revolution. Most block-and-shell case furniture was probably made in Newport, but the style was brought from Newport

to Providence by makers relocating there (see cat. 60), and a number of Providence craftsmen produced idiosyncratic interpretations of the genre. The Providence examples often have shells carved from the solid, not applied, as was more common in Newport (see cat. 63). Cabinetmakers in smaller towns, such as Ichabod Cole in Warren, Rhode Island (see cat. 79), also made block-and-shell furniture.

Scholarship on Rhode Island framed Queen Anne chairs and easy chairs has undergone significant re-assessment since the publication of two articles by Joan Barzilay Freund, Leigh Keno, and Alan Miller in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> The authors argued that several chairs attributed to the colony on the basis of Rhode Island family histories, or in one case a craftsman's signature, were instead made in Boston and were exported to Rhode Island as part of the extensive Boston export trade in chairs. These articles led scholars to reexamine the Rhode Island attributions of many mid-eighteenth-century chairs and reassign them to Boston.<sup>13</sup> The Rhode Island Furniture Archive includes almost 170 chairs—side chairs, armchairs, roundabout chairs, and easy chairs—once attributed to Rhode Island but now considered to be from Boston. The earlier attributions were based on the presence of certain decorative features, including shell carving. Since shells were a signature feature of Rhode Island case furniture, shells on the crest rails and knees of chairs became the basis on which to assign many chairs to the colony. Likewise, rounded rear stiles (rear legs), found on chairs known to have been owned by Rhode Islanders William Ellery and Moses Brown, became the basis on which other chairs with rounded stiles were attributed to the colony.<sup>14</sup> The use of flat stretchers also led to attributions to Rhode Island, based on those found on chairs said to have been made by Job Townsend, Sr., for the Eddy family.<sup>15</sup> Yet chairmakers and upholsterers were working in Rhode Island during this period; if so many chairs are reattributed to other locations, what were these craftsmen making? During the course of this study, a small number of chairs from the period that closely resemble Massachusetts chairs but have

subtle differences in their execution were identified. These differences, coupled with family histories, have led the present authors to reattribute them to Rhode Island (see cats. 46, 49–50).

In the late colonial period, when Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston were embracing the new Rococo (or Chippendale) style disseminated by English design books, Rhode Islanders chose to continue, for the most part, to produce their Baroque designs. Cabinetmaker John Goddard, one of the most important Newport craftsmen of the period, seems to have been familiar with the style; a 1922 article reported the existence of a copy of the 1762 edition of the London cabinetmaker Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Director* with the name "Thomas Goddard" on the title page. The article reported that the handwriting had been verified as that of Thomas Goddard, John's son. At the time the article was written, the volume was owned by Duncan A. Hazard of Newport, who claimed that it was originally owned by John Goddard.<sup>16</sup> If Goddard did own this book, which is replete with examples of the Rococo style, it had very little influence on his work or on that of his fellow Newport cabinetmakers. Rhode Island furniture makers did make chairs with the pierced splats typical of the style (see cats. 68, 70–71, 74), but they were of the scrolled variety, not the Gothic or ribbon-back types of the full-blown Rococo. Only a very few pieces of Rhode Island furniture embrace the Rococo—the gadrooning (carved ornamental banding) and latticework on a bureau table by Goddard's son Daniel (cat. 55), the gadrooning on a side chair (cat. 81), and the pierced scrollwork gallery and Chinese lattice-patterned stretchers of a china table attributed to John Townsend (cat. 82) are among the handful of examples.

After the Revolution, the economic fortunes of Newport and Providence were quite different. Newport struggled to rebuild, having been occupied by the British during the war. Providence, which was not occupied, came into its own in this period, with expanded trade and manufacturing. Early Federal-period

Rhode Island furniture, from 1785 to 1805, in what is called the Hepplewhite style, is known for its distinctive pictorial inlay patterns ornamenting the legs of tables and case pieces. Three different Newport shops had individual patterns: urns, swags, and tassels appear on pieces documented to Holmes Weaver (see cat. 91); urns and bellflowers adorn a card table documented to Stephen and Thomas Goddard (cat. 92); and paterae (segmented circles or ovals), bellflowers or flutes, and lozenges (sometimes referred to as icicles) are found on tables documented to John Townsend (see cats. 93–94).<sup>17</sup> Other Rhode Island makers produced furniture with related inlays. In Warren, for instance, James Halyburton made tables with floral and bellflower inlay and semicircular paterae (see cat. 101), and a sideboard believed to be from the Providence area also sports a complex array of bellflowers, quarter paterae, and geometric inlay (see cat. 103). Numerous small sideboards, often attributed to the Providence cabinetmaker Thomas Howard, Jr., have crossed branches with small leaves below the cupboard doors.<sup>18</sup>

After 1805 Rhode Island furniture makers moved away from these pictorial inlays, introducing turned, reeded, and fluted legs and contrasting veneers to ornament their objects, influenced by the designs of English cabinetmaker and designer Thomas Sheraton.<sup>19</sup> Rhode Island furniture came more directly under the influence of Boston and New York furniture, which began to be retailed in Rhode Island (see Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 12), and local makers began to import Boston inlay to use on their own work. The lunette-patterned inlay on a dressing bureau made in Providence probably by Joseph Rawson and Son in 1814 (cat. 104) was no doubt imported from Boston. Late Federal-period Rhode Island furniture also employs highly figured mahogany with stenciled ebonized and gilded borders (see cat. 106).

Throughout the period covered in this book—from 1650 to 1830—craftsmen in the wood trades navigated an economic system that was simultaneously local and international while creating well-made, aesthetically pleasing furniture in myriad forms. Nearly every kind

of work or production in the colony and eventual state either directly or indirectly supported commerce (the foundation of the economy), and the furniture craft tradition reflects this. John Brown, whose mercantile success helped turn Providence into a bustling port city rivaling Newport, embraced industry not only as a trade but also as a personal emblem; the finial in the decorative paneling over the fireplace in a first-floor parlor of his grand house built in Providence in 1786 was carved in the shape of a squirrel, an eighteenth-century symbol of industriousness.<sup>20</sup> In their superb workmanship and skillful production, in the successful running of businesses that required the hiring of journeymen (day laborers) and cooperation between multiple craftsmen of different specialties, and in the venture cargo trade itself, early Rhode Islanders participated in industry. The essays in this volume seek for the first time to reexamine not only the artistry of the furniture made throughout Rhode Island from the earliest days of the settlement to the late Federal period but also the commercial system in which these objects were made—encouraging a deeper understanding of this dynamic school of American furniture making, its forms and styles, its makers and their role in shaping Rhode Island's early economy.

## Notes

1. For more on the founding of the colony and its earliest furniture, see the essay by Dennis Carr in the present volume.
2. For an example of a Connecticut chest, see Ward 1988, 379–82, no. 195, ill. For chests from the Plymouth Colony, see St. George 1979, 38–39, figs. 20–21.
3. These groups include tables and stools with turned legs of an asymmetrical design (see cats. 17–19) and banister-back chairs with double-arched crests (see cats. 20–21).
4. For a New York example, see the Samuel Clement high chest of drawers at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1957.0512; for a Massachusetts example, see Ebenezer Hartshorn's high chest of drawers at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 31.432. The slant-front desk at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1930.2119 [RIF2513], was catalogued as Boston from the time it was given to the Gallery in 1930 until only recently. For an example of Rhode Island furniture previously attributed to New York, see Warren et al. 1998, 20–21, F35 [RIF232], ill.
5. For an example of a clock by Claggett with casework previously attributed to Boston, see Sotheby's, New York, January 16–17, 1998, lot 270 [RIF3139]. For discussions of the clocks made in colonial and Federal Rhode Island, see the essay by Patricia E. Kane and Gary R. Sullivan and the entries by Sullivan in the present volume.
6. For a discussion of chairmaking in Rhode Island, see the essay by Jennifer N. Johnson in the present volume.
7. See, for example, a side chair at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1966.1305 [RIF6168].
8. For a discussion of cabinetmaking in Rhode Island from 1740 to 1830, see the essay by the present author in this volume.
9. The two desk and bookcases in this catalogue with this type of decoration, cats. 39–40, were both attributed to Massachusetts when offered for sale in 1984 and 1993, respectively; see Christie's, New York, October 13, 1984, lot 298 [RIF6008], and Christie's, New York, January 25, 1993, lot 207 [RIF6009].
10. For a discussion of Windsor chairmaking in Rhode Island, see the essay by Nancy Goyne Evans in the present volume.
11. See also the chest of drawers by John Townsend in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 27.57.1 [RIF14], and a slant-front desk in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1976.0063 [RIF97], both made in Newport a year later, in 1765. The earliest example of the block-front design in American furniture is the desk and bookcase made by Job Coit, Sr., and Job Coit, Jr., in Boston in 1738; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1962.0087.
12. Keno, Freund, and Miller 1996; and Freund and Keno 1998.
13. One of the first books to embrace the new thinking about coastal New England chairs was the 1997 catalogue of New England furniture at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware, where, for instance, a side chair attributed to Newport by former Winterthur curator Joseph Downs was reattributed to Boston; see Downs 1952a, no. 101, ill. See also Richards et al. 1997, 42–43, no. 23, ill. [RIF2700].
14. For the chairs owned by William Ellery and Moses Brown, see Freund and Keno 1998, 25, figs. 41–42 [RIF2012 and RIF3993]. For an example misattributed to Rhode Island, see Jobe and Kaye 1984, 356–57, no. 98, ill. [RIF837].
15. Moses 1984, 248 [RIF214 and RIF755].
16. Dyer 1922, 207. This volume is now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 31.995.
17. For an example with flutes and lozenges, see Rodriguez Roque 1984, 328–29, no. 154, ill. [RIF1018].
18. Ward 1988, 415–17, no. 214, ill. [RIF1194].
19. See the sideboard by Joseph Rawson and Son illustrated in Monahan 1980, 141, fig. 15 [RIF1565].
20. The house also had wallpaper by the French company of Jean-Baptiste Réveillon that included squirrels in the design. The author is grateful to Wendy A. Cooper for pointing out Brown's use of squirrel iconography as a symbol of industriousness and, especially, to Caryne Eskridge, the Marcia Brady Tucker Fellow, Department of American Decorative Arts, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., for her research on the meaning of the word "industry" in colonial and Federal America, which has formed the basis of this paragraph.

# *Contributors and Note to the Reader*

## *Contributors*

DC	Dennis Carr
NGE	Nancy Goyne Evans
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GRS	Gary R. Sullivan

## *Currency*

The relative value of colonial Rhode Island currency is notoriously difficult to reconcile, owing to significant inflationary fluctuations during the eighteenth century. “Old Tenor” notes (so-named by the Massachusetts Bay Colony) were issued in Rhode Island until 1763, when this currency was replaced by “lawful money.” At that time, £23.33 in Old Tenor was equal to £1 in lawful money. In this catalogue, prices are given as they were recorded in the original documents; given the nature of the monetary fluctuations, conversions are given only rarely, when comparison between one unit and another informs the context of the discussion. For more information regarding early American currency, see McCusker 1978, 131–37; and James 1975, 172–85.

## *Dimensions*

Dimensions are given in inches followed by centimeters. Height precedes width precedes depth or diameter. Inches have been rounded to the nearest sixteenth; centimeters to the nearest tenth. In all instances, maximum dimensions are given, unless otherwise noted.

## *Inscriptions*

Inscriptions include construction marks—such as letters or numbers—applied by the maker, or inscriptions, labels, or other information applied by subsequent owners. A slash indicates a line break. For the most part, illegible inscriptions have not been recorded herein, and when inscriptions are extensive, selected inscriptions are given; for a full list of inscriptions, see the Rhode Island Furniture Archive (<http://rifa.art.yale.edu>).

## *Makers*

All makers are American, unless otherwise noted. Makers are identified if there is an inscription, label, or other documentation that offers firm evidence as to

authorship. Works are “attributed” to makers if such documentation is lacking but the design and workmanship are comparable to documented examples. These are sometimes qualified with “probably by,” indicating a stronger likelihood than “possibly by.”

### *Marks*

Marks are statements of authorship—such as inscriptions, labels, or other indicators—applied by the maker. A slash indicates a line break.

### *Medium*

The word “primary” indicates woods that are on the exterior of the object; “secondary” indicates woods used for interior structural parts, such as drawer linings or glue blocks. For chairs, seat material is given when original. Woods identified by microanalysis—analysis of the wood structure by a wood specialist using a microscope—are identified as such. For detailed media information, including which parts of an object use which wood, see the Rhode Island Furniture Archive (<http://rifa.art.yale.edu>).

### *Movement*

The movement is the internal mechanism of the clock, made by the clockmaker (as opposed to the casemaker, who made the cabinet). The term “8-day” indicates a movement that requires winding only once a week. Brass plates are solid rectangles, unless otherwise indicated. Functions of the movement are indicated: “time” (a time train to show hours and minutes); “strike” (a strike train to sound the hours audibly on a bell or gong); “three-train musical” (in addition to time and striking trains, a third train to play music); “quarter chiming” (plays short melodies on the half and quarter hours); and automated dial (mechanically animated devices, such as a depiction of a ship, that move back and forth with the motion of the pendulum).

### *Provenance*

Provenance is given in chronological order. When known, owners’ life dates are included, followed by site and period of ownership. When transfer is from one known owner to another, the names are separated by a semicolon; when there is a break in ownership, the semicolon is replaced by a period.

### *Rhode Island Furniture Archive*

The Rhode Island Furniture Archive—which currently catalogues more than five thousand objects as well as makers’ biographies and continues to be updated as new objects are identified—is available online at <http://rifa.art.yale.edu>. Throughout this publication, objects in the archive are identified by a number in square brackets (e.g., [RIF15]). Additionally, many of the primary sources cited throughout can be found in the archive files, located in the Department of American Decorative Arts at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

### *Terminology*

For objects catalogued as “one of a pair,” the data recorded is for that example only. For information on the mate, see the Rhode Island Furniture Archive (<http://rifa.art.yale.edu>). This description (and “from a set of”) refers only to examples that are currently owned together. Other objects from the same set that are part of another collection or whose locations are unknown are not included.

Throughout the catalogue, the words “proper left” and “proper right” refer to the left or right of the object itself, not the viewer’s left or right.



# *“A Lively Experiment”*

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## *Early Furniture Making of the Narragansett Bay Region, 1636–1740*

DENNIS CARR

*In this bay are five small islands, very fertile and beautiful, full of tall spreading trees . . .*

—Giovanni da Verrazano, 1524

IT WAS TO THE MILD AND SALUBRIOUS CLIMATE of the Narragansett Bay that the first English settlers arrived in 1636. They were religious dissenters from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, namely the preacher, writer, and scholar Roger Williams—followed by Samuel Gorton, John Clarke, William Coddington, and the fiery minister Anne Hutchinson—who helped found the early towns of Providence and Warwick on the western side of the Narragansett Bay and Newport and Portsmouth on Aquidneck Island, between 1636 and 1641 (fig. 1). From the start, this loose conglomeration of towns, which would not become the crown-chartered colony of “Rhode Island and Providence Plantations” until 1663, established itself as a world apart from the rest of New England. Detractors famously referred to the colony as “Rogues’ Island,” owing to the independent spirit of its residents; however, to the growing influx of European settlers seeking religious and social freedom, Rhode Island offered relief from the Puritan oppression of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which was settled in 1630. In 1695 Cotton Mather described Rhode Island as a “colluvies of Anti-nomians, Familists, Anabaptists, Anti-Sabbitarians, Arminians, Socinians, Quakers, Ranters, everything in the world but Roman Catholics and real Christians.”<sup>1</sup> Although often politically and religiously at odds with its neighbors, and beset with controversies and struggles over control of land, Rhode Island remained always tightly interconnected with the broader culture of New England and the Long Island basin in ways that shaped the material culture and furniture making of the region during the colony’s first hundred years.

From the earliest period of European settlement, the woodworking crafts played an important role in the founding and economic growth of the colony. Forested land needed to be cleared, houses constructed for comfort and safety and churches for



worship, fences erected for livestock, docks and wharves built for the region's growing maritime economy, and sturdy furniture fashioned for increasingly comfortable and well-appointed interiors. Among the early settlers of the town of Portsmouth were five men recorded specifically as carpenters in the colony records: George Cleare, Ralph Earle, William Hall, John Roome, and John Tripp, all of whom signed the Second Portsmouth Contract on April 30, 1639.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Easton was the first resident to erect a house in Portsmouth, in 1639, and the first to do so in Newport when he moved there later the same year. Shipbuilding began in the Narragansett Bay region by the 1660s.<sup>3</sup> By the 1670s, settlements began to sprout up along the eastern side of the bay across the Sakonnet River from Aquidneck Island, in Sakonnet (later Little Compton), Pocasset (later Tiverton), and Mount Hope (later Bristol), towns which would be incorporated into the Colony of Rhode Island by royal decree in 1747. These eastern lands had opened up to English settlement following the brutal and destructive war with the native populations in the mid-1670s, known as King Philip's War, after the Wampanoag leader.

Although the Rhode Island colony never officially declared war against the Narragansetts who lived on the western frontier of Rhode Island or against King Philip's Wampanoags to the east, its towns and farmlands on the eastern and western shores of the Narragansett Bay were not spared the war's destruction. Providence, the second-largest Rhode Island town before the war, suffered attacks in June 1675 and March 1676 and was nearly totally destroyed, losing some seventy-two houses; another one hundred were damaged by Native American raids.<sup>4</sup> "We once were as Rich as any town within 40 miles of us Round about," Providence resident Mary Pray wrote in 1676/77, "[b]ut now are the poorest of al[l] towns."<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Rehoboth (or East Providence) lost nearly all of its buildings, and the towns on the western side of the Narragansett Bay from Providence south to Warwick, East Greenwich, Kingstown (site of the Great Swamp Fight in 1675), and Point Judith were nearly completely lost. Of the original towns of Rhode Island,

only Newport and Portsmouth on Aquidneck Island were spared.<sup>6</sup>

The need to rebuild in these areas following the war created a great demand for all manner of woodworkers, especially house carpenters and furniture makers, as well as allied craftsmen such as shipwrights, ship joiners, and blockmakers, who benefited from increased mercantile traffic.<sup>7</sup> This level of widespread destruction also explains why so few examples of furniture made prior to the 1670s have survived. All of Rhode Island's early extant buildings, as well as most of its early furniture, date to the postwar period, when the building boom spread across southern New England. After the war, there was growing and more confident rural settlement farther from the coast in newly developed agricultural lands, increased movement along Long Island Sound and its many tributaries, and construction of new roads that contributed to freer and faster movement of people along the watercourses and highways of southern New England. A notable feature of the landscape of this postwar period is the classic Rhode Island stone-ender, which developed from West and North Country, or "Highland," English prototypes. An example of this style is the Eleazer Arnold House, built in 1687 in Providence (now Lincoln), with its characteristic exposed gable-end chimney (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> Shortly after the war, stone-enders appeared primarily in the northern areas of Rhode Island; however, by the end of the seventeenth century, this type of house could be found throughout Narragansett Country, Aquidneck Island, the eastern shore of the Narragansett Bay in Massachusetts, and as far west as Preston, Connecticut.<sup>9</sup>

As the historian Robert Blair St. George has discussed, the early building and furniture-making traditions of Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts show not a single identifiable influence but rather multiple influences mirroring the diversity of backgrounds of the settlers who lived there and the broader cultural connections across the region.<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest surviving examples of Rhode Island furniture, the famous Benedict Arnold chair (cat. 2), which is reported

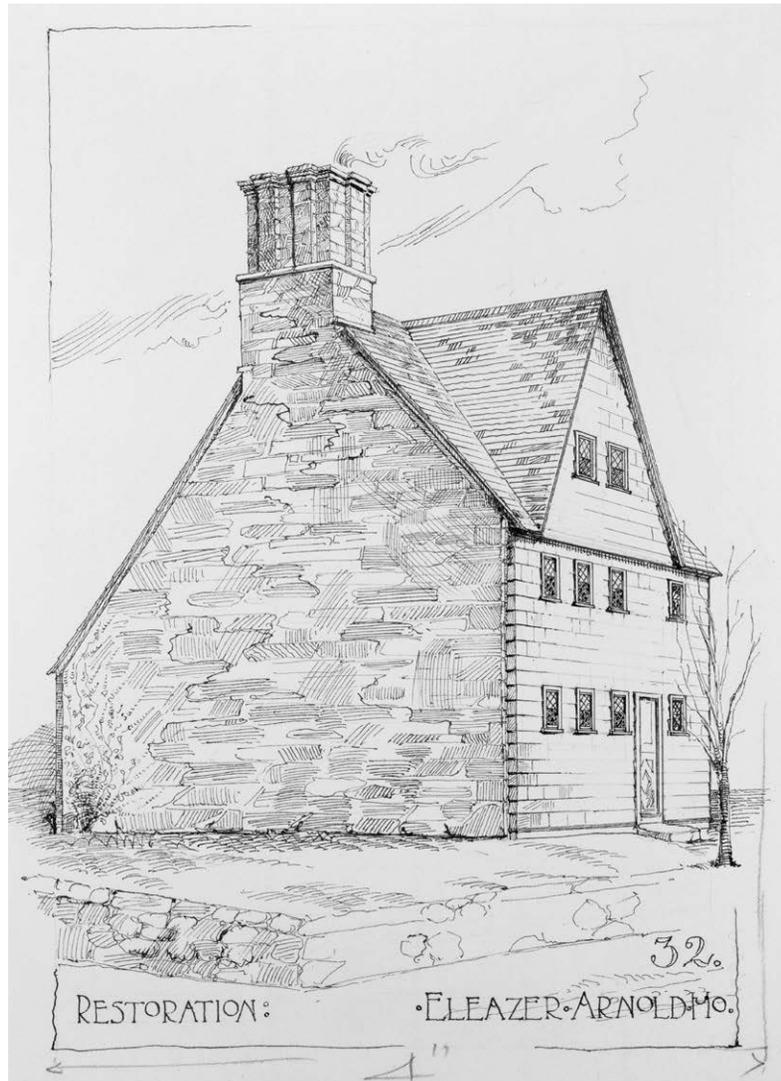


Fig. 2. Norman Isham,  
*Restored View of the  
 Eleazer Arnold House*, 1895.  
 Ink on paper, 9 × 12 in.  
 (22.9 × 30.5 cm). Rhode  
 Island Historical Society,  
 Providence, inv. no. Negative  
 #Rhi(x3)4086



Fig. 3. *Chest with Drawer*,  
 Swansea, Massachusetts  
 (later Warren, Rhode Island),  
 1675–85. Oak, 33½ × 45¾ ×  
 19¾ in. (85.1 × 116.2 × 50.2 cm).  
 Private collection. [RIF3953]

to have been used by the colonial governor during the presentation of the Rhode Island Charter in Newport in 1663, bears a close resemblance to joined chairs made in neighboring Plymouth Colony. A slightly later group of furniture, with links to the New Haven Colony to the west, includes an oak chest with a history in the Cranston family of Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island) (cat. 6), and related examples featuring similar carved panels with abstracted rosette designs, diamonds, and stylized tendrils (fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> The central panels on the Rhode Island chests are strongly reminiscent of furniture associated with the New Haven Colony, particularly a group of court cupboards with similar applied archways and a central elongated, turned drop.<sup>12</sup> Both styles of furniture are derived from provincial English prototypes, but it was in the Long Island basin region that these hybrid forms developed, a result of, as Neil Kamil has described it, “the shifting, transatlantic human geography of the Long Island Sound,” which contributed to the diffusion of styles and craft techniques throughout the region.<sup>13</sup>

Another regional variant that seems to have descended directly from English tradition is a newly discovered turned great chair, possibly made by Samuel Winsor of Providence (fig. 4). The chair descended in the Winsor family, whose ancestor was among the twelve original settlers of Providence with Roger Williams. The chair is a simplified version of two other turned armchairs with early histories in the Providence area, with features such as multiple ring turnings in the vertical spindles, which angle sharply into the back rails, and shallowly modeled ball shapes in the posts.<sup>14</sup> The inventory of Winsor’s house and farm in Providence taken at his death in 1705 includes a variety of carpenter’s and turner’s tools, such as numerous types of planes, chisels, saws, axes, froes, and augers, as well as “leath irons,” which suggest that he indeed worked as a turner.<sup>15</sup>

Complicating this picture of Anglo cultural hegemony in Rhode Island, however, are other early objects that appear to have an affinity with Dutch

craftsmanship, such as the remarkable Field family chest that has been attributed to John Clawson, a Dutch joiner living in Providence (cat. 1).<sup>16</sup> The Dutch had connections with Rhode Island, mostly through exploration and trade, even earlier than the English.<sup>17</sup> The chest displays a number of features that link it to Dutch craftsmanship, in particular the chiseled repeating decorative molding on the rails and stiles. The three tabled panels on the front of the chest with detailed edge moldings, while not entirely unknown in English work, are more typical of Dutch furniture, and are seen, for example, in the door panels of oak *kasten* (Dutch-style cupboards) from New York and Long Island.<sup>18</sup> Another link to Dutch workmanship is the construction of the bottom boards of the chest, which are set in grooves on all four ends like the backboards of *kasten*.<sup>19</sup> Recent studies of Dutch influence on colonial American furniture, especially outside the traditionally Dutch areas of



Fig. 4. Possibly Samuel Winsor, *Carver Chair*, Providence, 1675–1700. Maple and ash with a splint seat, H. 38 in. (96.5 cm). Location unknown. [RIF6116]

the American colonies, have enriched our understanding of the cultural diversity of craft traditions in the seventeenth century.

Another intriguing example of possible Dutch influence is a group of three turned chairs showing characteristics associated with standard Dutch chairs that were popular throughout Europe, especially in England—in particular, their numerous, finicky turnings, elongated finials, slanted arms with ball turnings, and large pommels that are integral to the front posts (see, for example, fig. 5 and cat. 3). Two of the chairs have histories in Little Compton, Rhode Island, a rural community on the eastern shore of the Narragansett Bay.<sup>20</sup> Erik Gronning, Joshua Lane, and Robert Trent have suggested that this group of chairs likely represents the work of a shop tradition located in an urban area such as Newport, resulting from the migration of either craftsmen from the culturally Dutch areas of New York, New Jersey, and Long Island or furniture makers who had been trained in Holland or had been instructed by Dutch masters in England.<sup>21</sup> The style of these Newport chairs could then have spread westward through southern New England and may be the source, as the authors contend, for the well-known “Norwich” chairs of Connecticut, signaling an early example of the wider influence of Newport furniture in the region, channeled through the coastwise trade, the movement of settlers and craftsmen, and apprenticeship training.

The success of Rhode Island’s charter-sanctioned “lively experiment” in religious toleration was reflected in the colony’s overall prosperity, as disparate groups of English and Dutch émigrés brought to the region a wide range of skills and knowledge that spurred economic activity. French settlers came to the Narragansett Bay as well. In 1686 a group of forty-eight French Huguenot families fleeing persecution after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes settled in northern Kingstown and southern East Greenwich, in the fertile and mostly unclaimed Narragansett Country of western Rhode Island. The area became known as Frenchtown, a small hamlet comprising two dozen buildings and a church. Although the settlement

lasted only a few years, some of the original settlers remained in Rhode Island, including the Mawneys (LeMoines), who kept their lands in King’s County; the Ayraults, who later moved to Newport, where they became influential in the mercantile trade; and Gabriel Bernon, who spent nearly forty years in Rhode Island, living in Narragansett, Newport, and finally Providence.<sup>22</sup> Other Frenchmen and their families were among even earlier settlements in the region, including Daniel Grennell in Portsmouth in 1638 and Maturin Ballou in Providence in 1639.<sup>23</sup> Other surnames familiar to Rhode Islanders have a French origin, for example, Chadsey, Fry, Nichols, Tarbox, Tourgee, and Tourtellot.<sup>24</sup> One of these names is among the recorded furniture makers in Rhode Island: Abraham Tourtellot, who was active in Providence by 1722 (see cat. 13).<sup>25</sup>

Further evidence of the influence of French settlers on furniture making in this area may be a couch made either in Rhode Island or New York but found in Providence and that has a history of ownership within the family of Ezekiel Carré, the minister of the short-lived colony at Frenchtown (fig. 6). Carré was a French Huguenot émigré from the Isle of Ré, near La Rochelle.<sup>26</sup> While the couch is thought to date to within the first three decades of the eighteenth century, there is no known record of Carré after 1691, when the settlement was abandoned. Therefore, it remains unclear where this couch was made. Furniture scholar Benno M. Forman commented that “a couch without arms or falls [such as this one] is virtually unknown in England, and its appearance in Rhode Island might be construed as a provincial variation of the older couch or couch-chair form, updated with turned ornament from the newer cane-chair style.”<sup>27</sup> As Forman also noted, the turnings relate most closely to the staircase of the Benjamin Cushing House (1737) in Providence, which suggests its origin in that town. A turning profile with a similarly attenuated baluster-ring-ball sequence appears in other Rhode Island turned furniture in the early eighteenth century, including a group of gateleg tables, tavern tables, stools, and chairs discussed later in this essay.



Fig. 5. *Carver Chair*, Newport, 1670–1710. Maple with a rush seat,  $50\frac{1}{4} \times 23\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$  in. (127.6 × 59.7 × 44.5 cm). Little Compton Historical Society, R.I., Gift of Mrs. Israel Brayton, 1955, inv. no. 1996.0044. [RIF2291]

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the rising fortunes of the merchant aristocracy in Rhode Island and the increasingly far-flung nature of mercantile pursuits in the Atlantic world economy began to shape the material life of the colony in new ways. In his 1708 report to the Board of Trade, Rhode Island colonial governor Samuel Cranston stated that the colony owned twenty-nine ships (up from four or five in 1690) and had produced another seventy-five vessels for merchants of other colonies.<sup>28</sup> This increasing interest in shipping, Cranston wrote, “is chiefly to be attributed to the inclination the youth of Rhode Island have to the sea.”<sup>29</sup> Capitalizing on the natural geographical advantages of Rhode Island, blessed with deepwater ports and a rich agricultural hinterland, the colony’s merchants

prospered in an era when New Englanders began to extend their reach within trading networks down the Atlantic Seaboard to the Caribbean, to Central and South America, and across the ocean to Europe and Africa. To organize their increasingly complex accounts and correspondence related to these new ventures, merchants required innovative forms of furniture that reflected the ever-increasing distance and peripatetic nature of their business.

Among the most elaborate expressions of this new mercantile style in Rhode Island furniture is a rare *scrutoir*, or fall-front desk, that has a history in the Child family of Warren (fig. 7 and cat. 14). The form is essentially a cabinet over a chest of drawers, with a bevy of small drawers and compartments in the upper



Fig. 6. *Couch*, Providence or New York, 1700–1730. Sugar maple and soft maple (microanalysis), 42 1/8 × 74 3/8 × 25 1/8 in. (107 × 188.9 × 63.8 cm). Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1958.0547. [RIF1165]



Fig. 7. *Fall-Front Desk*, probably Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), 1700–1730. Walnut and walnut veneer, pine, chestnut, and maple, with iron hinges, 66 × 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (167.6 × 101 × 47 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund, inv. no. 2013.877. [RIF5797]



Fig. 8. *High Chest*, Rhode Island, 1700–1730. Black walnut, soft maple, chestnut, sugar maple, yellow poplar, sassafras, and eastern white pine (microanalysis), 66 × 38 × 22½ in. (167.6 × 96.5 × 57.2 cm). Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Mass., Bequest of George Harris, Jr., Class of 1906, inv. no. AC 1955.296. [RIF2516]

section and a fall-front lid that opens to provide a broad writing surface. Only three American colonial scrutoirs, or scriptors (based on the French *escritoire*), are known, including this example, which was identified when the family consigned it to auction in 2013. The other examples are a walnut desk stamped by its maker, Edward Evans of Philadelphia, and dated 1707, and a beautifully inlaid cedar desk, from about 1711–25, which descended in the Brinckerhoff family of New York.<sup>30</sup> The Evans example and the Child desk are the closest in their overall proportions, and thus they may be similarly early in date. At present, the Child desk can be documented as far back as James Child, a yeoman of Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), in whose 1738 estate inventory it is listed as “One Chist [chest] of Drawers & Cabinett” for £5.<sup>31</sup> The Childs were a prominent family in Warren, involved in shipbuilding later in the eighteenth century, and it was in the home of John Child, James’s brother, that freemen met to discuss the formation of Warren as an independent town of Rhode Island in 1747.<sup>32</sup> The desk may have been owned originally by James’s father, John Child, also of Swansea, given the likelihood that it has an earlier date.

While it is unclear exactly which family member may have owned it prior to James, the desk remained in the area around Warren for much of its history. Names of later descendants in the eighteenth century are inscribed on the interior drawers of the upper case. What distinguishes this desk from the other examples is the large number of interior compartments: forty-six in the upper case alone, including twenty-five secret compartments that are hidden in the spaces behind, to the sides, and underneath the visible drawers and cubbies (see cat. 14, figs. 1–2). This number of secret compartments is unprecedented for New England furniture of this early date and is even a rarity for English and Dutch examples of the form.<sup>33</sup> Was this elaborate showcase of cabinetmaking—this technical innovation—a local product of Rhode Island, or even of Warren? There is no reason not to think so. As the colony became an important center of furniture making and also of shipbuilding, which required intricate joinery and fine finishes for

ships’ cabins, craftsmen working locally could have been capable of making such a complex form.<sup>34</sup>

Besides the strong family history, other aspects link this writing desk to Rhode Island, including its distinctive patterns of cross-banded walnut veneers and the extensive use of chestnut as a secondary wood.<sup>35</sup> The veneers on the outside of the lid and the drawer fronts in the lower case display a pattern seen on other Rhode Island case furniture dating to the early eighteenth century, where space is divided into two framed panels, often with a central vertical strip running down the middle. Examples of this regional preference can be found on a variety of slant-front writing desks, including one attributed to Newport (cat. 10) and a well-known example with a history in the Providence area (cat. 12), as well as veneered walnut high chests (see fig. 8 and cats. 8 and 11), dressing tables (see cat. 15), and tall case clocks of roughly the same date (see cat. 9). The visual connection between these objects, along with local family histories, construction details, and the preference for certain secondary woods, such as chestnut and yellow poplar, has permitted the reattribution of a number of them to the Rhode Island area. These remarkable examples evidence the skill of Rhode Island furniture makers in the art of working with thinly cut burl and root veneers. Among the most outstanding examples is a fine dressing table with turned legs and a broad top veneered in four sheets of burl walnut with an inset plaque in the center (cat. 15). The quality of the craftsmanship seen in this piece is immediately suggestive of work done in Boston, yet its collecting history in Rhode Island and its formal visual relationship with similar objects from the Narragansett Bay region points to the possibility that this level of workmanship was done in Rhode Island as well, just at the moment when the colony’s mercantile fortunes were on the rise.

Craftsmen such as Reuben Peckham of East Greenwich, a small coastal town on the western side of the Narragansett Bay, were evidently producing this type of work in the colony. The sale of Peckham’s estate in East Greenwich in 1737 lists “1 Finnering [Veneering] Saw” at £4.13.0, sold to the Newport joiner Benjamin



Fig. 9. *High Chest*, North Kingstown, Rhode Island, 1700–1720. Maple and pine (possibly yellow pine), 63 × 33<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (160 × 86 × 57.2 cm). Private collection. [RIF81]

Chanders.<sup>36</sup> His shop inventory included twenty-three pounds of lead, which were likely weights used when gluing up thin veneers.<sup>37</sup> One case in the Newport Inferior Court of Common Pleas involved an unpaid account recording that Peckham purchased twenty pounds of glue from the fellmonger Richard Clarke in December 1735.<sup>38</sup> The inventory of Peckham's shop in East Greenwich appraises case furniture, including "1 high Case of draws unfinished [£]7," "1 desk unfinished [£]5," "4 frames for Desks [£]8," "1 frame for Apothecarys Draws [£]1.15.0," and also a presumably finished "Low Case of draws [£]4" as a further credit.<sup>39</sup> Besides having his own shop in rural East Greenwich, Peckham also owned a shop in Newport, which in 1741 and 1742 (following Peckham's death) was recorded as having had five craftsmen—a fairly sizeable number for shops of this period.<sup>40</sup> The interest in cross-banded veneers, while on the wane by the 1740s in urban centers like Newport, does show up in later Rhode Island pieces; however, it was largely abandoned by the late 1730s and 1740s, replaced by the preference for working with solid wood, such as imported mahogany, finely grained maple, and sometimes cedar, especially for desks made for the export market.<sup>41</sup>

Identifying Rhode Island furniture of the early Baroque period, in particular outside of the urban centers of the colony, has been one of the challenges in forming a complete picture of the development of early furniture making in the colony. The scarcity of objects with clear family histories and the enduring confusion between furniture made in Boston and eastern Massachusetts and that made in Rhode Island has made it difficult to localize objects to the Narragansett Bay region.<sup>42</sup> Yet there were hundreds of craftsmen at work in urban centers like Newport and Providence, in secondary population centers like Bristol, East Greenwich, Portsmouth, and Warren, and in more rural areas like King's County (now Washington County) and North Providence, on the western side of the Narragansett Bay. A window into this agricultural landscape can be found in the rare objects that do have family histories, such as an early maple and pine

high chest on turned legs thought to have been owned originally by John Wightman, a yeoman of Kingstown (now North Kingstown), which descended directly in his family (fig. 9).<sup>43</sup> The high chest has three drawers across the top, like other, more sophisticated veneered objects from Rhode Island (see fig. 8 and cat. 11); however, the overall lack of refinement in the dovetailing and the thickness of the stock suggest its rural origins.<sup>44</sup> As settlement shifted to the western side of the Narragansett Bay in an attempt to secure Rhode Island's western border, a region disputed by neighboring Connecticut, a major population center developed there by the early eighteenth century, with wealthy planters, plantation-style agriculture, use of slave labor, and extensive animal husbandry, supported by the unusually rich soil and the region's maritime connections with the coastwise trade and farther afield to Africa and the West Indies. Wightman owned three hundred acres in the Narragansett Country and was a prosperous yeoman farmer, the son of an English immigrant.<sup>45</sup> His brother, Rev. Daniel Wightman, was a joiner and house carpenter who moved from Kingstown to Newport in the 1690s and, according to the architectural historian Antoinette Forrester Downing, was responsible for the construction of one of the earliest surviving houses in that town around 1694.<sup>46</sup> The creation of furniture in this area in the early eighteenth century and in the town of Westerly on the western border with Connecticut (for an object made in Westerly, see cat. 24) indicates that the rising fortunes of the wealthy Narragansett planters started to support a local industry of fine furniture making and chairmaking that started to compete with the larger urban centers of Providence and Newport.

### *The Rise of Newport*

By the turn of the eighteenth century, Newport had become the largest town in the Colony of Rhode Island. Gov. Cranston's report to the Board of Trade in 1708 gives a sense of the state of the town, which he described as "the metropolis of this Her Majesty's colony," with 2,203 residents. Newport was followed in population by Providence with 1,446, Kingstown with 1,200,

Portsmouth with 628, Westerly with 570, and the remaining four towns with between 200 and 500 each.<sup>47</sup> Many Rhode Islanders, he wrote, found work on vessels or invested in venture cargo as “the tradesmen in the town of Newport also doth, for the benefit of their children that are bred to navigation.”<sup>48</sup> By the next time such a report was sent to the Board of Trade, in 1730, Newport had more than doubled in size to 4,640 residents, greater than the next-largest towns in the colony (Providence with 3,916 and North Kingstown with 2,105), but still about a third of the size of Boston. The figure of 797 African Americans (many slaves) and

Native Americans in Newport, nearly 17 percent of the town’s population, only begins to reveal the diversity of its people.<sup>49</sup> Bishop George Berkeley, who arrived in Newport in 1729, gave the population as “six thousand souls” and described the town as being “the most thriving, flourishing place in all America for its bigness.”<sup>50</sup>

Lynne Withey has argued that Newport’s economic and urban growth in the early eighteenth century was spawned by not only reliance on its port but also an increasingly conscious effort to promote its trades, including furniture making and carpentry, which acted as unifying impulses for the town’s diverse population.<sup>51</sup>



Fig. 10. *Gateleg or Dining Table*, Newport, 1715–35. Maple, 26  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 49  $\frac{1}{2}$  × 43 in. (68.3 × 125.7 × 109.2 cm). Location unknown. [RIFI442]

Current research indicates that at least one hundred furniture makers, joiners, and turners—many more if including those working in the allied crafts of house carpentry and ship-joinery—were active in Newport during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Because of the varied backgrounds of the town’s furniture makers and the large number of different religious groups to which these craftsmen belonged, the development of any kind of coherent Newport style in this early period cannot be ascribed to a particular religious persuasion, such as Quakerism, as has been done for the Goddard-Townsend school of furniture making, later in the century. Rather, as Ezra Stiles would document, by 1763 the religious makeup of the town’s artisans mirrored the diversity of the town itself. Stiles’s detailed list of the population of Newport specifies the religious affiliations of the town’s 112 “artisans” as follows: Congregational (43 percent), Baptist (30 percent), Quaker (21 percent), and Anglican (6 percent), which provides a guidepost for understanding the first half of the eighteenth century as well, for which no such statistics survive.<sup>52</sup>

Among the largest groups of furniture attributed to Newport from the first half of the eighteenth century is an assortment of gateleg tables and related forms with similar leg turnings and construction features. A prime example of these is a gateleg table that survives in a remarkable state of preservation (cat. 19). The table has dramatically asymmetrical turned legs with a pronounced baluster-ring-ball design. This design has been found on a host of other tables and related forms with turned legs and posts attributed to Newport and Rhode Island.<sup>53</sup> Two other closely related tables, each with similar turned legs, drawer construction, and gates that swing in the same direction, have histories of ownership in Newport families. One table belonged to the Easton family of Newport (fig. 10) and another descended in the Alden-Southworth-Cooke family of Newport and nearby Little Compton.<sup>54</sup>

Architectural turnings of a similar style can be found in Newport buildings, such as the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House (fig. 11), as well as the



Fig. 11. *Staircase Banister of the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House, Newport, 1730–31.* Newport Historical Society



Fig. 12. *Candlestand*, probably Rhode Island, 1710–40. Maple, 29 1/8 × 12 3/4 × 12 5/8 in. (74 × 32.4 × 32.1 cm). Private collection. [RIF5105]

Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House (cat. 16) and the White Horse Tavern, two late seventeenth-century buildings with staircases added or modified in the mid-1720s.<sup>55</sup> The working habits of eighteenth-century turners and the repetitive nature of the craft resulted in similar forms being made for both architectural components and furniture, as the balusters in the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House and those on the related tables reveal. A related version of this style, displaying a columnar shaft and a central turned element, can be found on a group of elegant early Baroque candlestands attributed to Rhode Island, one of which was collected in Providence (fig. 12).<sup>56</sup>

Extensive research into the woodworking craftsmen of colonial Rhode Island has yielded few references to turners specifically recorded as such in the colony records, and none in urban areas such as Newport or Providence. “Turner” David Sprague, for instance, worked in Scituate, Rhode Island, in 1732 and 1733.<sup>57</sup> Most Rhode Island craftsmen of this period were referred to simply as “joiners” or “carpenters,” and those with skills as a turner could have performed a variety of woodworking activities, such as joinery, chairmaking, turning, and, in rural areas, seasonal farming. Judah Worden (Wordin), who is called a joiner of Westerly, owned carpenter’s and turner’s tools, according to his 1727 inventory.<sup>58</sup> Another craftsman, Reuben Peckham, discussed earlier, was called a joiner in period documents but also worked as a turner. The 1736 inventory of his East Greenwich shop lists joiner’s tools, two workbenches, unfinished case furniture, “1 Leath and turning tools,” “1 Grinstone” for sharpening his tools, and “Sundry Table Legs.” His household inventory included three oval tables, which were probably gateleg forms or simpler four-leg examples without folding leaves.<sup>59</sup> Other craftsmen were undoubtedly turners, such as the chairmaker Daniel Dunham, who was active in Newport by the 1720s.<sup>60</sup> On April 1, 1735, he debited the Newport cooper John West “for halfe a Dusson of fore Back Chears 2=6=0 and Tow Low Chears 0=13=6.”<sup>61</sup> The “fore Back” chairs were likely slat-back

chairs with four horizontal slats.<sup>62</sup> The “low” chairs may have been roundabout chairs of a similar type.<sup>63</sup>

An example of a Newport banister-back chair of the general type made by turners is in the collection of the Newport Historical Society (cat. 21). This chair has a history in the Peckham family of Newport. The provenance suggests that it was originally purchased in about 1745 by Peleg Peckham, a merchant of Middletown (formerly Newport).<sup>64</sup> The attributes of the Peckham

banister-back armchair are a double-arched crest rail, elongated acorn finials, a flared turning on the back posts above an urn, and softly molded spherical turnings on the front posts. These features relate the chair to other previously unidentified chairs that can now be attributed to Newport, such as a child’s high chair at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (fig. 13), which has similar turnings.<sup>65</sup> The proportions of the child’s chair have been compressed, but the chair



**Fig. 13.** *Child’s High Chair*, probably Newport, 1725–50. Soft maple and ash with a rush seat (microanalysis), 33 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (84.8 × 26 × 26.7 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, inv. no. 1931.1219. [RIF3604]

nonetheless retains the key design elements of the larger Peckham armchair.

The turnings on both of these chairs further relate them to the so-called Little Compton chairs, which have long been associated with Rhode Island. An example of the group descended in the family of John Irish of Little Compton and was first published by Joseph K. Ott, whose work on the subject produced a landmark article in 1984 (fig. 14).<sup>66</sup> Although the chairs have picked

up the moniker of Little Compton, after the small hamlet to the east of Newport across the Sakonnet River (see fig. 1), there is no reason to think that they were not made in the much larger population center of Newport—or for that matter in any of the other towns on the eastern side of the Narragansett Bay, which, like Little Compton, were part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony until 1747. The sheer number of these chairs that have survived makes a single place of origin unlikely.<sup>67</sup>



Fig. 14. *Banister-Back Armchair*, Rhode Island, 1720–1800. Maple and ash with a rush seat, 45 × 23 × 15½ in. (114.3 × 58.4 × 39.4 cm). Little Compton Historical Society, R.I., Gift of Theodora Wilbor Peckham, inv. no. 1996.0260. [R1F4280]

### *The Point*

The geographic center of Newport's burgeoning furniture-making industry in the eighteenth century was an area of land in the northern part of town called Easton's Point (see Evans essay, fig. 5). Known to residents simply as "The Point," it became home to numerous shipwrights beginning in the mid-1710s and to furniture makers and house carpenters by the mid-1720s. An overmantel painting of about 1740 depicting Newport from the harbor shows the extent of building in this area after just two decades of settlement (see Kane essay, fig. 1). The location of the Point, jutting out into the harbor like a fishhook, provided easy access to the wharves that linked the town's furniture-making shops with the busy coastwise trade and to more distant markets along the Eastern Seaboard and into the Caribbean. The Point lands were owned and managed by the Newport Quaker Meeting, which had received the bulk of the property as a donation from the descendants of Nicholas Easton, one of Newport's earliest Quaker residents.

In laying out the new plots of land on the Point, the proprietors adopted an innovative system of town planning. Instead of creating streets that radiated outward from important buildings, as was done in the earlier plan of Newport and other New England towns (see John Mumford's 1712 map of Newport, for instance), the Point was laid out in a strict geometric grid, much in the way Quaker Philadelphia was around the same time, with streets similarly named after trees: Elm, Poplar, Willow, Walnut, Chestnut, Cherry, and Pine.<sup>68</sup> The north-south streets were numbered, with the exception of Water Street (the equivalent of Front Street in Philadelphia) and Shipwright's Street (now Bridge Street), which lined the harbor and the cove. Shipwrights and merchants were among the first purchasers of the plots of land on the Point, mostly along the harbor, which were sold off in a quitrent system, beginning in 1715.<sup>69</sup> As William Penn had done in Philadelphia, the proprietors attracted a new class of Quaker artisans and shopkeepers, the Goddard-Townsend families of furniture makers among them.

The first individual called a "joiner" to own land on the Point was John Hull, Jr., who acquired lot 36 in 1716, the same year his father, John Hull, Sr., a mariner and resident of Jamestown, Rhode Island, purchased lot 4 on the harbor.<sup>70</sup> Hull, Jr., may also have been a house carpenter, like Elisha Sanford, who purchased lot 35 on Bridge Street in 1723.<sup>71</sup> In the mid-1720s, furniture makers and shipwrights rushed to acquire open land to build houses and shops, with sixteen woodworkers purchasing properties in 1724 and 1725 alone.<sup>72</sup> Some craftsmen bought additional lots that may have served as rental or investment properties.<sup>73</sup> Among the furniture makers who subscribed to the quitrent lots on the Point in 1724 and 1725 were the brothers Job and Christopher Townsend, both Quakers, as well as Ephraim Broderick, Ephraim Hicks, William Phillips, Ezbon Sanford, Job Tripp, and the house carpenters Job Caswell, James Peckham, and John Rogers.<sup>74</sup> A number of shipwrights were also among those who purchased lots during these years, including Isaac and Walter Chapman, Samuel Maxfield, Henry Negus, James Sheffield, as well as Daniel Goddard, father of furniture maker John Goddard, who moved with his family from Dartmouth, Massachusetts, in 1724. In the 1720s, furniture makers concentrated their land purchases farther inland, between Second and Fourth Streets and along Bridge Street, while the shipwrights tended to choose lots along the harbor (fig. 15).

By the end of the 1720s, woodworkers in certain families began to consolidate their land holdings on the Point. For instance, an early map of the Point lands prepared by the proprietors shows where some furniture makers, including the Townsends, had purchased parcels of land beginning in 1725. Christopher Townsend is shown owning lots 49, 51, and 81, while his brother Job owned nearby lots 86 and 100.<sup>75</sup> It was on lot 51 sometime after 1725 that Christopher Townsend constructed his square two-story gable-on-hip house and cabinetmaker's shop (see Kane essay, fig. 11), which still stand today.<sup>76</sup>

During the 1720s, as the settlement of the Point lands extended farther northward along the grid, many other furniture makers subscribed to plots of land there.

Most of the settlement of furniture makers and house carpenters occurred a block off the western harbor, beginning on Second Street and moving all the way to Fourth Street, where Bridge Street intersected a small channel of water. By 1728 furniture makers had settled all the way north to Walnut Street, where, within a block of the intersection of Walnut and Second Streets, at least five joiners had also purchased lots. Among the craftsmen who owned property in this area in 1728 were joiners Robert Bennett, James Brown, Samuel Easton, and Samuel Lyndon, joiner and house carpenter George Thomas, carpenter Simon Tallee, shipwright and merchant Joseph Gardner, and silversmith Samuel Vernon.<sup>77</sup> The following year, when the Point was expanded into the Second Division, joiner Samuel Easton,

the great-grandson of the original settler of Easton's Point, purchased lots farther to the north.<sup>78</sup>

The period of significant growth of the Newport furniture-making industry in the 1720s as indicated by the settlement of the Point lands by furniture makers during these years mirrored the general economic fortunes of the town as a whole. The population was increasing and, spurred by the expansion of a new merchant class, new opportunities arose. Newport merchants—Jaheel Brenton, Godfrey Malbone, and Abraham Redwood, among others—built grand houses in the 1720s, auspicious symbols of the town's burgeoning commercial success. New wooden churches and public buildings were also erected in Newport during this period: Trinity Church (1726), Seventh Day



Fig. 15. Map of Woodworkers' Properties on Easton's Point, Newport, 1715-40

Baptist Meeting House (1725–30), First Congregational Church (1729), Second Congregational Church (1735), Colony House (1739), and finally the classically inspired Redwood Library (1747–50). The selling of land on the Point continued unabated into the 1730s. The 1730s also saw the arrival of Benjamin Wyatt and Richard Munday, house carpenters who played an important role in the construction of many of Newport’s most significant structures during the decade. They each bought house lots on the Point in 1738, the year before they began construction on Newport’s Colony House.<sup>79</sup>

Richard Mundy’s plan for the Colony House was the last major Baroque public building in Newport. Built of brick with a large gable-end roof and a prominent center balcony, it signaled a new era of grandeur and commercial success in Newport, replacing the former wooden colony house that had served the town since 1687. As the town’s mercantile fortunes expanded, residents sought fashionable models; thus Mundy, the master builder and architect of the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House and of Trinity Church, was enlisted to plan this new, grand public structure. The same year Mundy set pen to paper, in 1739, the Newport merchant John Banister began to experiment with direct trade between Newport and London in an attempt, as he wrote, for Rhode Islanders to “make themselves Independent of the Bay Government to whom they have a mortal aversion.”<sup>80</sup> Banister’s letter signals the rising ambitions of Newport to become an even greater center of trade, more directly connected with the important trading ports of the era, and at the same time exposes the vexed relationship with neighboring Massachusetts Bay that had persisted since the earliest founding years of the colony. This independent spirit would lead the colony’s furniture makers, and their Newport colleagues in particular, to develop unique modes of cabinetmaking that would become a recognizable Rhode Island style, explored in other parts of this book, as colonial Rhode Island entered its second century.

## Notes

The title of this essay, “A Lively Experiment,” is borrowed from the Rhode Island Charter of 1663, written by John Clarke and signed by the king, in the section of the document about religious freedom. The actual wording is “to hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civill state may stand and best bee maintained, and that among our English subjects with a full libertie in religious concernements . . . will give the best and greatest security to sovereignty.”

1. Quoted in Field 1902, 1:175.
2. In addition, the family of William Carpenter, a furniture maker from Wiltshire County, England, who moved to Providence with Roger Williams in the late 1630s, was among a large extended family of early woodworkers in Providence and western Massachusetts. See Austin 1887, 36–37; and St. George 1979, 65, 77–78.
3. According to Bridenbaugh 1974, 80–81, by February 1638/39, a “workman” in Portsmouth was building “a Bote” for William Aspinwall. Through the first decades of settlement, shipbuilding in Rhode Island was probably limited mostly to smaller coastal vessels; however, by 1668, Peleg Sanford reported from Newport that “heare is now a shipp of about 120 tunns abuilding.” For more on shipbuilding in the region, see Minchinton 1961; and Goldberg 1976, 28.
4. St. George 1998, 248, table 9; and Schultz and Tougias 1999, 282–83.
5. Quoted in Preston 1928, 60.
6. St. George 1998, 248, table 9. In 1680 there were still four hundred structures standing in Newport, but none of these survives today; see Downing and Scully 1982, 17.
7. After the war, many Rhode Island residents returned to their original land grants and rebuilt. As Bridenbaugh 1974, 75, reports, “Gregory Dexter was one of many who fled from Providence to Aquidneck during the troubles, and in a deed of gift in 1678, made after his return, he explained that his son John [a Providence carpenter] had built a small cottage for him and was, at that time, also preparing another, bigger building and would erect it ‘in the place of o[u]r old ruines, o[u]r housing being all burnt by the enemy.’”
8. For an extended discussion of the Eleazer Arnold House, see Isham and Brown 1895, 41–44; Downing 1937, 38, 40–43; and Claire W. Dempsey, Richard E. Greenwood, and Wm. McKenzie Woodward, in Stachiw et al. 2001, 2:31–33. See also St. George 1982, 167; and St. George 1998, 74.
9. Myron O. Stachiw, “Domestic Architecture of the Narragansett Basin 1636–1840,” in Stachiw et al. 2001, 1:22–23.

See also St. George 1998, 413n80. The late seventeenth-century Waite-Potter House in Westport demonstrates the diffusion of the stone-ender form into Massachusetts; see Laura B. Driemeyer, "Bristol and the East Bay," in Stachiw et al. 2001, 310.

10. St. George 1979, 65.
11. For a discussion of this group of furniture, see Trent 1999, 212–14.
12. See Kane 1973, 24–31.
13. Kamil 1995, 225.
14. The two chairs are a more elaborate cottonwood (*Populus sp.*) and ash armchair at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 55.066 [RIF3895], which has a history in the family of Sarah Wickes (died 1753) of Warwick, Rhode Island; and an armchair at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.0683 [RIF1199], which has a history in the family of Dr. George Waterman (1752–1829) of Cranston, Rhode Island. For these two chairs, see, respectively, Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 146, no. 84; and Forman 1988, 120–21, no. 13, ill.
15. See Samuel Winsor probate inventory, Providence, taken September 25, 1705, recorded November 30, 1705, in *Early Records* 1892–1915, 6:246–52.
16. For a discussion of the Dutch-style construction features of the Field family chest and the attribution to John Clawson, see Fairbanks and Trent 1982, 2:210–11; Trent 1999, 209–12; and Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007, 8-D to 13-D, fig. 1. See also St. George 1979, 65, 68. A label on the chest, written by William Field on April 10, 1865, states that the chest was owned originally by members of the Field family, early settlers in Providence, and was thought "to have been brought from England in the ship 'Lyons' about the year 1637, and has been owned by the family ever since."
17. Two islands in the region retain names that commemorate this Dutch contact: Block Island, named for Adriaen Block, who explored in 1614, and Dutch Island (known to the native inhabitants as Quotenis), near Newport Harbor, which was the site of a Dutch trading post established by the West India Company in the 1620s. Sydney V. James writes that Dutch settlers from Manhattan came to the bay, "some actually residing for long periods in the English towns and conducting enough commerce with New Amsterdam to lure several Rhode Islanders into taking their trade there"; see James 1975, 50.
18. For a discussion of Dutch techniques in New York and Long Island case furniture, see Kenny, Safford, and Vincent 1991.
19. This feature is identified in Trent 1999, 211–12.
20. The two chairs with Little Compton histories include the one catalogued in the present volume (cat. 3) and figure 5 in the present essay. The third chair is owned by the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 30.101.4 [RIF5046].
21. See Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007, 13-D. Similarly, the work of eighteenth-century Rhode Island silversmiths owes a stylistic debt to New York; see Kane 1993, 30.
22. Baird 1885, 2:141, 291, 307–8, 310–11; see also Potter 1879. For another account of the colony at Frenchtown, see Field 1902, 1:150–51.
23. Baird 1885, 2:315–16.
24. Weeden 1910, 137.
25. Abraham Tourtellot purchased sixty-seven acres of land and a dwelling house from Joseph Hopkins in 1722; Joseph Hopkins, Providence, husbandman, deed to Abraham Tourtellot, Providence, joiner, March 23, 1721/22, recorded August 23, 1722, Providence Deed Book, vol. 4, pp. 251–52, Providence City Archives, R.I.
26. Kamil 1995, 224–25.
27. Forman 1988, 226.
28. Bartlett 1856–65, 4:58, 60.
29. *Ibid.*, 58.
30. See Kenny 2014.
31. See Carr, Johnson, and Kane 2014, 217.
32. Howard and Crocker 1880, 1:411; and V. Baker 1901, 5, 13, 48, 57.
33. See Ward forthcoming; and, for example, the English scribes in Bowett 2002, esp. chap. 7.
34. Warren, Rhode Island, was in fact a prosperous town in the eighteenth century, with one of the deepest ports in the region, and was chosen as the site of the colony's first university in 1764, which later moved to Providence and became Brown University; see Howard and Crocker 1880, 1:411–14.
35. See Safford 2007, 327–28, 330n6. The desk also has extensive notations and inscriptions on its interior drawers, and an 1825 issue of the *Rhode Island American*, a newspaper printed in Providence, is pasted to the inside of a drawer in the lower case. Walnut was imported into Rhode Island from the Carolinas as early as 1703; see Bartlett 1856–65, 4:60. For more on the woods of early Rhode Island furniture, see the essay by Patricia E. Kane in the present volume.
36. "Account of the Sundry Goods Sold at Vendue Belonging to the Estate of Reuben Peckham," May 3, 1737, in William Allen, North Kingstown, R.I., yeoman, v. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 169, May 1741 term, case 62, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.

37. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, p. 168, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.
38. Statement of account, December 1735, in Richard Clarke, Newport, fellmonger, v. Reuben Peckham, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 389, May 1736 term, case 35, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
39. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–68, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.
40. Writ, July 30 1741, served October 16, 1741, in Ephraim Hix (Hicks), Newport, shopkeeper, v. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, devisees of Reuben Peckham (deceased), late of East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 219, November 1741 term, case 129; and writ, served April 22, 1742, in Jacob Dehane, Newport, merchant, v. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, devisees of Reuben Peckham (deceased), late of East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 310, May 1742 term, case 144, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
41. See Beckerdite 2000, figs. 20, 24, 40.
42. For more on the misattribution of early Rhode Island furniture to Massachusetts, see the introduction by Patricia E. Kane in the present volume.
43. The provenance of the high chest is as follows: John Wightman (1674–1750), Kingstown, R.I.; by descent to Rev. James Wightman (1709–1791); by descent to Samuel Wightman (1736–1826); by descent to Mary Wightman (1783–1860); by descent to Josiah Bullock Wightman (1806–1925); by descent to Mary Frances Wightman (1830–1925); by descent to Harriet Waldron Frost (1862–1953); by descent to Rufus S. Frost (1893–1974); by descent to Mary Hale Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), February 27, 2000; sold to Anthony S. Wernecke, Inc., Pond Eddy, N.Y.; sold to a private collection, Mass. and Va.; sold to Antique Associates at West Townsend, Mass.; sold to a private collection.
44. The presence of three drawers in the upper row is by no means a definitive trait of Rhode Island furniture, but it does appear on a number of high chests associated with the region. See, for example, a high chest formerly attributed to Boston or New York but now thought to be from Rhode Island, in Ward 1988, 237–39, no. 122, pl. 11 [RIF3765]; Beckerdite 2000, 11, fig. 20 [RIF1215], and 24, fig. 40 [RIF1221]; and two high chests attributed to eastern Connecticut or Rhode Island, in Safford 2007, 327–30, no. 127, ill. [RIF2511], and Ward 1988, 253–55, no. 132, pl. 12 [RIF3602]. For examples from other regions, see the Samuel Clement high chest, dated 1726, at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1957.0512; and Safford 2007, 323–26, no. 126, ill., and 330n5.
45. Austin 1887, 226–27; and *Representative Men* 1908, 1:642.
46. Downing and Scully 1982, 437. Rev. Daniel Wightman also may have built the neighboring house in the 1720s.
47. Quoted in Bartlett 1856–65, 4:56, 59. The remaining four towns are Greenwich, Jamestown, New Shoreham, and Warwick.
48. Quoted in *ibid.*, 4:58.
49. Callender 1838, 94; Field 1902, 1:169, 176; and Withey 1984, 71.
50. Quoted in G. N. Wright 1843, 1:33.
51. See Withey 1984, esp. chaps. 1–2.
52. Quoted in *ibid.*, 128, table C-5.
53. See Gronning and Carr 2004; and Gronning and Carr 2005. Irving Whittall Lyon was the first scholar to illustrate an example of what is now considered a classic Rhode Island turning in Lyon 1891, 201, fig. 102 [RIF4141]. See also F. Morse 1902, 224 [RIF1183]. Albert Sack attributed this type of turning to Rhode Island in A. Sack 1950, 238 [RIF4015 and RIF6237] and 240 [RIF589]. The author is grateful to Erik K. Gronning for co-authoring two studies of early Rhode Island turning and compiling many related examples.
54. For these tables, see Gronning and Carr 2005, 2, fig. 1 [RIF1442], and 7–8, figs. 13–15 [RIF5064], respectively.
55. Related turnings also appear in the Benjamin Cushing House, in Providence; the Winslow House, in Marshfield, Mass.; and the Coeymans House, in Coeymans, N.Y., indicating a wide acceptance of this particular style.
56. On the stand illustrated in figure 12, see N. Little 1984, 215, 218, fig. 286; and Gronning and Carr 2005, 17, 211n8. George Considine discovered this stand in a house in Providence. Two closely related stands are at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1956.0094.002 [RIF6295], and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 1978.268 [RIF6296]. Another stand with somewhat related turnings descended in the family of Roger Williams of Providence and now belongs to the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1960.1 [RIF1046].
57. Israel Arnold, Providence, yeoman, v. David Sprague, Scituate and Township of Providence, R.I., turner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 1,

- p. 38, June 1732 term, case 23; and David Sprague, Scituate, R.I., turner, v. Fearnot Packard, Providence, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 1, p. 79, December 1733 term, case 6, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
58. Judah Wordin inventory, October 10, 1727, with an addition made March 28, 1748, Westerly Town Council and Probate, vol. 2, p. 151, Westerly Town Hall, R.I.
  59. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–70, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.
  60. Daniel Dunham was called a chairmaker in a Newport land deed dated May 24, 1720; see Daniel Dunham, Newport, chairmaker, deed to Thomas Brown, Newport, May 24, 1720, recorded July 5, 1720, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 6, pp. 163, 178, Newport Historical Society. His work in bottoming, mending, and making chairs is recorded in an account dated June 1726/27 to February 1730/31 for the Newport vintner William Swan; see statement of account, 1726/27 to 1730/31, Daniel Dunham to William Swan, debtor, in William Lascells, Newport, perukemaker, admin. of William Swan (deceased), late of Newport, vintner, v. Daniel Dunham, Newport, chairmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 481, November 1737 term, case 190, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  61. Statement of account, April 1, 1735, in Daniel Dunham, Newport, house carpenter, v. John West, Newport, cooper, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 362, November 1735 term, case 147, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. Dunham had two sons, Daniel, Jr., and Joseph, who were both chairmakers in Newport. Wendell D. Garrett also lists David Dunham as working in 1726; see Garrett 1958, 559.
  62. For an example of a typical New England slat-back chair, see Kane 1976, 38–39, no. 11, ill. Robert F. Trent suggests that such plain chairs with two slats were sometimes called “two back” chairs in period inventories in Connecticut during the eighteenth century; see Trent 1977, 65. For a discussion of examples of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century slat-back chairs with three and four slats made by turners, see Forman 1988, 80–84, nos. 14–17, ill.
  63. See H. Sack and Levison 1991, 936, fig. 2 [RIF1094]. Nancy Goyne Evans refers to mid- to late eighteenth-century Rhode Island Windsor chairs modeled after roundabout chairs as “low-back,” or “round-back,” chairs, as opposed to those with “high” backs; see Evans 1996a, 85, 239, and the essay by Evans in the present volume.
  64. Mary W. Peckham, letter to Herbert O. Brigham, July 7, 1942, in accession files, Newport Historical Society, inv. no. 01.270. Family tradition states that the chair was made for Peleg Peckham’s wife, Elizabeth Coggeshall.
  65. See Kane 1976, 67–68, no. 46, ill. [RIF3604]. For another example, made of hickory and ash, see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 2:427, no. 1067 [RIF5848].
  66. Ott 1984.
  67. See Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 64–66, no. 10, ill. [RIF775]. For other examples of the “Little Compton”-type chair, see Ott 1984, 1171. One chair at the Babcock-Smith House in Westerly, Rhode Island [RIF126], has a history in the family of Gen. Nathanael Greene, who married Catharine Littlefield of Block Island in 1774. A fragment of a chair is published in Kirk 1975, 124, fig. 119 [RIF6293]. For a variation of the design in an armchair with pommels, see Fales 1976, 28, no. 34, ill. [RIF1308]. For two early Rhode Island daybeds that have been linked to this type, see “Peter H. Eaton advertisement,” *Maine Antique Digest* (April 2006): 15-B [RIF5044]; and *Antiques* (May 1976): 847 [RIF1382].
  68. See Fries 1977. The exception in New England is the town of New Haven, Connecticut, which was laid out in 1638 in a grid of nine squares. Thomas Holme’s design for Philadelphia may have been based on Irish precedents; see Garvan 1963, 190–92. For Mumford’s 1712 map of Newport and Henry Bull’s earlier map of 1641, see Downing and Scully 1982, 19–20, ill.
  69. See the list of lots on Easton’s Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706–84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. The bulk of the land on the Point had been a part of the original grant of Nicholas Easton (1593–1675). Easton’s descendants sold or donated much of the family land in 1698 to the Newport Quaker Meeting, which gradually sold off the land in plots using a type of quitrent structure. Under this system, the tenants of the plots retained legal rights of ownership as long as they continued to pay rent to the Newport Meeting and fulfill any other obligations outlined in the purchase agreement; see James 2000, 181. The quitrent system provided regular income for the Newport Meeting and also served to regulate a significant portion of the new land purchases in Newport from the middle of the 1710s to midcentury.
  70. Jacob Mott et al., proprietors of Easton’s Point, lot 36, deed to John Hull, Jr., Newport, joiner, March 30, 1716, recorded November 16, 1716, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 4, pp. 59–61, Newport Historical Society. John Hull, Sr., acquired lot 4 in 1716; see List of Lots on Easton’s Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706–84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. John Hull, Jr., was a resident of Jamestown, or Conanicut Island, and may have used the property as an investment.

71. List of Lots on Easton's Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706-84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
72. Before the opening of the Point lands, most Newport furniture makers lived on Main Street (now called Thames Street), which ran along the length of Newport's harbor, and on Broadway and Clarke Streets.
73. Several Newport joiners owned multiple plots of land on the Point in the 1720s, including Christopher Townsend, who owned lot 51 in 1725 and 81 in 1728; Job Townsend, lot 86 in 1725 and 100 in 1728; and the shipwright Daniel Goddard, lot 97 in 1724, 125 and 131 in 1728, and 27 in 1729. In addition to his purchases of land on the Point, joiner Christopher Townsend, in partnership with his brother Solomon, invested in lots of land in Tiverton, Massachusetts, in 1729; see *Bristol Deeds*, vol. 10, p. 27, and vol. 18, p. 582, Bristol County Courthouse, Taunton, Mass.
74. List of Lots on Easton's Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706-84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. Ephraim Hicks, the joiner and merchant, is listed as the purchaser of lot 87 in 1724; however, Ephraim Broderick, also a joiner, is recorded in a 1724 deed for the purchase of this lot in February 1724/25 and the sale of it in 1725. See Jacob Mott et al., proprietors of Easton's Point, lot 87, deed to Ephraim Broderick, Newport, joiner, February 26, 1724/25, recorded March 19, 1724/25, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 6, pp. 528-30, Newport Historical Society; and Ephraim Broderick, Newport, joiner, and wife Mary, Easton's Point, lot 87, deed to Isaac Anthony, Newport, goldsmith, November 2, 1725, recorded July 12, 1726, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 2, pp. 81, 127, Newport Historical Society.
75. Joiner Ephraim Hicks, who was also the father-in-law of Newport joiner Reuben Peckham, owned two lots, 82 and 84, within the same block.
76. The rectangular shop, which faces Bridge Street, is one of two early eighteenth-century furniture maker's shops in Newport for which there is visual evidence. The other shop, built sometime after 1721 by joiner Job Bennett on the corner of Thames and North Baptist Streets (at the termination of Bridge Street), survives in a photograph taken in 1871, but it was torn down by the late nineteenth century; see Downing and Scully 1982, 495, pl. 10.
77. List of Lots on Easton's Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706-84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; see also proprietors of Easton's Point, lots 147 and 148, deed to Robert Bennett, Newport, September 1728, recorded October 14, 1728, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 8, pp. 158-59, Newport Historical Society.
78. Samuel Easton purchased lots 26 and 35 of the Second Division, Easton's Point, in 1729; see List of Lots on Easton's Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706-84), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. See also John Wanton et al., proprietors of Easton's Point, lots 26 and 35, Second Division, deed to Samuel Easton, Newport, joiner, February 5, 1729, recorded March 12, 1729/30, Newport Land Evidence, vol. 9, pp. 94-95, Newport Historical Society.
79. List of Lots on Easton's Point, Miscellaneous Manuscripts F-912, Monthly Meeting of Friends Bills, Real Estate Records (1706-1784), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. Richard Munday previously owned properties on Thames (Main) Street as early as 1721; see card file, Newport Land Evidence, Newport Historical Society. Benjamin Wyatt was in Newport as early as 1732.
80. Quoted in Crane 1985, 13.



# *“Faithfully Made of the Best Materials”*

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## *Cabinetmaking in Rhode Island, 1740–1830*

PATRICIA E. KANE

IN 1740, NEWPORT WAS THE LARGEST TOWN in Britain’s Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. An overmantel painting, originally part of the woodwork of a house on Mill Street, depicts the bustling port (fig. 1). Open fields command the horizon, commercial buildings crowd the waterfront, and religious and civic structures—from left to right, the Friends Meetinghouse (1700), the Colony House (1739), the Second Congregational Church (1735), Trinity Church (1726), and the First Congregational Church (1729)—tower over them. In the foreground, on Goat Island, Fort George with its prominent British flag provides military protection, a reminder of the territorial wars fought by Europeans in the New World. The harbor is alive with vessels large and small. Newport is about to expand its role in Atlantic commerce, but Long Wharf has yet to be built; only the modest “Town Wharf” stands at the foot of the street leading to the Colony House. Newport merchants organized the Long Wharf Proprietors in 1739 to extend the town wharf into a facility worthy of their high ambitions. It is seen in the upper-left quadrant of the 1758 map of Newport by Rev. Ezra Stiles, then of the Second Congregational Church (fig. 2). The shire town, or county seat, of Newport County, Newport had a population in 1740 of about six thousand, nearly twice that of Providence, and was far more religiously and ethnically diverse than any town in Rhode Island.

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the smaller towns had grown, too, and the conclusion of border disputes with Massachusetts and Connecticut changed the boundaries of the colony (see Carr essay, fig. 1). In 1729 the towns of North Kingstown, South Kingstown, and Westerly had been removed from Providence County to form King’s County, sometimes referred to as “South County” or the “Narragansett Country,” a fertile land of large plantations and wealthy landowners. South Kingstown became the shire town.<sup>1</sup> Towns on the Colony of Rhode Island’s eastern border—Bristol, Cumberland, Little Compton, Tiverton, and Warren—were controlled by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1747

they were annexed to the Colony of Rhode Island; Cumberland became part of Providence County, Little Compton and Tiverton part of Newport County, and Bristol, Warren, and later Barrington formed Bristol County, with Bristol designated as the shire town. Warwick and East Greenwich across Narragansett Bay, originally part of Providence County, were designated as Kent County in 1750, with East Greenwich chosen as the shire town.

Economic prosperity fostered the dramatic growth in Rhode Island's civic development between 1730 and 1750. New county seats meant new civic structures—such as “county,” “court,” or “colony” houses, including a new colony house in Providence and a larger one in Newport—to accommodate more General Assembly representatives and more court proceedings. The colony and the shire towns pooled their resources to construct these prominent buildings, which also

required the skills of the local woodworking communities. Work began on the courthouse in South Kingstown immediately upon the creation of King's County by the 1729 General Assembly Act. Ten years later, they were still working on the furniture; in 1739 the Newport upholsterer Robert Stevens provided chairs costing £46.10, and the South Kingstown joiner Nathaniel Perkins supplied tables costing £18.<sup>2</sup> Since South Kingstown had no upholsterers, the contractors for the colony house had to get the chairs from Newport, although simpler furniture was obtained locally. In 1729 Providence began work on its forty-by-thirty-foot county house, which was completed by 1731. The building was further embellished in 1739 by the acquisition of “the Bell, the best Coat of Arms & all the Leather Chairs” from the old colony house in Newport.<sup>3</sup> Smaller than Newport, Providence was content with these castoffs. In 1736 Newport had



Fig. 1. *Overmantel Painting with a View of Newport*, ca. 1740. Oil on panel, 33 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 67 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (85.7 × 170.8 cm). Private collection



begun construction of its new colony house, designed by Richard Munday, who employed Christopher Townsend for finish joinery.<sup>4</sup> The table in Newport's colony house (now divided into two tables) has also been attributed to him.<sup>5</sup> The Providence Colony House, destroyed by fire in 1758, was replaced by a brick building begun in 1760 and completed in 1762.<sup>6</sup> Providence chairmakers William Barker and William Proud each provided six chairs (£32 and £33.16), and the Providence shop joiner Samuel May provided a five-foot oval table (£70).<sup>7</sup> The dimensions of the Providence County House became the model for Kent County's courthouse, begun in 1750, for which East Greenwich joiner James Searle made, in 1767, a table costing just £2.17.5, perhaps more modest than the five-foot table made by May for Providence.<sup>8</sup> Each colony house had an accompanying jail, requiring at least rudimentary furniture.<sup>9</sup> The Rhode Island colony also commissioned lighthouses; the Beavertail Lighthouse on Jamestown Island was outfitted with tables, chairs, and beds in 1756.<sup>10</sup> Such institutional work provided a steady source of income for furniture makers as the colony began to grow quickly in the eighteenth century.

In the small-shop tradition of the colonial era, patrons had the opportunity to custom order furniture, now referred to as bespoke furniture. Evidence of this practice survives in account books and bills of sale. Correspondence between craftsmen and their customers, such as the letters between John Goddard and Moses Brown discussed in catalogue 66, also survive. Sometimes, as in the 1738 exchange between the merchant Abraham Redwood of Antigua and the Newport joiner Christopher Townsend, the customer was specific. Townsend writes that he “indevooured to finish a Desk and Book Case Agreeable to thy Directions,” which was shipped to Antigua for a friend of Redwood's.<sup>11</sup> Some customers chose deluxe details, such as custom-made silver hardware (see cat. 29). Sometimes the customers, like twenty-year-old Eunice Rhodes, visited a number of shops before deciding what to purchase. Just before her marriage to the wealthy Newport merchant Thomas Hazard, Eunice and her

friend Mary Brown came down from Providence and visited John Goddard's shop. That event is described in Mary Brown's testimony in a court case:

Sum time in the yer 1761 Being in Rhode Island Went to M<sup>r</sup>. Godwards With Eunice Rhodes Where of Eunice Rhodes asked the price of Book Case which he Maid Replying that seven hundred pound Was the price and for Chany Table one hundred and Twenty pound And She Thote it to Be Very Dere But said that She Shud Inquire the price and if others asked the Same She Shuld give it to Him and promis<sup>t</sup> to Waite on him Gaine and Sum Time after I went With Eunice Rhodes gaine to M<sup>r</sup>. Godward and she told him that She Wood Have them and he promised She Shud have them in Bout Six Weakes time at said Price.

After her marriage, Eunice went shopping again, this time with Susannah Hazard (perhaps her husband's unwed sister), who later testified that “some time in the year 1761 I was over with Eunice Hazard at John Goddard jiner and heard him agree To Make her a High Case of Draws of Mohogona for Two hundred and Fifty pound old Tenor and he Made thence.” When Eunice's new husband, Thomas, received, in 1762, a bill of £750 for a “Mahogony Swel<sup>d</sup>. Front Desk & Bookcase,” a bill of £300 for a “Mahogony Compashed Case of Drawers,” and a bill of £150 for a “Scollup<sup>d</sup>. Tea Table,” he disputed the prices billed, which were higher than the prices quoted.<sup>12</sup> These pieces may have been part of Hazard's property lost during the turmoil of the Revolution. Eunice petitioned the General Assembly in 1782 for relief from her destitute state, claiming that her Tory husband, now of New York, had left her with seven young children, “one of them at the breast,” and that she had exhausted all her resources in caring for them. After the Revolution, Rhode Island offered Hazard a pardon and restoration of his property at the price of submission, but he refused. The family reunited and

lived out their lives on Prince Edward Island on land granted by the Crown.<sup>13</sup>

John Goddard's reputation drew other customers from afar. Commissions from the Browns of Providence included not only a tea table (cat. 66) but also round-about chairs (cat. 68).<sup>14</sup> Goddard had customers on the west side of Narragansett Bay as well, including Anthony Low of Warwick, who purchased a slab table (cat. 34). But his best out-of-town customers were the wealthy planters in South County. Lodowick Updike, for example, a descendant of wealthy Dutch merchants with connections to New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, owned more than fifteen hundred acres in North Kingstown. He lived in a house built by his grandfather Richard Smith known as "Smith's Castle," and he was an ardent supporter of the Church of England. A slab table and a desk and bookcase, both attributed to Goddard, probably stood in "Smith's Castle," where Updike is said to have enjoyed entertaining.<sup>15</sup>

John Townsend, who was active around the same time, was another Newport joiner patronized by the

agrarian society of South County and others in Rhode Island. He probably made a high chest of drawers that descended to Mary LeMoine Potter of Kingston, possibly from her grandfather Elisha Reynolds Potter.<sup>16</sup> He also owned a chest-on-chest attributed to Townsend.<sup>17</sup> The Potters owned other high-style Newport furniture by unknown makers, including a bureau table and a desk and bookcase.<sup>18</sup> The family included John Potter, depicted with his family leading the life of the country gentry in an overmantel painting dated to about 1760 (fig. 3). The high chest owned by Mary and Oliver Arnold of East Greenwich (cat. 32) is probably Townsend's most flamboyant out-of-town commission, but his most stylish out-of-town patrons might have been Mary and Jerathmael Bowers of Somerset, Massachusetts. Mary was the former Mary Sherburne of Boston, beneficiary of her father Joseph's substantial fortune. She married Bowers, a wealthy Quaker of Swansea (later Somerset) in 1763. Her portrait by John Singleton Copley (fig. 4) shows a refined, elegant woman. In her home were a dining table and card table



Fig. 3. *Overmantel Painting of John Potter and His Family*, ca. 1760. Oil on panel, 31½ × 64¼ in. (80 × 163.2 cm). Newport Historical Society, Gift of the Estate of E. L. Winters, inv. no. 53.3

attributed to Townsend.<sup>19</sup> Another affluent Townsend client was the Quaker abolitionist Moses Brown, of Providence, for whom were made a slant-front desk and chest-on-chest that are attributed to Townsend, although the Browns did not patronize him as much as they did Goddard.<sup>20</sup>

Other customers patronizing Newport furniture makers lived as far away as Westerly, Rhode Island; Connecticut; Nantucket; and Long Island. Samuel Ward of Westerly, for example, patronized Job Townsend, Sr., for a dressing table in 1746.<sup>21</sup> New London, Connecticut, was an especially good source of clients: its excellent harbor enabled merchants to transport agricultural products in the West Indies trade, and some of their profits went toward buying the best Newport furniture.

New London merchant John Deshon owned a bureau table of blond mahogany made in 1764 by Edmund Townsend (cat. 51) and a rare tilt-top table with cabinet pedestal, like the one discussed in catalogue 65.<sup>22</sup> New Londoner John Still Winthrop, a descendant of the founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and a Loyalist during the Revolution, owned a set of chairs probably made by John Goddard.<sup>23</sup> His portrait by an unknown artist reveals a quiet presence clothed in brown wool (fig. 5); the restrained elegance of Goddard's chairs no doubt appealed to him. As for Nantucket, the tight-knit Quaker (Society of Friends) communities that existed there and in Newport were responsible, at least in part, for the close commercial ties between the two areas. Nantucket merchants, for example, supplied whale oil



Fig. 4. John Singleton Copley, *Mary Sherburne Bowers* (Mrs. Jerathmael Bowers, 1735–1799), ca. 1763. Oil on canvas, 49<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (126.7 × 101 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, inv. no. 15.128

for Newport's West Indian trade and later for its candle manufacturing, and in turn they bought furniture in Newport. Christopher Townsend probably made a high chest of drawers (cat. 31, fig. 4) for fellow Quaker George Hussey of Nantucket. This almost certainly was the "high Draws" listed in the personal property distributed to Hussey's children and their spouses in the months before Hussey's wife's death in 1770. It was valued at £2.5 and went to his daughter Elizabeth's husband, Josiah Barker.<sup>24</sup> John Goddard and Thomas Townsend had customers on Long Island: Goddard probably made a high chest, dining table, and tea table once owned by the Tillinghast family of East Hampton, while Townsend made a chest-on-chest in 1772 for David Gardiner of Gardiner's Island.<sup>25</sup>

The Rhode Island-made furniture distributed to Connecticut, Nantucket, and Long Island provided models for the local craftsmen in these areas. In addition, some Newport-trained craftsmen—either returning natives or immigrants—also made furniture in the Rhode Island style in these adjacent areas. Rhode Island-style furniture, therefore, was not all made in Rhode Island. The Rhode Island influence is particularly evident on Long Island. Newport brothers and cabinetmakers Job and Christopher Townsend, originally from Oyster Bay, Long Island, maintained ties to that area. (Job Townsend's sons Edmund and Thomas also helped build the family legacy in the trade and will be discussed later in this essay.) Scholar Dean F. Failey has speculated that joiner William Stoddard may



Fig. 5. Unknown artist, *John Still Winthrop* (1720–1776), ca. 1770. Oil on canvas, 41 × 34¼ in. (104.1 × 87 cm). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Cambridge, Mass., Gift of Robert Winthrop, representing the Winthrop family, to Harvard University, 1964, inv. no. H605

have trained in Newport before moving to Oyster Bay. Failey illustrates a number of Long Island pieces in the Newport style, some attributed to Stoddard.<sup>26</sup>

Rhode Island's influence on Connecticut and southeastern Massachusetts furniture is well known. The presence of Newport cabinetmaker Edmund Townsend's bureau table (cat. 51) in New London may have influenced a local joiner to make a block-and-shell chest of drawers for the New London merchant Guy Richards (fig. 6). Richards could well afford such luxurious furniture, having married in 1773 Hannah Dolbeare, said to be "an agreeable young Lady with a handsome fortune."<sup>27</sup> Edgar Mayhew and Minor Meyers, Jr.'s study of New London County furniture includes many eastern Connecticut joiners' interpretations of the block-and-shell form, as well as other Rhode Island models.<sup>28</sup> The most dramatic

examples of Rhode Island influence in southeastern Massachusetts are three chest-on-chests associated with the shop of Ebenezer Allen, Jr., of New Bedford (see fig. 7). Ebenezer trained in Newport with his uncle John Goddard, probably between 1769 and 1776, before returning to his native New Bedford. He trained his younger brother Cornelius, who signed two of the three chest-on-chests.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Furniture Export Trade in Newport*

While bespoke furniture made for individual clients accounted for a large part of a cabinetmaker's business, many Rhode Island cabinetmakers engaged in making furniture for export. The pattern of Newport's import and export trade was established in the first three decades of the eighteenth century—agricultural produce and livestock largely from South County were sent to



Fig. 6. *Chest of Drawers*, New London, Connecticut, 1770–80. Mahogany and pine,  $33\frac{3}{4} \times 38 \times 19\frac{1}{2}$  in. (85.7 × 96.5 × 49.5 cm). Private collection. [RIFI448]



Fig. 7. Ebenezer Allen, Jr., and Cornelius Allen, *Chest-on-Chest*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, probably 1786. Mahogany, pine, and birch or cherry, 85 × 39 × 19 in. (215.9 × 99.1 × 48.3 cm). Private collection. [R1F1083]

the West Indies, where they were traded for molasses, brought back to Rhode Island, and converted to rum, which was then traded in Africa for slaves. Although there was occasional direct trade with Europe, most European goods entered Rhode Island through Boston and New York. The arrival of Boston merchant John Banister (see fig. 8) in Newport in the 1730s changed all that; his establishment of direct trade with London in the late 1730s led to major commercial expansion of

Rhode Island's transatlantic and coastal trade, as well as of the slave trade in the 1750s.<sup>30</sup> Along with the agricultural products of the South County plantations, Newport merchants included furniture in the cargoes assembled for the colonial and West Indian trade.

Jeanne A. Vibert Sloane and Margaretta M. Lovell have written on the importance of the furniture export trade to Newport furniture makers.<sup>31</sup> Vibert Sloane's analysis of the Newport cabinetmaker John Cahoon's



Fig. 8. Robert Feke, *John Banister* (1707–1767), 1748. Oil on canvas, 57¾ × 48¾ in. (146.7 × 122.6 cm). Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in memory of her father, Maurice A. Scott, inv. no. 1945.16

account book, covering the period from 1749 to 1760, reveals that 34 percent of his income came from export furniture and 20 percent from locally sold furniture. Cahoone increased his shop's output by having three journeymen (craftsmen hired to work by the day) at any given time in addition to apprentices. Between 1750 and 1759, he paid wages to seven journeymen—Jonathan Brier, Job Clark, Gideon Lawton, Moses Norman, James Searle, Jonathan Swett, and Benjamin Tayer. Cahoone produced mostly tables and desks for export, typically “cased”—that is, put into a crate for long-distance shipment. After chairs, these two forms were the staples of the furniture export business. The desks may have been simple, like the labeled one by John Goddard (cat. 27), and the tables may have been drop-leaf dining tables,

or oval or “porringer-top” tables, like that seen in catalogue 64. After leaving Cahoone's employ, Brier, Norman, and Tayer became Newport cabinetmakers with property and shops of their own.<sup>32</sup> Of the other four, Clark may be the Job Clark of Charlestown, Rhode Island, who was paid by that town for a coffin in 1760 and was identified in a deed as a shop joiner when he bought land there in 1761.<sup>33</sup> Searle, born in Little Compton in 1737 and possibly trained in Newport, left there to work in Providence by 1761, then moved to East Greenwich by 1767.<sup>34</sup> Clark and Searle undoubtedly brought their skills and knowledge of the Newport style to these smaller towns. Vibert Sloane surmises that Swett and Lawton stayed in Newport as journeymen cabinetmakers. Indeed, Swett

worked in the furniture export trade before working for Cahoone. In 1752 he made a “beauffat and case,” or corner cabinet in a crate, valued at £50 for Newport mariner Robert Dunbar, whom he subsequently sued for nonpayment.<sup>35</sup> After leaving Cahoone, Swett worked as a journeyman for Job Townsend, Sr.<sup>36</sup>

Gideon Lawton worked as a journeyman for the joiner Samuel Burroughs, whom he sued in 1762 for nonpayment for the work he did on two mahogany desks and a table valued at £150.<sup>37</sup> Numerous suits in the Newport County Inferior Court of Common Pleas over the next six years show him struggling to pay his debts and his bills for rent, food, and shop supplies.<sup>38</sup> The £141.16.1 worth of hardware he purchased from merchant Samuel Fowler between August 1761 and July 1762 attests to his industry in making desks—he made more than seven desks over the course of one eighteen-week period, sometimes completing a desk in just a single week. His hardware purchases also show that the desks he was making were simple ones, no doubt intended for export.<sup>39</sup> His typical hardware purchase—eight handles, five escutcheons, one “Cabbinet Lock” (for the prospect door), two “Brass nubs” (for the lopers), “five small ditto” (small brass nubs for the interior drawers)—indicates that the desks he made had four exterior drawers and five interior drawers (one behind the prospect door), such as the interior of catalogue 27. Less complex than the typical desk of the period, such as the one shown in figure 9, which had eleven interior drawers (a tier of three at each side of the interior, one flanking each side of the prospect door, and three behind the prospect door), Lawton’s desks were also less costly and therefore more economical for the export trade.<sup>40</sup>

Evidence beyond the Cahoone account book has allowed Lovell to document how important the export trade was to many Newport cabinetmakers. Their entrepreneurial nature is demonstrated by the Charter Party Agreement of 1749, in which Cahoone, with joiners Constant Bailey and Benjamin Peabody, rented the sloop *Mary* to ship furniture to North Carolina.<sup>41</sup> The master and owner of the *Mary* was John Lyon,

Peabody’s brother-in-law and partner in the lumber business. Though Peabody, perhaps the most entrepreneurial of the trio, is often referred to as a lumber merchant in public records, historian Thomas Hornsby, in his 1849 account of the Newport cabinetmaking trade, remembered him for sending furniture to Suriname:

All the cabinetmakers on Bridge and Washington Streets, employed a large number Hands, manufacturing furniture, for which a ready market was found in New York and the West Indies. The stores of David Huntington and Benjamin Baker were also on the point; both these men were extensively engaged in manufacturing furniture, which they shipped to New York, and the West Indies. . . . Benjamin Peabody, cabinetmaker who carried on a large trade with Surinam . . . was an ingenious man.<sup>42</sup>

Most makers of export furniture sold their products to middlemen. Bailey, lacking connections and capital to organize further voyages after that made by the



Fig. 9. John Goddard, *Slant-Front Desk*, Newport, 1754. Mahogany, red cedar, pine, and yellow poplar, 41¼ × 37½ × 20<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (104.8 × 95.3 × 52.9 cm). Private collection. [RIF600]

*Mary*, for example, turned to mariners for the transport and sale of his furniture, including a maple desk and case sold to a Newport mariner, Charles Whitfield, in 1753 for £24.10.<sup>43</sup> Signed furniture by Benjamin Baker (see cat. 58), who is mentioned by Hornsby, survives, but Baker's account book does not support Hornsby's assessment of Baker's involvement in the furniture export trade, beyond the few instances of his making furniture that was cased for merchants in the West Indian trade.<sup>44</sup> Even less is known about David Huntington, also mentioned by Hornsby, though Huntington did sell a mahogany table (£65), a mahogany desk (£205), and three maple tables (£19, £20, and £22) to Newport mariner James Card between 1766 and 1768; whether these were cargo or personal purchases by Card is difficult to determine.<sup>45</sup> An account with the Newport merchant Samuel Fowler for hardware purchased between March and October 1765 shows Huntington making desks and tables—nine desks in thirty-four weeks. Like Gideon Lawton, who also purchased hardware from Fowler for his desks, Huntington's specializing suggests that the furniture he made was intended for export.<sup>46</sup> Newport County court records contain evidence of many other cabinetmakers producing cased furniture for the export trade.<sup>47</sup>

Only rarely did a skilled cabinetmaker parlay his craft skill into the mercantile profession, and Eleazer Trevett was one of the few. Born and probably trained in Marblehead, Massachusetts, he arrived in Newport in about 1740, where, early in his career, he made furniture for the export trade, consigning a desk and four tables to mariner William Pinegar, who sold them at Cape François, Haiti, in 1749.<sup>48</sup> By 1767 Trevett identified himself as a merchant in public documents.<sup>49</sup> He had accumulated enough capital to own, outright or in part, vessels often commanded by his mariner sons. In 1768 the sloop *Industry*, with Eleazer Trevett, Jr., as master, sailed to the Cape Verde Islands, and in 1769 the *Orotava*, under Constant Church Trevett, traded in the "western islands and the canaries."<sup>50</sup> The cargo probably included either furniture of their own making (Eleazer's son John was also a joiner) or furniture

bought wholesale, such as a mahogany desk (£10.17.6) and case of drawers (£7.10.0), as well as two maple desks (£8.0.6) and a case of drawers (£2.16.3) made for Trevett by Newport joiner James Pitman in 1768.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Furniture Export Trade in Providence*

Providence was much smaller than Newport in 1740; the volume of its shipping was about one-fifth of Newport's. Although its few merchants did engage in the West Indian trade, Providence was still largely an agricultural community.<sup>52</sup> The Brown family of merchants, first James and his brother Obadiah, then James's four sons—John, Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses—dominated Providence's commercial growth, trading in, among other things, cocoa, molasses, rum, and slaves. Providence cabinetmakers and merchants were already involved in the furniture export trade by the early 1750s, a phenomenon that has not heretofore been recognized. Between 1748 and 1753, for example, Thomas Garrett conducted business with the Bristol mariner Simeon Potter. Garrett assembled cargo, oversaw repair work on vessels, and sailed on a voyage to South Carolina on the sloop *Olive Branch* in 1752, which carried five desks that sold for £15.10 each. He provided furniture to Potter in 1753 that included six desks at £33 each; two desks at £30 each, with cases at £3 each; a six-foot table at £3.15 per foot; and two four-and-a-half-foot tables at £3.10 each, with casing at £3 each.<sup>53</sup>

A vigorous furniture export trade probably drove six Providence cabinetmakers—Gershom Carpenter, Benjamin Hunt, Philip Potter, his cousin John Power, Grindall Rawson, and Joseph Sweeting—to sign a price agreement on February 19, 1756 (fig. 10). The document sets the price a customer would be charged for fifteen different furniture forms, listed with variations as to the materials (e.g., mahogany or maple), the elaboration of the form (e.g., one drawer or two), and the hardware type (e.g., polished or lacquered). At the end of the list is the rate that would be paid by the cabinetmaker to a journeyman for one form—the desk—either plain or with two tiers of drawers. As stated earlier, desks and tables were staples of the Rhode Island furniture export

business; by establishing a set price, the master craftsmen could control the amount they paid their workers. When the agreement was revised about a year later (recorded on the verso of the 1756 agreement), the prices increased somewhat. Not surprisingly, since the furniture export trade was expanding, the list now included a £5 charge for casing a desk.<sup>54</sup>

There is little documentary evidence of most of these six makers' involvement in the furniture export business. Gershom Carpenter sold two maple tables to the South Kingstown mariner George Hazard in 1770, but it is difficult to determine if these were for export.<sup>55</sup>

John Carlile—who was not among the six but whose partner, Joseph Sweeting, signed the agreement—called himself a mariner when he sued mariner Samuel Dunn for nonpayment of two desks in 1774.<sup>56</sup> However, a great deal of evidence reveals Philip Potter's activities in the export trade. In the early 1760s, Potter sold a significant amount of furniture to Capt. Joseph Crawford in the West Indian trade, including a “Black Walnut Desk Cas'd” for shipment on the sloop *Rhodes*.<sup>57</sup> A note Potter signed in 1765 with Providence merchant James Brown promised payment of £287 in joiner's work.<sup>58</sup> His accounts with the chairmaker and turner William

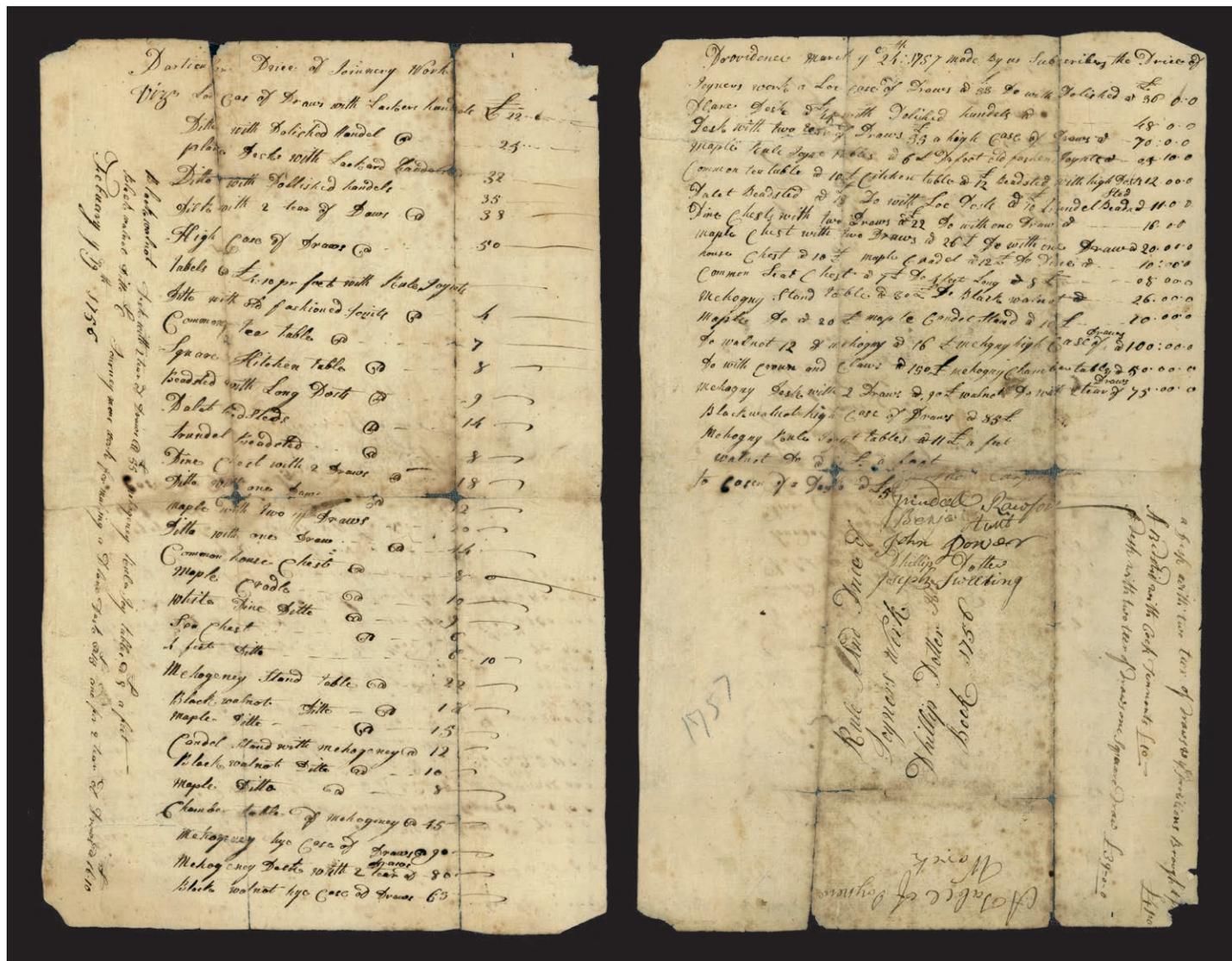


Fig. 10. Providence Cabinetmakers' Agreement (recto and verso), 1756/57. Ink on paper, 12¼ × 7¾ in. (31.1 × 19.7 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. RHI X17 1933-34

Barker hint at the volume of Potter's production: between June 1764 and August 1767, he purchased enough sets of legs to produce two tables each month.<sup>59</sup>

Like Eleazer Trevett in Newport, Potter aspired to be a merchant. By 1766 he was identified as such when he and Elijah Bacon, Caleb Harris, and Samuel Jacobs, joint owners of the sloop *Industry*, sued mariner Rufus Potter.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Trevett, however, Potter's risk-taking was his undoing. Severe losses at sea resulted in his 1770 insolvency. Boston merchant Lewis Deblois foreclosed on Potter's three-story house with a large store on the west side of Weybosset Bridge. A public auction held to settle accounts with creditors included his farm in Johnston, Rhode Island, half-ownership of a new ship, "about Seventy Tons Burthen, launched, but unfinished," as well as "Some Maple, Pine, Oak, Mahogany and Black-Walnut Boards and Plank.—Sundry Pieces of Joiners Work unfinished—and five Riding-Chairs, partly finished."<sup>61</sup> In an 1865 obituary of Potter's grandson, Moses Potter, it was recalled that his grandfather "failed in business, owing to severe losses at sea. After making an honorable settlement, he gathered what little he had left, and migrated to the wilds of Vermont, settling at Putney, in that State, where, after years of struggling with adversity, he died."<sup>62</sup>

The Providence cabinetmaker Joseph Martin was too young to be working when the price agreement was signed, but evidence hints that he was as productive as Philip Potter, if not more so. Although Martin may have learned to run a productive shop from Potter, his probable master, he could have been trained by Jonathan Ballou.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned, after chairs, desks and tables were the most popular items for the export trade, and account books reveal that Martin was purchasing enough sets of legs from William Barker between October 1766 and April 1767 to produce three tables a month.<sup>64</sup> Between August 1774 and November 1775, he purchased similar quantities from turner William Proud.<sup>65</sup> A gap in the accounts with Proud between June 1777 and November 1779 may be a result of the British blockade of Narragansett Bay after their 1776 invasion of Rhode Island. After the Revolution, Martin had a much better

time of it than Potter. His accounts with Proud after 1779 do not include the routine purchase of furniture parts, suggesting that he had given up making furniture for export and moved into the mercantile realm.<sup>66</sup> By 1781 Martin is identified occasionally in public documents as "esquire" or "merchant." In 1782 he had enough wherewithal to purchase a Jamestown farm that had formerly belonged to the Tory Thomas Hutchinson, forfeited to the state that same year.<sup>67</sup>

Other Providence cabinetmakers also made furniture for the export trade. Samuel May, an apprentice of Grindall Rawson, stayed in Providence after completing his apprenticeship, but by the time he was sued by the Providence merchant Joseph Whipple in 1765, he was living in Smithfield, some ten miles north of Providence. Whipple and May had a business arrangement in the early 1760s in which Whipple sold furniture hardware to May primarily for desks that Whipple then sold, perhaps locally but more likely in the export trade. In one instance, Whipple charged May £16.6.8 for "the freight of 2 Desk Charges at [New] York," in another, £5.1 for "Freight of 1 Desk to Albany." The latter may be the desk noted at the end of the account: "by 1 Desk not sold which is sent to Albany." During the two-year period of the account, May purchased from Whipple supplies for fifty-six desks.<sup>68</sup> He was making twenty-eight desks a year (or a desk every two weeks), as well as other items, such as tables. Between 1762 and 1766, the purchases of sets of legs from Barker indicate that he was making one to two tables a month.<sup>69</sup> Those accounts stop in 1766, when May bought land in Gloucester. Although he still called himself a shop joiner (in legal documents executed while he lived there from 1768 to 1789), he may have quit producing furniture for the export trade and instead made furniture for local customers while working his ninety-three-acre farm, which he sold when he moved to Norwich, New York, where he died in 1810.<sup>70</sup>

Although there is no evidence that May made much furniture for export after relocating to Smithfield, evidence of another of Rawson's former apprentices, Nicholas Bragg, suggests that some rural

shops did.<sup>71</sup> Like May, Bragg stayed in Providence for a few years after finishing his apprenticeship. He was married there in 1757, and by 1761 he too was residing in Smithfield, where he was sued by Andrew Waterman, a yeoman, in 1775.<sup>72</sup> When the sheriff could not find Bragg to serve him the writ, Waterman had it served on Elijah Bacon, a Providence housewright (a builder of wooden houses, including the fine finish work), and a former partner of Philip Potter and others in the vessel *Industry*. On the writ Bacon wrote that Bragg's property in his possession was "four Desks with Drawers Cased up but not Trimmed with Locks or Brasses," indicating that Bacon was probably still engaged in shipping furniture. The cases of May and Bragg, both Rawson apprentices, suggest that Rawson was making furniture for export and passed this business practice on to his trainees. Bragg, like May, also left the Providence area. Maybe the life of a shop joiner there was not as lucrative as they had wished, and a rural setting for their shops likely would have had the benefit of lower overhead than an urban one.<sup>73</sup>

### *Craft Practice*

In the eighteenth century, skills were passed from one generation to the next through apprenticeship, as is made clear in the case of Grindall Rawson and his apprentices Samuel May and Nicholas Bragg. The apprentice's parent or guardian signed a binding contract with the master. In 1763 such an agreement was made by Nathaniel Wheeler, the guardian of Zachariah West, with Providence joiner John Carlile:

Zachariah West Son and Minor of Oliver West Late of Rehoboth . . . Put and Placed himself apprentice to John Carlile of Providence in ye County of Providence and Colony of Rhode island ship joiner . . . after ye manner of an apprentice to serve . . . the full terme of four years and eight months or until he shall arrive to ye age of twenty one years . . . during all which terme the said apprentice his . . . Master faithfully shall

serve his secrets keep his lawful and reasonable commands Gladly every where obey . . . he shall not commit fornication nor Contract Matrimony within said terme: at Cards Dice or any other unlawful Game he Shall not play . . . And the said John Carlile doth herby Bind and oblige himself to teach and Instruct or cause to be taught and Instructed the said apprentice In ye art or trade of a Shop Joyner and Ship Joyner . . . find procure and provide for ye said apprentice sutable and sufficient meat drink apparel washing and Lodging Likewise Learn the said apprentice to Read wright and Cypher so far as is Necessary for Keeping accompts and at ye end of expiration of said terme to dismis said apprentice with two Good suits of apparel for all Parts of his body both Linin and wolen.<sup>74</sup>

An apprentice was an asset to the master and to his business. Apprentices enhanced the production of the master's shop; their labor was of value. In 1754 Newport cabinetmaker John Cahoon got into a fistfight with the constable to keep his apprentice, Samuel Slocum, out of jail. Newport constable William Pelsue arrested young Slocum over a debt to wigmaker David Cummings. Pelsue testified that "John Cahoon by Force & Armes violently take away the said Samuel Slocum my prisoner from me by striking and kicking me several times." Cahoon claimed that Constable Pelsue "an assault did make upon the Body of Samuel Slocum . . . and make him out of the said John's service."<sup>75</sup> Despite this rough patch in his training, Slocum went on to finish his apprenticeship and worked as a shop joiner in Newport for many years.

While the master valued his apprentice's work, the indenture saddled the master with significant financial obligations, as the excerpt from the agreement between the guardian of Zachariah West and Carlile shows. Sometimes the master did not fulfill his part of the bargain. So claimed West in his suit against Carlile, stating that his master never provided instruction in

reading, writing, and cyphering, nor did he provide the required two suits of clothes at the end of his term, dismissing him “almost wholly naked” and not “with two Good suits of apparel,” as called for in the contract.<sup>76</sup> Newport shop joiner Jonathan Phillips also had difficulties fulfilling his obligations to his apprentices. He was deeply in debt in the mid-1750s; among his unpaid bills were the costs for clothing and schooling his apprentices Silas Clark, Theophilus Clark, George Cornell, and Benjamin Tayer. Tailor Joseph Hayward billed Phillips for making and mending breeches (leather in one instance) for Theophilus and Benjamin in 1753 and 1754. The schoolmaster William Lake went unpaid for “Schooling Ben: Tears [Tayer] Winter Nights” and for schooling Theophilus, George, and Silas.<sup>77</sup> At one point the sheriff could not find Phillips to serve him a writ. Whether he had simply left town is not known, but somehow his apprentices finished their training.<sup>78</sup>

The cabinetmaking business also required a suitable space to accommodate the work and workers, in Phillips’s case at least five. Many of the cabinetmakers in Newport lived and worked on Easton’s Point, a spit of land shown at left in many of the period images of Newport (see figs. 1–2).<sup>79</sup> Most of the cabinetmakers lived on Bridge Street and had shops on their home



Fig. 11. *Christopher Townsend House*, 74 Bridge Street, Newport, built ca. 1725. Newport Restoration Foundation

lots.<sup>80</sup> Christopher Townsend’s house on Bridge Street still stands (fig. 11); the ell (an extension at right angles to the length of the main building, seen at right in fig. 11), measuring twelve by twenty-four feet, is generally presumed to be his shop and would have been a typical size.<sup>81</sup> Another shop, eight by sixteen feet, was mentioned in a 1782 damage claim by Mary Mumford, and a claim in the same year by Constant Bailey describes “one Joyner’s shop 16 foot by 22 a storey and half with three Joyner’s Benches.”<sup>82</sup> Rural joiners, however, whose farms included agricultural outbuildings, often built separate shops. Their furniture making tended to be winter work, and a shop with enough heat to melt glue (for securing joints) and comfortably work in was a practical investment. Nathaniel Heath of Barrington built himself a shop in 1772, and William Brayton advertised “100 Acres of good land, with a good Dwelling-House, Barn, Corn-Crib and Joiner’s Shop” in Coventry in 1785.<sup>83</sup>

Many cabinetmakers owned the shop but not the land on which it stood. The sisters Penelope, Henrietta, and Arrabella Cowley, for instance, sued John Cahoone in 1763 to recover the forty-by-twenty-foot lot on which Cahoone’s shop stood. In the same year, Newport joiner George Weeden signed a £75 note to purchase a shop on land owned by Walter Cranston.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, having to move a small building to use as a shop apparently did not faze eighteenth-century joiners. In 1798 Sheffield Attwood advertised for sale a “New House (now improved for a Joiner’s shop) . . . two Story, and 25 by 26 Feet . . . which may be removed to any Part of the town or Island, at very little Expense.”<sup>85</sup>

John Goddard’s house is known from nineteenth-century depictions to have had an adjoining shop and wharf (see the building at center in fig. 12). Such an arrangement made for ease of loading of furniture for export, shipping it to distant customers, and receiving incoming supplies of wood. Goddard was not the only cabinetmaker to benefit from such a location. Newport joiner Clement Peckham’s shop was on Robert Taylor’s wharf, and Providence joiners Joseph Sweeting and

John Carlile also rented a shop and warehouses located on a wharf.<sup>86</sup> In 1804 Adam S. Coe and Gideon Palmer advertised their location, “a few doors below the Theater, on the Long-Wharf.”<sup>87</sup>

In addition to a shop, cabinetmakers needed to acquire and maintain an abundance of tools. When the joiner Clement Peckham died in Newport in 1756, Joseph Sylvester and John Cahoon compiled an inventory of the contents of his shop (see fig. 13). Many joiners bought imported English tools, such as the “chisels gouges and augers” that Peter Thurston and Sons advertised for sale along with a whole stock of general merchandise in the March 10, 1764, issue of the *Providence Gazette*. Some bought only the best English tools, like those of the White family of London, who made the most expensive, most sought-after saws of the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>88</sup> When Providence joiner Richard Hoyle died in 1752, his inventory was taken by Alexander Frazier and the joiner George Brown,

who carefully noted that besides £45.10.0 of unspecified “joiner’s tools,” it included “One hand saw Whites make” at six shillings (an unspecified handsaw cost only half as much) and “two fine saws White’s make” at twelve shillings.”<sup>89</sup>

Though the Whites provided high-quality saws, some tools were made locally. In 1766 Newport blacksmith Simeon Price sued Newport joiner George Weeden for nonpayment of a holdfast, among other blacksmith’s wares.<sup>90</sup> Toward the end of the eighteenth century, some Providence-area joiners began making tools. Francis Nicholson of Wrentham, Massachusetts, is said to have been the earliest American maker of planes. His son John, a joiner, may have carried on this trade in neighboring Cumberland, Rhode Island, where he worked in the 1760s.<sup>91</sup> In 1773 Providence joiner Joseph Fuller advertised that he made and sold joiners’ tools at his shop on the west side of the “Great Bridge [Weybosset Bridge].” He later worked with his son,



Fig. 12. Samuel Colman, *Old Newport Houses*, 1865. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 8½ × 11¼ in. (21.6 × 28.6 cm). Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 2013.26

although their partnership was dissolved in 1798.<sup>92</sup> John Lindenberger, of Providence and Johnston, advertised in 1799 that he taught architecture to house carpenters, perhaps as a way of boosting sales for his planes, which he advertised in 1803, when he also stated that he sought birch and beech of various dimensions.<sup>93</sup> Thus joiners contributed to the beginnings of the manufacture of edge tools, a major industry in the Blackstone Valley area of Rhode Island and in Massachusetts in the nineteenth century.

Rhode Island furniture makers used a variety of woods for their furniture. Those that are visible are identified as primary, and those that are unseen on interiors are referred to as secondary. In the early eighteenth century, walnut was the fashionable primary wood, but around 1740, this began to be replaced by mahogany, a tropical wood. Mahogany was prized for its lustrous figure and color. Its hardness proved to be an ideal medium for carving. English merchants first exported

West Indian mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*) from Jamaica as early as the 1720s.<sup>94</sup> By 1765 most Jamaican mahogany had been harvested and merchants sought other sources. The Bay of Honduras in Central America, in what is now Belize, yielded another species of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). Supplies of top-quality mahogany were important assets for the cabinetmakers who produced the most luxurious furniture. Lesser-quality mahogany was also sometimes used for drawer linings.<sup>95</sup> When Newport joiner John Gibbs was served with a writ in 1753, the sheriff took possession of a mahogany board to make sure Gibbs appeared in court when the case was heard.<sup>96</sup> In 1773 Christopher Townsend esteemed his stock of mahogany enough to call it out in his will, specifying that “all my Mahogany and other Shop Joinery stock” go to his son John.<sup>97</sup> The other “Shop Joinery stock” most likely included maple and walnut, the alternative but less expensive primary woods. For example, the

17 moulding Planes @10/ 14 Jointers Jack Smoothing Do [?]Plow 14	£22.10
3 hold fasts 105/ 4 old plains 40/ 2 Do 12/ 14 Gouges & Chissels 70/	11.7
Sundry small tools 60/ a parcel of Od Irons Candlestick & Whetstone 20/	4:
1 Glew Pot 70/ 4 handsaw £12 2 old D° 15/ 1Whipsaw and frame 120/	22:5
1 Grindstone & Wench 20/ 11 Hois[ts] @ 36 £19.16 A set of Tin Measures 40/	21:16
5 Cont Screws @ 6/ 30/ 1 Table Lock 12/ 1 Sand Box 5/ 1 Case of Drawers £34	36:7
3 Earthen Milk Pots & 2 old Wooden horses 24/ 1 Wooden vice 10/ 4 Benches @80/ is 16£	17..14
4 Bottles 8/ 1 old Sword 10/ 1 Beam Scale 15/ 1 Table frame 8 legs & 4 rails £10	11..13
1 Round table £9 1 Small desk unfinished £7 1 set of Rails 20/ 1 Broad Chissel /	1[torn]
661 feet Black Walnut @3/ £99:3:- 300 feet Mahogany @ 3 is £45 26% Do Cedar boards £16:2:-	16[torn]
420 feet maple @40/ £8:10/	[torn]

Fig. 13. Transcription of Clement Peckham Estate Inventory, May 13, 1756. Newport Town Council and Probate, microfilm no. 0945000, vol. 12, p. 38, Family History Library, Salt Lake City

Providence cabinetmakers' agreement of 1756/57 (see fig. 10) listed "stand tables," costing £22 in mahogany, £18 in walnut, and £15 in maple. The agreement did not mention cherry as a primary wood, but there is abundant evidence of its use as a primary and secondary wood in Rhode Island, particularly in the Providence area.<sup>98</sup> Cedar, often referred to as "red cedar," was another primary wood used, especially for desks made for export.<sup>99</sup> Some cabinetmakers had large stocks of it, such as the 733 feet of cedar boards that joiner Jonathan Phillips had in 1757.<sup>100</sup> Cedar was also used for interior drawer linings on fine-quality slant-front desks.<sup>101</sup> More typically, drawer linings, glue blocks, case backs, bottoms, and tops were made of pine, both white (*Pinus strobus*) and yellow (*Pinus taeda*), as well as chestnut (*Castanea*), yellow poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and cottonwood (*Populus deltoids*).<sup>102</sup> Maple, oak, and birch were used for the rails of tables, and maple and birch are the most common woods found in the rails of Federal-period chairs.

### *Cabinetmaking in the Federal Period*

In the years before the Revolution, though Providence still lagged behind Newport in population and commerce, the Brown family's manufacturing businesses were expanding the range of goods available for trade.<sup>103</sup> Providence gained new prominence when the college later known as Brown University was relocated from Warren in 1770. Little more than a decade after Peter Harrison designed the Brick Market (1762) in Newport, Providence built a Market House (1773). This enhanced economic climate encouraged some woodworkers to move. Thomas Garrett, for example, described as "of Newport" when he was married to Mary Potter in Bristol in 1742, was in Providence from 1749 until 1756, when he was described as "late of Providence."<sup>104</sup> After working as a journeyman in Newport for John Cahoon, Little Compton native James Searle was in Providence by 1761, before moving on to East Greenwich by 1767.<sup>105</sup> And John Goddard's nephews Daniel and Thomas Spencer moved to Providence—Daniel from Newport by

1772 and Thomas from East Greenwich by 1783—very likely encouraged by their uncle's work for the Brown family, a patronage they later gained (see cat. 60 and cat. 75, fig. 2).<sup>106</sup> Other Newport joiners—Nicholas Easton, Townsend Goddard, and Jonathan Wallen—came to Providence at the time of the Revolution as well.<sup>107</sup>

In this way, Providence became the dominant economic force in Rhode Island in the Federal period. Newport, occupied by the British and partially destroyed during the Revolution, was very slow to regain its mercantile health. The patterns of trade changed after the war; business was increasingly global, with voyages to the East Indies, requiring more capital and bigger, more expensive ships. Beginning in 1787, John Brown funded East Indian voyages with a fleet of ships, including the *General Washington*, the *Warren*, and the *President Washington*, and other Providence merchants soon followed.<sup>108</sup> By 1785 Providence's shipping equaled Newport's; by 1820 its trade volume was twice that of Newport.<sup>109</sup> Providence also became popular for out-of-town furniture shoppers. Capt. James Driscoll of Warren purchased a clock (see Kane and Sullivan essay, figs. 12–13) from Thomas Howard, Jr., in 1811, and the DeWolf family of Bristol purchased a dressing bureau (cat. 104) in 1814 from the Rawson shop. Manufacturing, an enterprise in which Newport never excelled, grew rapidly in Providence. Moses Brown's textile manufacturing attracted the English immigrant Samuel Slater, and by 1790 the firm of Almy, Brown, and Slater was successfully spinning cotton yarn in Pawtucket. By 1793 the firm opened a new mill (the building with the cupola), and in 1810 David Wilkinson built a large mill for machine tools whose imposing scale overwhelmed the older buildings clustered around the Pawtucket Falls, a source of power for these new industrial enterprises (fig. 14). Such businesses later became the centerpiece of many Rhode Island communities.

Many small woodworking shops in both Newport and Providence continued to function as they had

in the colonial era. Descendants of Newport's colonial joiners carried on into the nineteenth century: Job Townsend's grandson, Job E. Townsend; John Goddard's sons Townsend, Stephen, and Thomas (Daniel, Henry, and Job having gone to Halifax; for a card table by Stephen and Thomas Goddard, see cat. 92); Edmund Townsend's sons Job E., Robert, James, and Thomas; and James Taylor's sons William, Stephen, and Anthony V. Other colonial-era cabinetmakers working into the Federal period included, in Newport, Constant Bailey (his son Lemuel went to New Bedford), David Huntington, Benjamin Tayer, and John Trevett; in Providence, Gershom Carpenter's son Joseph Carpenter

carried on the business. The Grindall Rawson shop was continued by Rawson's son Joseph and subsequently Joseph's sons Samuel and Joseph, while John Carlile's sons John, Thomas, Samuel, and Benjamin all became cabinetmakers. A new generation of joiners entered their ranks: in Newport, Robert Lawton, Jr., Palmer and Coe, and Holmes Weaver; in Providence, Judson Blake, Cyrus Cleaveland, Jonathan Woodbury Coy, and Thomas Howard.

Although some cabinetmakers such as these continued to operate small shops in Rhode Island, the nature of the business had changed. After the Revolution, more partnerships of individuals unrelated by family



Fig. 14. Unknown artist [D. B.], *Pawtucket Bridge and Falls*, 1810–19. Watercolor and ink on paper, 15 × 19½ in. (38.1 × 49.5 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1971.23.1

ties were formed, probably as a cost-effective way of pooling resources.<sup>110</sup> The smaller towns grew large enough to support resident shop joiners or cabinet-makers.<sup>111</sup> In the colonial period, a small-town craftsman who made furniture, such as Amos Stafford in Coventry (see cat. 36), tended to identify himself not by these terms but as a “house carpenter” or “house joiner,” as there was not enough work to support himself as a full-time furniture maker. Advertising in local newspapers (sometimes with illustrations) took on new importance as the growth of the consumer economy in the second half of the eighteenth century fostered a taste for fashionable goods. For instance, Holmes Weaver, the maker of a Pembroke table (cat. 91), advertised in the Newport newspapers as early as 1798. His illustrated advertisement of 1802 (which continued to run into 1803) states that he had furniture on hand to sell (fig. 15). Some bespoke work continued to be done, but ready-made furniture, sold in a retail setting, became much more prevalent after 1800.

In Rhode Island it was in Providence, not Newport, that the furniture warehouse concept took hold, and cabinetmaker Thomas Howard was there to embrace it. Eleanore Bradford Monahan has described Howard as someone who “lived across two eras.”<sup>112</sup> Born in Pawtuxet, just south of Providence, he probably trained in Providence. He briefly established business there, but in 1795, at age twenty-one, he advertised that he had moved back to Pawtuxet. An advertisement that was printed from 1804 to 1806 lists more than thirty-five furniture forms, “most of said articles on hand,” and notes “Work put up for shipping on the shortest notice.”<sup>113</sup> No other cabinetmaker of the time advertised so much stock. By 1810 he identified himself as a “Cabinet Manufacturer” in Pawtuxet and announced that he had opened a “Furniture Ware-House” in Providence. Among the “extensive and valuable” assortment of wares were clock cases with “*Cumming’s* [sic] warranted Clocks, *Willard’s* Patent Time-Pieces,” made by William Cummins (see Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 12) and Simon Willard in Boston; thus, Howard had begun to retail wares made elsewhere.<sup>114</sup> Two years

later, another advertisement reveals how cabinetmaking was changing rapidly from a retail to wholesale business. Howard states that his labor force had been enhanced by the best workmen from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; that he had moved part of his operation for making and repairing furniture to his enlarged “Cabinet Manufactory and Ware-House in Providence,” to be more convenient for his customers; that he also offered “fancy chairs” by William Buttree of New York, and Tunis and Nutman of New Jersey; and that cabinetmakers “who wish to purchase to sell again, will do well to call.”<sup>115</sup> An 1815 advertisement by Howard lists sixty dozen “fancy chairs” and four thousand Windsor chairs available for sale.<sup>116</sup> In a mere twenty years, a craftsman trained in a small-shop tradition had evolved into a wholesale merchant.

Howard had imitators in Providence. One of the keys to his business model was the economy of manufacture in Pawtuxet, outside the city. Inkings of this strategy had appeared in the colonial period—in the case of Nicholas Bragg, for instance—but the scale was different now. Other makers followed Howard’s lead, including Cyrus Cleaveland and Luther Metcalf, who advertised their “Cheap Cabinet Furniture Store”

12 to 14 years of age, as Apprentices to the Paper-making and Clothing business.—To such, great encouragement will be given. Providence, Oct. 1802.



**HOLMES WEAVER,**  
CABINET AND CHAIR-MAKER,  
HAS FOR SALE,  
A NUMBER of pieces of the most fashionable FURNITURE—as cheap as can be purchased of equal elegance.  
Newport Nov. 15 1802.

WHEREAS the Court of Probate of the town of Newport have allowed six months longer for the creditors of the estate of CHARLES

Fig. 15. “Holmes Weaver advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, February 8, 1803, p. 3



Fig. 16. Possibly Joseph Rawson and Son, makers, and William Rhoades Rawson, retailer, *Dressing Bureau*, made Providence, retailed Charleston, South Carolina, 1816–20. Mahogany and pine, 74 × 38 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 23 in. (188 × 98.4 × 58.4 cm). Location unknown. [RIF101]

in Providence in 1801, noting that “the Business is carried on upon a large Scale by one of the Proprietors in the Country, where Furniture can be afforded much cheaper than in Town, (the Work being chiefly done there, and transported here to be finished.)”<sup>117</sup> Metcalf was based in Medway, Massachusetts, where space and labor were no doubt cheaper.

Few makers in Providence, though, could create cabinet warehouses to compete with Howard’s. Most did not begin to use such terms as “furniture warehouse” or “cabinet warehouse” until the 1820s. In 1823 Rhodes G. Allen announced the opening of “New Ware Rooms” in Providence. He claimed he had procured “New York first rate workmen,” but his business was liquidated when he went bankrupt in 1828.<sup>118</sup> A label used by Joseph Rawson and Sons between 1815 and 1826 includes the location of their “Cabinet Furniture Manufactory.” The label used from 1828 to at least 1850 by the successor firm of Samuel and Joseph Rawson, Jr., states that their furniture is “faithfully made of the best materials,” and is headlined “Furniture Warehouse.”<sup>119</sup> Although their labels might use these terms to evoke images of the kind of business Howard ran, their advertisements reveal a more traditional approach. One in 1828 states that they were prepared “to sell as cheaply as any regular Cabinetmaker in this town.”<sup>120</sup> The use of the word “regular” (as in “traditional”) is perhaps intended as a jab at those who did not actually make furniture, as the Rawsons did (“immediately under our direction,” in the words of a Rawson advertisement), but who merely sold it. A more entrepreneurial member of the family, William Rhoades Rawson, Joseph, Sr.’s second son, ran a furniture store in Charleston, South Carolina, between 1816 and 1820. He sold furniture that arrived on ships from Providence and stated that he was “concerned in above business, with very eminent men, residing at the North”—presumably his father and brothers. Pieces with his label, such as the dressing bureau shown in figure 16, have histories in South Carolina. Unfortunately, William Rhoades Rawson’s business ended badly in Charleston when arson heavily

damaged his warehouse. He returned to Providence, where he was declared an insolvent debtor in 1823.<sup>121</sup>

In announcing the opening of his enlarged furniture warehouse in 1815, Thomas Howard proudly stated that it was “very convenient for the reception of such Ladies and Gentlemen who shall be pleased to favour him with their company, for the purpose of examining the fashion and quality of the extensive variety of Goods he has on hand.” A furniture-shopping trip to Howard’s establishment in 1815 was a far cry from the visit Eunice Rhodes and Mary Brown paid to John Goddard’s shop in 1761. Eunice and Mary knew Goddard’s work by reputation, and they did not choose from existing stock. Over the period from 1740 to 1830, much of the craft and business of making furniture in Rhode Island had changed greatly. A few things remained the same. As William Rhoades Rawson’s ill-fated Charleston venture shows, furniture made for export, particularly for the southern states, was still an important part of the business. But although the Rawson shop continued in Providence well into the nineteenth century, the overall furniture business was fading there. In 1822 the Providence joiner Charles Scott warranted his furniture “for workmanship, style and stock, to be equal to any that can be bought in Boston or New-York.”<sup>122</sup> That may have been the case, but the rise of these other style and manufacturing centers (particularly New York) had already begun to challenge and would eventually eclipse the craft and business of cabinetmaking in Rhode Island.

## Notes

The author is grateful to Thomas B. Lloyd for his help in shaping this essay. For the quotation used in the title of this essay, see n119, below.

1. Withey 1984 provides a useful analysis of the social and economic differences between Newport and Providence; for the population figures, see p. 15.
2. James Helme, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, November 1, 1739, General Treasurer's Accounts Allowed, February 1740, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
3. Preston 1918, 2, 5.
4. Downing and Scully 1982, 63.
5. Beckerdite 2000, 4, 7, figs. 10–11 [RIF1213].
6. Cady 1957, 37–38.
7. See William Barker, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, January 28, 1763; Paul Tew, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, August 1762–March 1763; and Samuel May, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, October 22, 1762, all General Treasurer's Accounts Allowed, February 1763 session, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence. Proud's charge of £33.16 also included three bushels of coal.
8. Charles Holden, Jr., invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, 1766–February 1767, General Treasurer's Accounts Allowed, May 1767 session, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
9. Peter Phillips, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, December 7, 1768, General Treasurer's Accounts Allowed, June 1769 session, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, includes payment to John Waite for supplying beds to the South Kingstown jail.
10. James Sheffield, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, September 1753–September 1754, General Treasurer's Accounts Allowed, February 1756 session, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
11. Lovell 1991, 59, citing Abraham Redwood Letter Book, ms 644, vol. 1, p. 55, Newport Historical Society.
12. John Goddard, Newport, cabinetmaker, v. Thomas Hazard, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 3, May 1763 term, case 5, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. For comparable examples of this furniture, see the desk and bookcase (cat. 57), high chest (cat. 58), and tea table (cat. 66) in the present catalogue.
13. For information on the Hazard family, see Robinson 1896, 45–47; and Updike 1907, 2:71–72. Eunice's petition was successful in having some of her estate restored.
14. Other Brown family commissions from Goddard include a dining table for John Brown (Coes 2006, 131–33, fig. 6 [RIF1614]) and a tea table (Coes 2006, 130, 133n18 [RIF4191]), as well as a pair of roundabout chairs owned by Nicholas Brown (Coes 2006, 131, 132n26 [RIF4193]).
15. Trask 1867, 375–76. For the slab table and desk and bookcase, see Ott 1965a, 54–55, 164, no. 41, ill. [RIF326]; and Richards et al. 1997, 439–42, no. 207, ill. [RIF1229].
16. Gronning and Coes 2013, 39–41, fig. 89 [RIF811].
17. Heckscher 2005, 138–39, no. 31, ill. [RIF1089].
18. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 84–85, no. 30, ill. [RIF690]; and Jobe 2001, 127–28, figs. 9–10 [RIF1230].
19. Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 123–24, no. 37, pl. 37 [RIF498]; and Heckscher 2005, 84, no. 3, ill. [RIF765]. The card table bears the inscription "John" and Townsend's "M" finishing mark.
20. Moses 1984, 171, figs. 3.94–3.94a [RIF496]; and 75, 167, figs. 2.4, 3.91 [RIF1091].
21. Heckscher 2005, 38, figs. 25–26 [RIF349].
22. M. Norton 1923b, 224–25, fig. 1 [RIF5751].
23. Christie's, New York, October 5, 2000, lots 95–96 [RIF1].
24. A copy of the distribution, a document detailing how the personal property was divided, descended with the high chest and is illustrated in *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 2:556. The distribution took place a few months before the death of Hussey's wife, Elizabeth. In the colonial period, household goods were often brought into a marriage by the woman and then passed on to her daughters. This distribution is curious in that the property all went to the spouses of the Husseys' daughters.
25. Failey 1998, 9–42, no. 58A, ill. [RIF803]; 9–42 [RIF1218]; 9–43, no. 58B, ill. [RIF1387]; and 162, no. 188, ill. [RIF630].
26. Failey 1998, 9–29, no. 40A; 9–30, no. 41A; 52, no. 55; 116, no. 136; 117, no. 137; and 287. Stoddard's marriage in Newport in 1714, at age twenty-four, to Mary Hicks supports Failey's theory; see *Rhode Island Vital Extracts* 1891–1912, 10:458. The Stoddard children's inheritance from their maternal grandmother, Deborah Card of Newport, in 1741, demonstrates the close ties Stoddard maintained to Newport and to Job Townsend. The 1741 will of Deborah (Almy Hicks) Card of Newport, widow of Jonathan Card, mentions her daughter Mary Stoddard of Oyster Bay, New York. In the estate papers, executors Job Almy and the joiner Job Townsend issued a receipt for a white hammock for Sarah Stoddard and a silver spoon for Hicks Stoddard, legacies from their grandmother Deborah Card, which Mary and William Stoddard promised to deliver to Sarah and Hicks of Oyster Bay; see Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 10, p. 181, microfilm no. 0944999, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

27. *Connecticut Gazette*, June 18, 1773, p. 3.
28. See Mayhew and Myers 1974, 103–5, for comparative photographs of Connecticut and Newport shells; see also p. 26, no. 21, ill., and p. 63, no. 70, ill., for examples closer to Rhode Island models.
29. See O’Brien 2007; and Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 181–83, nos. 62 [RIF1083], 62.1 [RIF4532]; 417 and no. 62, n12 [RIF1576]. The two that are signed are RIF1083 and RIF4532.
30. Withey 1984, 28.
31. See Vibert 1981; Vibert Sloane 1987; Lovell 1991; and Lovell 2005, 225–66.
32. Vibert Sloane 1987, 92–95.
33. Town Council, Charlestown, R.I., 1759–79, p. 13, microfilm no. 0931554; and Land Evidence, Charlestown, R.I., 1760–70, vol. 2, p. 70, microfilm no. 0931549, both Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
34. *Rhode Island Vital Extracts* 1891–1912, 8:26; Benoni Pearce, Providence, shopkeeper, deed to James Searle, Providence, shop joiner, December 22, 1761, recorded January 3, 1762, Providence Deeds, vol. 16, p. 160, Providence City Hall; and Charles Holden, Jr., invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, 1766–February 1767, General Treasurer’s Accounts Allowed, May 1767 session, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
35. Jonathan Swett, Newport, joiner, v. Robert Dunbar, Newport, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 176, November 1755 term, case 176, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
36. Job Townsend mentions Swett in his will; Job Townsend last will and testament, Newport, shop joiner, [illegible month] 31, 1764, Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 18, pp. 151–52, microfilm no. 0941997, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
37. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, v. Samuel Burroughs, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 570, May 1762 term, case 135, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
38. The following cases are in the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.: Edward Perry, Middletown, R.I., butcher, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, shopkeeper (the writ identifies Lawton as a shop joiner), Record Book, vol. F, p. 710, November 1762 term, case 246; Samuel Holmes, Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. F, pp. 710–11, November 1762 term, case 248; Matthew Cozzens, Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, alias cabinetmaker, Record Book, vol. G, p. 37, May 1763 term, case 139; Richard Ward, Newport, Esq., v. Gideon Lawton and John Cahoon, both Newport, joiners, Record Book, vol. G, p. 40, May 1763 term, case 164; John Topham, Newport, butcher, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 56, May 1763 term, case 305; Samuel Holmes, Newport, gentleman, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 63, May 1763 term, case 359; Myer Pollock (Pollack), Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 64, May 1763 term, case 370; John Fryers, Newport, shopkeeper, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, shop joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 69, May 1763 term; Moses Levy, Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, cabinet-maker, Record Book, vol. G, p. 144, November 1763 term, case 109; Gideon Sisson, Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, shop joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 149, November 1763 term, case 186; George Lawton, Newport, shopkeeper, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 152, November 1763 term, case 223; Nathan Luther, Newport, cordwainer, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 158, November 1763 term, case 282; Joseph Hammond, Jr., Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, shop joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 794, May 1767 term, case 172; and Joseph Freeborn, Newport, tanner, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, shop joiner, Record Book, vol. H, p. 167, November 1768 term.
39. Samuel Fowler, Newport, merchant, v. Gideon Lawton, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 71, May 1763 term, case 433, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The purchases indicate that in 1762 he made the following: two desks between March 8 and March 22; another between March 22 and March 31; two desks between May 26 and June 11; another between June 11 and June 30; and another between June 30 and July 12.
40. For the more prevalent and complex desk interior configuration, see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 5:1314–15, no. P4364, ill. [RIF100]. Other desks, if they become available for study, may prove to have the configuration Lawton was making, including Carpenter 1955, 46–47, fig. 7 [RIF486]; “Dillingham House Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 110, no. 5 (November 1976): 934 [RIF494]; “South Bay Auctions, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, January 29, 2010, p. 99, ill. [RIF4726]; and Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.6253 [RIF4764].
41. Lovell 1991, 59. The upper section of a high chest signed by Constant Bailey and found in Perquimans County, North Carolina, is an example of furniture Bailey shipped south; see Vibert Sloane 1987, 109, fig. 9 [RIF1247].

42. Thomas Hornsby, "Newport, Past and Present," *Newport Daily Advertiser*, December 8, 1849; cited in Vibert Sloane 1987, 92. For an example of Peabody being identified as a lumber merchant, see John Lyon, Jr., and Benjamin Peabody, both of Newport, lumber merchants, v. Benjamin Nichols, Newport, Esq., executor of Jonathan Nichols, Newport, Esq., deceased, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 478, May 1757 term, case 270, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
43. Constant Bailey, Newport, joiner, v. Charles Whitfield, Newport, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. D, p. 586, May 1754 term, case 486, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
44. Baker made cased furniture for Samuel Brenton, William and Joseph Wanton, Aaron Lopez, and Myer Pollack. All but Brenton were West Indian merchants. See Carr 2004, 55.
45. Ott 1969a, 21, citing a document from the Rouse Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
46. Samuel Fowler, Newport, merchant, v. David Huntington, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. H, p. 31, November 1767 term, case 92, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. When Huntington wrote his will in 1811, fellow Quakers Edmund Townsend, Job Townsend, and Thomas Goddard, all Newport joiners, witnessed it, which suggests close ties between Huntington and these Goddard-Townsend school craftsmen; David Huntington last will and testament, Newport, September 7, 1811, proved December 6, 1813, Newport Probate, vol. 5, pp. 152-53, Newport City Hall.
47. Some examples are as follows, all in the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.: in 1752 John Wilkinson made three maple desks for £32 each for mariner Daniel Vaughan, see John Wilkinson, Newport, joiner, v. Daniel Vaughan, Newport, mariner, Record Book, vol. D, p. 304, May 1753 term, case 397; in 1754 Jonathan Phillips provided desks, casing for them, and delivery to a vessel for Ami Decotay, see Ami Decotay, Newport, merchant, v. Jonathan Phillips, Jr., Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. D, p. 706, November 1754 term, case 419; in 1763 Christopher Townsend made "superfine curld Maple Desks" for £95 apiece with £10 for each case as well as a red cedar desk in a case for £170 for Capt. Peter Simon, see Christopher Townsend, Newport, joiner, v. Abigail Simon, Newport, widow, executrix of Peter Simon, Newport, merchant, Record Book, vol. H, p. 324, May 1769 term, case 280; in 1764 George Weeden made a mahogany desk plus case for merchant George Lawton for £255, see Sarah Lawton, Newport, widow, administrator for George Lawton, Newport, merchant, deceased intestate, v. George Weeden, Newport, joiner, Record Book, vol. G, p. 613, May 1766 term, case 197; and in 1766 Joseph Sanford made two maple desks and cases for mariner Thomas Simon, see Gilbert Stewart, Newport, shopkeeper, assignee of Joseph Sanford, late of Newport, shop joiner, v. Thomas Simon, Newport, mariner, Record Book, vol. H, p. 309, May 1769 term, case 114.
48. Dennis Carr, biography of Eleazer Trevett, Rhode Island Furniture Archive, <http://rifa.art.yale.edu>; and Eleazer Trevett, Newport, joiner, v. William Pinneger, Newport, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. C, p. 793, November 1751 term, case 110, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
49. John Tweedy, Newport, apothecary, appellant, v. Eleazer Trevett, Newport, merchant, and Eleazer Trevett, Jr., mariner, Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 355, September 1767 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
50. Robert Stevens and Son, Newport, merchants, v. Eleazer Trevett, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. H, p. 186, November 1768 term, case 50; and Eleazer Trevett, Sr., and Eleazer Trevett, Jr., both of Newport, merchants in company, v. Richard Bissell, Newport, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. H, p. 481, May 1770 term, case 188, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
51. James Pitman, Newport, shop joiner, executor of James Pitman late of Newport, shop joiner, deceased, v. Eleazer Trevett, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. H, p. 475, May 1770 term, case 21, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
52. Withey 1984, 5, 16.
53. Thomas Garrett, Providence, joiner, v. Simeon Potter, Bristol, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 3, p. 267, December 1753 term, case 1; and Thomas Garrett, Providence, joiner, v. Simeon Potter, Bristol, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 3, p. 267, December 1753 term, case 2, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
54. An odd omission from craftsmen listed on the agreement is John Carlile, the founding member of a Providence

- furniture-making family, who is known to have been working there since 1751. When the price agreement was signed, he was working in partnership with Joseph Sweeting (who is on the list), as revealed in a suit involving their failure to pay rent for two warehouses, a joiner's shop, and a wharf. Probably only one partner signed the agreement. For the suit, see John Whipple, Providence, gentleman, v. Ephraim Bowen, Providence, practitioner of physick, and John Carlile and Joseph Sweeting, both Providence, joiners, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 3, pp. 361–62, December 1754 term; and John Whipple, Providence, v. Ephraim Bowen, Providence, practitioner of physick, and John Carlile and Joseph Sweeting, both Providence, joiners, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 4, p. 232, December 1758 term, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
55. Gershom Carpenter, Providence, shop joiner, v. George Hazard, South Kingstown, mariner (son of Jonathan), Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 6, p. 161, June 1770 term, case 167, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  56. John Carlile, Providence, mariner, v. Samuel Dunn, Providence, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 6, p. 634, June 1774 term, case 16, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  57. Monahan 1965a, 573, citing the Joseph Crawford Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. Monahan notes that on August 6, 1762, Potter listed tables and chairs amounting to £357; on May 14, 1763, desks of “mapel and walnut” and tables of “mapel, mahogany, and charatry [cherry]” for £575; and on January 22, 1764, maple, walnut, and mahogany tables, “Joyners” chairs (i.e., framed chairs), and desks for £826.
  58. Samuel Thurber, Jr., yeoman, Dexter Brown, gentleman, and Frelove Brown, widow, all of Providence, administrators of the estate of James Brown, North Providence, mariner, deceased, v. Philip Potter, Providence, yeoman, alias shopkeeper, alias shop joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 5, p. 599, December 1767 term, case 52, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  59. William Barker account book, vol. 1 (1750–72), 5v, 10v, 13v, 14r, 17r, 17v, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  60. Samuel Jacobs, Philip Potter, Elijah Bacon, and Caleb Harris, all of Providence, merchants, joint owners of the sloop *Industry*, v. Rufus Potter, Johnston, mariner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 5, p. 480, December 1766 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  61. Philip Potter, Providence, yeoman, deed to Lewis Deblois, Boston, June 24, 1769, recorded June 26, 1769, Providence Deeds, vol. 18, p. 331, Providence City Hall; and “To Be Sold,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, September 8–15, 1770, p. 149.
  62. Trask 1868, 206.
  63. Martin witnessed a deed for Potter in 1761, the year he would have completed his apprenticeship, and again in 1763. Philip Potter, Providence, shop joiner, deed to Joseph Hewes, Providence, physician, November 28, 1761, recorded February 1, 1762, Johnston Deeds, vol. 1, p. 90, Johnston Town Hall, R.I.; and Philip Potter, Providence, shop joiner, deed to Samuel Low, Providence, cooper, January 3, 1763, recorded January 20, 1763, Providence Deeds, vol. 16, p. 235, Providence City Hall. Potter also witnessed Martin's brother's will in 1763; John Martin last will and testament, Providence, husbandman, July 14, 1763, proved December 16, 1765, Providence Probate Will Book, vol. 5, pp. 397–99, Providence City Hall. On the other hand, Ballou witnessed a deed for Martin in 1763; Simeon Hunt, Providence, merchant, deed to Joseph Martin, Providence, shop joiner, May 20, 1763, recorded June 4, 1763, Providence Deeds, vol. 18, p. 18, Providence City Hall. Martin witnessed Ballou's will in 1770; Jonathan Ballou last will and testament, Providence, shop joiner, August 13, 1770, proved October 13, 1770, Providence Probate Will Book, vol. 5, pp. 537–39, Providence City Hall.
  64. William Barker account book, vol. 3 (1763–67), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  65. William Proud account book, 8r–8v, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  66. *Ibid.*, 12v.
  67. Lewis Thomas, Providence, mariner, v. Joseph Martin, Providence, Esq., Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 7, p. 318, June 1781 term, case 53, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.; and Col. Israel Arnold, Johnston, Capt. William Tew, Barrington, R.I., and Maj. Coggeshall Olney, Smithfield, R.I., deed to Joseph Martin, Providence, Esq., March 15, 1782, Jamestown Land Evidence, vol. 3, p. 470, microfilm no. 0946902, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
  68. Joseph Whipple, Providence, merchant, v. Samuel May, Smithfield, shop joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 5, p. 299, June 1765 term, case 283, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The number of desks was determined by the number of fall locks that May purchased. On occasion he also purchased table hinges. Some of the table hinges may have been used for the table May made for the Providence courthouse in 1763.

69. William Barker account book, vol. 1 (1750–72), 11v, 12r, 12v, 13r, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
70. John Manton, Johnston, R.I., yeoman, deed to Samuel May, shop joiner, and Jonathan Miller, blacksmith, both of Smithfield, R.I., September 16, 1766, recorded September 24, 1766, Gloucester Record of Deeds, vol. 7, p. 527, microfilm no. 0941830; and Samuel May, Gloucester, R.I., gentleman, deed to Hezekiah Bellows, now residing in Smithfield, R.I., but late of Thompson, Windham County, Conn., yeoman, April 3, 1789, recorded same day, Gloucester Record of Deeds, vol. 11, p. 329, microfilm no. 0941833, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
71. Bragg was born in Wrentham, Massachusetts, in 1732 and witnessed deeds for Rawson in 1752, when he would have been twenty years old; Grindall Rawson, Providence, shop joiner, deed to Jabez Pearce, Plainfield, Conn., November 16, 1752, recorded June 28, 1753, Providence Deeds, vol. 13, p. 214; and Grindall Rawson, Providence, shop joiner, deed to John Larchar, Providence, cordwainer, December 30, 1752, recorded June 8, 1754, Providence Deeds, vol. 13, p. 330, both Providence City Hall.
72. Richard Smith, Smithfield, R.I., husbandman, deed to Nicholas Bragg, resident of Smithfield, R.I., joiner, December 7, 1761, recorded April 21, 1762, Smithfield Deeds, vol. 5, pp. 167–69, Central Falls City Hall, R.I.; and Andrew Waterman, Smithfield, yeoman, v. Nicholas Bragg, late of Smithfield, shop joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 7, p. 66, June 1775 term, case 44, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The 1761 deed was witnessed by Smithfield shop joiner Joseph Chilson, which may indicate there was a working relationship between Chilson and Bragg.
73. Bragg sold land in Smithfield in 1801 and died in Springfield, Vermont, in 1807; Sara Steiner, research notes, Rhode Island Furniture Archive, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., citing Nicholas Bragg, Smithfield, joiner, deed to Joseph Farnum, Smithfield, yeoman, June 17, 1802, Providence Deeds, vol. 28, no. 2, p. 376, Providence, City Hall.
74. Zachariah West, Providence, ship-joiner, son and minor of Oliver West late of Rehoboth, yeoman, deceased, v. John Carlile, Providence, ship-joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 6, p. 49, June 1769 term, case 175, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
75. John Cahoone, Newport, joiner, v. William Pelsue, Newport, painter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 5, May 1755 term, case 1, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
76. Zachariah West, Providence, ship-joiner, otherwise called Zachariah West, son and minor of Oliver West late of Rehoboth, Mass., yeoman, deceased, v. John Carlile, Providence, ship-joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 6, p. 49, June 1769 term, case 175, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
77. Joseph Hayward, Newport, tailor, v. Jonathan Phillips, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 141, November 1755 term, case 67; and William Lake, Newport, schoolmaster, v. Jonathan Phillips, Newport, shop joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 361, November 1756 term, case 73, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
78. As stated earlier, Benjamin Tayer worked as a journeyman for Cahoone; he went on to work as a joiner into the nineteenth century. Theophilus Clark may have come from Freetown, Massachusetts, and returned there; see Louis Demersville, Dartmouth, Mass., yeoman, deed to Theophilus Clark, Freetown, Mass., joiner, September 25, 1761, Bristol County Deeds, vol. 45, p. 388; Richard Burt, Canterbury, Mass., yeoman, deed to Theophilus Clark, Freetown, Mass., joiner, December 3, 1766, Bristol County Deeds, vol. 52, pp. 455–56, both Bristol County Courthouse, Taunton, Mass. Silas Clark was from Swansea, Massachusetts, and returned there; see Silas Clark, Swansea, Mass., shop joiner, v. Benjamin Knight, Jr., otherwise called Benjamin Dyer, Tiverton, in the county of Newport, cooper, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Bristol County, Record Book, vol. 2, p. 68, January 1774 term, case 14, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.; and Preserved Pierce account book, 1757–66, vol. 1, p. 16, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Doc. 717. George Cornell was from Newport and worked as a cabinetmaker; see notice in *Newport Mercury*, January 28, 1800, p. 4.
79. For a discussion of the Point, see the essay by Dennis Carr in the present volume.
80. Heckscher 2005, 26–27.
81. The Newport Restoration Foundation recently acquired this building and is investigating the history of the site. Maps from the middle of the nineteenth century show a wing of different proportions and size in place of the present structure. Those maps also show several structures in the backyard, two of which are roughly the proportion and size of the present building. Pieter Roos, Executive Director, Newport Restoration Foundation, email to the author, July 14, 2015.

82. Lovell 1991, 51n28, citing documents in the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
83. Nathaniel Heath memorandum book, July 1772, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; and “To Be Sold,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, February 19, 1785, p. 3.
84. Penelope Cowley, infant spinster, by her guardian Samuel Vernon, merchant; Henrietta Cowley, infant spinster, and Arrabella Cowley, infant spinster, by their guardian Joseph Wanton, merchant, all of Newport, v. John Cahoon, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 164, November 1763 term, case 336; and Daniel Ayrault and Stephen Ayrault, merchants, and Frances Cranston, widow, all of Newport, executors of Walter Cranston, Newport, merchant, deceased, v. George Weeden, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, vol. G, p. 261, May 1765, case 385, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
85. “To Be Sold, by Sheffield Attwood,” *Newport Mercury*, May 29, 1798, p. 4, ill.
86. Clement Peckham last will and testament, Newport, joiner, March 30, 1756, proved June 7, 1756, Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 12, pp. 34–36, microfilm no. 0945000, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. For the information on the Sweeting and Carlile shop, see n54, above.
87. “Gideon Palmer and Adam S. Coe advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, August 4, 1804, p. 4, ill.
88. Barley 2014, 640–41; and Barley 2015. The author acknowledges the help of Simon Barley, Walt and Mary Henderson, Jane Rees, and Dan Semel in providing insights into saws made by the White family.
89. Richard Hoyle inventory, Providence, joiner, died November 3, 1752, Providence, Will Book, vol. 4, pp. 309–10, Providence City Hall.
90. Simeon Price, Newport, blacksmith, v. George Weeden, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 717, November 1766 term, case 266, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
91. The present study found no evidence of John Nicholson as a toolmaker in public records. For a discussion of him as a toolmaker, see *Directory of American Toolmakers* 2007, 577. This directory also lists Jonathan Ballou from Providence as a toolmaker, but again this study found no evidence of that.
92. “Joiners Tools Made and Sold by Joseph Fuller,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, January 9, 1773, p. 4; and “Joseph Fuller and Son,” in *ibid.*, April 28, 1798, p. 1.
93. “Architecture,” *United States Chronicle* (Providence), December 19, 1799, p. 4; and notice signed by John Lindenberger, *United States Chronicle* (Providence), December 2, 1803, p. 1.
94. For a history of the mahogany trade, see Anderson 2012, esp. chaps. 4–6. Aaron Lopez is among the Newport merchants discussed by Anderson as importing mahogany. Newport court records reveal Lopez dealt in large quantities, ranging from 3,735 feet to 7,000 feet to 9,301 feet; see Aaron Lopez, Newport, merchant, v. Eleazer Trevett, Jr., Newport, mariner, alias merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. I, p. 600, November 1774 term, case 196; Aaron Lopez, Newport, merchant, v. Eleazer Trevett, Jr., Newport, mariner, alias merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. I, pp. 600–601, November 1774 term, case 197; Eleazer Trevett, Jr., Newport, mariner, alias merchant, v. Aaron Lopez, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. I, pp. 601–2, November 1774 term, case 247, all Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. Maderia wood may have been an alternate name for mahogany, according to a suit for nonpayment of forty feet of “maderia wood”; see Eleazer Trevett, Newport, joiner, v. George Weeden, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 244, May 1765 term, case 192, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
95. The most luxurious desks often had interior drawers with mahogany linings and very rarely mahogany secondary wood throughout. For an example of the latter, see cat. 29 in the present volume; for a desk with mahogany interior drawer linings, see fig. 9 in the present essay. Some interior drawer linings may not be true mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni* or *Swietenia macrophylla*), but Spanish cedar (*Cedrela*), a member of the mahogany family. In 1815 the estate of Samuel Downs paid James Townsend for a Spanish cedar coffin; see Newport Probate, vol. 5, p. 284, Newport City Hall.
96. Rowse Potter, Newport, butcher, v. John Gibbs, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. D, p. 279, May 1753 term, case 129, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
97. Quoted in Heckscher 2005, 199–201.
98. For examples of cherry used as a primary wood, see a desk and bookcase owned by Providence blacksmith Amos Atwell, in Cooper and Gleason 1999, 182, fig. 17 [R1F582]; and a tall case clock with movement by Warwick clockmaker Squire Millerd, in Bonhams and Butterfields, New York, January 22, 2009, 69, lot 1175 [R1F4251]. For examples of cherry as a secondary wood, see cat. 60 in the present volume.

99. Vibert Sloane 1987, 91, cites a document in which John Townsend was shipping two red cedar desks to the West Indies with Capt. Peleg Bunker. Surviving examples of cedar desks are rare. See Carpenter 1955, 46–47, fig. 7 [RIF486]; “Ginsburg and Levy, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 86, no. 2 (August 1964): 135, ill. [RIF620]; Vibert Sloane 1987, 105, fig. 5 [RIF1246]; and Gronning and Coes 2013, 21–22, fig. 47 [RIF6089].
100. Samuel and William Vernon, Newport, merchants, v. Jonathan Phillips, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. E, p. 439, May 1757 term, case 559, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
101. Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1976.0063 [RIF97].
102. The 1756 inventory of Stephen Wilcox of Westerly included both white pine and yellow pine boards; see South Kingstown Probate Records, vol. 5, p. 40, microfilm no. 0931834, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. Cottonwood, whose physical appearance is similar to that of yellow poplar, is found in the drawer linings of the high chest by John Townsend in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1984.32.26 [RIF3606]. Its use in Rhode Island may have been more widespread than has been recorded since it is easily misidentified as yellow poplar without microscopic analysis.
103. Withey 1984 notes that the Browns began the manufacture of spermaceti candles in 1753 (p. 39) and iron in 1765 (p. 40), and that around this time Welcome Arnold began marketing lime (pp. 40–41).
104. *Rhode Island Vital Extracts* 1891–1912, 6:22. See also Thomas Garret, Providence, joiner, v. Gideon Comstock, Providence, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 3, p. 36, December 1749 term; and John Potter, Jr., Cranston, R.I., gentleman, v. Thomas Garret, late of Providence, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 4, p. 2, June 1756 term, case 113, both Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
105. Benoni Pearce, Providence, shopkeeper, deed to James Searle, Providence, shop joiner, December 22, 1761, recorded January 3, 1762, Providence Deeds, vol. 16, p. 160, Providence City Hall.
106. Warren et al. 1998, 86–87, no. F139, ill.
107. Jonathan Wallen remained in Providence and was in partnership with Joseph Rawson, Sr., from 1788 to 1792. They billed Rev. Enos Hitchcock for furniture in 1788 (see Ott 1969c, 118) and announced the dissolution of their partnership in 1792 (see *United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical* [Providence], July 19, 1792, p. 4). Townsend Goddard returned to Newport after advertising a partnership in Providence and died in Newport in 1790; see “Goddard and Engs, Cabinet-Makers,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, June 15, 1782, p. 3, and Newport Probate, vol. 2, p. 139, Newport City Hall. Nicholas Easton was working as late as 1809 when he was identified as a cabinetmaker in a notice for being an insolvent debtor; see *Columbian Phenix*, July 8, 1809, p. 3.
108. Cady 1957, 57.
109. Withey 1984, 88.
110. These include Cleaveland and Metcalf, Providence, founded ca. 1801; Cole and Halyburton, Warren, R.I., 1796–97; Goddard and Engs, Providence, ca. 1782; Hudson and Tefft, Providence, ca. 1792; Palmer and Coe, Newport, 1804–9; and Wallen and Rawson, Providence, 1788–92.
111. Barrington: Josiah Kinnicutt; Bristol: Joseph Brown and William Cox; Charlestown: Job Clark, Jr.; Coventry: Waterman Hyde and William Weaver; Cranston: John Lockwood and John Manchester; East Greenwich: Benjamin Bardine, George Bardine, Gideon Myers, and Robert Potter; Exeter: Jesse Bicknell; Glocester: Welcome Pigsley, John Trask, and Jesse Tucker; Hopkinton: Elisha Wells and William Wordin; Portsmouth: David Lawton; Scituate: John Parker, Jr., and Laban Vincent; Smithfield: Daniel Angel and Nathan Cargill; South Kingstown: Jeremiah Sheffield; Tiverton: Thomas Butts and Stephen Crandall; Warren: Allen Cole, Gardiner Mason, and Seth Peck; Warwick: John Greene and Lovewell Spalding; West Greenwich: Allen James and Job Straight; Westerly: Joshua Babcock, George Gavit, Jr., James Hubbard, Peleg Tefft, Edward Sheffield Wells, and Stephen Wilcox.
112. Monahan 1964, 21.
113. “Thomas Howard advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, June 9, 1804, p. 3, is the earliest appearance of this advertisement.
114. “Thomas Howard, Jun., advertisement,” *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), June 8, 1810, p. 1.
115. “Cabinet Manufactory and Ware-House, in Providence, advertisement,” *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), February 28, 1812, p. 3.
116. “Thomas Howard, Jun., advertisement,” *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), May 23, 1815, p. 4.
117. “Luther Metcalf, Cyrus Cleaveland advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, October 17, 1801, p. 4.
118. For the ware rooms, see “New Furniture,” *Providence Patriot*, October 22, 1823, p. 4; for the bankruptcy, see “Lumber at Auction,” *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix*, November 8, 1828, p. 3.

119. The Samuel and Joseph Rawson, Jr., label that includes the phrase, “faithfully made of the best materials,” is illustrated in Monahon 1980, figs. 15a, 19a.
120. “Cabinet Furniture,” *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix*, November 15, 1828, p. 4.
121. “State of Rhode-Island, &c.,” *Providence Patriot*, December 17, 1823, p. 4. For an account of William Rhoades Rawson’s career in Charleston, South Carolina, see Rauschenberg and Bivins 2003, 3:1179–81.
122. “Useful and Ornamental Furniture, Charles Scott, Cabinet-Maker,” *Providence Gazette*, September 25, 1822, p. 4.



# *The Chairmaking and Upholstery Trades of Colonial and Federal Rhode Island*

JENNIFER N. JOHNSON

THOUGH RHODE ISLAND FURNITURE has long fascinated collectors and scholars, the region's chairmakers and upholsterers have yet to receive the attention they deserve.<sup>1</sup> Historically, much of the scholarship on Rhode Island furniture has been on the high-style case pieces and tables attributed to members of the Townsend and Goddard families and has only occasionally included the chairs associated with these makers. More recently, a focus on Boston's dominance in the trades of chairmaking and upholstery during the first half of the eighteenth century has overshadowed the role played by other colonial cities during that period.<sup>2</sup> Although the prominent role of Boston—the earliest center of chairmaking in colonial America—during this period cannot be disputed, the contribution of Rhode Island has certainly been underestimated.<sup>3</sup>

## *Colonial-Era Framed Chairs*

The focus of the present essay is upholstered framed chairs—that is, chairs constructed primarily with rectangular mortise-and-tenon joints—which constituted the more formal seating furniture of the period. The earliest framed chairs with turned legs displaying Rhode Island characteristics had rectangular splats, “crooked” (or serpentine) backs designed to echo the curve of the sitter's body, and carved-yoke crests. These models were based on prototypes from Boston, where they were available as early as February 1722/23, when the upholsterer Thomas Fitch sold “1 doz. crook'd back chairs” for £16.4.0.<sup>4</sup> Boston chairs like that illustrated in figure 1 were produced in large numbers by the city's craftsmen and exported throughout the colonies. A pair of Rhode Island side chairs with a history of descent in the Bull family of Newport (fig. 2) demonstrates how Newport makers created their own interpretations of Boston models. The turned legs of the Bull chairs differ from Boston examples in that the balusters have been compressed into the ball shape that characterizes early Rhode Island turning.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the columnar shaft of the leg is visible in between the various turned elements, a characteristic seen to a more pronounced degree on a



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Boston, 1723–45. Soft maple and ash (microanalysis), 45¾ × 18¼ × 14½ in. (116.2 × 46.4 × 36.8 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1909, inv. no. 10.125.698

group of early stools, tables, and stands (see, for example, cat. 18). Also distinctive are the termini of the front stretchers of the Bull chairs, which are unusually short, a feature that appears on an armchair with turned legs found near the Connecticut–Rhode Island border (see cat. 42). The shape of the ends of the stretchers on the Bull chairs is bulblike, like those of some later Rhode Island chairs, while those of the Boston chair are more conical in form. Most early Rhode Island framed chairs were probably made in Newport. In 1739 it was decided that the Providence County House (completed in 1731) was to have “the Bell, the best Coat of Arms & all the Leather Chairs” from the old Colony House in Newport, suggesting that such seating furniture was not readily available in Providence.<sup>6</sup>

Later iterations of Rhode Island framed chairs with turned legs were updated with solid or pierced baluster-shaped splats in the Queen Anne, or late Baroque, and the Chippendale, or Rococo, styles, respectively. A pair that descended in the Coddington family of Newport (see cat. 44), for example, has crests with beaklike ends and pierced, Chippendale splats with scrolled shoulders. This combination is also found on a group of more formal Rhode Island seating furniture that includes two side chairs with claw-and-ball feet of the type usually associated with Newport (see cat. 44, fig. 1). The Rhode Island features and solid provenance of the Coddington chairs make them key to the identification of earlier Rhode Island chairs. Catalogue 43, for instance, a turned chair with a yoke-carved crest and a solid Queen Anne splat, can be attributed to Rhode Island based on its relationship to the stylistically later examples. The leg turnings of this chair and the Coddington chair are virtually identical, with an upper ball shape and a lower compressed baluster (see cat. 43). The earlier chair, in turn, displays several traits—the manner in which the base of the crest overhangs the top of the splat, for example—that can be used to differentiate Rhode Island examples from similar models originating in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.<sup>7</sup>

No Rhode Island framed chairs with turned legs can be attributed to a particular craftsman, but the earliest



Fig. 2. *Pair of Side Chairs*, probably Newport, 1730–50. Maple, each 40 × 18½ × 13½ in. (101.6 × 47 × 34.3 cm). Private collection. [RIF3869]

examples could have been made by one of at least twelve chairmakers and at least five upholsterers (see the “Rhode Island Upholsterers” section later in this essay) working in Newport prior to 1750. Like the Townsend and Goddard families of cabinetmakers, several early Newport chairmakers were connected through ties of kinship or marriage.<sup>8</sup> At least one group of chairmakers, the Quaker families of Proud and Waterhouse, was united by both. By 1714 John Proud, a watch- and clockmaker, moved his family from England to Newport, where his sons Joseph and John, Jr., both worked as chairmakers. A William Proud, possibly another son of John, Sr., worked as a Providence chairmaker with his sons Samuel and Daniel.<sup>9</sup> In 1738 Hannah Proud, the sister of Joseph and John, Jr., married Newport chairmaker Timothy Waterhouse. It is not known whether the three men worked together, but it is likely that Waterhouse met his wife through a business connection with her brothers. Waterhouse was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he probably apprenticed with his older sister’s husband, chairmaker John Gaines III. Waterhouse was twelve or thirteen when his sister married Gaines, who had moved to Portsmouth from Ipswich, Massachusetts, to practice his trade.<sup>10</sup> Waterhouse’s age at the time makes it very likely that he received his training from Gaines, although no corroborating evidence has been found.

It is conceivable that Waterhouse collaborated with his brothers-in-law in the making of framed chairs with turned legs. The Prouds were undoubtedly turners as well as chairmakers. When Joseph Proud died in 1769, his shop contained fifty-six chair legs (assumedly turned), a turning wheel, and two lathes, the latter of which would have been used to turn both stretchers and legs.<sup>11</sup> Proud’s shop also had four benches, so, at least at the time of his death, he was not working alone. Chairs made by Waterhouse would no doubt have been influenced by those made by his older and more established brothers-in-law, but they may also have reflected his Portsmouth origins. Candidates for turned chairs made by Waterhouse and the Prouds are

those such as catalogue 43, which is clearly influenced by Portsmouth examples attributed to Gaines.

As is the case with chairs with turned legs, the close resemblance of cabriole-legged seating furniture to Boston examples creates attribution challenges. In both instances, turning vocabularies are key to differentiating between chairs from these cities. Stretcher turnings are often overlooked when attributing chairs because they are frequently nondescript and, if the product of a local turner, could be purchased as parts by multiple makers. Nevertheless, at least two stretcher patterns appear to be specific to Rhode Island chairs. The first consists of thin medial (front) and rear stretchers with a compact central bulge and conical ends with double rings. These are invariably paired with side stretchers with turnings similar to Massachusetts and other Rhode Island examples, with the exception of their rear rings, which are substantially thicker (see cat. 46).<sup>12</sup>

Although rear stretchers with double rings are found on Boston chairs, they are most often combined with medial stretchers without rings. This combination of stretcher turnings is illustrated by a chair with a history of ownership by Edward Holyoke, who served as president of Harvard College from 1737 to 1769, and it is typical of many Boston-area examples (figs. 3–4). A Masonic armchair owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is undoubtedly a Boston chair (fig. 5), with stylistic traits that include side talons that are raked backward, pointed knees with shallow, foliate carving, and rear feet with inner corners that are chamfered (cut away to form a sloping edge). The fact that both its medial and rear stretchers have conical ends with double rings is unusual in Boston examples; nevertheless, the differences of its stretchers to those of Rhode Island chairs are readily apparent. The medial and rear stretchers of the Masonic chair are thin, like those of Rhode Island chairs, but their central bulge is gradual rather than compact, and the rear rings of its side stretchers are adjacent to the rear blocks, a configuration not found on any known Rhode Island chairs.



Fig. 3. *Side Chair*, Boston, 1740–60. American black walnut and soft maple (microanalysis),  $38\frac{3}{4} \times 18\frac{3}{4} \times 16\frac{3}{8}$  in. (98.4 × 47.6 × 41.6 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, inv. no. 1930.2626e



Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 3, showing stretchers



Fig. 5. *Masonic Armchair*, Boston, 1775–90. Mahogany and maple, 50½ × 25⅝ × 24¾ in. (128.3 × 65.1 × 62.9 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George M. Kaufman, inv. no. 2000.192

Rhode Island stretchers of this first type are found on both Queen Anne and Chippendale chairs.<sup>13</sup> The earliest of these have yoke crests, solid splats, and compass seats (a seat with rounded front corners) with either flat or shaped front seat rails, or trapezoidal seats with shaped front seat rails. Their splats are typically more elongated, with smaller necks and waists than the Boston examples.<sup>14</sup> A set of four of these chairs in maple with compass seats was advertised in the

1970s and is said to have been owned by Gov. Joseph Wanton, and a set of four in maple with trapezoidal seats and shaped front rails belonged to Silas Casey of East Greenwich, Rhode Island (fig. 6), who is known to have purchased chairs from John Proud.<sup>15</sup> Three groups of chairs with solid splats and crests ornamented with carved shells also share this stretcher type and can likewise be attributed to Rhode Island. The first has shell-carved knees and webbed claw-and-ball feet

of a type not typically associated with Rhode Island (see cat. 49). The second group, an example of which is owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and is thought to have belonged to Parson Thomas Smith of Falmouth (now Portland), Maine, has similar webbed feet and knees that are ornamented with carved shells and bellflowers (fig. 7). The shell of its crest has very distinctive outer tear-shaped lobes that overlap the crest, differentiating it from similar Boston-area

examples. Shells sharing this unusual characteristic are also found on the third group of chairs that exhibit this first stretcher type, including a pair with shaped trapezoidal seats and pad feet in the collection of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design (figs. 8–9).<sup>16</sup> These chairs have a history of descent in the Simmons/Phillips family of Bristol, Rhode Island. Although the shells of these last two groups vary in the number of their lobes, their overlapping tear-shaped



Fig. 6. *Side Chair (from a set of four)*, Newport, 1740–60. Maple, 42<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 16<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (106.8 × 55.2 × 42.1 cm). Historic New England, Boston, Museum Purchase, inv. no. 1973.27. [RIF839]



Fig. 7. *Side Chair (from a pair)*, probably Newport, 1755–75. Black walnut and soft maple (microanalysis),  $39\frac{1}{2} \times 22 \times 20\frac{5}{8}$  in. (100.3 × 55.9 × 52.4 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Miss Ima Hogg, inv. no. B.69.90.1. [RIF3331]



Fig. 8. *Side Chair (from a pair)*, probably Newport, 1755–75. Walnut, 39 × 21½ × 16 in. (99.1 × 54.6 × 40.6 cm). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Gift of the Estate of Robert Simmons Phillips, inv. no. 44.669A. [RIFI445]

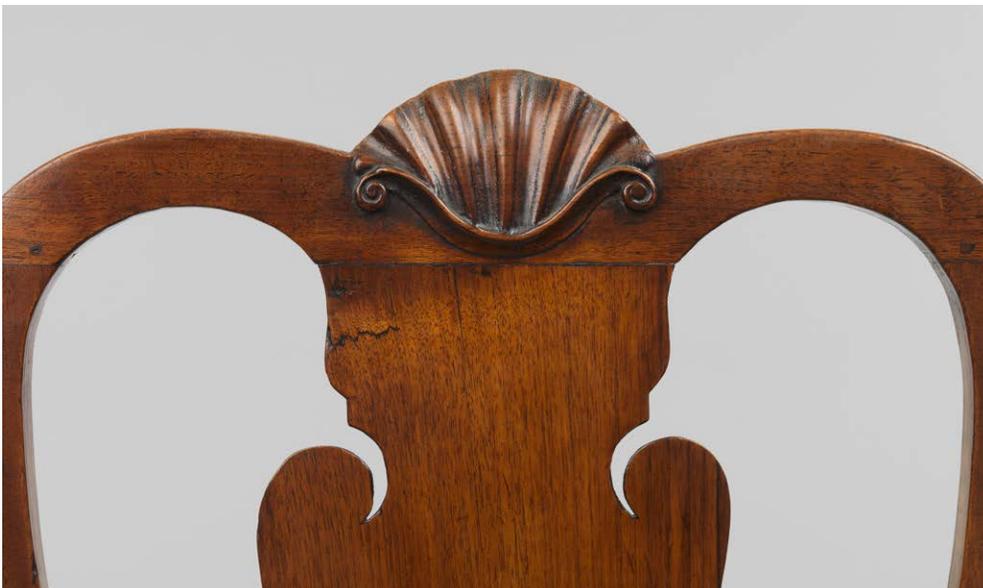


Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 8, showing shell on crest

element is rare enough to suggest the possibility of the same carver.

Stretchers in this pattern are likewise found on pad-footed easy chairs, including one upholstered in 1758 by Caleb Gardner, Jr., of Newport (cat. 50), and on side chairs with pierced splats (see cat. 48). All of the chairs examined for this study with this stretcher type have side stretchers consistently joined to their front legs with rectangular tenons. This method is typically seen in Boston chairs, suggesting the influence of that city not only in style but also in construction. The legs of these chairs are typically chamfered between their rear seat rails and stretchers but have unchamfered (square) rear feet, as is typical with most Rhode Island framed chairs.

It is probable that this double-ring stretcher configuration has not been widely recognized as belonging to the colony because it does not occur on chairs with claw-and-ball feet of the type generally associated with Rhode Island. Such chairs are invariably fitted with a different stretcher type. This second variety of stretcher includes medial and rear stretchers with a gradual rather than compact swell and bulb-shaped ends, paired with side stretchers with barely articulated rear rings, as seen in a set of six Newport chairs, possibly made by John Goddard, with a history of ownership by Stephen Hopkins, a governor of Rhode Island and signer of the Declaration of Independence (fig. 10).<sup>17</sup> In fact, all of the cabriole-legged chairs attributed to either Goddard or John Townsend have stretchers of this type.<sup>18</sup> Easy



Fig. 10. Possibly John Goddard, *Side Chairs (from a set of six)*, Newport, 1760–85. Mahogany, H. 38 in. (96.5 cm). Location unknown. [RIF322]



Fig. 11. *Easy Chair*, Newport, 1750–70. Mahogany, walnut, and maple, 46 × 31<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (116.8 × 80.7 × 64.8 cm). Private collection. [RIF3423]

chairs with stretchers of this second type (fig. 11) tend to have very thick medial and rear stretchers and legs that are shorter and stockier than those of the easy chairs exhibiting the first stretcher type.

The construction of all varieties of chairs of the second stretcher type differs from that of their double-ringed counterparts in that their side stretchers are almost always joined to their front legs with round tenons. Of the chairs examined for this study, only two exceptions to this rule have been found.<sup>19</sup> A Rhode Island characteristic shared by chairs of both stretcher types is that the legs are unchamfered below the rear stretcher. The

majority of chairs with the second stretcher type are completely square, lacking the chamfered corners between the seat rails and stretchers that are commonly seen on chairs of the first stretcher type.

### *Rhode Island Chairmakers*

While new evidence suggests a much livelier and more robust eighteenth-century Rhode Island chair trade than previously known, not all of these makers would have been producing framed chairs such as those just discussed. Joseph Proud, however, who was born in Newport and probably finished his apprenticeship

about 1732, was certainly making such chairs. The most compelling evidence of this is a 1765 account in which Proud billed Dr. Christopher Champlin for six chairs at £42 each.<sup>20</sup> Given the high cost, these were undoubtedly framed chairs. Further proof is found in the 1769 inventory of Proud's estate, which, in addition to "8 maple chairs almost finished," included fifty feet of black walnut and an easy-chair frame. His stock of walnut, an expensive hardwood not typically used for less expensive vernacular chairs, such as Windsors and banister backs, indicates that he was making higher-end formal seating furniture.<sup>21</sup>

Although the presence in Newport of another chairmaker, Daniel Dolorson, can be established only from 1757 to 1759, his work is well documented during that time by reciprocal accounts submitted as evidence in two legal disputes over unpaid bills with Alanson Gibbs, a Newport joiner and shopkeeper. Dolorson boarded with Gibbs and probably shared a shop with him. A 1759 account lists twenty-five chairs supplied by him to Gibbs (fig. 12), most of which are identified either by style or material, including: eight roundabouts (two of black walnut for £12 each and four of mahogany for £14 each), one roundabout to be used as a closetool (that is, fitted with a chamber pot) for £14, eight compass-seat chairs (four for £6 each and four for £7 each), and eight mahogany chairs of unspecified form for £12 each.<sup>22</sup> Given that Dolorson was making compass-seat chairs and working in mahogany and walnut, his side chairs were undoubtedly framed chairs in the Queen Anne or early Chippendale style.<sup>23</sup>

A reciprocal account from Gibbs to Dolorson shows that from 1757 to 1759, in addition to supplying Dolorson with food, board, and personal necessities, Gibbs was providing the chairmaker with the raw materials of his trade, including £4's worth of "Black Wornut for a Cheare By Agreement" and £4's worth of mahogany for a second chair. Other charges prove that Dolorson was outsourcing at least some of his carving and turning, including £38 for the carver's bill, £6.8.0 for the turner's bill, and £7.10.0 for "My Acco[unt] for Turning," indicating that Gibbs himself was a turner.

Gibbs also billed Dolorson for several pieces of furniture, including two roundabouts that were significantly more expensive than those made by Dolorson (one made of unspecified wood for £20 and one of mahogany for £40).<sup>24</sup> This is revealing in that it illustrates the practices of merchant-craftsmen like Gibbs, who, in addition to supplying sundry goods to customers and outsourcing furniture production to specialist craftsmen such as Dolorson, also produced furniture themselves. Similarly, chairmakers like Dolorson both produced seating furniture and, when demand exceeded supply, purchased it from other makers like Gibbs.

It is less clear whether Providence chairmakers like the Bacons, the Prouds, and William Barker were making framed chairs. The chairmaking brothers Henry and David Bacon shared a shop, and David probably trained with Henry, who was significantly older. Henry is known to have made Windsor chairs for the Providence courthouse in 1769.<sup>25</sup> There is no evidence as to the type of chairs David was making, but an inventory taken at his death included "8 Sticks of Black Walnut half to David" (the other half probably belonging to Henry).<sup>26</sup> Given that walnut is more typically used in the production of formal seating furniture, it is possible that the brothers may also have been making framed chairs.

The chair production of William Proud and his sons Samuel and Daniel is recorded in their account books, which cover the years 1772 to 1834. During that time their shop made 2,881 chairs of various (often vaguely described) types, including armchairs, banister-backs, chair frames, children's, closetools, common, crooked-back, dining, frame, frame seat, great, green, high, little, low, mahogany, parlor, rocking, shop seats, square work, table, tea table, three-back, York, and Windsor.<sup>27</sup> Some of the more expensive of these included a single mahogany chair sold in 1781 for £1.13.0 and seventy-six "frame chairs" sold from 1782 to 1791 and priced from £0.11.6 to £0.16.0. It seems very likely, however, that chairmakers used the term "frame chair" differently than did cabinetmakers.<sup>28</sup> The framed chairs mentioned in the Prouds' account book may have

1759 W. Alanson Gibbs to Daniel Dolorson D.  
 To Making 2 Roundabout Chairs ... 23<sup>4</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Making 1 Ditto for Clocks ... 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Ditto 4 Chairs w<sup>th</sup> Compass seats ... 28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Ditto 4 Chairs w<sup>th</sup> Ditto ... 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Making 2 Black Walnut R<sup>o</sup>unds ... 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Ditto 4 Mahogany Roundabouts ... 56<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Making 8 Mahogany Chairs ... 96<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To Mending 4 old Chairs ... 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>10</sub> ✓  
 To 1 lb. Glue ... 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 To 2 Hundreds Mads ... 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓  
 Newport, March 23<sup>d</sup> 1759 \$ 271<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ✓

Fig. 12. Statement of Account, from Daniel Dolorson to Alanson Gibbs, March 23, 1759. Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.

had some turned elements, such as the tops of the legs, as seen on a chair from Warwick, Rhode Island (cat. 77). Other slightly less expensive chairs would have had additional turned elements, such as turned stiles and fully turned front legs, like those of catalogue 76. The Prouds also sold chairs, chair parts, and other turned components to cabinetmakers, including John Carlile and his sons and Job Danforth.<sup>29</sup>

William Barker also performed these services for several of the same clients. One entry that stands out in Barker's accounts is a 1762 charge to Obadiah Brown for "6 chares colt feet 45.0.0."<sup>30</sup> The exact meaning of "colt feet" in this context is unclear, but a likely interpretation is cabriole legs with pad feet.

### *The Contribution of Rhode Island Cabinetmakers*

A substantial number of Rhode Island framed chairs were most likely made by craftsmen who did not identify themselves specifically as chairmakers, including the celebrated Townsend and Goddard families. A set of six side chairs with hooped crests and flat stretchers were long believed to have been made by Job Townsend, Sr., for example (see cat. 45). While it is probable that Job, Sr., made framed chairs, there is no documentary evidence to support this. Proof of his son Job, Jr.'s chair production does exist, however, and can be found in the younger Townsend's surviving ledger and daybook. According to these accounts, which cover the years 1750 to 1778, seating furniture produced by Job, Jr., included a roundabout chair for £45 in 1765, an easy chair frame for £40 in 1770, a child's chair for £7 in 1774, and four closestools, priced from £10 (for one of unspecified wood made in 1753) to £45 (for a black walnut one made in 1765). On two occasions, he made a set of six black walnut side chairs (in 1766 for an unspecified price and in 1768 for £30 each).<sup>31</sup>

The most famous member of the Townsend clan, cabinetmaker John Townsend, is also known to have made chairs. A set of four Federal-style side chairs bear his label and a date of 1800.<sup>32</sup> No other labeled Townsend chairs are known to survive, but documentary references to seating furniture made by the

cabinetmaker include eight mahogany chairs for £40 each in 1764 and twelve mahogany chairs in 1769, both for merchant Aaron Lopez, as well as closestools in 1781, 1791, 1794, and 1797.<sup>33</sup> On at least one occasion, Townsend relied on the work of others to meet the demands of his clients. In 1782 Benjamin Baker, a cabinetmaker who specialized in chairs, billed Townsend for two sets of eight and a set of six mahogany chair frames, ranging in price from £4.16.0 to £6 per chair.<sup>34</sup> Probate documents related to Townsend's estate offer further evidence of his chair production. His 1809 inventory reveals that the seating furniture in his shop at the time of his death included "8 Black Walnut framed Chairs," "8 Mahogany Chairs not put together," "2 Easy Chair frames," and "8 Blk Walnut frames Chairs." In his will, Townsend bequeathed "eight mahogany chairs with Claw feet, six Black walnut Chairs with Hair bottoms, [and] my Easy Chair" to his daughter Mary Townsend Brinley.<sup>35</sup>

Attributions of chairs to Townsend are based either on a history of descent in his family or the chairs' relationship to other attributed objects. Several attributed to Townsend have claw-and-ball feet related to those of other furniture forms signed by the cabinetmaker (see cat. 71).<sup>36</sup> Townsend also made furniture with stop-fluted legs from at least the mid-1780s. Two stop-fluted armchairs that descended in Townsend's family are said to have been owned by his daughter Mary and later by Ellen F. Townsend before passing out of the family. The chairs are remarkably similar with the exception of their arms: one has open arm panels with scrolled handholds (fig. 13) and the other has upholstered arm panels with straight armrests.<sup>37</sup> A distinctive element shared by both chairs and also found on other Newport armchairs is the arch of the arm supports where they meet the tops of the front legs. The armchair with the scrolled handholds in figure 13 resembles one pictured (second from right) in the watercolor depiction from about 1880 of the parlor of Ellen Townsend's Newport home (fig. 14).<sup>38</sup>

It has also been well established that John Goddard made chairs, including roundabouts for John Brown



Fig. 13. *Armchair*, Newport, 1785–1800. Mahogany, maple, and pine, h. 44 in. (111.8 cm) (including casters). Location unknown. [RIF4433]



Fig. 14. Mary Buffum, *Ellen Townsend's Parlor*, ca. 1880. Watercolor, 8¼ × 11¾ in. (21 × 29.9 cm). Newport Historical Society, Gift of the City of Newport, inv. no. 1887.2

(see cat. 68) and a West Indian client, common chairs and leather chairs for Moses Brown in 1763, and ten mahogany chair frames for Christopher Champlin in 1775.<sup>39</sup> On several occasions Goddard collaborated with the upholsterer Robert Stevens on the fabrication of seating furniture (see the “Rhode Island Upholsterers” section later in this essay). Like Townsend’s chairs, several chairs can be attributed to Goddard based on the design of their claw-and-ball feet (see cat. 69, for example), which have clear parallels in his case furniture and tables. An unusual system of numbering parts (e.g., crest, splat, shoe, rear seat rail) on their outside surfaces is used on a significant number of chairs with claw-and-ball feet of the type associated with Goddard (see cats. 69 and 70, and cat 70, fig. 2). These incised numbers are also found on several pad-foot examples (see cat. 47), which may provide a clue to identifying chairs made in Goddard’s shop or by makers who apprenticed with him and adopted the system.

In addition to these celebrated craftsmen, lesser-known Newport cabinetmakers and joiners also made framed seating furniture. Although a cabinetmaker by trade, Benjamin Baker produced a greater number of chairs than any other furniture form. From 1760 to 1782, when he made his last recorded chair, Baker’s output comprised one closestool of unidentified wood for £35, three mahogany closestools priced from £32 to £36 each, two mahogany roundabouts priced at £32 each, twenty black walnut side chairs priced from £20 to £28 each, forty maple side chairs priced at £12.10.0 to £18 each, and sixty-two mahogany side chairs priced at £32 to £56 each. On two occasions Baker supplied upholsterer Caleb Gardner, providing him with four mahogany chair frames at £56 each in 1772 and three mahogany chair frames at £56 each in 1774. Chairmaker Daniel Dunham did work for Baker in 1762, when there were numerous transactions between the two men, including credits to Dunham for “118 foot bord” and five days’ work.<sup>40</sup> An early Newport historian, Thomas Hornsby, who noted that “all the cabinetmakers on Bridge and Washington Streets, employed a large number of hands, manufacturing

furniture, for which a ready market was found in New York and the West Indies,” distinguished Baker as being “extensively engaged in manufacturing furniture” for these markets.<sup>41</sup>

Evidence of the production of framed chairs in the Queen Anne and Chippendale styles in Providence is scarce. A probable maker of such seating furniture was Philip Potter, one of six Providence cabinetmakers to sign a price-fixing agreement in 1756 (see Kane essay, fig. 10). There are several invoices documenting furniture made by Potter for Capt. Joseph Crawford, probably as venture cargo for export. These include a 1762 charge of £357 for an unspecified number of chairs and tables and a 1763 charge for “Joyners Chars Maid of Charatty [Cherry] at 36/per peas.”<sup>42</sup> Potter also purchased turned “chair sticks” from Providence chairmaker and turner William Barker. Barker’s surviving account book includes several such entries, including charges for “turning 8 chair sticks” for £3 in 1766 and for £8 in 1767. In this context, “chair stick” was most likely the term for stretchers, and the variation in cost may have reflected a price difference in the unspecified woods.<sup>43</sup> John Goddard’s nephew the cabinetmaker Daniel Spencer was also making chairs in Providence by 1772, when he advertised his services as a “Cabinet and Chair-Maker” who “Makes all Sorts of framed Chairs, and Cabinet Work, as cheap for Cash as they can be purchased in Boston, or elsewhere.”<sup>44</sup> Spencer was born in East Greenwich but probably apprenticed in Newport, most likely with his uncle John Goddard, so the framed chairs he was producing in Providence may have been closely related to Newport examples.

### *Neoclassical Chairs of the Federal Period*

The Revolution dealt a devastating blow to Newport’s craftsmen. The British occupation, which lasted from 1776 to 1779, crippled the once flourishing trade of the city, and a significant percentage of residents fled, many never to return. From 1774 to 1782, Newport’s population fell from 9,209 to 5,530, and the city did not regain its pre-Revolution numbers until the mid-nineteenth century. Providence, on the other hand, prospered. Its



Fig. 15. Adam S. Coe, *Sofa*, Newport, 1812. Mahogany, birch, cherry, and white pine (microanalysis), 41½ × 94 × 27¾ in. (105.4 × 238.8 × 70.5 cm). Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1951.33. [R1F1418]

population, which barely changed during the Revolution, rapidly increased between 1785 and 1800—from 4,310 to 7,614. With this growth came greater development and prosperity as Providence transformed into a thriving commercial center, replacing Newport as the hub of Rhode Island’s furniture trade.<sup>45</sup>

The most fashionable seating furniture made after the Revolution was in the Neoclassical style, with splats ornamented with classical motifs. The taste of Newporters, however, remained conservative, and much furniture produced there at that time would have been thought outdated in more progressive cities like Providence and New York. A sofa signed by cabinet-maker Adam S. Coe, for example, is in the camelback style, a form popularized in the third quarter of the eighteenth century (fig. 15). Its scrolled armrests and fluted legs would no longer have been considered the height of fashion when it was made in 1812.<sup>46</sup> The crest of Coe’s

sofa is signed and dated and also includes the name of Edward W. Lawton, the client for whom it was made; a second inscription on the crest reads “B Hadwen / of [?] Newport,” and is followed by additional text that may include the date 1812 (fig. 16). Nancy Goyne Evans has suggested that Hadwen may have been the upholsterer.<sup>47</sup> A Benjamin Hadwen is buried in the Friends Cemetery in Newport, but nothing is known about



Fig. 16. Detail of fig. 15, showing inscription on crest



Fig. 17. John Townsend, *Side Chair (from a pair)*, Newport, 1800. Mahogany, birch, soft maple, eastern white pine, and yellow poplar (microanalysis), 38 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 21 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (97.5 × 54.3 × 52.1 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Miss Ima Hogg, inv. no. B66.II.2. [RIF237]



Fig. 18. Detail of fig. 17, showing label on interior of rear seat rail

his life or occupation. Coe worked in Newport from at least 1804, when he and his partner, Gideon Palmer, announced their “CABINET and CHAIRMAKING Business,” offering “Furniture, of the most fashionable kind, constantly kept on hand, which they will dispose of as cheap as can be purchased in this town.”<sup>48</sup> The advertisement featured an image of a sideboard flanked by two chairs, one a shield-back and the other in the Grecian style, suggesting that their repertoire also included Neoclassical forms.

John Townsend made the only known labeled Newport chairs in the Neoclassical style (figs. 17–18). They are shield-back chairs of New York design with splats depicting Prince of Wales feathers and drapery swags. Townsend may have been commissioned to copy New York examples, or the chairs may be a reflection of the strong New York influence on Rhode Island seating furniture of the period.<sup>49</sup>

Two Newport craftsmen who were undoubtedly making chairs in the Neoclassical style were cabinetmakers Walter Nichols and Holmes Weaver. In 1795 Nichols provided Dr. Isaac Senter with a set of “10 mahogany oval top chairs @ 40/ and 2 same with arms @ 50/.” While no such primary-source documents exist for Weaver, he certainly made chairs, calling himself a “cabinet and chair maker” in 1798 when he advertised his shop on Meeting Street.<sup>50</sup> Given that the known pieces labeled by Weaver, including tables, clocks, a chest of drawers, and a set of Windsor chairs, are in the Federal style, it is probable that he made framed chairs in the same mode.

Although a large quantity of Neoclassical seating furniture was likely produced by Providence craftsmen during the Federal era, only one pattern can be definitively linked to a particular shop. Chairs of this pattern have shield backs and splats that feature a kylix (a shallow ancient Greek drinking vessel with a pedestal base); a handful of these, including that discussed in catalogue 102, bear the label of John Carlile and Sons. The kylix-splat design was hugely popular in Rhode Island, where multiple shops adopted it for chairs with both shield and pedestal backs.

Other Providence chairs of this period are associated with makers on the basis of family tradition, but



**Fig. 19.** Possibly Job Danforth, *Side Chair (from a set of three)*, Providence, 1790–1810. Mahogany and oak, 39¾ × 21½ × 17 in. (101 × 54.6 × 43.2 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1961.2.6. [RIF4346]

none are labeled, and therefore they cannot be definitively attributed to those craftsmen. A set of three pedestal-back chairs with a variation of the kylix-splat design that includes large pendant leaves and husks has a history of having been made and owned by Job Danforth (fig. 19); they were given to the Rhode Island Historical Society by his descendants. A surviving account book records Danforth's furniture production from 1788 to 1818, during which time he made 119 pieces

of seating furniture, including sofas, lolling chairs, joiner's chairs, mahogany armchairs, and mahogany and black walnut side chairs.<sup>51</sup>

Another Neoclassical chair design associated with a Providence maker has a pedestal back and a splat featuring an urn, a style popular in both Rhode Island and Connecticut. A set of four birch examples of this type descended in the family of Robert Sterry Burrough (fig. 20). According to family tradition, they were made



Fig. 20. Possibly Robert Sterry Burrough, *Side Chair (from a set of four)*, Providence, 1795–1805. Birch and pine, 38½ × 20¼ × 18½ in. (97.8 × 51.4 × 47 cm). Private collection. [RIF426]

by him; however, no corroborating evidence of his having been a cabinet- or chairmaker has been found.<sup>52</sup> The substantial number of chairs of this design that survive, coupled with subtle variations in their design, indicates that they were produced in multiple shops, probably throughout Rhode Island. An armchair of this splat pattern is pictured at far right in the watercolor of Ellen Townsend's parlor (see fig. 14). On a related set of chairs with a history of ownership in South Kingstown, Rhode

Island, the urn motif is replaced with Prince of Wales feathers (see cat. 98).

Other evidence of the production of Providence seating furniture after the Revolution comes from primary-source documents and newspaper advertisements. The inventory of Providence chairmaker Benjamin Veazie, Jr., for example, contains evidence that, in addition to inexpensive chairs, Veazie was making higher-end seating furniture. Among the

plentiful stock of chairs recorded were “10 frame Chairs,” “2 arm Chairs unfinnish,” “3 Stuff [probably upholstered] Chairs,” “1 Lolling Chair,” “1 Large Sofa frame,” and “1 Easy Chair frame.”<sup>53</sup> Providence cabinetmaker Judson Blake billed Timothy Green \$65 for a “Grecian Sopha” in 1822, and Joseph Rawson, Sr., and his partner Jonathan Wallen billed Providence goldsmith John Gibb £3.9.0 for six black walnut chair frames in 1784.<sup>54</sup> In newspaper advertisements, a good number of makers referred to themselves as cabinet- and chairmakers, sometimes including chairs in lists of their stock. Thomas Howard, Jr., who worked first in Pawtuxet and later in Providence, named several forms of seating furniture when he advertised his cabinet- and chairmaking business in 1802, announcing that “he has constantly for Sale, Sofas, Easy Chairs, Settees, Lolling Chairs, stuffed and finished.” When he placed another advertisement two years later, he added to the list “mahogany chairs of all kinds, with and without stuffing.”<sup>55</sup> By 1810 Howard was advertising his furniture warehouse, where he sold not only his own wares but retailed those of others.<sup>56</sup> This was a harbinger of changing cabinetmaking practices, and the next decades would see small shops replaced with large wholesale operations.<sup>57</sup>

### *Rhode Island Upholsterers*

A group of craftspeople essential to the story of Rhode Island chairmaking are upholsterers. Because of the expense of upholstery, it was typically employed on pricier, framed seating furniture rather than on more vernacular examples, which used rush. The presence of upholsterers in Rhode Island, therefore, can be used as further proof of the early production of framed seating furniture. Several upholsterers were active in Newport prior to 1750, including John Moore, who practiced his trade in Newport from at least 1732 until his death.<sup>58</sup> His origins remain a mystery, but two surviving accounts are compelling evidence of the fabrication of upholstered seating furniture in Newport in the 1730s. The first is from Nathan Townsend, a Newport carrier, who sued Moore over an unpaid bill.<sup>59</sup> From July

1733 to August 1734, Townsend supplied Moore with thirty-seven hides. The only leather identified by type on the invoice was three horse hides for £0.11.4 each and a calf skin for £0.10.6. Thirty-one of the remaining hides were £0.12.0 each. Although the invoice does not indicate the source, they were probably cowhides and were perhaps not specifically identified since cows were the most typical source for leather used by upholsterers. With the exception of the calfskin, all of the leather was dyed and, when specified, the color was red. Moore’s purchase of the hides suggests that he was partnering with early Newport chairmakers in the fabrication of leather-covered seating furniture, possibly like the chair featured in catalogue 42.

Moore was also sued over an unpaid bill by Newport brazier Stephen Ayrault.<sup>60</sup> From June to December of 1733, Ayrault charged Moore for five “pieces Girth Webb” (used to support foundation upholstery), three orders of “glew,” and thousands of nails and tacks, including “middle tax,” “large tax,” “black d<sup>o</sup> [tax],” “brads,” and six- and twenty-penny nails. Moore also purchased upholstery tools, including “1 hammer” and “3 awle hafts,” the latter of which were pointed tools used for making holes in wood or leather. The account also records a “Verbel Order” from Moore for £0.8.5 worth of “Sundrys” on behalf of John Ormsby, a chairmaker who worked in Newport from at least 1733 to 1739.<sup>61</sup> Moore’s order of supplies for Ormsby indicates that they probably had a business relationship and may represent the earliest documented connection between a Newport upholsterer and chairmaker. Scant details survive about another Newport upholsterer, William Stanton, who was sued over an unpaid bill by Newport cordwainer Samuel Phillips. In an account from 1754, Phillips charged Stanton on several occasions for either a “Reacking” or a “Reaching,” probably an eighteenth-century term for stretching leather.<sup>62</sup> Since both men’s trades involved working with leather, it is conceivable that Phillips may have provided such a service for Stanton.

Robert Stevens had a long career as a Newport upholsterer. He was born in Boston, and may have

completed his apprenticeship there. It is also possible that he trained in Newport, where he was practicing his trade in 1736, at the age of twenty-three.<sup>63</sup> Stevens also worked as a shopkeeper and merchant, activities in which he partnered with his son Robert, Jr. Despite these other pursuits, the elder Stevens continued in the upholstery trade until his death in 1780.<sup>64</sup>

Stevens's trade in seating furniture is documented in three accounts. In October 1739 he was paid £46.10.0 for providing chairs to the King's County courthouse in South Kingstown, Rhode Island.<sup>65</sup> The other two are reciprocal accounts between Stevens and John Goddard and record several occasions on which they collaborated. The invoice from Stevens to Goddard includes a 1768 charge of £61.6.0 for "Chairs that you Rec<sup>d</sup> the Money for Sum Not Carried out," and a 1776 charge of £14.0.0 for covering a chair. Stevens also supplied the cabinetmaker with leather and fabric.<sup>66</sup> The other invoice details seating furniture supplied by Goddard to Stevens from 1764 to 1781, including two easy chairs in March 1764, eight black walnut chairs in July 1766, and six mahogany chair frames in October 1773. Several other items related to Stevens's trade were charges for four sets of bed cornices and a "cornished Bed" between 1764 and 1767.<sup>67</sup> As this invoice implies, eighteenth-century beds, which were often elaborate, were another important aspect of the upholstery trade. Cabinetmakers supplied carved wooden cornices, which crowned the bed and were upholstered to match the bed curtains.

While continuing to practice their craft, many upholsterers sought greater financial and social status by engaging in mercantile pursuits or by keeping shops of ready-made goods. In addition to having a shop in Newport's Brenton's Row, Stevens co-owned a ship with fellow merchants William Vernon and Robert Crooke by 1760.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the greatest testament to Stevens's ambition is the portrait of his wife, Anstris Elizabeth Stevens, painted by an unknown artist (fig. 21). Mrs. Stevens, who sits in what appears to be a high-style chair with a carved crest, is depicted in the genteel pastime of reading. Behind her is a

window through which a classical column is visible. In commissioning such a portrait, Stevens was asserting his family's social status and their membership in the elite merchant class. Among their friends were distinguished members of Newport society, such as Rev. Ezra Stiles, pastor of the Second Congregational Church. According to his diary, Stiles often visited Stevens's house, where his congregation frequently gathered to hear him preach. When Stevens died, Stiles solemnly recorded the event, writing, "Departed this Life Ldsdy Dec. 26, 1780, Mr. Robt. Stevens Merch<sup>t</sup> in Newport Rh. Isld. aet. 67. My worthy Friend."<sup>69</sup>

Stevens may have been responsible for training at least two Newport upholsterers. Little is known about Kendall Nichols, Jr., who was born in Newport. The first mention of Nichols as a Newport upholsterer is a 1761 court case, but he was likely practicing his trade as early as 1743 or 1744.<sup>70</sup> In 1743 he acted as a bondsman for Stevens, along with Newport joiner Nathaniel Baker.<sup>71</sup> Given that Nichols was about twenty-one at the time, it is possible that he was apprenticing with or working for Stevens. In January 1767, Job Townsend, Jr., charged Nichols £6.15.0 for an unspecified order from Samuel Simson, possibly for a piece of seating furniture they were collaborating on.<sup>72</sup>

Caleb Gardner, Jr., may also have trained with Stevens. Gardner was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, but by 1740 his family had moved to Newport, where he probably completed his apprenticeship about 1750.<sup>73</sup> When Stevens was sued in 1750 by Thomas Ward, the sheriff unsuccessfully attempted to find and arrest him, instead confiscating "a small Knife & fork in a Sheath Delivered to me by Caleb Garnder jun as the Estate of ye Def<sup>t</sup>."<sup>74</sup> The fact that Gardner delivered Stevens's property suggests that he may have been at the upholsterer's home or shop when the sheriff arrived, an indication that the twenty-one-year-old Gardner was working for Stevens. Gardner is unique in that he is the only eighteenth-century Rhode Island upholsterer to whom an object can be attributed; the pad-footed easy chair mentioned earlier (cat. 50) is signed by him and has survived in a remarkable state of preservation. The chair



Fig. 21. Unknown artist, *Mrs. Robert Stevens* (née Anstris Elizabeth Wignall, 1723–1802), Newport, ca. 1750–70. Oil on canvas, 49 × 39½ in. (124.5 × 100.3 cm). Newport Historical Society, Gift of Juliana Stevens, inv. no. 1886.1

is covered in an “Irish-stitch” pattern (today known as flame stitch) and has an embroidered back panel depicting a fanciful landscape of rolling hills, frolicking animals, and a shepherd tending his sheep.<sup>75</sup> Evidence of the chair’s ornamental trimming, consisting of cord, two varieties of tape, and decorative nails, is also well preserved.<sup>76</sup> Equally important to the exterior details of the chair are the sophisticated upholstery techniques used to fabricate its foundation, which have preserved the chair’s original shape. Its streamlined exterior surfaces contrast with the generous amount of horsehair stuffing evident in the thickness of the cushion and the rounded profile of the interior wings.

Gardner also worked as a shopkeeper until at least 1770, when he petitioned for protection under the 1756

Insolvent Debtors Relief Act. As a result of his bankruptcy, his shop goods, along with the contents of his house, were inventoried and sold to pay off his debts. His inventory of goods contained primarily textiles, including “Harriteene,” “white wor[ste]d Damask,” and “furniture Checks,” all of which were used in upholstering furniture.<sup>77</sup> Gardner continued to practice the upholstery trade in Newport until at least 1774, when he purchased mahogany chairs from Benjamin Baker and billed Abraham Redwood \$25 for “making suit of Crimson Silk Bed & Window Curtains” and another \$5 “To my Attendance.” The framework for the upholstery was provided by John Townsend, who several months earlier charged Redwood £7.10.1 for “1 Mehogany Bedsted with Cornish floated Posts”

and £1.4.0 for “4 Window Cornishes.”<sup>78</sup> The latter charge on Gardner’s bill to Redwood indicates that Gardner went to Redwood’s home to install the curtains, highlighting the unique access enjoyed by upholsterers to the houses of their wealthy clients. The final record of Gardner’s Newport career is a December 1774 account in which he billed Mrs. Rachel Wright £40 for “making a Easy Chair.”<sup>79</sup>

Gardner was working in Providence by 1783, when he advertised that he carried “on his Business, in all its Branches . . . in the best Manner, and after the newest fashion.”<sup>80</sup> In 1790 he billed Enos Hitchcock of Providence £1.16 “To making a Easy Chair and Case.”<sup>81</sup> Although this amount is substantially lower than the £40 charged to Rachel Wright, such prices cannot be relied upon as an accurate basis for comparison given the fluctuations of pre- and post-Revolutionary Rhode Island currency. Nevertheless, it is possible that the chair made for Hitchcock was lower in price because it was finished only in linen, and that the “case,” or slipcover, was of an inexpensive material such as checked cotton. The last known record of Gardner’s upholstery practice is a 1796 charge of £1.16.0 (the same price he charged six years earlier) for stuffing an easy chair, included in an invoice from James Burrill to Providence goldsmith John Gibbs.<sup>82</sup> After Gardner’s death, his trade was carried on by his daughter Eleanor, who was listed as an “upholstress” in Providence directories from 1824 to 1838.<sup>83</sup>

Other Providence upholsterers are known only through advertisements. In 1802 and 1806, William Brown advertised his “Upholsterer’s Business in its various Branches,” where he made “Sofas, easy and lolling chairs, Marlborough Windsor and Compass Bottoms; Curtains, Feather Beds, Mattresses, Pew-Linings, Pew Cushions, and Venetian Blinds, &c.”<sup>84</sup> At least two Providence saddlers also tried their hand at the upholstery trade.<sup>85</sup> James M. Olney announced the dissolution of two partnerships in the saddler and harness-making business before advertising in 1814 that, in addition to these services, he also performed

“All kinds of Upholster’s work, such as Stuffing sofas, Easy Chairs, [and] Lolling Chairs.”<sup>86</sup> Jonathan Pratt was referred to as a saddler when petitioning for benefits under the Insolvent Debtors Relief Act but was listed as an upholsterer in Providence directories from 1824 to 1844.<sup>87</sup>

A significant number of craftsmen, including chair-makers, upholsterers, cabinetmakers, turners, and carvers, contributed to the production of Rhode Island seating furniture. The research done during production of the Rhode Island Furniture Archive has established the fact that upholstered framed chairs were being made in Rhode Island earlier than previously supposed. While Boston had a strong influence on early Rhode Island chairs, turning patterns can be used to differentiate between similar models. During the third quarter of the eighteenth century, Newport makers developed a distinctive style that they applied to their chairs, as well as to their innovative case pieces. After the Revolution, their production was surpassed by Providence craftsmen who created seating furniture in the Neoclassical style, influenced in part by New York fashions. Providence continued to dominate the Rhode Island chairmaking industry throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century, when small shops were gradually replaced by large furniture warehouses retailing goods often made elsewhere. As this study has shown, though few Rhode Island chairs can be definitively attributed, both the chairs and the craftsmen who produced them have made an important contribution to the canon of American furniture.

## Notes

1. One notable exception is the scholarship of Nancy Goyne Evans on Rhode Island Windsor chairs; for more information, see the essay by Evans in the present volume.
2. Two articles led to a widespread reattribution to Boston of chairs previously thought to have been made in Newport. See Keno, Freund, and Miller 1996; and Freund and Keno 1998.
3. The invaluable research done for the Yale University Art Gallery's Rhode Island Furniture Archive, led by Patricia E. Kane, has brought to light the names and activities of many previously unknown Rhode Island craftsmen. Many of the primary-source documents cited in this essay have been accessed through the files of the archive.
4. Quoted in Forman 1988, 335. See also Jobe 1974, 40.
5. For a discussion of early Rhode Island turnings, see Gronning and Carr 2004; and Gronning and Carr 2005. See also the essay by Dennis Carr in the present volume.
6. Quoted in Preston 1918, 5. "Leather chairs" was a period term for chairs upholstered in leather like the Bull chairs.
7. For a detailed description of these traits, see the entry for cat. 43 in the present volume.
8. There were at least three chairmakers in the Dunham family, including Daniel (1686–1758), his son Joseph (1723/24–1802), and his grandson Daniel (1738–1815). Another such family was the Pitmans: Joseph (ca. 1695–1731) and his nephew John (ca. 1726–1768) were chairmakers, and at least five other Pitmans practiced various woodworking trades.
9. It is tempting to assume that the Providence chairmaker William Proud was Joseph and John Proud, Jr.'s brother, but there is a slight discrepancy between the birth date of the William Proud born in Newport, recorded in James N. Arnold's *Vital Extracts* as October 9, 1720, and the birth date of the Providence chairmaker, about 1723, based on his death date and his recorded age when he died. See *Rhode Island Vital Extracts* 1891–1912, 7:70; and Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Database Index, <http://americanancestors.org> (accessed July 25, 2016).
10. W. Davis 1949, 11.
11. Joseph Proud inventory, September 7, 1769, Newport Town Council and Probate, microfilm no. 0945000, vol. 16, pp. 90–91, Family History Library, Salt Lake City; cited in Scotti and Ott 1965. According to Moxen 1703, 178–79, a turning wheel (or "great wheel") would have been used for heavier turning work, while lighter components were turned on a lathe.
12. Brock W. Jobe and Myrna Kaye have previously noted these Rhode Island stretcher traits; see Jobe and Kaye 1984, 350–51. The present author thanks furniture maker and author Jeffrey Greene for sharing his thoughts on Rhode Island chairs of this type.
13. For the chairs in this catalogue that exhibit this stretcher type, see cats. 46 and 48–50.
14. Also noted in Jobe and Kaye 1984, 350.
15. For more on the Casey chairs, see *ibid.*, 349–51, no. 95, ill. [RIF839]. In 1773 John Proud billed Silas Casey of East Greenwich for six chairs for £30. The invoice, cited in *ibid.*, 351, is in the Casey Family Papers, Historic New England, Boston.
16. For the other chairs of this type, none of which have early histories, see Christie's, New York, January 22, 1983, lot 324 [RIF429]; Northeast Auctions, Hampton, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 7–8, 1993, lot 58 [RIF3680]; "Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Blum advertisement," *Antiques* 172, no. 4 (October 2007): 22, ill. [RIF3948]; "Walton Antiques, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 136, no. 5 (November 1989): 894, ill. [RIF4858]; and Sotheby's, New York, January 24–25, 2014, lot 247 [RIF5959].
17. For the chairs in this catalogue that exhibit this second stretcher type, see cats. 47, 69, 71, and 73–74.
18. That is not to say that Goddard and Townsend were the only makers that used stretchers of this type, or that they never used stretchers of the other type. One known exception is a group of chairs that was probably made by Goddard. These chairs have the usual medial and side stretchers but have a rear stretcher with an incised ring; for an example, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 55.134 [RIF769].
19. For the two exceptions, both in private collections, see Garth's Auctions, Delaware, Ohio, May 16, 2014, lot 267 [RIF3169]; and an unpublished easy chair [RIF5995].
20. Cited in Scotti and Ott 1965.
21. Joseph Proud inventory, September 7, 1769, Newport Town Council and Probate, microfilm no. 0945000, vol. 16, pp. 90–91, Family History Library, Salt Lake City; cited in Scotti and Ott 1965.
22. See statement of account, March 23, 1759, in Daniel Dolorson, Newport, joiner, v. Alanson Gibbs, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 108, May 1759 term, case 17, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. Nothing is known about Dolorson's birth or his family, but he was probably the Daniel Dolorson who married Temperance Norton in Boston in 1755, which could mean that he apprenticed there as well; see *Manifesto Church* 1902, 248. The spelling of Dolorson's

- name differs in documents. Variations include Dolenson, Dollenson, Dollinson, Dollison, and Dollorson.
23. In addition to roundabout and compass-seat chairs, an earlier bill from Dolorson to Gibbs includes “flag bottom chairs” (for £3 each, plus another £1 each to bottom), mahogany tea tables, and turned work for roundabout chairs; see statement of account, July 19, 1758, in Alanson Gibbs, Newport, joiner, v. Daniel Dolorson, Newport, chairmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 54, November 1758 term, case 113, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  24. Statement of account, December 1757–April 1759, in Alanson Gibbs, Newport, joiner, v. Daniel Dolorson, Newport, chairmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 54, November 1758 term, case 113, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  25. For an in-depth discussion on Windsor chairs, see the essay by Nancy Goyne Evans in the present volume.
  26. David Bacon inventory, Providence, chairmaker, June 10, 1777, Providence Probate, Book of Wills, vol. 6, pp. 188–90, City Hall, Providence.
  27. For an in-depth discussion of vernacular chair terminology, see Evans 1996b.
  28. A period reference to framed chairs by cabinetmaker Daniel Spencer is cited later in this essay.
  29. Pillsbury 1975, 48, 51, 76, 78. The Prouds’ account book is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. For a chair made by John Carlile and Sons, see cat. 102 in the present volume.
  30. Cited in Ott 1969a, 17. Barker’s account book is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  31. Job, Jr., also made four chairs of unspecified form, two in 1767 for £30 each, another in 1770 for £45, and one in mahogany in 1772 for £45. For a transcription of Job Townsend, Jr.’s ledger and account book, see Willoughby 1999, appendixes 1–2.
  32. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, inv. no. B66.II.1–2 [RIF237], a pair; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1966.II2 [RIF4263]; and Christie’s, New York, January 20, 2012, lot 156 [RIF4264]. For more on these chairs, see Heckscher 2005, 181–83, no. 48, ill.
  33. Heckscher 2005, 56.
  34. Benjamin Baker account book, 1760–92, Newport Historical Society. For an in-depth analysis of Baker’s career and account book, see Carr 2004.
  35. John Townsend will, June 1, 1805, and John Townsend inventory, May 13, 1809, Newport Probate, vol. 4, pp. 600–601, 635, Newport City Clerk’s Office; quoted in Heckscher 2005, 203, 207.
  36. Heckscher 2005, 96–97, 102.
  37. For the other upholstered armchair, see Ott 1969a, 12–13, figs. 3–3a [RIF1675].
  38. The watercolor also includes an armchair (far right) with a popular Rhode Island Neoclassical splat design; see Ott 1965a, 16–17, no. 15, ill. [RIF1476].
  39. The common chairs are referenced in a letter from John Goddard to Moses Brown, June 30, 1763; the leather chairs are mentioned in the draft of a letter from Brown to Goddard, October 10, 1763. Both letters are quoted in Moses 1984, 196–97. The invoice for the Champlin chairs is cited in Dyer 1922, 207; and Scotti and Ott 1965.
  40. Cited in Carr 2004, 59–89.
  41. Thomas Hornsby, “Newport, Past and Present,” *Newport Daily Advertiser*, December 8, 1849, p. 2; quoted in Vibert Sloane 1987, 92. Dennis Carr has suggested that Baker’s specialization in chairs was due to the high demand for that furniture form for the export market during the years 1769–72; see Carr 2004, 49. Carr cites Anne Rogers Haley, who calculated Rhode Island furniture exports to the American colonies and the West Indies based on figures recorded in the Imports and Exports (America) Ledger, 1768–74, Public Records Office, Kew, England. Shipping records from the third quarter of the eighteenth century also show that the number of chairs shipped from Newport to the southern ports of Annapolis, Maryland, and Charleston, South Carolina, was greater than that of any other furniture form. See Vibert 1981, 19–21.
  42. Cited in Monahan 1965a, 573; and Garrett 1966, 518. The term “joyners chars” likely refers to chairs with no turned parts that are joined with the mortise-and-tenon joints employed by joiners.
  43. Barker’s account book is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. In other contexts the term may have meant spindles for Windsor chair backs, but Potter’s high prices indicate that these were most likely stretchers; see Evans 2006, 99.
  44. “Daniel Spencer advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, January 2, 1773, p. 3.
  45. Garrett 1966, 514.
  46. See also both a Newport easy chair and side chair with family histories dating them to the 1790s (cats. 73–74), which have cabriole legs and claw-and-ball feet that would no longer have been considered fashionable at the time of their supposed manufacture.
  47. Evans, in Richards et al. 1997, 183–84. For an instance of an upholsterer signing the crest of an easy chair, see cat. 50 in

- the present volume. Another example is an easy chair in the collection of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, inv. no. 83.37, signed by William Roby and dated June 1742 on the inside of its right rear stile. Roby is likely the “William Roby, Jun., of Boston, upholsterer” who is named in an Essex County, Massachusetts, deed; cited in Gardner 1916, 56.
48. “Palmer and Coe advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, August 4, 1804, p. 4. The firm of Palmer and Coe was dissolved in 1809, and in 1826 Coe and Robert P. Lee announced another partnership under the name of Robert P. Lee and Co., which carried “an elegant Assortment of the most fashionable CABINET FURNITURE, all made after the very latest New-York patterns, and of the best workmanship.” “Robert P. Lee and Co. advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, May 6, 1826, p. 3. For an in-depth discussion of the Coe sofa, see Richards et al. 1997, 183–85, no. 98, ill.
  49. Heckscher 2005, 181–83, no. 48, ill. For a discussion of the furniture trade between New York and Rhode Island, see Ott 1969a, 15–16. For another chair showing New York influence, see cat. 98 in the present volume.
  50. The sale to Senter is cited in Ott 1969a, 9; Senter’s papers are in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. For the Weaver advertisement, see “Holmes Weaver advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, January 23, 1798, p. 3.
  51. Pillsbury 1975, 34, 112. Job Danforth’s account book is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  52. For the Burrough attribution, see Ott 1965a, 16–17.
  53. Benjamin Veazie inventory, November 4, 1819, Probate File Records, Providence, file A4490, Providence City Hall.
  54. The Blake bill is cited in Ott 1982, 1158. The original invoice is in the Albert C. and Richard W. Greene Papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence. For the Rawson and Wallen bills, see Probate File Records, Providence, file A1605, microfilm no. 2209513, frame 477, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. When the partnership between Rawson and Wallen was dissolved in 1792, Rawson announced “that he still continues the Cabinet and Chair-making Business in all its Branches, at the Shop lately occupied by said Wallen and Rawson.” See “Joseph Rawson advertisement,” *United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical* (Providence), June 21, 1792, p. 3.
  55. “Thomas Howard, Jr., advertisement,” *United States Chronicle* (Providence), May 27, 1802, p. 3; and “Thomas Howard advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, June 9, 1804, p. 3.
  56. His wares included clocks with works by William Cummins and Simon Willard of Boston; “Thomas Howard, Jun., advertisement,” *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), June 1, 1810, p. 4.
  57. For a more in-depth discussion of this phenomenon, see the essay by Patricia E. Kane in the present volume.
  58. Judith Cranston, Newport, widow, v. John Moore, Newport, upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 167, November 1732 term, case 142, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  59. Nathan Townsend, Newport, currier, v. John Moore, Newport, upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 308, May 1735 term, case 126; and statement of account, July 1733–August 1774, in *ibid.*, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  60. Stephen Ayrault, Newport, brazier, v. John Moore, Newport, upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 312, May 1735 term, case 113; and statement of account, June 26, 1733–December 20, 1733, in *ibid.*, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  61. The statement of account from Ayrault to Moore is the earliest indication of Ormsby’s presence in Newport. The last known reference to Ormsby in Newport is contained in a 1739 court case. See Henry Vug, Portsmouth, a free negro man, v. John Ormsby, Newport, chairmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 639, May 1739 term, case 269, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  62. Samuel Phillips, Newport, cordwainer, v. William Stanton, Newport, upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. D, p. 703, November 1754 term, case 398; and statement of account, January 3–August 3, 1754, in *ibid.*, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists an obsolete definition of “reaching” as “capable of being stretched”; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “reaching, adj.,” <http://www.oed.com/> (accessed December 21, 2015). “Reaching leather” was a term sometimes used “to indicate the quality of yielding or suppleness”; see *Notes and Queries* 1883, 415.
  63. Stevens’s birth is recorded in E. Stevens and Bacon 1914, 70. A 1736 court case is the earliest known record of Stevens being in Newport. See Robert Stevens, Newport, upholsterer, v. Daniel Underwood, Newport, hatter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 415, November 1736 term, case 12, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  64. Stevens is referred to as an upholster in a court document relating to his estate, and, according to his inventory, he had two pounds worth of curled hair (commonly used as stuffing for chairs) in his kitchen at the time of his death. Robert Stevens, Jr., petition, March 4, 1784, Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize, and General Gaol Delivery, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 231, March 1784

- term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The inventory of Robert Stevens is transcribed in Hise 2010, 106–8.
65. “Account for Sundry Necessaries at the Court House in South Kingstown,” February 1739/40 session, Accounts Allowed 1716–40, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
  66. “The Estate of John Goddard Deceas<sup>d</sup> to the Estate of Rob<sup>t</sup> Stevens Deceas<sup>d</sup>,” Channing-Ellery Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; cited in Ott 1969b, 49.
  67. Estate of Robert Stevens, invoice to the Estate of John Goddard, March 1764–November 1781, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. J, p. 672, November 1791 term, case 23, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. The prices for these items have not been given as the account was drawn up by Goddard’s sons Stephen and Thomas, and it is not clear whether the charges reflect contemporary prices or prices for the years in which the chairs were made.
  68. Samuel Pease, Glastonbury, Conn., mariner, v. William Vernon, Robert Crooke, and Robert Stevens, Newport, merchants, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 4, p. 391, December 1760 term, case 106, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. Stevens participated in the slave trade on at least one occasion, when he and two fellow merchants commissioned a ship to bring six slaves (three boys and three girls) from Africa to Newport in 1756. All were sold in Newport with the exception of one girl who did not survive the voyage; see Robert Stevens, Samuel Vernon, and William Vernon, all of Newport, merchants, v. Caleb Godfrey, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 7, November 1758 term, case 138, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  69. Stiles 1901, 2:486.
  70. Thomas Norrington, Plymouth, Mass., baker, v. Kendal Nichols, Jr., Newport, upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 545, November 1761 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  71. Benjamin Pitman, mariner, Samuel Pitman, bricklayer, and Moses Pitman, fellmonger, all of Newport, v. Robert Stevens, Newport, upholsterer, alias upholsterer, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 704, May 1745 term, case 253; and bond, December 1, 1743, in *ibid.*, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  72. Willoughby 1999, 143.
  73. *Vital Records of Brookline* 1929, 28. His father is probably Newport shopkeeper Caleb Gardner, who was involved in multiple court cases from 1740 to 1754; see, for example, Caleb Gardner, Newport, shopkeeper, v. Job Caswell, Newport, house carpenter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 54, May 1740 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  74. Writ, October 24, 1750, in Thomas Ward, Newport, gentleman, v. Robert Stevens, late of the same Newport, upholder, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. C, p. 595, November 1750, case 347, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
  75. For other Rhode Island chairs with remnants of their original show covers, see cats. 42 and 72–74 in the present volume.
  76. Another easy chair trimmed with both tape and cord is a Massachusetts example in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, inv. no. 32.38.
  77. Caleb Gardner petition, filed June 15, 1770, Granted Petitions of the General Assembly (1756–1828), vol. 14, p. 32, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
  78. For the Baker reference, see Carr 2004, 73. The Redwood invoice is cited in Heckscher 1985, 122; for the invoice, see “Abraham Redwood Esq. to Caleb Gardner Dr,” September 14, 1774, Newport Historical Society. At this early date, the dollar amounts listed in the account were undoubtedly Spanish milled dollars. For the Townsend reference, see “Abraham Redwood Esq<sup>r</sup> To Jon Townsend Dr,” July 23, 1774, manuscript collection, box 166, folder 14, Newport Historical Society.
  79. Heckscher 1985, 122; for the invoice, see “M<sup>rs</sup>. Rachel Wright to Caleb Gardner Dr,” December 31, 1774, Haight Papers, Newport Historical Society.
  80. “Caleb Gardner advertisement,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 24, 1783, p. 3.
  81. Quoted in Ott 1969c, 117; and Heckscher 1985, 122. For the invoice, see “Enos Hitchcock to Caleb Gardner Dr,” January 29, 1790, Enos Hitchcock Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
  82. Probate File Records, Providence, file A1605, microfilm no. 2209513, frame 477, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
  83. Eleanor Gardner was listed at the following locations: Middle, 72 Westminster Street (1824, 1828, 1830, 1832, and 1836) and North Main Street (1838). The upholstery trade was one that was open to women. In the 1830s, two other upholstresses were listed in Providence. See “Hubbard, Nancy, upholstress” and “Tower, Miss B., upholstress &

- seamstress,” in U.S. City Directories, 1822–1989, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed December 21, 2015).
84. “William Brown advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, September 11, 1802, p. 3, and May 17, 1806, p. 3.
  85. Some of the earliest upholstered seating furniture was fabricated by European saddlers, who had already developed methods of securing padding, but this was less common in the eighteenth century, especially in urban centers. In 1754 a court saddler supplied King Charles X of Sweden with stuffed chairs; see Ward 2008, 723.
  86. The dissolution of Beckford and Olney, Saddlers and Harness-Makers, was announced in the *Providence Gazette*, April 14, 1804, p. 1; the dissolution of Olney and Parrot was announced in the *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), September 7, 1813, p. 1. A year later, Olney included upholstery work in a list of his services in the *Providence Gazette*, July 16, 1814, p. 4.
  87. *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence), March 22, 1816, p. 3; and U.S. City Directories, 1822–1989, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed December 21, 2015).



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31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Sam. Rockwel. Providence

SUNDAY  
1 Day

*“On This Moment  
Hangs Eternity”*

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*Clockmaking in Colonial  
and Early Federal Rhode Island*

PATRICIA E. KANE  
AND GARY R. SULLIVAN

FOR AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS, beginning in about 1720, cabinetmakers in Rhode Island manufactured cases for eight-day clocks, today known as tall case or grandfather clocks. Almost all of these clocks included brass movements, the construction and function of which remained largely unchanged throughout the period. Over the first quarter of the nineteenth century, tall case clocks gradually went out of fashion, being rendered obsolete by more affordable patent timepieces (banjo clocks) and, later, by factory-made Connecticut clocks.

Tall case clocks are complex objects, and their fabrication required the skills of several craftsmen. The maker of the movement (clockmaker) and the maker of the case (casemaker) were trained in very different trades. Most of the clocks in this study incorporate eight-day brass movements, which required winding only once a week and which local clockmakers assembled from components that they manufactured themselves or imported from England. Brass founders cast the blanks for gears and movement plates, and the clockmakers then cut and filed them into the finished movement.<sup>1</sup> Skilled engravers made components for the brass dials (clock faces) used on Rhode Island clocks. Two different types of brass dials were used. The earliest were called composite dials. They were constructed with several individual components including cast spandrels (decorative corner pieces), a chapter ring (the circle on which the numbers are engraved), and a name plaque, all attached to a brass backplate. Components for these dials were available from England, and although some local clockmakers were also engravers, many of them bought their dials or dial parts from England or from local founders. Indeed, clock specialists believe that most corner spandrels used in colonial America were English-made. Engraved sheet-brass dials, which replaced composite dials beginning in the 1780s, had numerals and decoration engraved into a solid brass dial plate (see, for instance, cat. 59). These were often made by the clockmaker himself because they required no imported British

spandrels or other cast components, only a blank sheet of brass on which to engrave a dial. In the late 1780s, imported painted iron dials—the work of ornamental artists in Birmingham, England—began to appear in Rhode Island. These decorated “white dials” (see, for example, cat. 95) took many years to catch on but persisted for decades. Beginning about 1800, dials painted in Boston gradually replaced English dials for clocks made in Rhode Island and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

Cabinetmakers oversaw the construction of the clock cases, and they relied on glaziers to supply the glass apertures. When Daniel Spencer billed Thomas Claggett £300 for a clock case in 1767, the receipt included a £1 charge for putting in the glass by a glazier named Morris.<sup>3</sup> Cast brass capitals and finials for embellishing the case were purchased from a brass founder, hardware supplier, or importer. Door locks probably were procured from importers as well. Depending on the case style, the casemaker may have needed many additional craftsmen to complete the job, including turners, gilders, inlay makers, and carvers. Rhode Island clockmakers often orchestrated the assembly of the movement and its case, producing the complete clock, ready for the customer.

The complexity of their production and the high cost of their materials, particularly the brass required for the movement, made tall case clocks very expensive. In the colonial and early Federal periods, eight-day clocks were owned by only the well-to-do. Of the more than 250 clocks recorded in the Yale University Art Gallery’s Rhode Island Furniture Archive (most of which are tall case clocks), about one-fifth have histories tracing them back to their original owners; most were made for prominent merchants, but others were owned by political leaders, entrepreneurs, land owners, ship captains, and at least one physician. Such people may not have been as affluent as their mercantile contemporaries, but they were individuals for whom accurate timekeeping was certainly very important. Latin mottoes on a few of the clocks confirm their owners’ intellectual as well as social status.<sup>4</sup>

### *Clockmaking in Colonial Rhode Island*

William Claggett, New England’s most prolific pre-Revolutionary clockmaker and one of the most prolific in all of colonial America, was Rhode Island’s earliest clockmaker.<sup>5</sup> Over fifty of Claggett’s clocks survive.<sup>6</sup> He was in Newport by 1716, having arrived from Boston, where he is believed to have been trained by clockmaker Benjamin Bagnall. Claggett’s earliest Rhode Island clocks have square composite dials housed in cases with sarcophagus hoods (molded tops), such as the example possibly made for Samuel Gorton, great-grandson of Samuel Gorton, founder of Warwick, Rhode Island (fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> Claggett’s square dials are consistent in their detail—each features an applied chapter ring with Roman numerals separated by fleur-de-lis half-hour markers (fig. 2). The dial centers are stippled and the corners fitted with applied cast brass spandrels, most in the form of urns flanked by birds. The dial centers also typically feature rectangular plaques engraved with Claggett’s name, circular second dials, and square apertures revealing a numbered calendar wheel. Although the dials on Claggett’s clocks are similar, the cases are not, suggesting that he or his customers patronized a number of different cabinetmakers. Claggett’s clock made for Samuel Gorton and another example recently on the market share the most features, particularly in the details of the hoods, including the turnings of the engaged colonettes on the hood doors and the general shape of the moldings above and below the hood architrave.<sup>8</sup>

The Newport clock with the earliest definitive date is one made by Claggett for Dr. Norbert Vigneron in 1728, now in the collection of the Newport Historical Society (fig. 3). An account copied from the business records of Dr. Vigneron attached to the clock’s interior backboard details various medical services performed for Claggett and his family for which Claggett “paid By a Pendulum Clock,” valued at £23 in 1728. The Vigneron clock is one of a half-dozen Claggett clocks housed in



Fig. 1. Unknown casemaker, and William Claggett, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, Newport, 1720–30. Walnut and yellow poplar, 89 × 19 × 10½ in. (226.1 × 48.3 × 26.7 cm). Private collection. [RIF3222]



Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1, showing dial



cases ornamented with burl veneer.<sup>9</sup> The base of the Vigneron clock is supported on replacement feet, and the top lacks its original sarcophagus element. Otherwise it is similar in design to a Claggett clock owned by the Chipstone Foundation, in Milwaukee, and to another, previously part of the Stanley Paul Sax collection, having a straight frieze molding below the sarcophagus, colonettes with entasis (swelled centers) on the dial door, and elaborately burl-veneered pendulum doors with applied molding at the edges.<sup>10</sup> Construction details of the Vigneron and the Chipstone Foundation clocks (the only two of this type located for this study) suggest that they were not from the same cabinetmaking shop.<sup>11</sup> The other three clocks with cases in this style—catalogue 9, now in the Henry Ford, in Dearborn, Michigan; one formerly in the collection of Eric Martin Wunsch; and one in the photo files of Gary R. Sullivan Antiques—show variations in form.<sup>12</sup> The door of the Henry Ford clock is arched and has a central panel of richly figured burl veneer surrounded by a band of dark veneer, and the frieze molding of the Wunsch example is arched. Burl is an outgrowth of a tree of deformed wood that can be cut into dense, highly figured veneer. Burl cases on Claggett clocks have sometimes been identified as having been made in Boston.<sup>13</sup> The extensive use of yellow poplar on these clocks, however, rarely used in Boston but a preferred secondary wood of Rhode Island cabinetmakers, indicates that burl-veneered furniture, including clock cases, was being made in Rhode Island.

Fig. 3. Unknown casemaker, and William Claggett, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, Newport, 1728. Walnut with walnut and maple veneer, yellow poplar, pine, and maple, 102 × 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (259.1 × 45.1 × 22.5 cm). Newport Historical Society, Gift of Inez West, inv. no. 2008.3.1. [RIF2496]

Although japanned cases—decorated with Asian lacquerwork motifs—were fashionable throughout New England, no examples can be ascribed to Rhode Island. Three known japanned tall case clocks house movements signed by William Claggett during his Newport years (see fig. 4), but several factors indicate that these were probably made and ornamented in Boston.<sup>14</sup> Claggett is known to have maintained close ties to Boston, making an organ for Christ Church there in 1736, and none of the three cases contain yellow poplar or chestnut, the latter another secondary wood often favored by Rhode Island makers. In addition, one of the cases—that seen in figure 4—is signed by the Boston japanner Robert Davis, who inscribed “Robt Davis / Japanner / Boston NE / 1736” inside the pendulum door.<sup>15</sup> Thus, these cases were very likely made in Boston, the source of much japanned furniture.<sup>16</sup>

By the 1740s, Rhode Island cabinetmakers were producing a new style of clock case, with concave blocking capped by a carved shell on the pendulum door. About a half-dozen such clocks are known. They house movements by William Claggett, his son-in-law James Wady, and the Providence clockmaker Samuel Rockwell. Stylistically, the earliest of these cases is the William Claggett clock owned by Thomas Dering, a merchant of Boston and Southhold, Long Island, the hood of which retains a sarcophagus top like those seen on earlier examples.<sup>17</sup>

The Wady clock now at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware (cat. 33), and other related Newport examples, however, have hoods with elaborately scrolled pediments atop an arched frieze, often ornamented with pierced decoration in metal, wood, or paper. The concave blocking and carved shells on the pendulum doors of this group of clocks are often richly enhanced by gilding and complement the splendid pediments at the top of the hood. The concave blocking is comparable to that seen on early case pieces, such as the desk and bookcase by Christopher Townsend (cat. 29), probably made between 1745 and 1750. A clock with a movement by



Fig. 4. Unknown casemaker, William Claggett, clockmaker, and Robert Davis, japanner, *Tall Case Clock*, case made and japanned Boston; movement Newport, 1736. Pine, 82 ¾ × 21 ⅝ × 11 ¼ in. (210.2 × 54.9 × 28.6 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1980.11.1. [RIF5318]

Samuel Rockwell (cat. 41), who left Providence by the early 1750s, also has concave blocking capped by a shell. The shell is not as skillfully carved as those on the Newport cases, which suggests a Providence origin for this piece. The Rockwell clock, once the property of lime quarry owner David Harris of Providence and Smithfield, Rhode Island, shows that, like their Newport counterparts, Providence cabinetmakers were also experimenting with the block-and-shell design by the early 1750s.

Beginning around the 1750s, convex block-and-shell pendulum doors succeeded the concave model. About 100 of the more than 250 clocks catalogued in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive have pendulum doors with convex block-and-shell decoration, of



which about three dozen were probably made prior to the American Revolution. Their blocked pendulum doors exhibit two different construction approaches: On the majority of the clocks, the door, including the blocked section, is cut from a single piece of wood, with shells either carved from the solid or applied.<sup>18</sup> On the others, the door is framed—that is, assembled from rails and stiles tenoned together—with blocking and shells applied to the front. The earliest convex-door Newport clocks by Claggett and Wady, including a clock made by Wady for the Newport and Tiverton, Rhode Island, landowner Col. Job Almy (fig. 5), are of the first construction approach, which suggests that Newport cabinetmakers used this technique before moving to framed doors.<sup>19</sup>

The use of blocking and shells carved from the solid persisted longer on cases made in Providence and Warwick. Clocks with movements by Providence clockmakers Samuel Rockwell and Edward Spalding have distinctive shells carved with rounded lobes sometimes lacking flutes.<sup>20</sup> A few of the clocks with this type of shell have blocking and shells on their bases as well as on the door (see, for example, cat. 62).<sup>21</sup> Cabinetmakers who made cases for clocks that originated in the Warwick area also made pendulum doors with blocking and shells carved from the solid. They are a “countrified” version of the Newport and Providence clocks. Three of these clocks house movements by the Warwick clockmaker Squire Millerd (fig. 6), one houses a movement by David Williams of Newport, and three have movements by unknown makers.<sup>22</sup> The clock shown in figure 6 and several related clocks share some combination of regional

Fig. 5. Unknown casemaker, and James Wady, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, Newport, probably 1753. Mahogany, chestnut, pine, yellow poplar, and oak, 98 × 21¼ × 10½ in. (248.9 × 54 × 26.7 cm). Private collection. [RIF2161]



features. They have bases constructed with unusually broad rails and stiles and with small-scale applied panels. Those with blocked doors are capped with primitive shells, with billowing rays that are carved from the solid. On the hood they typically incorporate a small arched molding above the dial door, below which is an unadorned frieze finished with a large arched cove molding. Four of the clocks, including the one shown in figure 6, have unusual colonettes at the front corners of the hoods, probably produced by the same turner; their capitals and bases are ball forms separated from the columnar elements by prominent reels. Two of the clock hoods in the group have fluted pilasters at the front corners of the hoods.<sup>23</sup> The Millerd clocks have brass dials, while the others have painted dials, indicating a later date.

Later in the eighteenth century, cabinetmakers in Newport and some in Providence forsook the unframed model for the less risky and more efficient construction of framed doors with applied shells and blocks. An example with a movement by Newport clockmaker Thomas Claggett, William's son, is catalogue 56, and an example with a Providence movement is catalogue 59. The inside of these neatly joined frames often have openings lined with mitered cove moldings, nailed or glued to the back of the blocked panel. The moldings are often of unfinished pine, contrasting with the darker mahogany of the door interior.

Not all clock movements made in the colonial era were housed in cases with block-and-shell decoration. A classic plain colonial clock case was made by Benjamin Baker for Thomas Claggett, who supplied

Fig. 6. Unknown casemaker, and Squire Millerd, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, Warwick, Rhode Island, 1770–90. Cherry, chestnut, and pine, 85½ × 17¼ × 10 in. (217.2 × 43.8 × 25.4 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 2006.439.a-1. [RIF637]

Abraham Brown of Tiverton, Rhode Island, with a completed clock in 1772 (fig. 7). Baker applied a label to the door of the case attesting to its fabrication in Newport that year. This clock case is probably the one recorded in Baker's account book as being sold to Thomas Claggett in December 1772 for £140. Claggett warranted the clock to Brown in December of that year for "fifty six dollars & on[e] quarter," a price that was probably in Spanish silver dollars.<sup>24</sup> Baker's account book records the sale of two clock cases to Thomas Claggett. Another Claggett clock is housed in a similar case with a solid door and has turned colonnettes on the hood; it may also be the work of Baker, possibly the other clock he made for Claggett.<sup>25</sup>

The colonial clock hoods invariably consist of an arched pediment ornamented with finials, often with a keystone in the entablature, and fluted colonnettes at the corners. The bases are unframed on the earliest examples and framed with an applied panel on the later ones. Rhode Island clock cases exhibit other regional characteristics. The molding between the waist and the base is usually ogee-shaped (a concave arc flowing into a convex arc, forming somewhat of an S curve) as opposed to cove-shaped (a concave arc), universal on other New England clocks. The sidelights on the hoods (if present) are not openings cut into a solid piece of wood but are often framed of four pieces around the glass. The rear colonnettes are usually free-standing, tenoned into the frieze board above and the base of the hood below. They are often split into half columns. In addition, the back edges of the hoods are usually rabbeted to provide a tight seal with the case backboards. The dial-door joinery on most Rhode Island cases is unusual, with the joints running horizontally and the side stiles fitted between the top and bottom members. This construction is uncommon in other regions.

More than a dozen Rhode Island cases with works signed by London makers survive from the colonial period.<sup>26</sup> This occasional use of imported

clockworks in local cases is noteworthy. The cases of these clocks are often more elaborate than those with locally made works. Customers who could afford a foreign clock could afford a more elaborate case, an example being a clock with a movement by William Creak of London (fig. 8). The mahogany used for the blocking on the door and base is richly figured, the waist corners feature quarter columns with stop-fluting, the base corners are skillfully chamfered, and the carved finials at the top of the hood are large and prominent. The case was probably made in Newport since the carved shell on the pendulum door relates to shells on furniture attributed to John Goddard. On Goddard's shells, the outline of the inner shell and the ridges for the first flute spiral out from the scroll that is the inner terminus of the lowest ray (see, for example, cat. 57, fig. 2).

Colonial craftsmen competed against fashionable imported goods, and eight-day clock movements were no exception. In 1772, when the Providence clockmaker Edward Spalding advertised that "Eight-Day Clocks are made and sold by him, warranted as good and cheap as any imported from London," he was referring to the brass, composite-dial London movements found in several Rhode Island clock cases.<sup>27</sup> Published just two months after his neighbors burned the anti-smuggling British customs schooner *Gaspee* in Narragansett Bay for chasing down a local packet boat, this advertisement may have been a gentle reminder for his clientele to buy locally made clocks.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Federal Period*

Clockmaking in Rhode Island reached its peak in the eighteenth century. The tall case clocks from the second half of the eighteenth century, with their innovative designs by talented cabinetmakers, rivaled the world's finest. The introduction after the Revolution of imported painted iron dials, which slowly replaced engraved sheet-brass dials, altered the graphic appearance of clock faces, although the cases



Fig. 7. Benjamin Baker, casemaker, and Thomas Claggett, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, Newport, 1772. Mahogany and pine, 95 × 21<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (241.3 × 54.9 × 28.6 cm). Old Sturbridge Village, Mass., inv. no. 57.1.92. [RIF1208]



Fig. 8. Unknown casemaker, and William Creak, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, case probably Newport, 1750–60; movement London. Mahogany and chestnut, 98 × 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 10 in. (248.9 × 49.5 × 25.4 cm). Private collection. [RIF92]

remained largely unchanged. As the nineteenth century approached and Federal-style cases with veneered and inlaid surfaces came into fashion, Boston, only fifty miles away, emerged as the new center for American clock production. Clockmaking there was dominated by the prolific Willard family, who exported their clocks throughout New England and beyond. Rhode Island clockmakers could not compete, and clockmaking in the state declined.

The imported painted iron dials that began to be used in the last years of the eighteenth century came mostly from dialmakers in Birmingham, England, and were among the parts that Rhode Island clockmakers such as Edward Spalding and Caleb Wheaton specialized in importing. Wheaton advertised in 1798 that “Watchmakers and others may be supplied at his Shop with almost every Article necessary in the Clock and Watch-making line.”<sup>29</sup> A few years later he declared he had “established a Connexion in London with an eminent Artist and Dealer in his Profession” and “has lately received an Assortment of Tools and Materials necessary and useful in the Clock and Watchmaking Business.”<sup>30</sup> As two of Wheaton’s clocks have dials by Birmingham makers, he clearly used and probably sold such parts.<sup>31</sup> Charles Robbins, a clockmaker in Pawtucket, advertised in 1794 that he was making “Eight Day Clocks of all Kinds, both with Weights and Springs, with China Faces.” He was referring to weight-driven tall case clocks and spring-driven bracket clocks with painted iron dials.<sup>32</sup>

The majority of Rhode Island clocks with convex block-and-shell carved doors have painted dials and were made in the Federal era. Of these later clocks, two are signed by Newport cabinetmakers. A case labeled by John Townsend and dated 1789 was made for the Newport merchant George Champlin and houses an English movement (fig. 9). Another, owned by the textile-mill entrepreneur Samuel Slater of Pawtucket, has a case signed by the Newport cabinetmaker Stephen Goddard (fig. 10). A medial rail (visible on the interior door), as well as rails at the top and bottom of the frame of the pendulum door, is an unusual feature on the



Fig. 9. John Townsend, casemaker, and William Tomlinson, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, case Newport; movement London, 1789. Mahogany, chestnut, white pine, and yellow poplar (microanalysis), 91 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 21 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (232.1 × 53.7 × 26.7 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1927, inv. no. 27.57.2. [RIF390]

Townsend case. The arch meets the stiles with mitered half-lap joints (mitered at the front of the door and vertical joints at the back). As the shell has no visible means of attachment, it was probably glued in place. On the interior of the door, small, neat moldings conceal the joint of the blocking and frame. On the Goddard case, the arched top and vertical stiles meet in miter joints on the front and back of the door. On the interior of the door, wide chamfered moldings conceal the joints between the blocking and the doorframe. These and other variations in construction indicate that many cabinetmakers, in the Federal as in the colonial era, supplied cases for eight-day clocks.<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to determine which cases with block-and-shell doors were made in Newport and which were made in Providence. Very likely those with works signed by Newport makers have cases also made in Newport; the origin of cases with movements signed by Providence makers is less certain. However, some block-and-shell clock cases with movements by Providence clockmakers can be attributed to Newport cabinetmakers. The clock case in figure 10 made by Newport cabinetmaker Stephen Goddard, for instance, is an example of a Providence-area clockmaker acquiring a case from a Newport cabinetmaker; it houses a movement with a pendulum bob engraved “Charles Robbins / Pawtucket.” Likewise, in 1786 the Providence clockmaker Caleb Wheaton, on behalf of the cabinetmaker Townsend Goddard of Newport, signed a receipt for payment of “£1.16.0 lawful money” from Zebulon Utter, sheriff and constable of Warwick, for two clock cases.<sup>34</sup> One of the clocks made by Townsend Goddard described in this receipt is another touchstone for case types made in Newport in the Federal era (fig. 11); unfortunately, the current whereabouts of this clock are unknown. Its case varies from the John Townsend and Stephen Goddard examples, having a pediment with scrolls ending in rosettes and outer finials supported on boxed elements, features usually associated with Providence cabinetwork.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Townsend Goddard worked in this style since the clock was intended for the Providence market. Unfortunately, existing images of the blocked



Fig. 10. Stephen Goddard, casemaker, and Charles Robbins, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, case Newport; movement Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 1795–1804. Mahogany, chestnut, pine, cherry, and yellow poplar, 86 × 19 1/8 × 10 1/4 in. (218.4 × 48.6 × 26 cm). Private collection. [R1F1855]



Fig. 11. Townsend Goddard, casemaker, and Caleb Wheaton, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, case Newport; movement Providence, 1786. Mahogany, 93 × 18 1/2 in. (236.2 × 47 cm). Location unknown. [R1F2311]



Fig. 12. Thomas Howard, Jr., casemaker or retailer, and William Cummins, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock*, movement Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1811; retailed Providence. Mahogany, H. 98½ in. (250.2 cm). Private collection. [RIF4612]

door and shell on the Townsend Goddard case do not provide enough detail to make other attributions to him. No movements signed by Newport clockmakers survive in cases with scrolled pediments ending in rosettes and boxed elements under the finials.

The Federal era saw variations on the typical Rhode Island tall case clock. Both Providence and Westerly cabinetmakers made clock cases with atypically short scrolled pediments. Examples are known with movements by Caleb Wheaton, Caleb Wheaton and Son, and members of the Stillman family of clockmakers in Westerly.<sup>36</sup> The shape of the pediments in this group relates to a small number of earlier block-and-shell cases, probably made in Providence, which also feature short scrolled pediments.<sup>37</sup> An example by Paul Stillman was made in 1807 for Thomas Noyes (cat. 97), a landowner in Stonington and Westerly whose portrait survives. Another cabinetmaker also in the Westerly, Rhode Island–Stonington, Connecticut, area made idiosyncratic cases for movements attributed to the Stillman family (see cat. 78). These cases have elaborately scrolled ornamentation on their pediments, naturalistic scallop-shell carving on their doors and applied and inset into their bases, outwardly splaying ogee-bracket feet with scrolled returns, and unusually broad cove moldings between their waists and bases.<sup>38</sup>

From the very end of the eighteenth century to about 1808, Willard tall case clocks in their fine “Roxbury cases” dominated the region.<sup>39</sup> These cases have veneered, cross-banded fronts and hoods with delicate fretwork mounted with three plinths that support brass finials. Some of these Massachusetts-made clocks were retailed in Rhode Island. The Providence cabinetmaker Thomas Howard, Jr., for instance, was an agent for the Roxbury clockmaker William Cummins.<sup>40</sup> The clock case with a movement by Cummins that Howard sold in 1811 to James Driscoll, of Warren, Rhode Island (fig. 12), bears all the Massachusetts earmarks and is perhaps an example of the Willard clockmakers reaching into the Rhode Island market. The sale is documented by an invoice glued inside the case of the clock (fig. 13). Documentation such as this, with

transaction date, price, and names of buyer and seller, is very rare. Seven clocks with “Roxbury cases” house movements signed by Bristol, Rhode Island, clockmaker Josiah Gooding (see cat. 100). The cases are so close to those made in Boston that they raise the question as to whether they were actually imported from Massachusetts by Gooding, or whether a Boston-trained casemaker relocated to the Bristol area.

Rhode Island cabinetmakers attempted to compete with the Willards by making cases that imitated the “Roxbury cases,” such as the example by Holmes Weaver (cat. 95) that houses an unsigned movement. Palmer and Coe, a Newport cabinetmaking firm active between 1804 and 1809, also labeled “Roxbury cases.”<sup>41</sup> The similarity of the Weaver and the Palmer and Coe cases, as well as of a number of locally made cases housing movements by Newport clockmaker David Williams, to those by Aaron Willard is unmistakable.<sup>42</sup> Several Rhode Island clockmakers manufactured tall case clocks in the last few years of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, but in comparison to other regions, relatively few Federal clocks were produced in the state. Most of the Rhode Island-made “Roxbury cases” can be

differentiated from their Boston counterparts by several small details not found on true “Roxbury cases.” Most common and easily recognizable is the use of a cock-bead molding surrounding the pendulum doors of the Rhode Island examples, rather than the larger, applied molding always found on true “Roxbury cases.” Other subtle differences include the ogee-shaped waist molding substituted in Rhode Island for the cove shape used in Boston, and the turned wood capitals and bases often substituted for the customary brass fittings on the Boston model. Roxbury-style cases were made not only in Newport but also in Providence. An example by clockmaker William Stanton uses ivory or whalebone for the finials, column capitals, and bases.<sup>43</sup> This use of organic material also occurs on other fine case pieces made in Providence (see, for example, cat. 104).<sup>44</sup> The style extended as far as Warwick, where a clock by Squire Millerd sports Roxbury-style fretwork (cat. 99). Although Rhode Island clockmakers were losing ground, cabinetmakers were still making cases in Rhode Island in the early Republic. In an advertisement dated 1812, William Salisbury of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, just over the state line from Providence, offered “at the shortest notice, and in the best manner,

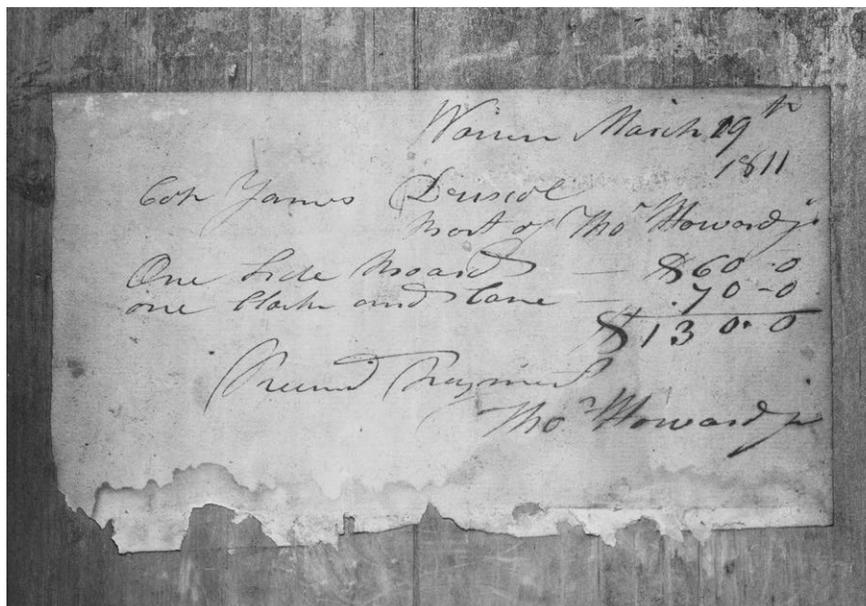


Fig. 13. Bill of sale for fig. 12, from Thomas Howard, Jr., to James Driscoll, March 19, 1811

all kinds of CLOCK CASES, cheaper than can be purchased in Providence.”<sup>45</sup>

In 1802 Boston clockmakers dealt another blow to Rhode Island clockmaking when Simon Willard developed his so-called patent timepiece, today called the banjo clock. These newly fashionable wall clocks included finely painted eglomise panels and were more affordable than tall case clocks. They eventually spelled disaster for clockmakers in Rhode Island and elsewhere. Willard selectively enforced his patent, allowing only his close circle of associates to make his clocks, and no Rhode Island clockmaker was granted that right. Banjo clocks grew in popularity and, by 1810, these almost entirely replaced tall case clocks, not only in Rhode Island but also throughout New England. Soon the new clocks were offered for sale in large numbers by retailers in Rhode Island. In 1809 silversmith, watchmaker, and clockmaker Payton Dana advertised “Willard’s Patent Time Pieces” for sale at his Providence shop. Nehemiah Dodge and Josiah Whitaker followed in 1811.<sup>46</sup>

When Willard’s patent finally expired in 1816, a few Rhode Island clockmakers made a Rhode Island version of Willard’s timepiece. Newport clockmaker David Williams was the most prolific of these and may have introduced his Rhode Island version a little before the patent expired.<sup>47</sup> He tried to modify Willard’s clocks slightly, particularly in the layout of the movement, apparently in an attempt to circumvent the patent. One example with this modified movement was made by Williams in about 1820, a few years after the patent expired (cat. 96).

Williams also made shelf clocks that imitated the products of the Willards and other Massachusetts clockmakers.<sup>48</sup> He is known to have worked with the Newport cabinetmaker John Young, who made his cases.<sup>49</sup> A public auction of the contents of Williams’s store following his death in 1823 reveals the magnitude of his endeavors. Among his goods and equipment were a “large and valuable assortment of clocks, time-pieces and watches; plain and moon clocks, with and without cases, mahogany and gilt deadbeat timepieces, of the best workmanship, and most approved construction,”

along with an extensive array of clockmaking, watchmaking, and silversmithing tools.<sup>50</sup>

By the time the Willards and other Boston clockmakers had exerted their influence on Rhode Island clockmaking, through their highly desired tall case clocks and later by the less expensive banjo and shelf models, Rhode Island clockmaking had lost its former prominence. Although a number of tall case and banjo clocks were made in Rhode Island after 1810, clockmaking by individual craftsmen was quickly fading, and Connecticut factories were producing ever-cheaper clocks, many with wood movements. Highly skilled makers could no longer support themselves by producing clock movements one at a time, by hand. Many turned to repairing movements—both brass and the troublesome new wood variety—and also to repairing watches, which were becoming more common. Out of necessity, clockmakers became merchants and branched out into jewelry making, silversmithing, and goldsmithing.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Rhode Island clockmakers and the cabinetmakers with whom they worked have left an incomparable body of work—some of the most remarkable and beautiful clocks made in early America.

## Notes

The title phrase of this essay appears in Latin (“Ab hoc momento pendet aeternitas”) on three clocks by Caleb Wheaton; see n4, below.

1. Only two Rhode Island clockmakers are known to have produced wooden clock movements, a cheaper alternative that would eventually become common in other regions. William Stillman of Westerly made a small number of wooden clock movements between 1786 and 1788, and one example is known by Jedediah Browning of Charlestown, R.I. See Morris 2011, 103–5.
2. The changeover dates from one style of dial to the next vary by region. The approximate dates given here are for Rhode Island.
3. Daniel Spencer, Newport, shop joiner, v. Thomas Claggett, Newport, watchmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, vol. H, p. 198, November 1768 term, case 29, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Record Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
4. See, for example, a clock by Seril Dodge with the motto “Tempus Edax Rerum” (Time, devourer of all things); Hohmann et al. 2009, 290–91, no. 88, ill. [RIF2109]. See also clocks by Caleb Wheaton with the motto “Ab hoc momento pendet aeternitas” (On this moment hangs eternity): Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 25.135 [RIF2306]; Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), February 24, 2001, lot 386 [RIF3549]; and Hohmann et al. 2009, 306–7, no. 96, ill. [RIF4610].
5. The authors are grateful to Donald L. Fennimore and Frank L. Hohmann III for sharing their research on William Claggett and to Paul J. Foley for sharing his research on colonial New England’s second-most prolific clockmaker, Gawen Brown of Boston.
6. The Rhode Island Furniture Archive, Yale University Art Gallery, records about forty clocks by Claggett, and the files of Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, in Canton, Mass., record others in private collections.
7. For similar clocks by Claggett, see Partridge 1937, 113, ill. [RIF2321]; Christie’s, New York, January 16, 1998, lot 423 [RIF2550]; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.546 [RIF 4027]; Champlin 1976b, 21, fig. 10 [RIF5372]; and Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Canton, Mass. [RIF6150].
8. The clock that is comparable to the one made for Gorton is RIF6150; see n7, above.
9. For the others, see Partridge 1937, 113, ill. [RIF2321]; Sotheby’s, New York, January 16–17, 1998, lot 270 [RIF3139]; cat. 9 in the present catalogue; and Christie’s, New York, January 23, 2015, lot 148 [RIF6174].
10. Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1955.2 [RIF956]; and Sotheby’s, New York, January 16–17, 1998, lot 270 [RIF3139].
11. The cases are constructed differently. For instance, the sides of the hood on the Vigneron clock are tenoned into the base of the hood, while the sides of the hood on the Chipstone Foundation clock fit into dovetail keyways in the base and are further secured with nails driven up through the base.
12. For the Wunsch clock [RIF6174], see n9, above.
13. See, for example, RIF3139 in n9, above.
14. The Claggett clocks in japanned cases are the following: Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, inv. no. DEC.002 [RIF3356]; Hohmann et al. 2009, 282–83, no. 84, ill. [RIF4607]; and Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1980.II.1 [RIF5318].
15. Emlen 1980, 502–7. Emlen also cites evidence of a tall case clock with a movement by Claggett and case by the Boston japanner Thomas Johnson, known through eighteenth-century correspondence; see *ibid.*, 506n1.
16. The authors are grateful to Tara Cederholm and Christine Thomson for sharing their research on eighteenth-century japanned furniture.
17. For the clocks by Claggett, see Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 89.6 [RIF668]; and, for the one owned by Dering, Failey 1998, 66–67, no. 74, ill. [RIF1176]. For the clocks by Wady, see cat. 33 in the present catalogue; Hohmann et al. 2009, 302–3, no. 94, ill. [RIF227]; and *ibid.*, 300–301, no. 93, ill. [RIF2299]. For the Rockwell clock, see cat. 41 in the present catalogue.
18. Most of the block-and-shell colonial clocks have blocking and shells carved from the solid; two exhibit blocking from the solid with applied shells. See Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, inv. no. B.59.83 [RIF392], with a movement by Edward Spalding; and Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), February 24, 2001, lot 386 [RIF3549], with a movement by Caleb Wheaton.
19. For a Claggett clock with a framed door, see Colonial Williamsburg, Va., inv. no. 1972-36 [RIF184]; for one with an unframed door, see Delaney Antique Clocks, West Townsend, Mass. [RIF6095]. The former has a variant construction in which the door is framed with the blocking applied, but the shell is carved from the solid, arched top of the door. For an additional Wady clock with a shell carved from the solid, see Christie’s, New York, January 21, 2000, lot 126 [RIF2305].
20. For an example of this type by Spalding, see “Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement,” *Antiques* 143, no. 5 (May 1993): 699, ill. [RIF2274]; for an example by Rockwell, see

- the clock on loan to the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. L1981.16.1 [RIF6152].
21. In addition to catalogue 62, four related examples survive, including one by Caleb Wheaton with a painted dial by dial manufacturer Ashwin and Company of Birmingham, England; see Carlsen Gallery, Freehold and Greenfield, N.Y., November 27, 2010, lot 265 [RIF5448]. See also Cooper and Gleason 1999, 175, fig. 10 [RIF2108], and 190, fig. 33 [RIF2123]; and Brown University, Providence, inv. no. HP 321 [RIF6172], with a movement by the London maker Samuel Toulmin.
  22. In addition to figure 6, the group includes the following two clocks by Squire Millerd: Carlsen Gallery, Freehold and Greenville, N.Y., May 18, 2008, lot 342 [RIF2713]; and A. Sack 1950, 122, ill. [RIF4217]. It includes one clock by David Williams: A. Sack 1993, 134, ill. [RIF2053]. And it includes several clocks by unknown makers: formerly collection of Ray Franklin, sold at Christie's, New York, October 13, 1984, lot 434 [RIF1521]; formerly collection of Morris Berry and William Randolph Hearst, "Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 134, no. 1 (July 1988): 9, ill. [RIF2023]; and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), November 6–7, 1999, lot 888 [RIF3807].
  23. RIF1521 and RIF2023; for citations for these clocks, see n22, above.
  24. Carr 2004, 53–54, figs. 12–13.
  25. Christie's, New York, January 23, 1988, lot 276 [RIF3647]. Another type of case made to house works by Newport clockmakers of the colonial era has a thin raised panel applied to the framed pendulum door. See, for instance, Sotheby's, New York, January 16–17, 1999, lot 697 [RIF3045], with a movement by Isaac Anthony, and Brooklyn Museum, inv. no. 18.156 [RIF4137], with a movement by William Claggett.
  26. See, for example, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 2757.2 [RIF390], with a movement by William Tomlinson; Ott 1965a, 124–25, no. 79, ill. [RIF403], and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), October 31–November 2, 2003, lot 1561 [RIF3892], with movements by Marmaduke Storrs; "Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 144, no. 2 (August 1993): 129, ill. [RIF2283], with a movement by John Goldsmith; Christie's, New York, January 21, 2011, lot 70 [RIF2347], with a movement by William and James Miller; Christie's, New York, January 18–19, 2007, lot 579 [RIF2349], with a movement by Thomas Chappell; Sotheby's, New York, October 14, 1989, lot 261 [RIF2860], with a movement by John Monkhouse; and Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), November 8, 2009, lot 58 [RIF4620], and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Portsmouth), May 26–27, 2012, lot 769 [RIF5522], with movements by Thomas Wagstaff.
  27. "Edward Spalding advertisement," *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, August 8, 1772, p. 4.
  28. Rhode Island clockmakers also competed with clockmakers in other colonial centers; see, for example, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 25.115.42 [RIF784], a Rhode Island block-and-shell case with a movement by the Boston clockmaker Gawen Brown.
  29. "Caleb Wheaton advertisement," *Providence Gazette*, July 14, 1798, p. 1.
  30. "Caleb Wheaton advertisement," *Providence Gazette* 41, August 11, 1804, p. 1.
  31. See Sotheby's, New York, October 7, 2006, lot 218 [RIF2069], with a dial made by William Price; and Sotheby's, New York, October 13, 2000, lot 314 [RIF3128], with a dial by Ashwin and Company.
  32. *United States Chronicle* (Providence), September 11, 1794, p. 3.
  33. In addition to visible vertical and miter joints on the exterior, some cases of this period combine visible vertical and miter joints on the interior; see, for instance, Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. 1764a–c [RIF2256]. Others do not use miter joints at all; see, for instance, a mahogany Chippendale tall case clock with a dial signed by Samuel Rockwell, advertised online by Stanley Weiss in 2010 [RIF5836].
  34. Drowne 1918, 379.
  35. For a discussion of pieces with "boxes" and rosettes, see Cooper and Gleason 1999, 185, 191, 197.
  36. For examples with movements by Caleb Wheaton in cases with short scrolled pediments, see Christie's, New York, January 24, 1987, lot 243 [RIF2312]; Sotheby's, New York, October 4, 2007, lot 165 [RIF3385]; and Nutting 1963, no. 3322, ill. [RIF4056]. For an example housing a movement made by Barton Stillman in 1814, see Delaney *Antique Clocks*, West Townsend, Mass. [RIF6070].
  37. See, for example, Hohmann et al. 2009, 290–91, no. 88, ill. [RIF2109]; Carpenter 1954, 57–58, no. 31, ill. [RIF2293]; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 25.135 [RIF2306]; Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), November 1–2, 1997, lot 510 [RIF3799]; Old Sturbridge Village, Mass., inv. no. 57.1.107 [RIF4393]; and Hohmann et al. 2009, 306–7, no. 96, ill. [RIF4610].
  38. In addition to catalogue 78, see Bailey 1975, 80, fig. 73 [RIF6040]; and Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum, Stonington, Conn. [RIF6068].
  39. The cases are named for the town of Roxbury, Massachusetts (now part of Boston), which was the location of the Willard family of clockmakers, who popularized this style.

40. Foley 2002, 268.
41. A clock in the Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.1718a-c [RIF396], for example, bears the label of Palmer and Coe.
42. For a David Williams clock, see, for example, "Richard A. Bourne, Co., advertisement," *Antiques* 104, no. 5 (November 1973): 735, ill. [RIF2278].
43. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 84.149 [RIF3467].
44. Other examples of Providence cabinetwork with extensive use of ivory or whalebone, particularly for pulls, are dressing bureaus, secretaries, and a chest of drawers. For the dressing tables, see Monahon 1980, 140, fig. 12 [RIF1754]; cat. 104 in the present catalogue; and Christie's, New York, January 15–16, 1999, lot 729 [RIF4548]. For the secretaries, see Monahon 1965b, 702, fig. 1 [RIF1907]; and one sold by CRN Auctions, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., October 17, 2009, lot 88 [RIF4556]. And for the chest of drawers, see one advertised by Stanley Weiss in 2010 [RIF5840].
45. "William Salisbury advertisement," *Columbian Phenix or Providence Patriot*, February 22, 1812, p. 4.
46. *Columbian Phenix*, December 30, 1809, p. 1; and *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, March 23, 1811, p. 3.
47. For examples by Williams, see Foley 2002, 87–91 [RIF4615, RIF4616, and RIF4617]. For other examples, see Sotheby's, New York, January 22, 2011, lot 130 [RIF5334], by George W. Babcock; and Sotheby's, New York, January 24–25, 2014, lot 354 [RIF5917], by Thomas G. Daggett.
48. See, for example, Nutting 1963, no. 3442, ill. [RIF3424]; Christie's, New York, January 21, 2011, lot 108 [RIF4529]; and the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 30.20.14 [RIF5018].
49. Foley 2002, 339.
50. *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport), October 9, 1823, p. 3.
51. See, for instance, "Pardon Miller advertisement," *Providence Gazette*, January 3, 1820, p. 3.



James's Wh.  
Waters's Wh.  
Ellery's Ferry Wh.

Point Br.

Draw Bridge

Long Wharf

James's Wh.

Barnister's Wharf

Taylor's Wh.

Mathews's Wh.

Gardner's Wh.  
Redwood's Wh.

Thames Street

Queen Street

Ann Street

Mary Lane

Griffin Street

High Street

Church Street

Market Street

William Street

King Street

St. Andrew Street

St. George Street

St. James Street

St. John Street

St. Peter Street

St. Paul Street

St. Mary Street

St. Elizabeth Street

St. George Street

St. Andrew Street

St. John Street

St. Peter Street

St. Paul Street

St. James Street

St. Mary Street

St. Elizabeth Street

St. Anne Street

St. Agnes Street

St. Ursula Street

St. Margaret Street

St. Cecily Street

St. Eustach Street

St. Nicholas Street

St. Martin Street

St. Giles Street

St. Edmund Street

St. Dunstons Street

St. Andrew Street

St. John Street

St. Peter Street

St. Paul Street

St. James Street

St. Mary Street

St. Elizabeth Street

St. Anne Street

St. Agnes Street

St. Ursula Street

St. Margaret Street

St. Cecily Street

St. Eustach Street

St. Nicholas Street

St. Martin Street

St. Giles Street

St. Edmund Street

*Windsor  
Chairmaking  
in Rhode Island,  
1760–1830*

NANCY GOYNE EVANS

MOST WINDSOR CHAIRMAKERS pursuing their craft in Rhode Island were indistinct figures. Almost none branded, labeled, stenciled, or otherwise identified their products, and few left more than a scattering of written transactions with clients. The basic product of the Windsor trade was a chair with a plank seat, hand-drilled on the bottom surface with a series of holes to socket the undercarriage, which comprises legs and stretchers, and on the top surface to house the chair back, consisting of either a steamed and bent bow or two vertical back posts, a horizontal crest, and, in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century work, a series of spindles, also known as sticks. The undercarriage and the upper structure independently socket into the shaped plank, unlike other seating, which is constructed with an open seat frame and rear legs and back posts that are continuous units. Early Windsor production focused on the armchair form, and additional drilled holes anchored the arm structures.

Windsors of early date—introduced from England to Philadelphia in the mid-1720s, probably in the household baggage of Patrick Gordon, lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania under Penn family sponsorship—were painted green, and virtually all Windsor seating in America remained that color until after the Revolution. Most early Windsor seating in England was used out of doors on the grounds of country estates and, painted green, the furniture receded into the landscape without intruding on the architectural structures ornamenting the grounds.<sup>1</sup> The Windsor was a sturdy, reliable, and moderately priced chair made of a variety of native woods, which were readily available. Unlike the seats of upholstered or fiber-bottomed chairs, the solid wood seat of the Windsor rarely required replacement. From the initial construction of Windsor seating in America in Philadelphia in the 1740s, the craft grew and spread, and by the 1790s, production, in varying degrees, extended from northern New England to the deep South and was moving westward.

### *Early Windsor Seating*

Newport was the first center of Windsor chairmaking in New England and the second center after Philadelphia in all the British colonies in America. Windsor seating of early date was made in Newport for the Redwood Library, a private institution founded in 1747 by Abraham Redwood, a Quaker merchant. Redwood's gift was described by an early visitor to Newport as "a small but very choice collection of Books." A library building to house the volumes, designed by Peter Harrison and funded by subscription, was completed in 1750. The first seating in the building was probably an assortment of household chairs supplied by individual members. Not until the annual meeting of September 26, 1764, was it "Voted That a Tax be Levied on the Society of Four pounds old Tenor for purchasing Twelve Chairs for the use of the Library & a covering for the Table & writing Desk."<sup>2</sup> The chairs were of low-back pattern and were painted verdigris green (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup>

Although the maker of these chairs is unknown, Jonathan Cahoon, Joseph Vickary, and possibly Timothy Waterhouse are candidates, as each was working as a chairmaker in Newport at this date, although



Fig. 1. *Low-Back Windsor Armchair*, Newport, 1760–65. Maple, 27<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 15<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (69.5 × 69.2 × 40 cm). Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1965.0833. [RIF1254]

Waterhouse has yet to be identified as a Windsor chairmaker.<sup>4</sup> Rev. Ezra Stiles, admitted to the society as an honorary member in 1755, was painted by Samuel King in 1771 seated in one of these library chairs or a low-back chair of similar pattern (fig. 2). Stiles, who was pastor of the Second Congregational Church and who later became the president of Yale College (1778–95), commented on the portrait in his diary: "The Piece is made up thus. The Effigies sitting in a Green Elbow Chair, in a Teaching Attitude, with the right hand on the Breast, and the Left holding a preaching Bible. Behind & on his left side is a part of a Library—two Shelves of Books."<sup>5</sup> As membership expanded, the library would have required additional seating, which probably explains the existence of a modest number of closely related chairs with high backs (see cat. 83). The design of these high-back chairs is well coordinated with that of the low-back chairs. The crest and the capping piece on the arm rails share similar profiles, and the turned work of the spindles, arm posts, legs, and stretchers is formed of related elements. A still later version of the basic low-back design introduced new leg turnings (fig. 3), although other features remained the same. The new leg pattern includes the five turned elements found on most eighteenth-century Windsors: a tapered foot connected by a ring and a spool turning to a baluster, above which a small swelled turning connects each leg with the shaped plank seat. The unusually tall spool turning seen above the ring here is a distinctive feature associated with some Rhode Island work through the end of the eighteenth century.

On the basis of provenance, it can be surmised that Windsor chairs were also being made in the Providence area during the colonial period. A group of sack-back chairs represented by figure 4 exhibits a general relationship in size and seat shape to the Redwood Library chairs, although the design of this group is advanced. There are three variant patterns within this sack-back group; all have large, thick D-shaped seats with chamfered (slanted) lower edges. The two leg styles seen in the group, although varied in profile, display a general relationship to each other. The previous cross-stretcher



Fig. 2. Samuel King, *Ezra Stiles* (1727–1795, B.A. 1746, M.A. 1749), 1771. Oil on canvas, 34 × 28 in. (86.4 × 71.1 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Bequest of Dr. Charles Jenkins Foote, B.A. 1883, M.D. 1890, inv. no. 1955.3.1



Fig. 3. *Low-Back Windsor Armchair*, Newport, 1770–76. Maple, 32½ × 26 × 15¾ in. (82.6 × 66 × 40 cm). Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, inv. no. RLC.FUR. [RIFI251]



Fig. 4. *Sack-Back Windsor Armchair*, probably Providence, ca. 1780–85. Maple, ash, and oak,  $37\frac{1}{4} \times 28\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  in. (94.6 × 72.4 × 40 cm). Probably Norman Herreshoff House, Bristol, R.I. [R1F1269]

bracing system, copied from a design found in formal seating, is replaced here by the H-plan system that remained in use throughout the eighteenth century. A small rounded projection just behind the rounded arm pads (see cat. 83, fig. 1) relates to a similar feature on the Redwood Library chairs. A Providence background for figure 4 is reinforced through its ownership by a direct descendant of John Brown, a prosperous eighteenth-century merchant and entrepreneur of Providence. An identical chair bears the inscription “I.BROWN,” incised in bold letters on the top surface of the proper-left arm terminal. Several other chairs of this group were collected in the immediate Providence area. At least two-dozen chairs relate to the illustrated example, either closely or through a variety of distinctive features. Among the closely related examples, however, are several variations: the ring turning near the leg tops is eliminated, or the sawed S-curved arm posts are exchanged for turned posts, or there is a top extension above the arched bow crowned by a double-ogee crest.<sup>6</sup>

A number of special features distinguish this sturdy Providence Windsor from previous Windsor seating. The chair back displays an early use of spindles with a nodule, or small swelling, in their lower half, a characteristic also found in eastern Connecticut work. The sawed S-curved arm supports, which contribute to the sturdiness of the form, appear to derive from a small group of formal Rhode Island armchairs.<sup>7</sup> Two unusual features of the design are the central ball-shaped element of the stretchers and the long, low reach of the bow ends, which terminate on the arm rail immediately behind the S-curved supports. The ball turnings of the stretchers, flanked by short colonnettes, likely were adapted from the common double-baluster, spool-and-ring turnings in the front stretchers of early eighteenth-century seating. Here the turning is simplified into a ball secured by the flanges of the colonnettes. On occasion this feature also appears in later Rhode Island Windsor work.<sup>8</sup>

The thickness and configuration of the bow in figure 4, particularly in concert with the S-curved arm posts, suggests the influence of Chinese seating

furniture, some of which displays similar characteristics. The chair, however, predates activity by American merchants in the China trade, which began in the mid-1780s. To maintain the solid structure of the chair, the maker apparently decided that a thick bow mounted relatively low and forward was critical. Extensive pinning also contributes to the sturdiness of the chair: Every other spindle is pinned at the bow, arm rail, and seat. The bow ends and those of the posts are anchored in blind sockets, and all the joints are pinned.

### *Windsor Seating in Early Government Buildings*

Just as Windsor chairs provided an expedient solution to the seating needs at the Redwood Library, they were sought after for both their sturdiness and affordability by other places of public gathering. Records of the colony of Rhode Island from the 1760s describe the need for seating in government facilities, and the paper trail continues until almost the end of the century. In 1750 Rhode Island consisted of five counties—Providence, Newport, King’s (renamed Washington in 1781), Bristol, and Kent. As the counties grew, government buildings were erected. These buildings originally were called colony houses and, after independence from England, statehouses. The colony houses also served as courthouses.

Following a resolve passed in autumn 1768 by the General Assembly, Martin Seamans and Henry Bacon supplied the courthouse at Providence in February 1769 with “12 Winsor Chairs @ 2 1/4 Dol[lars]” apiece and “3 highback ditto @ 2 3/4 d[itt]o” apiece, the prices recorded in Rhode Island paper money.<sup>9</sup> The date and modest difference in price between the two groups of chairs suggest that the twelve Windsors were sturdy low-back chairs compatible in design with the slightly more expensive high-back variety. Bacon is recorded as a chairmaker as early as 1761; Seamans’s name is absent from other records. Given their early date, the chairs likely had cross-stretchers, like those of the early Redwood Library seating. Four years later, in 1773, the Providence courthouse acquired another dozen chairs

from John Sharpoon, at a cost of nine shillings each.<sup>10</sup> Little is known of Sharpoon except that he migrated to Providence from Yorkshire, England. The lower cost and later date suggest that these were low-back Windsors of lighter construction than the library chairs.<sup>11</sup>

Efforts to reduce seating costs further by purchasing cheaper-quality chairs, however, frequently failed. In 1774, the year after Sharpoon supplied Windsor seating to the courthouse in Providence, Timothy Waterhouse delivered “1 Doz’n Slit [slat] Back Chairs” to the courthouse in Newport.<sup>12</sup> Waterhouse’s identification describes not Windsors but rush-bottom seating, priced at just five shillings per chair. Any cost saving to the government for the alternative seating was nullified two years later, in 1776, when Waterhouse was paid for “mending and bottoming” the same chairs at “Colony house,” that is, the Newport courthouse.<sup>13</sup> Woven bottoms in chairs subject to constant use had short lives, one of the reasons the Windsor, with its durable wooden seat, became so popular for general use.

### *Windsor Chairs in the Coastal Trade*

Within a few years of the Redwood Library’s purchase of the first Windsor chairs for member seating, the first evidence of the Windsor as a merchantable product in the export trade of Newport occurs, in the papers of Aaron Lopez.<sup>14</sup> Lopez, a Sephardic Jew who had emigrated from Portugal in 1752 to join an older brother in Newport, was by 1767 a well-established merchant, his vessels trading in England at Bristol and London, along the American coast, in the Caribbean, and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> As early as 1762 his property on Thames Street, which overlooked the waterfront, included a residence, three-story warehouse, and wharf, all of the buildings adjacent to the central business center at Long Wharf, with its drawbridge leading to the inner harbor, as delineated on Charles Blaskowitz’s plan of Newport (fig. 5). The following year Lopez became parnas of the newly built synagogue in the community. By 1775 the merchant owned or held part interest in

over thirty vessels. At Lopez’s death in 1782, Rev. Ezra Stiles described Lopez as “that amiable, benevolent, most hospitable, and very respectable Gentleman.”<sup>16</sup>

An invoice of merchandise for the brig *Charlotte*, bound for Jamaica and the Bay of Honduras in August 1767, lists among its cargo “12 Round Green Chairs” priced at sixteen shillings apiece. In September of that year, the brig *Industry* left Lopez’s wharf with a similar cargo of chairs for the Bay of Honduras.<sup>17</sup> The price indicates that all the chairs were armchairs, and the color green describes Windsor seating.

Before year’s end, Lopez shipped yet another cargo of Windsor chairs, consisting of “5 Green Round Chairs” and “4 D[itt]o with high backs,” to Savannah, Georgia, on the brig *Sally*. These and the other green chairs shipped during 1767 probably resembled the first low-back Windsors purchased for the Redwood Library and the high-back Windsors that likely were purchased a few years later to meet the needs of expanding library membership. A cargo of chairs on the sloop *Florida* shipped to Maryland in July 1768 provides explicit description: “4 round back wooden bottom Green chairs” and “2 round High back D[itt]o.” The words “wooden bottom” differentiated the Windsor seating from the “10 round back straw bottom Chairs” (roundabout chairs) also on board. Lopez’s vessels frequently carried other furniture, principally desks and tables. Prior to the Revolution, the merchant also shipped Windsor seating to Suriname (Dutch Guiana) and the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. The most viable candidate as supplier of Lopez’s vernacular seating furniture is Jonathan Cahoone, who is credited in Lopez’s papers in 1765 “By painting a Chair” and in 1773 with supplying “4 winser Chears.”<sup>18</sup>

Lopez was the consummate merchant. He routinely provided his captains with instructions for a voyage, including disposal of the varied cargo. Writing to John Newdigate, captain of the *Charlotte*, Lopez directed him to the port of Witherwood, Jamaica, where he was to deliver to Abraham Pereira Mendes (Lopez’s son-in-law) such goods



Fig. 5. Charles Blaskowitz, *Plan of the Town of Newport in Rhode Island*, September 1, 1777. Engraving, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (34 × 37 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.2346

as Mendes deemed suitable for the market there. Mendes, in turn, consigned goods judged salable at the Bay of Honduras. Newdigate sold a varied cargo at the bay and invested in “good and sound Large Logwood” for the voyage home, as directed. Converted into chips and boiled, logwood (campeche wood) produced a red dye used for staining furniture. The business of exchanging one cargo for another in a series of bargains at various ports generally profited an enterprising merchant.<sup>19</sup>

### *Newport and Providence in the Post-Revolutionary Period*

During the Revolution, Newport, the town and its people, suffered measurably from British occupation, and the trade of merchants like Lopez was severely disrupted. Trees, fences, and wharves were taken down to provide fuel for the British forces; livestock and crops were foraged for food. A considerable part of the population, including Lopez and his family, relocated elsewhere. The town was

shelled from the harbor, and the port was blockaded, destroying its commerce. One-third of the books in the Redwood Library were either carried off or destroyed, and like so many of the houses in town, the building fell out of repair. Furnishings in the library and courthouse probably were carried off for other purposes. Residents who remained suffered losses to their property, including aforementioned furniture maker Jonathan Cahoone. In 1782, following the Revolution, Cahoone submitted a "Petition for Losses Sustained during British Occupation of Newport," detailing personal property worth "90 Lawful dolers." The petition included "Chersmakers Tules of all sorts, one Dussen of Chers made and maney more sawed out stuff for Chers" as well as "one good Boot [boat] for Bseness."<sup>20</sup> Despite Newport's commodious deep-water harbor, it never recovered its former stature as a port. Only with time did its shipping revive moderately. On the other hand, Providence, although cut off from the sea by the British blockade of Narragansett Bay, was never an occupied town, and by the end of the war, it had become the principal commercial center of Rhode Island.<sup>21</sup>

In October 1783, the General Assembly in Providence turned its attention to addressing the post-Revolutionary needs of the Newport Statehouse and directed the sheriff to purchase three "large Windsor . . . chairs with resting Elbow-Pieces" and "Two Dozen . . . common Windsor chairs." Sheriff William Davis delivered the seating in April 1784, noting on the bill that the two-dozen Windsors at twelve shillings each were painted green and that only one fifteen-shilling chair "with high back" was acquired. The chairmaker was not named. In the same October 1783 session of the assembly, the sheriff of Washington County (formerly King's County) was directed to make a similar purchase of seating: Newport chairmaker Joseph Vickary delivered "Twenty Seven Green Windsor Chairs" and a bill for £16.13.0 on December 20, 1784, to Beriah Brown, sheriff of Washington County.

The similarity of orders and dates suggests that Vickary may have made both groups of chairs; however, a record of Timothy Waterhouse, the previously discussed chairmaker who turned banisters for the Newport Statehouse in 1784, suggests that he may have received the chair contract.<sup>22</sup> The style of both groups of chairs is debatable. Pricing is suitable for cross-stretcher Windsors, which would have been about this price, although it seems reasonable that, twenty years after their introduction, chair styles would have evolved. A scrapbook photograph of the Old Jury Room in the Newport Statehouse dating to about 1886 illustrates in the background six sturdy sack-back chairs, with tapered feet and turnings appropriate to the 1780s.<sup>23</sup> These may represent the type of seating delivered to the Newport Statehouse in April 1784, accompanied by a high-back chair with compatible turnings. In the foreground of the photograph are two cross-stretcher, tapered-foot chairs, which probably were part of a prewar purchase.

Information on statehouse seating in the eighteenth century ends with a directive by the General Assembly in October 1796 to the sheriff of Providence County to purchase "two dozen of Winsor Chairs" for the statehouse in that county. The following March, Kinsley Carpenter delivered the chairs and was paid \$48.00, or \$2.00 per chair, the price describing armchairs.<sup>24</sup> The pattern was probably the sack-back chair—similar to that seen in the portrait of Capt. Samuel Packard by James Earl in figure 6. The arched bow that forms the upper back of the chair is anchored in the arm rail, which produces a seat of strong construction suitable for public use. Carpenter pursued the trade of turner-chairmaker for many more years, occupying part of an old building near the corner of South Main Street and Market Square. As he owned part interest in several schooners, he may have retailed some of his chair production in the coastal trade.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 6. James Earl, *Capt. Samuel Packard* (ca. 1761–1820), ca. 1795. Oil on canvas, 35 × 29¼ in. (88.9 × 74.3 cm). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Bequest of Miss Louise B. Bowen, inv. no. 21.485

### *Tracing Windsor Chairmakers and Their Post-Revolutionary Production*

While Windsor chairmakers prior to the Revolution are difficult to identify, more can be learned about the careers of chairmakers during the post-Revolutionary period, such as Joseph Vickary, the chairmaker who in 1784 supplied seating to the courthouse in Washington County. Vickary also sold chairs to Dr. Isaac Senter, who had a substantial practice in Newport from 1780 until his death in 1799. Senter's furniture purchases were extensive; just as numerous were bills for repairs, refinishing, and rebottoming. Beginning in 1786,

Vickary supplied three sets of Windsor "dining chairs" priced from ten shillings to fourteen shillings, four pence, per chair. Several less expensive chairs probably had woven bottoms. In 1796 Senter had dealings with Benjamin and John Hammond, from whom he purchased six Windsor "fanback Chairs" priced at eleven shillings apiece (or, for comparison with earlier prices cited above, \$1.83 in Federal paper money). Senter's estate inventory lists several sets of "Green Chairs," identifying the color of his Windsor purchases from Vickary. Also itemized is a "Set of Cane Chairs," or fancy seating—which would have had woven seats



Fig. 7. Joseph Shoemaker Russell, *Dining Room of Dr. Whitridge, Tiverton, Rhode Island*, ca. 1848–53, depicting a scene of 1814–15. Watercolor on paper, 7 $\frac{1}{16}$  × 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (17.9 × 24.1 cm). New Bedford Whaling Museum, Mass., Gift of Mrs. Edward K. Simpson, inv. no. 1962.4.3

and painted and decorated wooden surfaces—valued at \$16.00, the price suggesting the set was almost new.<sup>26</sup> Chances are that the fancy chairs were purchased in New York, the “go to” center where many Rhode Islanders purchased upscale seating at this date.

Whereas account books for Windsor chairmakers working in Newport during the second half of the eighteenth century are unknown, it has been possible to compile some information from the accounts of their customers. The picture for Providence is different, however, as some chairmakers’ account books from this period, such as those of the Proud family, do survive. At the death of their father, William Proud, in 1779, Daniel and Samuel Proud took over the family chair-making and turning business, which they continued

into the early 1830s. Their surviving account books show that they produced fancy (woven-bottom) and Windsor seating and all manner of turned work for woodworkers and other customers. Business was slow during the war years, although by the early 1780s production began to normalize.<sup>27</sup>

The Proud brothers used three terms to identify their wooden-bottom production: “Windsor,” “dining,” and “green” chairs. The brothers first recorded making Windsor chairs in 1787; the last entry dates to 1799. Most chairs of this design were priced at twelve shillings (or \$2.00), suggesting they were armchairs. Production amounted to about two-dozen chairs, most probably of sack-back form, a few, perhaps, of high-back form. Dining chairs were introduced in the Proud

accounts in 1788 and continued until about 1804. They probably were bow-back Windsor side chairs (see, for example, cat. 89); first introduced in the mid-1780s in Philadelphia, this pattern was adopted quickly in other locations because its compact, tall, arched back made it ideal for use around the dining table, where space could be at a premium in the usual large family. Prices for this pattern rose gradually over time in the Proud accounts from seven to ten shillings, suggesting that a few later chairs may have been armchairs for use at either narrow end of a dining table (see cat. 87).<sup>28</sup> Bow-back Windsor side chairs are depicted, for example, in the dining room of Dr. William Whitridge of Tiverton, Rhode Island, as it appeared in winter 1814–15 (fig. 7). Still bundled up after attending to the morning's chores, the doctor is warming his feet by the Franklin stove and is seated beneath a large map on rollers that probably depicts the local Narragansett region. The table is set with six places, and the beverage service is in place, awaiting the family to assemble and enjoy "pot-apple-pie" for breakfast.

The term "green chairs" occurs in the Proud accounts only from 1801 to 1808; however, a section of the account book is missing, and production could have continued several years longer. Green was a common identification for most Windsor chairs from the 1760s through the Revolutionary period, after which time pattern names became more common. The Proud brothers may have chosen this older term to distinguish their earlier dining chairs from their production of the new square-back Windsor pattern. Pricing in the account book was in the range of nine shillings to ten shillings, six pence (\$1.50–\$1.75).<sup>29</sup>

The Proud brothers had been pursuing the family business for ten years when, in 1789, the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers was organized for "Promotion of Home Manufactures" and "cementing the Mechanic Interest."<sup>30</sup> Early members among chairmakers included the Proud brothers and Kinsley Carpenter, who, as discussed earlier, supplied Windsor seating to the Providence County courthouse in 1796. The association grew steadily over the

next decade and began working toward achieving protective duties for high-profile products, including chairwork and cabinetwork. By January 1799, minutes of the association note that meetings were being convened at the statehouse in Providence. The following year, a petition on duties for various commodities was drawn and submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives through John Brown. When, two years later, in 1802, the association received a negative reply to the petition, the nature of manufacturing in Rhode Island was already beginning to change from shop-based activity to an emerging factory economy. The new direction was underscored in 1809 by the admission to association membership of Samuel Slater, an English immigrant who used his knowledge of the application of machinery and factory production in spinning cotton to establish a small cotton mill in neighboring Pawtucket. Slater was already importing quantities of raw cotton from the American South for conversion to thread and woven cloth by the growing textile industry.

### *Windsor Design during the Struggles Preceding Statehood*

Rhode Island Windsor design throughout the 1780s, and in some rural areas into the 1790s, strongly reflected the political conditions of the state. Newport, the early center of Windsor chairmaking, was recovering from the devastation of a three-year occupation by the British and the blockade of its port. Rhode Island paper money, which circulated in place of coin and was welcomed by some and deplored by others, created difficult business conditions when the money began to rapidly depreciate. Until May 1790 a bitter controversy raged over ratification of the federal constitution, when by a slim margin of two votes Rhode Island finally joined the federal union—the last of the original thirteen colonies to do so. No cohesive Rhode Island style emerged under these conditions until the 1790s, when Providence craftsmen probably led the way. Up to that point, Rhode Island Windsor design was marked by various combinations of design elements

seemingly chosen at random to produce small numbers of chairs at a time. When a chair sold, a chair-maker repeated the process, not necessarily using all of the same elements.

Two Windsor chairs from the period when design was still in a state of flux are a fan-back side chair (fig. 8) and a sack-back armchair (fig. 9). The form of the upper half of the fan-back chair is that of a partially opened fan held upright and crowned by a top piece, or crest. The small seat of this fan-back chair has a pronounced pommel at the center

front and a chamfered, or canted, lower edge all around, two characteristics retained in some Rhode Island Windsors through the end of the century. The back posts and legs are of complementary design and are competently turned, although of an unusual pattern. The sausagelike stretchers are overstated.<sup>31</sup> The sack-back chair, which displays an entirely different character than most sack-back chairs, also has several uncommon features, including thickened bow ends and an arc-shaped seat front. Both features appear in Rhode Island Windsors from time to time,



Fig. 8. *Fan-Back Windsor Side Chair*, Rhode Island, 1780–90. Chestnut and unknown woods,  $36\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{8} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$  in. (92.4 × 53.7 × 37.5 cm). Location unknown. [RIFI277]



Fig. 9. *Sack-Back Windsor Armchair*, Rhode Island, 1785–95. Unknown woods,  $39 \times 25\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  in. (99.1 × 64.2 × 39.4 cm). Antique Associates at West Townsend, Mass. [RIF6199]

although rarely together. Whereas a master turner produced the boldly stated posts, legs, and stretchers, the same turnings are unlikely to appear together in another chair.<sup>32</sup>

Windsor chairs of this general period from the Connecticut–Rhode Island border region—where precise geographic identification is impossible because of the mix of Connecticut and Rhode Island features in the same chairs—also display considerable diversity. A particularly cogent example exhibits easily distinguishable characteristics of both areas (fig. 10). The association of this chair with Rhode Island chairmaking is indicated in the distinctive ball turning of the medial stretcher, an occasional feature of Rhode Island work (see, for example, fig. 4). The seat-front shaping, with rounded corners and a slightly canted, flat edge, has been purloined from the sack-back work of the Tracy family of New London County, Connecticut, the leading Windsor chairmakers in eastern Connecticut during the 1790s and later. Common to parts of both Connecticut and Rhode Island is the socketing of the legs inside the seat plank so that the leg tops are not visible on the top surface of the seat, a practice that became common everywhere after 1800. A feature found in several other border chairs is the full swell of the spindles. This chair stands apart from other border chairs, however, in its distinctive interpretation of the arm terminals, which are shaped to represent human hands (fig. 11). The wood grain is continuous from the rail proper into the thickened hand, indicating that this feature is original.

### *Windsors and the Domestic Waterborne Trade*

By the mid-1780s the coastwise trade, always an important part of the commerce of Rhode Island, approached its prewar volume. Of 272 vessels that cleared Providence in 1786 with a named destination, 40 percent were involved in the coastal trade with adjacent states and the American South.<sup>33</sup> A large part of Providence's coastal trade focused on New York, and Newport became even more involved in the



Fig. 10. *Sack-Back Windsor Armchair*, Connecticut–Rhode Island border region, 1790–1800. Basswood, maple, and oak, 34 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 26 × 14 in. (88.3 × 66.1 × 35.6 cm). Location unknown. [RIF2209]



Fig. 11. Detail of fig. 10, showing proper-left arm terminal

same trade. Customhouse records for the 1790s provide insight on Newport and New York interaction. Almost fifteen hundred chairs are recorded in seventy-three voyages made during this period, principally in sloops, small single-mast vessels of twenty to eighty tons burden. Of significance, these Newport vessels are recorded sailing the Long Island Sound eastward from New York to Newport with their cargoes.<sup>34</sup> One vessel, the *Aurora*, was owned in the Cahoone family, whose masters at various times were John, Jr., Stephen, and Henry, sons of John Cahoone, cabinetmaker. The *Aurora* carried Windsor chairs from New York to Newport on twelve voyages of record.<sup>35</sup> George G. Channing, who served a mercantile apprenticeship in Newport in the early nineteenth century, noted that “with the wind full and free at south-west” the best ships sailing from Peck Slip in New York could reach Newport in sixteen or seventeen hours.<sup>36</sup> Windsor chairmaking had been

introduced in New York at about the time the craft was underway in Newport. Although New York suffered moderate damage during the Revolutionary War, the destruction was unlike that experienced by Newport. Thus, by the early 1790s, William Strickland, an English visitor to New York, could describe the harbor there as filled with hundreds of vessels.<sup>37</sup> By that date Rhode Island was still getting back on its feet, and it had lost its advantage as a furniture producer. While some Windsor seating shipped to Rhode Island from New York was for local use, the bulk of this trade provided Rhode Island shippers with a commodity popular in its waterborne commerce, particularly when large numbers of chairs were required.

Vernacular seating carried from New York to Newport is variously described as Windsor chairs, green chairs, and dining chairs. Twelve “Yellow chairs” may have been Windsor or fancy chairs with turnings

Manifest of the Cargo on board the Sloop *Semiramis* Benjamin Maghalla Master,  
Burthen *Ninety Seven* Tons, bound from *New York* for *Newport August 14 1800*

Marks & Numbers.	No. of Entries.	Packages and Contents.	Shippers.	Residence.	Consignees.	Residence.
	1	Six Casks of Lime	Benj Maghalla	Newport	Benj Maghalla	Newport
	2	forty 60 <sup>lb</sup> of flour	ditto	ditto	ditto	ditto
	3	Five hundred Windsor Chairs	ditto	ditto	ditto	ditto
	4	thirty Boxes of Soap	ditto	ditto	ditto	ditto
		Four Whales	Passengers Baggage Benjamin Maghalla			

Fig. 12. Manifest of Cargo on Sloop “Semiramis,” Voyage from New York to Newport, August 14, 1800. Printed paper filled in by hand, 6 7/8 × 10 1/8 in. (15.6 × 25.7 cm). U.S. Custom House Records, Federal Archives and Records Center, Waltham, Mass.



Fig. 13. Walter MacBride, *Continuous-Bow Windsor Armchair*, New York, 1792–96. Yellow poplar, soft maple, and oak (microanalysis),  $37\frac{5}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{3}{8}$  in. (95.6 × 64.8 × 44.1 cm). Winterthur Museum, Library, and Garden, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1965.0832

in the new bamboo style. With the adoption of turned work in imitation of bamboo, pale yellow—which simulated the color of bamboo—became a popular new color for vernacular seating. A large number of “chairs” not further identified was counted as Windsor seating when twelve or more were in a cargo; “chairs” in quantity usually meant Windsors because more expensive seating, such as mahogany chairs, generally were identified, and by the 1790s common rush-bottom seating was fading from the picture as a trade commodity. The largest single cargo of Windsor chairs identified as such numbered two hundred items on the sloop *Semiramis* in 1800, shipped from New York and consigned to the master Benjamin Marshall of Newport (fig. 12). John Sprosen, a New York chairmaker, shipped six green

chairs on the sloop *George* in 1796 to a Mr. Carter, probably Robert, in Newport.<sup>38</sup> Two other identified New York shops also provided seating for Rhode Island. James Bertine sold fifteen Windsor chairs to Dean Sweet in 1792, possibly for delivery to a member of the Arnold family.<sup>39</sup> The Providence merchant John Brown owned two (or more) bow-back Windsor side chairs labeled by brothers Thomas and William Ash, the backs braced by two extra spindles anchored in a short extension centered at the back of the seat. Brown’s chairs also originally had stuffed seats, an enhancement that could triple the cost of a Windsor chair.<sup>40</sup>

Comparison of New York (fig. 13) and Rhode Island (fig. 14) continuous-bow armchairs of the early 1790s illuminates the stylistic impact of New York



**Fig. 14.** *Continuous-Bow Windsor Armchair*, Rhode Island, 1792–1800. Yellow poplar, soft maple, and ash (microanalysis),  $36\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{3}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$  in. (92.7 × 45.1 × 41.9 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Gift of C. Sanford Bull, inv. no. 1953.50.7b. [RIF3611]

Windsor seating on Rhode Island production. The continuous-bow Windsor was introduced to Rhode Island from New York when it was still a new design. It was probably inspired by the leather-covered swivel chairs in the French bergère style made by cabinetmaker Thomas Burling for Thomas Jefferson and George Washington; the arched back of the bergère sweeps down and forward to form arms.<sup>41</sup> The same profile occurs in the continuous-bow Windsor, with its arched-bow back that slopes downward and forward to form short arms in a continuous unit; the bow is elevated above seat level on baluster arm posts and tapered sticks. Rhode Island chairmakers slightly modified the bulbous turnings of the New York chair and cushioned the front seat corners. A large projection just behind the

rounded arm pads of the New York chair is absent in the Rhode Island example. The seats of both chairs are yellow poplar, although the seat of the Rhode Island Windsor has a distinctive feature: the lower edge of the seat back is chamfered, as occasionally found in other Rhode Island Windsors of varied pattern.

### *Windsor Seating in an Early Nineteenth-Century Economy*

If documented eighteenth-century Windsor furniture from Rhode Island is rare, documented nineteenth-century Windsor furniture is almost unknown. The nation, as it existed in the early nineteenth century, was moving in new directions. Manufacturing was gaining a toehold and gradually beginning to blossom.

The maturing textile trade in Rhode Island, among other rising businesses, produced jobs for a growing population and new products for a revived commerce that was redefining the term “international.”

Providence was the commercial center of Rhode Island and home to many of the state’s merchant princes. With growing demand from householders of moderate means for more, and cheaper, goods in the marketplace, furniture warerooms began to emerge and flourish. If a wareroom owner was also a woodworker, such as Thomas Howard, Jr., he might supply better-quality furniture for his store and supplement it with cheaper goods obtained elsewhere. When a wareroom owner had no woodworking background, he was merely a storekeeper selling anonymous goods.<sup>42</sup>

The first evidence of Windsor seating made in early nineteenth-century Rhode Island is a pair of fan-back chairs dating to about 1800–1805 and branded by George Gavit, Jr., of Westerly, a town on the southeast border with Connecticut.<sup>43</sup> In their eighteenth-century-style crests, Gavit’s bamboo-turned chairs show the influence of the New London County Tracy family; they also retain the eighteenth-century H-plan stretcher system. This stretcher system occurs in another chair with bamboo turnings, one that almost certainly originated in Providence, given its provenance (fig. 15). The chair has an updated square back, indicative of its manufacture in the early nineteenth century, and an uncommon squared seat front, which repeats the slight curve of the crest. The square-front seat was first developed in Philadelphia and copied briefly in New York, where it then influenced Connecticut and Rhode Island production via New York trade on the Long Island Sound. As observed by the English traveler John Lambert in 1807, New York was now “the first city in the United States for wealth, commerce, and population,” and its influence was widespread.<sup>44</sup> The small size of this chair and its mate indicate that they were made for children; the frames use standard legs shortened at the top to suit this purpose. The chairs

are branded “CRAPO,” probably identifying Philip Crapo (pronounced with a long *a*), a Providence lawyer who entered practice about 1796 and married in March 1801.<sup>45</sup> Construction of square-back chairs such as these, some painted green, was also underway in the Providence shop of the Proud brothers at this date, although how long the Proud brothers continued production is unknown because some accounts are missing from their ledger.<sup>46</sup>

During the early nineteenth century, citizens of Rhode Island continued to supplement local furniture purchases with occasional purchases made in cosmopolitan New York either in person or on order. Through a relative, Alice Arnold of Providence received an order of New York vernacular seating in 1808 from the shop of Charles Cluss containing a



Fig. 15. *Child’s Square-Back Windsor Side Chair*, probably Providence, ca. 1805–8. Probably pine and ash, 22¼ × 12¾ × 11 in. (56.5 × 31.5 × 27.9 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1972.12.2. [RIF2242]

dozen gilt fancy chairs, a dozen green Windsor chairs, and a half-dozen black Windsors.<sup>47</sup> These square-back Windsor side chairs were the new dining model in American production by this period, continuing the precedent set by the bow-back side chair for compact, armless seating for dining. During the early 1810s, wareroom owners such as cabinetmaker Thomas Howard, Jr., of Providence, began to import quantities of inexpensive Windsors from major production centers in Newark, New Jersey, and in New York City to stock his warerooms and supplement his overseas ventures of cabinetware.<sup>48</sup> Rhodes G. Allen of the same community followed suit and directed his furniture ventures to the coastal South.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, warerooms for the sale of moderately priced painted and decorated seating were already established in Providence when chair merchant and ornamental painter Christian M. Nestell arrived in the city in about February 1820, probably from New York, the city of his birth. A side chair labeled by Nestell now in a private collection (cat. 90) is the rare exception in maker-identified Windsor seating from nineteenth-century Rhode Island. The Nestell chair is virtually identical to an armchair in a private collection that has similar structural elements but is accompanied by slim, turned cylindrical arms supported on plain turned posts. The armchair has been repainted and redecorated, and the seat bottom is branded “R-Sarle,” probably the name of an owner. The Sarle surname appears in New England censuses for 1820 only in Rhode Island. Whereas no appropriate given name beginning with the letter *R* is listed for 1820, the 1810 census records a Richard Sarle in Cranston, Providence County, who possibly lived there until almost 1820.<sup>50</sup>

As this study has shown, while early Rhode Island documents reveal little about the purchase of Windsor seating by private individuals, they are informative in other respects: they show the early selection of Windsors as the first seating furniture of the Redwood Library at Newport; the acquisition by

merchants of “green chairs,” as Windsors were frequently identified in the eighteenth century, as suitable goods for export along the American coast and in the islands of the Caribbean; and, later, the choice of Windsor seating by the colony, and then state, of Rhode Island to furnish its government buildings. Furthermore, private purchases of Windsor seating during the post-Revolutionary period are recorded in the accounts of the Proud brothers of Providence and in purchases made at Newport during the 1780s and 1790s by Dr. Isaac Senter. The economically turbulent years of the 1780s—when Rhode Island refused to join the federal union and worthless paper money circulated freely—are reflected in a body of seating with unusual combinations of features. During the 1790s, the free flow of Rhode Islanders across the border with Connecticut to settle on more productive land resulted in chairs that exhibit characteristics of Windsors in both states. In addition, an extensive waterborne trade in Windsor seating was established between New York and Rhode Island, with the result that Rhode Island Windsor seating of the 1790s has a strong New York character. Finally, in the nineteenth century, new patterns in Windsor seating—square backs and simulated bamboo turnings—were introduced to the Rhode Island market. Sales practices changed dramatically; shopping trips took customers to newly introduced warehouses where moderately priced Windsors imported from large production centers, such as New York and Newark, New Jersey, were sold alongside local products. By this point, the use of Windsor seating had become universal, and patterns were exchanged freely among regions, clouding identification of local production.

## Notes

1. Evans 1996a, 38–45.
2. For the collection of books, see Padelford 1939, 63. For the purchase of the furniture, see Record Book of the Proceedings of the Annual and Special Meetings of the Redwood Library Company, Newport, 1747 and later, Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport.
3. The verdigris identification is based on cross-section microscopy analysis done by Natasha K. Loeblich on a low-back and a high-back Windsor in the collection of the Redwood Library and Atheneum, Newport, in 2006.
4. For high-back chairs sold by Jonathan Cahoone before May 1763, see Luke Howell, Newport, tailor, v. Jonathan Cahoone, Newport, chairmaker, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 17, case 398, May 1763 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Record Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
5. Stiles 1901, 1:131.
6. The incised “I.BROWN” chair is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1970.82.1 [RIF4339]; several other related chairs are in private collections.
7. More sinuous S curves form the supports beneath the arms of a pair of mahogany roundabout chairs once owned by John Brown; for one of the Brown chairs, see Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1990.36.1; see Ott 1965a, 22–23, no. 20, ill. [RIF1072]. The mate is cat. 68 in the present catalogue.
8. In Parrott and Boram 2014, the authors illustrate a chair with ball-centered stretchers (pp. 98, 102–3, figs. 2, 6–7). The date of the chair and its association with Bristol, England, are tentative. Use of this feature in an early Rhode Island chair appears to have been unrelated to English chairmaking and is innovative for its date.
9. Martin Seamans and Henry Bacon, Providence, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, February 27, 1769, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
10. John Sharpoon, Providence, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, for chairs for the Providence courthouse, May 21, 1773, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
11. For a low-back chair of cheaper construction, see Evans 1996a, fig. 6–10 [RIF1266].
12. Waterhouse began his career making, repairing, and bot-toming chairs in the 1740s, when Abraham Redwood was one of his customers; Timothy Waterhouse, invoice to Abraham Redwood, Newport, 1742–46, Wetmore Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
13. Timothy Waterhouse, Newport, invoice to the Colony of Rhode Island, for chairs for the Newport courthouse, December 1774, and for mending chairs, June 1776, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
14. Aaron Lopez Outward Bound Invoice Book, Newport, 1763–68, Newport Historical Society. For further discussion of the importance of furniture to the export trade, see the essay by Patricia E. Kane in the present volume.
15. Chyet 1970, 57, 118.
16. Bigelow 1931, 772, 776.
17. Aaron Lopez Outward Bound Invoice Book, Newport, 1763–68, Newport Historical Society.
18. *Ibid.*; and Aaron Lopez Shipping Book, Newport, 1771–73, both Newport Historical Society. For “painting a Chair,” see January 1765, Aaron Lopez Memorandum Book, No. 1, Newport, 1764 and later, Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del.; and for “4 winser Chears,” see Newport, 1773, Aaron Lopez Papers, Newport Historical Society. The author thanks the Redwood Library and Atheneum, Newport, for drawing her attention to this last source.
19. Aaron Lopez Letter Book, Newport, 1767, Newport Historical Society.
20. Jonathan Cahoone, Newport, Petition for Losses, n.d., Rhode Island State Archives, Providence. As noted earlier, Cahoone was credited in the Aaron Lopez Papers as a Windsor chairmaker; see 118, above. Cahoone is also identified as a maker of high-back Windsors in a court action of May 1763; see 14, above.
21. For two visitors to Rhode Island (out of many) who compared Newport and Providence at the war’s end, see J. Morse 1789, 204; and Harriott 1809, 2:38.
22. For these sales, see William Davis, Newport, sheriff, invoice to the State of Rhode Island, for chairs for the Newport Statehouse, April 28, 1784, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence; Beriah Brown, North Kingstown, R.I., sheriff, invoice to State of Rhode Island, February 25, 1785, for cash paid to Joseph Vickary, Newport, December 20, 1784, for chairs for the Washington County Statehouse, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, cited in *Narragansett Historical Register* 2 (1883–84): 314; and Timothy Waterhouse, invoice to the State of Rhode Island, October 1784, for turning banisters for the Newport Statehouse, Treasurer’s Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
23. For the view of the Old Jury Room, see Evans 1996a, fig. 6–17.

24. Kinsley Carpenter, invoice to the State of Rhode Island, for chairs for the Providence courthouse, March 1797, Treasurer's Receipts, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
25. For Carpenter's location in Providence and his later career, see Collins 1952, 17.
26. Joseph Vickary and Benjamin and John Hammond, invoices to Dr. Isaac Senter and family, Newport, 1786–1800, and Isaac Senter household inventory, 1800; cited in Ott 1969a, 8–9, 25.
27. William Proud Ledger, later Daniel and Samuel Proud Ledger, Providence, 1770–ca. 1825, and Daniel and Samuel Proud, Daybook and Ledger, Providence, 1810–34, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Records of the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers, vols. 1–2, 1789–1811, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
31. An armchair in the sack-back style with turnings and seat features similar to figure 8 may have come out of the same shop. See Evans 1996a, fig. 6-26 [RIF1278].
32. Out of thousands of Windsors seen, studied, or photographed by the author, this is the only chair encountered with this exact design.
33. Crawford 1921, 107, 109.
34. Newport Inward and Outward Entries, 1790–1800, U.S. Custom House Records, Federal Archives and Records Center, Waltham, Mass.
35. For the sloop *Aurora* and masters, see Vibert Sloane 1987, 96.
36. Channing 1868, 134, 141.
37. Strickland 1971, 43.
38. Newport Inward and Outward Entries, 1790–1800, U.S. Custom House Records, Federal Archives and Records Center, Waltham, Mass.
39. James Bertine, invoice to Dean Sweet, New York, 1792, Greene Collection, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
40. The John Brown chairs purchased from Thomas and William Ash are illustrated in Cooper 1973a, 335, fig. 12.
41. The bergère-style chair made by Thomas Burling for Thomas Jefferson is illustrated and discussed in Evans 1996a, 388, fig. 6-242.
42. For Thomas Howard, Jr., see Monahon 1964, 12–14.
43. One of the George Gavit, Jr., chairs is illustrated in Evans 1996a, 283, fig. 6-92. For another chair branded by Gavit, see Babcock-Smith House, Westerly, R.I., inv. no. 1972.I.88 [RIF129].
44. Lambert 1813, 2:55.
45. One of the pair of Crapo chairs is illustrated and discussed in Evans 1996a, 420, fig. 7-2.
46. William Proud Ledger, later Daniel and Samuel Proud Ledger, Providence, 1770–ca. 1825, and Daniel and Samuel Proud Daybook and Ledger, Providence, 1810–34, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
47. Charles Cluss, New York, invoice to a member of the Arnold family, Rhode Island, for delivery to Alice Arnold, probably Providence, 1808, Greene Collection, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
48. Monahon 1964, 12–14.
49. Evans 1996a, 423.
50. For the Sarle chair, see *ibid.*, 423, fig. 7-4 [RIF2243], where the Nestell pair is also discussed and illustrated (fig. 7-3). A second Nestell side chair of slightly varied pattern is not illustrated; it has been stripped of paint and decoration.



## 1

*Chest*

Possibly John Clawson (active by 1646–died 1660)

Providence, 1645–80

Red oak (primary) (microanalysis); pine (secondary)

Furniture scholar Robert F. Trent first posited that this chest, perhaps the earliest example of furniture to survive with a Rhode Island history, is also one of the “major Netherlandish joined chest[s] from seventeenth-century America.”<sup>1</sup> Among the Dutch characteristics of the chest is the style of its three fielded, or tabled, panels with detailed edge moldings. While not entirely unknown in English work, these types of panels are more typical of Dutch craftsmanship, the closest parallels being the door panels of *kasten* (Dutch-style cupboards) from the New York area.<sup>2</sup> The repetitive, imbricated gouge molding that surrounds the panels on the rails, stiles, and muntins of the present chest is also characteristic of the fastidious nature of Dutch woodworking. The use of Dutch-style gouge work is also seen on seventeenth-century Dutch-style chests and boxes from Windsor, Connecticut.<sup>3</sup> Both the Windsor chests and Dutch-style *kasten* are known to have been owned in the families of English colonists. This chest descended in the family of Thomas Field, a resident of Providence who had emigrated from England.<sup>4</sup>

The overtly Dutch characteristics of the chest led Trent in the seminal exhibition catalogue *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century* (1982) to attribute it to the Providence joiner John Clawson, a craftsman of Dutch extraction.<sup>5</sup> In a 1661 court deposition, Roger Williams, founder of Providence, recalled that he “sought him [Clawson] out (by Natives) and cherished him in his lost Naked and Starving Conditcion.” Williams claimed, “I was not only his Master, (and he my howse hold Servant by

the Yeare,) but his Schooll Mr [Master], giving him my Dutch Testamt and spending much time to teach him to reade.”<sup>6</sup> It is not known when Clawson first arrived in Providence nor how he came to find himself in this destitute condition, but he was recorded as a resident in the town as early as January 11, 1646, when he received, with twenty-eight others, a grant of a twenty-five-acre tract of land.<sup>7</sup>

Clawson’s probate inventory of 1660, the earliest-known inventory of a Rhode Island woodworker’s shop, lists suitable tools for a competent joiner: augers, chisels, a gouge, wimble bits, and a variety of cleaving, molding, jointer, and fore planes, among other furniture-making tools.<sup>8</sup> The number and type of tools indicate that Clawson could have made furniture; however, the date of his death in 1660 and the lack of documentary evidence that Clawson had apprentices or a shop tradition that continued after his death make the attribution to him difficult to prove with certainty.

On the evening of January 4, 1660, Clawson was attacked with a broadaxe by an assailant who sprung from behind “Barberry” bushes, splitting open his chest. He died shortly after from his wounds. In a petition regarding the disposition of Clawson’s estate, Williams wrote, “We know he spake by fits, and could not answere a word to many questions. And in the morning when he much desired to speak and said, Lift me up and was lift up by Ben. Hernden and Robt Colwell, he could not speake one word.”<sup>9</sup> An Indian named Waumaion pleaded guilty to the charge of murder before the Providence court and was sentenced to be hanged “till he be dead dead.”<sup>10</sup>



In the same court session, Benjamin Harrington (Hernden), who with his wife, Elizabeth Harrington, had attended to Clawson after the attack, was accused “of being A principle in Murther Comitted by Waumaion an Indian upon John Clawson” but was found not guilty by a jury.<sup>11</sup> —DC

*Cat. 1*

31¼ × 52 × 24¼ in. (79.4 × 132.1 × 61.6 cm)

INSCRIPTION: “This Chest belonged to the family of / Fields the former owners of what is / known by the name of Fields Point in Cranston about two miles below / Providence bridge, and said by Eleanor / Field to have been brought from England / in the ship ‘Lyons’ about the year / 1637, and has been owned by the family / ever since, and is now presented / to the Historical Society of Rhode Island by William Field of / Pomfret Conn, one of the descend / ants of the first settlers of that / name in Rhode Island, and on / the Maternal side from / Roger Williams / Pomfret April 10<sup>th</sup> 1865,” in ink, written on paper label glued to underside of lid

BIBLIOGRAPHY: St. George 1979, 65, 68, fig. 81; Fairbanks and Trent 1982, 2:210–11, no. 171, ill.; Trent 1999, 209–12, figs. 1–2; Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007, 8-D, fig. 1

PROVENANCE: Probably owned by Thomas Field (1648–1717), England and Providence; by descent to his son Thomas Field (1670–1752), Providence; by descent to his son Jeremiah Field (died 1768), Providence and Cranston, R.I.; by descent to his son Jeremiah Field (1746–1815), Providence and Pomfret, Conn.; by descent to his son William Field (1790–1878), Pomfret, Conn.; given to the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, 1865, inv. no. 1865.2.1 [RIF2086]

*Notes*

1. For a discussion of the Dutch-style construction features of this chest and its attribution, see Fairbanks and Trent 1982, 2:210–11; and Trent 1999, 209–12. See also St. George 1979, 65, 68, fig. 81.
2. For a discussion of Dutch techniques in New York and New Jersey case furniture, see Kenny, Safford, and Vincent 1991.
3. Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007.
4. The label on the chest also states that it was brought from England about 1637; however, the presence of red oak suggests an American origin.
5. Fairbanks and Trent 1982, 2:210–11.
6. LaFantasie 1988, 2:520.
7. *Early Records 1892–1915*, 2:29–30. Williams was negotiating with the Narragansett Indians for the purchase of land as early as the mid-1630s.
8. The inventory of John Clawson is summarized in Field 1902, 3:584; see also Weeden 1910, 87.
9. *Early Records 1892–1915*, 15:84; and LaFantasie 1988, 521.
10. Rhode Island Colony Records, pt. 1, p. 152, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
11. Ibid.

## 2

*Wainscot Chair*

Probably Newport, 1650–63

Oak, maple, and pine

This joined oak armchair bears an exceptional history. It was owned by Rhode Island governor Benedict Arnold and reportedly was the chair on which he sat when the Rhode Island Charter was delivered from King Charles II and read aloud before a gathered crowd in Newport on November 24, 1663. Known as the “Chair of State,” the solid oak armchair has long been celebrated as a relic of Rhode Island’s early history. The history of the chair is extensively recorded on a brass plaque affixed to its back and on several old paper labels pasted to the top and bottom of its pine seat. In his *History of Rhode Island*, published in 1853, Edward Peterson described the chair in verse: “On a bright canopy, covered o’er, with crimson cloth and gold, / On which was wrought by skillful hands, heraldic emblems bold. / Stood this Old Chair,—with fitting panoply, high backed, strong, and grand, / That old oak Chair, look’d gaily there, forever may it stand.”<sup>1</sup>

Given this documented history, the armchair is likely one of the earliest datable examples of Rhode Island joinery, made prior to 1663, probably in Newport. It relates to another early joined armchair—a wainscot chair with a history in the Cole family of the Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), area (cat. 5)—as well as to joined great chairs from nearby Plymouth Colony, such as one that descended in the Winslow family of Marshfield, another with a history in the Hobart and Ripley families of Hingham, and a third that descended in the Burgess family of Duxbury, Sandwich, and Yarmouth, as well as Newport and Little Compton.<sup>2</sup> It relates most closely to the Burgess family chair, which has similar turnings on the arm supports and legs, but it is distinguished by the level of ornamentation on its molded rails and stretchers. Described in 1919 as “somewhat dilapidated,” the chair



has been extensively restored; its crest rail, back panel, and corbels have been replaced, like the Burgess chair, as have its applied half-column turnings above the arms and below the arm on the proper-left side.<sup>3</sup> A photograph of the chair at the Newport Historical Society shows its state of preservation about 1874 (fig. 1).

After Arnold’s ownership, the chair descended in the Vernon, Olyphant, Hornsby, and Gould families



Fig. 1. William James Stillman, *Charter Chair*, 1874. Photograph, probably albumen print. Newport Historical Society, Charles F. McKim Portfolio, inv. no. P381

in Newport, and by May 1843 it was once again in the service of the Rhode Island government, being used by Gov. Samuel Ward King, the last governor to serve under the Charter of 1663. Seated in “the identical oak- en chair, in which, one hundred and eighty years ago, Governor Arnold received the Charter,” King presid- ed over the election of a new governor at the Colony House in Newport and the formation of the new state government under the newly adopted Constitution of 1842.<sup>4</sup> By 1853 the chair was in the possession of Isaac Gould, Esq., a banker of Newport, in whose family was preserved an old colonial flag that had also belonged to Arnold.<sup>5</sup> Isaac’s son, David J. Gould, gave the chair to the Redwood Library and Athenaeum in 1877, and for some decades it was on loan to the Newport Historical Society. —DC

*Cat. 2*

47<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (121 × 60 × 60 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “This Chair was the favorite seat of / Gov. Benedict Arnold who was PRESIDENT /

under the first Patent of the Colony of Rhode Island. / He used it as his Chair of state and was / sitting on it when he received the Charter / granted by King Charles 2nd 1663. / It was also used by Gov. Samuel Ward King. / Thomas Hornsby gave it to Stephen Gould / who left it to his widow Hannah Gould who / gave it to the Redwood Library. / Deposit of / Redwood Library,” engraved on brass plaque attached to underside of seat; “. . . It was also used by Gov<sup>r</sup> Samuel Ward King when / the Charter was superseded by the Constitution. / The Chair descended with other property to Mrs. Ann / the Wife of Doctor David Olyphant who gave it to / Thomas Hornsby / and by him given to / Stephen Gould / whose Widow / Hannah Gould / gave it to / Nathan H. Gould. / The Chair is of English Oak with a Norway Pine seat,” in ink, written on paper label glued to under- side of seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Goddard 1843, 77; Peterson 1853, 74–75; Boyd 1863, 77; *Harper’s* 1869, 380; Terry 1917, 1–3; Tompkins 1919, 10; Keyes 1930, 521–22, ill.; St. George 1979, 35, fig. 16; Youngken 1995, 119, ill.; Trent 1999, 209, 214–15

PROVENANCE: Gov. Benedict Arnold (1615–1678), Newport; by descent to Ann Olyphant (née Vernon) (1754–1826), Newport; given to Thomas Hornsby (1766–1857), Newport; given to Stephen Wanton Gould (1781–1838), Newport; by descent to his wife, Hannah Gould (1780–1860), Newport; given to her brother-in-law Isaac Gould, Esq. (died 1854), Newport; by descent to his son David J. Gould (1812–1879), Newport; given to the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, 1877, inv. no. FUR.002 [RIF3373]

*Notes*

1. Peterson 1853, 75.
2. For the Marshfield and Hingham chairs, see St. George 1979, 35, fig. 15, and 63, fig. 72, respectively; for a discussion of the Burgess family chair, see Trent 1999, 214–15, figs. 9–10.
3. Tompkins 1919, 10.
4. Goddard 1843, 77.
5. Peterson 1853, 74; see also *Harper’s* 1869, 380.

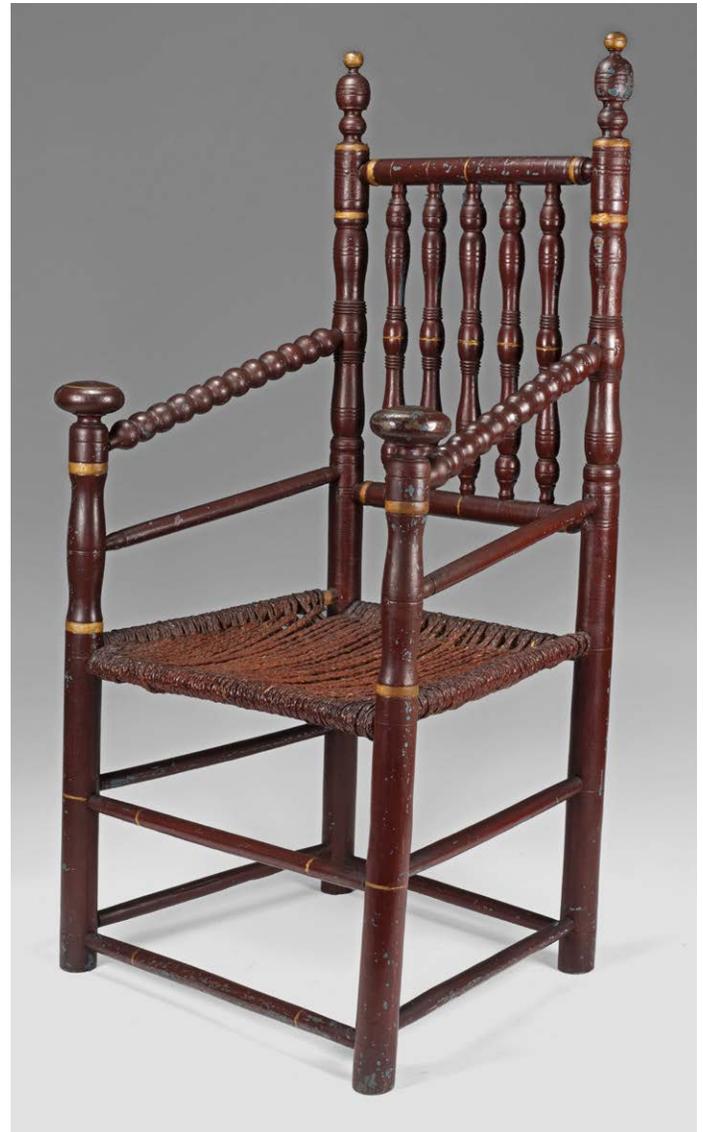
## 3

*Carver Chair*

Probably Newport, 1660–1700  
Maple and ash; cornhusk seat

Furniture scholars have increasingly recognized the presence of Dutch characteristics in seventeenth-century furniture produced outside the traditional Dutch settlements in New York, New Jersey, and Long Island, particularly eastward along coastal southern New England into parts of Connecticut and Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> Whether a product of craft training in the Netherlands, apprenticeships with Dutch craftsmen in England, or perhaps migration from culturally Dutch settlements in the Americas, these characteristics appear in a variety of early furniture forms. A group of three turned armchairs, of which the present chair is an example, is particularly interesting in this regard. Two of the armchairs have family histories in Little Compton, Rhode Island: this one, which descended in the Brown family and was subsequently purchased by the early Newport collector Cornelius C. Moore, and one in the Gray family (see Carr essay, fig. 5). The third armchair, at the Henry Ford in Dearborn, Michigan, has no early provenance, but it is closely related to the other two in the style of its turned rear balusters, slanted arms with incised, repetitive ball turnings, and front posts with turned pommels.<sup>2</sup> These features, along with the generally high precision of the workmanship, closely model seventeenth-century Dutch chairs that had wide influence in Europe, especially in England.

The present example, which may be the earliest of the three given the complexity of its turnings, bears a surface of Victorian red and gold paint over an earlier but not original layer of blue. Remarkably, it survives with what may be its original or at least an old braided cornhusk seat. A group of Newport banister-back chairs in the Little Compton Historical Society have seats



woven in a similar manner, which may represent a regional preference or even give evidence of Wampanoag or Narragansett craft production.<sup>3</sup> In 1732 Joshua Hempstead recorded that he “went to Nahantic to the Indian Town to get a Squaw to Botom Chairs.”<sup>4</sup> Native Americans provided labor for Anglo residents, some even becoming enslaved in Rhode Island during the

seventeenth century, especially after King Philip's War (1675–76), and bottoming chairs may have become something of a regional specialty.<sup>5</sup> Native Americans were the second-largest minority population in Rhode Island in 1730, with 985 residents comprising over 5 percent of the colony's total population.

The fact that two of the chairs in this group have family histories in Little Compton could suggest an origin there, but the complexity of the design of the chairs and their strongly Dutch character points to a larger urban center such as Newport, which lies just a short distance to the west of Little Compton, across the Sakonnet River at the mouth of Narragansett Bay. Little Compton, which was not incorporated until 1682 as part of the Plymouth Colony, was settled primarily by Anglo colonists moving from Duxbury and other areas of the Massachusetts and Plymouth Colonies. Members of the Brown family did not arrive until later; the progenitor of most of the Brown family in Little Compton, Nicholas Brown, was originally from Aquidneck Island and was one of the founding settlers of the town of Portsmouth in 1636.<sup>6</sup> The survival of these chairs may be attributed to the rural nature of Little Compton into the twentieth century rather than the presence of a sophisticated furniture-making shop tradition there in the mid- to late seventeenth century. This type of chair may have been influential in the development of a later regional style associated with Guilford and Wallingford, Connecticut, which began around the 1720s and remained popular through the third quarter of the eighteenth century. This style consists of banister-back chairs with slanted arms splaying outward and terminating in posts with turned pommels.<sup>7</sup> Slat-back chairs with similar slanted arms and large pommels have also been attributed to Norwich or Lebanon, Connecticut.<sup>8</sup> —DC

*Cat. 3*

43½ × 25⅝ × 20½ in. (110.5 × 65.1 × 52.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 1971a, 34, lot III; Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007, 13-D, fig. 29

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Brown family, Little Compton, R.I. Cornelius C. Moore (1885–1970), Newport, before 1970; bequeathed to Providence College; consigned to Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, October 30, 1971, lot III; sold to Doris Duke (1912–1993), Newport; given to the Newport Restoration Foundation, 1974 or later, inv. no. 2002.102 [RIF2282]

*Notes*

1. See, for example, Cooke 1993; Kane 1993; Trent 1999; and Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007.
2. Little Compton Historical Society, R.I., inv. no. 1996.0044 [RIF2291]; and the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 30.101.4 [RIF5046].
3. The author gratefully acknowledges Robert F. Trent for suggesting this intriguing possibility.
4. *Diary of Joshua Hempstead* 1901, 251.
5. See Field 1902, 1:176–77.
6. Wilbour 2003, 1:73–86.
7. For examples of this style, see Nutting 1963, 2: no. 1912, and the discussion in Trent 1977, 56–59.
8. Forman 1988, 124–28, nos. 15–16, ill.

## 4

*Carver Chair*

Kingstown or Westerly, Rhode Island, 1670–1710  
Soft maple (microanalysis); rush seat

This turned maple “carver,” or great chair, descended in the family of Judge William Case Clarke of South Kingstown, Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> Clarke descended from Joseph Clarke, a settler from Westhorpe, England, whose brother Dr. John Clarke famously wrote and obtained for the Colony of Rhode Island the Royal Charter of 1663 from King Charles II. After emigrating from England in 1638, Joseph Clarke lived in Newport, but he spent his later years in Westerly, a small town in western Rhode Island on the Connecticut border. The chair may have descended directly to William Case Clarke from Joseph or perhaps from Joseph’s son John, of Westerly—or potentially from one of the other Rhode Island families with which the Clarks intermarried, including the Cases, Dyers, and Tillinghasts.<sup>2</sup>

Given the construction features of the chair, it likely came from western Rhode Island, an area called the Narragansett Country during the seventeenth century. This region remained rural throughout the colonial era, characterized by the predominance of English yeomen and their families, many of whom had come to Rhode Island from other areas of New England seeking religious freedom and greater economic opportunity. The region became known in the last quarter of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the existence of plantation-style agriculture, the prevalence of African and Native American slavery, and the development of the Narragansett pacer, a famously sturdy breed of horses, which became a major export product to the Caribbean. The town of Westerly was incorporated in 1669 as a means to shore up the colony’s western border, a region of sharp and ongoing territorial disputes with Connecticut during the seventeenth century. The chair,



in fact, has some elements that relate it to turned great chairs from Connecticut—which differ generally from chairs made in Boston or southeastern Massachusetts—such as the shallow post turnings and outward and downward rake of the arms.<sup>3</sup>

Several elements of the chair relate it to other turned chairs from the Connecticut–Rhode Island border region. The barbell-shaped banister turnings and the softly molded classicizing elements, such as the urns and balls turned into the posts, are found on four other great chairs, including an example with a history of ownership in the family of Christopher Phillips (1693–1753) of South Kingstown and a chair at the Joshua Hempstead House, in New London, Connecticut.<sup>4</sup> Banister turnings and rounded finials of the same design are also found on a diminutive side chair at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, that has a history in the Congdon and Brown families of South Kingstown.<sup>5</sup> Specific references to turners in this region are rare—most would have been called “carpenters” or, rather, yeoman farmers, and would have practiced woodworking seasonally—but written references are known, including the 1727 inventory of joiner Judah Wordin of Westerly that lists tools for turning: “Carpenter and turners tools [£]4-10-,” “6 Spindles & Carriers -15-,” “25 Spindles 2-10-,” “Beetle Rings -2-,” and “nails & Irons Belonging to a Lathe -16-.”<sup>6</sup> Other craftsmen may also have made chairs of this type, including John Browne of Kingstown, who owned “Turning tooles” and “Chaires and Sum other Lumber” in 1716, and Benjamin Nickols, also of Kingstown, who had “Carpentry tools” and “a Lave & A Drill” in 1717.<sup>7</sup> —DC

#### *Cat. 4*

43  $\frac{1}{8}$  × 24  $\frac{5}{8}$  × 18 in. (109.5 × 62.5 × 45.7 cm)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Forman 1988, 108–9, no. 8, ill.; Trent 1999, 215–17, fig. 11

**PROVENANCE:** Possibly Joseph Clarke (1618–1694), Newport and Westerly, R.I., or his son Joseph Clarke (1643–1727), Westerly, R.I.; by descent to William

Case Clarke (1756–1841), South Kingstown, R.I.; by descent to his son, Col. George Clinton Clarke (1804–1878), South Kingstown, R.I.; by descent to his son William Case Clarke (1841–1902), Wakefield and South Kingstown, R.I.; by descent to his son William Case Clarke (1878–1963), South Kingstown, R.I., and West Woodstock, Conn.; sold to dealer Harry Arons, Ansonia and Bridgeport, Conn., 1955; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Museum Purchase, 1956, inv. no. 1956.10.2 [R1F1748]

#### *Notes*

1. At the time this object was made, the area was called Kingstown; Kingstown split into North Kingstown and South Kingstown in 1723.
2. The family history is provided in a letter by the last private owner, William Case Clark, dated November 9, 1955, in the accession files of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1956.10.2.
3. See Forman 1988, 108–9, no. 8, ill.
4. American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, February 27, 1930, 56–57, lot 178 [R1F2005]; and Comstock 1962, no. 21, ill. [R1F4791]. See also *Bernard and S. Dean Levy* 1974–2003, 10:3 [R1F3411]; and Lockwood 1926, 2:10, fig. 411 [R1F4149].
5. See Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 144–45, no. 83, ill. [R1F3339]. See also Trent 1999, 216, fig. 12.
6. Judah Wordin inventory, Westerly, R.I., October 10, 1727, with an addition made March 28, 1748, Westerly Town Council and Probate, vol. 2, p. 151, Westerly Town Hall, R.I.
7. North Kingstown Probate Records, vol. 5, p. 208, and vol. 6, pp. 113–14; quoted in Forman 1988, 108.

## 5

*Wainscot Chair*

Probably Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), 1660–80  
Oak

This oak wainscot chair is one of the most exceptional examples of surviving seventeenth-century furniture of the Narragansett Bay region. According to family tradition, the original owner was Hugh Cole, an early settler of Swansea, Massachusetts, and a soldier during King Philip's War (1675–76).<sup>1</sup> Cole was in fact one of the settlers who negotiated with the Wampanoag sachem Metacom, also known as King Philip, for the purchase in 1669 of five hundred acres of land west of what became known as Cole's River, which was incorporated as part of the town of Swansea.<sup>2</sup> Family lore has it that none other than Metacom himself sat in this chair. Cole's house was burned during the war, but he rebuilt on land in Swansea (later Warren, Rhode Island) in 1677. The chair descended in the Cole and later Martin families.

Armchairs of this type with plank seats and paneled backs hew closely to English tradition. They are often referred to as "great" or "wainscot" chairs in period inventories and were reserved mostly for persons of status.<sup>3</sup> This example features heavy, shaped arms that splay outward from the back, turned arm supports and front legs, and shaped front and side rails, all features common in English provincial designs. This example is notable for the style of incised decoration on its back panel, which features an abstracted rosette set within a diamond, with stylized tendrils emanating from the corners (see Carr essay, frontispiece). Carved panels of similar design are known in English furniture, including a related wainscot chair from Yorkshire dated 1672.<sup>4</sup> The rosette motif on the Cole chair is repeated at the center of its shaped crest rail. As Robert Blair St. George has pointed out,



this design also appears carved on the 1704 stone of Thomas Mallett in the graveyard of Trinity Church in Newport, indicating a regional preference for this motif as far south as Newport.<sup>5</sup> Another notable characteristic of the Cole chair is that the reverse of the chair's back panel features a raised, or tabled, panel, framed by added moldings on all four sides to keep it securely in place. Raised panels of this type are more commonly found on furniture associated with craftsmen trained in Holland or in Dutch New York and Connecticut. Robert F. Trent has raised the question of whether this chair may have been made by a joiner of Dutch heritage.<sup>6</sup>

The carved decoration of the panel closely relates to a group of three joined oak chests from the same region (see Carr essay, fig. 3, and cat. 6). One of the chests (cat. 6) descended in the Cranston family of Warren and Providence, and all four pieces include the same decorative motif—the abstracted rosette set within a diamond—on their carved panels. They appear to have come from the same shop in the Swansea, Massachusetts, area, possibly from that part of Swansea that became Warren, Rhode Island, in 1747. Two of the chests also bear designs similar to the four roundels that appear on the back panel of the chair. Made by rotating a scratch-stock plane, such designs also appear on furniture made in Windsor, Connecticut, which has been associated with a Dutch shop tradition.<sup>7</sup> Due to their heavy construction and use of thick stock, St. George links the manufacture of this imposing chair and the chests to West Country craftsmen, such as those from the Carpenter family, who settled on the western side of the Plymouth Colony in southeastern Massachusetts.<sup>8</sup> Although a maker cannot be ascribed at this time, it should be noted that members of the Cole family also were carpenters, including Hugh Cole, who was a shipwright, and his son, Hugh Cole, Jr., who is listed numerous times as a Swansea carpenter and house carpenter in town and county records.<sup>9</sup> —DC

### Cat. 5

43  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 24 × 18 in. (111.4 × 61 × 45.7 cm)

INSCRIPTION: “W [illegible text] / Elizabeth [illegible text] / belong[?] [illegible text] Cole / in wh[?] [illegible text] / [illegible text] / England [illegible text],” in white ink, written on dark gray label glued to back of crest rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Nutting 1928–33, 2: no. 1787, ill.; St. George 1979, 65, 67, fig. 79; Trent 1999, 211–13, figs. 3–6; Hosley 2007, 92–99, fig. 7

PROVENANCE: Hugh Cole (1628–1699/1700); by descent in the Cole and later Martin families, Rehoboth and Swansea, Mass.; by descent to Susan Taber Martin Allien (ca. 1862–1930), New York; bequeathed to an anonymous institution, 1930 [RIF2087]

### Notes

1. Hosley 2007, 92–93.
2. Cole 1908, 25–27.
3. For a discussion of joined chairs in America and Europe, see the chapter entitled “Seating Furniture Made by Joiners,” in Forman 1988, 133–93.
4. Sotheby's, London, November 20, 2002, lot 380. The author thanks Victor Chinnery for kindly providing this citation.
5. St. George 1979, 65.
6. See Trent 1999, 209–14, figs. 3–6. See also Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007.
7. Gronning, Lane, and Trent 2007.
8. St. George 1979, 65.
9. Cutter 1915, 1:50; Hugh Cole, Swansea, Mass., carpenter, deed to Nathaniel Cole, Swansea, Mass., yeoman, 1710, Warren Deeds, vol. 1, pp. 59–60, Warren City Hall, R.I.; and Swansea Proprietors Records, 1667–1730, pp. 77–79, microfilm no. 0903396, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

## 6

*Chest with Drawer*

Probably Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), 1650–80  
 Red oak, chestnut, and maple (primary); chestnut and white pine (secondary)  
 (microanalysis)



This decorated oak chest embodies the stylistic diversity of Rhode Island furniture in the seventeenth century. The chest is associated with the Cranston family of Warren, Rhode Island (originally part of Swansea, Massachusetts, until 1747), a town on the Warren River, lying east of Providence on Mount Hope Neck. It was donated by William Ira Cranston of Providence to the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1974. As

previous authors have suggested, the overall style and construction of the chest relates to provincial forms of London-style joinery, incorporating stylistic features seen in different regions in southern New England that were prevalent in Anglo settlements from southeastern Massachusetts to Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> The austere treatment of the central panel, with its plain archway and central drop, and even the use of square



Fig. 1. *Chest with Drawer*, probably Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), 1650–80. Oak, chestnut, pine, and maple,  $33\frac{1}{2} \times 49\frac{1}{4} \times 21$  in. (85.1 × 125.1 × 53.3 cm). Private collection. [RIF5735]

bosses, links this chest to chests and cupboards of the New Haven Colony, particularly the doors of a group of court cupboards associated with Guilford, Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> The flanking incised cruciform panels on the facade bear an abstracted rosette-and-diamond design with tendrils at the corners, also found on a joined wainscot chair that has a history in the Cole family of the Swansea/Warren area (cat. 5). Of interest, this red oak chest uses locally available chestnut (a wood from the *Fagaceae* family that has a decorative grain but is less dense than oak) as a primary feature of the applied decorative elements in the central arch and corner blocks on the facade, and also for the drawer bottom and bottom boards.

Chestnut would become a preferred secondary wood among many Rhode Island furniture makers during the eighteenth century.

The chest relates closely to two other examples with a similar arrangement of incised panels and decorative elements (fig. 1 and Carr essay, fig. 3), one of which was published by Wallace Nutting.<sup>3</sup> By comparison, the present chest is significantly less ornamented than the other two, which feature complex, split-spindle turnings on the stiles and applied oval bosses. The other two chests also have circular roundel designs on the archway around the central panel, similarly seen on the panel of the wainscot chair associated with the Cole family. Together, these

four objects—the three chests and the chair—likely represent the work of the same shop. The style of turning in the central drops of the chests reappears in the applied half-spindles seen on figure 1 and on the chest published by Nutting. The present chest evidently lost some height from its front and rear legs and would have originally extended several inches lower; on the related chest in figure 1 this full height is augmented by the unusual addition of turned feet in the front. —DC

*Cat. 6*

27½ × 49 × 20¼ in. (69.9 × 124.5 × 51.4 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: St. George 1979, 65, 67, fig. 80;  
Trent 1999, 212–14, figs. 7–8

PROVENANCE: Probably Benjamin Cranston (1754–1823), Warren, R.I.; by descent to his great-grandson William A. Cranston (1851–1908), Providence; by descent to his son William Ira Cranston (1878–1974), Providence; bequeathed to the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, 1974, inv. no. 1974.31.1 [RIF2088]

*Notes*

1. St. George 1979, 65, 67, fig. 80; and Trent 1999, 212–14.
2. Kane 1973, 24–31.
3. For the one published by Wallace Nutting, in 1921 as in the Erving collection (Carr essay, fig. 3), see Nutting 1924, 33, 59, no. 22, ill. The other (fig. 1 of the present entry) was advertised by Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., in *Antiques* 155, no. 6 (June 1999): 777.

## 7

*Part of a Box Pew*

Bristol, Massachusetts (later Rhode Island), 1684–85  
Oak



Box pews were a common feature of New England meetinghouses of the seventeenth century. Often fitted with hinged doors, they were among the English Protestant architectural conventions brought to New England by the early settlers, along with the use of prominent built-in pulpits and moveable communion tables. Box pews were typically privately owned, in some instances built by the congregants themselves and in others sold to raise funds for the building and maintenance of the church, with the pews closest to the pulpit commanding the highest prices. This kind of church seating, divided socioeconomically, contributed to the class distinctions readily apparent in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritan and Congregational houses of worship in New England. Contrary to the notion of the “plain” Puritan style, meetinghouses were actually highly ornamented in the manner of the finest civil buildings and were planned and constructed by the community’s best craftsmen.<sup>1</sup>

Of the ten surviving fragments of seventeenth-century New England meetinghouse pews or pulpits, this section of a paneled pew box is the most elaborate and complete, with turned elements set into an open frame at top and two framed and fielded panels below.<sup>2</sup> The fragment is supposedly the “door of the pastor’s pew” of the first meetinghouse in Bristol, Rhode Island, built about 1684–85, preserved with veneration, according to the church’s nineteenth-century historian, as “the only remaining relic of the Sanctuary where our fathers worshipped God for one hundred years.”<sup>3</sup> A paper label affixed to the woodwork suggests the same history. The lack

of evidence of hinges or a door clasp, however, indicates that this fragment was instead originally part of the paneling of the pew box itself. The turned oak spindles and the framed oak panels are adapted from standard English architectural designs of this period. Multiple boards make up the panels, the boards of the top panel oriented vertically and those of the bottom running horizontally. The boards are set into rabbets in the frame and are secured in place with moldings attached with nails. The moldings that adorn the top of the pew and the horizontal division below the turnings appear to have been run with the same stock molding plane used to create the frame around the inset panels. Of particular note are the turnings, which have a distinctive profile composed of asymmetrical rings and moldings that separate baluster and ball turnings. These were executed no doubt by a craftsman of particular skill.

The town meeting of Bristol on October 24, 1683, designated a committee of freemen to oversee the building of the meetinghouse on the town common, its timbers to be hewn from trees felled from the same town common lands. Among the committee members was Col. Benjamin Church, hero of King Philip's War (1675–76), who was a carpenter and who would have had perhaps the most authority in setting the architectural plan for the building and selecting competent local craftsmen to carry out its construction. According to the town records, sufficient money was not allotted for the finishing of the interior of the meetinghouse, so individual congregants were permitted to construct their own pew boxes on the floor of the church at their own expense.

The sometimes-haphazard arrangement of these individual boxes was clearly of concern in the records, and one wonders whether their design also vexed the church's planners, since the boxes may or may not have conformed to the original designs for the meetinghouse interior.<sup>4</sup> As this section of paneling reportedly comes from the pastor's pew, it likely dates to the earliest period of the meetinghouse; however, so far no records have been found to confirm this dating. —DC

*Cat. 7*

54 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 26 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 1 in. (139.1 × 67.3 × 2.54 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Donnelly 1957, 88, 90, fig. 3; St. George 1979, 65, 68, fig. 82; Trent 1979, 101

PROVENANCE: Originally part of the First Meetinghouse of Bristol (now First Congregational Church), R.I., 1684/85 [RIF3338]

*Notes*

1. For more on meetinghouse architecture and the Puritan aesthetics of the period, see Trent 1979; and Donnelly 1957.
2. Ibid. In addition to the present panel, the surviving pieces include six pew fragments from the first meetinghouse of Marblehead, Massachusetts; two pulpit fragments from the first meetinghouse of Medfield, Massachusetts; and a newel post from the second meetinghouse of Hingham, Massachusetts.
3. Lane 1873, 65–68; Donnelly 1957, 88, 90; and St. George 1979, 68, fig. 82. Timbers from the original church, reportedly hewn from trees felled on the town common, were also saved and reused in the town hall, which was built on the site of the meetinghouse when it was demolished in the late eighteenth century.
4. Munro 1880, 129.

*High Chest of Drawers*

Rhode Island, possibly Newport, 1700–1730

Maple and maple and walnut veneer (primary); pine (secondary)

This stately walnut veneered high chest of drawers is an elegant expression of the art of veneering in colonial Rhode Island. Set atop six complex turned legs with unusually thin shafts and finely detailed elements, the case comprises eleven veneered drawers plus an additional wide document drawer, which is concealed behind the walnut cornice molding at top. The facade bears a recognizable pattern of veneering associated with Rhode Island, with, in the upper case, two light burl wood panels per drawer surrounded by darker herringbone veneers of walnut. This pattern links the high chest to a group of three veneered desks (cats. 10 and 12, and cat. 12, fig. 2), as well as a high chest in this volume (cat. 11), another at the Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Massachusetts (Carr essay, fig. 8), and a third at the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee.<sup>1</sup> A similar pattern, executed in a different manner, is also present on other veneered or inlaid case furniture attributed to Rhode Island, including a William and Mary high chest on turned legs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, a later high chest on cabriole legs at the Chipstone Foundation, and a remarkable high chest in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, thought to be from Rhode Island or Eastern Connecticut and which has an unusually shaped front skirt and a host of exotic wood veneers.<sup>2</sup>

The present example has a family history associated with Nathan Smith of Groton, Connecticut, near the western border of Rhode Island. It reportedly descended in the family until being sold at auction in 2003. A graphite inscription on the underside of the rear stretcher reads: “R. H. Breitenstein [&] Son /

74 North main St,” referring to R. H. and Joseph Breitenstein, a firm of German-émigré cabinetmakers and furniture restorers located in Providence in the late nineteenth century. An 1892 advertisement for this firm states that both partners were natives of Germany and residents of Providence for twenty-six years, and that they “are expert cabinet-makers and make a specialty of repairing antique furniture.”<sup>3</sup> This inscription places the high chest in Providence by the late nineteenth century and suggests a date when repairs were carried out to the stretchers and other areas of the case. Nathan Smith’s great-grandson Amos Denison Smith relocated from Groton to Providence in the early nineteenth century, and this high chest descended to his great-grandson George Watson Hall Smith of Providence.

The construction of the drawers in the upper case is notable in that it uses up-to-date English construction features. For example, the drawers slide on wooden runners attached to the drawer bottoms, which are nailed to the dovetailed drawer sides and are visible from the sides of the drawers. To hide the exposed dovetails at the front corners of the lower case (behind which the legs attach to the case by means of glue blocks), thin vertical strips of veneer were added to the front sides of the facade. These construction features of the William and Mary, or early Baroque, style continued to be used in cabinet shops in Newport and other areas of Rhode Island later in the eighteenth century, long after they had gone out of widespread usage in other regions, and have become hallmarks of the Rhode Island style in colonial furniture. —DC



*Cat. 8*

67½ × 41¼ × 23 in. (171.5 × 105 × 58.4 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “Bottom,” in graphite, on underside of bottom drawer divider of upper case; “center,” in graphite, on underside of middle drawer divider of upper case; “I,” in chalk, on exterior back of top middle drawer of lower case; “II,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right top drawer of lower case; “III,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left top drawer of lower case; illegible script letter, in chalk, on exterior proper-right side of middle drawer of lower case; “R. H. Breitenstein [&] Son / 74 North main St,” in graphite, on underside of rear stretcher; “1761~,” in chalk, on underside of drawer divider of bottom middle drawer of lower case

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Boston and Bolton 2003, 31, lot 100, ill.

PROVENANCE: Nathan Smith (1702–1787), Groton, Conn.; probably by descent to his son Gilbert Smith (1742–1814), Groton, Conn.; by descent to his son, Amos Denison Smith (1778–1826), Groton, Conn.; by descent to his son Amos Denison Smith (1805–1877), Groton, Conn., and Providence; by descent to his son Charles Morris Smith (1838–1917), Providence; by descent to his son Charles Morris Smith (1864–1926), Providence; by descent to his son George Watson Hall Smith (1896–1968), Providence and Boston. Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Boston), February 23, 2003, lot 100; sold to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York; sold to a private collection; consigned to Keno Auctions, New York, January 2014; sold to Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon, Mass.; sold to a private collection, 2014 [RIF2448]

*Notes*

1. For the Chipstone high chest, see Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1953.2 [RIF6085].
2. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 50.228.12 [RIF2511]; Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 2000.7 [RIF1221]; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1964.46 [RIF3602]. The veneer patterns of the Metropolitan Museum high chest, the Mead Art Museum high chest, and the earlier Chipstone high chest are very similar in that each small drawer is divided by a central band. Other examples—such as that at the Yale University Art Gallery, an example in a private collection [RIF5336], and one in the Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 65.348 [RIF5737]—present a variation of this style of veneering; they have a long drawer at the top over three small drawers, with the central band continuing into the lower case.
3. *Industries and Wealth* 1892, 141; see also the advertisement in *The People's Pleasure Ground Illustrated: Roger Williams Park* (Providence: American Book Exchange, 1897), 38.

## 9

*Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

William Claggett (1694–1749), clockmaker

Newport, 1725–35

Walnut and walnut veneer (primary); cherry, yellow poplar, pine, maple, and beech (secondary)

Clockmaker, engraver, scientific experimenter, lecturer, organ builder, baker, published author, and maker of nautical and surveying instruments, William Claggett was a Renaissance man in early eighteenth-century Newport. Born in London, he immigrated to America, first appearing in Boston, where the nineteen-year-old was married by the controversial Puritan minister Cotton Mather in 1714.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the Boston clockmaker Benjamin Bagnall was most likely Claggett's master, as that city lacked other possible candidates in the early eighteenth century. Others have maintained that he was trained in London, which could account for his ability to make more complicated movements than Bagnall.

Claggett first advertised himself as a clockmaker in Boston in December 1715, offering for sale a clock and case "lately arrived from London."<sup>2</sup> By the end of the next year, he had relocated to Newport, where he went on to become New England's most prolific colonial clockmaker, best known for his brass-dial clocks, over four dozen of which survive.<sup>3</sup> This clock is one of a group of four with locally made walnut cases that have stepped, sarcophagus tops and distinctively veneered facades. A closely related clock is documented in a 1728 account book and represents the earliest dated Claggett clock (see Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> Another is in the collection of the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, and the location of the fourth, published in 1937, is unknown.<sup>5</sup> The case moldings on the present clock feature a William and Mary and early Queen Anne construction technique, incorporating small cross-grained segments rather than grain running lengthwise along the molding. Uncommon in American furniture, this detail is often found on English clock cases and furniture. The pendulum door, with its tombstone-shaped top, has a wonderfully grained





Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 9, showing dial

conforming panel of burled walnut veneer surrounded by darker, mitered cross-banding. The lower case has been shortened at the bottom. Claggett is known to have used both Newport and Boston casemakers throughout his career. Although it resembles Boston work of the same period, this case is probably the work of a Newport maker, as it relates to other similarly veneered early Newport furniture (see cats. 8 and 10).

Claggett's house in Newport, built in about 1718 and purchased by him in 1725, still stands today, at 16 Bridge Street (formerly Shipwright's Street), near the Point lands and originally abutting the northern edge of the cove, next to the home of his father, baker Caleb Claggett. The area—close to the water with its own wharfage and easy access to shipping—was also near the neighborhood of furniture makers on Thames Street (near where Claggett's original shop was located), and a growing number of craftsmen were purchasing lots on the Easton's Point lands in the 1720s and 1730s. Claggett would not have had far to go to find a ready supply of clock cases. The dial includes a penny moon in the arch, a favorite Claggett detail (fig. 1).

—GRS and DC

### Cat. 9

99 × 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (251.5 × 52.7 × 28.1 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike

MARK: "W. Clagget [sic] / Newport," engraved on dial

INSCRIPTIONS: "H," in chalk, on bottom of interior proper-left side of hood; "Nanny Reid 77 / Days wo[rk]," in chalk, on interior of waist door; "13th [?]ug[?]" / The Chimneys was Swep February / the 20th," in chalk, on interior of waist door; "Frank B[?] werk [counting marks]," in chalk, on interior of waist door; "milk[?]," in graphite, on interior of waist door

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hagler 1976, 26, ill.

PROVENANCE: Anthony family, Newport. John S. Walton, Inc., New York, before 1962; sold to the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., 1962, inv. no. 62.149.1 [RIF5021]

### Notes

1. The authors are grateful to Martha H. Willoughby, Donald L. Fennimore, and Frank L. Hohmann III for sharing their research on William Claggett. These researchers have recently located Claggett's birth and baptismal records. Claggett was born on October 29, 1694, in Southwark, Surrey, England. He was christened one day later, October 30, 1694, at the parish of Saint Olave, Bermondsey, Southwark. Previous authors have incorrectly cited Claggett's birth year as 1695 or 1696 and his country of origin as likely being Wales; see Champlin 1976b, 5.
2. "William Claggett advertisement," *Boston News-Letter*, no. 611 (December 26, 1715–January 2, 1716), 2.
3. Hohmann et al. 2009, 327. For more on Claggett and his clocks, see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
4. Newport Historical Society, inv. no. 2008.3.1 [RIF2496]. An account copied from the daybook of Dr. Norbert F. Vignerone detailing various medical services performed for William Claggett and his family, for which Claggett "paid By a Pendulum Clock" valued at £23 in 1728, is written in ink on a paper label affixed to the interior of the clock case.
5. For the Chipstone Foundation clock, see Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1955.2 [RIF956]; for an illustration of the clock published in 1937, see Partridge 1937, III.

## 10

*Slant-Front Desk*

Newport, 1700–1735

Black walnut and undetermined burl veneer (primary); eastern white pine, yellow poplar, Cuban oysterwood, chestnut, and cherry (secondary) (microanalysis)



Although this slant-front desk was attributed first to Boston when it came on the market in the early twentieth century, and later to New York by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the distinctive pattern of its paneled burl veneers relates it to a number of comparable examples with family histories in Rhode Island, including an elegant veneered walnut desk (cat. 12), a large fall-front desk (cat. 14), and two high chests of drawers (cats. 8 and 11) discussed in this catalogue.

The intense figure of the burl veneers, book-matched horizontally on the lid and drawers, highlights the luxurious, fashionable, and costly nature of the desk, as do the imported woods, such as the Cuban oysterwood (*Gymnanthes lucida*) used for the turned pulls of the interior drawers. The desk stands on four turned ball feet and, when opened (fig. 1), reveals a complex interior with shaped drawer dividers, arches, and stepped sides that are features of the best New England slant-front



Fig. 1. Cat. 10, showing lid of desk open

desks of this period. The nineteen drawers and compartments in the upper section of the desk are indicative of the rising complexity of mercantile pursuits in colonial Rhode Island in the early eighteenth century, which required new forms of furniture to store and organize important papers, accounts, and correspondence related to far-flung business ventures.

The use of fine woods and the complex construction details suggest that the desk is the product of a shop with a certain level of specialization in diverse skills, including veneering, turning, and fine dovetailing, as well as in the use of highly refined and thin stock for the interior drawers and compartments. Although the place of origin of this desk cannot be firmly established through ownership history, such fine workmanship points toward an urban center in Rhode Island, such as Newport, which was rapidly developing economically during this period. The backs and sides of the exterior drawers of the desk are lettered and numbered in a distinctively elegant graphite script, reminiscent of the florid script associated with the furniture of Newport makers such as Christopher and John Townsend.

In the 1720s, the development of Easton's Point, which linked Newport's burgeoning maritime econ-

omy to the sea, brought large numbers of furniture makers and woodworkers to the area, as well as ship captains, ship carpenters, merchants, and mariners, all of whom would have required furniture such as this to store their papers. Numerous records point to the use of such desks in households as well as to the trade in black walnut lumber, some of which was imported into Rhode Island and other New England ports, especially from the Middle Atlantic colonies. The Newport joiner and house carpenter Robert Bennett, for example, owned a "black walnut Desk" in September 1734, when the town's constable Joshua Easton served a writ on his home on the Point.<sup>1</sup> Newport joiner Samuel Lyndon, Jr., charged Joseph Fox, a gentleman of Newport, £1.10 for making a frame for a desk in 1733, and in the same year, sold 195 feet of "Black walnut" to the joiner Jonathan Drown of Bristol.<sup>2</sup> When his East Greenwich shop was inventoried in June 1736, joiner Reuben Peckham (formerly of Newport) had 155 feet of black walnut boards and four-inch planks, as well as unfinished furniture, including "frames for Desks [£]8" and "1 desk unfinished [£]5."<sup>3</sup> In 1734 he sold two desks in exchange for lumber from the Newport merchant Jacob Dehane.<sup>4</sup> He also owned tools for veneering furniture, such

as “1 Finnering [veneering] Saw” and twenty-three pounds of lead, which were probably weights used for gluing up thin veneers.<sup>5</sup> The amount of black walnut appearing in craftsmen’s accounts and inventories suggests that Peckham and other Rhode Island furniture makers continued to produce furniture for fashionable clients in this material well into the 1730s, some of it undoubtedly veneered like the present desk. —DC

*Cat. 10*

41¼ × 36¼ × 19⅝ in. (104.8 × 92.1 × 49.8 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: Two interlocked loops, in chalk, on underside of bottom board; “T” and illegible text, in chalk, on exterior of backboard; illegible letter, possibly “S [with spiral tail?],” in graphite, on exterior back of top exterior drawers; “1 [probably later],” in graphite, on exterior bottom of top proper-left exterior drawer; illegible letter, possibly “S [with spiral tail?],” C-scroll, and “B,” in graphite, on exterior back of top exterior long drawer; illegible word and “Back,” in graphite, on interior back of bottom exterior long drawer; illegible letter, possibly “S [with spiral tail?],” twice, in graphite, on exterior back of bottom exterior long drawer; “1” and “/,” in graphite, on exterior back of proper-right interior drawer; “2” and “/,” in graphite, on exterior back of second interior drawer from proper right; “3” and “T,” in graphite, on exterior back of middle interior drawer; an arc, in graphite, on upper front corner of exterior proper-right side of middle interior drawer; “5,” in graphite, on exterior back of proper-left interior drawer; “x,” incised on interior front of interior drawer marked “2” and interior back of interior drawer marked “3”

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Warren et al. 1998, 20–21, no. F35, ill.; Kenny 2014, 6–7, fig. 8

PROVENANCE: Collings and Collings, New York, before 1927; sold to Ima Hogg (1882–1975), Houston, 1927; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Miss Ima Hogg, 1969, inv. no. B.69.42 [RIF232]

*Notes*

1. Writ, September 28, 1734, in case file, James Gardner, Newport, shopkeeper, v. Robert Bennett, Newport, house carpenter, Inferior Court of Commons Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 271, November 1734 term, case 152, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
2. Statement of account, 1733, in case file, Samuel Lyndon, Jr., Newport, joiner, v. Joseph Fox, Newport, gentleman, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. A, p. 351, November 1735 term, case 89, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.; and Samuel Lyndon, Jr., Newport, joiner, v. Jonathan Drown, Bristol, Mass., joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Bristol County, 1730–37, pp. 603–4, Massachusetts State Archives, Columbia Point.
3. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–68, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.
4. Statement of account, 1734–36, in case file, Jacob Dehane, Newport, merchant, v. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, devisees of Reuben Peckham (deceased), late of East Greenwich, R.I., joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 310, May 1742 term, case 144, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
5. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–68, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I. The veneering saw is itemized in the sale of Peckham’s property in May 1737, selling to the Newport joiner Benjamin Chandlers for £4.13; “Account of the Sundry Goods Sold at Vendue Belonging to the Estate of Reuben Peckham,” May 3, 1737, in case file, William Allen, North Kingstown, R.I., yeoman, vs. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 169, May 1741 term, case 62. Peckham purchased twenty pounds of glue from the fellmonger Richard Clarke in December 1735; see statement of account, December 1735, in case file, Richard Clarke, Newport, fellmonger, v. Reuben Peckham, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, vol. A, p. 389, May 1736 term, case 35. Both files are in the Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.

## 11

*High Chest of Drawers*

Possibly Providence, 1710–30

Maple and maple veneer (primary); pine, yellow poplar,  
and chestnut (secondary)



The family history of this high chest of drawers suggests that it was first owned by Samuel Backus of Norwich, Connecticut, and may be the “Case of Drawers” listed in his 1741 inventory for £15, given to his widow, Elizabeth Tracy Backus.<sup>1</sup> While this early history is unclear, it does seem certain that the chest was next owned by their son, Rev. Isaac Backus, and his wife, Susanna Mason of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, who were married in 1749. Backus was an influential Baptist minister, trustee of Rhode Island College (later Brown University), and author of the important three-volume *History of New England, with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists* (1777–96). Given that the style of the high chest suggests an early date, it may in fact have entered the family through another line, perhaps that of Susanna’s parents, Samuel Mason and Rebekah Read.<sup>2</sup> Both were prominent residents of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, a rural community east of Providence, the western side of which fronted Narragansett Bay and was annexed by Rhode Island in 1747; this included what are now the towns of Barrington, Bristol, Cumberland, East Providence, Pawtucket, Warren, and Woonsocket. The community of Rehoboth has long been within the cultural orbit of Providence, serving as a crossroads between Providence and Fall River, Massachusetts, and it is possible that the high chest, with its veneered facade and stylish turned legs, is the product of a workshop in Providence.

Few examples of Providence furniture of this type and date have been identified; however, a number of furniture makers were active there during the first half of the eighteenth century. The names of these

furniture makers are known in the historical record, including Daniel Smith, James Dexter, Jonathan Drown, and Daniel Cook, who took on the apprentice William Potter in 1716.<sup>3</sup> There was also a vibrant community of woodworking craftsmen in Providence dating back to the seventeenth century. The history of Providence in this period has long been overshadowed by Newport to the south, which began to assert its mercantile power in the early eighteenth century; however, wealthy yeoman farmers, shipbuilders, and merchants in Providence made it and other communities in the surrounding area, fed by rich agricultural hinterlands, an economic powerhouse on the northern side of Narragansett Bay.

This high chest bears the characteristic pattern of cross-banded veneers that is associated with the Narragansett Bay region and is seen in other objects linked to Providence, including a slant-front desk with a history in Smithfield, Rhode Island (cat. 12).<sup>4</sup> It also shares with this group the use of less-expensive local woods for the sides of the case, in this instance maple and yellow poplar. It features the use of chestnut as a secondary wood, dovetailed drawer construction with attached runners at the bottom, veneered vertical strips to cover the half-blind dovetails in the lower case, and legs secured with glue blocks—characteristics typical of William and Mary– (or early Baroque-) style furniture that became distinctive attributes of Rhode Island furniture later in the eighteenth century. The delicately turned legs and feet of this high chest are a refined statement of the early Baroque style in Rhode Island. —DC

*Cat. 11*

69¼ × 38 × 20 in. (175.9 × 96.52 × 50.8 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “X,” in chalk, on center of exterior back of bottom drawer of upper case; “Top[?],” in chalk, on underside of top; “X,” incised on exterior backs of proper-left and proper-right small drawers of upper case; “I” and “II,” incised on exterior backs and interior fronts, and “1” and “2,” in chalk, on undersides near back of same small drawers

PROVENANCE: Possibly Samuel Backus (1693–1740), Norwich, Conn., ca. 1720; by descent to his wife, Elizabeth Tracy Backus (died 1769), Norwich, Conn.; by descent to their son Rev. Isaac Backus (1724–1806), Norwich, Conn., and Bridgewater and Middleborough, Mass., or from the family of his wife, Susanna Mason Backus (1725–1800), Rehoboth, Bridgewater, and Middleborough, Mass.; by descent to their eldest daughter, Mrs. William Nelson (née Hannah Backus, 1750–1827), Middleborough and Taunton, Mass.; by descent to her younger sister, Mrs. Parker Allen (née Lois Backus, 1760–1853), Middleborough, Mass., and Canterbury, Conn.; by descent to her son, Nathan Allen (1787–1880), Canterbury, Conn.; by descent to his son Nathan Allen, Jr. (ca. 1825–1889), Canterbury, Conn.; sold by his widow, Sarah Allen (ca. 1838–1917), to his niece Mrs. Charles Thompson (née Abby Frances Allen, 1848–1935), Danielson and Hartford, Conn.; by descent to her son, Arthur Ripley Thompson (1872–1960), West Hartford, Conn.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Edmund R. Harrison (née Marjorie Thompson, 1903–1980), West Hartford, Conn.; by descent in her family [RIF5336]

*Notes*

1. Samuel Backus inventory, Norwich, taken April 28, 1741, microfilm no. 959, Connecticut State Archives, Hartford. The author thanks family descendant Robert E. Carroll, Jr., for kindly providing this reference.
2. For genealogical information on the Mason family, see Barton 1864; and *Representative Men* 1908, 3:1801.
3. For more information on these and other furniture makers in this period, see the Rhode Island Furniture Archive at <http://rifa.art.yale.edu>.
4. See Margon 1971, 240–41 [RIF5737], for a high chest at the Detroit Institute of Arts. For a related pattern of veneering, see a high chest at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1930.2197 [RIF3602], and the upper case of a high chest at the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1953.2 [RIF6085].

## 12

*Slant-Front Desk*

Providence, 1710–35

Walnut and walnut veneer (primary); mahogany, soft maple, chestnut, and white pine (secondary) (microanalysis)



Since being exhibited in the landmark 1929 *Girl Scouts' Loan Exhibition*, this elegant walnut desk has stood as an exemplar of early New England veneered furniture. The catalogue praised its style as “probably the rarest and most desirable of the earlier American designs,” and noted its veneered surfaces, assortment of drawers and compartments behind the fall-front lid (fig. 1), side pigeonholes in a stepped form, and globular feet.<sup>1</sup> A graphite inscription on one of the

small interior drawers reads: “Old Joad Place / No Smithfield / RI” (written probably during a campaign of significant restoration in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century), suggesting a history in this town north of Providence, which was incorporated in 1871. Henry Francis du Pont had purchased the desk by 1929, the year he loaned it to the exhibition, and later scholars at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware, attributed it to Rhode Island,

making it at the time one of the few examples of William and Mary, or early Baroque, veneered furniture linked to the Narragansett Bay region.<sup>2</sup>

This desk uses locally available chestnut for the drawer interiors and the back and bottom boards of the case, indicating the eighteenth-century preference in Rhode Island for this sturdy yet light wood—which replaced the heavier oak favored in the seventeenth century—as a secondary wood. The desk has features that diverge from standard New England examples of this form. Whereas veneered furniture linked to the Boston area typically has a single veneered panel of burl wood on the drawer and lid facades, framed by a darker wood border, this desk has two framed panels, divided in the center by a single vertical strip. This pattern allies this desk to a high chest (cat. 11) that also has a history in the Providence area, as well as to two similar slant-front desks, catalogue 10 and an example in the Yale University Art Gallery (fig. 2), which Francis P. Garvan purchased probably in the 1920s. The present desk has solid maple sides while the

other two have sides of black walnut and maple, respectively. The central prospect door is pintle-hinged at the bottom and locked at the top, a rare feature but one that is not unprecedented on other examples of New England furniture linked to Massachusetts, as well as later furniture in Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

This desk underwent a campaign of restoration probably after it was collected in Rhode Island and before being purchased by du Pont. Although the veneers on the drawer fronts and lid are largely intact, the veneer on the top is a replacement, as is one of the veneered drawers in the interior. The four prominent, ebonized turned ball feet are old replacements but are in the style of what would have been typical for such desks. As an early example of Providence veneered furniture, this desk adds to our understanding of the development of finely constructed furniture in the early eighteenth century as the town emerged from its agrarian roots and became a major economic center of the colony. Desks from Providence and Newport furniture makers later in the eighteenth century are

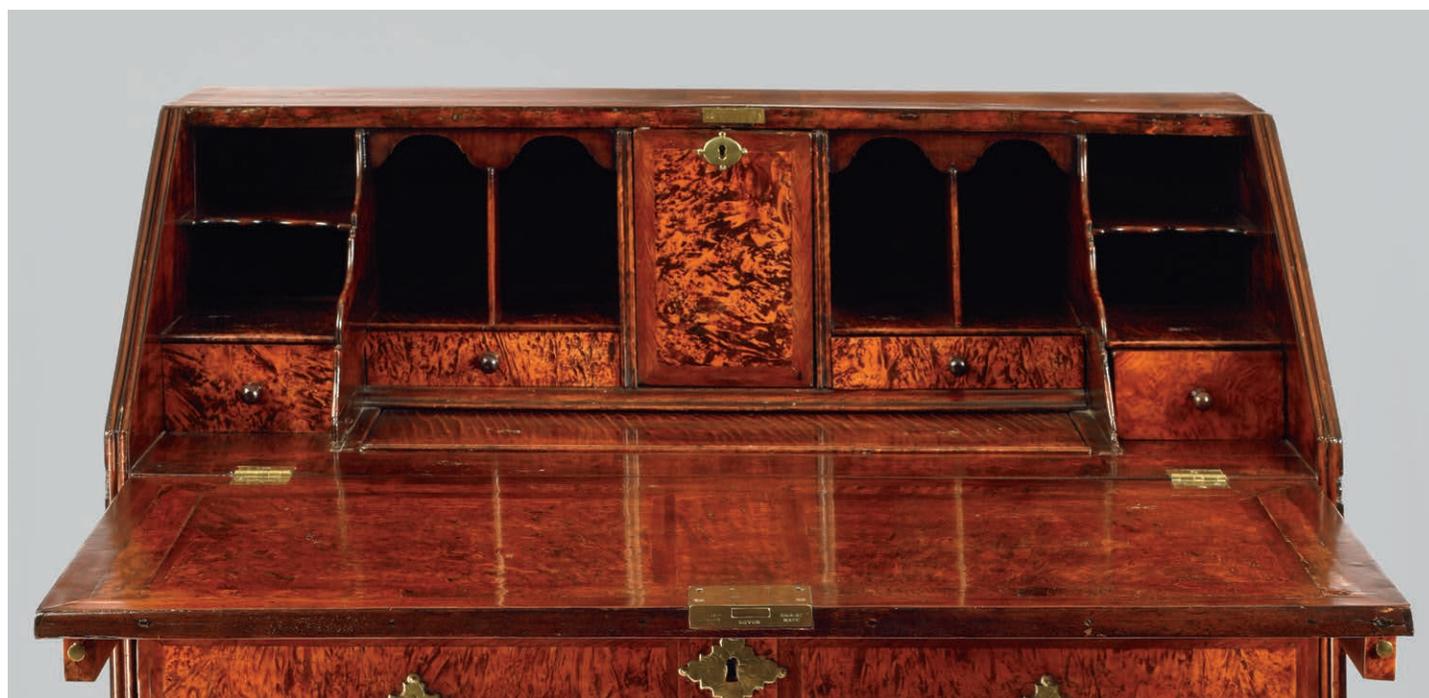


Fig. 1. Cat. 12, showing lid of desk open



Fig. 2. *Slant-Front Desk*, Rhode Island, 1690–1730. Maple, maple and walnut veneer, pine, and yellow poplar, 42½ × 38 × 21½ in. (108 × 96.5 × 54.6 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, inv. no. 1930.2119. [RIF2513]

well known, but what has been missing from the scholarship is a more thorough examination of the early furniture from these key Rhode Island towns, which set the foundations for the celebrated Queen Anne and Chippendale styles. —DC

**Cat. 12**

40⅝ × 35 × 19⅜ in. (103.2 × 88.9 × 48.7 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “X,” incised on exterior backs of exterior drawers; “V,” incised on top of exterior sides of exterior drawers; “IX,” incised on top edge of back of top exterior drawer; “IV,” incised on top edge of back of middle exterior drawer; “V,” incised on top edge of back of bottom exterior drawer; “II,” incised on exterior back of proper-right interior drawer; “I,” incised on top edges of sides of proper-right interior drawer; “II[?],” incised on top edge of back of proper-right interior drawer; “I,” incised on exterior back and bottom of interior drawer to proper right of prospect door; “Old Joad Place / No Smithfield / RI,”

in graphite, on exterior bottom of interior drawer to proper right of prospect door; “I,” incised on top edge of sides and back of interior drawer to proper right of prospect door; “I,” incised on top edges of sides of interior drawer to proper left of prospect door; “II,” incised on top edge of back of interior drawer to proper left of prospect door; “I,” “II,” or “III,” incised on exterior backs (except drawer marked “II”) and exterior bottoms of prospect drawers, from top to bottom; “2 [later?],” in graphite, on exterior bottom of top prospect drawer; “I,” incised on top of exterior front of top prospect drawer; “II,” incised on top of exterior front of middle prospect drawer; “I,” incised on top edges of sides and backs of prospect drawers; “HOBBS&CO / LONDON,” “LEVER,” and “MACHINE / MADE,” stamped on end of brass lock (later) on fall board

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Loan Exhibition* 1929, no. 505, ill.; Krill and Eversmann 2001, 67, ill.

PROVENANCE: Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), Winterthur, Del., before 1929; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1969, inv. no. 1958.1799 [RIF881]

**Notes**

1. *Loan Exhibition* 1929, no. 505.
2. See notes in accession file, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.1799; see also Krill and Eversmann 2001, 67, ill. The desk was initially catalogued at Winterthur as Newport.
3. See, for example, a Boston-area veneered fall-front desk in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 32.248, and another at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 10.125.75, but also later Rhode Island slant-front desks, such as one made by John Goddard in 1745, now at the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee (cat. 27).

## 13

*Slant-Front Desk*

Attributed to Abraham Tourtellot (1698–1762)

Glocester, Rhode Island, probably 1743

Maple (primary); maple, chestnut, and pine (secondary)



The recent discovery of two inscriptions on this extraordinary highly figured maple desk links this remarkable object with Abraham Tourtellot of Glocester, Rhode Island. Found on the side and bottom of one of the interior drawers in the desk section, the inscriptions reads, “AHTourtellot,” cut carefully in a serif font with a sharp chisel (fig. 1). The inscriptions likely refer to Abraham and his wife, Hannah, whom he married in 1743.<sup>1</sup> Tourtellot was a joiner, first

working in Providence, then Smithfield, and later in Glocester as the town designations shifted. Little documentary evidence of his furniture making exists, other than his £4 charge to Capt. Job Whipple in 1735 for “one bedstead he found Posts.”<sup>2</sup> This desk is the only known object associated with him.<sup>3</sup> With eye-catching tiger maple bursting with radiance, a complex cubby of interior drawers and compartments (fig. 2), and stately turned feet with notably tall necks, the desk is



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 13, showing inscription on side of interior drawer

a testament to Tourtellot's skills as a furniture maker. This may be the desk referred to in his 1762 estate inventory as "1 Desk" for £45.<sup>4</sup>

Tourtellot was of French extraction. His father, Abraham Tourtellot, fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and sailed to America in 1687

aboard the ship *Friendship*, landing in Boston.<sup>5</sup> He may have stayed briefly at the short-lived settlement of "Frenchtown" in Narragansett, Rhode Island, a refuge for Huguenots fleeing France, as his name appears on the original list of plats (or plots) drawn up in 1686; however, he soon was in Providence, then Roxbury, Massachusetts, and later Newport, where he married Marie Bernon, the daughter of the prominent French settler Gabriel Bernon.<sup>6</sup> In 1722 their son Abraham became a freeman of Providence, where he worked as a joiner, and that year, he purchased a dwelling house and sixty-seven acres of land in Providence from Joseph Hopkins for the sum of £300.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, at about the time this desk was made, Tourtellot was a large landholder and was also increasingly involved in business affairs in Gloucester: he petitioned the town to operate a tavern in his house starting in 1743 through 1751, and he is often referred to as "gentleman" or "Esq." in the town records.<sup>8</sup> He served as a justice of the peace, an overseer for the poor, a rate maker for the town, and moderator of



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 13, showing lid of desk open

the town council meetings. In 1743, the same year as his marriage to Hannah, he was elected to serve as a deputy to the Rhode Island General Assembly.<sup>9</sup> It is probable that Tourtellot made this desk at about the time of his new marriage. On the other hand, in 1740 he is recorded as purchasing a “Deske” from the Providence joiner Benjamin Hunt for £12.<sup>10</sup> The extent to which Tourtellot continued to practice his skills as a joiner as late as the 1740s is not clear in the records. It is possible that the present desk may in fact be the work of Hunt, who was himself an accomplished furniture maker in Providence. —DC

*Cat. 13*

42 ¼ × 35 ½ × 19 ⅞ in. (107.3 × 90.2 × 50.5 cm) (closed)

MARKS: “AHTourtellot,” incised on exterior bottom and exterior proper-left side of second interior drawer from proper right

INSCRIPTIONS: “V [pointing up],” in chalk, on exterior back of second exterior drawer from top; “S[?],” in chalk, on exterior bottom of third exterior drawer from top; “3,” in graphite, on interior bottom of third exterior drawer from top; “1” through “4,” later, in graphite, on exterior back of large interior drawers; “Guaranteed / GINSBURG & LEVY / 815 Madison Av., N.Y.,” in red ink, printed on paper label glued to exterior back of middle interior drawer

PROVENANCE: Hannah Tourtellot (née Case, widow of Jeremiah Corps [Corpe], 1713–unknown) and Abraham Tourtellot (1698–1762), Gloucester, R.I. Ginsburg and Levy, New York, 1940–50. Private collection, Michigan, before 2014; sold to Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon then Canton, Mass., 2014 [RIF6146]

*Notes*

1. Abraham married Hannah Corps (née Case, widow of Jeremiah Corps [Corpe]) of Providence on January 29, 1743; see *Rhode Island Vital Extracts* 1891–1912, 2:49.
2. Statement of account, September 30, 1735, in case file, Abraham Tourtellot, Esq., Gloucester, v. Job Whipple, Smithfield, gentleman, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 2, p. 221, December 1744 term, case 20, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
3. Austin 1887, 207.
4. Abraham Tourtellot inventory, Gloucester, November 23, 1762, recorded September 5, 1769, Gloucester Probate Records, vol. 1, pp. 252–53, Gloucester Town Hall, R.I.
5. The elder Tourtellot was born in 1655 in Bordeaux, France, and died at sea in 1706.
6. Potter 1879, 10–12, 80–81; and *Representative Men* 1908, 3:2036–37.
7. Joseph Hopkins, Providence, husbandman, deed to Abraham Tourtellot, Providence, joiner, March 23, 1721/22, recorded August 23, 1722, Providence Deeds, vol. 4, pp. 251–52, Providence City Hall.
8. Gloucester Town Council Records, 1731–84, pp. 74, 77, 82, 88, 100, 117, 128, and n.p., Gloucester Town Hall, R.I.
9. Gloucester Town Meeting Records, pp. 1, 7, 9, 11, 14–15, 25, 29, 32, 33 (first section), Gloucester Town Hall, R.I.; Gloucester Town Council Records, 1731–84, pp. 84, 118, 8a, 33a, Gloucester Town Hall, R.I.; Court of General Sessions of the Peace Record Book, 1730–40, Providence County, p. 28, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.; and General Court of Trials, 1747–69, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 1, p. 74, September 1750 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
10. Statement of account, March 25, 1740, in case file, Benjamin Hunt, Providence, joiner, v. Abraham Tourtellot, Providence, gentleman, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 1, p. 385, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I. Hunt had “5 Maple Deskes” and “1 Desk partly finished” in his 1763 inventory; see Providence Probate Record Book, vol. 5, pp. 363–66, Providence City Hall.

## 14

*Fall-Front Desk*

Probably Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), 1700–1730  
Walnut and walnut veneer (primary); pine, chestnut, and maple (secondary)

Unknown to furniture scholars before it sold at auction in 2013, this fall-front desk is one of only three known examples of this rare form made in colonial America and the only one from New England. In both form and construction it relates closely to the European writing desk sometimes referred to as an *escritoire*, or in English *scrutoir* or *scriptor*, which comprises a cabinet over a chest of drawers, with numerous small drawers and cubbies in the upper case for storing account books, papers, and writing implements, and a broad fall-front lid that lowers to form a writing surface (for a full image of this desk open, see Carr essay, fig. 7). These desks were popular with the rising merchant class in Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and were



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 14, showing secret compartments

made until about 1730 in England, but they are rarely found in colonial America. The other two early eighteenth-century American *scrutoirs* that are known today are a walnut example stamped by Edward Evans, a Philadelphia joiner, and dated 1707 and a cedar example elaborately decorated with profuse vine-and-berry inlays that descended in the Brinckerhoff family of New York.<sup>1</sup> The present example is distinguished by its complex arrangement of fifty interior drawers and compartments, including an astonishing twenty-five secret compartments in the upper case (figs. 1–2), heretofore unprecedented in American case furniture of this early date.

The desk was owned in the Child family of Swansea, Massachusetts (later Warren, Rhode Island), and it appears in the 1738 inventory of James Child, listed as “One Chist [chest] of Drawers & Cabinett £5.”<sup>2</sup> It descended directly in the family until the last owner in 2013 and bears on four of its secret drawers, written in ink, the names of three siblings in the late eighteenth century, John, Nathan, and Rosabella Child, and a cousin, Gardner Child.<sup>3</sup> Pages of the June 21, 1825, issue of the *Rhode Island American* newspaper, published in Providence, are pasted on the inner sides of one of the lower drawers. The desk, given its elaborate form, prodigious number of secret compartments, up-to-date English construction features—such as thinly constructed dovetailed drawers with added drawer-runner strips and complex, multipart upper and waist moldings with a core of secondary wood—might suggest that it was constructed in an urban center and by an English-trained cabinetmaker; however, the secure family history in



Swansea dating to the 1730s, the use of veneering patterns that are characteristic of Rhode Island furniture construction of this period (compare to cats. 10 and 12), and the extensive use of chestnut as a secondary wood point to its origins in Rhode Island.

Although a small town today, Warren boasted an active port in the eighteenth century—one of the deepest in New England—and became a major center of shipbuilding (in which the Child family was active), which contributed to its rising fortunes in the early eighteenth century and supported a number of craftsmen engaged in the furniture making and shipbuilding trades. One of the secret drawers in the center of the upper case of the desk bears a faint, now virtually illegible, ink inscription with the name of Thomas Easterbrook, who may have belonged to a family of joiners and house carpenters by the same name in the Swansea/Warren area.<sup>4</sup> The feet, base molding, and exterior brass hardware are replacements.<sup>5</sup> —DC



Fig. 2. Line drawing of cat. 14, showing secret compartments

*Cat. 14*

66 × 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (167.6 × 101 × 47 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: Upper case: “1” through “5” and “10” through “15,” in graphite, on interior fronts and backs of outermost drawers of desk interior, from top to bottom, and on tops of drawer dividers on left and right sides of desk interior, from top to bottom; “|,” in graphite, on interior sides of all interior drawers and compartments; corresponding numbers, in graphite, on long sides of secret compartments of outermost drawers marked “1” through “5” and “10” through “15”; “Samuel Child / Nathan Child,” in ink, on a long side of secret compartment marked “10”; “Gardner Child [illegible] 1795,” in ink, on a long side of secret compartment marked “11”; “Rosabella Child,” in ink, “44 [twice],” in chalk, and “Borrowd [followed by mathematical calculations],” in chalk, on a long side of secret compartment marked “12”; “Samuel Child,” in ink, on a long side of secret compartment marked “13”; “Nathan Child,” in ink, on a long side of secret compartment marked “14”; “6” through “9,” in graphite, on exterior tops of four sections of removable compartments over desk drawers; mathematical calculations, in chalk, on exterior bottom of secret compartment marked “6”; “6” through “9,” in graphite, on interior fronts and backs of secret drawers of secret compartments correspondingly marked; “Rcd Books / F[illegible] / 1804,” in chalk, on back of secret compartment drawer marked “6”; “V [inverted],” in graphite, on interior back of cornice drawer and drawer over bottom open compartment; illegible inscription, possibly “Fore Side,” in ink, on exterior back of well tray; “0” through “4,” in graphite, on interior fronts and backs of secret drawers under well tray; “1” through “3,” in graphite, on interior fronts and backs of secret drawers behind central open compartment; “Notes & Bonds,” in ink, written on tape affixed to front of secret drawer marked “1”; “Dee[ds],” in ink, written on tape affixed to front of secret drawer marked “2”; “Thomas Easterbrook,” in ink, written on exterior front, and “May 21 1777/400/to/[?],” in chalk, on exterior bottom of secret drawer

marked “3”; Lower case: “|,” in graphite, on interior sides of all drawers; “V [inverted],” in graphite, on interior fronts and backs of middle and bottom drawers; “2” within “V [inverted],” in graphite, on interior back of proper-right top small drawer; “1” within “V [inverted],” in graphite, on interior front and back of proper-left top small drawer

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Boston and Marlborough 2013, 16–17, lot 38, ill.; Virginia Bohlin, “MFA Top Bidder for William and Mary Desk,” *Boston Globe*, August 25, 2013, p. G6; Hewett 2013a, 12-A; Hewett 2013b, 34-C; Frances McQueeney-Jones Mascolo, “Skinner Americana Auction Led by Rarity of New England Furniture,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, August 30, 2013, pp. 34–35; Carr, Johnson, and Kane 2014; Grant 2014, 171–72; Kenny 2014, 5–8, 14, 17–18, 28

**PROVENANCE:** Probably John Child (1672–1739) or his son James Child (1708–1737/38), Swansea, Mass.; by descent to James’s son John Child (1732/33–1819), Warren, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Rosabella Gardner (née Child, 1778–1855) and her husband, Edward Gardner (1770–1824), Warren, R.I.; by descent to their daughter Mary Miller Gardner (1816–1888), Warren, R.I.; by descent to her great-niece Abby Child Bradford (née Gardner, 1831–1902) and her husband, Martin Luther Bradford (1821–1903), Boston; by descent to their daughter-in-law Cornelia Howland Bradford (née Myrick, 1866–1955) and her husband, George Gardner Bradford (1863–1952), Boston; by descent to their daughter Hope Bowden (née Bradford, 1908–1995) and her husband, Frederick Prescott Bowden, Jr. (1908–1976); by descent to their son Paul Converse Bowden (born 1941), North Providence; consigned to Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Marlborough), August 11, 2013, lot 38; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund, 2013, inv. no. 2013.877 [RIF5797]

## Notes

1. The walnut desk is Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Va., inv. no. 1958-468; see Lindsey 1999, 133–34, 147, no. 69, fig. 194. The cedar example is Museum of the City of New York, inv. no. 45.112A-C; see Kenny 2014.
2. James Child inventory, Swansea, Mass., February 23, 1737/38, recorded April 20, 1738, Bristol County, Mass., Probate Records, vol. 9, p. 54, Massachusetts State Archives, Columbia Point.
3. Carr, Johnson, and Kane 2014, 217.
4. Thomas Hardin, blacksmith, and Marcy Sweeting, widow, Providence, executors of Henry Sweeting, Providence, practitioner in physick, deceased, v. Thomas Easterbrook, Warren, house carpenter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, Record Book, vol. 3, p. 32, December 1749 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Record Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
5. The author gratefully acknowledges the work of Gordon Hanlon, Christine Storti, and Bodil Unckel in the Furniture and Frames Conservation Lab at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for their helpful analysis and expert conservation of this remarkable desk. For further information regarding the inscriptions, see Storti 2014.

## 15

*Dressing Table*

Probably Newport or East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1705–35  
 Maple and maple veneer (primary); walnut and pine (secondary)



This remarkable dressing table is one of the best-preserved and most sophisticated expressions of the early Baroque style in Rhode Island, with elegant veneers, remarkably thin and attenuated leg turnings, and distinctive crossed cyma (or S-curved) stretchers that are capped with a central finial. The broad, overhanging top bears a rare example of decorative placage (fig. 1): four panels of walnut veneer are highlighted in the center with a darker wood inlay, which depicts a floral spray motif that may relate to embroidery patterns and other decorative designs of the period.<sup>1</sup> The accomplished

veneering and the style of the leg turnings share an affinity with a high chest (cat. 8) that has been attributed to Rhode Island.

The dressing table also closely relates to a high chest that descended in the Howland family of Westport, Massachusetts, once owned by Nina Fletcher Little and now in the collection of Historic New England (fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> The high chest is marked “Howland” in chalk and is said to have descended in the family of Joseph Howland.<sup>3</sup> Although the high chest is unveneered, its distinctive leg turnings with unusually thin shafts are

very similar to those of the dressing table, suggesting that it was made in the same shop. The history of the dressing table, which descended in a family from East Greenwich, Rhode Island, and that of the high chest in Westport, a coastal town just east of the Rhode Island border along the water, indicate that both pieces are likely the work of a Rhode Island shop possibly in Newport or a coastal town like East Greenwich.<sup>4</sup> Moving via water along Narragansett Bay was the quickest and preferred mode of transit during the early eighteenth century, and Newport maintained close ties with the cities on the western side of the bay, such as East Greenwich, and on

the eastern side (originally part of the Plymouth Colony until annexed by Rhode Island in 1747), including Little Compton and the coastal towns beyond. The career of joiner Reuben Peckham, one of the best-documented Rhode Island craftsmen of the early eighteenth century, shows the close ties between these towns: born in Little Compton, he initially ran a large shop in Newport before moving to East Greenwich and continuing to produce fine furniture there. His 1736 inventory indicates that he was making furniture in the style of this dressing table and was skilled in the art of veneering, turning, and fine cabinetwork. When he died in 1736, his probate records



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 15, showing floral inlay on top



Fig. 2. *High Chest*, Rhode Island, 1700–1735. Maple, maple veneer, and pine, 61¼ × 40 × 22¾ in. (155.6 × 101.6 × 57.8 cm). Historic New England, Boston, Gift of Bertram K. and Nina Fletcher Little, inv. no. 1991.1292. [RIF2451]

listed in his shop “1 Finnering [veneering] Saw” and twenty-three pounds of lead, likely weights used for gluing up thin veneers, as well as “1 Leath [lathe] and turning tools” for turning the legs, delicate drops, and finials of high chests and dressing tables.<sup>5</sup> His shop inventory also records that he was making case furniture at the time of his death, including “1 high Case of draws unfinished [£]7” and a “Low Case of draws [£]4.” The presence of Reuben Peckham in East Greenwich demonstrates that fine and complex examples of cabinetmaking like this dressing table were being made not only in the urban centers of Newport and Providence but also in the rural towns along the edges of Narragansett Bay that were settled during the seventeenth century. —DC

*Cat. 15*

28½ × 35½ × 23¼ in. (72.4 × 90.2 × 59.1 cm)

INSCRIPTION: Leigh Keno American Antiques label, glued to interior back of middle drawer

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Leigh Keno American Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 135, no. 5 (May 1989): 1052, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent in an unknown family, East Greenwich, R.I.; sold to Erwin W. Deines (1919–2007), Smithfield, R.I., 1958; sold to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York, 1989; sold to a private collection, Va., 1989; sold to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York, 1996; sold to the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, 1999, inv. no. 1999.3 [RIF2447]

*Notes*

1. Similar abstract flower-and-vase designs, which were widely popular in Anglo embroidery, can be seen in Thomas Trevelyon’s unpublished *Miscellany* of 1608 (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., inv. no. V.b.232) and, more specifically in Providence, in an embroidery from about 1735 by Ester Bernon Powell (see Ward et al. 2001, 80–81) and in a closely related Rhode Island embroidery in a private collection.
2. On this object, see N. Little 1984, 193, 195; and Winchester 1969, 251, ill. [RIF2451].
3. A modern typed label pasted on a drawer of the high chest reads: “Bought from Mrs. Joseph / Howland, Westport, Mass (92 years old) Highboy / descended in her husband’s family.” The chalk appears to be a period inscription. There were furniture makers in Rhode Island with the Howland surname, including Isaac Howland of Tiverton and Portsmouth, Rhode Island, who worked in the 1730s.
4. The author thanks Robert Trent for sharing the early history of the dressing table in East Greenwich.
5. Peckham’s tools are listed in both his probate inventory of 1736 and a public sale of his goods in 1737: Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, joiner, June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–68, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.; “Account of the Sundry Goods Sold at Vendue Belonging to the Estate of Reuben Peckham,” May 3, 1737, in case file, William Allen, North Kingstown, R.I., yeoman, vs. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, Newport, widow, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 169, May 1741 term, case 62, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.

## 16

*Stair Baluster*

Newport, probably 1697  
Oak

The upper staircase of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, which was completed by 1697, is the earliest known example in a Newport building of the asymmetrical baluster-ring-ball turning, a style now associated with a host of Rhode Island furniture forms.<sup>1</sup> The house was originally constructed by Stephen Mumford, a Newport merchant and member of Newport's Seventh Day Baptist congregation, and is considered the oldest surviving house in Newport (fig. 1). A remnant of what is likely the original staircase of the house, from which the present architectural element comes, survives in the attic level. This stair baluster is made of oak, which is consistent with a seventeenth-century date. The staircase on the building's first two floors is somewhat later, either reconfigured or completely added following copies of the earlier balusters (fig. 2). This work may have been commissioned by the third owner of the home, Richard Ward, a wealthy Newport lawyer and later colonial governor of Rhode Island, who purchased the property in 1724. It is also possible that the staircase was repaired after 1766, when significant portions of the house, which was then owned by Martin Howard, Jr., a Newport lawyer and Loyalist, were vandalized and severely damaged during the Stamp Act riots. In any event, that the early baluster turning design continued to have stylistic currency in Newport well into the eighteenth century suggests the popularity of this regional turning style, which appears on a later group of tables as well as on other forms that employ a similar turning.

The stair balusters in the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House are very closely related to the legs on a Newport



draw-bar table that reportedly belonged to William Floyd (1734–1821) of Brookhaven, Long Island.<sup>2</sup> Given Floyd’s life dates and the similarity of the leg turnings to the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard balusters, it is likely that the history of this table precedes the modern family history and that it was brought to Long Island from Newport soon after its construction sometime in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. This asymmetrical style of turning also appears on the stair balusters of the Winslow House (ca. 1698–1700) in Marshfield, Massachusetts, and the Coeymans

House (ca. 1700) in Coeymans, New York, indicating a wider popularity of this style outside the borders of Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

An antecedent for the design can be found in architectural design books, such as Augustin-Charles d’Aviler’s *Cours d’architecture qui comprend les Orders de Vignole* (1691), which was republished in multiple editions during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Mirrored balusters (two baluster shapes that are turned end-to-end) were described as *double poire*, or “double pear” (fig. 3). During



Fig. 1. *Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House*, Newport, built ca. 1697. Newport Historical Society



Fig. 2. *Lower Staircase of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House*, Newport, 18th century. Newport Historical Society

the first half of the eighteenth century, craftsmen working in the Narragansett Bay region developed alternatives to this archetypal Baroque design. The origins of these designs are unknown, but similar baluster shapes and arrangements occur in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century British furniture and interior architecture. One example is a staircase in the Harvard House, owned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. The house dates to 1596, but the staircase was a later addition, installed

in the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Another example from the late seventeenth century is a staircase that was part of the Little Cloister at Westminster Abbey in London.<sup>5</sup> —DC

*Cat. 16*

23 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (60 × 6.4 × 6.4 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Gronning and Carr 2005, 6, figs. 9–10

PROVENANCE: Originally part of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, Newport, built ca. 1697; Newport Historical Society, inv. no. FIC.2014.558 [RIF3348]

*Notes*

1. See Downing 1937, 70–72; and Downing and Scully 1982, 435–37, pls. 29–37. The date of this house is based on recent dendrochronology. The author thanks Adams Taylor of the Newport Historical Society and Myron Stachiw of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, for providing this information.
2. Failey 1998, 28, fig. 26. While draw-bar tables are known in colonial New York, this is the only New England example to be identified. The author gratefully acknowledges the close collaboration of Erik Gronning in the study of this architectural turning and related furniture forms; see Gronning and Carr 2004 and Gronning and Carr 2005.
3. For more on the Winslow and Coeymans Houses, see St. George 1979, 44, fig. 34b; Gross et al. 2002, 84; and J. Stevens 2013.
4. The author thanks Victor Chinnery for providing information about the staircase at Harvard House. For another similar staircase, see Godfrey 1911, pls. 40–41.
5. For a photograph of the staircase, see *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments* 1924, pl. 179. The author thanks Robert Trent for suggesting this comparison.



Fig. 3. Augustin-Charles d'Aviler, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les Ordres de Vignole* (1691), 1:319, pl. 94. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

17

*Table*Newport, 1710–40  
Maple

Recent research has established links between turnings on early eighteenth-century Rhode Island furniture and related architectural work.<sup>1</sup> The legs on this small table are among the closest in style to the front stair banister of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House in Newport (cat. 16), which was constructed by 1697 with additional sections to the staircase likely added or reconfigured after 1724. Although the specific turning profiles of the staircase

banister and the table differ in certain details, they share similar design elements that have now become associated with a large group of surviving Rhode Island furniture: a baluster-ring-ball turning that appears on a host of other small tables and larger gateleg tables from the colony and has been categorized as “group three” turning.<sup>2</sup> In the turning of this group, the ring between the baluster and ball has an angled molding profile that flares outward

toward the bottom. The asymmetrical character of this turning represents a regional preference in the Rhode Island area that differs from the more common symmetrical baluster turnings found on gateleg tables and smaller tables and stools made elsewhere in New England, especially in eastern Massachusetts.

This style of turning likely represents the work of multiple shops over a period of decades, as Newport furniture makers translated the late seventeenth-century design of the banister turning found in the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House to furniture produced during the first several decades of the eighteenth century. Among the tables most closely related to the present example is one in a private collection that bears an old or original oval top; the top of the present table has been replaced with a rectangular multiboard top.<sup>3</sup> The size of the baluster turnings on these two tables has been reduced from the architectural scale of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House stair banister, yet the crispness and skillful handling of the turning has been retained. This is especially seen in the asymmetrical quality of the ring between the baluster and ball turnings, which is highlighted by precisely turned fillets, and in the sharp transition between the lower edge of the baluster and the beginning of the ring turning, a quality found in the best examples of this form. The legs of the table under discussion cant outward along one axis, as is typical for Rhode Island tables of this type, and are joined to the side rails and stretchers by angled mortise-and-tenon joints and wooden pegs.

Despite the numerous surviving examples of turned furniture from the eighteenth century, surprisingly few references to turners appear in period inventories. Most craftsmen of this period would have been referred to as joiners or carpenters, such as Christopher Townsend, who was often listed as a shop joiner or cabinetmaker but is also known to have worked as a house joiner; he has been associated with the stair banister turnings of the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House in Newport (Carr essay, fig. 11), which dates to roughly the same period as the tables in this group.<sup>4</sup> The inventory of another Newport furniture maker, Reuben Peckham,

who died in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, in 1736, lists a lathe and turner's tools, as well as two oval tables and a joint stool, valued at £4.<sup>5</sup> Another "Small Oval Table" was sold by Peckham's estate to Samuel Pike for £1.11.0 in May of 1737.<sup>6</sup> Despite the scant references to their makers, tables of this type would have been a common sight in New England homes in the eighteenth century, fitting into the fashionable domestic interiors that would have displayed both locally made and imported objects. —DC

#### *Cat. 17*

22  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 23  $\frac{3}{4}$  × 15  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (58.1 × 60.3 × 39.4 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Gronning and Carr 2005, 13, 15, fig. 31

PROVENANCE: Private collection, 2005 [RIF5110]

#### *Notes*

1. See, for example, Beckerdite 2000; and Gronning and Carr 2005. The author thanks Erik Gronning and Robert Trent for their knowledge and collegiality in compiling this large study of Rhode Island gateleg tables and related architectural forms.
2. See Gronning and Carr 2005.
3. For the table in a private collection, see Gronning and Carr 2005, 15, fig. 32 [RIF374].
4. Beckerdite 2000, 4–10.
5. Reuben Peckham probate inventory, East Greenwich, joiner, taken June 25, 1736, East Greenwich Probate, vol. 1, pp. 167–68, East Greenwich Town Hall, R.I.
6. Reuben Peckham estate sale, May 3, 1737, in case file, William Allen, North Kingstown, R.I., yeoman, v. John Peckham, Little Compton, R.I., laborer, an infant, and Sarah Peckham, late of Newport, widow, devisees of the last will and testament of Reuben Peckham (deceased), late of East Greenwich, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. B, p. 169, May 1741 term, case 62, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.

## 18

*Table*

Rhode Island, 1710–50

Soft maple (microanalysis)



The slender legs of this diminutive maple table and its related examples represent a specific style of turning long associated with early Rhode Island. They differ from turnings on other Rhode Island furniture of this period in the space between the ball and reel turnings and the long necks above the feet. The flattened reel turning is also more pronounced than on other tables (see cats. 17 and 19) and varies from a broad disk, as in this example, to turnings with a distinct astragal (convex) and cavetto (concave) profile, based on classical ornament.

The present table relates most closely to a group of other small maple tables and stools with what has been termed “group two” turnings.<sup>1</sup> It also relates somewhat to those on a table that has a history in the Tew family of Newport and is now part of the furnishings of the John Stevens Shop, a stonecutting shop that has been in continuous operation in Newport since 1705.<sup>2</sup> Finally, a similar turning profile also appears in a slightly enlarged form in a group of four gateleg tables, exemplified by a fine table in a private collection.<sup>3</sup> This similarity across

forms suggests that one or more furniture-making shops possibly centered in the Newport area were producing related turnings for a variety of furniture forms.

Notable in the present table and in some of the related objects is the strong transition between the square stock of the post and the columnar turning of the legs and feet, with only a very small fillet defining the edge of the profile. The straight, columnar nature of the shaft that runs through the length of the turning (the thinnest part of each leg from bottom to top) is one of the defining qualities of this group of Rhode Island tables; its style has yet to be found in period architectural turnings in the colony, but it does appear in a number of stools, gateleg tables, and candlestands from the region.<sup>4</sup> As with nearly all of the stools and small tables of this group, the legs on the table cant outward along a single axis. The tops of the stretchers and bottoms of the rails have a molded edge, as does the two-part rectangular top, which is likely original.

This type of asymmetrical turning is one of the most distinctive innovations of Rhode Island furniture making of the early eighteenth century, differing from most Boston-area and New England turned furniture, which typically employ a mirrored (or “double pear”) baluster form centered on the leg (see cat. 16, fig. 3). Among the early authors who first illustrated examples of this style of turning were Frances Clary Morse, who included a gateleg table in her book *Furniture of the Olden Time* (1902), and Wallace Nutting, who featured an oval-top table in *Furniture Treasury* (1928).<sup>5</sup> It was Albert Sack in his *Fine Points of American Furniture* (1950), however, who identified the origins of this turning as colonial Rhode Island.<sup>6</sup> Since these early publications, a host of additional forms and examples have come to light—mostly constructed of maple but examples in walnut and oak are also known—establishing Rhode Island, and in particular Newport, as a major center of lathe-turned furniture by the second decade of the eighteenth century, just as the city was becoming a key economic and cultural engine of the region.<sup>7</sup> Although few craftsmen are specifically identified as turners in the historical records of Newport and other towns in the Narragansett Bay region, this type of production was clearly situated within larger furniture workshops as part of a wider output of turned bases for gateleg tables, stools,

small tables, high chests, and dressing tables, as well as staircase banisters and architectural ornaments that came to define Rhode Island style in the first half the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> —DC

#### Cat. 18

21 7/8 × 20 1/2 × 14 5/8 in. (55.6 × 52.1 × 37.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Trent 1999, 220, fig. 19; Gronning and Carr 2005, 20114

PROVENANCE: Charles K. Davis (1889–1968), Fairfield, Conn.; sold to Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), Winterthur, Del.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1969, inv. no. 1967.1448 [RIF2093]

#### Notes

1. In addition to cat. 17 in the present volume, for related tables see Fairbanks 1967, 834, ill. [RIF2464]; Nutting 1963, no. 1254, ill. [RIF4014]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 10.125.327 [RIF4141]; private collection, Winchester 1951, 462 [RIF6238]; and Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, June 23, 1972, lot 164 [RIF5114].
2. See Gronning and Carr 2005, 20114 [RIF446].
3. The table in the private collection is illustrated in *ibid.*, 9, fig. 19 [RIF5115]. For the other examples of gateleg tables, see Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), May 30, 1986, lot 132 [RIF5140]; and “Melvin Hubley advertisement,” *Antiques* 44, no. 5 (November 1953): 408, ill. [RIF6239]. The fourth table is unpublished and is in a private collection [RIF6278]. The turning profile also appears on the original upper front stretcher of a banister-back chair linked to Rhode Island; see Gronning and Carr 2005, 12, fig. 24 [RIF5102].
4. See Gronning and Carr 2005.
5. F. Morse 1902, 223–24, no. 188, ill. [RIF1183]; and Nutting 1963, 1: no. 1254, ill. [RIF4014].
6. Sack published a closely related joint stool; see A. Sack 1950, 238, ill. [RIF6237]. For a related Rhode Island gateleg table, see *ibid.*, 240, ill. [RIF589].
7. For additional examples of Rhode Island turning, see Trent 1999, 220–21, fig. 20 [RIF1442], and 222–23114.
8. For an exploration of the relationship between Rhode Island turnings and architecture, see Beckerdite 2000; and Gronning and Carr 2005.

## 19

*Dining Table*

Newport, 1710–30

Maple (primary); yellow poplar and pine (secondary)



This maple dining table is the best-preserved example of a large group of surviving turned gateleg tables from colonial Rhode Island. It retains remnants of its original black paint on the base, its original maple top with iron hinges, and its original feet, which show little wear. The table is further distinguished by the quality of the turnings on its legs and stretchers. The turnings on the legs feature an asymmetrical design: at the top, a columnar shaft is ornamented with two complex astragal (convex) moldings, while below, two ball turnings are separated by an asymmetrically turned ring that flares outward toward the bottom. This style of leg

turning differs from those of most New England gateleg tables of this period, which generally have symmetrical baluster-ring-baluster turnings on their legs and stretchers. Also atypical is the fact that the swing legs (or gatelegs) pivot from the same end of the table; most New England examples pivot from opposing ends as they open out to support the leaves. Five other surviving examples of this Rhode Island gateleg form have legs that swing outward from the same end.<sup>1</sup> This type of gate arrangement also occasionally appears on tables from England and New York and is known in other gateleg examples from Rhode Island.<sup>2</sup>

Among the dozens of gateleg tables attributed to colonial Rhode Island, this table relates most closely to a group of eight with similar leg turnings and construction details. Two of these tables have documented early histories, one in the Easton family of Newport (Carr essay, fig. 10) and the other in the Alden-Southworth-Cooke family of Newport and Little Compton, Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup> While no exact cognate of the leg turning appears in Rhode Island architecture of this period, three examples survive that display elements of the basic design: the staircase banister from the Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House (Carr essay, fig. 11), a fragment from the Gov. William Coddington House, and the staircase from the White Horse Tavern, all seventeenth-century buildings in Newport with staircases added or remodeled in the 1720s. This number of architectural examples, along with the wide variety of furniture forms with related turnings—from small tables (see cats. 17–18) to gateleg tables and banister-back chairs—suggests multiple shops at work producing related forms in Newport and elsewhere in the region.

Another highly unusual aspect of this table is the fact that the legs are turned from vertically laminated wooden stock. The legs are composed of up to two or three laminated boards per leg. Typically, furniture makers used laminated boards to reduce waste or labor, rather than using a solid piece of wood thick enough to cut away and form elements such as the flaring “Spanish” feet of some chairs and tables of this period. However, the fact that the joints of the laminates of the table legs fall irregularly across the width of the stock suggests that thin boards were glued up first, the stock was cut to thickness without regard to the position of the seams, and then the legs were turned on a lathe. The question as to why the furniture maker used this kind of process is perplexing given the fact that the legs are only a few inches thick and maple was a plentiful material in New England; however, the table would have been painted originally, thus obscuring the fine joints, which are more visible today. —DC

### *Cat. 19*

28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 58<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 48<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (73 × 149.2 × 123.8 cm) (open)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hampton and Portsmouth 2003, 132, lot 778, ill.; Gronning and Carr 2004, 126–27, pl. 8; Gronning and Carr 2005, 2–3, 8, 20, figs. 1, 12, 16; Safford 2007, 156n1

PROVENANCE: Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 1–3, 2003, lot 778; sold to a private collection [RIF80]

### *Notes*

1. See Gronning and Carr 2004, 122–23, 125, pls. 1–2 [RIF918]; 126, fig. 4 [RIF5066]; and 126, pl. 7 [RIF5067]; as well as Gronning and Carr 2005, 2, figs. 1, 12 [RIF1442]; and 7–8, figs. 13–15 [RIF5064].
2. See Gronning and Carr 2005, 8, 20n7. An additional Rhode Island example with this gate arrangement was purchased by a private collector in the late nineteenth century from the Chase family of Dartmouth, Massachusetts; the table is unpublished [RIF6235]. The author thanks Erik Gronning for this reference.
3. RIF1442 and RIF5064; see n1, above.

## 20

*Banister-Back Side Chair*

Rhode Island, 1720–1800

Maple and ash (primary); ash (secondary)



One of the most intriguing groups of furniture long associated with Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts is the so-called Little Compton banister-back chairs. They have turned up in significant numbers in the town of Little Compton, a small, seaside community founded in 1682 on a corner of land on the eastern side of Narragansett Bay, across the Sakonnet River from Newport. Little Compton was originally a settlement of the Plymouth Colony until a royal decree in 1747 transferred jurisdiction of the town to the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The renowned Rhode Island furniture scholar Joseph K. Ott, working with Little Compton historian Carlton C. Brownell, proposed the origin of these chairs in a seminal article in *Antiques* in 1984, based on two examples preserved in the Little Compton Historical Society, both with local family histories.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the histories of ownership of these two chairs—in the Irish and Hilliard families in Little Compton—are suggestive, and there are other examples in the Little Compton Historical Society that also trace their roots to the town. Among them are armchairs from the Little and Wilbor families, and side chairs from the Gray, Soule-Seabury-Potter, and Church-Burchard families.<sup>2</sup> More recently, chairs in other local collections have come to light, including an important armchair from the Peckham family of Newport and Middletown, Rhode Island (cat. 21), as well as numerous examples without early histories.<sup>3</sup> A stylistically related chair that once belonged to the Charitable Baptist Society of the First Baptist Church in America, Providence, was sold in 1993.<sup>4</sup>

While there are subtle differences among all of these chairs, they share a characteristic double-arched crest rail, elongated finials, and similar turnings on their banisters, posts, and stretchers.

The number of examples of this style that have been discovered since Ott's article appeared has raised the question of whether all of these chairs are indeed from a single town or rather were part of a broader regional style that was centered on the Narragansett Bay region. The style may have started in an urban production center like Newport or even Providence and then gradually diffused to other towns in the surrounding regions during the course of the eighteenth century. Other regional banister-back chair-making traditions support this possibility, in particular, the Heart and Crown chairs of the Guilford and Wallingford area of eastern coastal Connecticut and a very closely related group of chairs made beyond Little Compton in the inland areas of southeastern Massachusetts.<sup>5</sup> The similarities among these chairs and those of the Little Compton group—seen in the turned banisters and posts and, in some cases, the double-arched crest rails—is suggestive of broader regional connections, a style that may have originated in Rhode Island and emanated outward along the ever-expanding road system and busy coastal waterways of southern New England. The present chair is an excellent example of this important and widely recognized Rhode Island regional furniture-making style. —DC

*Cat. 20*

43<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (109.5 × 49.2 × 37.5 cm)

PROVENANCE: Peter H. Eaton Antiques, Newbury, Mass.; sold to Terry and Richard Albright, Wayland, Mass., 2001; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Gift of Terry and Richard Albright, B.A. 1961, 2014, inv. no. 2014.66.1 [RIF6004]

*Notes*

1. Ott 1984, 1171.
2. For chairs of this style at the Little Compton Historical Society, see Carr essay, fig. 14; inv. no. 1996.0262 [RIF4281]; inv. no. 2000.0207 [RIF4283]; inv. no. 1996.0046 [RIF4654]; inv. no. 2000.0208 [RIF4738]; inv. no. 2000.0212 [RIF4739]; inv. no. 2000.0213 [RIF4740]; inv. no. 2006.0003 [RIF4741]; inv. no. 2006.0004 [RIF4742]; and inv. no. 2000.0211 [RIF4746].
3. See, for example, Nutting 1924, 314, 323, no. 359, ill. [RIF4044]. A sampling of related chairs can be found in the Babcock-Smith House, Westerly, R.I., inv. no. 1975.4.1-2 [RIF126]; Historic Deerfield, Mass., inv. no. HD P.121 [RIF1308]; and the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 1987.069.1 [RIF3361]. Others have been in the marketplace, including Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 64-66, no. 10, pl. 10 [RIF775]; Cheshire Auction, Mass., July 8, 2006 [RIF1687]; and "Paul and Karen Wendhiser, advertisement, 'Connecticut Spring Antiques Show: Special Show Section,'" *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, March 2, 2007, p. 8-18, ill. [RIF2647].
4. See Northeast Auctions, Hampton, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 7-8, 1993, lot 566 (right) [RIF5986].
5. For the Connecticut chairs, see Trent 1977, 56-59. For the southeastern Massachusetts chairs, see Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 64-66, no. 10, esp. pl. 10.1.

This banister-back armchair is a variant of the so-called Little Compton type and is among the few examples that can be related to a singular shop tradition. The chair shares many of the same features associated with the other chairs in this group (see Carr essay, fig. 14, and cat. 20), such as the distinctive double-arched crest rail, elongated turned finials, conical turnings on the rear posts, and undercut shaped arms; however, the thickness of the stock and the bold turnings distinguish it from the more typical versions of the style. The chair relates most closely to three other armchairs, all of which are in private collections; none has an early history.<sup>1</sup> It may also relate to a child's high chair at the Yale University Art Gallery (Carr essay, fig. 13) that has a similar handling of the turnings, although on a diminutive scale.<sup>2</sup> The more common type of Little Compton chairs have turnings below the reel at the base of their conical elements. Many have histories in Little Compton, especially in the John Irish, Stephen Wilbor, and Little families.<sup>3</sup> The large number of chairs of the Little Compton type suggest that they were made over a wider geographic area.<sup>4</sup>

This armchair has a history in the Peckham family of Newport and Middletown, Rhode Island, and was donated to the Newport Historical Society in 1942 by that family. According to tradition, the chair originally belonged to Peleg Peckham of Newport (later Middletown), Rhode Island, and may have been commissioned for his wife, Elizabeth Coggeshall.<sup>5</sup> Peckham was a sea captain and merchant and made his home in the rural, sparsely populated area in the middle of Aquidneck Island between Newport and Portsmouth, which later became incorporated as a separate town in 1743. While little craft production is known in this town

in the first half of the eighteenth century, it was home to wealthy yeoman farmers, merchants, and even intellectuals such as Bishop George Berkeley of Whitehall, who, like Peckham, owned land in the area. Peckham's life dates (1710–1765) suggest that this chair may have been made sometime after 1730, and the heaviness of the chair and its turnings bolster the case for an early date.

The question arises as to whether such furniture originated in the more densely populated craft center of Newport or may instead be the product of a small, rural shop, in this case in Middletown. At this time, it is impossible to attribute the Peckham example and related chairs to a particular craftsman; however, it should be noted that a number of members of the Peckham family worked as joiners or carpenters in Newport, including Peleg's uncle Thomas Peckham (1693–1765) and his cousins Reuben Peckham (1676–1736) and Clement Peckham (1721–1766); the latter was a shop joiner in Newport, active in the 1740s and 1750s.<sup>6</sup> —DC

*Cat. 21*

41½ × 26 × 18 in. (105.4 × 66 × 45.7 cm)

PROVENANCE: Peleg Peckham (1710–1765), Newport and Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his son Thomas Peckham (1747–1825), Newport and Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his son Thomas Peckham (1783–1843), Middletown, R.I., and Providence; by descent to his daughters Eliza Ann Peckham (1811–1899) and Sarah Wardwell Peckham (1820–1911), Providence; by descent to their nephew Stephen Farnum Peckham (1839–1918), Providence; Newport Historical Society, Gift of Stephen Farnum Peckham, 1942, inv. no. 01.270 [RIF3359]



### Notes

1. See “Buckley and Buckley Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, March 2, 2007, p. 8-11, ill. [RIF2645]; Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 4, 2001, lot 113 [RIF3853]; and unpublished [RIF5988].
2. See Kane 1976, 67–68, no. 46 [RIF3604]. For a related high chair, see “David C. Morey American Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, March 3, 2006, p. 8-29 [RIF1460].
3. For examples with family histories in Little Compton, see Ott 1984, 1171, ill. (left) [RIF4280].
4. Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 64–66, no. 10.
5. Mary W. Peckham, letter to Herbert O. Brigham, Newport Historical Society, July 7, 1942, in accession files, Newport Historical Society, inv. no. 01.270. The provenance suggests that it may have been purchased about 1745.
6. Peckham 1903.

## 22

*Banister-Back Side Chair*

Probably Providence, 1750–90

Maple (primary); ring-porous wood(?) (secondary)



Often originally painted and made in large sets, the ubiquitous banister-back chair was a common feature of many houses in Rhode Island and throughout New England. This classic chair type evolved from earlier caned chairs imported from England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and also manufactured in Boston. Gradually, over the course of the early eighteenth century, woven rush seats and turned half-banisters came to replace the more costly and labor-intensive caning. Even late examples of this form, like this side chair from the second half of the eighteenth century, display features associated with the earlier caned chair prototypes, including a shaped, arched crest rail (with an outline evoking the profile of gravestones), turned posts and stretchers, and turned front legs that terminate in the corners of the framed seat rather than being integral to the seat frame itself.

This banister-back chair diverges somewhat from the better known Newport- or Little Compton-type banister-backs (see cats. 20–21) and represents what is possibly a slightly later Rhode Island tradition that developed in the Providence area. The chair has a history in the Charitable Baptist Society of the First Baptist Church in America, in Providence.<sup>1</sup> It relates closely in style to a chair formerly owned by collector and antiques dealer Roger Bacon (1904–1982); that chair lacks an early provenance.<sup>2</sup>

These chairs differ from the formulaic Little Compton type in many respects. They feature a crest rail with a single rather than double arch, and the arch displays carved and incised decoration. The turning on the posts and stretchers favors larger, rounder profiles, with ovoid ball turnings and baluster-shaped

rather than conical-shaped shafts. The tapered conical shape so common to Rhode Island chairs, however, does show up in the horizontal front and side stretchers that flank the central “barrel” turning.

In addition to the provenance of this chair, the carved decoration on the crest rail also suggests a Providence-area origin and rather interestingly relates it and the Bacon chair to earlier chairmaking and case furniture traditions in the region. The stylized rosette in the center of the crest recalls the complex overlapping petals of the termini of scrolled pediments in Providence desk and bookcases (see cat. 60) and chest-on-chests of the second half of the eighteenth century. The rosette and flanking pair of incised “bulls-eye” designs recall a similar combination of motifs found on an oak wainscot chair owned by the Cole family (cat. 5) and a related group of chests (see Carr essay, fig. 3, and cat. 6, fig. 1) from the Warren, Rhode Island, area dating to the late seventeenth century. These chairs link to the long tradition of furniture making in the Providence area that emerged in the seventeenth century and reached its peak in the second half of the eighteenth century as the city became a major cultural and economic center of the region. —DC

*Cat. 22*

42  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 21 × 15 in. (108.9 × 53.3 × 38.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hampton 1993, 37, lot 566 (right), ill.

PROVENANCE: Charitable Baptist Society of the First Baptist Church in America, Providence;

consigned to Northeast Auctions, Hampton, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 7–8, 1993, lot 566; sold to Judith and John A. Herdeg, Mendenhall, Pa. [RIF4535]

*Notes*

1. The Charitable Baptist Society traces its roots to 1774, when members of the Baptist Church in Providence obtained a charter to manage the church’s fund-raising and property holdings, which include the current meetinghouse in Providence, which was built in 1774–75.
2. Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), September 24–25, 1982, lot 709 [RIF4536].

## 23

*Banister-Back Armchair*

Probably Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1740–60

Maple and ash or oak (primary); oak (secondary); splint seat



Like many Newport residents in the late eighteenth century, Thomas Robinson and his wife, Jemima Fish, left the city for northern New England seeking greater economic opportunity after the devastation of the American Revolution. According to family tradition, they brought this painted banister-back armchair, along with a dozen other family furnishings, with them to Vergennes, Vermont, in 1792, and later to neighboring Ferrisburgh, where Robinson founded a prosperous sheep farm on a rural tract of land. These family objects descended through four generations of the Robinson family and are now in the collection of the Rokeby Museum, which preserves the family homestead and farm. The original owner of the chair was reportedly Jemima Robinson's grandfather, David Fish, a Quaker blacksmith of Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Known to Robinson family descendants as the "Fish Chair," it is the chair in which, by tradition, Fish sat up at night due to his constant bouts with asthma. Genealogist John Osborn Austin wrote in 1893 that Fish, at the age of seventy-one, "died suddenly in his chair, just after remarking that he did not know that he could do more for his family, if he lived. After a silence of a few moments had followed this remark, he expired."<sup>1</sup> As his son David, Jr., predeceased him, this chair may have passed directly to his granddaughter Jemima, who married in 1787.

This banister-back armchair combines attributes from a number of coastal southern New England chairmaking traditions, particularly those from eastern Connecticut. The deeply chamfered crest rail of the armchair, which centers an arched reserve with a

carved heart, is tenoned and pinned into elaborately turned rear stiles. The six turned and split banisters mimic the profiles of the stiles. The stiles feature an elongated baluster shape framed, at the top, by a reel and, at the bottom, by a similar reel above a flattened ball. The reels have unusually sharp transitions. The general configuration of the chair relates it to a group of banister-back chairs attributed to Guilford or Wallingford, Connecticut, published by Robert F. Trent in *Hearts and Crowns: Folk Chairs from the Connecticut Coast, 1720–1840*.<sup>2</sup> Although they are not exact cognates, they share some of the same characteristics, such as the angular reels in the stiles and the notably tall finials with elongated necks, ovoid balls, and a prominent top button. The Guilford/Wallingford chairs also typically have a wide stance and downward and outward sloping arms, like the present example. The Guilford/Wallingford chairs and the present example are coeval with the so-called Heart and Crown tradition from Stratford and Milford in central coastal Connecticut, and interestingly this chair has a heart incorporated into the design of the crest rail, although in this case it is carved in relief rather than being cut out in negative space, as in the Connecticut examples. Unlike the Guilford or Wallingford chairs, which have straight turned arms that terminate into posts, this example has the curved and shaped arms more typically seen on New England chairs, with deep channels cut on either side.

Portsmouth, founded in 1639, was among the first English towns to be settled in the Narragansett Bay region and is situated at the northern end of Aquidneck Island. In the mid-eighteenth century, Portsmouth was still a relatively small town, numbering about one thousand residents, smaller than neighboring Newport or Bristol, Rhode Island, but like the rural towns of coastal Connecticut, it was large enough to support an active furniture-making trade. Renowned as a center of shipbuilding in the seventeenth century, Portsmouth became home to at least seven joiners in the mid-eighteenth century, including

the chairmaker and joiner Joseph Thomas and joiners Benjamin and George Thomas.<sup>3</sup> From the late 1750s to the 1770s, the chairmaker Samuel Wyatt was active in Portsmouth and neighboring Middletown. Given the strong family history of this chair, it was likely obtained from a workshop in Portsmouth or in one of the other nearby towns along the tightly interconnected coastal Narragansett Bay region. —DC

#### Cat. 23

45 × 24 × 20½ in. (114.3 × 61 × 52.1 cm)

PROVENANCE: Probably David Fish (1710–1781), Portsmouth, R.I.; by descent to his granddaughter Mrs. Thomas Robinson (née Jemima Fish, 1761–1846), Portsmouth, R.I., and Ferrisburgh, Vt.; by descent to her son, Rowland T. Robinson (1796–1879), Ferrisburgh, Vt.; by descent to his son George G. Robinson (1825–1894), Ferrisburgh, Vt.; by descent to his brother Rowland E. Robinson (1833–1900), Ferrisburgh, Vt.; by descent to his wife, Anna S. Robinson (1840–1920), Ferrisburgh, Vt.; given to the Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vt., inv. no. 23 [RIF3333]

#### Notes

1. Quoted in Austin 1977, 98.
2. See Trent 1977, 56–59, figs. 27–29. One of the chairs published by Trent has a history in the Hubbard family of Guilford, which provided the basis for the attribution.
3. The joiners listed in Portsmouth records from the 1720s through the 1760s include Isaac Howland, Jeremiah Lawton, Jr., Benjamin Thomas, George Thomas, Joseph Thomas, Anthony Trube, and Samuel Wyatt.

## 24

*Banister-Back Side Chair (from a pair)*

Eastern Connecticut or Western Rhode Island, 1720–40

Maple (primary); oak (secondary)



In the late seventeenth century, the western border region of Rhode Island was the site of significant territorial and political controversy. Colonists from both Connecticut to the west and Massachusetts Bay to the east, eager to gain control of the fertile farmland east of the Pawcatuck River, led incursions into the region and fomented political unrest. The Rhode Island Royal Charter of 1663 issued by King Charles II, which gave this territory to Rhode Island, and the establishment of the town of Westerly, Rhode Island, in 1669, shored up the western border of the colony, but it was not until 1703 that the contesting parties settled on the boundary line that followed the Pawcatuck River from the coast and ran northward in a straight line to Massachusetts (see Carr essay, fig. 1). The conclusion in 1676 of King Philip's War, which had caused significant damage in Rhode Island's western Narragansett Country, encouraged greater population growth in Westerly and in Westerly's sister city of Pawcatuck, Connecticut (now part of Stonington, Connecticut), which grew up on the other side of the Pawcatuck River.

This unusual banister-back side chair is one of a pair owned by the Westerly Public Library and provides a glimpse into the remarkable material culture of this border region. The chairs probably descended in the family of Thomas Noyes of Pawcatuck and were donated to the library in Westerly by a descendant in 1938, subsequently placed on loan to the historic Babcock-Smith House in Westerly. A third chair of a similar design in a private collection likely comes from a related set.<sup>1</sup> The likely date of the chairs precedes Thomas's ownership and suggests that they may have belonged to the generation of his parents, James Noyes (1714–93)

and Grace Billings (1716–unknown) of Pawcatuck, or even his grandparents, Thomas Noyes (1679–1755) and Elizabeth Sanford or Lt. Ebenezer Billings (1685–1760) and Phebe Denison (1690–1775), all prominent residents of the town. They may also have descended through the family of his wife, Polly Noyes.<sup>2</sup>

The chairs display an intriguing, atypical arrangement of carved front stretchers and crest and lower back rails, which are decorated with pierced S-curved and volute carving incised into the boards. This type of idiosyncratic decoration might be seen as a rural interpretation of the elaborately carved crest rails and front stretchers of earlier caned chairs (both English- and Boston-made examples), although by the second quarter of the eighteenth century this type of work had largely gone out of fashion in favor of turned stretchers and simpler, shaped crest rails (see, for example, Johnson essay, fig. 1). This use of earlier designs also appears in a group of related chairs, which might have come from the same shop tradition and which have a very similar style of turning on the posts and legs. One of these chairs was published by Wallace Nutting in 1921 and was later owned by the firm Israel Sack; the other now belongs to the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee.<sup>3</sup> A third is in a private collection.<sup>4</sup> These chairs have long been associated with Connecticut, but none has a specific history of ownership dating to the eighteenth century. They may in fact be the work of a chairmaking shop that was located in the eastern Connecticut or western Rhode Island region, centered around the current towns of Stonington and Westerly. —DC

*Cat. 24*

45½ × 19 × 16½ in. (115.6 × 48.3 × 41.9 cm)

PROVENANCE: Thomas Noyes (1755–1844), Pawcatuck, Conn.; by descent to his granddaughter, Mrs. Orson C. Rogers (née Mary Noyes, 1846–1938), Westerly, R.I.; bequeathed to the Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park, R.I., 1938, inv. no. 137 [RIF128]

*Notes*

1. This chair was sold by John Walton in 1983, who had reportedly acquired it from a collection in Connecticut; the chair is unpublished [RIF6073].
2. Noyes and Noyes 1904, 2:68–83; and Spencer-Mounsey 2006, 1:142.
3. One of these chairs was owned by G. Winthrop Brown of Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. See Nutting 1924, 370, 391, no. 495, ill.; Nutting 1963, no. 1943; and *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 6:1621, no. P4717. For the Chipstone chair, see Rodriguez Roque 1984, 146–47, no. 64, ill.; and Kirk 1967, 122, no. 217, ill. The author is grateful to Erik Gronning for suggesting the relationship to these chairs. A table with similar turnings appears in Nutting 1963, no. 1218.
4. The third chair is unpublished. A fourth related chair is at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn., inv. no. 1985.21.

## 25

*Banister-Back Side Chair (from a pair)*

Newport, 1730–1800

Maple (primary); oak and maple (secondary)



By the mid-eighteenth century, chairmakers began to interpret the banister-back chair form in different ways. Adapting to new consumer tastes, craftsmen incorporated the fashionable yoke-shaped crest of mid-eighteenth-century chairs (for later Rhode Island examples, see cats. 48 and 76) and simplified the turned half-banisters of the back into straight vertical strips whose decorative front faces were produced with a molding plane. By the 1740s, humble, sturdy maple chairs of this style began to supplant the more complex chairs with turned banisters and were made in significant numbers until the end of the century, going out of fashion only with the introduction of the Neoclassical style.

This chair is one of a pair of maple side chairs with rush seats that has a well-documented history. Both chairs were reportedly owned in the John Stevens Shop, a stonecutting shop that has been in continuous operation in Newport since 1705. John Stevens and his later descendants, including his sons John II and William and his grandson John III, were responsible for many of the carved slate gravestones in Newport's Common Burying Ground and other cemeteries in Rhode Island. When Newport resident and artist, designer, and carver John Howard Benson acquired the shop from the Stevens family in 1927, these two chairs may have been part of its contents, along with an early painted pine standing desk-on-frame, also presumably made in the Newport area.<sup>1</sup> Given this history, the pair of chairs was likely made in Newport as well.

Chairs of this general type regularly appear at New England auctions and antique shops and

probably originated from throughout the Narragansett Bay region. The Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House in Newport has six side chairs of a similar design, although none appear to be from the same set, and they likely represent the output of various workshops in Newport and the surrounding area.<sup>2</sup> The chairmaking tradition represented by these and the present chair also extended eastward into southeastern Massachusetts, judging by a group of chairs with histories and identifiable characteristics that link them to that region. For example, an armchair with a very similar back design and turning profile but with recessed arm supports tenoned directly into the middle of the chair frame (a feature associated with southeastern Massachusetts and eastern Long Island) was acquired in the 1970s from a family in the Fairhaven, Massachusetts, area, near New Bedford.<sup>3</sup> A side chair with similarly turned legs that extend upward to the seat frame was also found in New Bedford.<sup>4</sup> Other examples are found on Long Island, such as a side chair at the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, which has a history in the Martin or Hewlett families of Rock Hall in Hempstead.<sup>5</sup> The Rokeby Museum in Ferrisburgh, Vermont, owns a pair of related side chairs that reportedly descended in the family of Mrs. Thomas Robinson (née Jemima Fish) of Newport and Portsmouth, Rhode Island.<sup>6</sup> Like the so-called Little Compton-type chair tradition, this style of chairmaking may have begun in the Narragansett Bay region and then spread outward to southeastern Massachusetts and—via the Long Island Sound—to southern coastal New England and Long Island. —DC

*Cat. 25*

39 1/8 × 19 1/4 × 14 1/4 in. (99.4 × 48.9 × 36.2 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 67

PROVENANCE: Possibly the John Stevens Shop (founded 1705), Newport; by descent in his family; shop and contents sold to John Howard Benson (1901–1956), Newport, 1927; by descent in his family to Richard and Barbara Benson [RIF445]

*Notes*

1. For the desk-on-frame, which is unpublished, see RIF2480.
2. See, for example, Newport Historical Society, inv. no. W1974.II.I [RIF5971]. A closely related chair descended in the Carr family of Jamestown, Rhode Island [RIF5505]. Variants of this general design are four chairs with a history in the family of Gen. Nathanael Greene (1742–1786), Warwick and Coventry, Rhode Island, owned by the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1951.I.I-4 [RIF4348]; and a chair that descended in the Borden family of Fall River, Massachusetts (Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, January 24–27, 1973, lot 952 [RIF2567]).
3. See Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 67–68, no. II, pl. II [RIF573].
4. *Ibid.*, 68, pl. II.I [RIF4070].
5. See Failey 1998, 77, fig. 89.
6. The chairs were likely brought to Vermont when the Robinson family moved there from Newport in 1792; see Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vt., inv. no. 346 [RIF3761]. For a chair with a similar history, see cat. 23.

26

*Archway from the Hall  
of the Banister-MacKaye House*

Middletown, Rhode Island, probably 1756

Pine



This archway was part of the stair hall of John Banister's country house in Middletown, Rhode Island. John was the son of Thomas Banister, who was a merchant in Boston, and John began his own mercantile career in that city. By 1736 he had purchased real estate in Newport, where he spent the rest of his life. He quickly became an important figure among the Newport mercantile elite, marrying Hermione Pelham, a granddaughter of Gov. Benedict Arnold (see cat. 2 for a wainscot chair

owned by Arnold), in Trinity Church in 1737. Through the marriage he came into possession of large tracts of real estate. In 1740, at age thirty-two, he was elected a warden of Trinity Church. Robert Feke painted John's and Hermione's portraits in 1748 (see Kane essay, fig. 8).<sup>1</sup> His three-quarter-length likeness shows an imposing figure, resplendent in a buff waistcoat and blue frock coat of luminous textiles, with Newport harbor, the hub of his mercantile ventures, in the background.

Banister's career is well known from his extensive business records.<sup>2</sup> Early in his career he worked to bring Newport out of Boston's shadow by establishing direct trade with London. His correspondents included merchants in Liverpool, Hull, and Rotterdam, as well as the West Indies and the Carolinas. Much of his wealth was the product of privateering and the slave trade.<sup>3</sup> His Newport house was on the corner of Spring and Pelham Streets. His Palladian-style country house in Middletown (fig. 1), from which this arch comes, was built on land he bought in 1754. Although architect Peter Harrison was Banister's brother-in-law, no evidence exists that he designed the country house.<sup>4</sup>

The house and its archway illustrate the grandeur of Newport's wealthiest merchants and is a reminder that furniture makers also did fine interior woodwork, exterior architectural details, and fittings for the ships that generated much of the region's wealth.<sup>5</sup> Christopher Townsend, for example, was paid for work on Newport's Colony House, designed in 1739 by Richard Munday. Benjamin Baker's account book includes payments for architectural work. He made a chimney board, casing around the fireplace, window frames, and window shutters for William Potter in 1791 and spent eleven and a half days in 1783 on



Fig. 1. Facade of the Banister-MacKaye House, Middletown, Rhode Island, ca. 1756. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del.

the sloop *Sally*, for which Capt. Joseph Garner was the debtor.<sup>6</sup> In these ways, Rhode Island woodworkers made significant contributions to the richness of the region's architecture, shipbuilding, and furniture making. —PEK

*Cat. 26*

125 × 110<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (317.5 × 281.3 × 54 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Sweeney 1963a, 50–51, ill.; Sweeney 1963b, 50–51, ill.

PROVENANCE: Originally part of a house owned by John Banister (1707–1767), Boston, Newport, and Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his son John Banister (1745–1807), Newport and Middletown, R.I.; by forced sale to George Irish (1729–1801), Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Easton Bailey (née Mary Irish, 1764–1803), Middletown, R.I.; by descent to her son George Irish Bailey (1797–unknown), Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his son William Bailey (1823–1908), Middletown, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Henry G. MacKaye (née Ellen Ida Bailey, ca. 1861–unknown), Middletown, R.I.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Roy Silas Atwood (née Mary MacKaye, 1892–1986), Middletown, R.I.; deeded to Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., 1957 [RIF3355]

*Notes*

1. The portrait of Hermione Banister is owned by the Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 1944.283.
2. The Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence has a daybook (1746–50), a ledger (covering roughly the same period), and related papers. The Newport Historical Society owns a letter book (1746–50) and an account book (1746–49).
3. For biographical information on Banister, see D. Baker 1923, 1–8.
4. Downing and Scully 1982, 87–88.
5. For more on woodworkers and their activities in making furniture and architectural finish work and in shipbuilding, see the essay by the present author in this volume.
6. For Christopher Townsend, see Downing and Scully 1982, 63; for Benjamin Baker, see Carr 2004, 67.

*Slant-Front Desk*

John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1745

Mahogany (primary); mahogany, pine, and chestnut (secondary)

John Goddard made this simple mahogany desk in 1745, when he was just twenty-one years old. He is presumed to have apprenticed with Job Townsend, Sr., whose daughter Hannah he married the next year. His customers were among the leading citizens of Rhode Island and many, like him, were members of the Society of Friends. Six of his sons—Daniel, Townsend, Job, Henry, Stephen, and Thomas—became cabinetmakers, as did a number of his nephews. The label on the desk (fig. 1), which states that Newport was “on Rhoadisland in Newengland,” is clearly an advertisement intended for individuals who did not live in the colony. Today John Goddard is esteemed for his extraordinary mahogany furniture enhanced with fine carving, but he probably spent considerable time producing simple pieces like this desk destined for faraway markets. Although much of Newport’s venture cargo was bound for the southern colonies and the Caribbean, furniture was shipped north as well; this desk descended in the Sylvanus Morton family originally of Nova Scotia, Canada.

The interior of the desk speaks to its early date of manufacture. Like desks from the first quarter of the eighteenth century, such as catalogue 12, its prospect



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 27, showing label on top drawer

door is hinged at the bottom and opens by tipping forward. The door is flanked by small drawers with compartments above, which in turn are flanked by compartments with projecting small drawers below. This configuration would soon be replaced by the classic Newport block-front interior, as seen in the desk and bookcase of catalogue 29. Surprisingly few comparable desks have been found, but since the present desk was made at just the time John Goddard was completing his apprenticeship, one can assume that his master, Job Townsend, was probably making similar ones.<sup>1</sup>

This documented example of Goddard’s work should provide benchmarks for identifying other objects by Goddard. Unfortunately, the evidence is anomalous. The dovetails used to attach the top to the sides and the drawer fronts to the drawer sides have unusually thick-necked pins, unlike the pins in other documented examples, such as the two later slant-front desks signed by Goddard, one of which is dated 1754.<sup>2</sup> By this date, Goddard and other Newport cabinetmakers were cutting dovetails with much thinner pins. The thick-necked dovetails seen here, then, are probably a function of the early date of manufacture. In addition, this desk does not display the graphite numbers that he used on his later work at the center of the back and at the front corners of the sides on the small drawer interiors. However, the exterior drawers do have large letters on their interiors, at the center of the backs—a detail found on his later work. Such details indicate the evolution of a master cabinetmaker’s techniques. —PEK



*Cat. 27*

42 × 35½ × 19 in. (106.7 × 90.2 × 48.3 cm) (closed)

MARK: "Made by John Goddard of / Newport on Rhoadisland in Newengland / in the year of our Lord 1745," in ink, written on paper label glued to interior back of top exterior drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: "5[?]," in chalk, on interior back of proper-left interior drawer; illegible chalk, on interior back of prospect drawer; "A," in chalk, on interior back of top exterior drawer; "B," in chalk, on interior back of middle exterior drawer; "C," in chalk, on interior back of bottom exterior drawer; "1745 [later, twice]," in graphite, on interior proper-right side of top exterior drawer; "S. MORTON," branded, on exterior proper-left side of top exterior drawer

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Stone 1973, 319, ill.; Rodriguez Roque 1984, 56–59, no. 26, ill.; Rodriguez Roque 1988, 1154, pl. 16; Lovell 1991, 31, 42, 44, 47, figs. 1, 12; Beckerdite 2000, 27–28, fig. 46; Lovell 2005, 229–30, 246, 250, figs. 92–93

PROVENANCE: Sylvanus Morton (1805–1887), Milton, Nova Scotia, Canada, before 1887; by descent to his son, John Graham Morton (1838–1923), Milton, Nova Scotia, Canada; by descent to his daughter Alina Agnes Morton (1878–possibly 1963), Milton, Nova Scotia, Canada, and Cleveland; by descent to her unidentified niece; sold to John S. Walton, Inc., New York, before 1971; sold to Polly Mariner Stone (1898–1995) and Stanley Stone (1896–1987), Fox Point, Wis., 1971; Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, Bequest of Stanley Stone, 1987, inv. no. 1971.11 [RIF469]

*Notes*

1. An unpublished slant-front desk in a private collection [RIF215] has straight-bracket feet, but the prospect section has no door; the maple one in the Little Compton Historical Society, R.I., inv. no. 1996.0060a [RIF4753], has ball feet.
2. Christie's, New York, January 21, 2006, lot 680 [RIF241]; and Moses 1984, pl. 14 [RIF600], have dovetails with much thinner pins.

# 28 *Desk and Bookcase*

Job Townsend, Sr. (1699–1765)

Newport, 1745–60

Mahogany (primary); mahogany, yellow poplar, pine, chestnut, and cherry (secondary)

Brothers Job and Christopher Townsend founded the Goddard-Townsend family of Newport cabinetmakers. Born in Oyster Bay, New York—Job in 1699 and Christopher in 1701—they came with their family to Newport in 1707, where they trained as furniture makers. An inscription on a paper label glued inside the prospect door of this desk and bookcase (fig. 1) is the touchstone for identifying the work of Job Townsend, Sr. This is the only signed example of his work. In spite of alterations and repairs that have changed its appearance over the years (the pediment above the cornice molding and the blocks beneath the ogee curves on the feet are missing), the desk and bookcase is an important document in the history of Rhode Island furniture.

Many features of the desk and bookcase assist in attributing other work to Townsend. These include the system of numbering the interior drawers (excluding the prospect drawers) “1” to “8” on their interior backs; the prospect drawers are numbered “1” to “3” from top to bottom. The valance drawers are numbered “1” to “6” on their interior bottoms and have corresponding dots on the top edges of their mahogany fronts. No letters or numbers identify exterior drawer parts, though shellac may have effaced them. The top edges of the drawer sides at the rear corners of the exterior drawers have an incised line that imitates a mitered corner. The blocking of the interior section does not rest on a straight molding, as in most Rhode Island desks with blocked interiors (fig. 2). The backboards of the lower case are stabilized with a vertical brace.<sup>1</sup> The concave shell carvings on the interior drawers are confined within relieving arches, which may indicate an early date.<sup>2</sup> The beguiling tulip blossom, carved with authority on

the shell on the prospect door (fig. 3), has been found nowhere else in Rhode Island furniture.

Yet, very little furniture can actually be attributed to Job Townsend, Sr. A dressing table in the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, is often cited as an example of his work, an attribution based on a history of ownership by one Samuel Ward and a receipt from Townsend to Ward that includes a “dressing table.”<sup>3</sup> As the receipt did not descend with the table, this may not be the dressing table Ward purchased. None of its features are closely related to the documented desk and bookcase. Numbers identify the drawer parts, but the dovetails have thick-necked pins, unlike the thin-necked ones on the desk and bookcase—though instances of different dovetail configurations by an individual maker have been



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 28, showing label on prospect door





Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 28, showing blocked molding above well

documented (see, for example, cat. 27). The drawer-side tops barely meet the drawer fronts, unlike those on the desk and bookcase, which are almost full height. The carved shell has none of the assurance of the shell on the desk and bookcase.

The Rhode Island Furniture Archive includes a few pieces with miters cut into the back corners of the drawers, including a dressing table at the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Michigan; a high chest of drawers in a private collection; and a slant-front desk at the Newport Historical Society.<sup>4</sup> The shells on the dressing tables and high chest are set within encircling arcs, like the documented example at the Chipstone Foundation, but the centers of the shells and other features are dissimilar on the high chest in the private collection and the slant-front desk in Newport.<sup>5</sup> On the slant-front desk the molding above the well also conforms to the blocking above, but the numbers on the interior drawers, like those in most Newport desk interiors, begin at the proper-right top and continue in an unbroken sequence to the proper-left



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 28, showing concave shell carving on prospect door

bottom, unlike the present example.<sup>6</sup> Another slant-front desk, in a private collection, has the numbers “1” to “3” on the prospect drawers and has dovetails with thin-necked pins similar to those of the desk and bookcase, and may possibly be the work of Job Townsend, Sr.<sup>7</sup> A desk signed by Job Townsend, Jr., in the collection of the Milwaukee Museum of Art has an atypical interior, but the prospect drawers are numbered separately “1C” (see Appendix, fig. 19) to “3C,” a practice probably learned from his father.<sup>8</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 28*

82½ × 40 × 24½ in. (209.6 × 101.6 × 62.2 cm) (closed)

MARK: “Made / by / Job Townsend / in Newport,.” in ink, written on paper label glued to inside of prospect door

INSCRIPTIONS: “1” and “2,” in graphite, on interior backs of proper-right interior shell drawer and proper-right interior middle drawer; “4,” in graphite, on interior back and bottom of interior drawer to proper right of prospect door; “5,” in graphite, on exterior back of interior drawer to proper left of prospect door; “6” through “8,” in graphite, on interior back of proper-left interior drawers, from top to bottom; “6,” in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-left interior shell drawer; mathematical calculations, in chalk, on proper-left side of drawer marked “7”; “1” through “3,” in graphite, on interior backs of prospect drawers, from top to bottom; “D<sup>r</sup> / LM,” in graphite, on exterior bottom of top prospect drawer; “Top,” in graphite, on exterior top of removable prospect compartment; “2” and “3,” in graphite, on interior bottoms of two proper-right valance drawers; “4” through “6,” in graphite, on interior bottoms of proper-left valance drawers; “3” and “4,” incised on top fronts of valance drawers marked “3” and “4”; multiple dots, incised on top fronts of valance drawers marked “4” through “6”; dot, incised on top front of valance drawer marked “3”; counting marks, in chalk, on exterior backboard of bookcase

BIBLIOGRAPHY: M. Norton 1923a, 63–66, fig. 6; *Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition* 1936, 18, no. 12; Downs 1947, 428, fig. 2; *Antiques* 1952, 483, ill.; Carpenter 1953, 43, fig. 21; Carpenter 1954, 71–72, no. 44, ill.; Comstock 1962, no. 201, ill.; Nutting 1963, nos. 693, 695, 716, ill.; Landman 1975, 935, ill.; Moses 1984, 254, 273, figs. 3.64, 6.1, 7.1; Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 94–96, no. 38, figs. 38a–d; Lovell 1991, 44–46, figs. 8–9; Beckerdite 2000, 20, fig. 35; New York 2002, 223, fig. 4; Heckscher 2005, 37, figs. 23–24; Lovell 2005, 248–50, figs. 101–2

PROVENANCE: James Davidson, New London, Conn., by 1919; sold to the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, 1936, inv. no. 36.006 [RIF564]

*Notes*

1. Moses 1984, 267.
2. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 94.
3. For the Chipstone piece, see inv. no. 1958.2 [RIF349].
4. For the dressing table at the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., see Shelley 1958, 157, fig. 18 [RIF1535]; for the high chest in a private collection, see Joseph Kabe Estate Auction, Milford, Conn., March 20, 2010 [RIF4776]; and for the slant-front desk in Newport, see Newport Historical Society, inv. no. 32.1 [RIF5965].
5. On the Chipstone dressing table, the guides for the center drawer are rabbeted and nailed to the skirt and end at the level of the drawer opening; on that in the Henry Ford, the guides for the center drawer are dovetailed to the skirt and end above the drawer opening; on the high chest in a private collection, the guides for the center drawer are tenoned and pinned to the skirt and end even with the bottom edge of the skirt. The slant-front desk does not sequence the numbers of the prospect drawer differently from the other interior drawers.
6. On the traditional Newport desk interior this includes the proper-right tier, the three prospect drawers, the two drawers flanking the prospect, and the proper-left tier; if numbers are used, they go from “1” to “11”; if letters are used, they go from “A” to “K.”
7. This desk is unpublished [RIF6052].
8. Milwaukee Art Museum, inv. no. M1985.53 [RIF515].

## 29

*Desk and Bookcase*

Christopher Townsend (1701–1787), cabinetmaker

Samuel Casey (1723–ca. 1773), silversmith

Newport, 1745–50

Mahogany (primary); sabicu(?) and mahogany (secondary);  
silver hardware

With a history of descent in the Appleton family of Massachusetts, this desk and bookcase probably entered the family through the marriage of Sarah Fayerweather to John Appleton in 1807. Sarah and her brother, John, inherited a fortune in 1805 upon the death of their father, Thomas Fayerweather, a wealthy Boston merchant. In 1743 the elder Fayerweather's sister Mary had married Nathan Carpenter of Newport, a son of Charity and Hezekiah Carpenter. Mary and Nathan set up house in Newport about the time this desk and bookcase would have been made and were likely the original owners. Mary lived in Newport during her marriage; her four children were born there. As Nathan spent much of his life at sea and was often beset by creditors, Mary was looked after by her brother Thomas and their father, John. Sometime after her husband's death in 1771, Mary moved back to Massachusetts, presumably taking her Newport possessions with her to her brother's home in Cambridge. In 1786, when Thomas Fayerweather purchased a mahogany bed, he also paid for a maple one for "Mrs. Carpenter." Mary died in Cambridge in 1791. The inventory of her



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 29, showing inscription on interior bottom of exterior drawer

brother's estate lists "1 elegant desk and bookcase, \$40," though that may have been a Massachusetts desk and bookcase with a Thomas Fayerweather history.<sup>1</sup>

This desk and bookcase is signed by Christopher Townsend (fig. 1), who with his older brother Job was a founding member of the Goddard-Townsend school of cabinetmaking in Newport. Its monumental proportions and luxurious details befit the social aspirations of a Newport merchant in the West Indian trade and his wealthy wife, the daughter of a prominent Boston merchant. The amphitheater bookcase interior (fig. 2) looks back to the complexity of the *escritoire* (see cat. 14) and is shared by other midcentury desk and bookcases (see cats. 39–40). Both the primary and secondary woods are imported mahogany. The hardware, including the hinges on the doors and fall board and the bird-head pulls on the lopers (supports for the fall board), are silver, fabricated by the Kingston silversmith Samuel Casey, who began working about 1745. Casey was a successful merchant and silversmith, until a devastating fire landed him in debt. He turned to counterfeiting colonial currency, for which offense he was sentenced to death. The eyes of his bird-head pulls are hard stone, possibly carnelian (fig. 3). Every inch of this piece of furniture was bespoke.

This desk and bookcase is the only known example of Newport furniture with silver handles and hinges, though furniture with other silver hardware was owned in Rhode Island in the eighteenth century. The 1807 will of Newport merchant George Champlin, for example, lists a mahogany desk with silver "furniture" (the eighteenth-century term for hardware) bequeathed to Champlin's nephew Edward Hazard.<sup>2</sup> This is the





Fig. 2. Cat. 29, showing interior

same George Champlin who owned three pieces of furniture labeled by John Townsend now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.<sup>3</sup> Furniture of silver or incorporating silver mounts was made for royalty and the aristocracy in the seventeenth century. Louis XIV's Versailles had silver furniture later melted down in the eighteenth century. A silver dressing table suite was presented to England's Charles II by the City of London following his restoration to the throne, and his wife owned a pair of cabinets mounted with embossed silver.<sup>4</sup> Although the use of silver on the present desk and bookcase is modest by comparison to these royal examples, it shows that elite members of colonial society were emulating European and British aristocracy. Silver as a decorative element on Rhode Island furniture was probably quite rare; some may have met the fate of Louis XIV's furniture at Versailles. Catalogue 103 is a later example of the continuation of this tradition.

Other unusual features of this object include the arched bookcase pediment, as opposed to a scrolled



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 29, showing silver bird-head loper pull

pediment, and the straight-bracket feet, fashioned with sockets to accept turned ball feet. Those on this example are replaced. Two other Rhode Island desk and bookcases with arched pediments by other makers are known, and a slant-front desk by Townsend also has feet with square sockets, probably to accept turned ball feet.<sup>5</sup> This type of foot shows Townsend's awareness of style in Britain, where this detail appears on furniture made in the early eighteenth century. The desk and bookcase also provides evidence of Townsend's marking system, which includes a large "M" finished with a concentric flourish (see Appendix, fig. 14), double loops on drawer backs (see Appendix, fig. 15), and letters on drawer parts.<sup>6</sup> Its concave—as opposed to convex—blocked doors capped by monumental shells, its removable compartment behind the prospect door on the interior, and an amphitheater, in this case with letter drawers inside the bookcase, point to its early date (see fig. 2). The earliest Rhode Island block-and-shell configuration features concave blocking (see, for instance, cats. 33 and 41), and removable central compartments are also found on early desks (see, for instance, cats. 28 and 38–39). —PEK

*Cat. 29*

107¼ × 44¼ × 22¾ in. (272.4 × 112.4 × 57.8 cm) (closed)

MARKS: "Made By / Christopher Townsend," in graphite, on interior bottom of top exterior drawer; "M [in concentric circles] / By / Christopher Townsend," in graphite, on interior bottom of second exterior drawer from top; "sc," stamped in screw plate of round hinges of bookcase doors and of both exterior sides of lopers; "s. CASEY," stamped in screw plates of hinges of fall board

INSCRIPTIONS: Bookcase interior: Illegible chalk [?], on proper-right side of proper-right document drawer; "2," in chalk, on proper-right side of proper-left document drawer; "A," in chalk, on interior back of drawer between document drawers; double loops, in chalk, on exterior drawer backs of exterior lower drawers; "1" though "4," in chalk, on interior backs of lower drawers; Desk interior: "A" through "C," in

graphite, on interior fronts of proper-right drawers, from top to bottom; “A,” in graphite, on interior back of proper-right shell drawer; “F,” “G [twice],” and “H,” in graphite, on interior fronts of proper-left drawers, from top to bottom; “A,” in graphite, on interior front of proper-right long drawer; “B,” in graphite, on interior bottom of proper-left long drawer; “A” and “C,” in chalk, on interior fronts and exterior backs of top and bottom prospect drawers; “B,” in chalk, on interior back and front of middle prospect drawer; “T,” in graphite, on exterior sides of removable compartment behind prospect door; “A” through “C,” in graphite, on exterior fronts and backs of three secret drawers behind prospect compartment; “2,” in graphite, on exterior proper-left side of middle secret drawer behind prospect compartment; “A” through “F,” in graphite, on interior and exterior bottoms of valance drawers, from proper right to proper left; Desk exterior: double loops, in chalk, on exterior back of all drawers except second from top; “A” through “D,” in graphite, on exterior backs of drawers, from top to bottom; “1” through “4,” multiple times, in graphite, on exterior bottoms of drawers, from top to bottom; “D,” in graphite, on exterior bottom of bottom drawer; “B,” on interior bottom of bottom drawer

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Thatcher Freund, “Oh, the Tales That a Secretary Could Tell!” *New York Times*, February 11, 1999, pp. F1, F7, ill.; New York 1999a, 201–8, lot 704, ill.; Bill Van Sicken, “Why Would Anyone Pay \$8.25 Million for a Desk?” *Providence Sunday Journal*, February 14, 1999, p. D-01; Ward 1999, 228, fig. 4; Beckerdite 2000, 18–19, 21–22, figs. 33–34, 37–38; Kirk 2000, 159–61, figs. 190–92; Heckscher 2005, 50–51, figs. 40–41; New York 2005b, 42, fig. 14; New York 2012b, 98, fig. 2; Gronning and Coes 2013, 12–13, figs. 16, 30

**PROVENANCE:** Probably Mary Fayerweather Carpenter (1717–1791) and Nathan Carpenter (died 1771), Boston, Newport, then Cambridge, Mass., ca. 1745; by descent to her brother Thomas Fayerweather (1724–1805), Boston and Cambridge, Mass.; by descent to his daughter, Mrs. John Appleton (née Sarah

Fayerweather, 1759–1839), Cambridge, Mass.; by descent to her stepson John-James Appleton (1792–1864), Rennes, France; by descent to his son, Charles-Louis Appleton (1846–1935), Lyon, France; by descent to his son Henri Appleton, Lyon, France; by descent in his family; consigned to Sotheby’s, New York, January 16–17, 1999, lot 704; sold to a private collection [RIF242]

### Notes

1. The research by Martha Willoughby commissioned by the owners of this desk and bookcase pointed to the Fayerweather family as a possible line of descent. The detailed history of the family from the Thomas Fayerweather Papers in the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, compiled by Carney 1990–92, 57–66, provided the link between this Massachusetts family and Newport. The Massachusetts desk and bookcase is illustrated in Swan 1942, 187, 189, fig. 3.
2. Charlestown Probate, vol. 1 (1798–1812), p. 304, microfilm no. 0931559, Family History Center, Salt Lake City.
3. The Metropolitan Museum objects are a chest of drawers, inv. no. 27.57.1 [RIF14]; a card table, inv. no. 27.161 [RIF309]; and a tall case clock, inv. no. 27.57.2 [RIF390].
4. Coleridge 1976, 87, figs. 287, 304.
5. For the desk and bookcases with arched pediments, see private collection [RIF5406] and Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, October 30, 1971, lot 154 [RIF5533]; for a desk having straight-bracket feet with sockets, see Gronning and Coes 2013, 20, fig. 39 [RIF4780].
6. Gronning and Coes 2013, 15–20.

## 30

*Tea Table*

Christopher Townsend (1701–1787)

Newport, probably 1764

Mahogany (primary); pine (secondary)

More than sixty of these tea tables are recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive. The tops are supported by slender cabriole legs with slipper feet. The bottom edges of the frames are simple quarter-round moldings. The edge of the top boards form a bead visible below the cove moldings applied to the boards' perimeter. The absence of pins in the corner posts adds a certain sleekness. Some of these tables are walnut, but most, like the present example, are mahogany. Their severe, restrained beauty is quintessentially Rhode Island.

These tables were popular, introduced in the 1740s along with the slipper-foot high chest of drawers, and they continued to be made well into the 1760s, as indicated by the inscription on this example (fig. 1). They accompanied the introduction of tea to America, an expensive and newly fashionable beverage that required a specialized equipage of serving utensils. The molded lip of the table corralled and protected costly ceramic, glass, or silver tea wares—teapots, cups

and saucers, milk pots and sugar bowls, waste bowls, caddies, and tea and moat spoons and their trays. Round tea tables were also in vogue; there is an example shown in an overmantel painting of the Potter family taking tea (Kane essay, fig. 3; see also cat. 65). Although most slipper-foot tea tables were made in Newport, some were owned in Providence and may have been made there.<sup>1</sup> Some reached a wider clientele; the present example was owned in the nineteenth century in New Bedford, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup>

This table is the only example of its form signed and dated by its maker. Subtle details of its construction may enable the identification of Christopher Townsend as the maker of other tables, such as an example that descended in the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard family.<sup>3</sup> Under the tops of most of these tables is a shallow rabbet, which allows the top to fit within the frame. To accommodate the corner posts and the glue blocks that secure the joint of the rails and the posts, the rabbet is angled there. The shape

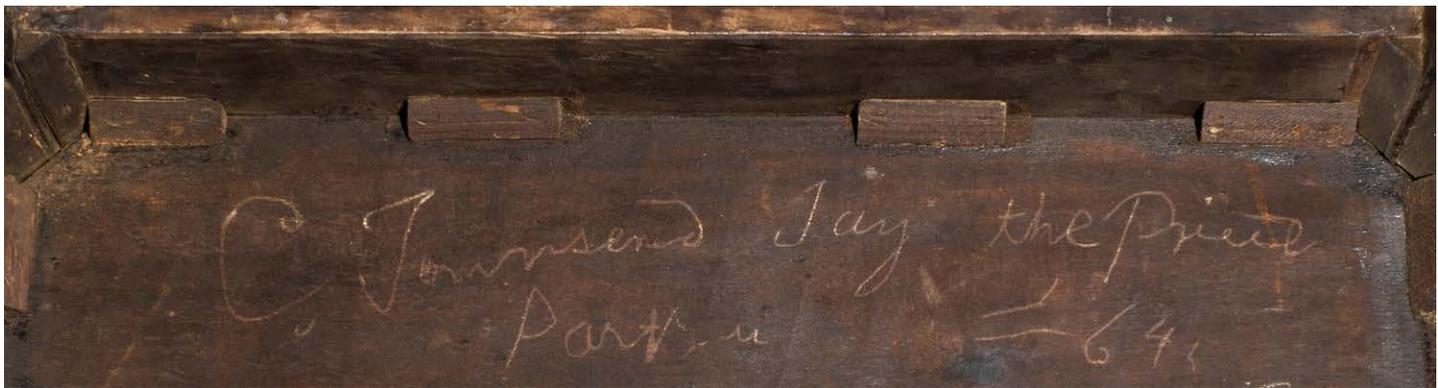


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 30, showing inscription on underside



of the blocks, however, varies on these tables. Some are square with a chamfered face to fit within the rabbet; others are square and are chamfered only adjacent to the rabbet. The present table has blocks that are nearly triangular, making for a neat and tight joint (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Most of these tables have knee returns that are attached below the quarter-round molding that abuts the frame.<sup>5</sup> Townsend's knee returns are of a type shared by a number of tables. They are C-shaped and reduced to almost microscopic thinness where they join the rails. This type of return, as opposed to a serpentine shape, accounts for the appearance of a precise point next to the knee. The shape of the square-kneed cabriole legs and the slipper feet vary as well; Townsend used a slight ridge on the top of the toe, and the sides of the feet are vertical (fig. 3). The slight variations in details indicate

that these beautiful tables were made by many different Rhode Island craftsmen. —PEK

*Cat. 30*

25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 32 × 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (65.4 × 81.3 × 54.3 cm)

MARK: "C Townsend joy[n] the piece / [in New]port in [17]64," in chalk, partially legible, on underside of top

INSCRIPTIONS: "328 [underscore] / 56," in graphite, and "10 [underscore] / 38453," in chalk, on underside of top

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 2006, 410–11, lot 554, ill.; Gronning and Coes 2013, 26, fig. 58

PROVENANCE: Possibly Thornton Briggs (1843–unknown), New Bedford, Mass., after 1869;



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 30, showing corner blocks and knee returns



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 30, showing slipper foot

probably by descent to his daughter Mrs. Otto C. Wierum (née Mary Thornton Briggs, born 1869), New York; by descent to her husband, Otto C. Wierum (probably 1868–1950), New York; by descent to his grandson Thornton Briggs Wierum (1925–2012) and his grandson’s wife, Jean Hough Wierum (1925–2008), Hicksville, Long Island, Westport, Conn., then Minneapolis; consigned to Sotheby’s, New York, January 20–22, 2006, lot 554; sold to Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York; sold to a private collection, 2006 [RIF18]

serpentine shaped. In addition to RIF1404, for tables with triangular blocks, see a table owned by Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Inc., in 2007 [RIF3429]; an example at the Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 31.15 [RIF4431]; and Keno Auctions, New York, January 18, 2011, lot 168 [RIF5090].

5. Rare variations are torus moldings attached below the rails (see Christie’s, New York, January 20–21, 2005, lot 550 [RIF631], and Christie’s, New York, January 18, 2008, lot 516 [RIF649]), and knee returns that abut the torus moldings (see tables in private collections [RIF323] and [RIF6144]).

### Notes

1. Examples with Newport histories of ownership include: Christie’s, New York, January 20–21, 2005, lot 550 [RIF631], probably owned by Thomas Robinson; Sotheby’s, New York, January 18–19, 2008, lot 235 [RIF1404], which descended in the Wanton and Lyman-Hazard families; and Keno Auctions, New York, January 18, 2011, lot 168 [RIF5090], owned by Dr. William Turner. Examples with Providence histories of ownership include: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 1981.360 [RIF777], owned by Jacob Freese; “M. Schorsch, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 113, no. 5 (May 1978): 925, ill. [RIF860], in maple, owned by Thomas Casey in the nineteenth century; “G. K. S. Bush, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 132, no. 6 (December 1987): 1164, ill. [RIF882], owned by Benjamin Pitman; and Sotheby’s, New York, January 16–17, 1999, lot 748 [RIF3044], owned by Anna F. D. Draper in the nineteenth century.
2. Similarly, the table illustrated in “John Walton, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 125, no. 2 (February 1984): 310, ill. [RIF11], was owned by the Noyes family of Stonington, Connecticut, and the one in “Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 147, no. 3 (March 1995): 331, ill. [RIF110], was owned by the Perry family of South Kingstown, Rhode Island.
3. *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 7:1959, no. P5234, ill. [RIF1404].
4. The tables with square blocks that are chamfered are the one sold by Christie’s in 2005 [RIF631] (see n1, above) and one sold at Sotheby’s, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 263 [RIF1078]. For the tables with square blocks shaved where they meet the rabbet, see Sotheby’s, New York, January 20, 1996, lot 115 [RIF2364]; Sotheby’s, New York, January 19–21, 2007, lot 343 [RIF2367]; and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 2–3, 2014, lot 662 [RIF5142]; on all three of these tables, the tenon from the rail to the post is single-shouldered, and the knee returns are

## 31

*High Chest of Drawers*

Christopher Townsend (1701–1787)

John Townsend (1732/33–1809)

Newport, 1750–55

Mahogany (primary); mahogany, yellow poplar, pine,  
and hickory (secondary)

Of the three flat-top high chests of drawers identified as the work of Christopher Townsend, this is the most elaborate.<sup>1</sup> Irving Lyon discussed this type of case of drawers, with steps for the display of glass, ceramics, and other costly wares, citing an example listed as “1 Japan chest of Drawers and Steps for China” in the inventory of Thomas Fayerweather in Boston in 1734.<sup>2</sup> The custom of displaying these items in this way is part of a long international tradition. A scene painted on a fan leaf, perhaps Dutch, from about 1700, shows a family gathered around a table drinking tea with a cabinet in the background topped with a garniture, an array of ceramic vessels.<sup>3</sup> Lyon documented the similar use of cupboards in seventeenth-century New England.<sup>4</sup> Almost a dozen American high chests of drawers with china steps survive.<sup>5</sup> On some of these, the steps are separate structures, simply sitting on the flat tops; on others, they are structurally integral. Many more of these chests were likely produced, their unattached structures lost over time. The scrolled backboard behind the steps makes the present example one of the most elaborate and visually lively.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 31, showing inscription on exterior back of proper-left top drawer

The only known example of a high chest with steps made in Rhode Island, the piece is identified as the work of Christopher Townsend on the basis of the inscription, “Christopher,” on the back of the proper-left top drawer (fig. 1). The “C” in the inscription is closely related to that in the inscription “C T / made it” on the underside of a desk.<sup>6</sup> The lettering on the exterior of the drawer backs also follows Townsend’s known practice (see cat. 29). In addition, elsewhere on the piece the inscriptions “Christopher,” “John,” and “John To[?],” in the familiar hands of father and son confirm their involvement. Like a high chest from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the present chest was probably made when John was still working in his father’s shop, either during his apprenticeship or before he established a shop of his own.<sup>7</sup> In their discussion of the carving style of Christopher Townsend, Erik Gronning and Amy Coes note how the thick, elongated toes on the flattened balls seen here (fig. 2) distinguish the carving style of the son from that of the father, whose toes were thinner (for a foot by John Townsend, see cat. 32).<sup>8</sup>

The claw-and-ball feet of this high chest set it apart from classic Rhode Island flat-topped high chests, which are typically supported on cabriole legs with slipper feet, such as Christopher Townsend’s signed and attributed examples (figs. 3–4).<sup>9</sup> A comparison of his high chests illustrates the fact that eighteenth-century cabinetmakers were capable of delightful variations. Two of them—the present example and figure 4—have three drawers at the top of the case, allowing the brasses to be arranged in a gentle arc. On these two objects, although the curves of the





Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 31, showing claw-and-ball foot



Fig. 3. Christopher Townsend, *High Chest of Drawers*, Newport, 1748. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, chestnut, hickory(?), pine, and yellow poplar, 70 × 40 × 21½ in. (177.8 × 101.6 × 54.6 cm). Private collection. [RIF205]



Fig. 4. Attributed to Christopher Townsend, *High Chest of Drawers*, Newport, ca. 1750. Mahogany, pine, and yellow poplar, 72 × 39 × 21 in. (82.9 × 99.1 × 53.3 cm). Private collection. [RIF1558]

skirt on either side of the central ornament have less height than those on figure 3 (and on most high chests and dressing tables with this skirt configuration), the lack of height makes the pieces feel more grounded overall. The flat-top high chest form was relatively common in Rhode Island; Christopher Townsend's examples of it are simple, minimally decorated, graceful masterpieces.<sup>10</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 31*

83  $\frac{5}{8}$  × 40  $\frac{1}{2}$  × 22  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (212.4 × 102.9 × 56.5 cm)

MARKS: "Christopher," in graphite, on exterior back of proper-left top drawer of upper case; "John To[?]," in graphite, on exterior bottom of bottom drawer of upper case; faint names, including "Christopher" and "John," in graphite, on exterior back of bottom drawer of upper case

INSCRIPTIONS: "A," in graphite, on exterior back of proper-right top drawer; "B," in graphite, on exterior back of middle top drawer; "D[aniel?]," in graphite, on exterior back of top long drawer of upper case; "C[?]," in graphite, on exterior back of middle long drawer of upper case; "A[?]," in graphite, on exterior bottom of bottom drawer of upper case; faint letters or initials, including "G," in graphite, on exterior back of bottom drawer of upper case; "C," in graphite, on top of drawer divider under middle long drawer of upper case; "Bottom," in chalk, on underside of upper case; "A," in chalk, on exterior back of top drawer of lower case; faint marks, probably letters, in chalk, on exterior backs of bottom drawers of lower case; "2 A" and drawing of broken arch pediment, in graphite, on top of front rail of lower case; "C[?]," in graphite, on exterior back of lower case; "A [twice]," in chalk, on inside of stepped pediment

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "John Walton, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 128, no. 6 (December 1985): 1050, ill.; Rodriguez Roque 1988, 1154, pl. 16; Beckerdite 2000, 11, 16–17, figs. 20, 30–31; Gronning and Coes 2013, 29–30, fig. 65

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Birckhead, Hall, Howe, and Ward families, Newport. John Walton, Inc., Griswold and Jewett City, Conn., 1985; sold to Polly Mariner Stone (1898–1995) and Stanley Stone (1896–1987), Fox Point, Wis., 1985; Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, Bequest of Stanley Stone, 1987, inv. no. 1985.12 [RIF1215]

*Notes*

1. For the others, see Gronning and Coes 2013, 27–29, figs. 61 [RIF205] and 63 [RIF1558].
2. Lyon 1891, 102.
3. Thornton 1984, 78, fig. 94.
4. Lyon 1891, 44–45.
5. Ward 1988, 262–63, no. 137, is a Connecticut example. Ward cites the following related examples: five additional examples discussed in Gaines 1957; an example with a Massachusetts history illustrated in "Ronald A. De Silva advertisement," *Antiques* 111, no. 1 (January 1977): 51, ill.; an example in Lockwood's collection illustrated in Lockwood 1926, 1:90–91, fig. 86; an example illustrated in Lyon 1891, fig. 42; a tall chest of drawers in Fales 1976, 184, fig. 384; and a veneered example in F. Morse 1902, 25, fig. 13.
6. Gronning and Coes 2013, 20, fig. 42 [RIF4780].
7. *Ibid.*, 22–25.
8. *Ibid.*, 30–32.
9. Although figure 3 is signed by Christopher Townsend, it does not have his characteristic drawer marking system. It also lacks the channels in the backboards to accept the legs, and the vertical dividers on the lower case continue to the bottom of the skirt rather than stopping at the drawer opening. In addition, it has only two drawers at the top of the case.
10. Other high chests that were not available for examination during the course of this study but that may prove to be by Christopher Townsend include "Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement," *Antiques* 117, no. 5 (May 1980): 964, ill. [RIF1974]; Sotheby's, New York, June 26–27, 1991, lot 365 [RIF3278]; and A. Sack 2008, 191, ill. [RIF4067].

*High Chest of Drawers*

John Townsend (1732/33–1809)

Newport, 1756

Mahogany (primary); red cedar, yellow poplar, mahogany, chestnut, and pine (secondary)

John Townsend made this high chest of drawers, inscribed “Made by John Townsend / Newport 1756” (fig. 1), when he was twenty-three, just beginning a career as an independent craftsman. As his father, Christopher Townsend, was one of Newport’s leading cabinetmakers, it is not surprising that important commissions came to John at this early date. The descent of the high chest through the women of the Arnold family suggests that it was made for Mary Arnold on the occasion of her marriage to Oliver Arnold in 1756. Oliver was a descendant of William Arnold, one of the founders of Providence and later of Warwick.

The high chest is the earliest datable Rhode Island high chest with a scrolled pediment, or what was probably called an “ogee head” or “crown” in the eighteenth century. The Providence cabinetmakers’ price agreement of 1756/57 (Kane essay, fig. 10) lists “a Mahogany high case of drawers with crown and claws” at £150, the price a customer would be charged for one. Typically, on Rhode Island scroll-top high chests, a pair of applied plaques adorns the scroll-top pediment. Their shape



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 32, showing inscription on interior bottom of top drawer of lower case

conforms to the curves of the cornice, the oculi below the center finial, and the rail above the top drawers that are of equal height. The present high chest is unusual in its four claw-and-ball feet with undercut talons, the more common design being claw-and-ball feet at the front and pad feet at the back. The skirt is outlined in opposing C-scrolls centered on a rare pendant shell. Only one other high chest, attributed to John’s father, Christopher, and a sideboard table, attributed to John Goddard, have similar shells.<sup>1</sup> On the classic Rhode Island high chest, the skirt is centered by an upright concave shell (see cat. 58).

Erik Gronning and Amy Coes have used the present high chest as a centerpiece in the study of John Townsend’s early career and his emergence as an independent craftsman. Although the present high chest is very similar to the other example with a pendant shell, subtle differences in the handwriting of the graphite marking system and the carving of the feet distinguish the father’s work from his son’s. Michael Moses identified the letters on the exterior drawer backs as keys to attributing work to John Townsend.<sup>2</sup> Gronning and Coes, who pioneered the use of infrared photography as a field research tool in the study of American furniture, employed this technology to make the letters in graphite more legible. Their study shows that the “M” finishing mark used by both father and son is subtly different. On this chest (Appendix, fig. 21), it lacks the concentric circles overlaying the “M” found on Christopher’s documented desk and bookcase (Appendix, fig. 14). The Arnold high chest is also the earliest example of John Townsend using his father’s lettering system. The letters are inscribed on the exterior of the drawer backs, in



this case “A” through “F” for the drawers in the upper case (Appendix, fig. 20) and “A” and “B” on the drawers in the lower case. The father’s “B” is different from the son’s “B.” Furthermore, John Townsend’s claw-and-ball feet (fig. 2) have somewhat taller balls and shorter phalanges, or midsections, on the side toes than those found on Christopher’s work (see cat. 31, fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> Despite these subtle differences, there are many similarities to the two makers’ works. Father and son used a particular shape of glue block to reinforce the attachment of the vertical divider to the skirt in the lower case; their glue blocks are long and terminate in chamfered points as they near the skirt (fig. 3).<sup>4</sup>

John Townsend was a brilliant and successful cabinetmaker, establishing strict shop standards and a

high level of detailed craftsmanship that persisted over a very long period. This consistency, coupled with a recognizable carving style, has enabled scholars, notably Morrison H. Heckscher, to attribute case pieces to him with a high degree of certainty.<sup>5</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 32*

88½ × 40¼ × 21⅛ in. (224.8 × 102.2 × 53.7 cm)

MARKS: “Made By John Townsend / Newport 1756,” in graphite, on interior bottom of top drawer of lower case; “John Townsend,” in graphite, on drawer divider of upper case

INSCRIPTIONS: “£ 14 Wigg,” in graphite, on underside of long drawer of lower case; “A,” “B,” and “C,”



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 32, showing claw-and-ball foot



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 32, showing vertical divider in lower case

in graphite, on exterior backs and interior bottoms of small drawers of upper case; “D,” “E,” and “F,” in graphite, on exterior backs of long drawers of upper case; “A” and “B,” in graphite, on exterior sides of deep drawers of lower case; “M [within scrollwork],” in graphite, on interior bottom of middle small drawer of lower case, on interior bottom of middle long drawer of upper case, and on backboards of upper and lower cases; “Woman tis By / Nature False & Inconstant / W [illeg.] FULL / W. Richardson,” in graphite, on interior bottom of proper-right top drawer of upper case; “W Richardson / J Robinson / E Wanton / J Townsend / To Ride Out Next Wensday,” in graphite, on bottom of proper-right top drawer of upper case; “Polly,” in graphite, on interior bottom of middle long drawer of upper case

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** New York 2012c, 1–25; New York 2012d, 128–33, lot 186, ill.; Solis-Cohen 2012, 36-A; Gronning and Coes 2013, 2–5, fig. 1

**PROVENANCE:** Mary Arnold (1725–1762) and Oliver Arnold (1725–1789), East Greenwich, R.I., 1756; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Orthneil Gorton Wightman (née Sarah Arnold, 1768–1826), East Greenwich, R.I.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Stukley Wickes (née Almy Maria Wightman, 1793–1879), East Greenwich, R.I.; by descent to her daughter Sarah Arnold Wickes (1824–1911), Warwick, R.I.; by descent to her niece Almy Wightman Wickes (1858–1914), Warwick, R.I.; by descent to her sister, Mary LeMoine Wickes (1860–1916), Warwick, R.I.; by descent to her niece Harriet Almy Wickes (1908–1996) Providence, R.I.; by descent to her unidentified niece; consigned to Sotheby’s, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 186; sold to a private collection [R1F5171]

### Notes

1. For the sideboard table, see Gronning and Coes 2013, 10, fig. 14 [R1F408]; for the high chest attributed to Christopher Townsend, see *ibid.*, 12, fig. 16 [R1F816]. For the attribution of the sideboard table to John Goddard, see Zea 1999, 263–64, figs. 15–16.
2. Moses 1984, 88.
3. Gronning and Coes 2013, 9, 13, 25.
4. *Ibid.*, 14, figs. 23–24.
5. Heckscher 2005, 61–70.

## 33

*Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

James Wady (died 1759), clockmaker

Newport, 1745–55

Walnut (primary); walnut, maple, birch, chestnut, yellow poplar, and pine (secondary)



James Wady made only a few clocks in his career. The complications of his movements and the sophistication of their cases put them within reach of only the wealthiest citizens of Newport. Wady's birth date and place are unknown; since he married the daughter of his master, William Claggett, in 1736, he was probably born no later than 1715.<sup>1</sup> He was a member of the military and was active in civic affairs.<sup>2</sup>

The case of the clock is closely related to another with a Wady movement and to two others with movements by Claggett.<sup>3</sup> A fifth clock in a related case by a different maker is illustrated in catalogue 41. The cabinetmaker who introduced this innovative case design to Rhode Island is unknown.<sup>4</sup> Double pediment hoods like the one on the present clock (fig. 1) are known in English clock cases, but this ambitious and rare feature combined with concave pendulum doors with carved shells elevate this group of cases to the pinnacle of American design. They predate the more familiar cases with carved shells and convex blocked doors and represent a dramatic advancement in the evolution of Rhode Island clock cases.

The hood consists of a scrolled pediment above an arched pediment, each with friezes decorated with blind fretwork of pierced and gilded heavy paper, imitating wooden fretwork. The pendulum door, carved from a solid block of mahogany, incorporates a central concave panel, supporting a carved and gilded shell. The complicated brass dial has a seconds indicator, revolving moon-phase disk, date aperture, and two subsidiary dials in the upper spandrels. One indicates the local tides (left); the other silences the hour strike (right). William Claggett made similarly complex and sophisticated dials and movements. These very rare dials are found on six of

the nine Wady clocks known. Another has the same dial configuration and concave blocked door but terminates in a single arched pediment.<sup>5</sup>

Wady's end was less glorious than his clocks. At his death in 1759, the Newport town council paid his burial costs and put his two children into suitable apprenticeships.<sup>6</sup> —GRS

*Cat. 33*

99 × 17 × 10 in. (251.5 × 43.2 × 25.4 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike

MARK: "James Wady Newport," engraved on dial-arch

INSCRIPTIONS: "July 8 1892 / R Wallace / Cleaned Jan 6 1868," "Cleaned By Thomas Perry / in the spring of of 1848," "Cleaned by BWallace / May 21 1856," "Cleaned Nov. 20 1832 / by Barton[?]," "Cleaned by R Wallace Jany 21 1888," "Cleaned May 26th 1904," and "Cleaned 4/23/10," in graphite, on interior of waist door

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Downs 1952a, no. 202; Downs 1952b, 426; Mooz 1971, 883, fig. 2; Distin and Bishop 1976, 25, fig. 31; Cooper 1980, 34, fig. 40; Moses 1984, 19, figs. 1.1-1.1a; Fennimore 1996, 301, no. 197, ill.; New York 2000a, 70, ill.; New York 2000b, 92-93, figs. 2-3; New York 2002, 220, 224, figs. 1, 5; O'Brien 2007, 145n18; Hohmann et al. 2009, 304-5, no. 95, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Noyes family, Stonington, Conn., before 1951; sold to dealer John S. Walton, Greenwich, Conn., or New York, by 1951; sold to Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969), Winterthur, Del., 1951; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1951, inv. no. 1951.0028 [RIF2303]

*Notes*

1. Hohmann et al. 2009, 356. Apprentices were usually restricted from marrying until completing their apprenticeship (generally at age twenty-one). Frequently, apprentices married the daughters of their master. The assertion that James Wady was apprenticed to William Claggett is based on this marriage, combined with the knowledge that Wady shared a shop with Claggett's son William II (*ibid.*), and on the close similarity of their clock dials and movements.

2. *Ibid.*, 356-57.
3. For the Wady clock, see *ibid.*, 300-301, no. 93, ill. [RIF2299]; for the Claggett clocks, see Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 89.6 [RIF668], and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 30.120.17 [RIF783].
4. The case has previously been attributed to John Goddard and Job Townsend, Sr., but there is no solid foundation for those attributions.
5. Photographs of this privately owned clock are held in the files of Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Canton, Mass.
6. Hohmann et al. 2009, 356-57.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 33, showing hood

## 34

*Slab Table*

John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1755

Mahogany (primary); chestnut and maple (secondary); marble top

## 35

*Commode*

Attributed to John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1755–65

Mahogany (primary); white pine and chestnut (secondary) (microanalysis); marble top

Newport had French connections during the colonial era—there were Huguenots in Rhode Island, and the colony traded illegally in the French West Indies. But in his article on the serpentine furniture of Newport, Philip Zea points out that, though the forms seem to owe a debt to French design, they are more the result of Rhode Island’s mercantile elite aspiring to a high-style British interpretation of French taste.<sup>1</sup> The slab table is a Continental form, introduced to England after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. It was a rare commodity in the British North American colonies. Known by various names in the eighteenth century—slab table, sideboard table, side table, and pier table—it could be used in different ways in a great house. As a “pier table” it stood between windows below a looking glass, reflecting light. With a stone top impervious to stains, it was a “sideboard table” in the dining room for serving food and drink. They were sometimes made as pairs, such as the “2 Marble Side boards” valued at £260 in Jonathan Nichols’s dining parlor when the inventory of his estate was taken in Newport in 1756.<sup>2</sup>

Marble was expensive in the eighteenth century. Anthony Low of Warwick, Rhode Island, paid John Goddard £30 for the frame of this table in 1755, a year after his marriage to Phoebe Green (fig. 1). The couple were both members of Warwick’s founding families, and this purchase suggests that twenty-two-year-old Phoebe and thirty-year-old Anthony planned to live in a grand style.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that Goddard would have coordinated the fit of the marble top, which would have

been supplied by a stonecutter. In 1754 John Stevens and William Stevens (probably relatives) as well as Henry Emmes were working as stonecutters in Newport; any one of them could have supplied the top.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, Low could have purchased the stone top separately, from Providence stone- and marble-cutter John Anthony Angel.<sup>5</sup>

Since the present table and commode share unusual serpentine corner posts, and the claw-and-ball feet of the commode have John Goddard’s characteristic “fleshy” bulge above the rear talon, we can attribute the commode to Goddard as well.<sup>6</sup> The source of his design for the serpentine corner posts is not documented. Goddard seems to have had an intuitive grasp of the Vitruvian ideals: firmness, commodity, and delight.

This commode is one of three thought to have been made by Goddard. Another much larger one with a wooden top was made for French ship captain Peter (Pierre) Simon of Newport and is now owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>7</sup> The third example, made for Godfrey Malbone, was stolen in the 1970s; its whereabouts are unknown.<sup>8</sup> The present commode is almost experimental in design and construction. As Zea points out, its top and bottom boards are not dovetailed to the case sides. Instead, the top rail and the drawer dividers are dovetailed to the front corner posts, and the bottom rail is mortised and tenoned. The serpentine sides are a cabinetmaker’s tour de force. The three-board sides are mortised and tenoned to the front corner posts and half-blind dovetailed to the backboard.



The side moldings are integral with the lowest side boards. These serpentine sides make this commode and its related examples unique in colonial American case pieces. Indeed, they are more closely related to high-style French furniture.<sup>9</sup> Another feature, as noted by Zea, that ties this group of work to French examples is the Continental style of drawer arrangement—the middle drawer is the tallest.<sup>10</sup>

The drawer construction is closely related to other Goddard case pieces. The interior backs of the drawers are marked “A,” “B,” and “C,” in chalk, from top to bottom, in Goddard’s customary method. As the “A” is heavily worn, it is impossible to tell if it is written in his hand. The drawer bottoms are full width; however, they do not fit into a groove in the drawer front, as in Goddard’s documented desks. Instead, they are fitted into a rabbet at the front with running strips attached at the sides. Perhaps Goddard abandoned the groove because it was simply too difficult to run it in the serpentine drawer front. The size and shape of the dovetails, on the other hand, are comparable to those on the documented desks.<sup>11</sup>

Although Goddard made one commode for Peter Simon, who was of French heritage, this example was made for Robert and Anne Wickham Crooke of Newport, patrons who were among Newport’s Anglo elite. Robert, who was a Whig, was involved in mercantile affairs, as were members of Anne’s family, who were sympathetic to the Crown. Anne was the sister of Benjamin Wickham, His Majesty’s

Customs Collector, a target of an armed mob in 1765 during the Stamp Act crisis; another brother was imprisoned for Loyalist sympathies during the American Revolution.<sup>12</sup> They were among Goddard’s rare patrons who aspired to have a piece of furniture with a cosmopolitan aura, beyond the standard realm of Anglo-American furniture. —PEK

*Cat. 34*

26 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 45 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 21 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (67.9 × 115.6 × 55.6 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Nutting 1928–33, 3:431, ill. (line drawing); *Antiques* 1933, 3, fig. 1; Nutting 1936, 120, fig. 2 (bill of sale); Carpenter 1954, 100; “Harry Arons advertisement,” *Antiques* 83, no. 2 (February 1963): 144, ill.; Ott 1965a, 52–53, 164, no. 40, ill.; Ott 1965b, 566, fig. 7; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:733; Ott 1975, 948, 951, fig. 10; Cooper 1980, 28, figs. 26–27; Moses and Moses 1982, 1131, fig. 3; Moses 1984, 196, 203, 209–10, 216, 219, pl. 6, figs. 4.3, 5.2, 5.5; Heckscher 1985, 159, 218; Zea 1999, 263–64, figs. 15–16; Heckscher 2005, 44, 74, figs. 31–32; New York 2012a, 24–31, lot 139, ill.; New York 2012b, 102, fig. 1

PROVENANCE: Phoebe Greene Low (1732–1759) and Capt. Anthony Low (1724–1802), Warwick, R.I., 1755; by descent to his second wife, Sarah Stafford Low (1737–1832), Warwick, R.I.; by descent to her son Samuel Low (1771–1863), Warwick, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. William U. Arnold (née Phoebe Ann Low, 1801–1876), New York, Warwick



Fig. 1. Receipt for cat. 34, from John Goddard to Anthony Low, 1755. Private collection

and Providence, R.I.; by descent to her son William James Arnold (1843–1922), New York and Providence and Warwick, R.I.; by descent to his daughter, Hettie Frances Arnold (1869–unknown), Warwick, R.I., before 1936; sold to Harry Arons, Ansonia, Conn., 1936; sold to a private collection, about 1936; sold to Harry Arons, Ansonia, Conn., 1963; sold to Joseph K. Ott (1929–1994) and Anne Northrup Ott (1929–2015), Providence, R.I., 1963; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 20, 2012, lot 139; sold to a private collection [RIF348]

*Cat. 35*

34<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 36<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (88.3 × 93.4 × 54.6 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “A” through “C,” in chalk, on interior backs of drawers, from top to bottom; “A,” in graphite, on top of drawer divider under top drawer; “B,” in graphite, on top of drawer divider under middle drawer; “2,” in graphite, on top of front rail; “This chest of drawers with a marble top, known in the family as the marble slab, belonged to Robert Crooke before his marriage to Anne Wickham so dates at least to 1750 or probably much earlier. This couple were the great, great, great, great grandparents of Maurice and Robert Fagan, children of Christina and Maurice Fagan,” typed on twentieth-century paper label glued to exterior back of top drawer

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Antiques* 1962, 618–19, ill. frontispiece; Biddle 1963, 25, no. 47, ill.; Gershenson 1967, 638; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:728, 732–33, ill., and 8:2137, ill.; Moses 1984, 44, fig. 1.29; Heckscher 1985, 218–19, no. 140, ill.; Zea 1999, 254–57, figs. 2, 4–5, 7

PROVENANCE: Anne Crooke (née Wickham, 1730–unknown) and Robert Crooke (ca. 1701–1802), Newport, R.I., by ca. 1760; by descent to their daughter Rebecca Wickham Crooke Wood (1771–1847), Newport, R.I., and Lockport, N.Y.; by descent to her daughter Rebecca W. C. W. Stanley (1810–1880), Le Roy, N.Y.; by descent to her daughter Rebecca W. C. S. Falkner (1849–1895), Le Roy N.Y.; by descent to her daughter Rebecca W. C. F. Sutherland (1878–1926), Le Roy,

N.Y.; by descent to her daughter Christina Katharine Sutherland Fagan (1905–1982), New Canaan, Conn.; by descent to her sons Maurice S. Fagan (1926–2010), New Canaan, Conn., and Naples, Fla., and Robert G. Fagan (1928–1975), Pittsford, N.Y.; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, ca. 1960; sold to Doris Fisher Gershenson (1915–2003) and Charles H. Gershenson (1900–1982), Detroit, ca. 1960; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., by 1971; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, Gifts of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell and Mrs. Russell Sage, by exchange, and the Sylmaris Collection, Gift of George Coe Graves, by exchange, 1972, inv. no. 1972.130 [RIF327]

*Notes*

1. Zea 1999.
2. *Ibid.*, 264–65. Nichols may have obtained the marble tops from the Providence stonecutter John Anthony Angel since he is known to have done business with him. See Jonathan Nichols, Newport, gentleman, late tavern keeper, v. John Anthony Angel, Providence, marble cutter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. 3, p. 718, May 1751 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
3. Richards et al. 1997, 215.
4. Hall 2005. Henry Emmes is identified as a stonecutter in his probate administration; Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 15, p. 117, microfilm no. 0945000, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. William Stevens was working as a stonecutter as early as 1743; Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 9, p. 31, microfilm no. 0944999.
5. For Angel, see Luti 1980, 3. Angel was also identified as a “marble cutter” in public records.
6. This feature is found on two other slab tables attributed to John Goddard; see Zea 1999, 264, fig. 17 [RIF752], and 267, fig. 24 [RIF408].
7. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 81.665 [RIF761].
8. See Zea 1999, 254, 270.
9. Compare the commode, probably made in Paris, about 1735, in *ibid.*, fig. 3.
10. *Ibid.*, 256.
11. For Goddard’s signed desks, see Moses 1984, 140, 201, 216, 221, figs. 3.66, 4.1, 5.1a [RIF241]; and Moses 1984, 210, pl. 14 [RIF600].
12. Zea 1999, 259–61.

## 36

*High Chest of Drawers*

Attributed to Amos Stafford, Jr. (1726–unknown)

Probably Coventry, Rhode Island, 1749

Maple (primary); pine (secondary)

A needlework sampler (fig. 1) and family register (fig. 2) that descended with this high chest help identify its original owners, Capt. John Waterman, Jr., and Marcy Stafford Waterman of Coventry, Rhode Island. The sampler was made by Marcy Stafford Waterman Clapp, their great-granddaughter and the namesake of Marcy Stafford Waterman. The couple were descendants of the founders of Warwick, Rhode Island, and married in 1742, Marcy Stafford becoming Capt. Waterman's second wife. Coventry had become an independent town from Warwick a year earlier, in 1741. In 1744 the captain built a house in Coventry and was granted a license to operate it as a public house or tavern in 1747. A prominent citizen, he drowned after being thrown from his horse while fording a river during a snowstorm in 1751.



Fig. 1. Marcy Stafford Waterman Clapp, *Sampler*, Warwick, R.I., 1830. Wool and linen, approx. 8 × 9 in. (20.3 × 22.9 cm). Patnaude Family Collection

The high chest is one of the earliest signed and dated pieces of Rhode Island furniture.<sup>1</sup> It bears the initials “AS” and the date 1749 on the backboards of the upper case in the red paint that originally covered the finished surfaces (fig. 3). The initials are presumably those of Amos Stafford, a Coventry house carpenter.<sup>2</sup> No other woodworker with these initials is known to have worked in Rhode Island in 1749. Stafford was known as “Jr.” in legal documents, distinguishing him from his father, Capt. Amos Stafford, and his paternal grandfather, Lt. Amos Stafford. Amos Stafford, Jr., probably received this commission because of the familial relationship between the two families. Marcy Stafford Waterman was a first cousin of Capt. Amos Stafford. By 1763 Stafford, Jr., was living in Plainfield, Connecticut, his wife’s hometown. Later he was an early settler of Plainfield, New Hampshire.<sup>3</sup> The high chest documents the kind of furniture being made in Kent County in the mid-eighteenth century.

Like many woodworkers in rural communities, Stafford divided his time between farming and carpentry or furniture making. He worked in maple, a locally available wood. The design of the high chest shows that he was aware of what was happening in urban centers. In Newport, in 1748, for example, Christopher Townsend made a similar flat-top, slipper-foot high chest with a central drop (cat. 31, fig. 3). On Stafford’s high chest, while the central skirt ornament is more like an inverted fleur-de-lis than a drop, the silhouette of the base relates to the Newport example. The arrangement of the drawers in the lower case—two long drawers above a long drawer flanked by small drawers—is, however, atypical and is found on only a



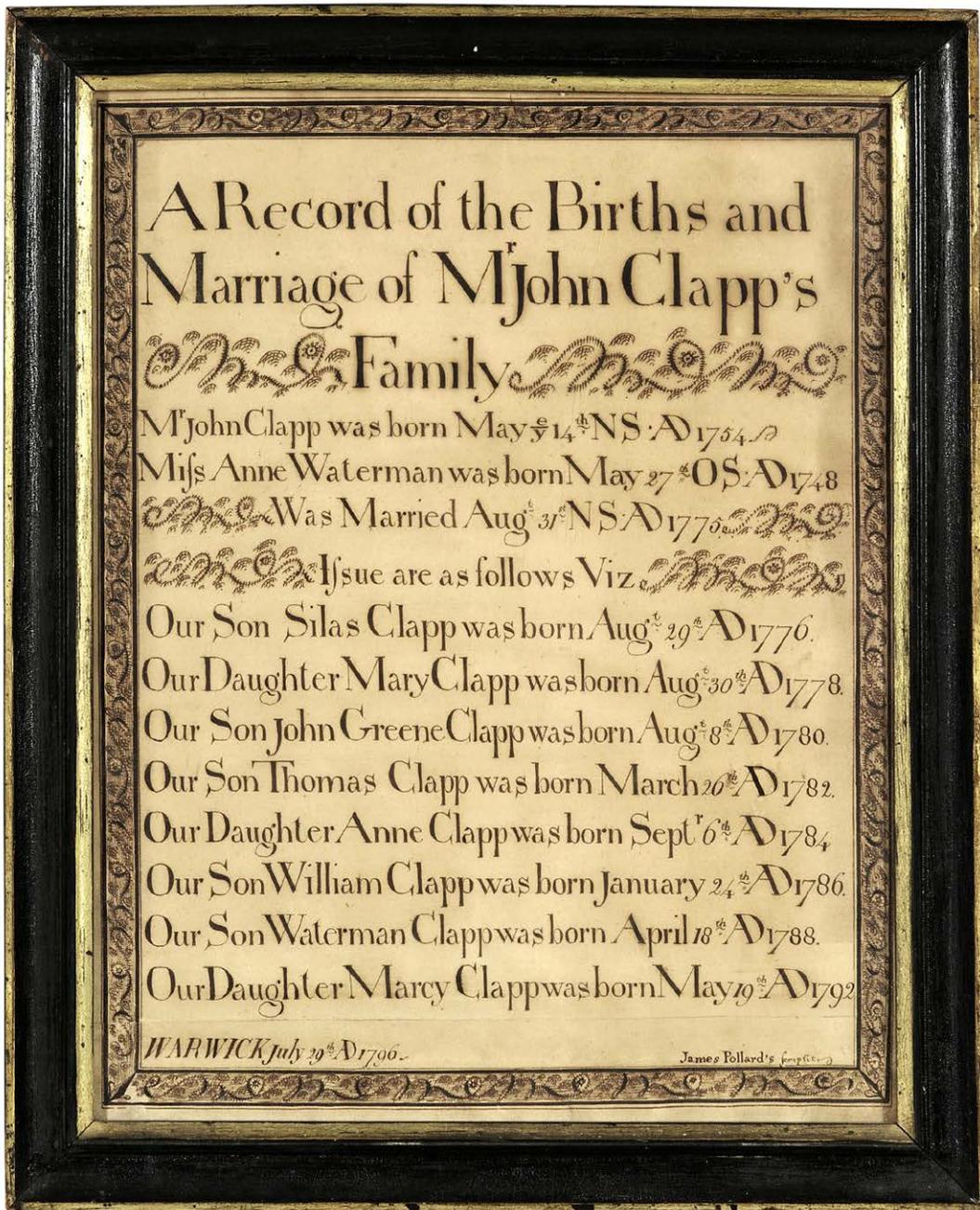


Fig. 2. James Pollard, calligrapher, and Peter Grinnell and Son, framemaker, *A Record of the Births and Marriages of Mr. John Clapp's Family*, calligraphy Warwick, Rhode Island, frame Providence, 1796. Ink on paper in a pine frame, 14 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. (36.8 x 29.2 cm) (unframed). Patnaude Family Collection



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 36, showing inscription on a backboard of upper case

few other high chests in Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup> It may be a pattern peculiar to Kent County, though none of the other examples have histories to confirm that. —PEK

*Cat. 36*

69½ × 39 × 21 in. (176.5 × 99.1 × 53.3 cm)

MARK: "AS J [illegible] III / 1749," in red paint, on a backboard of upper case

INSCRIPTIONS: "X [sometimes multiple]," on many interior surfaces of drawers of upper case; "3," in graphite, on interior front, back, and sides of proper-right top drawer of upper case; "2," in graphite, on interior front, back, and sides of proper-left top drawer of upper case; "O," in graphite, on interior front, back, and sides of middle top drawer of upper case; "1" through "3," in graphite, at front corners of interior sides of long drawers of upper case, from bottom to top; "4" and "5," possibly later, in graphite, on vertical dividers and guides for middle top drawer of upper case; "O," in graphite, on interior backs of drawers of lower case; "2," in graphite, on interior front of proper-right top drawer of lower case; "3," in graphite, on interior sides and on back, twice, of proper-right top drawer of lower case; "1," in graphite, on interior front, back, and sides of proper-right bottom drawer of lower case; "2," on interior front, back, and sides of middle bottom drawer of lower case; "2," in graphite, on interior front of proper-left bottom drawer of lower case; "II," in graphite, at front corners of interior sides of proper-left bottom drawer of lower case; "I" and "II," in graphite, on interior back of proper-left bottom drawer of lower case; "X," in graphite, on interior proper-left side of lower case; "1," "2," and "3," in graphite, on interior back of lower case; "X [twice]," incised on interior back of lower case

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Boston and Marlborough 2011, 13, lot 9, ill.; Boston and Marlborough 2012, 131, lot 1084, ill.

PROVENANCE: Marcy Stafford Waterman (1714/15–1811) and Capt. John Waterman, Jr. (1698–1751), Coventry and Warwick, R.I., 1749; by descent to their daughter Ann Waterman (1748–1844) and her husband,

John Clapp (1754–1817), Warwick, R.I.; probably by descent to their son Waterman Clapp (1788–1884) and his wife, Eliza Woodward (1793–1826), Providence and Warwick, R.I.; by descent to their daughter Marcy Stafford Waterman Clapp (1821–1913), Warwick, R.I.; probably by descent to her cousins Ellen Louise Clapp (1856–1938) and Charles Henry Allen (1844–1922), East Greenwich, R.I.; by descent to their son, Howard Vernon Allen (1878–1969), East Greenwich, R.I.; by descent in his family; sold to Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn., 1991; sold to Barbara and Robert Levine, Old Greenwich, Conn., 1991; consigned to Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Marlborough), August 14, 2011, lot 9 (unsold); Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Marlborough), August 11–12, 2012, lot 1084; sold to the Patnaude Family Collection [RIF5439]

*Notes*

1. Christopher Townsend made a high chest, now in a private collection, a year earlier; see cat. 31, fig. 3.
2. Amos Stafford, Jr., Coventry, R.I., house carpenter, v. Benjamin Weaver, Coventry, house carpenter, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, King's County, Record Book, vol. 1, p. 159, July 1753 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
3. The author is grateful to A. Patnaude for his research in primary records to clarify the lives of the three Amos Staffords and to verify the history of descent of the high chest.
4. See "Philip H. Bradley, Co., advertisement," *Antiques* 168, no. 2 (August 2005): 9, ill. [RIF1118]; Sotheby's, New York, October 7, 2006, lot 220 [RIF2075]; and Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, November 12–16, 1974, lot 1189 [RIF2610].

Probably South Kingstown, Rhode Island, 1750–80

Mahogany (primary); pine and yellow poplar (secondary)

With its slipper feet, and its skirt with opposed C-scrolls and high central section with drop, this dressing table is immediately identifiable as Rhode Island cabinetmaking, though certain accents distinguish it from the standard Newport design.<sup>1</sup> The feet, for example, are a little too big, and the skirt does not rise in clear arcs, as on Newport examples, but is instead flanked by serpentines. The dressing table has a history of descent in the Hazard family of South Kingstown, Rhode Island, and was probably made there.

The original owner was probably one Carder Hazard, the son of a wealthy landowner in South Kingstown. In public records he calls himself a “yeoman,” and he was active in the political life of the colony and (later) the state, serving as a judge of the superior court at the time of his death in 1792. He died as the result of a fall from a chair, reaching for a book at the top of a bookcase in the home of his son Dr. George Hazard, the dressing table’s next reported owner.<sup>2</sup> Some wealthy residents of South Kingstown owned such locally made furniture; other prominent residents of South Kingstown and Kingston (the village within South Kingstown known in the eighteenth century as Little Rest) owned Newport-made furniture.<sup>3</sup>

Several other pieces recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive were likely made in King’s County (known familiarly as South County), which included not only North and South Kingstown but also the towns of Charlestown, Hopkinton, Richmond, and Westerly. Some share characteristics with the present dressing table, including a high chest of drawers inscribed with the name J. A. Hagadorn, who lived in South Kingstown.<sup>4</sup> Others are clearly by makers in the

other towns, such as a dining table owned by Joshua Clarke of Hopkinton.<sup>5</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 37*

32 ¼ × 37 × 23 ¾ in. (81.9 × 94 × 60.3 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “|,” in chalk, on interior back of proper-right bottom drawer; “||,” in chalk, on interior back of proper-left bottom drawer; inscription, probably mathematical figures, in chalk, on exterior proper-left side of bottom middle drawer; “V,” in chalk, on exterior back of upper drawer; “V,” incised on front edge of underside of top; “|,” in chalk, on exterior sides of most drawers; “X [multiple, possibly later],” in chalk, on underside of guides for middle bottom drawer

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 2004, 220, lot 433, ill.

PROVENANCE: Probably Carder Hazard (1734–1792), South Kingstown, R.I., or his brother George Hazard (1724–1791), Newport and South Kingstown, R.I., ca. 1765; by descent to Carder Hazard’s son Dr. George Hazard (1763–1829), South Kingstown, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Attmore Robinson (née Laura Hazard, 1819–1915), Wakefield, R.I.; by descent to her son George Hazard Robinson (1847–1919), New York; by descent to his daughter Mrs. William Ballou Donnell (née Laura Robinson, 1874–after 1940), New York; by descent to her unidentified granddaughter; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 15–16, 2004, lot 433; sold to Juliana Terian (born ca. 1955), New York; sold to Morgan Mac Whinnie (born ca. 1935), Southampton, N.Y., 2013 [RIF204]



### Notes

1. Compare, for example, the dressing table by Job Townsend, Sr., in the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1958.2 [RIF349].
2. Robinson 1895, 55–57.
3. Examples of Newport furniture owned in South Kingstown include a bureau table at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 33.216 [RIF690], and one in a private collection [RIF5622]; a chest-on-chest attributed to John Townsend at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 59.251 [RIF1089]; a high chest of drawers in a private collection, see Moses 1984, pl. 22 [RIF804]; and a desk and bookcase in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 40.790 [RIF1230].
4. Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, January 31–February 3, 1979, lot 1245 [RIF823]. For another dressing table with a South Kingstown history, see Sotheby's, New York, June 17–18, 1997, lot 647 [RIF3112]. Two other objects without histories have skirt designs similar to the Hazard family dressing table: a high chest sold at Christie's, New York, January 18–19, 2007, lot 616 [RIF2354], and a dressing table sold at Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 3–5, 2012, lot 757 [RIF3099].
5. Hopkinton Historical Society, R.I. [RIF5982].

38

*Slant-Front Desk*

Bristol, Rhode Island, 1740–60

Walnut, ash(?), and maple inlay (primary); chestnut and pine (secondary)

39

*Desk and Bookcase*

Probably Bristol, Rhode Island, 1740–60

Walnut and light and dark wood inlay (primary); ring-porous wood, pine, and chestnut (secondary)



Compass-star inlay—a hallmark of later Baroque-style furniture in New England—ornaments the fall boards of this slant-front desk and desk and bookcase probably made in Bristol, Rhode Island. The slant-front desk also has compass stars on its case sides; the desk and bookcase has them on its doors. Alternating light and dark line inlay is used throughout each

piece. The panels of inlay on the exterior drawer fronts create a vertical band found on earlier veneered case pieces (see, for example, cat. 11). The slant-front desk also has wide bands of inlay inside each panel corner on the fall board and exterior drawers, opposing inlaid drops between the panels on the fall board (fig. 1), and a pair of hearts on the prospect door (fig. 2). Elaborate



compass-star inlay and stringing such as this is seen most frequently on Massachusetts furniture, though a Providence example exists (cat. 40). No Newport case pieces using compass-star inlay have been identified, though two desk and bookcases with domed pediments in the manner of Christopher Townsend (see cat. 29) have alternating light and dark line inlay.<sup>1</sup>

The abundance of the inlay and its exuberance on the slant-front desk is unusual. Two motifs—the broad bands of inlay in each panel corner and the opposing drops at the center of the fall board—tie it to a high chest described as “possibly Rhode Island” when it was offered for sale in 1987 (fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> On the high chest, the same broad bands outline the drawer corners, and the opposing drops appear on the front corners of the lower section, above the cabriole legs. The high chest also has inlaid birds on the tympanum and inlaid shells on the deep drawers. Another slant-front desk with broad bands outlining the drawer corners has shown up in the marketplace, reportedly inscribed “Thayer,” “1752,” and “Boston,” in chalk and ink, on the backboards.<sup>3</sup> The present slant-front desk’s history of descent in the Wardwell family of Bristol, Rhode Island, suggests its place of origin. Based on the similarities of inlay on the desk and bookcase shown here and the high chest, they were probably made there as well.

Similarities in decoration and construction suggest the pieces were made by the same hand. While the desk and bookcase lacks the more exuberant inlay of the slant-front desk—the bands outlining the drawer corners, hearts, and opposing drops—its compass stars have similar two-part light and dark points, though the centers of the stars on the slant-front desk are not segmented. Both pieces have removable prospect compartments with applied colonnettes. The attachment of the feet on both is remarkably similar. Flat blocking is applied with brads to the front and side edges of the case bottom. The knee returns for the short cabriole legs are attached to the blocking and base molding (fig. 4). On both pieces the legs are angular, with square feet, chamfered on their underside. As neither desk has a bottom rail, the bottom boards are flush with the base moldings. Both have chestnut secondary wood throughout and are made with narrow walnut boards, wider boards probably being unavailable. Each piece has a two-piece fall board and three-board case sides. The scroll board on the bookcase is two pieces as well.

For the maker, a possible candidate is James Wardwell, a joiner who was born in Bristol in 1684. A 1718 deed identified him as such when his father-in-law transferred land to him. Another deed identified



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 38, showing inlay on fall board



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 38, showing inlay on prospect door



Fig. 3. *High Chest of Drawers*, possibly Bristol, Rhode Island, 1750–70. Walnut with light wood inlay, 86½ × 40 × 20¾ in. (219.7 × 101.6 × 52.7 cm). Location unknown. [RIF2797]



Fig. 4. Cat. 38, showing underside

him as a cabinetmaker in 1757.<sup>4</sup> One is tempted to think he might have made the slant-front desk for a family member, especially given the hearts on the prospect door. The absence of given names in the Wardwell family provenance, however, precludes linking the later owners to this early cabinetmaker.

Yet there are also significant differences in the construction of these two pieces. Their marking systems, which aid in the assembly of the drawer parts, are very different. The dovetails, which join the drawer sides to the exterior drawer fronts, have thin-necked pins on the slant-front desk and thick-necked ones on the desk and bookcase. On the slant-front



Fig. 5. Cat. 39, showing interior

desk the dovetails attaching the drawer dividers to the case sides are not half-blind and therefore are visible on the case sides. On the desk and bookcase these joints are handled more elegantly, with strips covering the joints between the drawer dividers and case sides, in the Massachusetts manner. The edges of the drawer openings are also cockbeaded on the desk and bookcase. On the high chest sold in 1987, which on the basis of the inlay is clearly by the same maker as the slant-front desk, the openings of the drawers are outlined with a cockbead molding, and a cover strip conceals the joint between the drawer dividers and the case sides. On balance, the three pieces share more similarities than differences, their differences no doubt the result of their maker's evolving craft practices.

Rhode Island annexed Bristol from Massachusetts in 1747, just about the time these pieces were made, and therefore it is not surprising that they have so many similarities to Massachusetts workmanship. In addition to the inlay and stringing as well as some of the construction methods of these three pieces, the form of the high chest—with its high scrolled pediment, deep drawer in the tympanum, and skirt lacking a rise in the center—is also related to Massachusetts examples. Tympanum drawers are rarely found in Rhode Island high chests.<sup>5</sup> The arched doors of the desk and bookcase conceal concave semicircles inlaid with sunbursts (fig. 5), a decorative element also found on Massachusetts examples.<sup>6</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 38*

42½ × 36¼ × 19 in. (108 × 92.1 × 48.3 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: "X" or "V," incised at front corners on interior fronts, backs, and sides of interior drawers; mathematical calculations, in chalk, on exterior back of one lower interior drawer; "C," incised on interior front of top prospect drawer; probably "C," in chalk, on interior bottom of top prospect drawer; probably "D," in chalk, on interior bottom of bottom

prospect drawer; “V B [later?],” in red chalk, on interior front of bottom exterior drawer

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** “Harry Arons advertisement,” *Antiques* 87, no. 2 (February 1965): 148, ill.; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:818, no. P2251, ill., and 7:1942, no. P2251; “Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 139, no. 3 (March 1991): 436, ill.

**PROVENANCE:** By descent in the Wardwell family, Bristol, R.I. Harry Arons, Bridgeport, Conn., 1965; sold to Ardis Leigh, Basking Ridge, N.J.; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1965; sold to a private collection, 1965. Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1972, 1982, and 1991; sold to a private collection, 1991 [RIF1642]

### *Cat. 39*

95<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 37<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 23 in. (243.2 × 95.3 × 58.4 cm) (closed)

**INSCRIPTIONS:** “/,” incised at center of drawer sides and backs, “/,” incised at interior front corners on proper-right sides, and “X,” or “//,” incised at interior front corners on proper-left sides, on most interior drawers; “/,” incised at center bottom of interior drawer sides and back, and “/,” incised on drawer fronts and sides at interior front corners, of exterior proper-left and proper-right top drawers; “/,” incised at center of interior drawer sides and backs, of exterior long drawers; “X,” incised on drawer front and side at proper-right interior corner, and “///,” incised on drawer front and side at proper-left interior corner, of exterior middle long drawer; “X,” incised on drawer front and side at proper-right interior corner, and “IV,” incised on drawer front and side at proper-left interior corner, of exterior bottom long drawer; “V,” incised at front of underside of bottom board; “IX,” incised on underside of bottom board; “13519,” in black wax pencil, on exterior backboard; “X” and “//,” incised, on exterior backboard

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** New York 1984, 132–33, lot 298, ill.

**PROVENANCE:** Christie’s, New York, October 13, 1984, lot 298; sold to John Walton, Inc., Griswold and Jewett City, Conn.; sold to a private collection, 1984 [RIF6008]

### *Notes*

1. Private collection, unpublished [RIF5406]; and Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, October 30, 1971, lot 154 [RIF5533].
2. Sotheby’s, New York, January 28–29, 31, 1987, lot 1313 [RIF2797].
3. Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 1–2, 1981, lot 498 [RIF2492].
4. Deed, Timothy Ingraham, Bristol, Mass., cooper, to James Wardwell, Bristol, Mass., joiner, May 21, 1718, Bristol County Deeds, vol. 22, p. 164, Bristol County Courthouse, Taunton, Mass.; and James Wardwell, Bristol, R.I., cabinetmaker, to Simeon Munro, Bristol, R.I., cordwainer, March 3, 1757, Bristol Deeds, vol. 2, pp. 77–78, Bristol Town Hall, R.I.
5. For two examples that otherwise relate to Rhode Island cabinetwork in the use of the closed bonnet and the shell at the center of the skirt, see Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 2001.6 [RIF4372], and New Haven Museum and Historical Society, Conn., inv. no. 1992.2 [RIF5033].
6. See Richards et al. 1997, 431–34, fig. 2, for an illustration of this treatment on the desk and bookcase made in Boston by Job Coit, Sr., and Job Coit, Jr., in 1738.

## 40

*Desk and Bookcase*

Probably Providence, 1740–60

Walnut, light and dark wood inlay, and maple (primary);  
chestnut, pine, and yellow poplar (secondary)

Joiners were active in Providence in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but their furniture is hard to identify. This desk and bookcase in the inlaid style popular in the mid-eighteenth century is an exception. It has been published as being from Massachusetts, where much furniture with line inlay and compass-star decoration was made, but its chestnut and yellow poplar secondary woods point to Rhode Island. The “waterfall” configuration on the lowest tier of drawers on the interior (fig. 1), created by running cavetto and cove moldings in the drawer fronts, indicates that the desk and bookcase was made in Providence.

More than two dozen desk and bookcases and slant-front desks with “waterfall” interiors are recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive; several have histories of ownership that link this feature to Providence. One desk and bookcase, for example, was owned by the Providence merchant Welcome Arnold (fig. 2), while another descended in the family of Moses Brown Ives. Yet another, with the distinctive Providence nubbin on the foot, was owned by Nicholas Power.<sup>1</sup> The double tier of drawers behind the fall board on the present desk and bookcase evolved into a standard Providence desk interior—two or three lower drawers over five upper drawers with a single drawer above, often ornamented with a shell. The Providence joiners’ price agreement of 1756/57 (Kane essay, fig. 10) lists desks “with 2 tiers of drawers” from £55 to £90, depending on the wood, with mahogany being the most expensive. The document drawers—the tall drawers faced with fluted columns that flank the prospect



Fig. 1. Cat. 40, showing interior

cabinet on the present desk and bookcase—are a feature found only occasionally on Rhode Island desks, and usually indicate an early date.

The bookcase doors open to a rich and complex interior, which also suggests an early date. Above three drawers with cove-molded fronts is a tall locking cabinet, flanked by fluted pilasters and compartments large enough to accommodate eighteenth-century ledgers. Above that are nine drawers of various configurations, surmounted by more compartments for books and papers. The drawers and compartments of the bookcase interior

recall the even more complex interior of the earlier *escritoire* (cat. 14). It is also comparable to the interior of the desk and bookcase made in Newport at roughly the same time by Christopher Townsend (cat. 29, fig. 2). Its complexity, with its secured compartments and ample storage for business records, suggests that the desk was made for a member of the Providence mercantile community. The richness of the compass-star inlay on the tympanum, bookcase doors (fig. 3), and center of the fall board, the carefully chosen figured walnut, and the exquisite craftsmanship bespeak that member's great wealth.

—PEK



Fig. 2. *Desk and Bookcase*, Providence, 1770–80. Mahogany and chestnut, 97 × 39 × 22 in. (246.4 × 99.1 × 55.9 cm). Collection of Rebecca Abrams and Nathan Benn. [RIF272]

*Cat. 40*

95<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 37<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 23 in. (243.2 × 95.3 × 58.4 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: Interior bookcase, from top to bottom: “L,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right square drawer; “LT,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right top drawer; “LU,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right middle drawer; “RT,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left top drawer; “RU,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left middle drawer; “R,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left square drawer; “L,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right bottom drawer; “M,” in chalk, on exterior back of middle bottom drawer; “R,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left bottom drawer; “^,” inscribed on exterior back of both column drawers; “|,” in chalk, on exterior sides of both column drawers; “B pro[?],” in chalk, on exterior back of prospect drawer; Interior desk, from top to bottom: “1,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-right top drawer; “2,” in chalk, on exterior back of drawer to proper right of prospect drawer; “Lt hand,” in chalk, on exterior side of proper-right column drawer; “pros. [?],” in chalk, on exterior back of prospect drawer; “Rt hand,” in chalk, on exterior side of proper-left column drawer; “3,” in chalk, on exterior back of drawer to proper left of prospect drawer; “4,” in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left top drawer; “1” to “5,” in chalk, on exterior backs of bottom drawers;



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 40, showing compass-star inlay on bookcase door

Exterior desk: “|,” in chalk, on exterior backs of drawers; “X [lumber mark],” inscribed on exterior bottom of second drawer from top; “5507 / 33,” in chalk, on exterior backboards of bonnet

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A. Sack 1950, 157; New York 1993, 72–73, lot 207, ill.; New York 2014a, 100–101, lot 114, ill.

PROVENANCE: Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1952; sold to Jean Chorley (1904–1992) and Kenneth Chorley (1893–1974), Hopewell, N.J., before 1993; consigned by her estate to Christie’s, New York, January 25, 1993, lot 207; sold to a private collection, Pa.; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 23–24, and 27, 2014, lot 114; sold to Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon, Mass.; sold to a private collection, 2014 [RIF6009]

#### *Note*

1. See, respectively, Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), October 26, 1997, lot 140, ill. [RIF272]; private collection, unpublished [RIF504]; and Christie’s, New York, October 3, 2007, lot 107 [RIF3362].

## 41

*Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Samuel Rockwell (1722–1773), clockmaker

Providence, 1743–52

Mahogany (primary); yellow poplar, chestnut, pine, cherry, mahogany, and maple (secondary)



Before he relocated his business in 1752 and became the first clockmaker in Virginia, Samuel Rockwell made at least five clocks in Providence.<sup>1</sup> Exactly where or with whom he apprenticed is unknown. He was born in Middletown, Connecticut, but he was probably trained in Providence or Newport.<sup>2</sup> He is known to have been back in Middletown by 1763 and made clocks there before his death in 1773. Three of Rockwell's clock dials include subsidiary dials in the upper corners (fig. 1), rare dials favored by Newport clockmakers William Claggett and his apprentice James Wady.<sup>3</sup> Another Rockwell clock is known from a 1772 Newport court case when he was called as an expert in a lawsuit against Thomas Claggett. In Rockwell's court deposition he claimed to have made at least one musical clock in his career, though the whereabouts of that clock are unknown.<sup>4</sup> The complicated dial of this example includes a variant of his name, "Saml Rockwel." Other dials are engraved "Rockwell" and "Rocknel" and use three different representations of "Samuel," suggesting that he was not the engraver.

The case of this clock is significant in the evolution of Rhode Island clock case design and is closely related to four others with similar concave, shell-carved pendulum doors and elaborate double pediments. They house movements, two each, by William Claggett and James Wady of Newport (see, for example, cat. 33, containing a movement by Wady).<sup>5</sup> Those four clocks are similar to each other but are different enough from the present case to suggest that another cabinetmaker made this one. It may be a singular effort by an unknown maker, perhaps from Providence. The five cases in this group appear to predate the convex blocked doors that became so popular in the region. They demonstrate the first use of a concave

block-and-shell design on a Rhode Island clock case and represent a sudden, dramatic change in style and ornament from the earlier, more restrained sarcophagus-top cases (see cat. 9). Each of the five cases has a bold scrolled pediment above an arched pediment, each with decorative friezes below. Both friezes on this hood are decorated in gold paint (possibly on paper); the others incorporate blind fretwork. The differences between this clock and the other four suggest that it may have been the first of its form, but regardless of whether that form was developed in Newport or in Providence, as a group these clocks represent some of the most innovative, aesthetically beautiful examples ever made in America.

The carved and gilded shell on the door varies slightly in design and execution from the Newport clocks of the group and lacks the refinement of later examples, suggesting an unknown cabinetmaker's or carver's early essay in the carved ornament that would become an important element in later Rhode Island furniture. —GRS

*Cat. 41*

95½ × 18½ × 9½ in. (242.6 × 47 × 24 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike with center sweep seconds

MARK: "Sam,<sup>l</sup> Rockwel Providence," engraved on nameplate above dial center

INSCRIPTION: "DAVID HARRIS, / Son of RICHARD, Son of THOMAS, / Son of THOMAS. / 1750. / STEPHEN HARRIS, 1817. / BENJAMIN CUSHING HARRIS, 1872. / THOMAS HARRIS.," engraved on brass plaque screwed to interior of waist door

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "Christie's advertisement," *Antiques* 158, no. 3 (September 2000): 263, ill.; New York 2000a, 68–71, lot 87, ill.; Hohmann et al. 2009, 292–93, no. 89, ill.

PROVENANCE: David Harris (1714–1797), Smithfield, R.I., and Providence, 1743–52; by descent to his son Stephen Harris (1753–1817), Providence; by descent to his son Benjamin Cushing Harris (1797–1872), Providence; by descent to his son Thomas Harris (1825–1898), Providence; by descent in his family; consigned to

Christie's, New York, October 5, 2000, lot 87; sold to a private collection [RIF2320]

*Notes*

1. Hohmann et al. 2009, 352.
2. A tall case clock with dial signed at Middletown, Connecticut, is illustrated in Hoopes 1930, nos. 15 and 39.
3. For the two other Rockwell clocks with subsidiary dials in the upper corners, see Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, November 17–19, 1938, lot 358 [RIF4390]; and Brown University, Providence, inv. no. HP 217 [RIF6171].
4. For a transcription of the deposition, see Fiske 1998, no. III3.
5. For the other clocks in this group, see cat. 33, note 3.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 41, showing hood

This armchair was discovered in Stonington, Connecticut, in the attic of the Stanton-Davis House, built in 1670 by Thomas Stanton, one of the town's four founders. While working as a fur trader in Hartford, Stanton learned the Algonquin language, a skill that gained him a position as interpreter with



Fig. 1. Attributed to John Gaines III, *Side Chair*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Maple, 40¼ × 20½ × 17 in. (102.2 × 52.1 × 43.2 cm). Private collection

the local tribes. He owned land on both sides of the Pawcatuck River, the border between southeastern Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The Stanton-Davis chair represents a partial transition from the early Baroque, or William and Mary, style to the late Baroque, or Queen Anne, style, incorporating elements of both older and newer forms. Its rectangular leather back, scrolled Spanish feet, turned front legs, and ball-and-ring turned front stretcher are typical of earlier chairs, but its carved-yoke crest, its molded stiles, and the serpentine curve of its stiles and back panel are stylistically later features. Chairs with serpentine or “crooked” backs such as this were available in Boston as early as February 1722/23 and were popular export items (see Johnson essay, fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The influence of these imported chairs on local craftsmen can be seen in a pair of chairs said to have descended in the Bull family of Newport (see Johnson essay, fig. 2). Though their form is clearly based on Boston prototypes, their turnings are more like those of the present chair and related examples (see cats. 43–44).

While the turnings of the Stanton-Davis chair are related to contemporary Boston examples, they are distinctive in their compressed, ball-like balusters. In their work on early Rhode Island turnings, Erik Gronning and Dennis Carr have noted the tendency of Rhode Island turners to compress their balusters into round shapes (for related examples, see cats. 18–19 and 43–44).<sup>2</sup> The turnings of the present example also resemble those of some New Hampshire chairs attributed to the Gaines family of Portsmouth (see fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> The Stanton-Davis chair differs from the Gaines chairs in having Spanish feet with laminated toes, a rectangular rather



than turned rear stretcher, and, in the case of arm-chairs, scrolled arms with less exaggerated volutes.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the original upholstery of the Stanton-Davis chair has survived in a remarkable state of preservation. The leather is not the more costly imported Russia leather but is probably of local origin. Three narrow strips of the webbing that originally supported the seat remain and are preserved under wider, more recent reinforcements. The grass stuffing is visible through holes in the leather and in the sackcloth of the foundation upholstery. Still discernible at the center of the leather seat are stitches in the shape of a square, which would have passed through each upholstery layer—from the webbing to the leather—to hold the stuffing in place. The edges of the leather covering the seat are concealed by a leather strip secured with decorative brass nails and tacks: two rows of brass nails along the front seat rail, one row of brass nails and one row of tacks along the side rails, and two rows of tacks along the rear rail. The leather of the back panel is secured all the way around with two rows of brass nails.

It is difficult to say with certainty where this chair was made. Given the proximity of the Stanton-Davis House to Rhode Island, it could be an early example of turned Newport seating furniture or a later rural production based on urban prototypes. Whatever its origins, it is a rare survival and an important example of upholstered seating furniture owned in the Connecticut–Rhode Island border area. —JNJ

*Cat. 42*

43<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (109.9 × 65.4 × 44.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement,” *Antiques* 169, no. 5 (May 2006): 23, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent to John Whitman Davis (1924–2016), Stonington, Conn.; sold to Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn., 2005; sold to a private collection, 2006 [RIF6094]

*Notes*

1. For crooked-back Boston chairs, see Forman 1988, 334–44; and Jobe 1974, 40.
2. For discussions on early Rhode Island turnings, see Gronning and Carr 2004; and Gronning and Carr 2005.
3. For a comprehensive discussion on Gaines attributions, see Trent, Gronning, and Andersen 2010.
4. For another Portsmouth example with related turnings, see Richards et al. 1997, 32, fig. 1.

## 43

*Side Chair*

Probably Newport, 1730–60

Maple

The Rhode Island attribution of this chair from the Yale University Art Gallery (and a small group of others) is based on the similarity of its turned legs to those of catalogue 44, a stylistically later, pierced-splat example in the collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County with a well-documented Newport history. A defining characteristic of the virtually identical legs of these two chairs is the compression of their balusters into ball-like forms, an attribute of early Rhode Island turning.<sup>1</sup> The upper turning is at the center of a columnar shaft, whereas the lower one sits directly on a disk.<sup>2</sup> This group of turned chairs also relates to a leather-upholstered armchair discovered in Stonington, Connecticut, near the Rhode Island border (cat. 42). The present example has the same carved-yoke crest as the armchair, but instead of a rectangular leather back, it has a stylistically later Queen Anne vasiform (vase-shaped) splat.

Two related side chairs were owned by the firm of Israel Sack, one like the Yale chair and the other a slight variation on the form, with closely related leg turnings but differing in the profile of its molded horizontal rear rail, the pattern of the turned ends of its front stretcher, and the flared neck of its splat.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, a number of additional related examples have entered the marketplace.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these have turned feet consisting of a flattened ball surmounted by a compressed baluster form; one exception is a chair sold at Skinner in 2005, which has a splat like the present example but legs terminating in Spanish feet.<sup>5</sup>

Two side chairs with Spanish feet in the collection of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware (see fig. 1) are another variation of the Yale chair.<sup>6</sup> The Winterthur chairs have closely related leg and stretcher



turnings, but the balusters of their splats have elongated, rounded necks. A pair of the same form was sold at a Rhode Island auction in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Despite their subtle differences all of the aforementioned groups of chairs share several characteristics in addition to the similarities of their turnings. All have carved-yoke crests and double ogee-shaped seat rails, and all have legs that are joined to their seat rails with mortise-and-tenon joints rather than with round dowels. Another trait typical of Rhode Island turned chairs with carved-yoke crests is the significant overhang where the bottom edge of the crest meets the serpentine top of the splat. On most similar New Hampshire and Boston examples, the top of the splat is a simple arch that meets the crest in a comparatively seamless curve (see cat. 42, fig. 1).



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, probably Newport, 1730–50. Soft maple and yellow poplar (microanalysis), 42½ × 19¾ × 18½ in. (108 × 49.2 × 46 cm). Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1966.1303. [RIF6187]

There are striking similarities between the turnings of these Rhode Island chairs and some Portsmouth examples attributed to the Gaines family (see, for example, cat. 42, fig. 1). A probable link between these two cities is Newport chairmaker Timothy Waterhouse, who was originally from Portsmouth.<sup>8</sup> When he was twelve or thirteen, his older sister married the chairmaker John Gaines III, and Timothy probably apprenticed with Gaines. Upon arriving in Newport, Waterhouse joined another furniture-making family through his marriage to Hannah Proud, whose brothers Joseph and John, Jr., were chairmakers. —JNJ

#### Cat. 43

41¾ × 19 × 18¾ in. (105.1 × 48.3 × 46.7 cm)

PROVENANCE: John Walton, Inc., Griswold and Jewett City, Conn.; sold to Anne H. and Frederick Vogel III, 1980; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Gift of Anne H. and Frederick Vogel III in memory of Mary and John Walton, 2016, inv. no. 2016.40.1 [RIF6074]

#### Notes

1. For a discussion of early Rhode Island turnings, see Gronning and Carr 2004, 122–27; and Gronning and Carr 2005, 2–21.
2. A Rhode Island gateleg table formerly owned by Anita S. and Irvin G. Schorsch, Jr., has ball-shaped turnings that are remarkably similar in form to those of Rhode Island turned chairs; see Sotheby's, New York, January 20–22, 2016, lot 483 [RIF5316].
3. See *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:743, no. P3315 [RIF6227]; and 7:1697, no. P4896 [RIF6226].
4. See, for example, Nadeau's Auction Gallery, Windsor, Conn., March 27, 2010, lot 234 [RIF6184 and RIF6185]; and Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), October 27, 2013, lot 102A [RIF5656].
5. Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), August 14, 2005, lot 84 [RIF6243].
6. For the other Winterthur chair, see Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1966.1305 [RIF6168].
7. Sharon Cohen, "Gustave J. S. White Auction Offers a Host of Items under a Sunny Sky," *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, September 12, 2014, p. 18, ill. [RIF6186].
8. For more information on Waterhouse, see the essay by the present author in this volume.

# 44 *Side Chair (from a pair)*

Newport, 1755–75

Maple

Originally one of a set of at least seven, this chair descended along with a mate through the Coddington family of Newport to Sarah Anne Davis (née Coddington). Given its probable date of manufacture of 1755–75, the original owner of the chair was most likely Sarah's grandfather, Capt. Edward Coddington (1738–1816), the great-grandson of Rhode Island governor William Coddington. The chair is an important object not only in its own right but also as a key to the identification of other Rhode Island turned chairs. Only one other identical example, formerly owned by the firm Israel Sack, is currently known.<sup>1</sup> The combination of the Coddington chair's turnings and its unmistakably Rhode Island characteristics, specifically its crest and splat, make it a touchstone for the attribution of stylistically earlier turned chairs (see, for example, cat. 43).

The crest of the chair has beak-shaped ends like those of catalogue 48. Its baluster splat has shoulders with bold volutes and is pierced with a small diamond above a larger, elongated diamond that is in turn flanked by gently tapering slots. In addition to examples with similarly turned legs, other chairs combine these characteristics with compass seats and cabriole legs, either with pad or claw-and-ball feet, or with trapezoidal seats and straight legs. Only two claw-and-ball examples are known, and their feet are clearly of Newport origin (see fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Like most other chairs with feet traditionally associated with Newport, they have medial and rear stretchers with bulb-shaped turnings (see, for example, cats. 69, 71, and 73–74). The design of their splats differs slightly from the present example, lacking the small upper diamond piercing and having volutes with lower edges that are partially defined.



The pad-footed examples were made both with and without the upper diamond piercing.<sup>3</sup> On the double-diamond chairs the central diamond is more elongated than on the single-diamond examples. All of the pad-footed chairs have medial and rear stretchers with conical ends that are capped with two rings and have side stretchers with prominent rear rings. Their legs are more slender, with higher knees than those of the claw-and-ball-footed chairs. A pad-footed example in the collection of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware (fig. 2), has a splat profile that differs from that of the other cabriole-legged examples.<sup>4</sup> The top of its splat, which is more complex where it rises to meet the crest, is similar to that of catalogue 48. Finally,

a pair of related side chairs with trapezoidal seats, straight legs, and rectangular stretchers is also known.<sup>5</sup> They differ from the other chairs in that their crests and the tops of their splats are thinner, the single diamond of their splats is more symmetrical and is flanked by slots that are not tapered, and their volutes lack the curve of the previously discussed examples.

The crest and splat patterns combined in the present example occur separately on many other Rhode Island chairs. The beak-shaped crest is most frequently seen on chairs with conical stretchers with double rings (see cat. 48), while diamond-pierced splats of this design are almost invariably seen on chairs with bulb-shaped stretchers that have crests both with and without



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1760–90. Medium and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. [RIF6205]



Fig. 2. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1755–80. Black walnut and soft maple (microanalysis),  $38\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{8} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$  in. (97.5 × 53.7 × 50.2 cm). Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, inv. no. 1964.1091. [RIF5038]

carved shells (see cats. 69–70). Exceptions include a cabriole-legged example with a plain arched crest and conical double-ring stretchers as well as a few straight-legged examples.<sup>6</sup> —JNJ

*Cat. 44*

38 ¼ × 18 7/8 × 18 1/8 in. (97.2 × 47.9 × 46 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “VII,” incised on underside of proper-right front seat block; “Loaned by the Morris Family / of ‘Malbone’ Newport R.I. / 1934,” in ink, written on paper label affixed to interior of front seat rail; “Chairs Belonging To / Sarah Anne Coddington & long in her family / B: May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1803 / D: Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1891 / M: Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1822 / John W. Davis / of Newport / D: John Coddington / G.D: Edward Coddington / G.G.D: Nathaniel Coddington / G.G.G.D: Maj. Nathaniel Coddington / Indian Wars[?] G.G.G.G.D: Gov. William Coddington,” in ink, written on paper label affixed to back of rear seat rail

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Coddington family, Newport; by descent to Mrs. John W. Davis (née Sarah Anne Coddington, 1803–1891), Newport; sold by her estate to Mrs. Lewis Gouverneur Morris (née Alletta Nathalie Lorillard Bailey, 1883–1935), Newport; by descent to Mrs. Alletta Morris McBean (1912–1986), Newport; Preservation Society of Newport County, Bequest of Mrs. Alletta Morris McBean, 1986, inv. no. PSNC.8718.1 [RIF4761]

*Notes*

1. See *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 2:296, no. 721 [RIF1515].
2. For the other claw-and-ball-footed example, see American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, April 17–18, 1931, lot 135 [RIF24].
3. Four chairs with pad feet and double-diamond splats are in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, New York, inv. no. 2000.17.1–.4 [RIF4733–RIF4736]; another pair is in the Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.9696.1–.2 [RIF5748]. For single-diamond examples with pad feet, see “Native American Portrait Takes in Big Money at Smith Auction,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, July 28, 2006, p. 58, ill. [RIF2060]; and Christie’s, New York, January 18–19, 2007, 279, lot 565 [RIF2343].

4. For more on the Winterthur chair, see Richards et al. 1997, 62–64, no. 35, ill. [RIF5038].
5. A pair with straight legs and stretchers was advertised in “Elizabeth R. Daniel Gooseneck Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 100, no. 5 (November 1971): 687, ill. [RIF5807].
6. For the chair with the plain arched crest and conical double-ring stretchers, see Northeast Auctions, Hampton, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), March 14–15, 1992, lot 491 [RIF3723]. Five chairs with plain straight legs and a serpentine crest that descended in the family of Godfrey Malbone (1724–1785) of Newport and Brooklyn, Connecticut, are now in the collection of the Colonel Daniel Putnam Association, Brooklyn, Conn. [RIF5143].

*Side Chair (from a set of three)*

Probably Newport, 1740–60

Walnut (primary); maple (secondary)

This chair is one of twenty-five known examples of a form traditionally associated with Newport cabinet-maker Job Townsend, Sr. Like the majority of chairs of this form, it has simple, flat-arched front and side seat rails. At least seven of the chairs in this group feature more decorative, shaped front seat rails with central as-tragals (half-round drops) flanked by serpentine curves. The present example and two more from the same set



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1740–60. Walnut, 38¼ × 22 × 17½ in. (97.2 × 55.9 × 44.5 cm). Newport Restoration Foundation, Gift of Doris Duke, inv. no. 2002.21. [RIF4402]

descended in the Hazard family of Newport, though their ownership by that family can be traced only to the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The Townsend attribution originated in 1930, when a set of six side chairs of this type and a related easy chair were included in the estate sale of dealer Philip Flayderman.<sup>2</sup> It was repeated two years later when the same chairs were sold by Israel Sack as “part of a group of pieces made by Job Townsend for the Eddy family of Rhode Island in 1743.”<sup>3</sup> In support of the attribution, Sack cited a related piece of Eddy family furniture labeled by Townsend, the location of which is currently unknown. The attribution persisted until the 1990s, when many late Baroque chairs (including the present example) believed to have been made in Newport were reassigned to Boston, based on research conducted by Leigh Keno and Jean Barzilay Freund.<sup>4</sup>

Chairs with crests with hooped, or rounded, ends like those of the present example are rare in American furniture. They were first introduced in Boston about 1725 on chairs with rectangular, crooked (serpentine) splats. Such chairs, inspired by English interpretations of Chinese forms and referred to as “India backs” during the period, typically had splats embellished with veneers. Boston examples with hooped crests and rectangular splats include both armchairs and side chairs, with either flat or turned stretchers.<sup>5</sup> The rounded corners of the “compass” seat and the vaseform (vase-shaped) splat of the present chair are later stylistic developments, indicating a progression toward the more curvilinear late Baroque, or Queen Anne, style.

As there is no definitive evidence to support a Boston attribution, it is entirely possible that some of



these chairs were indeed made in Newport. The fact that the style originated in Boston does not preclude the adoption of the form by Newport craftsmen inspired by earlier models. While C-scrolls like those ornamenting the knees of the present example are found much more frequently on Boston seating furniture, they do occur on Rhode Island chairs. A side chair with knee scrolls and a stretcher type frequently seen on Rhode Island chairs (fig. 1) has no early history but is closely related to a pair of chairs thought to have been owned by Henry Bull of Newport (see cat. 49, fig. 3).

In addition to the chairs associated with the Hazard and Eddy families, a pair of chairs has an oral history

of ownership by Gov. Gideon Wanton of Newport.<sup>6</sup> These three Rhode Island histories are significant in light of the fact that no chairs of this form have Boston histories. Furthermore, though we know that Newporters bought chairs in Boston, the chairs with Newport histories have rear stretchers more typical of Newport work than of Boston work: thin with swelled centers and conical ends capped with two ring turnings, one small and the other more prominent (see cats. 46 and 48–50). While this in itself does not prove a Newport origin, it is an intriguing coincidence that all of the chairs with Rhode Island histories share this stretcher type.



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 45, showing lower leg and foot



Fig. 3. *Side Chair*, probably Boston, 1740–60. Black walnut and soft maple (microanalysis), 40 × 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 21 in. (101.6 × 55.2 × 53.3 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Miss Ima Hogg, inv. no. B.60.51. [RIF334]

Milo Naeve, whose analysis of the design and construction of this form, which included tracing the splats, stiles, and seat rails of various examples, concluded that the Wanton and Eddy chairs were a product of the same shop, thus further connecting two of the examples with Rhode Island histories. The chairs of probable Rhode Island origin examined for this study also had strikingly similar pad feet. In addition to the shape of their turned pads, all of the feet have a distinctly articulated ridge running from just below the stretcher to the pad, dividing the front of the foot from the back (fig. 2).<sup>7</sup>

Several of the chairs with shaped seat rails have rear stretchers with conical ends and no rings, a turning pattern frequently seen on Boston chairs (see fig. 3) but not found on any known chairs of Rhode Island origin.<sup>8</sup> The splat necks of these examples are wider than those of the probable Rhode Island chairs, creating a subtly different silhouette. —JNJ

*Cat. 45*

41½ × 20½ × 21½ in. (105.4 × 52.1 × 54.6 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “VI,” incised on rabbet on interior of front seat rail; “VIII,” incised on underside of slip seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Carpenter 1954, 39, no. 13, ill.; Naeve 2003, 5, 13, 15, 17, charts 1–2, 4

PROVENANCE: Thomas George Hazard, Jr. (1862–1946), Narragansett Pier, R.I.; by descent to his wife, Mrs. Thomas George Hazard, Jr. (née Nancy Lyman Pawle, 1897–1988), Narragansett Pier, R.I.; by descent to her cousin on her husband’s side, Peyton Randolph Hazard (1873–1961), Newport; Newport Historical Society, Bequest of Peyton Randolph Hazard, 1962, inv. no. W1960.1.1 [RIF4189]

*Notes*

1. Naeve 2003, 5.
2. For the original Townsend attribution of the six side chairs and related easy chair, see American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, January 2–4, 1930, lot 492 [RIF214] and lot 493 [RIF755].
3. American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, January 9, 1932, lots 80–81.
4. In a 1998 article, Freund and Keno reattributed the Eddy chairs to Boston based on several stylistic elements, including their hooped crests, flat stretchers, and carved C-scrolls. They also cited the relationship of the chairs to earlier “India back” chairs, which they likewise attributed to Boston; see Freund and Keno 1998, 14–17, 33–34. Subsequently, the chairs have been given a more general attribution, based on an in-depth analysis of the eighteen related examples conducted by Milo M. Naeve. After studying their measurements, construction, and design, he concluded that the chairs were from ten different sets made in eight different shops across coastal New England.
5. For a Boston example with a hooped crest, straight-sided splat, and flat stretchers, see Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.2221 [RIF4901]; see also Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.1787a–b [RIF3971].
6. See “Robert A. Blekicky advertisement,” *Antiques* 131, no. 1 (January 1987): 45, ill. [RIF1231]. Milo M. Naeve suggests that the original owner might also have been Gov. Wanton’s son, John Gideon Wanton, of Newport; see Naeve 2003, 5.
7. For other chairs of this form most closely related to the examples with Rhode Island histories see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 8:2354, no. P5887 [RIF1227], Richards et al. 1997, 26–27, no. 14 [RIF2736], “Harry Arons advertisement,” *Antiques* 91, no. 4 (April 1967): 417, ill. [RIF4935], and Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), October 28, 2012, lot III [RIF5649].
8. For other examples with rear stretchers similar to Boston examples, see “Leigh Keno American Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 147, no. 5 (May 1995): 642, ill. [RIF4936]; Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, January 11, 1964, lot 122 [RIF4965]; and an unpublished chair in a private collection [RIF6229].

## 46

*Side Chair*

Newport, 1740–60

Walnut

One of a set of at least seven, this side chair descended in the Bull family of Newport and was presented to the Newport Historical Society by a direct descendant of Henry Bull, an early governor of Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> It belongs to a larger group of early Rhode Island chairs that are recognizable, in



Fig. 1. *Side Chair (from a pair)*, Newport, 1740–90. Maple, 42 × 22 × 16½ in. (106.7 × 55.9 × 41.9 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, Museum Purchase, inv. no. PSNC.I666.2a–b. [RIF4804]

part, by the turning of their stretchers (see also, for example, cats. 48 and 50). They have thin medial and rear stretchers with a pronounced, compact central bulge, terminating in conical ends flanked by two rings: a thin, flat ring on the inside and a larger, bulbous ring on the outside. These are invariably paired with side stretchers with a thick rear ring. On all of the chairs in this group examined for this study, the side stretchers are joined to the front legs with rectangular tenons rather than the round tenons found on Rhode Island chairs with bulb-shaped stretcher ends.

Chairs like the Bull family example have trapezoidal seats with front rails that are shaped with a lunette flanked by ogees and side rails that have straight front edges and ogee rear edges. They have yoked crests, elongated vase-shaped splats with tall bases and thin necks, slender cabriole legs with rounded knees and pad feet, and rear stiles that are unchamfered below the rear stretcher. The close to twenty examples from this group currently catalogued in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive are made of various woods, including maple, maple and birch, walnut (like the current example), and cherry.<sup>2</sup> A good number have Rhode Island histories, including a maple pair that descended in the Rogers family of Newport, a set of four maple chairs originally owned by Silas Casey of East Greenwich (see Johnson essay, fig. 6), a walnut example originally owned by Thomas Robinson of South Kingstown and Newport, and a walnut pair that descended in the Hunter family of Newport.<sup>3</sup>

A closely related group of side chairs, of which a handful of examples (in maple and walnut) are





Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1, showing stretchers

known, shares most of the attributes of the Bull chair, including its stretcher turnings and splat design. The seats of this group are compass rather than trapezoidal, however, and have simple flat-arched rails. Several chairs in this group have Newport histories, including a set of four said to have been originally owned by Gov. Joseph Wanton of Newport and another, now owned by the Preservation Society of Newport County, that descended in the Hunter family of Newport (figs. 1–2).<sup>4</sup>

It is often difficult to differentiate between late Baroque, or Queen Anne, chairs made in Boston and those made in Rhode Island (see, for example, the discussion in cat. 45). In determining the origin of such chairs, it is important to consider both their histories of ownership and their stylistic

relation to later examples with known Rhode Island characteristics. The stretcher turnings of these two related groups of chairs—which also occur on later Chippendale examples that are clearly of Rhode Island manufacture (see cat. 48)—as well as the prevalence of examples with Rhode Island histories, firmly place both groups in Rhode Island. —JNJ

*Cat. 46*

41 × 19 × 21¼ in. (104.1 × 48.3 × 54 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “VII,” incised on rabbet on interior of front seat rail; “In Memory of Mrs. Sara Jarvis Pattison / Presented by / Mrs. Frederick Nichols,” engraved on brass plaque nailed to interior of front seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Carpenter 1954, 45, no. 19, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Bull family, Newport; Mrs. Frederick Nichols (née Sarah Desier Pattison, 1867–1931), Boston; Newport Historical Society, Gift of Mrs. Frederick Nichols, 1924, inv. no. 24.3.1 [RIF1788]

### Notes

1. Given the date of the chair and its line of descent, its original owner may have been Ezekiel Bull (1662–1759), his son Nathan Bull (1711–1746), or his granddaughter Elizabeth Bull (1735–1804).
2. Furniture maker and author Jeffrey P. Greene has attributed some of these chairs to the Proud family; see Greene 1996, 244–45. For a maple example, see Jobe and Kaye 1984, 349–51, no. 95, ill. [RIF839 (set of 4)]; for a maple and birch pair, see Greene 1996, 39, 244–46, ill. [RIF6231]; for a cherry pair, see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 2:295, no. 720, ill. [RIF4899].
3. For the Rogers family chairs, see National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C., inv. no. NT 59.59.5–6 (currently on loan to the Preservation Society of Newport County) [RIF6088]; for the maple chairs owned by Casey, see RIF839 in n2, above; for the unpublished walnut example owned by Robinson and now in a private collection, see RIF4687; for the walnut pair from the Hunter family, see Preservation Society of Newport County, PSNC.1757.1–2 [RIF6087].
4. For the chairs with the Joseph Wanton provenance, see “John S. Walton, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 107, no. 4 (April 1975): 550, ill. [RIF4943]. Joseph and William Wanton purchased at least two sets of chairs from the cabinetmaker Benjamin Baker; see Carr 2004, 71.

## 47

*Side Chair*

Newport, 1760–70

Mahogany (primary); maple (secondary)

This chair, along with a walnut pair of the same form, descended in the Newport home of Thomas Robinson, a prominent Quaker merchant. Robinson purchased the house in 1760 and soon renovated it, substantially increasing its size and adding a gambrel roof.<sup>1</sup> Cabinetmaker John Goddard was his friend and



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1750–70. Walnut, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. [RIF4892]

neighbor, and according to family history Robinson purchased furniture from both Goddard and his son Thomas (a desk and bookcase and card table owned by Robinson have been attributed to the father).<sup>2</sup> He is also known to have purchased furniture from Job Townsend, Jr.<sup>3</sup>

The design of the Robinson chair, which combines a splat with a central inverted teardrop shape flanked by elongated tapered openings, and a crest with rounded ends reminiscent of earlier hooped-crest examples (see cat. 45), is rare.<sup>4</sup> Of the few known chairs of this form, only four have splats exactly like that of the present example: the walnut pair that descended with this one and a mahogany pair.<sup>5</sup> A second group of five chairs has a splat of the same design, but that splat is clearly laid out with a different template: the central teardrop-shaped piercing is larger, while the overall pattern is more compact, with more space above and below.<sup>6</sup> In the course of this study, the Robinson chair and one other from the first group as well as one walnut example from the second group were examined. The side stretchers of both of the chairs from the first group are joined to their front legs with round tenons, while on the chair from the second group, these joints are rectangular. This is quite unusual; during the course of this study, many chairs with medial and rear stretchers with the bulb-shaped ends seen here were examined, but the chair from this second group is one of only two examples found to use rectangular tenons to join side stretchers and front legs.<sup>7</sup> Despite these differences, all three chairs are pinned at the joint of the rear stretchers and legs, a feature not often found on Rhode Island



chairs. They also have in common the fact that at least one of their parts (in addition to the front seat rail and slip seat) is numbered on its rear surface, a method of keeping track of parts most often seen on chairs associated with John Goddard (see, for example, cats. 69–70).<sup>8</sup>

Another small group of related chairs has crests with beak-shaped ends. Like the other examples discussed here, all have medial and rear stretchers that terminate in bulbs. One pair has splats very similar to that of the Robinson chair but with a triangular piercing at the base and a bead within each pierced slot.<sup>9</sup> Another variation has a solid splat and trapezoidal seat but retains the distinctive shape formed by the intersection of the crest and top of the splat (fig. 1). A low chair with a similarly pierced splat is also known, but the shape of that splat differs where it meets both the shoe and crest.<sup>10</sup> —JNJ

#### *Cat. 47*

36½ × 21¾ × 20¼ in. (92.7 × 55.3 × 51.4 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “This chair probably came down in the Robinson House,” in ink, written on paper label nailed to interior of rear seat rail; “III,” incised on rabbet of front seat rail and on underside of slip seat; illegible chalk, on underside of slip seat; “I,” incised or stamped on backs of crest rail and rear seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 2005a, 314, lot 547, ill.; Carpenter 2008, fig. 10

PROVENANCE: Thomas Robinson (1730–1817), Newport; by descent to his daughter Mary Morton (née Robinson, 1757–1829), Philadelphia; by descent to her daughter Esther Smith (née Morton, 1797–1865), Philadelphia; by descent to her son Benjamin Raper Smith (1825–1904), Philadelphia and Newport; by descent to his wife, Esther Fisher Smith (née Wharton, 1836–1915), Philadelphia and Newport; by descent to her son Edward Wanton Smith (1875–1940), Philadelphia and Newport; by descent to his son Edward Wanton Smith, Jr. (1920–2001), Jamestown, R.I.; by descent to Josh Wanton

Smith, Newport; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 20–21, 2005, lot 547 (unsold); Preservation Society of Newport County, Gift of Josh Wanton Smith, 2006, inv. no. PSNC.II423 [RIF4797]

#### *Notes*

1. For the walnut chairs, see New York 2005a, lot 546, ill. [RIF6297]. For a description of the Robinson House, see Downing and Scully 1982, 452.
2. For the desk and bookcase, see Winchester 1955, 566, ill. [RIF454]; for the card table, see Carpenter 1954, 92, no. 64, ill. [RIF1435]. Robinson witnessed John Goddard’s will, and Thomas Goddard made Robinson’s coffin.
3. Several items of furniture purchased from Job Townsend, Jr., by Thomas Robinson between 1754 and 1758 and in 1765 are recorded in Townsend’s account book, which is transcribed in Willoughby 1999.
4. It is interesting to note that the front feet of the Robinson chair are different sizes, the proper-left foot being noticeably bigger than the proper-right one.
5. For a mahogany pair like the present example, see Garth’s Auctions, Delaware, Ohio, May 16, 2014, lot 267 [RIF6178].
6. Three walnut chairs from the second group [RIF3169] were also sold at Garth’s Auctions in 2014 as part of the same lot as the mahogany pair referenced in n5, above. For the other two chairs from this group, see Christie’s, New York, January 22–23, 1993, lot 528, ill. [RIF3200].
7. The other chair with rectangular tenons is an unpublished easy chair in a private collection [RIF5995].
8. The Robinson chair has an incised “I” on the backs of its crest and rear seat rail, the mahogany chair [RIF6178] is marked “VII” on the backs of its splat, crest, and rear rail, and the walnut chair [RIF3169] has a “V” on the back of its crest rail.
9. See “Kenneth Hammitt Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 129, no. 3 (March 1986): 484, ill. [RIF4887]. For chairs with similar splats, crests with beak-shaped ends, and medial and rear stretchers with conical turnings capped with double rings, see cat. 48 in the present volume.
10. Sotheby’s, New York, October 4, 2007, lot 118 [RIF2089].

This chair and its mate, originally part of a set of at least thirteen, descended in the Davenport family of Rhode Island and have traditionally been attributed to Newport chairmaker Thomas Davenport.<sup>1</sup> Davenport died in 1745, however, so there is little likelihood of it being his work since it is doubtful that chairs with pierced splats were made in Newport prior to the 1750s. If their maker was indeed a member of the Davenport family, it was more probably a relation of Thomas Davenport's second wife, Mary Pitman, whose family included several woodworkers, one of whom was the chairmaker John Pitman.<sup>2</sup>

Over sixty chairs related to the Davenport chair are known, and these can be divided into smaller groups based on slight variations. Most have splats with piercings that include a central, inverted tear-drop shape, two long, slightly tapered elements, and a lower triangular element with a rounded bottom.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the chairs, including the present example, have scrolls protruding from the shoulders of their vasiform (vase-shaped) splats. A smaller number have splats with the same piercings, but lack scrolled shoulders.<sup>4</sup> All of these pierced-splat examples have compass-shaped seats and slender cabriole legs with high, rounded knees and pad feet. Their medial and rear stretchers have conical ends with double-ring turnings and are paired with side stretchers with prominent rear rings (fig. 1). Their crests terminate in downward-sloping points, resembling beaks, and the necks of their splats are distinctively shaped.<sup>5</sup> The present example is one of the few from this group with an early history of ownership. Others include a set of six that descended in the Brown family of

Providence, and a single chair with a brass plaque bearing the name of Ebenezer Storer of Boston. A related low chair with a simplified splat neck and upturned ears was owned by Norman Herreshoff, a descendant of John Brown.<sup>6</sup>

A group of side chairs related to the pierced-splat examples has solid splats with the same profile as the present example. The majority of these have compass seats with flat front rails, like their pierced-splat counterparts. A small number have trapezoidal seats with shaped front rails with lunettes flanked by ogee curves and side rails with ogee-shaped rear edges (fig. 2). They all share the same stretcher turnings as the present example.<sup>7</sup>

Beak-shaped crests are primarily seen on Rhode Island chairs (for a chair with a beak-shaped crest paired with a different splat style, see cat. 44). As shown by Nancy Goyne Evans, however, they do appear on vernacular examples from eastern



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 48, showing stretchers





Fig. 2. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1750–70. Medium and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. [RIF424]

Connecticut and the New Hampshire–Massachusetts border region.<sup>8</sup> Evans notes that a chair with a beak-shaped crest, turned legs, and scrolled Spanish feet that she attributes to eastern Massachusetts or New Hampshire has several characteristics associated with chairs attributed to John Gaines III (for an example of a chair attributed to Gaines, see cat. 42, fig. 1). Newport chairmaker Timothy Waterhouse was born in Portsmouth and probably trained with Gaines, suggesting one possible route of stylistic transfer between New Hampshire and Newport seating furniture.<sup>9</sup>

Many attributes of the Davenport chair and its related examples can be traced to an earlier generation of Rhode Island chairs that exhibit many of the same stylistic details (see, for example, cat. 46). These include stretchers with double-ring turnings, splat bases with similar profiles, legs with high, rounded knees, front seat rails that are either plain or are ornamented

with a lunette flanked by ogee curves, and rear legs that are chamfered between the seat rails and stretchers and are unchamfered below the stretchers. These shared characteristics demonstrate a continuity of style from an earlier to a later generation of Rhode Island chairmaking. —JNJ

*Cat. 48*

38<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 22 × 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (97.2 × 55.9 × 42.5 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “XIII,” incised on rabbet of front seat rail and on underside of slip seat frame; illegible chalk, on interior of rear seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Ott 1982, 1163, fig. 10 (left); Jobe and Kaye 1984, 35, 37, fig. 1-42

PROVENANCE: Ruth Davenport, Middletown, R.I.; sold to Joseph K. Ott (1929–1994), Providence,

before 1982; by descent to his wife, Anne Northrup Ott (1929–2015), Providence; by descent in the Ott family [RIF832]

### Notes

1. See Ott 1982, 1160, 1163, fig. 10.
2. Mary Pitman married Thomas Davenport in 1737; see Lovell 1991, 42. The exact identity of Mary Pitman is unclear, but it is possible that she was Mary Whitman Pitman, the widow of chairmaker Joseph Pitman (uncle of John Pitman). Joseph and Mary also had a daughter Mary, but she would have been only sixteen in 1737, while Davenport would have been about fifty-six.
3. A prototype for this splat pattern is found on English examples; see Kirk 1972, 137, no. 177, ill.
4. For an example of a low chair with a pierced splat with scrolls, see Ott 1982, 1163, fig. 10 (right) [RIF4722]. For an example with a pierced splat without scrolls, see Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del. inv. no. 52.241.2 [RIF2702], which comprises six chairs of at least two different sets. The splat of at least one of these chairs has a different neck profile that relates to a low chair that descended in the Brown family; see Ott 1965a, 10–11, no. 10, ill. [RIF3989].
5. A handful of chairs closely relate to the present example but have crests lacking the beak-shaped ends. A set of five chairs in the collection of the Newport Restoration Foundation (inv. nos. 1999.539.1–5) has yoked crests with rounded rather than pointed ends [RIF4371]. Another chair has a very similar splat but is different in that it has a rounded crest similar to cat. 47, side stretchers with ogee-shaped turnings, medial and rear stretchers with cropped conical-shaped ends with no rings, and rear legs that are completely unchamfered; see Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 3–4, 2002, lot 773 [RIF3886]. Finally, there is one known related example with a rounded, shell-carved crest, owned by John Walton sometime between 1959 and 1975 [RIF6221].
6. For the Brown family side chairs and low chair, see Sotheby's, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 213, ill. [RIF655]; and RIF3989, cited in n4, above. The Storer chair was sold in 2001; see Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), February 24, 2001, lot 584A [RIF3556]. Despite its Boston history, the chair is of Rhode Island origin; for a related Boston example, see Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 41.777a–b.
7. For another example of chairs with a solid splat and trapezoidal seat with shaped front rails, see a pair from Sotheby's, New York, January 27–30, 1982, lot 799 [RIF3070]. For an example of a chair with a solid splat and compass seat, see "I. M. Wiese, Antiquarian, advertisement," *Antiques* 128, no. 6 (December 1985): 1086, ill. [RIF4895]. Two low armchairs with a history of ownership by Christopher Champlin of Newport are puzzling. Their crests and splats relate to the Rhode Island examples, but their stretcher turnings and the chamfering of their rear feet are commonly seen on Massachusetts chairs. They may be Boston examples of a related design that were owned in Newport. See Christie's, New York, January 20, 2012, lots 169 [RIF3342] and 170 [RIF5468].
8. For a discussion of vernacular non-Rhode Island chairs with beak-shaped crests, see Evans, in Richards et al. 1997, 63; 69, fig. 2; and 107–9, no. 59, fig. 1.
9. For more on the connection between Timothy Waterhouse and John Gaines III, see the essay by the present author in this volume.

## 49

*Side Chair*

Probably Newport, 1750–70

Walnut

This side chair represents a rare form of Rhode Island shell-carved seating furniture. Its claw-and-ball feet differ from the typical Newport variety, which lack webbing between the talons; on the present example the talons are separated by thick webbing from which they are barely articulated. The webbing extends about a third of the way down the ball, giving the appearance of a firm and active grasp. The claws are shorter than those of most Newport examples and, like the



Fig. 1. *Easy Chair*, probably Newport, 1760–90. Mahogany, 49 × 31 × 35 in. (124.5 × 78.7 × 88.9 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, Gift of Mrs. Helen B. Younger, inv. no. PSNC.1762a–b. [RIF280]

talons, are not sharply defined. Unlike the plain knees of the majority of Rhode Island chairs, the knees here are ornamented with scallop shells with eight lobes and a lower outline that terminates in scrolls. The shell of the crest, when compared to that of a more typical Newport shell-carved side chair (for example, cat. 69), is similar but has some distinct differences. It is more compact, and the scrolls of its lower outline are larger and form tighter coils; the shell sits slightly lower on the crest, and its lobes are more curvilinear. The only two other side chairs of this exact form recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive were sold at auction in 1983 and 1998. Unfortunately, no early history exists for either chair.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the two side chairs sold at auction, there is a closely related easy chair in the collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County (fig. 1) that, according to family tradition, was originally owned by Sidney Breese, a New York merchant. It descended through the maternal line to Mrs. Helen Younger (née Breese Walcott), whose father, Charles Doolittle Walcott, Jr., had roots in Cumberland, Rhode Island.<sup>2</sup> The carved elements of the easy chair—both its claw-and-ball feet and the shells on its knees (fig. 2)—are strikingly similar to those of the present example. The stretchers of the two chairs are also related: both have side stretchers with pronounced rear rings and thin medial and rear stretchers with a compact central bulge and conical ends, capped with double rings. As is typical on chairs with such turnings, the side stretchers of both the easy chair and the side chair are joined to the front legs with rectangular rather than round tenons.



Also related to the present example are three pad-footed side chairs with a history in the family of Henry Bull of Newport (see fig. 3).<sup>3</sup> Although lacking the carved elements, the Bull chairs share many features of style and construction with the present chair. They have pieced, inward-curving stiles; vase-shaped splats with bulbous protrusions at their base; boldly curved compass seats with thin rails; long, slender cabriole legs with high, rounded knees; and stretchers with identical turnings. All of these side chairs also share a distinctive stance, a result of their long legs and short backs. Given the relationship of the present chair to both the Bull side chairs and the Preservation Society easy chair, it is likely that they were all produced in the same city. If this hypothesis is correct, the probable Newport origin of the Bull chairs suggests that the shell-carved chairs were made there as well; however, since the easy chair may have been owned in Cumberland, nearby Providence is also a possibility. —JNJ

*Cat. 49*

38 × 22 × 22¼ in. (96.5 × 55.9 × 56 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 1989, 59, lot 79, ill.

PROVENANCE: Christie's, New York, June 3, 1989, lot 79; sold to G. K. S. Bush, Inc., New York; sold to a private collection, 2000 [RIF3100]

*Notes*

1. "Garth's Auctions, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 123, no. 3 (March, 1983): 547, ill. [RIF5951]; and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), March 7–8, 1998, lot 630 [RIF3801].
2. Winchester 1958, 128–29, ill. [RIF280]. Given the fact that family histories are sometimes unreliable, this Rhode Island connection suggests another possible history of ownership originating in Cumberland.
3. Each chair has a brass plaque proclaiming its ownership by Bull; see Christie's, New York, June 12, 1982, lot 194 [RIF1219], and Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Portsmouth), August 15, 2015, lot 507 [RIF434], a pair. They were first published in Carpenter 1954, 32, no. 6, ill. [RIF434], and 38, no. 12, ill. [RIF1219].



Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1, showing knee carving and claw-and-ball foot



Fig. 3. *Side Chair (from a set of three)*, Newport, 1750–70. Walnut, 37 × 21 × 17½ in. (94 × 53.3 × 44.5 cm). Location unknown. [RIF434]

*Easy Chair*

Unknown chairmaker

Caleb Gardner, Jr. (1729–1801), upholsterer

Newport, 1758

Walnut (primary); maple (secondary); upholstery: wool on linen ground (flame stitch), wool and silk on linen ground (back panel), silk and cotton (tape covering cord), and silk and wool (flat patterned tape)

An inscription on the crest of this easy chair reads “Made by Caleb / Gardner Jun<sup>r</sup>. Newport May 23 / 1758,” revealing not only the name of its upholsterer but also its Newport origins (fig. 1). The date most likely refers to when Gardner covered the chair with its needlework fabric, which was worked by unknown embroiderers. Caleb Gardner, Jr., was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, but by 1740 he had relocated with his family to Newport, where he probably completed his apprenticeship. He worked in Newport until the Revolution, when he joined the army, resuming his trade in Providence by 1783. Three easy chairs upholstered by Gardner are recorded in surviving accounts (for more information on Rhode Island upholsterers, including Gardner, see the essay by the present author in this volume).

Given the documented Newport origin of this chair, its distinctive characteristics can serve as touchstones for attributing other easy chairs to Newport. Morrison H. Heckscher has previously cited the high arch of the crest, large front feet, and unchamfered rear legs of the chair as being Newport characteristics. Other relevant features are the downward-sloping profile of the wings and the turnings of the stretchers, which are of a type commonly seen on Newport chairs (see, for example, cats. 46 and 48–49).<sup>1</sup> A small group of easy chairs, including one in the collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County that descended in the family of Godfrey Malbone of Newport (fig. 2), share these characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Another closely related chair is in a private collection and descended in the Wanton family of Newport and Providence.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 50, showing inscription on crest



Fig. 2. *Easy Chair*, Newport, 1740–60. Mahogany, 48 × 40 × 24 in. (121.9 × 101.6 × 61 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, Museum Purchase, inv. no. PSNC.1716a–b. [RIF5004]



A recent analysis of the upholstery performed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, revealed that both the show cover and back panel are original to the chair.<sup>4</sup> The pattern of the upholstery is flame stitch, called “Irish stitch” during the colonial era. It is executed in a worsted crewel yarn using five colors—orange (used only on the inner back panel), red/coral, yellow, purple (now faded to gray where exposed to light), and blue—each represented in multiple gradations of shading (fig. 3). The analysis found differences in the execution of the various panels (on the interior back, inner arms, outer arms, front seat rail, and cushion), revealing that each was most likely executed by a different hand. This suggests the work of professional embroiderers, who would have been given direction as to color and design but allowed considerable leeway in stitch formation and color placement.<sup>5</sup> They may have been working locally, but the panels may also have been imported from London. In contrast, the whimsical landscape of the chair’s back panel, embroidered on linen with worsted crewel and silk, is clearly the work of an amateur (fig. 4). Needlework was an important component of female education in the eighteenth century. Both the stitches and composition of the back panel relate to a group of embroidered pictures worked from the 1750s to the 1770s in Boston, where girls were often sent to complete their studies.<sup>6</sup>

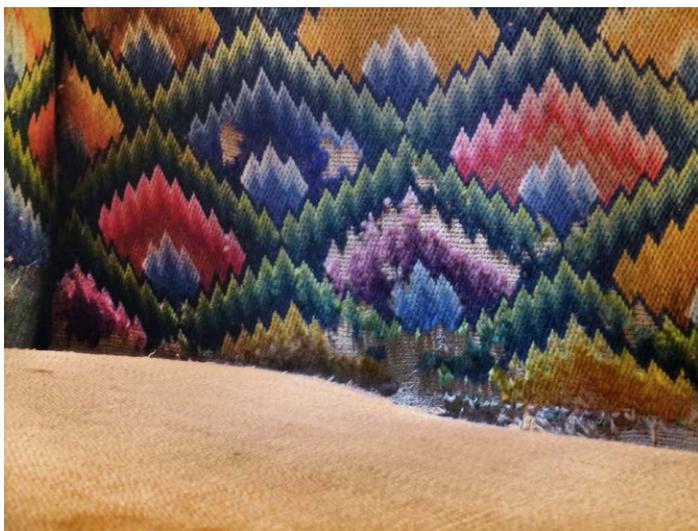


Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 50, showing lower back panel

Gardner ornamented the chair with several varieties of trim.<sup>7</sup> He sewed a black or dark green tape (narrow woven ribbon) over cord to create a raised border that encircles the tops of the arms, wings, and crest, forming a false crest that evokes the silhouette of earlier William and Mary easy chairs.<sup>8</sup> The tape was also sewn over the raised seam of the upper edge of the cushion to create the same effect. A wider patterned tape with a yellow silk warp and green wool weft was sewn flat along the side seat rails, front seat rail (as far as the inner knee brackets), and outside edges of the vertical arm cones. On the seat rails, the black or dark green tape was centered on the wider patterned tape, creating a layering that is unusual. The Metropolitan Museum’s analysis revealed that the decorative nails on the seat rails and arm cones are probably iron (or possibly steel), with a coating of tin to produce the silvered surface (fig. 5).

Gardner’s superior skills are evident in the foundational structure of the upholstery. He used diagonal strips of webbing on the underside of the seat to reinforce the typical interwoven pattern, a technique employed by some English upholsterers to give added support to the seat.<sup>9</sup> He also ensured that the generous amount of stuffing on the interior surfaces of the chair stayed in place by securing it with twine. Radiographs of the chair show that, in one instance, one end of the twine is anchored to a tack on the interior crest and the other end is anchored with a leather plug, which could be seen protruding from the sackcloth of the chair’s exterior back when the embroidered panel was removed. These sophisticated techniques have kept the stuffing firmly in place for over 250 years, leaving behind a valuable document of eighteenth-century upholstery practice.

—JNJ

*Cat. 50*

46 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 32 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 25 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (117.8 × 82.2 × 65.7 cm)

MARK: “Made by Caleb / Gardner Jun<sup>r</sup>. Newport  
May 23 / 1758 / W,” in graphite, on back of crest rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Little 1931, 235, fig. 54; Andrus 1951, 242, 247–48, ill. (right); Andrus 1952, 166, ill.;



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 50, showing exterior back panel



Fig. 5. Detail of cat. 50, showing tape and decorative nail

M. Davidson 1967, fig. 169; Heckscher 1971a, 887, 889; Heckscher 1971b, 65, ill.; Winchester 1971, 884–85, ill.; Bishop 1972, 118–19, figs. 128–128a; Cooper 1980, 64–67, fig. 83; “Bicentennial Treasury” 1975–76, no. 11, ill.; Moses 1984, 14, 59, fig. 1.51; Heckscher 1985, 122–24, 366, no. 72 ill.; Heckscher 1987, 98, 100–103, figs. 88, 90, 92, 94; Freund and Keno 1998, 32–33, fig. 51; Heckscher 2000, 184–85, pls. 6, 7a–b; Heckscher, Peck, and Barratt 2001, 195–97, pl. 6; Heckscher 2005, 44–45, figs. 33–34

PROVENANCE: Keech or Keach family, Newport, ca. 1850, then Burlington, Vt.; sold to an unidentified owner, Conn., 1926. Ginsburg and Levy, Inc., New York, 1926; sold to Mrs. J. Insley Blair (née Natalie Knowlton, 1884–1951), Tuxedo Park, N.Y., 1926; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. J. Insley Blair, 1950, inv. no. 50.228.3 [RIF768]

### Notes

1. The author would like to thank Erik Gronning for sharing his ideas on the wing profile of Newport easy chairs.
2. See also Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 1–2, 1981, lot 506, ill. [RIF6117]; and Christie’s, New York, January 23, 2015, lot 152 [RIF5625], traditionally associated with John Hancock of Boston but almost certainly a Rhode Island chair.
3. The Wanton family chair is unpublished [RIF5202].

4. Nancy Britton, “American Wing Easy Chair 50.228.3, Summary of Findings for the Upholstery Components for the Yale Art Museum, in Anticipation of the Loan for Exhibition and Catalog Entry,” June 10, 2015, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Objects Conservation Department, digital storage files, inv. no. 50.228.3. The Metropolitan’s analysis of the chair revealed that the embroidered back panel was originally tacked to the underside of the rear seat rail, and that the strip of fabric at the bottom of the panel was added in 1927 to cover losses to the embroidery. In 1960 the panel was removed for cleaning and was shifted up to cover losses to the crest. The author thanks Nancy Britton, Morrison H. Heckscher, Marijn Manuels, and Amelia Peck for their insightful input on the Gardner chair’s upholstery.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.
6. For information on related schoolgirl embroideries, see Ring 1993, 1:45–53.
7. For a more detailed discussion of the ornamental finishings of this chair, see Heckscher 1987, 100–103.
8. The tape that once covered the cord does not survive, but the cord is still visible on the crest, wings, and arms. For another example of an easy chair trimmed with both tape and cord, see the Massachusetts chair in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, inv. no. 32.38.
9. For an example of diagonal strips of webbing on an English chair seat, see Wood 2009, 2:684, no. 65, fig. ix 65b. The author is indebted to Nancy Britton for sharing the Croome Court reference and for her analysis of the foundation upholstery of this chair, observed in radiographs.

51

*Bureau Table*

Edmund Townsend (1736/37–1811)

Newport, 1764

Blond mahogany (primary); yellow poplar (secondary)



The bureau table, used for dressing in America in the second half of the eighteenth century, was modeled on an English form, first made in the 1720s. English examples often have a top drawer divided into small compartments to hold dressing accessories and jewelry, and

sometimes include a looking glass, elevated on a ratcheted support, or a baize-covered writing surface. The form was usually found in the bedroom.<sup>1</sup> The American examples typically have a frieze drawer (rarely subdivided) above two tiers of small drawers, with a cupboard,

usually recessed, between them. About half of the sixty or so Rhode Island examples have recessed cupboard doors with a rectangular or “tombstone” panel, as on the present example. The rest have doors with concave blocking and a carved shell.<sup>2</sup>

This example is the earliest dated American bureau table known and is signed by its maker, Edmund Townsend (fig. 1), a son of the cabinetmaker Job Townsend, Sr. It illustrates the sumptuous Rhode Island interpretation of the form, in which blocking



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 51, showing inscription on underside of bottom board

on the drawers is capped with robustly carved shells. It is also one of the rare American bureau tables that incorporates the concept of a desk found on some of the English examples. The top drawer pulls forward; the front is hinged to provide a flat writing surface. At the back are compartments and small drawers for writing materials (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The unusually blond mahogany is also very rare. Its original owner was the wealthy and prominent Huguenot merchant John Deshon, who developed West Indian trade out of New London, Connecticut.

As much as this bureau table and another example signed by Edmund Townsend in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 3), illustrate the consistency of Townsend’s construction methods and carving style, they also reveal, as Michael Moses has pointed out, the inconsistencies that make it hard to define an eighteenth-century cabinetmaker’s working methods.<sup>4</sup> Similarities include the use of graphite numbers “1”



Fig. 2. Cat. 51, showing frieze drawer open

through “6” in the center of the interior backs and at the interior front corners of the drawers flanking the cupboard and the side base moldings, secured with countersunk nails on the back faces. Although the shells of the catalogued example are not stop-fluted like those on the Boston table, they are of the same shape and scale as the Boston shells (figs. 4–5). Both also have similar flat buttons at their center.

In other ways the bureau tables differ greatly. On the Deshon bureau table, the bottoms of the small drawers are nailed to the sides and to a rabbet in the drawer front. On the example in Boston, the bottoms fit into grooves in the front and sides and are nailed only at the back. The top rail of the Deshon bureau is dovetailed to the case sides, while the top rail of the Boston one is dadoed to the case sides. The cockbeading continues across the divider under the frieze drawer on the bureau table owned by Deshon but does not on the

Boston bureau. These differences may indicate evolving technical knowledge, or the master giving his journeymen free rein with their construction details. —PEK

*Cat. 51*

32½ × 36 × 19½ in. (82.6 × 91.4 × 49.5 cm) (closed)

MARK: “Made / By Edmund Townsend / In Newport Rhode Island 1764,” in graphite, on underside of bottom board

INSCRIPTIONS: “1” through “3,” in graphite, at center of interior backs and at front corners of interior sides of proper-right small drawers, from top to bottom; “4” through “6,” in graphite, at center of interior backs and at front corners of interior sides of proper-left small drawers, from top to bottom; “1” through “5,” in graphite, at center of interior backs and at front corners of interior sides of interior drawers; “48.68.4,” painted, on back



Fig. 3. Edmund Townsend, *Bureau Table*, Newport, ca. 1770. Mahogany, chestnut, yellow poplar, pine, and red cedar, 33⅞ × 34½ × 18⅞ in. (85.4 × 87.6 × 47.9 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The M. and M. Karolik Collection of Eighteenth-Century American Arts, inv. no. 38.41.579. [RIF675]



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 51, showing shell carving on frieze drawer



Fig. 5. Detail of fig. 3, showing shell carving on frieze drawer

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** M. Norton 1925, 127, fig. 1; Nutting 1928–33, 1: nos. 626, 628, ill.; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:784, 792–93, no. P3444; “Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 100, no. 6 (December 1971): 808, ill.; Moses 1984, 32, 140, 263, 280, pl. 15, figs. 1.14, 3.67, 6.11; Warren 1996, 730, pl. 10

**PROVENANCE:** John Deshon (1727–1794), New London, Conn., 1764; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Samuel Wheat (née Sarah Deshon (1752–unknown), Norwich, Conn.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Archibald Mercer (née Harriet Wheat, 1782–1854), New London, Conn.; by descent to her grandson Frederick W. Mercer (1866–1949), New London, Conn.; given to the Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn., 1948; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1971; sold to Mrs. Northam Warren, New Canaan, Conn., 1972; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York; sold to a private collection, ca. 1984 [RIF685]

#### Notes

1. For a discussion of this form, see Goyne 1967.
2. Two examples have cupboard doors flush with the small drawers: Christie’s, New York, January 15–16, 2004, lot 546 [RIF210]; and Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.2139 [RIF1431]. Two others have plain facades: Carpenter 1954, 63, no. 37, ill. [RIF785]; and “Gary Sullivan Antiques, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 180, no. 4 (July–August 2013): 22, ill. [RIF1790].
3. Other examples with writing drawers include one at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 33.216 [RIF690]; and another unpublished object in a private collection [RIF5622].
4. Moses 1984, 268–69.

52

*Bureau Table*

James Goddard, Jr. (1752–unknown)

Newport, 1775–85

Mahogany (primary); mahogany, cedar, yellow poplar, pine,  
and chestnut (secondary)

Bureau tables were specialized forms owned by individuals of substantial means. About a third of the bureau tables in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive have eighteenth-century histories of ownership by merchants, political figures, professionals,

and, in two cases, cabinetmakers.<sup>1</sup> The present example originally graced the home of Ruth and Samuel Whitehorne, married in Newport's Trinity Church in 1771. Both members of Newport mercantile society, they could afford such a splendid piece of furniture.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 52, showing shell carving on frieze drawer

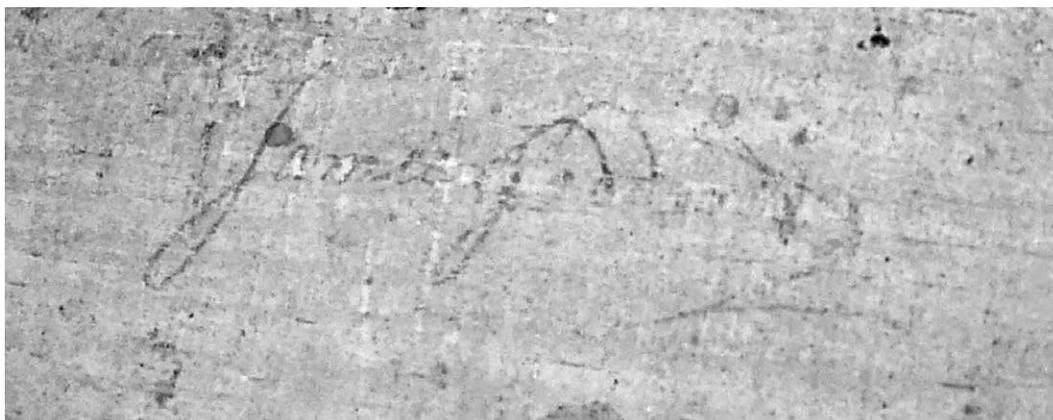


Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 52, showing inscription on interior bottom of proper-right lower drawer

Ruth was the daughter of Newport merchant George Gibbs. Her brother George Gibbs, Jr., owned a related bureau table.<sup>2</sup> Ruth and Samuel were the parents of Samuel Whitehorne, Jr., whose mercantile activities enabled him to build a grand house in Newport in 1811, today owned by the Newport Restoration Foundation. The descent of this bureau table from Samuel Whitehorne, Sr., to his granddaughter in the twentieth century may account for its remarkable state of preservation.

The bureau table had long been attributed to Edmund Townsend. Its shells (fig. 1) are very like those on catalogue 51 (see cat. 51, fig. 4) but lack the

bar below the central element. However, the signature in one of the drawers of James Goddard, Jr., who apprenticed with Townsend, identifies him as the maker (fig. 2). James, whose father, James, Sr., was the brother of John Goddard, had begun his apprenticeship with Townsend by 1765, when he signed a receipt for payment for a coffin on behalf of his master.<sup>3</sup> His signature is also found on a chest of drawers whose shells also lack the bar below the central element (fig. 3). Although the shell carving and graphite numerals on drawer interiors at the center of the back and at the front corners follow his uncle's practice, the bureau table and the signed chest do



Fig. 3. James Goddard, Jr., *Chest of Drawers*, Newport, 1775–85. Mahogany, white pine, chestnut, and yellow pine (microanalysis),  $31\frac{7}{8} \times 37\frac{1}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$  in. (80.3 × 94.3 × 54.6 cm). Private collection. [RIF151]

not follow his uncle's sub-top construction method. Massachusetts cabinetmakers tended to attach their tops directly to the case sides, while Rhode Island makers used a secondary element, either longitudinal battens or a full-depth board, as the structural component to which they attached the mahogany top. On both the bureau table and the signed chest the sub-tops are full depth. A bureau table with similar shells, some evidence of graphite numbers, a full-depth sub-top, and mitered framing around the cupboard door (a very unusual detail) can also be attributed to James Goddard, Jr.<sup>4</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 52*

$33 \times 36\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$  in. (83.8 × 92.7 × 49.5 cm)

MARK: "James Goddard," in graphite, on interior bottom of proper-right bottom drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: "[I?]," in chalk, on interior back of top long drawer; "1," in graphite, on interior back and bottom of top proper-right drawer; "2," in graphite, at front on interior proper-right side of top proper-right drawer; "2," in graphite, on interior back, bottom, and sides of middle proper-right drawer; "3," in graphite, at front corners on interior back and sides of bottom proper-right drawer; "4,"

in graphite, at front on interior back and sides of top proper-left drawer; “5,” in graphite, at front on interior back, bottom, and sides of middle proper-left drawer; “6,” in graphite, at front on interior back and sides of bottom proper-left drawer; “1” through “6,” in graphite, on tops of drawer dividers, from proper-right top to proper-left bottom

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Ormsbee 1943, 12, ill.; R. Davidson 1950, 490, ill.; New York 1950, 208, lot 663, ill.; Hinckley 1953, fig. 1068; Carpenter 1954, 64, 203, no. 38, ill. and detail; *Antiques* 1961, 476, ill.; Garrett 1971, 891, ill.; New York 1996, lot 48, ill.; Beckerdite 2000, 27, fig. 45; Kirk 2000, 154–57, fig. 188; New York 2005b, 43, fig. 15

**PROVENANCE:** Ruth Gibbs (1748–1824) and Samuel Whitehorne (1744–1796), Newport, ca. 1780; by descent to their son Samuel Whitehorne, Jr., (1779–1844), Newport; by descent to his daughter Mrs. William H. C. Bartlett (née Harriet Whitehorne, 1812–1901 or 1903), and her husband, Professor William H. C. Bartlett (1804–1893), Pa. and N.Y. Mrs. Margaret Gold Rambaut (1880–1974), Wyckoff, N.J., and Winter Park, Fl., after 1903. C. W. Lyon, Inc., New York, ca. 1940; sold to Irene Pierce Green (1900–unknown) and Norvin H. Green (1893–1955), Tuxedo Park, N.Y., and Phoenix, before 1950; consigned to Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, November 29–December 2, 1950, lot 663; sold to Jess S. Pavey (1906–2000), Birmingham, Mich.; sold to Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Henry Meyer, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 1950; consigned to Sotheby’s, New York, January 20, 1996, lot 48. Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York, 1996; sold to a private collection, 1996 [RIF107]

## Notes

1. John Townsend owned an example whose current location is unknown but was sold at Christie’s, New York, January 15–16, 2004, lot 546 [RIF210]; it later descended in Townsend’s family. John Goddard’s daughter Catharine Weaver owned another, sold at Christie’s, New York, January 21, 2011, lot 92 [RIF635]; its value was deducted from her share of her father’s estate. On the latter, see John Goddard, will, written June 13, 1785, proved August 15, 1785, Newport Probate, vol. 1, p. 267, City Hall, Newport, R.I.
2. Erving and Joyce Wolf Collection, New York; see Heckscher 2005, 128, 130, fig. 25 [RIF110].
3. The receipt, owned by the Newport Historical Society, is illustrated in Moses 1984, 261, fig. 6.9.
4. Private collection, unpublished [RIF5621]. For other bureau tables that have mitered frames around the cupboard doors, see Moses 1984, 285, fig. 7.11 [RIF108]; Moses 1984, 283–84, pl. 20, figs. 7.10, 7.10a–c [RIF110]; Moses 1984, 33, figs. 1.16, 1.16a [RIF147]; cat. 53 in the present volume [RIF325]; and Sotheby’s, New York, January 31, February 1–2, 1985, lot 981 [RIF676]. Thomas Townsend used a full-depth sub-top in conjunction with a dovetail keyway; see cat. 53 in the present volume.

53

*Bureau Table*

Thomas Townsend (1742–1827)

Newport, probably 1765

Mahogany (primary); chestnut, eastern red cedar, eastern white pine, yellow poplar, and poplar (possibly aspen) (secondary) (microanalysis)



The discovery of a graphite inscription (fig. 1) on the underside of a drawer divider suggests that Thomas Townsend, a son of Job Townsend, Sr., made this bureau table shortly or even immediately after his father's death in 1765, when he was twenty-three years old.<sup>1</sup> Whether he was working on his own at this time is not known. The secretive placement of the signature suggests that Thomas was not the shop master but

was working for his father. His father's will is fragmentary, having been damaged during the American Revolution like so many of Newport's colonial-era records, but suggests he had at least two journeymen in his shop. In what remains of the document Job, Sr., mentions his cousin Joseph Sanford, probably the Newport cabinetmaker, who may have worked for Job, Sr., as a journeyman, saying "all I give him are



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 53, showing inscription on underside of drawer divider



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 53, showing shell carving on frieze drawer

twenty five plains which are stocked or have handles to them,” and states, “[torn] han Swet all my Joyners stuff I now except,” probably a reference to the joiner Jonathan Swett, who may also have been one of his journeymen. The will continues, “to son Job such water from my well as he may have [torn]” and “that my sons Edmund and Thomas shall have the use and benefit of my [torn].”<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with Job, Sr.’s working methods, the present bureau table lacks a drawer-marking system for its drawers. The shells (fig. 2) have definite affinities with those on the signed examples by Thomas’s brother, Edmund, though the ridge that forms the inner shell does not tuck under the button with as much authority as it does on the shells in Edmund’s bureau table in this catalogue (cat. 51). Otherwise Thomas’s bureau table is radically different from his brother’s signed examples, which have meticulous drawer-marking systems and different top-to-case joinery. On Thomas’s bureau table a full-depth sub-top is dovetailed to the case sides, and the mahogany top is joined to the case sides with a dovetail keyway (fig. 3), a technique found on only a very few chests and bureau tables, including a closely related

bureau table and a very different example with a drawer signed by Daniel Goddard (cat. 55).<sup>3</sup> The former bureau shares with the present example not only the full-depth sub-top and dovetail keyway but also an unusual detail—a frame with mitered corners around the cupboard door, a feature rarely found on Rhode Island bureau tables, including catalogue 52.<sup>4</sup>

As noted, the present bureau table has no drawer-marking system. In 1772, however, Thomas Townsend labeled a chest-on-chest with a distinct system of graphite numbers, “1/1” to “4/4,” in each interior corner—a system found on a few related examples (see Appendix, fig. 22).<sup>5</sup> It is possible that, as he began to work on his own, Thomas adopted this system. The chest-on-chest is also signed by Nicholas Easton, probably a journeyman, and it could be his system. The labeling system of the chest-on-chest and the lack of such a system on the present bureau table lends credence to the idea that the bureau table was made when Thomas was still working in his father’s shop. —PEK



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 53, showing keyway on back

*Cat. 53*

33 × 36¼ × 20¾ in. (83.8 × 92.1 × 51.8 cm)

MARK: “Thomas Townsend of Newport son of Job Townsend / deceased of Newport,” in graphite, on underside of drawer divider under proper-left top drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: “6,” incised on exterior back of proper-left bottom drawer; compass-work designs (pinwheels and a heart), incised on underside of case

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 9:161, ill.; “Christie’s, New York, advertisement,” *Antiques* 114, no. 3 (September 1978): 371, ill.; New York 1978, 100–101, lot 296, ill.; Moses 1984, 298–99, figs. 7.23, 7.23a–b; Conger, Rollins, and Itsell 1991, 134–35, no. 52, ill.; Karla Klein Albertson, “Becoming a Nation: Americana from the Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the U.S. Department of State,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, January 9, 2004, p. 70, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Watts family, Newport, before 1978. Christie’s, New York, October 21, 1978, lot 296; sold to the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1978, inv. no. 78.67 [RIF325]

*Notes*

1. The author thanks Sean Fisher for sharing an image of the inscription.
2. Newport Town Council and Probate, vol. 18, pp. 151–52, microfilm no. 0941997, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
3. For the closely related bureau table, in a private collection, see Moses 1984, 33, figs. 1.16–1.16a [RIF147].
4. Another bureau table with a mitered cupboard doorframe and similar shell that may relate to the present example is *ibid.*, 285, fig. 7.11 [RIF108]; it is in a private collection and has not been available for study.
5. For the chest-on-chest, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 2005.52 [RIF630]. This drawer-marking system is also found on a closely related unpublished slant-front desk recently on the market and on a related chest-on-chest; see, respectively, Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Portsmouth), March 9–10, 2013, lot 40, ill. [RIF5674], and an unpublished chest-on-chest in a private collection [RIF5608].

## 54

*Bureau Table*

Jonathan Townsend (1745–1772)

Newport, 1767

Mahogany (primary); chestnut, yellow poplar, and pine (secondary)



This bureau table is the only known piece of furniture signed by Jonathan Townsend, a son of Christopher and brother of John Townsend (fig. 1). Jonathan's career was brief. Born in 1745, he probably began working on his own in about 1766 and died of the smallpox on Long Island in 1772. He is known to have made furniture: in his 1773 will, Christopher Townsend bequeathed to his son Christopher "one large Mahogany Desk, which his brother Jonathan made."<sup>1</sup> Jonathan also sued the

Newport merchant William Chaloner in May 1771 for nonpayment of a chest and desk that Townsend had made in the summer of 1770.<sup>2</sup>

Jonathan would have been only twenty-two when he made this bureau table. Although he could have been an independent craftsman with his own shop by that age, he might have been working for his father or brother. The construction techniques of the bureau table are very similar to those used by his brother. For

example, the divider below the frieze drawer (above the recessed cupboard) has cockbeading on both edges, a distinguishing feature of John Townsend's bureau tables; on most Newport bureau tables the cockbeading does not continue on the divider.<sup>3</sup> The shell carving (fig. 2) is also very similar to John Townsend's, the only ones in the Newport school where all the flutes and ribs emanate from under the line that defines the inner shell.<sup>4</sup> John Townsend's shell carving changed over his almost thirty years of production.<sup>5</sup> Like the shells on early examples by his brother, Jonathan's shells have centers with feathery petals and no subdivision. Jonathan's carving, however, is more delicate, with smaller and less robust buttons. His bureau table also does not follow John's consistent practice of marking drawer parts with large letters, reinforcing the idea that Jonathan Townsend created this bureau table as an independent craftsman in the tradition established by his brother. —PEK

*Cat. 54*

32½ × 36½ × 20 in. (82.6 × 92.7 × 50.8 cm)

MARK: "Jonathan Townsend [in script]," in graphite, on exterior bottom of top long drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: Math calculations and "1767," twice, in graphite, on exterior bottom of top long drawer; "A" through "F," in graphite, on drawer dividers below small drawers; "II," and "2 [sideways]," in graphite, on exterior back of proper-right middle drawer; "III," and "3" [sideways], in graphite, on exterior back of proper-right top drawer; "6[?]," in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-right bottom drawer; "180 / 240 / — / 420 / 18 / — / 438" [math calculations], in chalk, on exterior proper-left side of proper-right bottom drawer; "I," in graphite, on exterior back of proper-left bottom drawer; "5," in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-left middle drawer; two scrolls, in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-left middle drawer; "s"



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 54, showing inscription on underside of frieze drawer



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 54, showing convex shell carving on frieze drawer

or “8,” in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-left middle drawer; “4[?],” in graphite, on exterior bottom of proper-left bottom drawer; “ $16 / ?2 / 250$ ” [math calculations], in graphite, on interior proper-left side of case; “CHCG,” inscribed on back edge of top, on top of top drawer divider, and on proper-right side of cupboard interior

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** “Ringing in the New at Christie’s,” *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, February 15, 2013, pp. 20–21; “Christie’s advertisement,” *Antiques* 180, no. 1 (January–February 2013): 89, ill.; Gronning and Coes 2013, 41–42, fig. 92; New York 2013, 128–52, lot 157, ill.; Solis-Cohen 2013, 35–C

**PROVENANCE:** By descent in the Pell family, New York and Newport, until 2013; probably by descent to Emily Coster (née Pell, 1857–1933), New York, Tuxedo Park, N.Y., and Newport, or possibly by descent to her brother, Herbert Claiborne Pell (1853–1926), Newport, New York, and Tuxedo Park, N.Y.; by descent to Emily Coster’s son Charles Henry Coster (1898–1977), Warwick, N.Y., by 1933; by descent in his family, until 2013; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 24–25 and 28, 2013, lot 157; sold to a private collection [RIF5630]

#### Notes

1. Heckscher 2005, 209.
2. Jonathan Townsend, Newport, joiner, v. William Chaloner, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. H, p. 697, May 1771 term, case 93, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
3. The author is grateful to Thomas B. Lloyd for pointing out this feature of John Townsend’s bureau tables; a few other Newport bureau tables are constructed in this way, including: Moses 1984, 34, figs. 1.17–1.17a [RIF105]; Christie’s, New York, January 27–28, 1995, lot 1090 [RIF341]; Christie’s, New York, January 21, 2011, lot 92 [RIF635]; cat. 51 in the present volume [RIF685]; and Christie’s, New York, January 18–19, 2007, lot 593 [RIF2352].
4. The earliest dated use of this shell type is on a chest of drawers by John Townsend in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 27.57.1 [RIF14], and a desk by him at the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1976.063 [RIF97], both dated 1765. The latest use of it is on a chest of drawers made for Sarah Slocum in 1792, now in a private collection; see Heckscher 2005, 115–17, no. 19, ill. [RIF1472].
5. In addition to the examples of John Townsend’s shells on the chest of drawers at the Metropolitan Museum and the desk at the Diplomatic Reception Rooms (see n4, above), early examples also include a bureau table attributed to John Townsend at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 10.125.83 [RIF271], dated ca. 1765.

55

*Bureau Table*

Daniel Goddard (1747–unknown)

Probably Newport or possibly Shelburne, Nova Scotia, Canada, 1780–95

Mahogany (primary); eastern red cedar, white pine, chestnut, birch, and cottonwood (secondary) (microanalysis)



This bureau table has been attributed to Daniel Goddard on the basis of an inscription on the back of its block-and-shell carved drawer, “Daniel Goddard His Draugh [drawer],” though the meaning of this is not entirely clear (fig. 1). In its most literal sense it implies that Daniel Goddard made this drawer but whether it also means to say that he carved its shells or made the rest of the table is unknown, though this is likely the case. Daniel was the eldest son of John

Goddard and would have finished his apprenticeship in about 1768. In September 1782 he was reported to have joined a privateering vessel in New York (an act for which he was disowned by the Society of Friends), but how long he was away on that venture is not known.<sup>1</sup> In 1784 he received a land grant in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, and by 1786 he was listed as a cabinetmaker there, along with his brothers Job and Henry, a move perhaps prompted by the migration to Nova Scotia of

wealthy Rhode Island Loyalists during the American Revolution.<sup>2</sup> The use of plain bail handles on the small drawers of the bureau table points to a date no earlier than the American Revolution. It is likely that it was made in Newport between 1780 and 1784, though it could have been made in Nova Scotia.

Several features are atypical of the restrained Newport bureau table aesthetic: the latticework background of the shells; the stop-fluted quarter columns of the case; the carved gadrooning above the feet, reminiscent of the crest decoration on the side chair seen in catalogue 81; and the leaf carving at the scrolls of the bracket feet (fig. 2), which is like that found on the desk and bookcase in catalogue 57. The unusual shell, in which a deep spiral is cut into the button that is the terminus of the shell's lowest ray (fig. 3), is found on a few other pieces of Newport furniture. This feature has led scholars to attribute other examples to Daniel.<sup>3</sup> The center shell on the bookcase of the desk and bookcase attributed to Daniel's father, John (cat. 57, fig. 5), also has spirals cut deeply into its buttons. Daniel may have adapted a style of shell his father once carved.

Four bureau tables are related to the present one, including one in a private collection, one at the Henry

Ford, Dearborn, Michigan, and two whose current locations are unknown.<sup>4</sup> The bureau tables available for study have subtle differences in the execution of the carving, and all use a different drawer-marking system. The present example has chalk letters on the drawer sides at the front interior corners (see Appendix, fig. 5); the bureau table at the Henry Ford reveals very little in the way of a marking system, possibly because so many of the drawers are rebuilt; the bureau in a private collection has chalk letters on the exterior drawer backs; and one of the tables whose location is unknown, which was sold at auction in 2010, has a couple of random numbers. With the exception of this last bureau table, all have full-depth sub-tops. All of the tops are attached to the case sides in a manner not frequently encountered in Rhode Island—a dovetail keyway cut in the underside of the sub-top, which engages a dovetail at the top of the case sides.<sup>5</sup> This construction feature is also found on objects by other makers, including a bureau table by Thomas Townsend (cat. 53, fig. 3) and a three-drawer chest.<sup>6</sup> These commonalities suggest relationships not yet fully understood. —PEK

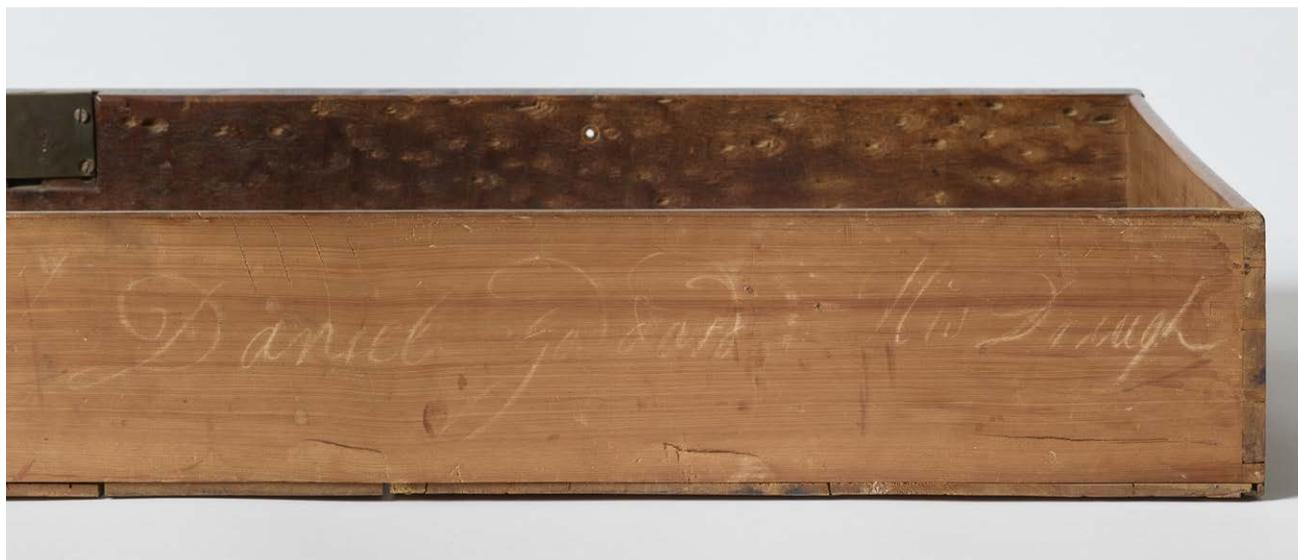


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 55, showing inscription on exterior back of frieze drawer



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 55, showing foot



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 55, showing convex shell carving on frieze drawer

*Cat. 55*

31<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 21 in. (80.7 × 101 × 53.3 cm)

MARK: "Daniel Goddard His Draugh," in chalk, on exterior back of top drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: "A" through "F," in chalk, on interior front corners of small drawers; corresponding letters, incised on drawer dividers; "A[?]," in chalk, on exterior back of proper-left bottom drawer

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 95, no. 1 (January 1969): ill. inside front cover; Moses 1984, 141, 265, 291, pl. 16, figs. 3.68, 6.13, 7.1; Rollins 1984, 1103, pl. 2, figs. 5–5a; New York 1999b, 142, figs. 2–2A; Heckscher 2005, 190–91, fig. 64

PROVENANCE: Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1969; sold to the Dietrich American Foundation, Philadelphia, 1969 [RIF678]

*Notes*

1. Society of Friends, Rhode Island Monthly Meetings, 1773–99, p. 72, microfilm no. 0022413, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.
2. Daniel, as well as John and Job Goddard, each received fifty acres in what was described as Mason's Division, below Shelburne, on the east side of the harbor; see Nova Scotia Land Papers, 1765–1800, Hogarth, Andrew and Others, 1784, Queens County, Draft Grant, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, <http://www.novascotia.ca/archives/landpapers/archives.asp?ID=331&Doc-report> (accessed June 13, 2016). For the 1786 census listing, see Moses 1984, 253.
3. Moses 1984, 271–72. These include a desk and bookcase at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 04.042 [RIF1233]; a high chest at the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, inv. no. 79.9 [RIF2991]; a bureau table at the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 71.62.1 [RIF792]; and a tall case clock at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Arts, inv. no. 87.20.34 [RIF2276]. In addition to these examples, noted by Moses, buttons cut with a deep spiral occur on two other bureau tables; see Christie's, New York, January 27–28, 1995, lot 1090 [RIF341], in a private collection, and Christie's, New York, January 21–22 and 25, 2010, lot 271 [RIF4689], the location of which is unknown.

4. Christie's, New York, January 15–16, 1999, p. 144, under lot 694, fig. 6 [RIF341], now in a private collection; the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 71.62.1 [RIF792]; *Antiques* 1932, 28, ill. [RIF794]; and Christie's, New York, January 21–22 and 25, 2010, lot 271 [RIF4689].
5. Moses 1984, 272, 293–94, shows illustrations of this attachment method.
6. For the chest, see *ibid.*, 272, 300, fig. 7.24 [RIF2822].

# 56 *Musical Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Thomas Claggett (ca. 1730–1797), clockmaker

Newport, ca. 1775

Mahogany (primary); pine (secondary)

Thomas Claggett made clocks in Newport for most of the second half of the eighteenth century. He was also a watchmaker, goldsmith, and expert swordsman. Since he was in business by 1752, he was probably born about 1730, in all likelihood trained by his father, the preeminent Newport clockmaker William Claggett.<sup>1</sup> Eleven of Thomas's tall case clocks are known, including two dwarf models.<sup>2</sup> He was neither as prolific nor as prominent as his father, yet his splendid creations are excellent examples of Rhode Island clockmaking.

The Revolution and its effect on Newport was Thomas Claggett's great misfortune. The war ruined the workings of the port, his business suffered, and he relocated several times to nearby towns, including Taunton and Dighton, Massachusetts, and Providence. Of his nine known full-size tall case clocks, three have cases with block-and-shell doors. Seven have hoods with the arched pediments associated with Newport and Providence case design. Two cases feature the earlier sarcophagus-style hood. Two of his clocks include rocking-ship dials with scenes painted in the dial-arch of what appears to be Fort George. The oft-renamed fort, on Goat Island, just off Newport, was the scene of early acts of rebellion against the British.<sup>3</sup>

Claggett's associations with the great Newport cabinetmakers—Benjamin Baker, Daniel Spencer, and others—also elevate the status of his clocks.<sup>4</sup> One example, in a restrained mahogany case executed in the local taste, bears the paper label of Baker and was made for Abraham Brown (Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 7). Baker's label, inside the case, reads, "Made and Sold by Benjamin Baker in Newport 1772." As the clock also





Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 56, showing hood

includes Claggett's handwritten bill of sale, it is an unprecedented written documentation of authorship.

This quintessential Newport clock is constructed of superb imported mahogany. The hood is of typical Newport (and Providence) configuration, with a bold cornice molding surmounted by three short plinths supporting carved flame finials with stop-fluted urns (fig. 1). Extra details made for extra cost, which only a few customers could afford. These included fluted split-columns at the rear of the hood, a raised central "keystone," fluted quarter columns with carved stop-fluting on the case, a blocked door with a neatly carved shell, and a base with chamfered corners and a raised panel of figured mahogany.

The two-tune musical and quarter-chiming movement also sets this clock apart. Only six Rhode Island clocks with musical movements have survived.<sup>5</sup> Few men had the skill to make one. In addition to this clock, Claggett made at least one other "chime clock" (probably a musical clock). It caused him considerable trouble. In 1767 he filled a bespoke order for a Capt. Owen Morris of Newport, who ultimately sued him for selling a "bad and deficient clock."<sup>6</sup> The two tunes featured on the present clock are inscribed on the composite brass dial, "MARCH" and "HORNPIPE." The clockmaker's name and location are engraved on a banner. The sweep-center calendar hand (rather than a small seconds dial) is an uncommon feature, favored by Newport clockmakers. —GRS

*Cat. 56*

94 × 22¼ × 11 in. (238.8 × 56.5 × 27.9 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass three-train musical and quarter chiming

MARK: "Thomas Clagget [*sic*] Newport," engraved on arched nameplate below center of composite brass dial

INSCRIPTIONS: "CHIME / NOT CHIME" and "MARCH / HORNPIPE," engraved on applied rings in dial-arch

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 175, no. 1 (January 2009): 94, ill.; Hohmann et al. 2009, 306–7, no. 96, ill.

PROVENANCE: Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon, Mass., 2007; sold to a private collection, 2007 [RIF5415]

*Notes*

1. Hohmann et al. 2009, 326.
2. The dwarf models are Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 18.110.30 [RIF782], and Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1954.0019 [RIF2322]. Heckscher 1985, 292–93, notes a third dwarf clock, whereabouts unknown, which was also mentioned in Champlin 1976a, 62.
3. Christie's, New York, January 23, 1988, lot 276 [RIF3647], and Champlin 1979, 173, fig. 3 [RIF5323], also have dial-arches with paintings of a fort. From Fort George, Rhode Islanders fired on the HMS *Saint John* in 1764 and burned the HMS *Liberty* in 1769, both early acts of aggression toward British rule. It was renamed Fort Liberty in 1775. Subsequent name changes include a return to Fort George during British occupation.
4. Hohmann et al. 2009, 326.
5. In addition to this example, three musical clocks by Caleb Wheaton (see, for example, cat. 59) and another in a private collection (Hohmann et al. 2009, 306–7, no. 96, ill. [RIF4610]), and one each by William Claggett (Hohmann et al. 2009, 282–83, no. 84, ill. [RIF4607]) and William Stillman (Christie's, New York, January 20–21, 1989, lot 637 [RIF5932]), are known to survive. A quarter-chiming clock by William Claggett (Hohmann et al. 2009, 286–87, no. 86, ill. [RIF3356]) and one by Seril Dodge (in a private collection) are also known.
6. Fiske 1998, no. 1113.

*Desk and Bookcase*

Attributed to John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1761

Mahogany (primary); mahogany(?), maple, red cedar, pine, birch or cottonwood(?), and chestnut (secondary)

John Goddard was trained by Job Townsend, Sr., and became one of the leading Newport cabinetmakers of the third quarter of the eighteenth century. His reputation drew clients from afar, including the Brown family of Providence and the Low family of Warwick (see cats. 34 and 68). His sons, Daniel, Townsend, Job, Henry, Stephen, and Thomas, followed him in the cabinetmaking business (see cats. 55 and 92).

This desk and bookcase attributed to John Goddard is one of nine Rhode Island examples of this singular Rhode Island form with concave and convex blocking capped by three carved shells on both the upper and lower cases (see also cat. 60).<sup>1</sup> The inscription on the object (fig. 1), “Made by John Goddard 1761 and repaired / by Thomas Goddard his Son,” in graphite on the middle prospect drawer, was no doubt written by John’s son, Thomas Goddard, when he repaired the desk and bookcase in 1813. The inscription makes this desk and bookcase the touchstone for the characteristics of John Goddard’s block-and-shell decoration. The convex shells on the fall board and bookcase have centers with a basket-weave section with a horizontal bar below and petal tops above (fig. 2), while on the concave shells at center no basket-weave section is used below the

fountainlike petals (figs. 3–4). The concave shell on the prospect door also has no bar below the petals.

In addition to the shell-carving patterns, the marking system and construction features of the desk and bookcase provide evidence for attributing other pieces to Goddard.<sup>2</sup> On the slant-front desks that bear his signature—one in the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, and two others, one in a private collection and another whose whereabouts are unknown—the exterior drawers are lettered from the top beginning with “A” on the interior backs (see Appendix, fig. 7). The interior drawers of the desks are numbered “1” through “11” in graphite on both the interior backs and front corners.<sup>3</sup> The dovetails of the interior drawers and valance drawers on the desk in the private collection and the one whose whereabouts are unknown are long and precise with very small pins. In discussing the present desk and a related one also in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Providence, Thomas Michie stated that the two desks were so closely related they could be attributed to the same shop.<sup>4</sup> The details of the shell carving on the second RISD example are not very similar to the present desk and bookcase, however. On the fall board the convex shells lack the basket-weave

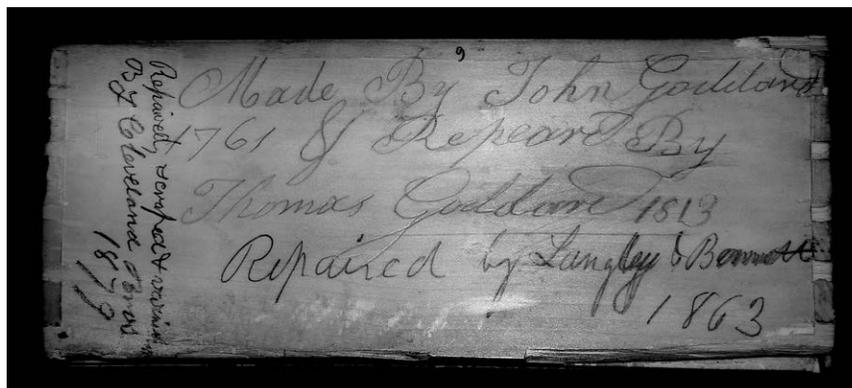


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 57, showing inscription on exterior back of middle prospect drawer



interiors, the concave shell has a bar below the flutes, and the buttons on the shells are rounded. On the bookcase doors the shells have bars that connect each outermost pair of flutes, and the buttons at the center of the shell have lines that spiral in on themselves (fig. 5). The buttons are similar to those on the drawer of a bureau table signed by John Goddard's son Daniel in the Dietrich American Foundation, Philadelphia (cat. 55).<sup>5</sup>

Another desk and bookcase in the group of nine attributable to John Goddard is at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware.<sup>6</sup> It shares with the present desk and bookcase the unusual feature of secret

compartments within the double-walled bookcase sides, with removable panels locked with metal springs. The shell carving on the fall board is similar to that on the second example at RISD and the fine dovetails are comparable to both RISD desk and bookcases. Although the interior drawers lack Arabic numerals, they are incised with Roman numerals. Since all the linings of the exterior drawers have been replaced, any evidence of letters has disappeared. These three examples of an iconic American furniture form that can be attributed to John Goddard attest to his skill as a cabinetmaker.

—PEK



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 57, showing convex shell carving on bookcase door



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 57, showing concave shell carving on fall board



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 57, showing concave shell carving on bookcase door



Fig. 5. Attributed to John Goddard, *Desk and Bookcase* (detail showing concave shell carving), Newport, 1760–70. Mahogany, cedar, pine, maple, and chestnut, 101 × 42 × 24 in. (256.5 × 106.7 × 61 cm). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton, inv. no. 04.042. [RIF1233]

*Cat. 57*

96½ × 45<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 26 in. (245.1 × 116.4 × 66 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “Made by John Goddard / 1761 & Repaired By / Thomas Goddard 1813 / Repaired by Langley Bennett / 1863 / Repaired scraped and varnished / By Cleveland Bros. / 1879,” in graphite, on exterior back of middle prospect drawer; “Made by John Goddard 1761 and repaired / by Thomas Goddard his Son 1813 / Health Officer of the Town of / Newport Appointed by the / Honr Town Council Members / Nicholas Taylor Esqr & my son T Topham [Thomas Goddard’s son in law],” in graphite, on exterior proper-left side of middle prospect drawer; “Bottom,” in graphite, on underside of bookcase, and in chalk, on underside of desk; “A” through “C,” in graphite, on interior backs of exterior drawers, from top to bottom; “1” through “11,” in graphite, on interior backs and at some interior front corners of sides of interior drawers, from proper-right top to proper-left bottom, including prospect drawers (some numbers illegible); “I” through “XI,” incised on top front edges of the same interior drawers; “1” through “6,” in graphite, on interior backs of valance drawers, from proper right to proper left; “I” through “VI,” incised on top front of valance drawers; “B,” in graphite, on top and bottom of drawer divider under middle exterior drawer; “C,” in graphite, on top of lower front rail of bookcase

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Antiques* 1929, 274–77, ill. frontispiece; Casey 1936, 26–27, ill.; Carpenter 1953, 43, fig. 22; Carpenter 1954, 69–70, 205, no. 43, ill.; Garrett 1971, 890, ill.; Landman 1975, 934, ill.; *Arts Magazine* 1984, 93–94, fig. 6; Jobe and Kaye 1984, 35–36, figs. 1–41, 1–41A; Moses 1984, 314–35, figs. 8.10, 8.10a–c; Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 96, 98, no. 39, figs. 39, 39a–b; Greene 1996, 69, 265, ill.; Jobe 2001, 120–51, figs. 1–5, 25–32, 36; A. Miller 2008, 118, fig. 4.27

PROVENANCE: Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890), Kingston, R.I., about 1870; by descent to his sister Mary E. Potter (1820–1901), Kingston, R.I.; by descent to her nephew James Brown Mason Potter, Jr., (1850–1916), South Kingstown, R.I.; sold to Arthur B. Lisle (1871–1949), Providence, after 1916; by descent to his wife,

Martha B. Lisle (1875–1967), Providence; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Bequest of Martha B. Lisle, 1967, inv. no. 67.166 [RIF1228]

*Notes*

1. In addition to the two in the present catalogue, see Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, inv. no. B.69.22 [RIF230]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 15.21.2 [RIF381]; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2646 [RIF1229]; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 40.790 [RIF1230]; an object in a private collection illustrated in Moses 1984, 328–29, pl. 1, figs. 8.17, 8.17a–c [RIF1232]; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 04.042 [RIF1233]; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.155 [RIF1235]. For an in-depth analysis of the nine desks and bookcases, see Jobe 2001.
2. For example, Brock Jobe links the present example with ones at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2646 [RIF1229], and the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 04.042 [RIF1233]; see Jobe 2001, 124–25, 131–32, 144–45.
3. Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1971.11 [RIF469]; private collection, illustrated in Moses 1984, 210, pl. 14 [RIF600]; and location unknown, Christie’s, New York, January 21, 2006, lot 680 [RIF241].
4. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 97. The numbers in the interior drawers of the second RISD desk (see n2, above) are in chalk and do not appear at the front corners as they do in the present desk, and only the “B” at the center of the back of the middle exterior drawer is legible, but given the similarities of some of the carving, the markings, and the construction noted by Michie, the attribution to John Goddard is warranted. A notable difference between the two desks is the open pediment on the second RISD example.
5. Moses 1984, 316–17. Moses attributed the second RISD example to Daniel Goddard on the basis of the shell carving with incised spirals found on the Dietrich bureau table. The marking system on the desk and bookcase, however, conforms to John Goddard’s practice rather than to Daniel’s, and therefore it seems more likely that the second RISD desk and bookcase was made by the father rather than the son.
6. See RIF1229 in n1, above.

*High Chest of Drawers*

Benjamin Baker (1734/35–1822)

Newport, 1760–75

Mahogany (primary); Spanish cedar, yellow poplar, and pine (secondary)

Documented to its maker by an inscription on the back of the lower case (fig. 1), this high chest of drawers is one of only three signed pieces by the Newport cabinetmaker Benjamin Baker. This alone makes the chest extremely rare, but even more impressive is that Baker's account book survives and contains one entry that might describe this piece.<sup>1</sup> On July 17, 1760, Ebenezer Rumrill of Newport was indebted for "1 Case of Draws of mehogni" at the cost of £220. Rumrill had made the purchase shortly after his marriage to Mary Fenner of Providence earlier that year. Additional purchases followed over the next three years, including a mahogany cradle acquired shortly after the birth of their first child.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to state with certainty that this high chest, said to have been owned later by the Hazard and Lyman families of Peace Dale, Rhode Island, is the one made in 1760, although no other "cases of drawers" are listed in the account book. Dennis Carr's analysis of the account book has shown that Baker's most active period was from the 1760s to the mid-1770s.

Carr has also questioned whether the signature itself could be taken at face value. Some of the high chest's features, such as the shell with a fleur-de-lis center, relate closely to the work of John Townsend, but recent study of Townsend's work and numerous high chests for this study have strengthened the Baker attribution. Construction details and the system of drawer markings, for example, separate this high chest from the work of Townsend. As Erik Gronning and Amy Coes have shown, the vertical stiles on the lower cases of the Townsend high chests and dressing tables typically end at the height of the drawer opening and are braced by blocks with

pointed ends.<sup>3</sup> On the Baker high chest, however, the vertical stiles have rounded profiles flush with the lower edge of the skirt and are braced with small blocks on the inside of the vertical dividers and long blocks on the outside of the vertical dividers, which are also flush with the bottom of the skirt (fig. 2). Furthermore, Townsend's practice was to use letters on the exterior backs of the drawers (see, for instance, cat. 32), whereas Baker's high chest has letters on the interior of the drawer backs, a practice also followed by John Goddard (see cat. 27 and Appendix, fig. 7).

Additional similarities between Baker's and Goddard's work suggest a hitherto unnoticed relationship between them. The shape of the vertical stiles on the Baker high chest are akin to those found on high chests attributed to Goddard, though Goddard did not flank the vertical stiles with additional blocks as Baker did here. The feet and carved knees on the Baker high chest



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 58, showing inscription on backboard of lower case





Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 58, showing vertical divider of lower case



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 58, showing knee carving

are also evocative of Goddard's carving—the top of the rear talon of the foot has a fleshy bulge, and on the knee, the first petal below the S scroll in the anthemion continues above the tear shapes at the center (fig. 3; compare cats. 66–67). These similarities raise the possibility that Baker may have either trained in Goddard's shop or worked there as a journeyman. Baker would have begun his apprenticeship in about 1748, three years after Goddard had begun his own shop. —PEK

*Cat. 58*

88 × 39¼ × 21 in. (223.5 × 99.7 × 53.3 cm)

MARK: "Benjamin / Baker [upside down]," in graphite, on exterior back of lower case above proper-right rear leg

INSCRIPTIONS: "HIGHBOY / Mahogany / Inscribed by Benjamin Baker (d. 1822) / Joiner and Furniture Salesman / of Newport, Rhode Island / Newport, about 1770 / Lent by Newport Restoration Foundation / L. 1971.57," typed on paper label, affixed to interior drawer bottom; "DAVID STOCKWELL / 256 S. 16th Street / Philadelphia 2, PA.," printed in red on a label, affixed to interior drawer bottom; "Top," in graphite, on interior top of upper case; "A" through "C," in graphite, on interior backs of upper drawers, from proper right to proper left; arcs, in graphite, across center bottom of exterior backboard; "D" through "F," in graphite, on interior backs of long drawers of upper case, from top to bottom; "A," in graphite, on top of drawer divider under middle top drawer of upper case; "B" or "3," in graphite, on top of drawer divider under top long drawer of upper case; sketch of a flower and other doodles, in graphite, on top of drawer divider under middle long drawer of upper case; "Nelly," incised on top of drawer divider under middle long drawer of upper case; detailed sketch of a bird, two profiles of birds, and the word "Bottom [very faint]," in graphite, on interior of bottom board of upper case; "A," in graphite, on interior back of long drawer of lower case; "B," in graphite, on top of drawer divider under top drawer of lower case

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Ellesin 1971, 534, ill.; New York 1971b, 58–59, lot 199, ill.; Cooper 1980, 27, fig. 25; Moses 1984, 194, figs. 3.110, 3.110a–b; Ward 1999, 232–33, fig. 6; Carr 2004, 46, 50, figs. 1–2, 4

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Lyman and Hazard families, Peace Dale, R.I. David Stockwell, Inc., Philadelphia, ca. 1950; sold to a private collection; consigned to Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, May 22, 1971, lot 199; sold to Doris Duke (1912–1993), Newport; Newport Restoration Foundation, Bequest of Doris Duke, 1993, inv. no. 2001.2 [R1F1210]

*Notes*

1. For a discussion of Baker's career and a transcription of the account book, which is in the Newport Historical Society, see Carr 2004.
2. *Ibid.*, 68–69.
3. Gronning and Coes 2013, 14, fig. 23.

*Musical Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Caleb Wheaton (1757–1827), clockmaker

Providence, ca. 1785

Mahogany (primary); mahogany, pine, cherry, and yellow poplar (secondary)



A prolific clockmaker, Caleb Wheaton worked in both the brass and painted dial eras. He first appears as a Providence clock- and watchmaker in a February 1781 advertisement, informing the public of his move from a previous shop to his new location, “a little above Dr. Arnold’s hay scales,” indicating that he was likely in business by 1780 or before.<sup>1</sup> Over the next seventeen years, he advertised being at two different Main Street locations, looking for a new apprentice, and selling all manner of clock and watch parts. Wheaton imported these components and sold them to the trade. Of his twenty-three known tall case clocks, ten have earlier brass dials and thirteen have later painted dials. Roughly half have arched pediments and half have scrolled pediments, some of the latter in the inlaid Federal style. These later, early nineteenth-century cases incorporate pierced fretwork cresting in the prevailing fashion. One case has a pagoda top.

Wheaton clearly worked with the finest cabinet-makers in Providence and Newport. In 1786 he sold two clocks to Townsend Goddard, just after the death of Goddard’s father, John.<sup>2</sup> The present example includes details typical of the finest Rhode Island clock cases. The arched pediment, with a carved central keystone, includes a rare frieze of etched brass fretwork (fig. 1) with similar fretwork continuing on the hood sides. The large brass open-fretwork panels in the hood sides allow the movement’s music to be heard. Fluted columns with brass stop-fluting and cast brass Corinthian capitals flank the dial door. Highly figured mahogany raised panels embellish the base panel and the blocked pendulum door below the carved shell.

Twelve graduated bells in the musical movement play six different tunes, numbered in the dial-arch. Wheaton's name is engraved on the brass pendulum bob, a method he used to sign several of his painted-dial clocks. He began a twenty-year partnership with his son, George, in 1807. Together they made clocks with inlaid Federal cases under the name Caleb Wheaton and Son.<sup>3</sup> Of the five signed clocks by Caleb Wheaton and Son, four are housed in Federal cases with short scrolled pediments.<sup>4</sup> In 1825 Simon Willard and Son of Roxbury, Massachusetts, placed an ad in the September 30 issue of the *Rhode Island American*, illustrating a lighthouse clock and declaring that they had appointed Caleb Wheaton as their agent.<sup>5</sup> —GRS

*Cat. 59*

100½ × 22½ × 12 in. (255.3 × 57.2 × 30.5 cm)  
(with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass three-train musical and quarter striking

MARKS: "Caleb Wheaton / Providence," engraved on dial center and on pendulum bob

INSCRIPTIONS: "IN TE DOMINE SPERAMUS" (In God We Hope), engraved on dial-arch; "1" through "6," corresponding to tunes played, engraved on dial-arch; "RENEWED BY / John Jenks / COMPLETED, NOVEMBER 18, 1841 / PROVIDENCE RHODE ISLAND," encircled by the verse, "O harp! within thy magic cells light, airy glee and pleasure dwells / and gentle rapture rings, while clear / voic'd echo sends around the heavenly gale of tuneful / sound from all th'accordant strings," engraved on brass plaque nailed to interior of waist door; "3[?] St / T Daggett," in chalk, on interior of waist door; "O M Chace," in graphite, on interior proper-right side of case; "began to go July 7<sup>th</sup> 1796," in graphite, on interior back of case; "O. M. Chace / 1796," in graphite, on interior back of case; "T[?] the / B[o?]bb Down / to y[e?] Slow," in graphite, on interior back of case; illegible inscription, in graphite, possibly ending in "ton," on interior backboard of hood

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Sullivan forthcoming

PROVENANCE: By descent in the Howes family, R.I., sold to Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon, Mass., 2013; sold to a private collection, 2013 [RIF6097]

*Notes*

1. Harris 2003, 444–45.
2. Hohmann et al. 2009, 358.
3. Foley 2002, 325–26.
4. See *Rhode Island History* 1960, 30 [RIF6112]; Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Boston), November 4–5, 2006, lot 596 [RIF2246]; and Bonhams, New York, January 27, 2010, 73, lot 1179 ill. [RIF3385]. A fourth example is in a private collection in Rhode Island.
5. Foley 2002, 325–26.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 59, showing hood

## 60

*Desk and Bookcase*

Attributed to Daniel Spencer (1741–1801)

Providence, 1772–90

Mahogany (primary); American black cherry, chestnut,  
and eastern white pine (secondary) (microanalysis)

The form of this desk and bookcase—in which tripartite concave and convex vertical blocking on both the desk fall board and the bookcase doors incorporates carved shells—is unique to Rhode Island. Only nine examples of this form are known, with one of those documented to the renowned cabinetmaker John Goddard of Newport (cat. 57).<sup>1</sup> The present example can be attributed to Daniel Spencer, a nephew of John Goddard who began his career in Newport but was working in Providence by 1772; its drawer-marking system matches that on a desk and bookcase signed by Spencer (see Appendix, figs. 10–11).<sup>2</sup> Spencer followed the system that his uncle used, lettering the inner faces of the drawer backs on the exterior desk drawers, starting at the top with “A” (fig. 1), but in addition, he used a cursive “1” or “I” (perhaps for “Inside”) in the interior

front corners of those drawers (fig. 2). His brother, Thomas, used similar marks (see cat. 75). The form of the “A,” written with a continuous stroke from start to finish, is similar on the work of all three makers and stands apart from the letter “A” found on pieces by John Townsend (see Appendix, fig. 20) and Benjamin Baker (see cat. 58 and Appendix, fig. 1).

This desk and bookcase has a history of having been owned by the Providence merchant John Brown, who is known to have patronized John Goddard (see cat. 68). The desk and bookcase could have been made sometime between 1762 and 1772 when Spencer worked in Newport. It is more likely, however, that the desk and bookcase was made in Providence after Spencer relocated there. The rosette terminals on the scrolled pediment are a distinctive feature of Providence furniture but



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 60, showing letter “A” on interior back of top drawer



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 60, showing number “1” or letter “I” in drawer corners



are hardly ever found on pieces made in Newport.<sup>3</sup> At almost nine feet tall, its soaring proportions suggest it might have been made for the architecturally ambitious house with high ceilings that Brown built on Power Street in 1786. The three-story house had a commanding presence in Providence. It is one of the two brick houses on the right horizon of Alvan Fisher's painting *Providence from across the Cove* (fig. 3).

The signed desk and bookcase and the present example provide evidence for attributing other objects to Spencer. In his article on the desk and bookcase owned

by Arthur B. and Martha B. Lisle and now in the collection of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (cat. 57), Brock Jobe said that the present desk and bookcase was made in the same shop as several other pieces, including a chest-on-chest, a wardrobe, a bureau table, and two closely related desks, one owned by Nicholas Brown, John Brown's brother.<sup>4</sup> Of these objects the chest-on-chest, now at the Chipstone Foundation, can also be firmly attributed to Spencer since the drawers have the same marking system at the front corners. The shell carving on this



Fig. 3. Alvan Fisher, *Providence from across the Cove*, 1819. Oil on canvas, 39 × 53 in. (99.1 × 134.6 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1905.2.1

chest-on-chest, the desk and bookcases, and the wardrobe owe their general form to John Goddard's work in that the central flutes gracefully fountain upward and the scrolled element that forms the bottom of the shell ends in a fairly plump button. However, on Spencer's shells the central area is much broader with more closely packed flutes, and the line separating the inner and outer shells does not wrap as neatly under the button as on Goddard's work; instead, it ends rather abruptly beside it (fig. 4). In addition to the objects discussed by Jobe, two chest of drawers with fluted quarter columns

have the letters on the interior drawer back and "1" or "I" in the front corners and are also probably by Spencer.<sup>5</sup> Other objects recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive share similarities with the objects discussed previously, but the marking systems of the case pieces with drawers lack the "1" or "I" in the front corners found on the signed desk and bookcase. These pieces may have been made in the Spencer workshop or by craftsmen who fell under his sway.<sup>6</sup> —PEK



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 60, showing convex shell carving on fall board

*Cat. 60*

107 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 44 $\frac{11}{16}$  × 25 $\frac{3}{16}$  in. (272.4 × 113.5 × 64 cm)  
(closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “1” through “4,” in graphite, at front corners of interior sides and on interior backs of proper-right interior drawers; “5,” in graphite, on interior sides and interior back of top prospect drawer; “6,” in graphite, on interior back of bottom prospect drawer, and “6 / 7,” in graphite, at interior front corners of that drawer; “7” through “10,” in graphite, at front corners of interior sides and on interior backs of proper-left drawers of interior desk; chalk, sometimes in the shape of a “C” or an arc, on exterior backs of drawers of interior desk; “C [or arc] I” and “C [or arc] II,” in chalk, on exterior backs of cabinet drawers of interior desk; “1” through “6 [“5” written as “V”],” in graphite, at front corners on interior sides of valance drawers; “1” through “IIII,” stamped on interior backs of valance drawers; “A” through “C,” in graphite, on interior backs of exterior drawers; “1” or “I [for interior?],” in graphite, at front corners of interior sides of exterior drawers; “Bottom,” in chalk, on undersides of desk and bookcase; “COLLINGS & COLLINGS / Antiques / 528 Amsterdam Ave. / NEW YORK,” printed in blue letters on white octagonal label with blue border, glued to underside of middle exterior desk drawer, to top of corresponding dust board, to proper-right side of interior desk, to back of pediment, and to underside of desk

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lockwood 1926, 1:248–49, fig. 271; *Loan Exhibition* 1929, no. 638; Ormsbee 1934, 136–38, fig. 59; E. Miller 1937, 1:490–91, no. 897; Nagel 1949, pl. 15; Rogers 1960, 7, fig. 10; Rogers 1962, 10; Nutting 1963, no. 708, ill.; L. Wright 1966, 316–17, pl. 233; Kirk 1970, 34–35, fig. 19; Neilson and Ritchie 1972, n.p. (introduction), ill.; Cooper 1973a, 334, 338–39, pl. 2; Diamonstein 1975, 49, ill.; James 1975, 246, ill.; C. Montgomery 1975, 52–67, ill.; Cornforth 1976, 221, ill.; Gilbert 1976, 6, ill.; Jervis 1976, 186, fig. 7; C. Montgomery 1976a, 14, ill.; C. Montgomery 1976b, 1196–211, pl. 1; C. Montgomery and Kane

1976, 150–52, 294, fig. 100; Bishop and Coblentz 1979, 114–15, 117, fig. 93; Sherrill 1979, 36, 40, ill.; Kane 1980, 1317, pl. 4; Ward, Kane, and Cooper 1980, 28–30, fig. 5; Kirk 1982, 5, fig. 3; C. Montgomery 1982, 248, fig. 5; Dulaney 1983, 72, ill.; Shestack 1983, 46–47, ill.; *Arts Magazine* 1984, 87–99, ill.; Moses 1984, 325–27, figs. 8.16a–c; Ward 1988, 11, 45, 327, 339–44, no. 177, pl. 15; Lovell 1991, 32, 37, fig. 7; Greene 1996, 69, ill.; Cooper and Gleason 1999, 168–70, fig. 6; Kirk 2000, 131–33, fig. 155; Jobe 2001, 129, 140–41, figs. 11–12, 33–35

PROVENANCE: John Brown (1736–1803), Providence, 1772–90; by descent in the Brown family to his great-granddaughter Mrs. Ebenezer Stanton Chesebrough (née Caroline L. Herreshoff, 1837–1924), Bristol, R.I.; sold to Collings and Collings, New York, 1918; sold to Francis P. Garvan (1875–1937), New York, 1918; by descent to his wife, Mabel Brady Garvan (1886–1979); given to the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1940, inv. no. 1940.320 [RIF3601]

## Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of these desk and bookcases, see Jobe 2001. The pieces discussed in the Jobe article are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, inv. no. B.69.22 [RIF230]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 15.21.2 [RIF381]; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 67.166 [RIF1228]; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2646 [RIF1229]; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 40.790 [RIF1230]; private collection, Jobe 2001, 130, figs. 13–14 [RIF1232]; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, inv. no. 04.042 [RIF1233]; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.155 [RIF1235]; and the present example.
2. Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York; Keno Auctions, New York, January 18, 2011, lot 169 [RIF2912].
3. The only piece of Newport furniture whose scrolled pediment ends in rosettes is a tall case clock that has been associated with the Newport and Providence cabinetmaker Townsend Goddard on the basis of a 1786 receipt; see Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 11.
4. Jobe 2001, 139–40. For the Nicholas Brown desk, see Jobe 2001, 130, figs. 13–14 [RIF1232]. Nicholas and John's brother Joseph owned a related desk and bookcase with nine shells that is by another Providence maker and is now at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1944.5.1 [RIF578]. The other examples discussed by Jobe are as follows: a desk and bookcase, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.155 [RIF1235]; a chest-on-chest, originally owned by Jabez Bowen of Providence, and a wardrobe, Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1948.2 [RIF281] and inv. no. 1977.4 [RIF47], respectively; and a bureau table whose location is unknown but was originally owned by Dr. William Bowen of Providence, Moses 1984, 287, figs. 7.14–7.14a [RIF684]. The desk and bookcase at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is probably not by Spencer.
5. Both chests of drawers are in private collections and unpublished; see RIF5337 and RIF5543.
6. These include a bureau table at the Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 1999.532 [RIF111], with similar shells but no drawer marking system; a chest of drawers in a private collection with letters on the interior drawer backs (the "A" does not follow the Spencer pattern) and letters and loops on the drawers sides (A. Sack 1993, 111, ill. [RIF2946]); a chest of drawers with Spencer-type letters on the interior drawer backs and numbers "1," "2," and "3" in the front corners (Sotheby's, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 248 [RIF2821]); and a chest of drawers with Spencer-type letters on the interior drawer backs (Sotheby's, New York, January 24–25, 2014, lot 271 [RIF5916]).

## 61

*Desk and Bookcase*

Providence, 1760–80

Mahogany (primary); chestnut and pine (secondary)

This desk and bookcase and five tall case clocks are related through their unusual decorative schemes.<sup>1</sup> The fall board of this desk and bookcase and the areas above the pendulum doors and bases of the clocks have very unusual triangular-shaped spandrels framing shells that are carved from the solid. The use of these triangular spandrels is rare enough to raise the possibility that these six pieces were made by the same person, although the subtle differences in the carving of the shells could also suggest the hand of multiple craftsmen working in a similar regional style. The triangular-shaped spandrels also relate to architectural woodwork such as the arch from John Banister's house (cat. 26).

Shells carved from the solid persisted in Providence longer than in Newport.<sup>2</sup> The shells on the fall board of the present desk and bookcase have straight lower edges, concavities with sharp edges between the flutes, and tightly closed C-shaped centers (fig. 1). On the bases of the five tall case clocks, large shells are framed by cove-molded edges; below are smaller shells and bellflowers. In all but one instance,

the base panels are applied (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The shells on the clocks all have large, rounded flutes, without concavities defined by sharp edges between them. The shells on the two Spalding clocks from this group have serpentine lower edges (see cat. 62), whereas those on a clock by Wheaton and two clocks with English movements are straight. The center of the shells on the two Spalding clocks and on the Wheaton clock are open C-shapes, while those on the two with English movements are arcs with hooked ends.

The shells with hooked ends on the clocks with English movements are like those in the semicircular depressions behind the doors of the desk and bookcase (fig. 3) and provide an intriguing link to two high chests of drawers. The first (fig. 4) has long been attributed to the Providence joiner Grindall Rawson. The second (figs. 5–6), probably also made in Providence, has prominent bulbous knees framed by C-scrolls like the Rawson piece. The drawer carvings on both are remarkably similar to the shells behind the doors and the concave shell on the fall board



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 61, showing shell carving on fall board



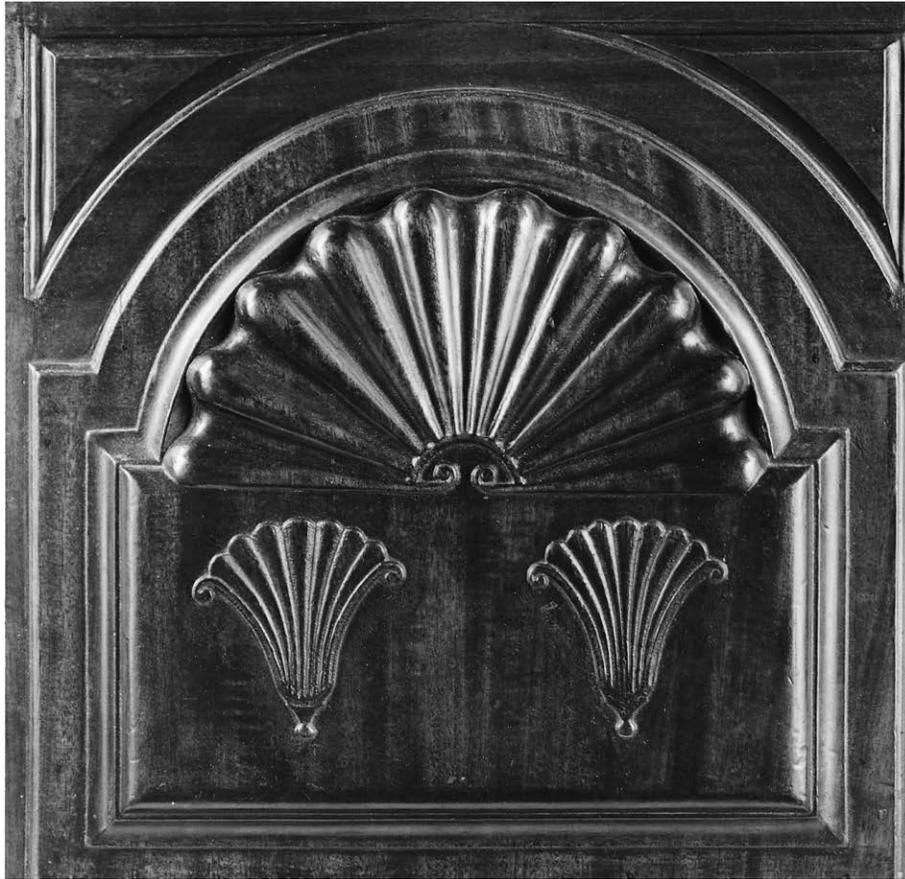


Fig. 2. Unknown casemaker and George Sommersall, clockmaker, *Tall Case Clock* (detail showing convex shell carving on base), Providence, movement London, 1765–85. Mahogany and pine,  $84\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{5}{8}$  in. (214.6 × 51.4 × 29.5 cm). Private collection. [RIF2108]



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 61, showing concave shell carving behind bookcase doors



Fig. 4. Attributed to Grindall Rawson, *High Chest of Drawers*, Providence, 1750–70. Cherry, chestnut, and pine, 72 × 38¾ × 22 in. (182.9 × 98.4 × 55.9 cm). Location unknown. [RIF1987]



Fig. 5. *High Chest of Drawers*, probably Providence, 1750–70. Mahogany, pine, and cedar, 88½ × 39½ × 22 in. (224.8 × 100.3 × 55.9 cm). Private collection. [RIF1953]



Fig. 6. Detail of fig. 5, showing concave shell carving on center drawer of lower case

of the present desk and bookcase. In addition to the hooked ends noted above, the thin, straight, radiating flutes have rounded ends, which are echoed in their alternating concavities. Moreover, the pediment on the high chest in figure 5 is constructed in a similar manner to the pediment on the present desk and bookcase, in which the blocking behind the central plinth is an elongated, serpentine shape with chamfered edges. These commonalities suggest that one maker is responsible for these two high chests, two of the five clocks in this group, and the present desk and bookcase. —PEK

*Cat. 61*

98 × 38 × 24 in. (248.9 × 96.5 × 61 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “I” and “II,” incised on interior short sides of letter drawers at rear of removable central desk compartment; “X,” incised on exterior back of small secret drawer at top rear of central desk compartment; “XI,” “XII,” “XIII,” and “XIII,” incised on exterior backs of bottom interior desk drawers, from proper right to proper left; “XI” and “XII,” incised on exterior backs of top interior desk drawers, from proper right to proper left; “XI,” “XII,” “XIII,” “XIIII,” and “XIIII,” incised on exterior backs of interior bookcase drawers, from proper right to proper left; “1” through “3,” in chalk, on interior bottoms of first three interior bookcase drawers; “X” and “X 2,” incised on two exterior drawer backs

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lockwood 1926, 1:245–46, fig. 269; Hosley 2007, 98, fig. 9

PROVENANCE: Richard A. Canfield (died 1915), New York, before 1915. Mrs. Clinton Ogilvie (née Helen Slade, died 1936), New York, by 1917; given to the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York, 1917, inv. no. 1988.11 [RIF3093]

*Notes*

1. For the five clocks with similarly carved shells on their cases, see the following: For clocks with movements by Edward Spalding, see cat. 62 in the present volume and Cooper and Gleason 1999, 190, fig. 33 [RIF2123]. For a clock with a movement by George Sommersall, see fig. 2 of the present entry. For a clock with a movement by Caleb Wheaton, see Carlsen Gallery, Freehold and Greenville, N.Y., November 27, 2010, lot 265 [RIF5448]. For a clock with an English movement by Samuel Toulmin, see Brown University, Providence, inv. no. HP 321 [RIF6172].
2. Newport makers carved shells from the solid in the mid-eighteenth century; see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
3. The exception is one of the clocks with a movement by Edward Spalding [RIF2123]; see n1, above.

# 62 *Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker  
Edward Spalding (1732–1785), clockmaker  
Providence, 1770–85  
Mahogany (primary); pine and chestnut (secondary)

Edward Spalding, the maker of this clock, was at work in Providence by 1753, when he signed and dated a tall case clock.<sup>1</sup> He first advertised as a watch and clockmaker in 1766, in an ad that curiously makes no mention of his ability to make clocks, instead focusing on soliciting repair work and selling “Watch Keys, Seals, and Chains.” It places him at “the South end of Captain Knight Dexter’s House in Providence.”<sup>2</sup> Spalding continued to advertise until 1776, when he left his business to serve as a captain in the Revolutionary War. His advertisements mention watches, clock parts, and tools for sale. Not until 1772 did he inform the public of his eight-day clocks for sale.<sup>3</sup>

The present clock is one of six closely related Providence examples; each features an idiosyncratic, tombstone-shaped base panel with a central shell above a pair of small fans, all carved from the solid.<sup>4</sup> The six also have inset corner spandrels above both the tombstone-shaped base panel and the pendulum door, carved into the solid rails and stiles. Also unique to this group is a detail on the pendulum doors—between the traditional rounded blocked panel and its frame is an additional cove and file molding, adding depth to the shape of the door. This molding and the shell at the top of the door are impressive carving from a solid block of mahogany. Four cases from this group include arched pediments similar to the present one (fig. 1); the other two have scrolled pediments with the raised, boxed corners associated with Providence cabinetwork.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the present example, two of the clock cases in this group house movements by Spalding. Two contain imported movements by English makers, and one houses a painted-dial movement by Providence



clockmaker Caleb Wheaton. The identity of the innovative cabinetmaker of these cases is unknown.<sup>6</sup> Of the fifteen surviving clocks by Edward Spalding, most are housed in cases with block-and-shell carved pendulum doors. Twelve, including this example, incorporate composite brass dials. The other three have later, engraved, sheet-brass dials. Spalding often included a banner on his dials, as he did here, engraving it “Spalding / PROVIDENCE.” —GRS

*Cat. 62*

96 × 19 × 12 in. (243.8 × 48.3 × 30.5 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 62, showing hood

MARK: “Spalding / PROVIDENCE,” engraved below center of composite brass dial

INSCRIPTION: “STRIKE / SILENT,” engraved on applied ring in dial-arch

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *American Collector* 1941, 6, ill.; New York 1950, 230–31, lot 674, ill.; Ott 1965a, 122–23, no. 77, ill.; F. Davis 1972, 195, fig. 5; Moses 1984, 339, figs. 8.24–8.24a; Cooper and Gleason 1999, 188, 190, fig. 32; Hohmann et al. 2009, 296–97, no. 91, ill.

PROVENANCE: C. W. Lyon, Inc., New York, probably before 1941; sold to Irene Pierce Green (1900–unknown) and Norvin H. Green (1893–1955), Tuxedo Park, N.Y., and Phoenix, probably by 1941; consigned to Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, November 29–December 2, 1950, lot 674. Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York. Doris Seidlitz (born 1926) and Richard Seidlitz (born 1925), Pound Ridge, N.Y., by 1972. Private collection, by 2003 [RIF1778]

*Notes*

1. Hohmann et al. 2009, 353.
2. Harris 2003, 407–8.
3. *Ibid.*, 409.
4. In addition to this example, a clock in a private collection illustrated in Hohmann et al. 2009, 298, no. 92 [RIF2123], and an uncatalogued musical clock in private hands (examined by the author) also house movements by Spalding. Another houses a movement made by Caleb Wheaton of Providence; see Carlsen Gallery, Greenville, N.Y., November 27, 2010, lot 265 [RIF5448]. Two house imported English movements; see Cooper and Gleason 1999, 175, fig. 10 [RIF2108], and Brown University, Providence, inv. no. HP321 [RIF6172].
5. For the other two, see RIF2108 and RIF6172 in n4, above.
6. See Cooper and Gleason 1999, 188, where a possible association with Providence cabinetmaker Grindall Rawson is suggested, based on the provenance of a high chest (*ibid.*, 189, figs. 29–30 [RIF1987]) with closely related carved fans on the knees. However, the style of the shell carving on these clocks bears little relationship to the shells on a desk and bookcase also with a firm attribution to Rawson (*ibid.*, 182, fig. 17 [RIF582]), which casts doubt on the clocks’ attribution. The author is grateful to Patricia E. Kane for this observation.

## 63

*Chest-on-Chest*

Providence, 1790–1810

Mahogany (primary); mahogany and pine (secondary)

With the distinctive features of the block-and-shell form, shells carved from the solid, and ogee-bracket feet with a half-round nubbin as opposed to the Newport pointed cusp, it can be surmised that this chest-on-chest was made in Providence. It was probably made for Nicholas Brown and Ann Carter, who were married in 1791.<sup>1</sup> Its most unusual feature is the pitched pediment, which relates to three secretary and bookcases with Providence associations, including one owned by Nicholas Brown's sister Hope and her husband, Thomas Poynton Ives; one owned by Tristram Burgess; and a bookcase on an earlier desk signed by John Carlile, Jr.<sup>2</sup> Wendy A. Cooper and Tara L. Gleason concluded that the Ives, Burgess, and Carlile bookcases are by the same hand. The similarity between their cornice moldings and those on the present chest-on-chest suggests that these pieces were all made in the same shop.<sup>3</sup>

On the bottom drawer in the prospect section of the Ives secretary and bookcase is the name "J. Halyburton," written in graphite. This is probably the James Halyburton who worked as a cabinet-maker in partnership with Benjamin Cole in Warren, Rhode Island, in the 1790s (see cat. 101). James Halyburton is listed in the federal census in Warren in 1790 and again in 1800. A James Halyburton married Susannah Reed in Providence in 1792, and the death of Susannah Halyburton, wife of James, is recorded in Pawtucket in 1823. If the James Halyburton in Warren and the one in Providence are one and the same, it is possible that sometime after 1800 Halyburton relocated to Providence and worked there as a furniture maker.



Cooper and Gleason speculate that the Iveses purchased their secretary and bookcase for their new brick home, built in 1805 on Power Street, adjacent to the house built by the Providence merchant John Brown, owner of catalogue 60.<sup>4</sup> Since the chest-on-chest is stylistically earlier than the secretary and bookcase that Halyburton signed and was made when he was working in Warren, it is likely that it is the product of an established Providence shop that he later joined.

Although the pitched pediment design may have derived from Providence architectural interiors, Cooper and Gleason have suggested that it could also have been inspired by a Philadelphia clothespress with pitched pediment brought to Providence in 1785 by Philadelphia merchant John Francis, who married John Brown's daughter Abigail in 1788 and entered into a business partnership with her father. The Philadelphia piece would have been known in the wider Brown social and mercantile circles in Providence.<sup>5</sup> —PEK

### *Cat. 63*

92 ¼ × 42 ¾ × 24 ½ in. (234.3 × 108.6 × 62.2 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: "x," in graphite, at center of exterior backs of some drawers; "x," in chalk, on back of one drawer of lower case; "2" and "3," in graphite, on top of drawer dividers of lower case; "Top," in chalk, on top of upper case; "B," in chalk, on underside of bottom board of lower case

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "Florene Maine Antiques advertisement," *Connoisseur* 172, no. 693 (November 1969): 205, ill.; Barnes and Meals 1972, 69, no. 65, ill.; Sherrill 1972, 766, ill.; Hawley 1977, 276–83, figs. 1, 3–5; Cooper and Gleason 1999, 167, 199, figs. 5, 56

PROVENANCE: Nicholas Brown, Jr. (1769–1841), Providence; by descent to his son John Carter Brown (1797–1874) and his wife, Sophia Augusta Brown (née Browne, 1825–1909), Providence; by descent to their daughter Mrs. William Watts Sherman (née Sophia Augusta Brown,

1855–1926), Newport and Providence; by descent to her granddaughter Hon. Mrs. Charles Donald Leslie Pepys (née Pamela Sophia Nadine Stonor, 1917–2005), Newport. Florene Maine Antiques, Ridgefield, Conn., 1969. Sold at auction to Mrs. Moselle Taylor Meals (1909–1978), about 1972; Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Moselle Taylor Meals, 1976, inv. no. 1976.170 [RIF1844]

### *Notes*

1. Wendy A. Cooper and Tara L. Gleason published an in-depth article on Providence furniture. For a detailed discussion of pieces related to the chest-on-chest, see Cooper and Gleason 1999.
2. See, respectively, Sotheby's, New York, January 22, 2005, lot 841 [RIF641]; the Stanley Weiss Collection, Providence [RIF2803]; and Cooper and Gleason 1999, 200, fig. 58 [RIF2124].
3. Cooper and Gleason 1999, 201.
4. *Ibid.*, 177, 181. The Iveses' secretary and bookcase is RIF641; see n2, above.
5. *Ibid.*, 199.

64

*Table*

Newport, 1750–90

Mahogany (primary); chestnut and maple (secondary)



A popular multifunctional table made in Rhode Island and the neighboring parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts, this form is now commonly called a “porringer-top” table, a twentieth-century collector’s term. In the eighteenth century various descriptors were used, such as “tea table” or “square table.” The four rounded, protruding corners were intended for candles when the table was used at night for reading, dining, or card playing; protruding corners also appear on folding card tables of the mid-eighteenth century (see, for

example, cat. 66, fig. 1). This mahogany example of the present form is exceptional for its state of preservation and its refined construction. The two-board top is thin, and the straight-turned legs have crisply turned pads with slightly flared supporting disks. The chestnut corner blocks are shaped to conform snugly to the arcs at the ends of the rails where they join the legs (fig. 1).

Gilbert Stuart’s portrait from about 1773 of the brothers Francis and Saunders Malbone (fig. 2), sons of the Virginia-born merchant Francis Malbone and his



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 64, showing corner blocks and batten coming through rail

wife, Margaret Saunders, depicts the sort of wealthy clientele who would have owned such a table. Francis (age fourteen) and Saunders (age nine) are dressed as young gentlemen in smart frock coats, knee breeches, and silk stockings. Silver knee buckles secure Saunders's stockings and a silver heart brooch fastens Francis's stock (or neckcloth). They sit in what are likely mahogany chairs with pierced splats in the latest fashion. Francis is writing, using a brass-and-wood inkstand, and Saunders is reading, symbolically preparing for mercantile and civic careers.

Given the wide geographic area in which these tables were made, it is often difficult to determine precise regional origin. Examples of the form are

found in walnut, cherry, mahogany, and birch, but the majority are maple and were probably originally painted. The present table is thought to have been made in Newport, where it was owned by the Howland family. Its top is held to its frame in a manner of construction similar to that used by John Goddard and other Rhode Island cabinetmakers who preferred to conceal their method of attachment. Here, two narrow transverse battens (or wooden strips) underneath the top are fastened to the rails at the point where they pass through them in the manner of Goddard's construction, and they are secured to the top by nails driven through from the underside (see fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> However, the tips of the battens on this table are squared off, while



Fig. 2. Gilbert Stuart, *Francis Malbone and His Brother Saunders*, ca. 1773. Oil on canvas, 36 × 44 in. (91.4 × 111.8 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Francis Malbone Blodget, Jr., and funds donated by a Friend of the Department of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture, and Emily L. Ainsley Fund, inv. no. 1991.436

Goddard rounded his battens. Porringer-top tables whose tops are fastened using a batten system similar to Goddard's, whereby the top is secured from underneath, are more likely to have been made in Rhode Island than tables where the top is fastened to the frame by wooden pegs driven through the top into the rails.

—PEK

*Cat. 64*

25½ × 33¾ × 23½ in. (64.8 × 85.7 × 59.7 cm)

PROVENANCE: Howland family, Newport, until 2006; sold to Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn., 2006; sold to a private collection, 2006 [RIF5838]

*Note*

1. For a discussion of John Goddard's table construction, see Moses and Moses 1982.

## 65

*Tilt-Top Table*

Newport, 1750–80

Mahogany

This intriguing tilt-top tea table features a triangular cabinet containing five block-front drawers (fig. 1). It is one of only seven known examples of the complex form, which may be unique to Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> This mid-eighteenth-century form may be inspired by British tripod-based washstands, which feature triangular compartments containing drawers elevated on three brackets below and having three supports for the washbasin holder above.<sup>2</sup> However, no Rhode Island washstands of this type are known. The only two surviving colonial Rhode Island washstands employ circular, not triangular, elements above their tripod bases.<sup>3</sup>

If this tilt-top table form was intended for serving tea—as its top, which is molded to prevent tea wares from slipping off, suggests—what was stored in the



Fig. 1. Cat. 65, showing cabinet open

drawers? The locked cabinet suggests something of value; tea in the eighteenth century, both black and green, was kept under lock and key, as were utensils such as silver spoons and tongs, and porcelain tea bowls and saucers. John Potter, a wealthy planter of South Kingstown, and his family, including a black house servant, are depicted in an overmantle painting (Kane essay, fig. 3) gathered around a circular table with tea wares. Such tables were intended to be moved out of the way when not in use. The legs and pedestal of the present example are arranged so that one leg could fit into a corner when the top was tilted up. However, moving such a table, its drawers loaded with small objects, or retrieving the objects when the top was tilted down would have been awkward at best.

As none of the half-dozen examples are exactly alike, most likely they were made by different cabinetmakers. This is the only one with a small, carved tongue at the top of each leg. The sides of the cabinet curve inward, as do the diagonal drawer sides. Of the seven known tables, five of which were available for study, four have drawers with sides that curve inward.<sup>4</sup> The present table has engaged columns at each cabinet corner, relating it to a small number of Newport tea tables with four columns supporting a tilting top.<sup>5</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 65*

25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 29<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 29<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (65.4 × 74.9 × 74.3 cm)

PROVENANCE: Private collection, 1985 [RIF508]



### *Notes*

1. For the others, see Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 1999.534 [RIF406]; Sotheby's, New York, September 26, 1981, lot 445 [RIF484]; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2648 [RIF646]; Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn., inv. no. 1948.68.6 [RIF5751]; M. Norton 1923b, 224–25, fig. 3 [RIF5752]; and Sotheby's, New York, January 23 and 25, 2015, lot 877 [RIF6153].
2. For an example at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, see Fitz-Gerald 1969, no. 50; for an example at Temple Newsam, Leeds, England, see Gilbert 1978, 2:374, no. 490.
3. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2650 [RIF1426]; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 2012.442.2 [RIF2409].
4. In addition to the present example, the drawer sides curve inward on the table at the Newport Restoration Foundation [RIF406], the table at the Lyman Allyn Museum [RIF5751], and the one sold at Sotheby's in 2015 [RIF6153]. The drawer sides on the Winterthur example are straight.
5. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.164 [RIF747], which has a history in the Goddard family; Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. 1980-65-1, a-c [RIF3613]; New London County Historical Society, Conn., inv. no. 1953.01 [RIF3620]; Sotheby's, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 177 [RIF5185]; and an unpublished one in a private collection [RIF5348].

66

*Tea Table*

John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1763

Mahogany and mahogany veneer (primary); yellow poplar (secondary) (microanalysis)



This table is documented to John Goddard on the basis of his 1763 letter to Moses Brown, of Providence, in which he writes, “I send herewith The Tea Table & common chairs which thou spoke for,” and later, “I Recd. A few lines from Jabez Bowen, whom I suppose this furniture is for.”<sup>1</sup> Bowen had recently married Brown’s cousin Sarah Brown, the daughter of the wealthy Providence merchant Obadiah Brown, for whom a tea table would have been essential for

their genteel household (see cat. 30 for a discussion of tea-drinking). Goddard described the form as a “Scollup’t [scalloped] Tea Table” for which he charged £90 in a 1760 bill to another of his Providence customers, John Brown.<sup>2</sup> In the period it might also have been called a china table, which is what Mary Brown of Providence called the scalloped tea table costing £150 purchased by her friend Eunice Rhodes in 1762.<sup>3</sup> The latter name emphasized the function of the table’s

raised rim that kept costly ceramic tea wares from slipping off the top. Although the Bowens and John Brown also patronized Providence cabinetmakers, the fact that John Goddard, who worked in Newport, had prominent customers in Providence is a testament to his renown.<sup>4</sup>

This “scalped” tea-table form—with protruding corners flanked by reverse cymas (or S curves)—is unique in American furniture. It is a creative leap from an earlier card table, attributed to John Goddard, with round corners flanked by short reverse cymas (fig. 1). Here the serpentine curves have been elongated; they abut on the short rails (or sides) and frame a straight central expanse on the long rails. The curves of the frame are echoed in the top, which is carved from the solid. The cabriole legs, the knees of which have anthemions carved in a classically Newport way below scrolling leaves, end in muscular claw-and-ball feet with undercut talons (fig. 2). Several Rhode Island card tables with similar serpentine curves on their rails are known (see cat. 67).



Fig. 1. Possibly by John Goddard, *Card Table*, Newport, 1750–70. Mahogany and maple, 28¼ × 30¾ × 15¼ in. (71.8 × 78.1 × 38.7 cm). Dietrich American Foundation, Philadelphia, inv. no. 8.3.2.1220. [RIF310]

Of the half-dozen or so known examples of the “scalped” tea table, four have histories of ownership in Providence.<sup>5</sup> The known examples represent different shop traditions and include one attributed to John Townsend. The present table, one owned by Charles Field, and one owned by Nicholas Brown have some details in common—similarly carved knees, lack of vertical corner blocks, and horizontally grained veneer on the outer faces of the legs matching the rails.



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 66, showing cabriole leg

However, the Nicholas Brown table relies on short pieces of wood screwed to the top and fitted into slots in the rails, rather than glue blocks, to fasten the top to the frame. The three may in fact all be the work of John Goddard. A table owned by John Brown of Providence and another in a private collection appear to be from a different shop, as they have short glue blocks under their tops, and the molded edges of their tops lack inner borders. A table in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and one owned by the Thurston family of Newport have related knee carvings, vertical corner blocks, and vertically grained veneer on the outer faces of their legs. These tables exhibit consummate craftsmanship and design: they are the most luxurious tea tables made in colonial Rhode Island. —PEK

*Cat. 66*

26  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 33  $\frac{11}{16}$  × 20  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (68.3 × 85.6 × 52.1 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: Two columns of figures, in graphite, on underside of top; abstract design, incised on interior of one long rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 16, no. 6 (December 1929): 448, ill.; *Antiques* 1930, 331, fig. 6; New York 1930, 188–89, lot 450, ill.; A. Sack 1950, 247, ill.; Downs 1952a, no. 373, ill.; Downs 1952b, 426–27, ill.; Honour 1969, 152, ill.; Butler 1973, 53; Moses and Moses 1982, 1132, fig. 5; Moses 1984, 196–97, 204, 217–18, pl. 7, figs. 4.4, 5.4, 5.4a–b; T. Norton 1984, 112; Lovell 1991, 32–33, 42, fig. 3; Greene 1996, 70, ill.; Richards et al. 1997, 238–40, no. 123 (left), fig. 1; Zea 1999, 260–62, fig. 11; New York 2000a, 78, fig. 3; Lovell 2005, 232–33, ill.; New York 2005b, 28, 40, 72, figs. 2, 5; Coes 2006, 130, 133n13; New York 2012b, 103, fig. 2

PROVENANCE: Ordered by Moses Brown (1738–1836), Providence, for Sarah and Jabez Bowen (1739–1815), Providence, 1763; by descent to their son Hon. Henry Bowen (1785–1867), Providence; by descent to his son William H. Bowen (1824–1897), Providence; by descent to his son Henry Bowen (1852–1932), Providence; by descent to his son Donald F. Bowen (1892–1982),

Providence; sold to Philip Flayderman, Boston, before 1930; consigned by his estate to the American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, January 2–4, 1930, lot 450; sold to Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), Winterthur, Del.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1958, inv. no. 1958.2148 [RIF1424]

*Notes*

1. The letter is no. 89, F.IVIP53, oversize box 1, Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, as cited in Coes 2006, 133n15.
2. Coes 2006, 128, fig. 1.
3. For a discussion of Eunice Rhodes and her purchase from John Goddard, see the essay by Kane in the present volume. The purchase is documented in John Goddard, Newport, cabinetmaker, v. Thomas Hazard, Newport, merchant, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. G, p. 3, May 1763 term, case 5, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
4. For Providence-made pieces owned by the Bowens, see the chest-on-chest by Daniel Spencer in the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1948.2 [RIF281], and a tall case clock with an English movement in an elaborate shell-carved case (see cat. 61, fig. 2, in the present volume, for a detail of this clock).
5. For the known examples, see Heckscher 2005, 88–89, no. 7, ill., attributed to John Townsend and now in a private collection [RIF143]; Keno, Keno, and Freund 2000, 213, also in a private collection [RIF150]; Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1973.4.10 [RIF436], made for John Brown, Providence; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, inv. no. B.57.1 [RIF902], probably made for the Brown family, Providence; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.2149 [RIF1425], made for Charles Field, Providence; Carpenter 1954, 105, no. 77, ill., now in a private collection [RIF4191], made for Nicholas Brown, Providence; and Wunsch Americana Foundation, New York [RIF4192], owned by the Thurston family, Newport.

67

*Card Table*

Attributed to John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1760–70

Mahogany (primary); maple, pine, chestnut, and yellow poplar (secondary)



Card playing became popular in America by the mid-eighteenth century, and wealthy individuals commissioned specialized tables to facilitate play. Card tables typically had folding tops designed to seat four people; the folding tops also enabled the tables to be stored against a wall when not in use. As in this example, the open tops were often lined with baize, a napped woolen material, and sometimes had oval depressions to hold each player's

counters (fig. 1). Mid-eighteenth-century tables also have rounded or protruding corners that provided space for candlesticks. The were often made in pairs, and this table, which has a history in the Pease family of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, may have been the mate to one with a Pease family history sold in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

About a dozen card tables of this form are known, some attributed to John Townsend, some to John

Goddard, and others to unknown makers.<sup>2</sup> The rails (or sides of the table), with their reverse cymas (or S curves) flanking protruding front corners, are similar to those on related tables (see cat. 66). The present table is most closely related to one in a private collection.<sup>3</sup> They share an unusual feature—a drawer in one of the short rails—though the private-collection table now lacks that drawer and its original supporting elements. The knee carving on the present table (fig. 2) relates closely to the carving on the tea table documented to John Goddard (cat. 66). What distinguishes the carving on the knees of these three pieces is the delineation of the first petal below the S scroll, and the way it continues above the tear shape at the center of the anthemion. On the basis of this similarity and the carving of the feet of the present table, which is also comparable to the carving on the Goddard tea table, this card table can be attributed to Goddard.

A table of this type is depicted in a portrait by Gilbert Stuart of two spaniels (fig. 3), owned by Dr. William Hunter of Newport. Hunter encouraged the young Gilbert Stuart to pursue an artistic career, and this is one of Stuart's earliest works. Hunter came to the colonies in the 1750s, settling in Newport, where he practiced as an apothecary and physician. He married Deborah Malbone, youngest daughter of Godfrey Malbone, one of Newport's most prominent merchants, in Trinity Church in 1761. Hunter was a proud man and a staunch Tory. Ezra Stiles, the minister of the Second Congregational Church and later president of Yale College, loathed him. In 1777, upon hearing the news of Hunter's death, Stiles wrote in his journal, "He was Scotch Physician—spent about two years attending the medical Lecture in University of Edinburgh—then came over to America 1754 with nothing. Settled in Newport, where he got an estate, turned Chhman



Fig. 1. Cat. 67, showing table open



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 67, showing knee carving



Fig. 3. Gilbert Stuart, *Dr. William Hunter's Spaniels*, ca. 1769. Oil on canvas, 31 × 35 in. (78.7 × 88.9 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, Gift of Mr. Robert M. Phelps, inv. no. PSNC.1791

[Churchman; i.e., Church of England], became as haughty as a Scotch Laird, high in ministerial and parlim<sup>t</sup> Measures, an inveterate Enemy to American Liberty—dressed well, was much of the Gentleman, lived high & luxuriously.”<sup>4</sup> Such a loyal subject of the Crown, who lived well, no doubt enjoyed games of cards on a table like this one made by one of Newport’s most talented cabinetmakers. —PEK

*Cat. 67*

27¾ × 34¼ × 17 in. (70.5 × 87 × 43.2 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTION: “III J. P.,” in chalk, on underside in late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century script

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Leigh Keno American Furniture advertisement,” *Antiques* 133, no. 1 (January 1988): 52–53, ill.; “Leigh Keno American Furniture advertisement,” *Antiques* 139, no. 5 (May 1991): 814, ill.; New York 2005b, 41, fig. 8; Cooper 2012, 113, fig. 9

PROVENANCE: Possibly by descent in the Pease family, Martha’s Vineyard, Mass., before 1987; sold

to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York, 1987; sold to a private collection, 1987 [RIF4688]

*Notes*

1. American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, October 6, 1932, lot 256 [RIF2634].
2. The examples attributed to John Townsend include: Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 78.69 [RIF324]; and one in a private collection, Heckscher 2005, 87, no. 6, ill. [RIF4032]. In addition to the present table, a table in a private collection [RIF6055] and one formerly at Strafford Hall, Va. (Moses 1984, 228, fig. 5.17 [RIF2631]) are attributed to John Goddard. For the ones attributed to other makers, see n1, above, and the following: Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2647 [RIF313]; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, inv. no. 1938.29 [RIF867]; Historic Deerfield, Mass., inv. no. HD 1809 [RIF1782]; Nutting 1963, no. 1016, ill. [RIF4255]; and private collection, unpublished [RIF5513].
3. RIF6055; see n2, above.
4. Cited in Krumbhaar 1935, 522.

*Roundabout Chair*

John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1760

Mahogany (primary); pine (secondary)

This roundabout chair and its mate—the only seating furniture documented to John Goddard—were made for prominent Providence merchant John Brown shortly before his marriage to Sarah Smith. An October 1760 invoice from Goddard discovered in the Brown family papers includes two mahogany roundabout chairs priced at £60 apiece (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The chairs were inherited by Brown's daughter Sarah "Sally" Brown Herreshoff and descended in the Herreshoff family of Bristol until the twentieth century, when the present example was sold to the firm of Israel Sack; the other chair was given to the Rhode Island Historical Society.<sup>2</sup>

Like easy chairs, roundabouts were sometimes made as closestools (chairs fitted with chamber pots).<sup>3</sup> This was the case with one ordered from Goddard by John Brown's brother Nicholas on behalf of a West Indian client. In 1766 Brown wrote to the cabinetmaker

to commission a "Handome Mahogany Arm Chair as a Close Stool for Sick Persons with a Pewter pan." Goddard replied to request clarification, asking Brown to "be more particular respecting the form, whither plain feet or claws—or whither one claw foot & the others plain," to which Brown specified that "the Cheer should be Very Neet & Handsom therefor Desire You'l make it with 3 claws," adding the further request that the chair be completed in ten days.<sup>4</sup> This illuminating exchange reveals the different combinations of pad and claw-and-ball feet available: Goddard's customers could have four feet in the same style or could mix and match, with one claw-and-ball foot and the rest pad (or "plain"), or with three claw-and-ball feet and one pad. Roundabout chairs related to the present example exist with different combinations of carved and plain feet as well as with other variations, such as turned

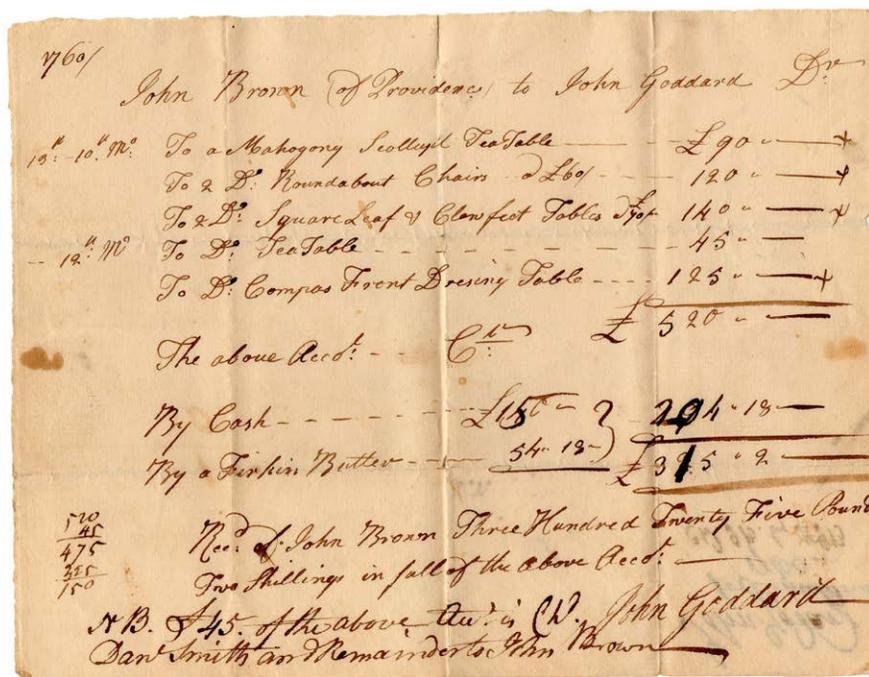


Fig. 1. Bill of sale for cat. 68, from John Goddard to John Brown, 1760. John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence



arm supports and handholds terminating in scrolled volutes (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup>

As the only chairs that can be directly linked to Goddard, the John Brown roundabouts serve as a touchstone for identifying other Goddard chairs. Goddard's mastery of the curved line is evident in the form of the chairs, which exude Baroque movement and drama. The mahogany surface of the present example is enlivened by the artful use of sapwood (the light-colored wood closest to the bark) on the armrests, splats, and legs. The interlaced C-scroll splats, the sturdy, yet graceful cabriole legs, and the prominent use of sapwood as a decorative element are all attributes seen on other chairs associated with Goddard.<sup>6</sup> Several distinctive characteristics can be seen in the carving of the claw-and-ball feet of the

Brown chairs, including a fairly compact ball; a fleshy heel with a bulge where the rear talon meets the leg; pronounced tendons that travel up the leg, with flat areas in between; knuckles that are not sharply articulated (e.g., the middle talon has a small rise at the top, a small central knuckle, and another small rise where the talon meets the claw); a diagonal intersection of talon and claw; and longish claws with grooves where they meet the ball. There is a lack of tension in the talons that gives the impression of a grip that is more languid than active. Several of the related roundabouts, including that seen in figure 2, have numbers incised on the underside of their arms.<sup>7</sup> This method of keeping track of parts occurs not infrequently on Newport chairs, most often on those associated with John Goddard (see cat. 69). —JNJ



Fig. 2. *Roundabout Chair*, Newport, 1760–70. Mahogany and maple, 30½ × 26 × 26 in. (77.5 × 66 × 66 cm). Preservation Society of Newport County, Gift of Mrs. Stanley F. Reed in memory of W. Gurnee Dyer, inv. no. PSNC.9805. [RIF4788]

*Cat. 68*

31<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 29 × 27 in. (80.3 × 73.7 × 68.6 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “Brown / X,” in ink, written on underside of slip seat frame; “II,” incised on underside of slip seat frame and on rabbet of proper-right front seat rail; “S Herreshoff,” in ink, on underside of a seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lockwood 1926, 2:71–72, fig. 521; Biddle 1963, 3, no. 1, ill.; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 3:733, 4:966–67, no. P937, ill., and 10:82–87, pl. 6, fig. 5; “Sotheby Parke Bernet advertisement,” *Antiques* 102, no. 4 (October 1972): 517, ill.; New York 1972, 71–73, lot 49, ill.; Cooper 1980, 160–61, 164, fig. 182; Moses 1984, 237, fig. 5.25; A. Sack 1993, 67, ill.; “Israel Sack, Inc., Loan Exhibition advertisement,” *Antiques* 149, no. 1 (January 1996): ill. inside front cover; New York 2005b, 56–57, fig. 1, under lot 822, and 71–72, fig. 3, under lot 827; Coes 2006, 128–29, 131, figs. 2–2a; Heckscher and Kenny 2014, 139, 141, ill.; New York 2014b, 68, figs. 3–3a

PROVENANCE: John Brown (1736–1803), Providence; by descent to his daughter Sarah “Sally” Brown Herreshoff (1773–1846), Providence; by descent to her son Charles Frederick Herreshoff III (1809–1888) and his wife, Julia Ann Herreshoff (née Lewis, 1811–1901), Bristol, R.I.; by descent to their son Nathanael Green Herreshoff (1848–1938) and his wife, Clara DeWolf Herreshoff (1853–1905), Bristol, R.I.; by descent to their son Algernon Sidney DeWolf Herreshoff (1886–1977) and his wife, Rebecca Chase Herreshoff (1894–1991), Bristol, R.I.; sold to Harry Arons, Ansonia, Conn., ca. 1963; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, ca. 1963; sold to Lansdell K. Christie (1903–1965), Syosset, N.Y.; by descent to Mrs. Lansdell Christie (née Helen Louise Grauwiler, 1906–1992), Syosset, N.Y.; consigned to Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, October 21, 1972, lot 49; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York; sold to E. Martin Wunsch, New York, 1972; Wunsch Americana Foundation, New York [RIF433]

*Notes*

1. The invoice totaled £520 and included seven pieces of furniture, which were paid for by Brown with a combination of cash and a firkin (small wooden container) of butter. For a discussion of the furniture included in the bill, see Coes 2006.

For the original copy, see Brown Family Business Papers, box 775, folder 9, item 8, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. Wendy A. Cooper has published two articles focusing on John Brown’s furniture; see Cooper 1973a and Cooper 1973b.

2. Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1990.36.1 [RIF1072]. The horizontal armrests of both chairs are made up of four pieces of wood in two layers—a one-piece upper layer and a three-piece lower layer—but, although the chairs are a pair, the construction of this element differs. On the present example, the elements of the lower layer are joined with butt joints, while on the Rhode Island Historical Society chair these joints are half-laps. Other roundabouts possibly by Goddard, such as a pair originally made for Nicholas Brown (Sotheby’s, New York, January 22, 2005, lots 822 and 842 [RIF4193]), share the lap-joint construction of the Rhode Island Historical Society chair. As Amy Coes has suggested, Goddard may have made the present example first and then adopted a sturdier technique for subsequent models; see Coes 2006, 131.
3. In 1759, for instance, chairmaker Daniel Dolorson billed Alanson Gibbs for “3 Round about Chairs 23.4.0” and “1 Ditto for Clostool 14.0.0”; see Daniel Dolorson, Newport, joiner, vs. Alanson Gibbs, Newport, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, Record Book, vol. F, p. 108, May 1759 term, case 17, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
4. Nicholas Brown and Co., letter to John Goddard, May 31, 1766; John Goddard, letter to Nicholas Brown and Co., June 4, 1766; and Nicholas Brown and Co., letter to John Goddard, June 6, 1766, box 357, folder 8, Brown Family Papers, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence. The exchange is quoted in Cooper 1973a, 334. It is clear that Brown is referring to a roundabout chair rather than an armchair, since the configuration of an armchair would not work with three claw-and-ball feet.
5. Variations of roundabouts related to the present example include those with three claw-and-ball feet, see RIF4193 in n2, above; one claw-and-ball foot, Shelburne Museum, Vermont, inv. no.3.3-203 [RIF1069]; one claw-and-ball foot and turned arm supports, Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 72.123 [RIF320] (replaced splats); four pad feet, Carpenter 1954, 46, no. 20, ill. [RIF1051]; and four pad feet with turned arm supports, Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1958.17 [RIF951], and Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1959.2641 [RIF1416].
6. For a discussion of the characteristics of John Goddard’s furniture, see Moses 1984, 209–45. Other chairs with C-scroll splats included in this catalogue are cats. 70 and 74.
7. See also RIF320 in n5, above; and RIF4193 in n2, above.

*Side Chair*

Probably John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1760–85

Mahogany (primary); chestnut, pine, and maple (secondary)

This Newport side chair in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has long been associated with John Goddard based on its bold stance, substantial proportions, and the carving of its claw-and-ball feet, which relates to that of a roundabout chair made by Goddard for Providence merchant John Brown (cat. 68).<sup>1</sup> Of the thirteen known chairs of this form, none are from the same set as the present example. Slight variations include unchamfered rear legs and splats with



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Newport, 1750–70. Mahogany, maple, and pine, 38½ × 19¼ × 15 in. (97.8 × 48.9 × 38.1 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The M. and M. Karolik Collection of Eighteenth-Century American Arts, inv. no. 39.172. [RIF749]

scrolls whose lower outlines are either fully or partially defined where they intersect the vertical elements.<sup>2</sup>

As the carving of this group of chairs does not appear to be by the same hand, it is probable that at least two different makers were producing the form. The chairs most likely from the same shop as the present example are a pair with chamfered rear legs and fully articulated scrolls, with no early history, a set of six with unchamfered rear legs and partially defined scrolls, originally owned by Gov. Stephen Hopkins of Providence, for whom Goddard was known to have made furniture, and another chair virtually identical to the Hopkins chair that has no early history.<sup>3</sup> Another chair of this type, now owned by the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, was likely the product of a different shop (fig. 1). Though the shells are of the same basic design as those of the present example, they differ in the angle at which their lobes are situated; those of the MFA Boston chair are angled toward each other, while those of the present example are spaced farther apart at the lower outline of the shell (see figs. 2–3). Similarly, the feet of the MFA Boston chair are also of the same design but vary in execution. The knuckles on the MFA Boston chair are more articulated, and there is a distinct separation where the talons meet the back of the leg (fig. 4). A related chair with a replaced splat and one replaced foot is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.<sup>4</sup>

Another chair type attributed to Goddard and closely related to the present example has carved knees and a trapezoidal seat.<sup>5</sup> All of the known examples of this group have unchamfered rear legs, splats with partially carved volutes, carved shells with central C-scrolls, and angular knees with relief-carved anthemions. Both



groups have the same inward-curving stiles and splat design, and their carved feet and shells were possibly executed by the same hand.

The Metropolitan chair provides evidence of a system used to keep track of parts during production. In addition to the numbers stamped on its front seat rail and slip seat (the usual method for identifying individual chairs within a set), numbers are present on the backs of the crest and rear seat rail. Such markings appear not infrequently on chairs associated with Goddard: in the case of catalogue 70, they are also found on the backs of the rear seat rail, shoe, and crest and on the underside of the medial stretcher. As demonstrated by the

present example, which is number two in the set but is marked with an “I” on its crest and rear seat rail, these part numbers do not always correspond to the order of the chair within the set. The most likely explanation for this is that the numbers on the rear surfaces of the chair were used to keep track of the parts during construction, after which the front seat rail was incised with the order of the chair within the set without regard to the numbers used in its construction. Given that the known examples that display this numbering system are either chairs associated with Goddard or chairs that share characteristics with examples that are, it is probable he employed this method in his shop.<sup>6</sup> —JNJ



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 69, showing shell



Fig. 3. Detail of fig. 1, showing shell



Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 1, showing claw-and-ball foot

*Cat. 69*

37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (95.9 × 52.1 × 52.7 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “V,” incised on underside of slip seat; “II,” incised on rabbet of front seat rail; “I,” incised on backs of crest rail and rear seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 7:1874, no. P5060, ill.; “Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 120, no. 5 (November 1981): ill. inside front cover; Moses 1984, 14, 58, fig. 1.49; Heckscher, Peck, and Barratt 2001, 191, 195, fig. 1, pl. 2

PROVENANCE: Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1981; sold to Ann Holzer (1917–1999) and Philip Holzer (1919–2011), Great Neck, N.Y., by 2001; by descent to their sons, Stuart Holzer and Marc Holzer, 2011; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Stuart Holzer and Marc Holzer, in memory of their parents, Ann and Philip Holzer, 2012, inv. no. 2012.442.3 [RIF1390]

*Notes*

1. The side chair retains what appears to be its original upholstery foundation beneath a replaced show cover.
2. The other chairs of this form are Christie’s, New York, January 27–28, 1995, lot 1089 [RIF293], a pair; Christie’s, New York, January 17–18, 1992, lot 426 [RIF322], a set of six; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.172 [RIF749]; Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1953.I.25 [RIF1204]; Sotheby’s, New York, January 18–19, 2001, lot 698 [RIF3487]; Nutting 1928–33, 2: no. 2155, ill. [RIF4916]; and Christie’s, New York, January 26–27, 1995, lot 128 [RIF6279].
3. See RIF293, RIF322, and RIF6279 in n2, above. In a letter from 1763, Moses Brown criticized Goddard for finishing furniture for Gov. Hopkins’s family before items he himself had ordered. See Moses Brown, letter to John Goddard, October 10, 1763, box 1c, folder 5, Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; quoted in Moses 1984, 196–97, and Heckscher 2005, 46–47.
4. For the Rhode Island Historical Society chair, see RIF1204 in n2, above.
5. For an example of this type, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 55.134 [RIF769].
6. RIF769 (see n5, above), for example, has an “I” incised on the rabbet of its front seat rail and an “XII” incised on the rear surfaces of its crest, splat, shoe, and rear seat rail.

*Side Chair (from a pair)*

Attributed to John Goddard (1723/24–1785)

Newport, 1760–85

Mahogany (primary); maple (secondary)

This side chair, arguably the most elaborate of Rhode Island origin, was part of a set of at least eight originally owned by Nicholas Brown of Providence. The six chairs from the set that are currently known descended to his daughter Hope Brown Ives and remained in the family until sold at auction in 2005 and 2007. Two of the chairs were pictured in a 1965 *Antiques* article in the Thomas Poynton Ives House, the family's red brick mansion on Power Street.<sup>1</sup> The Brown family chairs have been associated with John Goddard based on their history and the carving of their claw-and-ball feet.<sup>2</sup> The Browns were successful merchants, and Nicholas and his brothers are known to have patronized the Newport cabinetmaker. In a letter from 1763, Moses Brown scolded Goddard for not completing his order "after my Brother's Wife's furniture were done," probably referring to Nicholas Brown, who had recently married Rhode Jenckes. In a 1766 letter to Capt. Bogman of Suriname, a West Indian client awaiting an armchair, Nicholas Brown sang Goddard's praises, calling him "the neatest workman in America."<sup>3</sup>

The Brown family chairs have several features in common with the more iconic models of Newport shell-carved chairs (see, for example, cat. 69), namely, a crest with rounded shoulders, a vasiform (vase-shaped) splat with scrolls and a central diamond piercing, inward-curving stiles, and related claw-and-ball feet. The design of the shell of the Brown chair, however, differs from other Rhode Island examples in the way it appears to drape over the crest and conform to its curve, rather than simply perch on top of it. The chair form most closely related to

the present example is catalogue 74. In addition to the resemblance of its claw-and-ball feet to the present example, both chairs have similar C-scrolls that flow from the crest and are supported on a splat with a central diamond flanked by two elongated piercings. This chair-back design may have derived from English prototypes that were in turn inspired by French design sources.<sup>4</sup> The Brown chair surpasses the aforementioned examples in ornamentation, being further embellished with fluting, applied carved volutes, a keyhole-shaped cutout beneath the shell, and ogee stretchers with rounded tops.

There are other attributes in addition to the carving of its claw-and-ball feet that suggest a possible Goddard attribution, including the prominent use of sapwood (the light-colored wood closest to the bark) on at least one of the chairs of the set.<sup>5</sup> Although Goddard was by no means the only Rhode Island cabinetmaker to use this wood in a decorative fashion, it appears prominently on several other chairs associated with him (see, for example, cat. 68). Another intriguing feature of the Brown chairs are the incised numbers that appear on their various parts, not only on the front seat rails and slip seats (as is typical of most side chairs) but also on the rear of the crests, splats, and shoes (fig. 1), and on the underside of the medial stretcher. This method of identifying parts, apparently a way to keep track of them during construction, is seen only on Newport chairs, most often on examples with claw-and-ball feet of the type associated with John Goddard (see cat. 69).<sup>6</sup> —JNJ



*Cat. 70*

38½ × 21½ × 20½ in. (97.8 × 54.6 × 52.1 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “VI” and “IIIIII,” incised on rabbet of front seat rail; “VI,” incised on backs of crest rail, splat, rear seat rail, and shoe, and on underside of medial stretcher; “III,” incised on underside of front rail of slip seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: SNOW 1965, 58I, ill.; New York 2005b, 66–76, lot 827, ill.; New York 2007, 39I, under lot 59I; New York 2012b, 103, under lot 114

PROVENANCE: Nicholas Brown (1729–1791), Providence; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Thomas Poynton Ives (née Hope Brown, 1773–1855), Providence; by descent to her son Moses Brown Ives (1794–1857), Providence; by descent to his daughter, Mrs. Henry Grinnell Russell (née Hope Brown Ives, 1839–1909), Providence; by descent to her cousin Robert Hale Ives Goddard (1837–1916), Providence; by descent in his family, until 2005; consigned to Sotheby’s, New York, January 22, 2005, lot 827; sold to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York; sold to a private collection, 2005 [RIF4194]

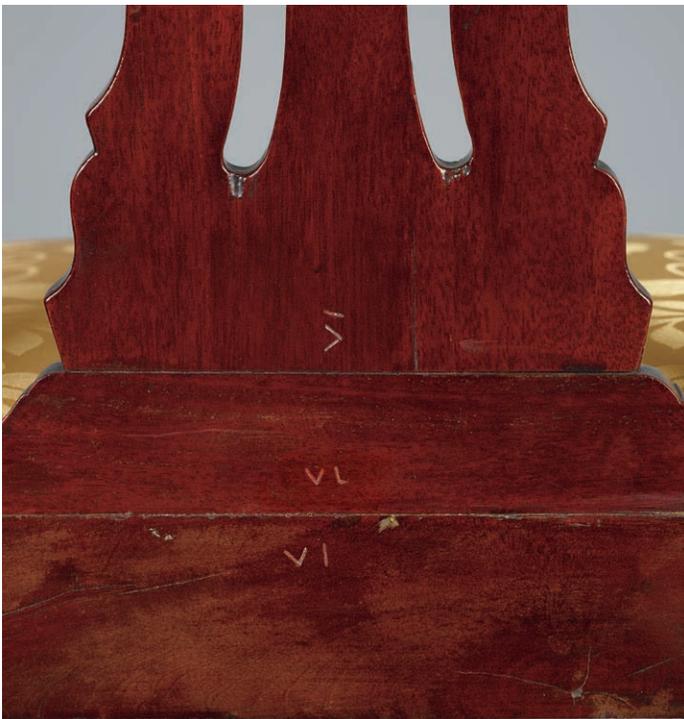


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 70, showing incised numbers on back of splat, shoe, and rear seat rail

*Notes*

1. Snow 1965, 58I, ill. A pair of chairs, numbered “V” and “VIII,” that descended with the present example was sold at the same 2005 auction; see Sotheby’s, New York, January 22, 2005, lot 828 [RIF6204]. A third pair, numbered “I” and “III,” that also descended from Hope Brown Ives were sold in 2007; see Sotheby’s, New York, January 19–21, 2007, lots 591–92 [RIF6156].
2. For a description of the claw-and-ball feet on a chair attributed to Goddard, see cat. 68 in the present volume. For a further discussion of characteristics of John Goddard’s furniture, see Moses 1984, 209–45.
3. Moses Brown, letter to John Goddard, October 10, 1763, box 1c, folder 5, Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; quoted in Moses 1984, 196–97, and Heckscher 2005, 46–47. Nicholas Brown and Co., draft letter to Mr. Bogman, June 20, 1766, box 357, folder 7, Brown Family Business Papers, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University; quoted in Heckscher 2005, 47.
4. For a discussion of possible antecedents for American chairs with scrolled splats and interlaced strapwork, see Richards et al. 1997, 81.
5. RIF6156 (see 11, above) displays a streak of the lighter wood on the proper-left side of its splat.
6. A desk attributed to Goddard on the basis of an inscription made by his son Thomas when he repaired the piece in 1813 also has incised numbers, which are used on the tops of the interior desk drawers; see cat. 57 in the present volume.

## 71

*Side Chair (from a pair)*

Attributed to John Townsend (1732–1809)

Newport, 1760–90

Mahogany (primary); maple, chestnut, and pine (secondary)

The splat pattern of this chair—interlaced C-scrolls that emerge from the crest and are supported by a pierced pedestal—derives from English examples and is found in various iterations throughout the American colonies.<sup>1</sup> It was popular in Rhode Island, where it was invariably paired with a serpentine crest with flared ears like that visible on the chair in the portrait of Elizabeth Stiles, the wife of Rev. Ezra Stiles of Newport (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Samuel King, *Elizabeth Hubbard Stiles* (1731–1795), Newport, 1771. Oil on canvas, 33½ × 27½ in. (85.1 × 69.9 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Bequest of Dr. Charles Jenkins Foote, B.A. 1883, M.D. 1890, inv. no. 1955.3.2

Splats like that of the present example appear on Rhode Island cabriole-legged chairs with either claw-and-ball or pad feet, both of which were made by John Townsend.<sup>2</sup> According to tradition, this chair and its mate were originally owned by Townsend and descended in the family through his son Solomon. The underside of the slip seat of the other chair is marked with a “T”—probably for Townsend—in what appears to be eighteenth-century script, and the name “Bullock” is written in a later hand. Phila Feke Townsend, who married William Bullock, was John Townsend’s granddaughter. Another privately owned pair of chairs is undoubtedly part of the same set: the seat rail of one is marked with a “T” and both chairs bear the name “Bullock.” One of these chairs is numbered “XXI,” indicating the considerable size of the original set.<sup>3</sup>

A third pair of identical chairs descended in the Townsend family through John Townsend’s daughter, Mary, and is now in the collection of the Newport Restoration Foundation.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that these are also from the same set and that the chairs were divided between at least two of Townsend’s children. The Newport Restoration Foundation’s chairs have long been a touchstone for identifying John Townsend’s seating furniture. Like the present example, they have a bold stance, unchamfered rear legs, wide seat rails, and sturdy cabriole legs with rounded knees. Their claw-and-ball feet have articulated talons, with the exception of the rear talons, which follow the straight lines of the backs of the legs. The talons are devoid of webbing and grip elongated balls.<sup>5</sup> As with other chairs attributed to Townsend, these chairs have



medial and rear stretchers with bulb-shaped ends and side stretchers with barely articulated rear rings.

A group of four chairs with cabriole legs with claw-and-ball feet are closely related to the aforementioned examples but have a slightly different splat pattern.<sup>6</sup> At the top of their splats, the two triangular elements beneath the central arch are partially open. Unfortunately, the locations of these chairs are not known, but based on their resemblance to chairs attributed to Townsend, it is conceivable that they are also products of his shop. Another pair of chairs with claw-and-ball feet, pictured in the Ralph Carpenter Papers, has the same partially open triangular panels but differs in that the arch at the center of the crest is also open.<sup>7</sup> Their seats are trapezoidal, further differentiating them from the other chairs, all of which have compass seats. The elongated balls and barely articulated talons of the feet on these chairs are clearly not Townsend's work. The only pad-footed example with a splat design identical to that of the present chair is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and has been attributed to John Townsend by Morrison H. Heckscher. In addition to its pad feet, its trapezoidal seat and angular cabriole legs also differ from the present example.<sup>8</sup>

All of these examples, including the present chair, have medial and rear stretchers ending in bulbs and side stretchers with understated rear rings. One outlier with a related splat has another common Newport stretcher type: medial and rear stretchers with conical ends capped with double-ring turnings and side stretchers with hefty rear rings (fig. 2; for other chairs with this stretcher type, see cats. 46, 48–50).<sup>9</sup> This chair also differs from the aforementioned examples in the thinner rails of its trapezoid seat, its slender legs paired with rounded knees, and its rear legs chamfered between seat rail and stretcher. Clearly, there were several Newport makers producing chairs with variations of this interlaced splat design. —JNJ



Fig. 2. *Side Chair*, probably Newport, 1760–90. Mahogany, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. [RIF5433]

*Cat. 71*

37½ × 22¼ × 18¾ in. (95.3 × 56.5 × 47.6 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “WPB” in graphite, on interior of rear seat rail; “T,” in ink, written on underside of rear rail of slip seat; “X,” incised on underside of front rail of slip seat and on rabbet on interior of front seat rail; “III,” incised on rabbet on interior of front seat rail

PROVENANCE: John Townsend (1733–1809), Newport; by descent to his son Solomon Townsend (1776–1821), Newport; by descent to his wife, Mrs. Solomon Townsend (née Ann Pearce, 1786–1874), Newport; by descent to her daughter Mrs. William Bullock (née Phila Feke Townsend, 1812–1866), Providence; by descent to her daughter Rhoda Peckham Bullock (1852–1940), Providence; by descent to her nephew William Bullock Waterman, Jr. (1889–1959), Providence; by descent to his son, William Bullock Waterman III (1918–2000), West Hartford and Simsbury, Conn.; by descent to his son, Richard William Waterman (born 1961) [RIF6104]

*Notes*

1. An English example is illustrated in Kirk 1972, 145, no. 192.
2. Similar, but not identical, splats also appear on straight-legged examples, but none of these chairs can be attributed to Townsend.
3. For this pair, see “Leigh Keno American Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 150, no. 3 (September 1996): 230, ill. [RIF4005].
4. Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 1999.537.1–2 [RIF380]; see Heckscher 2005, 96–97, no. 11, ill.
5. For the attribution of Townsend chairs based on their characteristic claw-and-ball feet, see Moses 1984, 147, 188, 190–91, figs. 3.106–3.106a, 3.108, 3.108a–b.
6. Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, November 18–20, 1976, lot 1004 [RIF2806]; Kirk 1972, 136, no. 175, ill. [RIF1177]; and Northeast Auctions, Hampton, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), May 29, 1993, lot 57 [RIF3699], a pair.
7. See Ralph Carpenter Papers, Joseph Downs Manuscript Library, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del. [RIF303]; a closely related pad-footed example is owned by the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1930.2415 [RIF2957].
8. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 2004.97 [RIF1196]; see Heckscher 2005, 98–99, no. 12, ill.
9. Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Manchester, N.H.), August 5–7, 2011, lot 1253 [RIF5433]. The chair has a crest featuring partially open triangular panels and a pierced central arch that is similar to two other examples [RIF303 and RIF2957] but is not the work of the same maker(s).

## 72

*Easy Chair*

Possibly Newport, 1760–90

Walnut (primary); maple and pine (secondary);

upholstery: wool on wool ground

According to tradition, this easy chair was owned by Col. George Watson, a prominent Plymouth, Massachusetts, merchant. Its needlework is strikingly similar to that of an easy chair in the collection of the Newport Historical Society that descended in the Ellery family of Newport (cat. 73). This remarkable resemblance suggests that the Watson chair, though it lacks the



Fig. 1. *Palampore*, India (Coromandel Coast), ca. 1720–40. Cotton, linen, and paint, 78½ × 52½ in. (199.4 × 133.4 cm). New-York Historical Society, Gift of Mrs. J. Insley Blair, inv. no. 1938.1

Ellery chair's distinctive Newport style of claw-and-ball feet, was also made in that city. Watson was connected to Newport through his third wife, Phebe Thurston, whom he wed in 1781, and it is probable that the chair came into the family through their marriage. It may have been one of two easy chairs included in Phebe's inventory when she died in Plymouth in 1825.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the Thurston and Ellery families were related by marriage: Phebe's sister Mary Thurston married William Almy, a cousin of William Ellery, in whose family the Ellery easy chair descended.<sup>2</sup>

A significant portion of the original eighteenth-century embroidered show fabric of this easy chair survives. It remained in situ until the early twentieth century, when it was removed to prevent further deterioration. The needlework of both the Watson and Ellery chairs is a meandering floral pattern with a back panel that depicts a flowering vine emerging from an openwork basket with scrolled handles. The inspiration for such designs was the "tree of life" motif found on Indian palampores, made for Western markets and imported to the colonies beginning in the late seventeenth century (fig. 1). The types of flowers and leaves depicted on the two chairs are almost identical, and it is possible that their embroidery was laid out by the same hand or with related patterns. Although the designs may have been drawn locally, patterns were also imported from London or copied from London patterns. In 1738 a Boston schoolteacher named Mrs. Condy claimed to have "All sorts of beautiful Figures on Canvas for Tent Stick [stitch]; the Patterns from London, but drawn by her much cheaper than English Drawing."<sup>3</sup> She was obtaining her patterns from London and transferring



them onto canvas (the material used for tent stitch, a type of needlework that covers the ground fabric completely), instead of importing canvas with the pattern predrawn in England, which would have been more expensive. In a 1742 advertisement, she informed potential customers that she drew her patterns “in a plainer Manner, and cheaper than those which come from London,” hinting at the relative simplicity of American tastes.<sup>4</sup>

The Watson chair has several features characteristic of some Rhode Island easy chairs, including short, stocky front legs and massive medial and rear stretchers. The turning pattern of the stretchers, however, differs from that of most chairs possessing these traits. The majority of easy chairs with heavy legs and stretchers have medial and rear stretchers ending in bulb-shaped turnings (see, for example, cat. 73). Those on the present example have conical ends capped with a single ring, a pattern fairly rare in Rhode Island seating furniture. A set of four side chairs with single-ring turnings, currently on loan to the Preservation Society of Newport County, descended in the Rogers family of Newport (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> —JNJ

#### Cat. 72

44½ × 31 × 29 in. (113 × 78.7 × 73.7 cm)

PROVENANCE: Col. George Watson (1718–1800), Plymouth, Mass. Herbert Schiffer Antiques, Exton, Pa.; sold to Joe Kindig, Jr. (1898–1971), York, Pa., ca. 1950; Joe Kindig Antiques, Lancaster, Pa. [RIF5717]

#### Notes

1. Watson’s wife was probably the Phebe Thurston baptized in Newport in 1740, the daughter of Jonathan Thurston (ca. 1689–1749) and his second wife, Mehetabel Claghorn (ca. 1708–1745). Phebe’s first husband was John Bennett Scott (1739–1767), a Newport merchant, whom she wed at Trinity Church in Newport in 1764; see Watson 2010, 230. For the wedding of Phebe Thurston Scott and George Watson, see Oliver and Peabody 1982, 741. For Phebe Watson’s inventory, see “Massachusetts, Plymouth County, Probate Estate Files, 1686–1915,” case no. 22245, FamilySearch, <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-27158-12883-44?cc=1918549&wc=M9S5-2NS:1896424911> (accessed June 17, 2015).

2. Merwin F. Almy and Thomas A. Almy, “Almy Descendant No. 1252,” in *William Almy and His Descendants in America*, July 2001, <http://news.almy.us/AlmyBook.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2016).
3. “To Be Had at Mrs. Condy’s near the Old North-Meeting House,” *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, August 27, 1738, p. 2.
4. “Mrs. Condy Opens Her School Next Week,” *Boston Evening-Post*, March 29, 1742, p. 2.
5. For other easy chairs of probable Rhode Island origin with short, thickset front legs and oversized stretchers, see Sotheby’s, New York, January 20, 2001, lot 72 [RIF3124]; and Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, January 30–February 1, 1975, lot 992 [RIF2683].



Fig. 2. *Side Chair (from a set of four)*, probably Newport, 1740–90. Walnut, 41 × 21 × 17 in. (104.1 × 53.3 × 43.2 cm). National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C., on loan to the Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. NT 59.59.1. [RIF5747]

*Easy Chair*

Newport, 1790

Mahogany (primary); maple (secondary);  
upholstery: wool on later wool ground

According to family history, this chair was presented by William Ellery to his daughter Almy on the occasion of her marriage in 1790 to William Stedman. The frame was made with mahogany from Ellery's Honduras plantation, and the needlework, worked by Almy Ellery, has been cut away from its original ground and applied to what is said to be its third background. The red thread visible around the borders of the embroidery was used to affix it to its current show cover.



Fig. 1. Judith Paul, *Sampler*, Providence, 1791. Silk thread on a ground of plain weave linen, 17 × 13¾ in. (43.2 × 34.9 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Gift of Mrs. L. Knight, inv. no. 1916.3.1

Differences in the ground fabric of some of the embroidery, visible where the stitches have deteriorated, reveal that not all of the needlework is original to the chair. The majority of it was worked on the original dark green worsted wool ground, including the flowers and leaves on the interior back panel, the interior and exterior arms and wings, and the top of the seat cushion. The embroidery along the front of the seat cushion, however, has a yellow worsted background and appears to have been a later addition. Several areas, along the tops of the wings and arms and along the front seat rails, include flowers and leaves with both green and yellow grounds. The most likely explanation is that early in the chair's history the original embroidery was removed from its green ground and sewn onto a new yellow show cover, and that the flowers and leaves that were too deteriorated to be saved were replaced with newly embroidered ones.

All of the needlework is executed in worsted woolen thread known as crewel and depicts a flowering vine that relates to the “tree of life,” a motif found on Indian palampores produced for Western markets during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see cat. 72, fig. 1). The embroidery is closely related to that of a Rhode Island easy chair said to have belonged to Col. George Watson (cat. 72), a prominent Massachusetts merchant who married a woman from Newport. The similarity of both the overall design and the rendering of the flowers, leaves, and baskets suggests that the embroidery was either laid out by the same hand or using related patterns.

Embroidered designs were not always drawn by the person who was to execute the embroidery.



In a 1751 letter to Rev. Joseph Smith of Stonington, Connecticut, the father of fifteen-year-old Mary Fish, the Newport schoolteacher Sarah Osborn wrote, "I am exceeding glad that your desire is to have all the chairs drawd here because I had been and consulted with the gentlewoman about getting cloth to work them on and also agreed with her to draw them."<sup>1</sup> The gentlewoman mentioned by Osborn would have drawn the embroidery design on the fabric intended for the chairs, and Mary Fish would have executed the embroidery under her teacher's instruction. Decorative needlework was considered a genteel pastime for women and was an important element of the education of well-bred young ladies. Girls learned sewing by completing samplers and needlework pictures that were proudly displayed in the family home as emblems of accomplishment. The flowering vine depicted on the Watson and Ellery easy chairs was a popular motif and is also found on contemporary samplers (see fig. 1).

The claw-and-ball feet of this chair are of a type commonly associated with Newport. They share several characteristics with those attributed to the cabinetmaker John Goddard, including a bulge where the rear talon joins the foot, pronounced tendons that flow from the talons to the leg, and knuckles that are articulated to various degrees but are not sharply defined (see, for example, cats. 68–70). As noted by Michael Moses, however, it is not possible to attribute all examples of this type of foot to Goddard since the form was likely used by other Newport makers as well (see, for example, cat. 58, a high chest formerly attributed to John Goddard that is signed by Benjamin Baker).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if the family history dating the present chair to 1790 is correct, Goddard would have been deceased at the time the chair was made. Newport chairs with feet of this style share other features with the present example, including medial and rear stretchers terminating in bulbs capped with small rings and side stretchers with barely articulated rear rings that are joined to the front legs with round tenons. —JNJ

*Cat. 73*

47<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 33 × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (119.7 × 83.8 × 54.6 cm)

INSCRIPTION: "This chair was made in Newport of / mahogany from the Ellery plantation / in Honduras for Almy Ellery, 1759–1839, / daughter of the Signer on her marriage to / Senator William Stedman. The embroi / dery is hers on a third background. / 1972," embroidered on fabric label sewed to top of fabric covering seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Taylor 2008, 183, ill.

PROVENANCE: Abigail Carey Ellery (1742–1793) and William Ellery (1727–1820), Newport; given to their daughter Mrs. William Stedman (née Almy Ellery, 1759–1839), Newport, 1790; by descent in her family to Thomas Hale (1924–2012), Vineyard Haven, Mass.; Newport Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Hale, 2006, inv. no. 2006.17 [RIF4066]

*Notes*

1. Quoted in Ring 1983, 47.
2. Moses 1984, 211.

# 74 *Side Chair (from a pair)*

Newport, 1792

Sabicu (primary); soft maple (secondary) (microanalysis);

upholstery: wool and silk on linen ground

This side chair is one of a pair in the collection of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware, that, like the Newport Historical Society easy chair (cat. 73), is associated with the Ellery family. According to a note that accompanied the chairs when they were purchased by the museum, they were made for Katharine Almy on the occasion of her marriage in 1792 to Edmund Trowbridge Ellery, son of William Ellery and brother of Almy Ellery, for whom the easy chair in catalogue 73 is said to have been made. The note also states that the chair was made of wood grown on the West Indian plantation of Katharine's brother James Gould Almy. That wood is sabicu, known as "horse-flesh mahogany" in the eighteenth century because of its reddish-brown color and curled figure. It is an intriguing coincidence that the easy chair made two years earlier for Almy Ellery also has a history of having been made with wood from a family plantation, in this case that of the Ellerys.

The chairs have survived with their original needlework seat covers; on the present example the needlework has been conserved and reattached (fig. 1). The seats are not quite large enough to properly display the embroidery, which has been somewhat awkwardly cropped. Nancy Goyne Evans has suggested that, though original to the chairs, the needlework may have been executed prior to their manufacture, possibly by Katharine Almy when she was a girl.<sup>1</sup> The types of flowers and the way in which they are depicted are related to those on the embroidered show covers of the Watson and Ellery chairs (see cats. 72–73).

The design of the back of this chair, featuring C-scrolls that flow from the crest and are supported on a splat with a central diamond flanked by two elongated piercings, is rare in Rhode Island, and the few chairs with

this design that exist can be divided into distinct groupings.<sup>2</sup> Most elaborate is the Winterthur pair, originally part of a set of at least six, with claw-and-ball feet and inward-curving stiles that echo the curves of their splat. The remaining chairs, all of walnut with straight stiles and pad feet, are of two types. The first consists of chairs with pad feet supported by thick disks. Their crests and splats are virtually identical to the Winterthur examples, but their strapwork, while the same in outline, intertwines differently, and they lack the teardrop-shaped element that joins the C-scrolls of the Winterthur chairs. On the basis of the inscriptions on the underside of the slip seats of two of these chairs—"Prov" on one and "Providn" on the other, probably abbreviations for Providence—this group was previously attributed to that city. An examination of one example in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, however, reveals



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 74, showing needlework seat cover





Fig. 2. *Side Chair (from a pair)*, probably Newport, 1760–90. Walnut, 37 × 16 in. (94 × 40.6 cm). Location unknown. [RIF4190]

construction details and markings typical of Newport chairs: the side stretchers, for example, are joined to the front legs with round tenons, a detail found on Newport chairs with medial and rear stretchers with bulb-shaped ends, including the present example. Likewise, the backs of its crest, shoe, and rear seat rail are numbered, a method of identifying parts observed only on Newport examples (see cats. 47 and 69–70).<sup>3</sup> The second group differs from the aforementioned examples in its crest, which has solid triangular fields that separate the outer and inner C-scrolls, rather than the cutouts seen on the other chairs (see fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Another Newport form that is closely related to the Winterthur chairs has fluted stiles, a shell-carved crest, and claw-and-ball feet (see cat. 70). —JNJ

#### Cat. 74

37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (95.9 × 53.7 × 51.8 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “VI,” incised on rabbet of front seat rail and on front rail of slip seat; “M” or “W,” in graphite, and “Amy,” in ink, written on underside of slip seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1994b, 186–93, figs. 3–4, pls. 1–3, 5; Richards et al. 1997, 80–81, no. 46, ill.; Zea 1999, 262, fig. 13; New York 2005b, 71, 73, fig. 7

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Edmund Trowbridge Ellery (née Katharine Almy, 1770–1803), Newport; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Samuel Jennison (née Mary Gould Ellery, 1792–1867), Worcester, Mass.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. John Bangs (née Mary Ellery Jennison, 1823–1902), Springfield, Mass.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Morrison Dwight Montague (née Mary Jennison Bangs, 1849–unknown), Springfield, Mass.; by descent to her daughter Ruth Montague Sturgis (ca. 1887–1970), Springfield, Mass.; sold to Feralyn G. Watson Antiques, Sturbridge, Mass.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Museum purchase with funds provided by Henry Francis du Pont, 1959, inv. no. 1959.0083.001 [RIF1413]

#### Notes

1. Richards et al. 1997, 81.
2. Nancy Goyne Evans has shown that this splat pattern is based on English designs that have their roots in French sources; see *ibid.*
3. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1953.50.4; see Kane 1976, 144–45, no. 122, ill. [RIF3610]. Also in this group are Kirk 1972, 135, no. 173, ill. [RIF3990]; and American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, January 2–4, 1930, lot 295 [RIF4955].
4. In addition to figure 2, which is one of a pair, the second group includes Carpenter 1972, 83–84, figs. 6–7 [RIF333]; and a low chair, Evans 1994b, 190–93, fig. 8 [RIF4956]. The pair represented by figure 2 was owned by Gen. Charles Tillinghast James (1805–1862), Providence, whose parents were from West Greenwich and North Kingstown, Rhode Island; see Carpenter 1954, 40, no. 14, ill.

## 75

*Desk and Bookcase*

Thomas Spencer (1752–1840)

East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1775

Mahogany (primary); maple, chestnut, yellow poplar, cherry,  
and pine (secondary)

After tall case clocks, desk and bookcases were the most expensive and complicated pieces of furniture made during the late colonial and early Federal periods. With a locked bookcase containing ledgers and other costly volumes, the form bespoke the

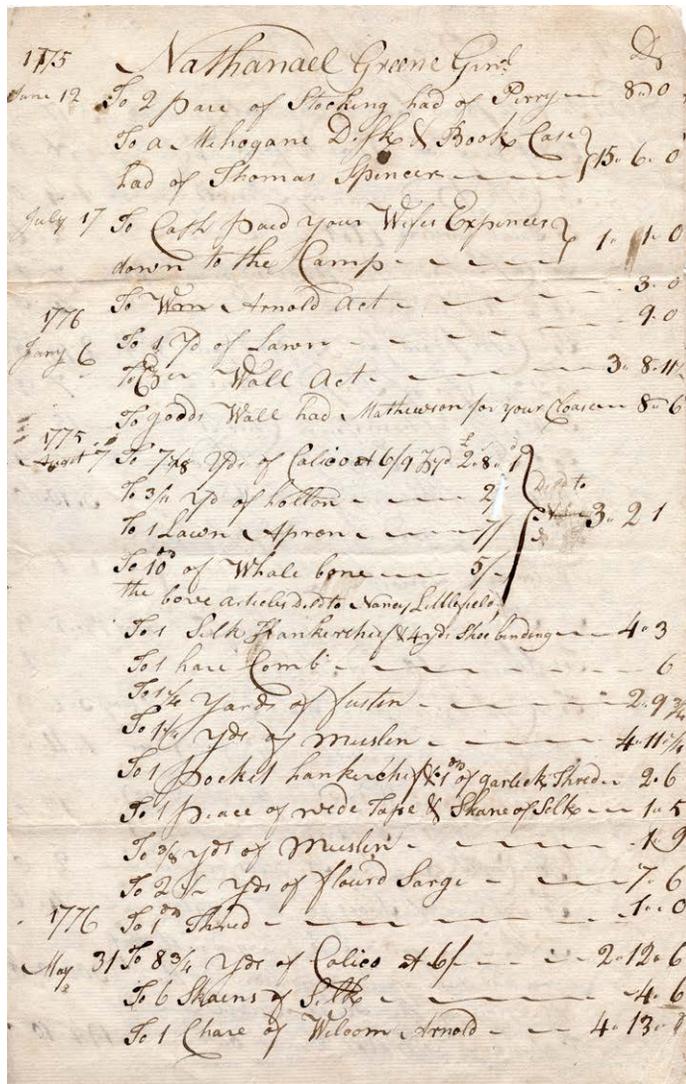


Fig. 1. Bill of Expenses, Gen. Nathanael Greene, June 12, 1775, to November 1776. Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C., The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

owner's wealth, business acumen, and intellectual accomplishment. This desk and bookcase descended in the family of the Revolutionary War general Nathanael Greene, who supervised his family's iron foundry business in Coventry, Rhode Island, and commissioned the desk and bookcase just before his appointment as brigadier general in the Continental Army on June 22, 1775.<sup>1</sup> The discovery of a list of Greene's expenses from the 1770s (fig. 1), which included the purchase of a "Mehogane Desk & Book Case" from Thomas Spencer on June 12, 1775, put the name of the cabinetmaker together with the object.<sup>2</sup>

In 1775 Spencer was a shop joiner in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, near Greene's home in Coventry. Thomas Spencer, who came from a long line of woodworkers, was a nephew of the renowned Newport cabinetmaker John Goddard and was the younger brother of the cabinetmaker Daniel Spencer. The Greene desk and bookcase is modest compared to the elaborate desk and bookcases attributed to Thomas's uncle and brother (see cats. 57 and 60). It has a flat facade, two fielded-panel bookcase doors, a semiblocked interior with a single carved shell, a scrolled pediment with applied plaques, and a central finial whose ball element lacks the fluting found on more opulent examples.

It is likely that Thomas Spencer trained with his brother Daniel, as they both used an unusual drawer-marking system. The eleven interior drawers of Thomas's desk and bookcase are each inscribed three times with a numeral, "1" through "11," in graphite (at the front interior corners and





Fig. 2. Probably Thomas Spencer, *Bureau Table*, probably Providence, 1780–85. Mahogany [genus *Cedrela*], eastern white pine, soft maple, chestnut, and yellow poplar (microanalysis),  $31\frac{1}{2} \times 36\frac{3}{4} \times 20\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $80 \times 93.4 \times 52.7$  cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James L. Britton, Jr., inv. no. B.92.6. [RIF234]

the center of the interior backs). The valance drawers are numbered, from proper right to proper left, “1” through “6,” in graphite (at the front interior corners and the center of the interior back). On the large exterior drawers the letters “A” through “D” appear at the center of the interior backs, and large loop-like symbols, either “1” or “I,” are used on the interior front corners of the sides. Only one other piece—a bureau table (fig. 2)—can be attributed to Thomas Spencer, on the basis of its calligraphy details, the “1” or “I” figures in the drawer corners (see Appendix, fig. 13), and the inscription “Tos. Spencer 1764 / Reichhold & Knoblock 1876 Repaired,” written by one of the Providence furniture restorers who worked on the bureau table in 1876. Although the

date of 1764 does not correlate to Spencer’s working dates, whoever had the piece restored in 1876 clearly knew who made it. This may have been Ann Francis Woods, who inherited the bureau table in 1864 upon the death of her father, John Brown Francis, the grandson of John Brown, the original owner.

By 1783 Thomas Spencer had moved from East Greenwich to Providence, where his brother Daniel had been working since 1772. Thomas may have given up furniture making; he was a retailer in Providence in 1783, and a few years later, a merchant in Albany, New York. —PEK

*Cat. 75*

87½ × 38¼ × 21¾ in. (222.3 × 97.2 × 55.3 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “X,” “XX,” “XII,” and “IXX,” in chalk, spanning horizontal joints of backboards; “B,” in graphite, on underside of desk; “1” to “11,” in graphite, on interior backs and front corners of interior drawers, from top to bottom and left to right starting at proper-right upper corner; “1” to “6,” in graphite, on front interior corners and center of interior backs of valance drawers, from proper right to proper left; “A” to “D,” in graphite, on interior backs of exterior drawers, from top to bottom; “1” or “I,” in graphite, on interior front corners of sides of exterior drawers; “N.Y. Mills 1856,” in graphite, on interior proper-right side of interior drawer marked “2”; “This bookcase and secretary formerly owned by Mrs. Anna Thomas and her successors,” in graphite, on interior proper-left side of same drawer; “[illegible] originally belonged to Gen’l Natahnia Greene / [illegible] who died in 1786 Born 1742 / [illegible] been in later possession of / (? Hubbard) / [illegible] for some sixty years at New York Mills / Oneida N.Y. / [illegible] uncle Phineas Miller married / [illegible] Isaac Miller father of Phineas Miller furnished / Eli Whitney with money to perfect the cotton gin. Eli Whitney / lived at Mrs. Greene Miler’s home [inserted above the line “in Georgia”] a tutor, he was Yale 1792 died 1825 / Cost of refinishing desk & new handles 30.95 / Passed down in direct line to William Walcott Middle / bury ct,” in graphite, on underside of interior drawer marked “1,” partially legible because of rubbing; “Phineas Miller / at Yale College / He [illegible] / children.,” in graphite, crosswise on underside of same drawer near back edge; “21 / Walcotts,” in ink, written on paper label with red borders and canted corners glued to proper-left top corner of back of desk and the bookcase

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Kenneth Hammitt Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 94, no. 3 (September 1968): 263, ill.; Kane 2010, 114–19, fig. 2

PROVENANCE: Nathanael Greene (1742–1786), Warwick and Coventry, R.I., then Savannah, Ga.,

1775; by descent to his wife, Catharine Littlefield Greene (1755–1814), Block Island and Coventry, R.I., then Savannah and Cumberland Island, Ga.; by descent to her second husband, Phineas Miller (1764–1803). Anna Thomas; Phineas Miller’s niece Mrs. William D. Walcott (née Hannah Coe Hubbard, 1817–1905), New York Mills, N.Y.; by descent to her grandson William S. Walcott, Jr. (1871–unknown), Litchfield, Conn.; by descent to his son William S. Walcott III (1913–1997), Middlebury, Conn. Kenneth Hammitt Antiques, Woodbury, Conn., 1968. Deanne D. Hall American Furniture, Atlanta, 1974; sold to Nancy Fraser Parker (1931–2005) and William A. Parker, Jr. (born 1927), Atlanta, 1974; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Gift in loving memory of Nancy Fraser Parker by her husband, William A. Parker, Jr., and her children, William A. Parker III, Isobel P. Mills, and Richard C. Parker, in honor of her devotion to decorative arts and love of beautiful furniture, 2007, inv. no. 2007.123 [RIF1447]

*Notes*

1. For a fuller discussion of this desk and bookcase, see Kane 2010.
2. The author is grateful to Katharine G. Farnham for bringing this document to her attention.

76

*Side Chair (from a pair)*

Probably Providence, 1750–1800

Soft maple (primary); yellow poplar (secondary) (microanalysis)



This chair from the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery represents a Rhode Island specimen of a type often associated with New York and Connecticut. Such chairs were made as early as the 1750s in New York City, where some examples were stamped by their makers.<sup>1</sup> They were also produced in the Hudson River Valley and in Long Island, where similar models were manufactured by Nathaniel Dominy V in East Hampton as late as 1830.<sup>2</sup> In Milford, Connecticut, John and Samuel Durand made chairs of this type—referred to as “red” chairs in John Durand’s account book, no doubt because of their color—beginning in the early 1760s.<sup>3</sup>

The Yale chair combines the turned legs typical of vernacular furniture with a baluster splat and pad feet borrowed from formal Queen Anne-style seating furniture. The beak-shaped crest is seen on both vernacular and formal Rhode Island seating furniture (see cats. 44 and 48). Patricia E. Kane has noted that the turnings at the tops of the rear posts—a baluster and ball rather than the cone and ball seen on New York models or the double balls seen on Connecticut models—are characteristic of the Rhode Island examples of this type.<sup>4</sup> The balls of the front stretcher are compressed into ovoid shapes and are separated by a disk that is missing on their Connecticut counterparts.

Only a small group of Rhode Island examples of this form are known, including a set of six with no history that was sold at Sotheby’s in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Like the Yale example, these are entirely of maple, with the exception of their yellow poplar splats. A single privately owned example descended in the family of Hanna Wilkinson Rhodes (née Slater) and Henry Albert Rhodes of

Providence.<sup>6</sup> A related chair, with a serpentine crest with upturned ears, flat rear posts, and a pierced baluster splat, also descended in the Rhodes family (fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> The turnings of the front legs and stretchers of the two Rhodes family chairs are so similar that, taking into account their shared history, it is likely that they were made in the same shop. Another chair with closely related turnings is a banister-back side chair with block-and-turned legs and ball feet in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia (fig. 2). Its front stretcher turnings differ from the previous

examples in that their ends are elongated and capped with rings, and the central balls are round rather than compressed. The turnings of its rear posts and upper front legs, however, are virtually identical to those of the present example.

It is difficult to say with any certainty where the Yale chair was made. The bulb-shaped stretcher ends relate to Newport chairs, but these were used elsewhere as well. Given the close relationship of its turnings to those of the Rhodes family examples, it was very likely made in Providence. —JNJ



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, Providence, 1760–1800. Maple, 40 1/8 × 20 1/8 × 16 1/4 in. (101.9 × 51.1 × 41.3 cm). Private collection. [RIF6140]



Fig. 2. *Banister-Back Side Chair*, Rhode Island, 1730–60. Maple and ash, 40 × 19 × 13 3/4 in. (101.6 × 48.3 × 34.9 cm). Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Va., Gift of the John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, Fund, Inc., through the generosity and interest of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, and members of the family, inv. no. 1996.BH.405. [RIF175]

*Cat. 76*

40<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 14 in. (102.6 × 34.3 × 35.6 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 1930, 29, lot 137, ill.;  
Kane 1976, 104, no. 89, ill.

PROVENANCE: Philip Flayderman (1874–1929),  
Boston; consigned by his estate to the American Art  
Association, Anderson Galleries, New York, January  
2–4, 1930, lot 137; sold to Francis P. Garvan (1875–  
1937), New York; given to the Yale University Art  
Gallery, New Haven, Conn., Mabel Brady Garvan  
Collection, 1930, inv. no. 1930.2425b [RIF3605]

*Notes*

1. For stamped New York City chairs, see Blackburn 1981,  
1135–37, figs. 10–10a, 12, and 13–13a.
2. For chairs by the Dominy family, see Hummel 1968, 254,  
260–63.
3. John Durand account book, 1760–83, Milford Historical  
Society, Conn. Durand's account book is cited in Forman  
1974; and Trent 1977, 63–68. For an example of a “red” chair,  
see Richards et al. 1997, 74–75, no. 42, ill.
4. Kane 1976, 104. Nancy Goyne Evans noted double-ball  
turnings as a distinctive feature of Connecticut chairs;  
see Richards et al. 1997, 75.
5. Sotheby's, New York, January 26, 2013, lot 549 [RIF5900].
6. This chair is unpublished [RIF6139].
7. For chairs with similar splat designs, see cats. 48 and 77.

# 77 *Side Chair*

Attributed to Ambrose Taylor (1744–1831)  
Warwick, Rhode Island, 1775–95  
Maple (primary); birch (secondary)

This chair descended in the family of Warwick chairmaker Ambrose Taylor. An 1805 map of Apponaug, an area of Warwick situated on Apponaug Cove, shows property belonging to Taylor, including a wharf and a house of considerable size (fig. 1). A smaller building, perhaps a shop, stands between it and another substantial house, owned by his son Thomas, who was also a chairmaker. Thomas's account book records the various types of chairs he was making from 1795 to 1799. The assortment of styles he produced included common chairs (probably slat-backs), desk chairs, dining chairs, turned chairs, little chairs, great chairs, fiddleback chairs, green chairs (probably Windsors), and framed chairs.<sup>1</sup> Since he doubtless would have apprenticed with his father, it is likely that Ambrose Taylor was producing the same forms. The present example would probably have been considered a framed chair. It combines elements of vernacular seating—a rush seat, a front stretcher with ball-and-ring turnings, and partially turned legs—with characteristics of formal Chippendale-style furniture, including a serpentine crest with flared ears, a pierced splat, and straight legs with molded edges.

A closely related example with turned front legs and pad feet descended in the Rhodes family of Providence (cat. 76, fig. 1). The splat and crest of the two chairs are remarkably similar, though the ears of the Rhodes example are plain and those of the Taylor chair are carved. Their splats are the same pattern, with identical profiles where they meet the crest and lower rear seat rail. The beads dividing the outer piercings of both their splats are also alike in that they are rectangular; by contrast, a group of formal



Rhode Island chairs with this splat pattern have beads that are decidedly round (see cat. 48). The ball-and-ring turnings of the front stretchers of both chairs have compressed balls, similar to those on vernacular Rhode Island chairs such as catalogue 76. The turnings of the present chair differ in that the central disk is thicker, and the side and rear stretchers have bulb-shaped ends. On the Rhodes example, these stretchers are simple

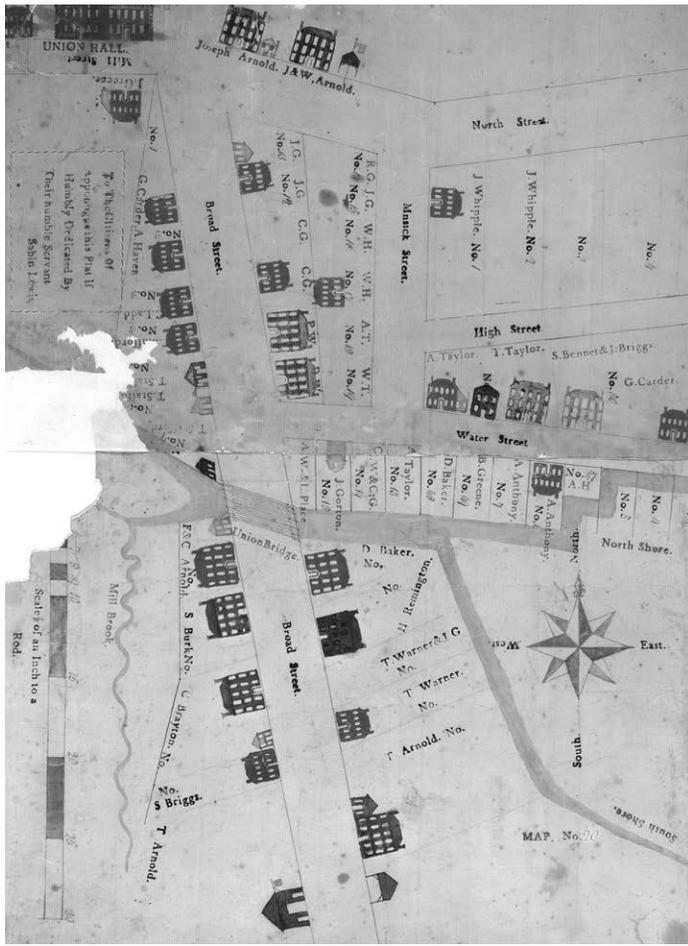


Fig. 1. Sabin Lewis, 1805 *Map of Apponaug, Rhode Island*, 1805. Colored ink on paper, 21¾ × 34¾ in. (55.3 × 87 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. RHi(x32)163

cylinders that taper as they join the legs. Given that Warwick is separated from Providence by a single town, it seems logical that its craftsmen would take their stylistic cues from that city.

A pair of side chairs formerly owned by Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Delaware, also relate to the Taylor chair (fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> Their splats are similar but have a more elaborate base and rounded beads, while their crests have arched centers and slightly larger ears. Though made of maple, the pair are more high style than the present example, with straight legs devoid of turning, rectangular stretchers, framed seats, and serpentine corner brackets. —JNJ



Fig. 2. *Side Chair (from a pair)*, possibly Rhode Island, 1780–1800. Maple and birch, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. [RIF3077]

#### Cat. 77

40⅛ × 20 × 16½ in. (101.9 × 50.8 × 41.9 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bamberg 2013, 113, ill.

PROVENANCE: By descent in the family of Ambrose Taylor (1744–1831), Warwick, R.I., to Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, Marlborough, Mass.; Historic New England, Boston, Gift of Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, 2012, inv. no. 2012.41.1 [RIF4447]

#### Notes

1. Bamberg 2013, 119. Images of the account book are in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive, courtesy of Cherry Fletcher Bamberg. For chairs made by Thomas Taylor, see RIF4389 and RIF5942.
2. Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, April 28, 1978, lot 210 [RIF3077].

## 78

*Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Stillman family (active 1786—at least 1812), clockmaker

Probably Westerly, Rhode Island, ca. 1795

Maple (primary); maple, butternut(?), sycamore, yellow poplar, and chestnut (secondary)

A small group of tall case clocks with movements attributed to the Stillman family of Westerly, Rhode Island, are in unusual cases made by an unknown but imaginative local cabinetmaker.<sup>1</sup> As seen in the present example, they have dramatic, carved scallop shells within small, framed panels on their bases, carved concave shells in the pendulum doors, and exaggerated ogee feet. The Stillman attribution is based on their very unusual skeletonized brass movements, a common feature of this family's work. A skeletonized movement has a number of voids, cast or cut into the brass front and back plates, giving them a straplike appearance (fig. 1). This laborious construction technique conserved precious brass. The technique is rare, and stands out clearly from standard clock movements with solid brass plates. The Bailey family of Hanover, Massachusetts, was best known for it, but the cutout patterns of their movements are very different from those of the Stillman group.

At least four Stillmans made clocks in or around Westerly. The self-taught craftsman Deacon William Stillman was the first and most prolific member, making first wood and then brass movements. William or his brother Willet probably made this clock.<sup>2</sup> Their cousins Paul (see cat. 97) and Barton also worked in Westerly, but they were at work slightly later than the proposed date of this example. A clock housed in a case closely related to this group is signed by Willet Stillman and further supports the attribution.<sup>3</sup>

The dial of the present clock, with an automated scene of a farmer continuously knocking a cow over the head with the blunt end of an ax, is unique in American clockmaking (fig. 2). This curious action, whose meaning is unknown, takes place within a recessed opening in the dial-arch. The ax is raised and lowered on the hour.



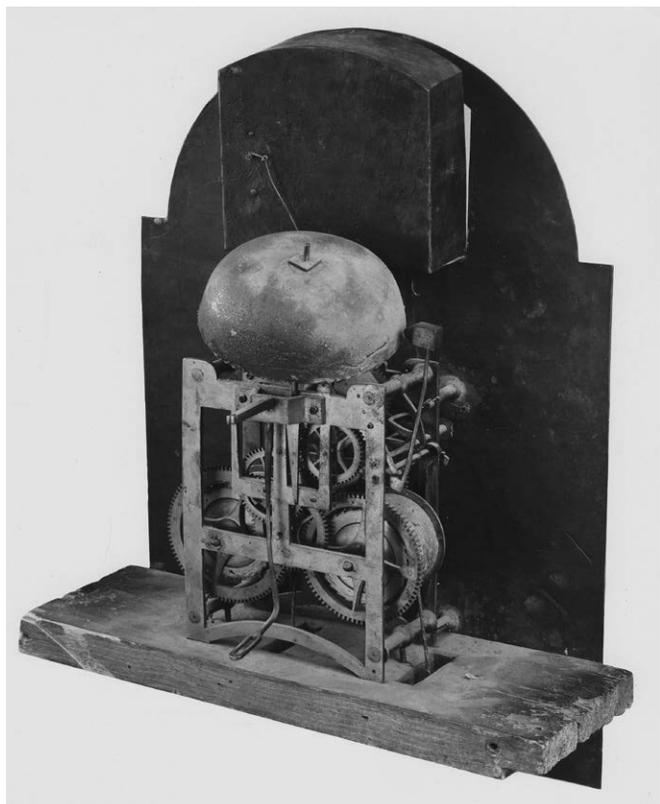


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 78, showing skeletonized movement



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 78, showing dial

The dial is apparently of local manufacture and similar to those on other clocks from this region. The “whale’s tail” fretwork and twisted flame finials at the top of the case are common on eighteenth-century Connecticut clocks. The circular oculus in the pendulum door is a rare occurrence of a detail more popular much earlier in the century. —GRS

*Cat. 78*

86 × 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (218.4 × 54.3 × 28.9 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day skeletonized brass time and strike, with automated dial

INSCRIPTION: “B [possibly later],” incised at bottom on interior of waist door

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement,” *Antiques* 139, no. 5 (May 1991): 822, ill.; “Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement,” *Antiques* 167, no. 5 (May 2005): 19, ill.; Solis-Cohen 2005, 3-D, ill.

PROVENANCE: Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn., 1991 and 2005; sold to a private collection, 2005 [RIF15]

*Notes*

1. Included in this group are: private collection, illustrated in Mayhew and Myers 1974, 72 [RIF6040]; Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum, Stonington, Conn. [RIF6068]; and private collection, illustrated in Nonemaker 1959, 235 [RIF6030]. The author is grateful to Charlene Senical and Deanne Levison for providing information on RIF6040 and RIF6030, respectively.
2. The author is grateful to Arthur Liverant and Kevin Tulimieri of Nathan Liverant and Son for sharing their unpublished research on the attributed Stillman clocks and their histories.
3. This clock is in a private collection; for an illustration, see Nonemaker 1959, 235 [RIF6030].

## 79

*Desk and Bookcase*

Ichabod Cole (1748–1841)

Warren, Rhode Island, 1790

Mahogany (primary); chestnut, yellow poplar, and pine (secondary)

The inscription on one of the interior drawers of this desk and bookcase (fig. 1) has led to the attribution of more than a half-dozen examples of furniture to the Warren, Rhode Island, shop joiner Ichabod Cole. Cole's unique marking system for the identification of components during fabrication and his unusual floral ornament are hallmarks of his work.<sup>1</sup> The desk and bookcase echoes the aesthetics of Newport and Providence case pieces with its block-and-shell bookcase doors and interior, its scrolled pediment with applied plaques, and its ogee-bracket feet with small cusps, but these elements all bear Cole's personalized twists. The block-and-shell carving is applied to the framed door, and the outline of the shell is carved into the door in the manner of Providence shells carved from the solid (see, for example, cat. 63) and on a few Newport clock cases (see, for example, Kane and Sullivan essay,

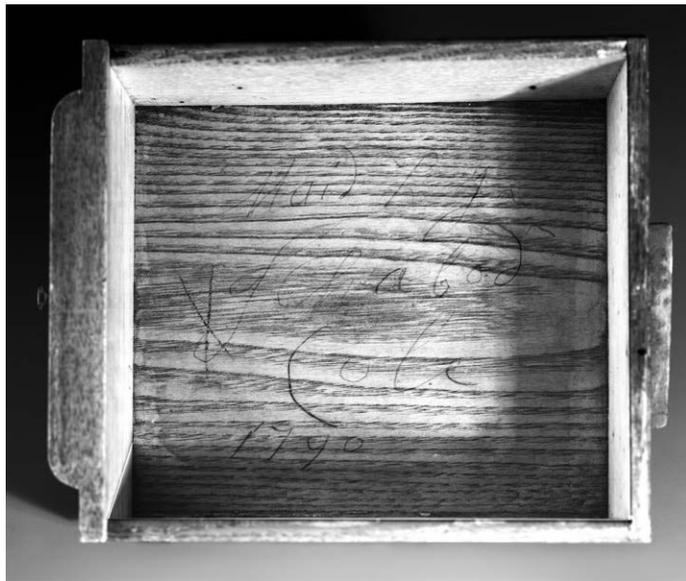


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 79, showing inscription on bottom of interior drawer

fig. 5). The ubiquitous shell carving found on the prospect doors of Rhode Island desks is here enlivened by the vines and leaves that descend from it (fig. 2). The cornice lacks the deep cove typical of Newport and Providence work and instead is formed of two ogee-shaped moldings. Finally, the base molding has a fillet (square band) added below the cyma (or S curve), and the ogee curve of the feet is more elongated than those on classic Rhode Island examples.

It is Cole's drawer-marking system that really sets his work apart. During the construction process, Rhode Island craftsmen often assigned numbers or letters to their drawer parts. The typical sequence starts with the top drawer and continues down. Cole's drawers are numbered from the bottom up, a method only occasionally found on work from other shops.<sup>2</sup> On the valance



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 79, showing prospect door



drawers of desk interiors the sequence typically starts at the proper right and continues to the proper left. On Cole's valance drawers the numbers follow from proper left to proper right. In addition to this atypical ordering, the placement and character of the symbols on this desk and bookcase are unmistakably his. On the top edges of the drawers a vertical line and a slash, forming a lopsided "V," indicate which side of the drawer was the exterior, usually with additional vertical lines next to the "V" indicating its place in the series (see Appendix, fig. 3). On the interior of the drawer backs and fronts are incised or graphite vertical lines topped by dots indicating placement in the series ("i" through "iii," for instance; see Appendix, fig. 4). This distinctive system of incised lines and dots also appears in the corners of a dining table attributed to Cole.<sup>3</sup>

Identifying Cole's work has enhanced understanding of the vibrant furniture-making tradition in Warren that existed from the seventeenth century to the early Federal period, a tradition that includes, among other pieces, a seventeenth-century wainscot chair (cat. 5 and chest (cat. 6), an early eighteenth-century scrutoir (cat. 14), a high chest of drawers (cat. 80), and an inlaid card table by James Halyburton (cat. 101). Like many of Cole's desks, much of this furniture is adorned with beguiling floral decoration. —PEK

### Cat. 79

92 × 40 × 23 in. (233.7 × 101.6 × 58.4 cm) (closed)

MARK: "Maid by / Ichabod / Cole / 1790," in graphite, on interior bottom of one interior drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: "i" through "iii," incised on interior fronts and backs of outermost tiers of interior drawers, from bottom to top; "i" to "iii," incised on interior fronts and backs of prospect drawers, from bottom to top; "/I" through "/III," incised on top edges near front of sides of outermost tiers of interior drawers, from bottom to top; "/I" through "/III," incised on top edges near front of sides of prospect drawers, from bottom to top; "i" and "ii," incised on interior fronts and backs, and "/I" and "/II," incised on top edges, of

drawers flanking the prospect door; "I," in chalk, on interior sides of exterior drawers; "V [pointing out]," incised on top edges of sides of exterior drawers; "\I" through "\VI," with slashes pointing out, incised on top edges of sides of valance drawers, from proper left to proper right

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "John S. Walton Antiques, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 121, no. 5 (May 1982): 980, ill.; Moses 1984, 306–7, figs. 8.2, 8.2a–b; "Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement," *Antiques* 169, no. 1 (January 2006): 1, ill.; Kane 2007, 112–14, figs. 4–4a, 5

PROVENANCE: Found in a house in Seekonk, Mass., 1982 or earlier; sold to John Walton, Inc., Griswold and Jewett City, Conn., 1982; sold to John Warner Kluge (died 2010), Charlottesville, Va., about 1984; consigned to Christie's, New York, December 16, 2005, lot 235; sold to Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York [RIF581]

### Notes

1. For a fuller discussion of the decorative and construction features of Cole's work, see Kane 2007, which illustrates two other desk and bookcases attributed to him in private collections [RIF1875 and RIF1876]. The Rhode Island Furniture Archive also includes the following objects attributed to Cole: two slant-front desks, one with Cole's floral ornament (see G. Montgomery 2008, 226, ill. [RIF4068], and Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1974.31.2 [RIF4308]), an unpublished chest-on-chest in a private collection [RIF6050], and a dining table with his marking system (Sotheby's, New York, January 21–22, 2011, lot 267 [RIF5330]).
2. For an example with drawers sequenced from the bottom up, see Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Portsmouth), August 3–5, 2007, lot 988 [RIF3421].
3. See RIF5330 in NI, above.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Warren, Rhode Island—the site of the Indian village of Sowans, where the Plymouth Colony established a trading post in 1622—had become a major center for shipbuilding, the whaling industry, and the West Indian trade. According to family tradition, this high chest of drawers was commissioned in 1776 by the Warren shipbuilder Cromwell Child for the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth. With its carved shell in the center of the lower rail, fluted quarter columns, and scrolled pediment ending in rosettes, it is an ambitious example of cabinetmaking. The shell-carved skirt evokes high chests of drawers made in Newport, and the pediment rosettes relate the piece to Providence cabinetwork.<sup>1</sup> Other details reveal its provincial origin, however, and it was probably made locally. The outline of the front skirt, for example, lacks the measured play of opposing C-scrolls seen on Newport high chests (see cat. 58), and there is a large space between the top of the shell and the drawer above it. In addition, the turned capitals and bases of the quarter columns are rather crude compared to their Newport and Providence counterparts. The ambitious form reveals a vigorous furniture-making tradition in Warren in the late colonial period, no doubt tied to shipbuilding, the ultimate test of a joiner's skills.

As this high chest of drawers has none of the hallmarks of furniture made by Ichabod Cole, who worked in Warren beginning in the 1770s (see cat. 79), it must have come from another shop. Rufus Whitaker and Daniel Kinnicutt both worked as cabinetmakers in Warren at the time; there were others, variously identified as joiners or house carpenters. The high chest is related to the desk and bookcase by Cole catalogued in the present publication in its abundant use of mahogany as a secondary wood. The top of the Cole desk, covered by

the bookcase section, is mahogany. Most makers would have used a less exotic wood for this unseen portion of the piece. The maker of this high chest of drawers used expensive mahogany for other hidden elements—the drawer supports, guides, and corner blocks. Warren's maritime industry may provide a clue to this use: many parts of a sailing ship were made of mahogany, and the town of Warren probably had an ample supply of the wood. —PEK

*Cat. 80*

88 × 39¾ × 20¾ in. (223.5 × 101 × 52.7 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: "X," incised on exterior sides and backs of each drawer; "S" and "18 / 88," in chalk, on back, in nineteenth-century handwriting

PROVENANCE: Commissioned by Cromwell Child (1727–1801), Warren, R.I., as a wedding present for his daughter Mrs. Peter Turner (née Elizabeth Child, 1752–1819), East Greenwich, R.I., and Newport, 1776; by descent to her son Dr. James Varnum Turner (1798–1863), Newport; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Francis Lawton (née Isabella Greene Turner, 1822–unknown), Brooklyn; by descent to her daughter Mrs. David Fales (née Mary Engs Lawton, 1850–unknown), Chicago; by descent to her daughter Mrs. William Wistar Comfort (née Mary Lawton Fales, 1878–1965), Rosemont, Pa.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. William Meyer Masland (née Anne Wistar Comfort, 1911–1975), Manhasset, N.Y.; by descent to her daughter Mrs. Matthew Adams (née Mary Fales Masland), Washington, D.C.; Daughters of the American Revolution Museum, Washington, D.C., Gift of Mary Fales Masland Adams, in memory of Mary Lawton Fales Comfort, 1997, inv. no. 97.52 [RIF680]



*Note*

1. For a classic Newport high chest of drawers, see the example at the Art Institute of Chicago, inv. no. 1989.158 [RIF516]; for a pediment with rosette terminals, see cat. 60 in the present volume.

*Side Chair (from a set of four)*

Newport, 1775–90

Mahogany

The double-looped splat and arched serpentine crest of this chair are based on plate 9 of Robert Manwaring's *Cabinet and Chair-Maker's Real Friend and Companion*, published in London in 1765. The design is seen on English prototypes and was adapted in the colonies by craftsmen in Rhode Island, Philadelphia, New York, and Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Its legs are stop-fluted, a decorative technique in which the bottom few inches of the



Fig. 1. *Side Chair*, probably Providence, 1780–1800. Mahogany and chestnut, 38 1/8 × 21 × 16 3/4 in. (96.8 × 53.3 × 42.6 cm). Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1973.4.2. [RIF6129]

flutes or grooves are filled in or stopped. This example and three others in the collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County are part of a set of at least eight, including two armchairs, originally owned by Newport merchant Christopher Champlin.<sup>2</sup> The chairs descended in his family, probably to Elizabeth Champlin Perry, until purchased by the King family of Newport when the contents of the Perry house were sold in 1858. The only other known chairs of this form are a set of six with an unsubstantiated history of ownership by Gov. Joseph Wanton of Newport.<sup>3</sup>

Champlin patronized multiple Newport cabinetmakers, and his known purchases include seating furniture: in 1765 he bought six chairs from Joseph Proud for £42 each, and in 1775, a more probable date for the present example, he purchased “10 Mahogany Chaire Frames” from John Goddard for £44 each. Although there is no evidence linking these chairs to Goddard, he was making fluted furniture as early as 1769, when he billed Newport merchant Aaron Lopez for two square mahogany tables, charging him a dollar for “fluting legs.”<sup>4</sup> As Morrison H. Heckscher has shown, this form of ornamentation was also adopted by John Townsend, Edmund Townsend, and Townsend Goddard.<sup>5</sup>

The back of the Champlin chair is ornamented with acanthus leaves that unfurl at the top of the splat and scroll upward to form a gadrooned ridge along the crest. At the center of the crest is an opening framed with C-scrolls and crowned with a foliate cluster. Another set of scrolled acanthus leaves form the ends of the looped straps. Gadrooning is rare on Rhode Island chairs and cabinetwork. A bureau table in the collection



of the Dietrich American Foundation, Philadelphia, thought to be made by Daniel Goddard on the basis of an inscription (cat. 55), has related gadrooning along its base and similar leafy elements emerging from the scrolls of its feet (see cat. 55, fig. 2). Gadrooning is also used on the stretchers of several stop-fluted tables made by John Townsend (for an example attributed to Townsend, see cat. 82).

The double-loop splat design was extremely popular in Rhode Island and was almost invariably paired with straight legs. The majority of known examples have crests with either a central shell or a paneled arch with ornamental cross-hatching. Their splats are characterized by two basic designs: those like the Champlin chair, with a Y-shaped strap at the base of the splat; and those with splats with two lower openings divided by a central bead element.<sup>6</sup> Two chairs—a simpler version of this second variety, with splats that lack any carved details, shell crests, and molded rather than stop-fluted legs—were owned by Providence merchant John Brown (see fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> Evidence of the enduring popularity of the looped design is found in a handful of later chairs, with splats like the present example but with straight, tapering legs in the Neoclassical style. Vernacular versions with double-looped splats were also made.<sup>8</sup> —JNJ

**Cat. 81**

38 × 21½ × 18 in. (96.5 × 54.6 × 45.7 cm)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Carpenter 1953, 39, fig. 3; Carpenter 1954, 30, 200, no. 4, ill.; Carpenter 1995, 550, pl. 1

**PROVENANCE:** Christopher Champlin (1731–1805), Newport; by descent in the Champlin family, possibly to Mrs. Oliver Hazard Perry (née Elizabeth Champlin Mason, 1791–1858), Newport; sold at the Perry family estate sale, Washington Square, Newport, 1858; purchased by the King family, Newport and Albany; by descent to Peter King, Newport; sold to Ralph Carpenter, Jr. (1909–2009), Newport, as agent for the Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953, inv. no. PSNC.1804.1 [RIF865]

**Notes**

1. A discussion on Manwaring's design and how Rhode Island's interpretation differed from that of other American colonies is found in Richards et al. 1997, 82–83. For English and Philadelphia models of this design, see Kirk 1972, 84, nos. 77–78, ill.; for a New York example, see Kane 1976, 143, no. 121, ill.; for a Massachusetts example, see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 2:374, no. 942, ill.
2. For the other chairs owned by Champlin, see *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 10:2573, no. P6225, ill. [RIF1100], a set of four including two armchairs; and Beach 2005, 119–21, ill. [RIF1471], a pair.
3. “John S. Walton advertisement,” *Antiques* 63, no. 2 (February 1953): 88, ill. [RIF4942], a set of six.
4. The Proud and Goddard invoices are quoted in Scotti and Ott 1965. Goddard's invoice to Lopez is quoted in Heckscher 2005, 140. For the original account, see series 2, box 12, Aaron Lopez Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, New York.
5. For a discussion of stop-fluted furniture produced by Newport cabinetmakers, see Heckscher 2005, 140–41.
6. A pair of chairs of the second splat variety, with cabriole legs and pad feet, is attributed to John Townsend; see *ibid.*, 99–101, no. 13, ill. [RIF4038 and RIF7001].
7. For a discussion of the John Brown chairs [RIF4268 and RIF6129], see Cooper 1973a, 330, 333, fig. 6.
8. For a chair with plain, tapered legs, see Northeast Auctions, Hampton and Portsmouth, N.H. (sale held Portsmouth), March 22–23, 2014, lot 564 [RIF6122]. For a vernacular version with no carving and a woven seat, see Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), October 27–28, 1989, lot 417 [RIF5791].

82

*China Table*

Attributed to John Townsend (1732–1809)

Newport, 1785–90

Mahogany (primary); soft maple, white pine,  
and chestnut (secondary) (microanalysis)

The original owners of this china table have been published as Jabez and Mary Bullock of Barrington, Rhode Island, the paternal great-grandparents of Rhoda Peckham Bullock, based on the letter its last owner, Mrs. Thomas Harris, wrote when she sold the table to a dealer.

The letter incorrectly recorded Rhoda Peckham Bullock as the daughter of Richmond and Rhoda Bullock, when in fact she was the daughter of William Peckham Bullock and his second wife, Phila Feke Townsend. In the letter Mrs. Harris goes on to state, “Aunt Rhoda told

me that the Townsend pieces were in the family and that Townsends were related to the family,” suggesting that they descended to Rhoda from her mother, Phila Feke Townsend, John Townsend’s granddaughter.<sup>1</sup> Rhoda Peckham Bullock also owned chairs (see cat. 71) that came to her from her mother. The china table and the chairs most likely share the same history of descent in the family of John Townsend. The table may be the “mahogany Tea Table with the set of China it Contains” listed in Townsend’s will as a bequest to his daughter Mary.<sup>2</sup>

The table bears a script “M,” one of Townsend’s characteristic finishing marks, on its underside and was probably made in the late 1780s. In the mid-1780s, Townsend began to make furniture with straight, stop-fluted legs like the ones on the present example; four such tables, a card table and three Pembroke tables, bear his label, one with the date 1786 and another 1788.<sup>3</sup> He also made a basin stand with a pierced gallery similar to the present one.<sup>4</sup> Only one Newport china table comparable to the present example is known.<sup>5</sup> Discussing the present table, Morrison H. Heckscher pointed out that its construction conforms to Townsend’s meticulous shop practices—five cross braces under the top, neatly beveled glue blocks, and corner brackets tenoned into the legs and skirt rather than merely nailed and glued.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Chippendale, the most famous of England’s eighteenth-century cabinetmakers, included furniture with straight legs as early as 1754 in *The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker’s Director*; the fashion came later to Rhode Island, perhaps in the late 1760s.<sup>7</sup> In 1769 John Goddard billed Newport merchant Aaron Lopez for “2 Mahogany Square Tables 3 feet 9 . . . fluting legs . . . 1 Dollar.”<sup>8</sup> Rhode Island furniture makers stop-fluted straight legs more often than makers in other regions. Numerous examples of dining, card, side, pier, and Pembroke tables with this architecturally derived ornament are known.<sup>9</sup>

Rhode Island cabinetmakers rarely, if ever, incorporated the ruffles, floral streamers, and asymmetrical shells typically seen in Philadelphia, Boston, and other

urban centers, but there are late Rococo elements here: the serpentine and C-scroll design motifs of the gallery are seen in the openwork detail on silver pieces from the 1770s by the New York silversmith Myer Myers.<sup>10</sup> The fine gadrooning (convex curves forming a decorative band) at the lower edge of the stretchers is also like that on Myers’s silver, as well as many other examples of colonial silver, including the so-called feather-edges on flatware.<sup>11</sup> The present catalogue includes two other examples of furniture with gadrooning, a bureau table (cat. 55) and a chair (cat. 81), both thought to have been made just after the American Revolution. About a dozen Rhode Island Pembroke tables from a similar period have gadrooned stretchers related to those on the china table.<sup>12</sup> Although Rhode Island furniture makers rarely worked in the full-blown Rococo style, the elaborate ornament on this table is a step in that direction. —PEK

#### Cat. 82

27¼ × 34½ × 20⅝ in. (69.2 × 87.6 × 52.1 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: “B [later],” in chalk, on underside of top; “X,” in graphite, on underside of top and on one of the upper braces; mathematical figures, in graphite, on underside of top; “M [in script, twice],” in graphite, on underside of top

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 73, no. 5 (May 1958): ill. inside front cover; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 10:68, fig. 7; Cooper 1980, 142, fig. 160; Moses and Moses 1981, 1158, figs. 10–10a; Moses 1984, 157, figs. 3.79, 3.79a–b; A. Sack 1987, 257, fig. 7; Richards et al. 1997, 244–45, no. 125, ill.; Heckscher 2005, 152–53, no. 36, ill.

PROVENANCE: Possibly John Townsend (1733–1809), Newport, 1785–1790; by descent to his granddaughter Mrs. William P. Bullock (née Phila Feke Townsend, 1812–1866), Providence; by descent to her daughter Rhoda Peckham Bullock (1852–1940), Providence; by descent to her nephew Thomas Harris, Providence; by descent to his wife, Mrs. Thomas Harris (née Dorothy Arnold, 1898–unknown), Providence,

Warwick, Cranston, and Saunderstown, R.I.; sold to Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn.; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1958; sold to Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Museum Purchase, 1958, inv. no. 1958.37 [RIF1423]

### Notes

1. Heckscher 2005, 152, citing a letter from Mrs. Thomas Harris to Harold Sack, April 18, 1958, accession files, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del.
2. *Ibid.*, 209–12, traces the descent of John Townsend's furniture to family members. In her will of 1856 his daughter Mary left "all the household furniture" to her nephew Christopher Townsend, who in turn bequeathed it to his sister Ellen Townsend. This line of descent would not account for the present table and the chairs descending to his son Solomon's daughter Phila Feke Townsend. If the present table is the one bequeathed to Mary, it is possible she may have conveyed it and the chairs to her niece Phila Feke Townsend before she wrote her will.
3. *Ibid.*, 140–51, nos. 32–35, ill. [RIF309, RIF1396, RIF1400, and RIF1401].
4. *Ibid.*, 154–55, no. 37, ill. [RIF801].
5. See Sotheby's, New York, January 30–31 and February 1, 1986, lot 565 [RIF2942]. When this table was offered for sale, it lacked the fretwork gallery.
6. Heckscher 2005, 152–53, no. 36, ill.
7. See, for example, Chippendale 1966, pl. 56.
8. Cited in Heckscher 2005, 140.
9. The Rhode Island Furniture Archive records more than two-dozen dining tables, almost two-dozen Pembroke tables, about four-dozen card tables, and assorted side tables. In addition, chairs with stop-fluted legs were also made in Rhode Island.
10. Barquist 2001, 174–80, nos. 78–81, ill.
11. For an example of Newport flatware with feather edges, see the spoon by Jonathan Otis in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1985.84.589.
12. The Rhode Island Furniture Archive includes more than a dozen Pembroke tables with pierced and gadrooned stretchers. See the unpublished one in a private collection [RIF224]; Sotheby's, New York, January 19, 2002, lot 56 [RIF410]; Carpenter 1954, 85, no. 57, ill. [RIF411]; Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1966.2 [RIF588]; Sotheby's, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 235 [RIF654]; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 39.110 [RIF748]; Winterthur Museum,

Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.2147 [RIF1396]; Heckscher 2005, 148–49, no. 34, ill. [RIF1400]; Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Boston, inv. no. 15.2.1 [RIF1401]; "Kenneth E. Tuttle Antiques advertisement," *Antiques* 167, no. 5 (May 2005): 14, ill. [RIF2625]; Sotheby's, New York, June 26, 1987, lot 201 [RIF2853]; Ott 1965a, 62–63, no. 45, ill. [RIF4201]; and Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Boston, inv. no. 15.2.2 [RIF4228].

A small number of high-back Windsor armchairs of cross-stretcher pattern are in institutional and private collections. Some examples probably were made as additional seating for the Redwood Library in Newport after the library's initial purchase in 1764 of a dozen low-back Windsor armchairs (see Evans essay, fig. 1). Like the low-back chair, this design is unusual in several respects and draws heavily on formal seating, namely the roundabout chair.

The use of cross stretchers, almost unknown in other Windsor work, derives from the roundabout, as does the use of tapered-columnar turned work in the stretchers,



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 83, showing proper-left arm terminal

arm posts, and spindles. Another feature borrowed from roundabout design is the three-piece arm rail construction, here formed of two arm pieces that butt together at the center back and an ogee-end top piece. The two layers are secured with rosehead nails or pins driven in from the underside of the arm rail. One or two rosehead nails also secure the stretchers at the center crossing. A small projection on the outside face at the juncture of the rounded arm pads and rail (fig. 1) is a subtle feature common to early Rhode Island Windsors, whether of high- or low-back design.<sup>1</sup>

The ogee-end crest, another unusual early feature seen in this American Windsor design, mimics the profile of the top piece on the arm rail. Termination of the short spindles and arm posts within the arm rail follows the prototype and likely informed the internal socketing of the legs within the seat plank. The latter continued as a feature in part of Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut work through the end of the eighteenth century. Similar to early Philadelphia work, the lower edges of the D-shaped plank are deeply chamfered, although the front corners flare outward almost imperceptibly, in the manner of some English work. English chairmaking may also have influenced the use of a pronounced center crease extending backward on the top surface of the seat from the front pommel, a feature that continued in some Rhode Island production through the end of the eighteenth century. English design again dictated the basic profile of the chair legs, which was modified in Rhode Island to form more graceful feet.<sup>2</sup>

Philadelphia and English Windsors were known in and around Rhode Island by the early 1760s.<sup>3</sup> Newport harbor, one of the best in the American colonies, was



capable of receiving the largest vessels and offering a safe anchorage in all seasons. Imported goods from England arrived on American and English vessels, much of it for redistribution along the American coast, since commerce was the lifeblood of Newport in the pre-Revolutionary War years. When Long Wharf was widened in 1763 to provide additional warehouse space, sixty-six other piers were already spread along the shore for nearly a mile and a half. Charles Blaskowitz's plan of Newport (see Evans essay, fig. 5) identifies the wharves of many of the town's merchants, including those of John Banister and Abraham Redwood. During the 1740s, Banister and other merchants "opened a direct connection with London . . . to make them selves Independent" of Boston. Redwood, meanwhile, shipped sugar from his Antigua plantation to Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Boston, and Bristol, England.<sup>4</sup> The books donated by Redwood to the library named in his honor likely were purchased in London, a city that also provided him with an excellent gardener and a "Liveried English coach man."<sup>5</sup> Thus, Banister, Redwood, and other merchants had substantial contacts in London from an early date and were likely aware of the new wooden-bottom garden seat called a Windsor chair. Redwood was among a number of merchants who owned country estates with cultivated gardens in the vicinity of Newport. When Abraham Redwood, Jr., visited London, he wrote to his father saying, "I have seen all parts of this city and the villages around and . . . some of the fine gardens."<sup>6</sup> He also inquired about the status of his father's new summerhouse, which, when completed, would have needed some type of seating. —NGE

*Cat. 83*

42 7/8 × 26 5/8 × 17 5/16 in. (108.9 × 67.6 × 44 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1994a, II, fig. 9; Evans 1996a, 238, fig. 6-1

PROVENANCE: Winsor White (1901-1975), Plymouth, Mass. Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969), Winterthur, Del.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1959, inv. no. 1959.1667 [RIF1240]

*Notes*

1. For a Rhode Island roundabout chair with the features discussed here, see Christie's, New York, October 3, 2007, lot 90 [RIF2350].
2. For prototype Philadelphia Windsor chair seats and prototype English chair legs, see Evans 1996a, figs. 3-3, 3-6, and figs. 1-20 to 1-23. For comparable high-back Windsor armchairs in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive, see *Israel Sack* 1969-92, 2:295, no. 719, ill. [RIF891]; "James M. Hansen advertisement," *Antiques* 117, no. 1 (January 1980): 63, ill. [RIF2455]; Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 2006.1127 [RIF2907]; "George E. Scholellkopf advertisement," *Antiques* 104, no. 5 (November 1973): 755, ill. [RIF4429]; and Keno Auctions, New York (sale held Stamford, Conn.), May 1-2, 2010, lot 451 [RIF4812].
3. For an early Philadelphia high-back Windsor with a large scroll-end crest owned by Moses Brown of Providence, see Evans 1996a, fig. 3-12. An English high-back Windsor of about 1760 with the same baluster legs as the Newport Windsors (see Evans 1996a, fig. 1-23) provided a model for a pair of American Windsors owned in neighboring Long Island by William Floyd; for the Floyd chairs, see Failey 1998, 69, no. 78, ill. The Floyd Windsors are altered only by the addition of nodules to the spindles and swelled tips to the stretchers. For another pair of American Windsors identical to the Floyd chairs, which have American butternut seats (determined by microanalysis) and were owned in Norwich, Connecticut, by Samuel Huntington, see Evans 1996a, 291, fig. 6-97.
4. For information on Newport harbor wharves and on Banister's and Redwood's trade, see Bridenbaugh 1955, 46-47, 71, and 247.
5. See Ott 1981, 670. For Redwood's English coachman, see Bridenbaugh 1955, 146.
6. See Bolhouse 1972, 29.

## 84

*Fan-Back Windsor Side Chair*

Rhode Island, 1790–1800

Yellow poplar, maple (microanalysis), and other woods

The fan-back chair was the first Windsor side chair introduced to the consumer market in America; its name probably derived from the upright segmental shape of a partially open fan. First constructed in Philadelphia in the late 1770s after the British evacuated the city, the form may have reached Rhode Island directly, given the strong ties between the two mercantile communities. New York was bypassed because until 1783 it was occupied by the British. Instead, the sack-back chair continued as the staple Windsor design in New York until the late 1780s, when chairmakers there began construction of the bow-back side chair and the continuous-bow armchair, both of which influenced Rhode Island design.

The present chair was the product of a very able craftsman, one with an eye for proportion, harmony, and detail. The substantial bend of the crest follows the curve of the seat back. In framing the chair the craftsman splayed the front legs considerably more than those at the back. When viewed head-on, each leg is distinct, placing emphasis on the turnings and, in turn, their coordination with the back posts above the seat. The crest, which displays a good sweep through the center, has just the right lift at the rounded terminals. An unusual feature of the back posts is the short neck at the base of the long baluster, in place of the usual hollow, or spool, turning. In other Rhode Island Windsor work a similar hollow sometimes occurs at the base of the leg balusters in place of the spool turnings. The feature also is found in the arm posts of early work by Ebenezer Tracy, Sr., of neighboring New London County, Connecticut. The overall production of the Tracy



family had a visible impact on Windsor work in the greater Norwich area, so it is not unrealistic to think that some features were carried farther afield.

The undercarriage of this chair has two special features of note. One is the exceedingly small tips of the feet, so delicate it is amazing they have survived intact. Another is the slim tapered tips of the medial stretcher, a feature that appears to have been directly influenced by formal seating. Similar stretcher tips occur in earlier eighteenth-century side chairs and armchairs made from fine cabinet woods, such as mahogany, and ranging in origin from eastern Massachusetts to Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Only one other fan-back chair of similar design is known.<sup>1</sup> That chair has a reddish-brown outer paint coat, which covers the original green. Reading the paint history of the present chair, its dark finish covers a reddish-brown coat. Under that is what little remains of an original blue-green coat over grayish-white. In the eighteenth century and later, light gray on raw wood was the standard primer for chairs finished in either green or light blue paint.

—NGE

*Cat. 84*

36 ¼ × 21 ¼ × 15 ½ in. (92.1 × 53.5 × 39.4 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1996a, 270, fig. 6-62

PROVENANCE: Private collection, 1996 [RIF2133]

*Note*

1. The chair was on display in the booth of Peter H. Eaton at the ADA/Historic Deerfield Antiques Show, Massachusetts, in October 2009 [RIF6198].

85

*Sack-Back Windsor Armchair*

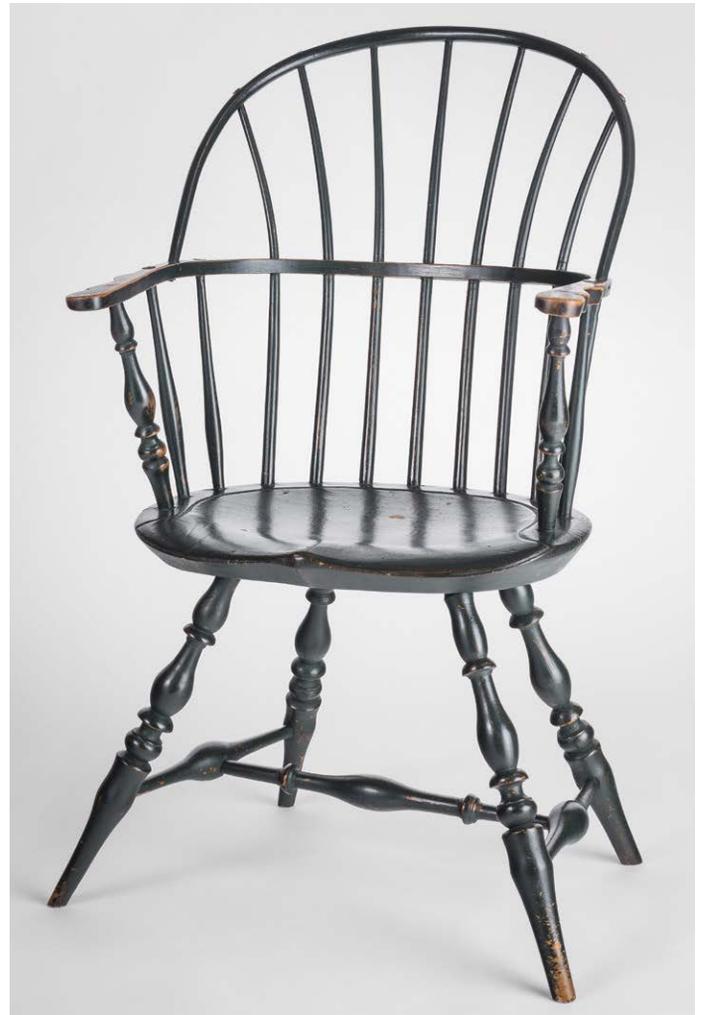
Rhode Island, probably Providence, 1790–1800

White pine, soft maple, and white oak (microanalysis)

Few Windsor chairs display as much vigor in their structure as this classic sack-back design.<sup>1</sup> It appears to be bursting with energy from top to bottom. The bends of the three long spindles on either side of the center back spindle have the force of coiled springs. The energy continues in the precise modeling of the seat and the bold splay of the legs. The same boldness is visible in the flat, scrolling terminals of the arm rail (fig. 1). Several related Windsors have bulky, carved-knuckle arm terminals that visually anchor the design to the ground, negating the sprightliness found in the present example.

The seat also has several features of note. The legs socket inside the plank, a characteristic associated with a body of Windsor work produced in Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut. When internal seat socketing occurs elsewhere in the eighteenth century, it probably represents the work of a craftsman who migrated from this region. Only after the turn of the nineteenth century and the introduction of new designs in Windsor seating—square backs, simulated bamboo turnings, and box-style stretchers—did internal leg socketing become the norm. The spindle platform is set off from the deep scoop of the seat top by a precisely gouged narrow groove that appears to terminate forward of the arm posts at the edge of the seat. In reality the groove continues partway across the seat front. The pommel at the center front, which is accented by ridges both above and below the edge, is a bold interpretation found on occasion in other Rhode Island work.

The turnings also are out of the ordinary. The master turner had perfect control over his tools and material and an advanced sense of design. The deep



cutting between individual leg elements makes each a distinct entity, yet the rhythmic sequence of hollows and rounds permits one unit to flow into the next to form a unified whole. The legs are shouldered, or thickened, where they meet the seat to form stops that prevent the internal tips from breaking through the top surface. The bold collars of the baluster and spool turnings harmonize with those of the arm posts and are repeated in the prominent collar-form rings of the medial stretcher. A distinctive interpretation of the swelled taper occurs in the feet. The swell pops out as a small bulge, and its shouldered top deeply undercuts the adjacent thick ring. —NGE



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 85, showing proper-right arm terminal

*Cat. 85*

39½ × 23¾ × 15½ in. (100.3 × 58.9 × 39.4 cm)

INSCRIPTION: “[W]hen Rev. David Tenney Kimball / began house keeping he brought two / Windsor chairs and the tall clock wh[ich] / had belonged to his father. / One chair was given to D. A. Kimball / [One chair was given to] E. K. Gray S / The clock was inherited by E. K. G. S. / under will of Mrs. Mary S. C. Peabody,” in ink, written on paper label glued to underside of seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1996a, 261, fig. 6-40

PROVENANCE: Rev. David Tenney Kimball (1782–1860), Ipswich, Mass., probably 1806. Ernest B. LaGrange (1879–1970), Wilton, Conn., before 1937; Charles K. Davis (1889–1968), Fairfield, Conn., 1937; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Gift of Charles K. Davis, 1954, inv. no. 1954.0074.007 [RIF1292]

*Note*

1. The sack-back Windsor is identified by an arched bow at the upper back that anchors into the arm rail. The origin of the term is obscure, although the shape of the back was likely seen to approximate a filled sack. There are no close examples to this sack-back chair in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive, although two chairs that have turnings out of the ordinary are better matches in their seat shaping and/or long spindle bends; see Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Va., inv. no. 1930-65 [RIF4212], and a writing-arm Windsor chair in a private collection, illustrated in Evans 1997, fig. 1-12 [RIF3663].

*Sack-Back Windsor Armchair*

Joseph Stone (1761–1833)

East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1785–98

Ash or hickory, pine, and birch(?)

This sack-back chair is a rare example of Rhode Island Windsor chairmaking because it is branded on the seat bottom with the name of the maker, Joseph Stone (fig. 1), a circumstance otherwise hardly known in the colony. Over the years the chair has suffered moderate damage: to the arm terminals; to the proper-right stretcher at its connection with the front leg; and to the bottoms of all of the feet. Rockers (not original) were installed and later removed. Rabbits, or right-angle pieces, removed from the outside faces of the front feet indicate the installation method; rabbits on the rear legs were cut off.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of this chair is the profile of the baluster turning of the legs, a type of slender tenpin shape that is longer and fuller through the body than most balusters. The profile appears in a small number of Rhode Island chairs, each without apparent relationship to the present chair except for an unmarked fan-back side chair attributed to Stone (fig. 2). Comparison of this fan-back chair with the present chair is striking. The elements of the legs and stretchers are close in profile. The elongated back posts and shorter arm posts of the two chairs compare well. The spindles swell distinctively in their lower part and are visually similar. The crest of the side chair is unusual because the rounded terminals spring from a ruler-straight base rather than from a base that gently curves upward toward the terminals (compare, for example, cat. 84). Distinctive late eighteenth-century Rhode Island shaping at the back edge of the seat is flat, then chamfered.

Joseph Stone was born in East Greenwich in 1761 and worked there from about 1782 to 1798. He first purchased land “with a dwelling house” in East Greenwich in 1790. The deed identifies him as a chairmaker. Five years later,



in 1795, Stone sold that property the same day he acquired another property and house bordering Main Street. That property was sold to an innkeeper in 1798, when Stone apparently left East Greenwich. He eventually settled in Genesee County, New York.<sup>1</sup>

Several bills detailing Stone’s work survive. An early customer was Christopher Spencer, who in 1788 purchased six Windsor chairs. From 1790 to 1795, Stone did work for Capt. William Arnold of East Greenwich, which consisted of bottoming many chairs, making a



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 86, showing brand on underside of seat



Fig. 2. Attributed to Joseph Stone, *Fan-Back Windsor Side Chair*, East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1788–98. Basswood, maple, and oak, 38¼ × 20⅞ × 17½ in. (97.2 × 53.1 × 44.5 cm). Private collection. [RIF2113]

few repairs to “green” chairs, providing or repairing small textile equipment, and “two days painting on the Schooner.” In 1797 another local customer, Lydia Greene, purchased “1/2 dozen greene Chares.” Presumably there were other customers and other accounts, although perhaps not sufficient patronage to encourage Stone to remain in East Greenwich.<sup>2</sup>

Associated with this sack-back chair is a history of ownership by Dr. Elijah Woodward Carpenter of Bernardston, Massachusetts. Census records place Carpenter in Bernardston in 1820 and 1830, although his name is absent from the 1840 census. By what route the chair reached Carpenter’s hands is unknown. —NGE

*Cat. 86*

34⅛ × 25⅛ × 15½ in. (86.7 × 63.8 × 39.4 cm)

MARK: “J. STONE,” branded on underside of seat

INSCRIPTION: “Dr. Carpenter’s chair / died 1855,” in graphite, on underside of seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1996a, 266, fig. 6-51

PROVENANCE: Dr. Elijah Woodward Carpenter (1788–1855), Bernardston, Mass.; probably given to Charles H. Tyler (1835–1892), Bernardston, Mass.; Memorial Hall Museum, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Mass., Gift of Charles H. Tyler, 1873, inv. no. 1873.32 [RIF2112]

*Notes*

1. Joseph Stone Property Records, 1790–98, East Greenwich Deeds, vol. 10, pp. 173–74 343–44, 453, Office of the Town Clerk, East Greenwich, R.I.
2. Joseph Stone, invoice to Christopher Spencer, East Greenwich, R.I., December 19, 1788, Rufus Spencer Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, cited in Ott 1969a, 23; and William Arnold, accounts with Joseph Stone, 1790–95, and Joseph Stone, invoice to Lydia Greene, 1797, East Greenwich, R.I., A. C. and R. W. Greene Collection, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, cited in *ibid.*

## 87

*Bow-Back Windsor Armchair*

Providence, ca. 1792–1800

Mahogany, pine, maple, and ash

Within a few years of the introduction of the bow-back design in America at Philadelphia in the late 1780s, Rhode Island Windsor chairmakers introduced the same chair-back pattern—an arched design consisting of a tall and slim steamed and bent bow that anchors in the seat to form a side chair or, with the addition of “elbow pieces,” an armchair. Early Rhode Island examples had nodular (swelled) spindles that soon were replaced with plain spindles. There followed this handsome design—with turned ornamental balusters on the spindles across the back and in a pair of bracing spindles anchored in a rear seat extension—which has become a Rhode Island Windsor classic. The arms of the chair scroll forward in the vertical plane, the top surface marked by a scratch bead, or fine groove, near either edge that continues the scratch beads of the bow face. Patrons could choose between painted arms or arms fashioned from mahogany or another cabinet wood stained to contrast with the painted surfaces of the chair. The choice of swelled-taper feet, as seen in the present example, over plain tapered feet probably also represented a particular option. Special features (such as ornamental baluster spindles), extra labor, and fine materials increased the cost of a chair, as did the choice of a stuffed seat covered with an upholstery fabric. Chairs for stuffing were made with semifinished seat planks having flat, vertical sides and frequently tool-marked top surfaces (fig. 1).

Chairs of the present design, with and without arms, appear to have been influenced by Windsor seating originally of limited New York production, perhaps entirely concentrated in the hands of Thomas and William Ash.<sup>1</sup> John Brown of Providence owned a pair (or more) of labeled Ash side chairs of this pattern.<sup>2</sup>

The Ash brothers may have taken the idea for the tiny baluster turnings of the spindles from early Rhode Island cross-stretcher chairs of the type made in the 1760s and 1770s for the Redwood Library (see Evans essay, fig. 1). The four known chairs made in this design by the brothers have semifinished seats for stuffing.



Fig. 1. *Bow-Back Windsor Side Chair*, probably Providence, ca. 1795–1802. White pine, maple, and ash,  $36\frac{1}{2} \times 16 \times 16\frac{3}{4}$  in. (92.7 × 40.6 × 42.5 cm). Private collection. [RIF2148]



The Providence attribution of the present Windsor and similar chairs seems justified by known backgrounds of the chairs in the group. A set of two armchairs and six side chairs first owned by Samuel Scott, Jr., of Providence descended in the family to the last private owner. Another Providence resident, Sullivan Dorr, a China trade merchant, owned a slightly later armchair of this pattern with a nine-spindle back and a seat for stuffing. Other bow-back armchairs with baluster spindles bear the brand “AGCase” in two sizes of uppercase serif letters on the seat bottoms. The brand is that of Allen G. Case of Providence, who is listed in city directories as a carpenter or house carpenter from 1826 through 1855 (and later, without trade designation). The same brand appears on one of a set of six striped maple fancy chairs from the 1830s or early 1840s, which have large angular crests and angular back splats with seats made for caning. How Case acquired the Windsor chairs and why he branded them remain a mystery.<sup>3</sup> —NGE

*Cat. 87*

37½ × 17 × 17¾ in. (95.3 × 43.2 × 45.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Stone 1967, 211, ill.; Rodriguez Roque 1984, 230–31, no. 107, ill.

PROVENANCE: John C. Spring, Boston. Israel Sack, Inc., New York; sold to Polly Mariner Stone (1898–1995) and Stanley Stone (1896–1987), Fox Point, Wis., 1951; Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, Bequest of Stanley Stone, 1987, inv. no. 1951.13 [RIF595]

*Notes*

1. For two armchairs of the baluster-spindle pattern made by the Ash brothers, one labeled, see “Mabel K. Rogers advertisement,” *Antiques* 16, no. 2 (August 1929): 147, ill.
2. One of a pair of labeled Ash side chairs of this pattern owned by John Brown was illustrated in Cooper 1973a, 335.
3. The two armchairs from a set of eight that descended in the Samuel Scott, Jr., family and the chair owned by Sullivan Dorr are illustrated in Evans 1996a, figs. 6–72 [RIF2486] and 6–74 [RIF2147]. The Tillou Gallery of Litchfield, Connecticut, advertised a set of twelve “AGCase” Windsor bow-back armchairs, several branded, in *Antiques* 96, no. 4 (October 1969): 453 [RIF889]. A single bow-back armchair with the same brand is in the Art Institute of Chicago, inv. no. 1950.1711 [RIF6036]. For a similar bow-back armchair, without brand, see Greenlaw 1974, 174–75, no. 149, ill. [RIF166]. A set of six striped maple side chairs, one branded, sold at Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Bolton), January 25, 1998, lot 240 [RIF6202].

*Continuous-Bow Windsor Armchair (from a set of six)*

Rhode Island, probably Providence, 1794–98

White pine, soft maple, and hickory (microanalysis)



Although the continuous-bow armchair is related to the bow-back armchair, it is distinctly different. The one-piece bow, which arches across the back, is bent forward at the ends to form arms, and the entire bow structure is elevated above the seat and supported on the spindles and arm posts. The first Rhode Island continuous-bow Windsor, which had plain tapered feet (see Evans essay, fig. 14), was followed by an example with swelled feet, as seen here. In concert with the bulging turnings of the upper leg, each swelled foot on this chair completes a rhythmic sequence of elements from leg top to bottom. Well-formed collars marking the tops of the baluster and spool turnings often are found in Rhode Island Windsor work of the eighteenth century. Just as distinctive is the treatment of the terminals of the bow as one-piece cylindrical scrolls in place of the common flat-arm terminal (see, for example, Evans essay, fig. 14). The scroll feature was adapted from the bow-back armchair designed with vertically scrolling arms (see cat. 87). The bow face is flat with a scratch bead near either edge, a common feature throughout New England work. Despite the structural delicacy of these chairs, bracing spindles, which provide chair-back support (as on cat. 87), are uncommon in Rhode Island armchairs of continuous-bow design. The back of the seat retains just a hint of a chamfer along the lower edge, an occasional feature of late eighteenth-century Windsor production in the state. Several continuous-bow armchairs of this pattern have embellished spindles across the lower back and under the arms, the turned work mimicking the profiles of the arm posts.<sup>1</sup>

The present chair is part of an intact set of six chairs collected sufficiently early to have remained together. They were purchased by Henry Francis du Pont through a New York agent in 1928 at the auction of the Morris Berry collection and described as “Six Windsors of the most desirable and attractive type.” The present green, although handsome, is not the original finish. Like so many eighteenth-century Windsors, the chairs in this set have been painted many times.

The white pine of the seat is the common wood in Rhode Island for Windsor planks, though occasionally yellow poplar (tulip poplar) or chestnut was used. Use of ash or basswood (see cat. 86, fig. 2), rare selections, probably was based on local accessibility. Maple usually was chosen for seats in the large early chairs, and cottonwood (true poplar) was a rare selection in the Connecticut–Rhode Island border region. Legs commonly are maple, as in the present example. —NGE

*Cat. 88*

36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 20 × 17 in. (93.3 × 50.8 × 43.2 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1996a, 278, fig. 6-78

PROVENANCE: Morris Berry (ca. 1886–after 1940), Plainville, Conn.; consigned to Anderson Galleries, New York, 1928; sold to Collings and Collings, New York, as agent for Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), Winterthur, Del.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1960, inv. no. 1960.575 [RIF2151]

*Note*

1. For comparable chairs to the present example, see the continuous-bows in Safran 2003, 2-B, ill. [RIF60]; and *Bernard and S. Dean Levy* 1974–2003, 2:70, ill. [RIF5475]. For an example with embellished spindles, see Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Va., inv. no. 1930-64 [RIF159].

*Bow-Back Windsor Side Chair (from a set of six)*

Connecticut–Rhode Island border region, ca. 1797–1805

White pine, birch, and ash (microanalysis)

In 1929 Henry Francis du Pont purchased a set of six chairs, including the present example, from the auction of the Frederick Willington Ayer collection. The set belongs to a small group of Windsor seating that makes precise regional identification impossible, having both Connecticut and Rhode Island characteristics. In a previous publication, the present author placed this group in a special category labeled Connecticut–Rhode Island border work, in lieu of a more precise geographic identification.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, a rationale for the dual characteristics of this group came to hand in the published travels of Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College (1795–1817). Dwight’s description of the border township of Stonington, Connecticut, in about

1800, provides a reason for this fusion of Connecticut and Rhode Island features in Windsor chair work.

Dwight wrote,

The farms . . . contain from sixty to three hundred acres each. Almost all of them are cultivated by tenants. A great part of these are poor people from Rhode Island, who make Stonington their halfway house in their progress toward the new settlements. Accustomed . . . to labor hard on a sterile soil, and to live on very scanty means of subsistence, they come with their families to the rich lands of Stonington and take small farms or parts of small farms on lease. Here, with . . . industry and . . . frugality, they gradually amass money enough to purchase farms in the wilderness. They then leave their habitation to successors from the same state. . . . In this manner a considerable part of the inhabitants of this township are almost annually changed.<sup>2</sup>

The Rhode Island characteristics of this chair are bold: a ridged pommel at the center front of the seat adjacent to a well-scooped circular depression for sitting; rear seat edges that are flat, then chamfered. The Connecticut influence is more subtle. Although this set and several other chairs have blocked feet and stretchers marked by deep creases, it is the slim silhouette of the mid-leg section that actually links these chairs to Connecticut and the late bamboo work of the Tracy family.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 89, showing graining on top of seat



The set of chairs is uncommon in having an even number of spindles across the back; most Windsor bow-back chairs have an odd number, and those that have an even number generally have eight sticks instead of the ten seen here. The original two-color paint scheme is exposed, never having been painted over. The set is painted medium Prussian blue on the undercarriage, entire back, and spindle platform. The top surfaces and edges of the seats are grain painted, simulating a combination of wood grain and whimsy: The first coat is a brick red, probably Venetian red. A second, thinner brownish coat is likely umber. The actual graining was done with glazes, medium-dark brown and probably Venetian red, forming a looping pattern on the seat top using the exposed leg tips as eyes (fig. 1). Still more unusual is the existence of another set of eight chairs, each with a ten-spindle back and two-color exposed original finish described as blue and red.<sup>3</sup>

Of the last two Windsor side chairs in the eighteenth-century market—the fan-back and the bow-back patterns—the bow-back chair became the more popular one for dining purposes. The arched, bow-back seating fit neatly and compactly around the dining table, eliminating a problem found with the fan-back design (see cat. 84), best described as “locking horns”. —NGE

### Cat. 89

38 × 16 3/4 × 16 3/16 in. (96.5 × 42.5 × 41.1 cm)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: New York 1929, 105, lot 423, ill.; Evans 1996a, 320, fig. 6-154

PROVENANCE: Frederick Willington Ayer (1855–1936), Bangor, Maine, before 1929; consigned to the American Art Galleries, New York, May 3–4, 1929, lot 423; sold to Collings and Collings, New York, as agent for Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), Winterthur, Del.; Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1969, inv. no. 1969.1563.2 [RIF2230]

### Notes

1. Evans 1996a, 320, fig. 6-154.
2. Dwight 1969, 3:11.
3. The set of eight chairs was sold from the Justine Milliken collection; see the auction review in *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, October 6, 1978, p. 15 [RIF6280]. The same set was later advertised; see “Stephen Score, Inc., advertisement,” *Maine Antique Digest* (May 1980): 21-B, ill.

90

*Slat-Back Windsor Side Chair (from a pair)*

Christian M. Nestell (1793–1880, active 1820–36)

Providence, 1820–22

Pine, maple, and ring-porous wood (hickory?)

The professional training of Christian M. Nestell began in 1811 and 1812, when he enrolled for three semesters in an unidentified school or academy in New York, the city of his birth. A rare inscribed drawing/copybook illustrating eighty colored decorative designs survives from this period.<sup>1</sup> Nestell appeared in records again in 1820, when on February 17 he paid Daniel and Samuel Proud of Providence \$15 for “Quarter Shop Rent.”<sup>2</sup> That date was within nine days of Nestell’s first known newspaper advertisement, which announced his ornamental painting and gilding business and sale of “a general assortment of painted and gilt Windsor CHAIRS.”<sup>3</sup> The store site, formerly occupied by the Proud brothers, was “opposite the Rev. Mr. Wilson’s meeting-house” on the west side of the Providence River. A paper label on the bottom of this chair bears the same address and general information (fig. 1). Nestell was indebted to the Prouds over the next several years for minor chair repairs, bottoming, the addition of rockers to chair feet, and the purchase of several framed chairs for painting and ornamenting. One of Nestell’s customers was Rev. Mr. Wilson.

Nestell’s next and last-known advertisement dates to 1822, when he moved his “Chair Ware Room” across the river to 112 South Main Street (fig. 2). The two advertisements and chair label illustrate a woodcut of an ornamented Windsor armchair bearing Nestell’s initials, indicating the woodcut was not a stock printer’s image. The 1822 advertisement identifies the source of some of Nestell’s stock-in-trade: “Fancy Chairs of the Newark make.” Only two Windsor chair patterns can be associated with Nestell: the slat-back pattern of the present labeled chair, which is one of a pair, and a

slat-back chair of latter pattern with stenciled identification on the seat bottom.

This Nestell chair bears its original peach-colored finish and painted decoration in red and dark green. During the early nineteenth century chairmakers introduced square-back Windsor chairs such as this with various shaped crest pieces. The new undercarriage of Windsor seating was influenced by the box-style stretchers of the woven-bottom fancy chair, a bracing system consisting of four stretchers forming a box between the four legs. Three-section simulated bamboo legs (see Evans essay, fig. 15) were introduced during the late 1790s to fancy and Windsor seating, along with the box-style stretcher system. During the early nineteenth century four-section bamboo-turned legs, as seen here, quickly replaced the three-section design. Many back posts were shaved flat on the face to receive decoration,

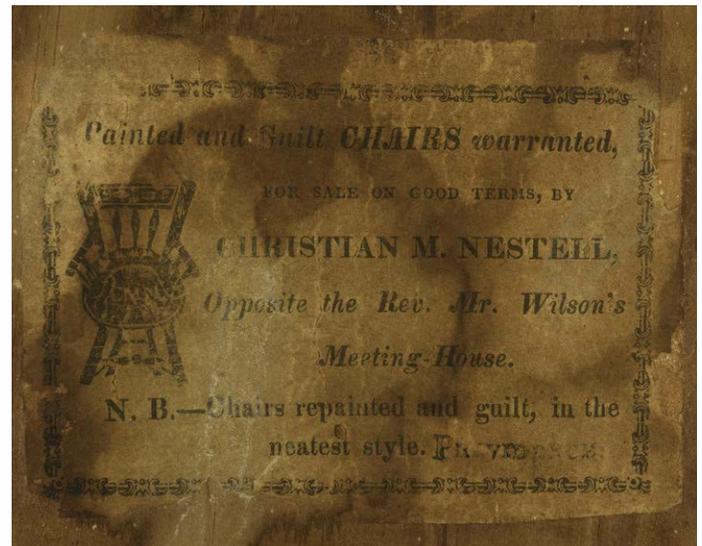


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 90, showing label on underside of seat



and ornamental spindles were an option, including the arrowlike form, known as “flat sticks,” of the present example. The seat of this chair retains moderate shaping; shallow grooving on the top surface adds subtle detail.

The present chair can be dated to within two years because the label bears Nestell’s first Providence address. No direct correlation exists between the decoration on this chair and designs in the drawing book. The second Nestell chair, which has lost its original finish, is similar in crest type and undercarriage; however, the seat edges are thick and flat. Four slim spindles are punctuated by a small ball turning, and the chair bottom is stenciled with the Main Street address.<sup>4</sup>

Several leading citizens of Providence are known to have patronized Nestell, namely Richard Ward Greene, U.S. district attorney for Rhode Island, and two China trade merchants, Edward Carrington and Sullivan Dorr.<sup>5</sup> Nestell remained in business until 1835/36, when

he sold his shop and became clerk of the Merchants Bank in Providence. As a young man Nestell became associated with Freemasonry, joining Mount Vernon Lodge, No. 4, in 1820 and continuing as a staunch supporter throughout his life. At his death in 1880, when a new lodge was forming, it was named the Nestell Lodge, No. 37, in his memory. —NGE

*Cat. 90*

33¼ × 17¾ × 15 in. (84.5 × 45.1 × 38.1 cm)

MARK: An image of a chair and “Painted and Gilt CHAIRS warranted, / FOR SALE ON GOOD TERMS, BY / CHRISTIAN M. NESTELL, / Opposite the Rev. Mr. Wilson’s / Meeting-House. / N. B. Chairs repainted and gilt, in the / neatest style. PROVIDENCE,” printed within decorative border, on paper label glued to underside of seat

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Evans 1996a, 423, fig. 7-3; Evans 1998, 103, fig. 5; New York 2012a, 94-95, lot 173, ill.

PROVENANCE: Joseph K. Ott (1929-1994), Providence, by 1981; by descent to his wife, Anne Northrup Ott (1929-2015), Providence, 1994; by descent to her son Joshua Ott, Burbank, Calif.; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 20, 2012, lot 173 (unsold); Joshua Ott [RIFI244]

*Notes*

1. Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del. For an account of Nestell’s training and career, see Evans 1998.
2. Nestell’s accounts with the Proud brothers are in the Daniel and Samuel Proud Daybook and Ledger, Providence, 1810-34, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
3. “Christian M. Nestell advertisement,” *Providence Patriot*, February 26, 1820.
4. For the second chair, the location of which is unknown, see Evans 1998, 103, ill. [RIFI245].
5. Christian M. Nestell, invoice to R. W. Greene, Providence, April 3, 1827, A. C. and R. W. Greene Collection, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; Nestell’s bills to Edward Carrington are summarized in Ott 1969c, 118; and for Nestell’s work for Sullivan Dorr, see Cayford 1961, 141.

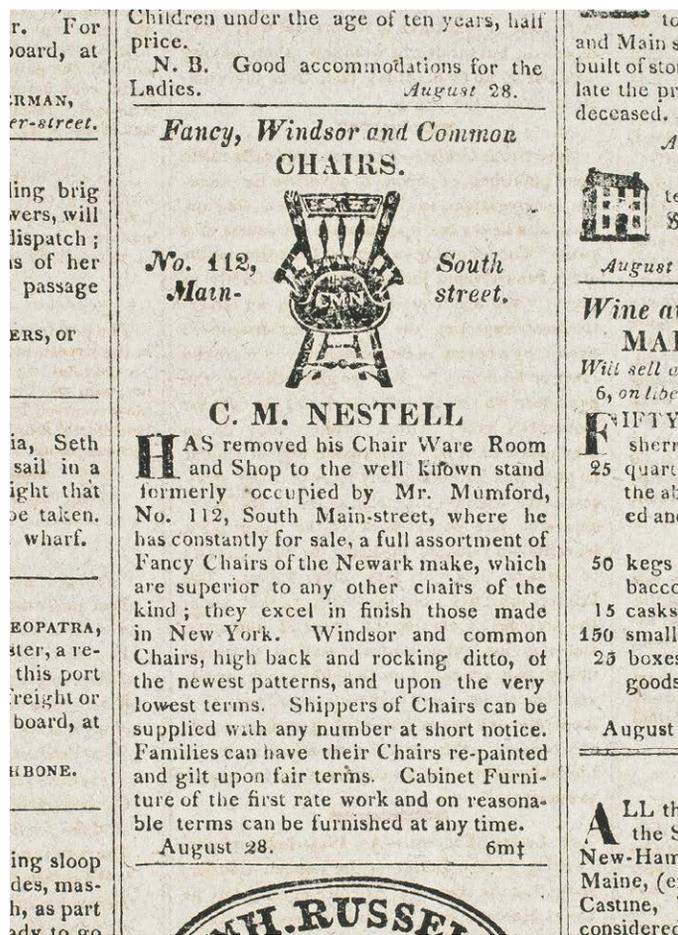


Fig. 2. “Christian M. Nestell advertisement,” *Providence Patriot*, August 28, 1822

*Pembroke Table*

Holmes Weaver (1769–1848)

Newport, 1795–1815

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and light and dark wood inlay (primary);  
cherry and pine (secondary)

Holmes Weaver was born in Middletown, Rhode Island, and probably trained in Newport. He came of age after the American Revolution, and, like other cabinetmakers of his generation, he advertised his services in the newspaper. When he opened a shop on Newport's Meeting Street in 1798, he proclaimed that he practiced "an Art Conducive to Elegance" and that he produced "All Kinds of inlaid and ornamental Work . . . in the most fanciful Manner."<sup>1</sup>

This Pembroke table documents the type of urn, tassel, and floral inlay that is often attributed to Weaver on the basis of this sole labeled example (fig. 1). The salient details of the inlay include an urn with reeding on the finial and bowl base (fig. 2), an architectural pedestal below the urn, three tassels on cords in the upper part of the leg (fig. 3), and a tulip blossom within a surround at the foot (fig. 4). Five additional objects use these inlaid elements, but only one of the five, from a private collection, is similar to the present table in all

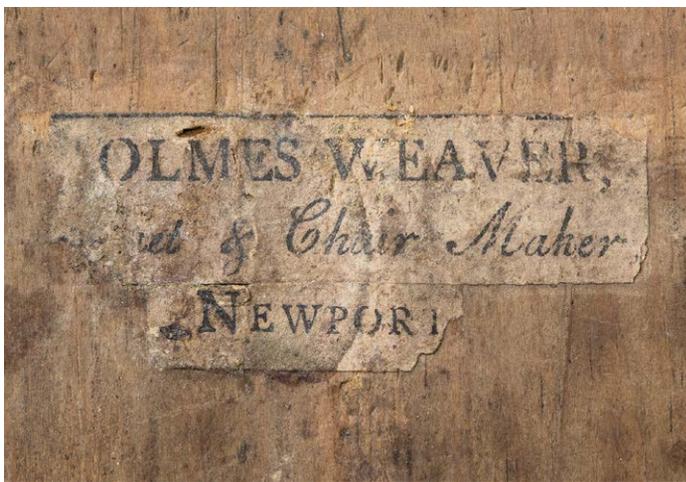


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 91, showing label on drawer bottom

details.<sup>2</sup> The inlaid decoration of these two tables share subtle features: the careful drawing of the individual petals on the finial and round knob of the urn, the incised line that outlines the urn, the rosette in an oval between the urn and pedestal, the swag at the top of the cord of the tassels, the use of dots to define the tops of the tassels, the elongated carrot-shaped inlay below the tassels, and an elongated triangular inlay on which the tulip is incised. On the basis of these similarities the Pembroke table in the private collection can be attributed to Weaver with certainty. The other four objects with this decorative scheme are very similar to one another. Unlike those on the catalogued table and the one in the private collection, the lines defining the petals on the finial are sketchy arc shapes, and they lack an elongated carrot-shaped inlay below the tassels and the knob on the urn but include a horizontal line that divides the urn from the pedestal. They use bowknots in place of the swags and "X"s as well as dots to define the tops of the tassels, and the tulips are incised on a trapezoidal inlay. Whether the differences in these details indicate that Holmes Weaver's inlays evolved over time or whether they point to the hand of two different craftsmen is impossible to determine. Two additional examples that use an urn and bowknot scheme but are less closely related to these six objects are even less likely to be products of Weaver's shop.<sup>3</sup>

The present table is said to have been owned by John Dennis, a descendant of Robert Dennis, a Quaker who settled in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and served in the Rhode Island House of Deputies from 1673 to 1684. John was born in Tiverton, Rhode Island, but spent his married life in Newport, where he was a mariner. In



1796 he married Catherine Tillinghast, a daughter of dry-goods merchant William Tillinghast, who could have brought the table into their household upon their marriage, or it may have been brought into the household on the occasion of his second marriage in Newport in 1811 to Catherine Engs, a daughter of merchant William Engs. Later in life Dennis lived in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and was buried in a family plot there in 1844. —PEK

*Cat. 91*

27 × 36 ¼ × 11 in. (68.6 × 92.1 × 27.9 cm) (closed)

MARK: “[H]OLMES WEAVER, / [Cabinet] & Chair Maker / NEWPORT,” printed on paper label glued to interior bottom of drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: Mathematical calculations, in chalk, on interior of proper-left hinged rail; scroll or “C” and “No 1,” in graphite, on one of interior partitions of drawer; circle with loop at top, in graphite, on interior back of drawer



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 91, showing urn inlay on leg



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 91, showing swag and tassel inlay on leg



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 91, showing tulip inlay on leg

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Hipkiss 1950, 126–27, no. 67, ill.; Stone 1967, 210; Moses and Moses 1981, 1161, figs. 14–14a; Ott 1982, 1158–59, fig. 5, pl. 3; Moses 1984, 114, figs. 3.30–3.30a

**PROVENANCE:** Catherine Tillinghast Dennis (1777–1810) and John Dennis (1773–1844), Newport, ca. 1796, or Catherine Engs Dennis (1783–1860) and John Dennis (1773–1844), Newport, ca. 1811; by descent to the latter’s daughters Catherine Tillinghast Dennis (1813–1891) and Sarah Brown Dennis (1825–1909), Newport; by descent to their nephew, William Engs Dennis, Jr. (1873–after 1951), Los Angeles and Newport; sold to George E. Vernon and Company, Newport, before 1938; sold to Martha Codman Karolik (1858–1948) and Maxim Karolik (1893–1963), Boston and Newport, 1938; given to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The M. and M. Karolik Collection of Eighteenth Century American Arts, 1939, inv. no. 39.138 [RIF13]

### Notes

1. “Holmes Weaver, Cabinet and Chair-Maker advertisement,” *Newport Mercury*, May 8, 1798, p. 4.
2. These include a card table in a private collection [RIF139] and its probable mate at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 2007.19.5 [RIF3612]; a Pembroke table at the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1966.6 [RIF1023]; and two Pembroke tables in private collections (“Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 81, no. 2 [March/April 2014]: 1, ill. [RIF3402], and an unpublished one [RIF5618]). The last object matches the catalogued table in all details.
3. The two examples are a card table that was in the marketplace in 1983 (“Kenneth Hammitt Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 123, no. 3 [March 1983]: 473, ill. [RIF2745]) and a Pembroke table at the Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich., inv. no. 26.5.5 [RIF5574].

92

*Card Table*

Stephen and Thomas Goddard (active ca. 1785–1804)

Newport, 1790–1804

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, satinwood, and ivory (primary);  
oak and pine (secondary)

Bearing the label of Stephen and Thomas Goddard (fig. 1), successors to the Newport cabinetmaking business of their father, John Goddard, this table is the documented example by which other pieces of Newport furniture with these distinctive urn and bellflower inlays can be attributed to this firm.

A half-dozen six-legged card tables with this inlay are known, each with subtle differences in the inlay details.<sup>1</sup> On the present example and four others, the urns are ornamented with swags from which a tassel hangs (fig. 2); on the sixth table the tassel is omitted.<sup>2</sup> This omission is understandable given the variations



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 92, showing label on back of rail



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 92, showing urn and bellflower inlay on leg

inherent in hand-workmanship. A Pembroke table inlaid with an urn and swags but no tassel may also have been made by Stephen and Thomas Goddard.<sup>3</sup> The card tables and the Pembroke table have similar bellflower-inlaid legs. The graduated flowers descend from looped stringing at the top of the leg (see fig. 2). Each bellflower is a single piece of wood (incised with three dark lines to simulate veining), with two inlaid ivory dots between them.<sup>4</sup> The stringing terminates at the foot in a loop.

The card tables differ in construction as well as decoration. Below the mahogany veneer, the curved rails consist of four individual pieces of wood with three glue joints between them.

An exception is a card table now in a private collection that has kerf-sawn curved rails, which feature vertical slits that allow the wood to be bent or curved.<sup>5</sup> Two of the card tables have two tenons on the back edges of their tops that align with mortises in the lower leaves, stabilizing the leaves when open, while the other tables have none.<sup>6</sup> These card tables exhibit another characteristic Newport detail—they were ready-made tables with two swinging rear legs. In other regions such six-legged tables were made only on special order.<sup>7</sup> Given the table's history of ownership by John Randolph of Virginia, the table was likely shipped out of Newport as venture cargo. —PEK

*Cat. 92*

27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 35<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 17<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (69.2 × 90.5 × 45 cm) (closed)

MARK: "Stephen & Tho' Goddard / Cabinet Makers / Carries on said business in its / Various branches / ON THE POINT / Newport, R. I.," printed on paper label glued to back of hinged rail

INSCRIPTIONS: "1 N," in chalk, on underside of top; "Wh," in graphite, on exterior of hinged rail; chisel incision, at center of interior of stationary rail and at center of underside of top; loops, in graphite, on interior of stationary rail and on underside of top to proper-right side of table; "X," in graphite, on interior of stationary rail and on underside of top to proper-left side of table

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Swan 1950, 448, ill.; Honour 1969, 153, ill.; Hewitt, Kane, and Ward 1982, 147, no. 28, ill.; Heckscher 2005, 194, fig. 68

PROVENANCE: John Randolph (1773–1833), Roanoke Plantation, Charlotte County, Va. Mrs. Henry Clinton Ford (née Elizabeth Lydia Walker, 1869–1962), Lexington, Va., by 1929; sold through the Warfield Shops, Saint Louis, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1929, inv. no. 29.75 [RIF710]

### Notes

1. In addition to the present table, these include the following: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, inv. no. 92.4 [RIF274]; a pair at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1953.1.21–22 [RIF697]; and, in private collections, “Bernard and S. Dean Levy advertisement,” *Antiques* 180, no. 1 (January/February 2013): 1, ill. [RIF5634]; Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), March 2, 2014, lot 72 [RIF5940]; and an unpublished table [RIF6053].
2. The tables with tassels include RIF274, RIF5634, RIF5940, and RIF6053; see n1, above. The tables with swags only are the pair at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence [RIF697].
3. See the Pembroke table now in a private collection in *Bernard and S. Dean Levy* 1974–2003, 2:62, ill. [RIF5493].
4. RIF6053 (see n1, above) has three ivory dots below the uppermost flower.
5. RIF6053; see n1, above.
6. The tables with leaf-edge tenons are RIF5940 and RIF6053.
7. Hewitt, Kane, and Ward 1982, 146, no. 28, ill.

93

*Pembroke Table*

John Townsend (1732–1809)

Newport, 1797

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and light wood inlay (primary);  
chestnut, pine, maple, and yellow poplar (secondary)

94

*Card Table*

Attributed to John Townsend (1732–1809)

Newport, 1795–1805

Mahogany and light wood inlay (primary); pine and maple (secondary)

The Pembroke table catalogued here is documented to John Townsend by a label (fig. 1), while the card table is attributed to him on the basis of its ornament and the script “M” on the rear rail, one of his typical finishing marks (fig. 2). In addition, the inlay decoration of both pieces—which is different than that found on the work of John’s Newport contemporaries Holmes Weaver (see cat. 91) and Stephen and Thomas Goddard (see cat. 92) and—further links the tables to Townsend. Here the bellflowers on the legs (fig. 3),

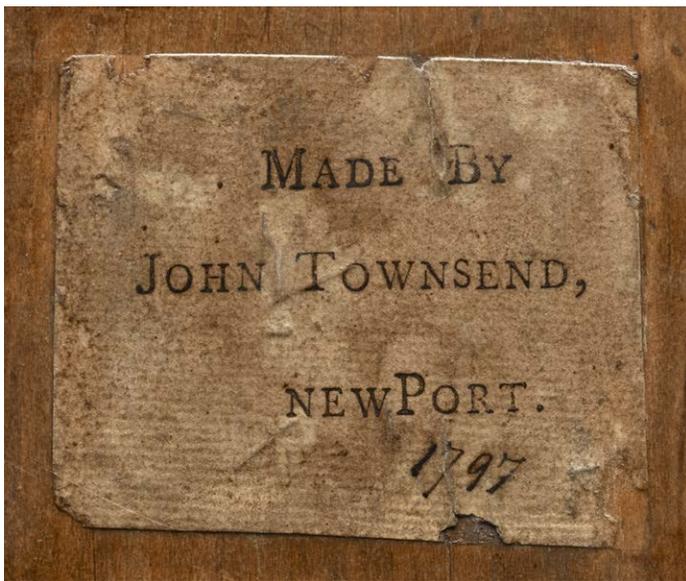


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 93, showing label on drawer bottom

for example, have a more fluid, naturalistic outline than those on Stephen and Thomas Goddard’s tables, and the plinths above the legs have flutes instead of the urns found on tables by Weaver and the two Goddards. Related Townsend tables, including dining tables—some of which, like the present Pembroke table, are dated in the late 1790s—have similar decoration.<sup>1</sup> The bellflowers on Townsend’s tables show subtle differences, though; some have fewer flecks than others on either side of the central veining, some include and some omit dots below the lowest bellflower.<sup>2</sup> Large paterae with discreet shading (fig. 4) decorate the center of the curved rails on the present card table and on Townsend’s related card and dining tables. A table with identical ornament on the legs but without the paterae on the curved rails suggests that these ornaments were optional choices for the customers.<sup>3</sup> The bellflower ornament on the legs is later in date than the icicle inlay found on the legs of his earlier, Federal, rectangular Pembroke tables and his serpentine-sided card tables.<sup>4</sup>

Like Townsend’s earlier work, the objects in this group are exquisitely made. The card tables all have two leaf-edge tenons, a refinement that ensures the correct alignment of leaves when the tables are open. Both rear legs swing on carefully crafted round knuckle joints, providing additional sturdiness in the open position. The rabbeted tops of the swing legs support the back





Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 94, showing “M” finishing mark on exterior of hinged rail

corners of the tables when they are closed. Likewise, the Pembroke tables exhibit the meticulous construction of Townsend’s earlier tables, wherein the attachment of the top to the frame is reinforced by three cross braces below the top and two cross braces on the underside of the side rails (fig. 5). —PEK

*Cat. 93*

26 ¾ × 37 ¼ × 18 ½ in. (68 × 94.6 × 47 cm) (closed)

MARKS: “MADE BY / JOHN TOWNSEND, / NEWPORT,,” printed, and “1797,” written in ink, on paper label glued to bottom interior of drawer

INSCRIPTIONS: “M,” in graphite, on each inside face of stationary rails



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 94, showing flute and bellflower inlay on leg

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Charles Woolsey Lyon advertisement,” *Antiques* 96, no. 2 (August 1969): 165, ill.; “Israel Sack, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 125, no. 6 (July 1984): ill. inside front cover; Moses 1984, 69, 83, fig. 2.11; Heckscher 2005, 63, 176–77, no. 45, fig. 54; Solis-Cohen 2011, 9-B

PROVENANCE: C. W. Lyon, Inc., Milbrook, New York, 1969. Israel Sack, Inc., New York, 1984. Wunsch Americana Foundation, New York, ca. 1984; consigned to Christie’s, New York, September 28, 2011, lot 38; sold to a private collection [RIF1140]



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 94, showing patera inlay on skirt

*Cat. 94*

28 ¼ × 36 × 17 ¾ in. (71.8 × 91.4 × 45.1 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTION: “M [in script],” in graphite, on exterior of hinged rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 148, no. 3 (September 1995): 209, ill.; Heckscher 2005, 168

PROVENANCE: Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York, 1995; sold to a private collection, 2011 [RIF1414]

*Notes*

1. A pair of card tables, one at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Del., inv. no. 1958.0135.003 [RIF698], and the other at the Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no.



Fig. 5. Detail of cat. 93, showing cross braces

PSNC.6380 [RIF1361], can be dated to 1796 by the label on the Winterthur example. A Pembroke table at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. 2000-136-1 [RIF1141], has an incised date, “179[?].” The label on a dining table at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1967.24.1 [RIF416], includes the date 1797, and one on a dining table at the Newport Restoration Foundation, inv. no. 1999.392 [RIF4072], dates the piece to 1796. For a discussion of a number of these pieces, see Heckscher 2005, 168–79.

2. The only examples with dots below the bellflowers are the pair of card tables [RIF698] and the dining table [RIF4072]; see *nr*, above.
3. Christie’s, New York, January 23, 2009, lot 228 [RIF2632].
4. Heckscher 2005, 157.

*Tall Case Clock*

Holmes Weaver (1769–1848), casemaker

Unknown clockmaker

Osborne's Manufactory (Birmingham, England, active 1778–1813), dialmaker

Newport, 1805–10

Mahogany (primary); pine (secondary)



Cabinetmaker Holmes Weaver made Federal-style furniture and clock cases in Newport. His paper label (fig. 1) is found on a handful of furniture pieces, including this clock case and one other.<sup>1</sup> The original copper printing plate for a nearly identical label, engraved by Henry Barber, Jr., is in the collection of the Newport Historical Society.<sup>2</sup> Weaver's labels depict an elaborate serpentine-front Hepplewhite sideboard with oval paterae and quarter-fan inlays, and include the location "Meeting-Street," where he began working in 1799.<sup>3</sup> Though cabinetmakers of this period rarely signed or labeled their work, Weaver used at least three different labels and one brand during his long career.<sup>4</sup> The label on this clock case helps identify regional inlay patterns and form preferences, allowing for further attributions.

The so-called Roxbury case influenced Rhode Island Federal clock styles.<sup>5</sup> Although those influences are visible here in the clock's proportions and the pierced fretwork pediment, some details—including the ogee-shaped waist molding and small bead-molding around the pendulum door—were never used in Roxbury. When Weaver first began working in Newport, the Roxbury style had not yet influenced Rhode Island cabinetmakers to such an extent. Local cases from that period, such as Weaver's other labeled case, which has a slightly more Rhode Island-style hood, with a frieze in the pediment and a unique dial door treatment with a cross-grained, ogee-shaped facing, still retained a recognizably local flavor.

Although no clockmaker's name can be associated with this movement, it was probably made in or near Newport. Transactions recorded in the account books



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 95, showing label on waist door



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 95, showing hood

of New England craftsmen show clockmakers and cabinetmakers often bartering clock movements for cases and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> Clockmakers had every incentive to put their name on their dials, yet many period examples, such as this one, are unsigned (fig. 2). These transactional records indicate that many clocks with unsigned dials were assembled and retailed by the cabinetmakers, rather than the clockmakers. Perhaps this example contains a movement bartered from a local clockmaker and retailed by Weaver. —GRS

*Cat. 95*

86 × 13½ × 9¾ in. (218.4 × 34.3 × 24.8 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike

MARKS: “Holmes Weaver, / CABINET AND CHAIR MAKER / Meeting-Street, / NEWPORT. / H [Barber],” printed on paper label glued to interior of waist door; “OSBORNE,” cast into back of falseplate

INSCRIPTIONS: “\$60//,” in ink, written on paper label glued to interior of waist door; “Cleaned 8 – 21– 25 / E. C. Merrett,” in graphite, on interior of waist door

PROVENANCE: Henry A. Hoffman (1873–ca. 1953), Litchfield, Conn., and Barrington, R.I.; Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Bequest of Henry A. Hoffman, 1953, inv. no. 1953.1.44 [RIF6110]

*Notes*

1. For the other labeled clock, see Carpenter 1954, 59–60, no. 33, ill. [RIF397].
2. Newport Historical Society, inv. no. 49.2. For the copper printing plate, see Ruth Taylor, “Newport Historical Society: Museum of Newport History at Brick Market,” undated pamphlet, Newport Historical Society.
3. Ralston 1942, 134.
4. In slight contrast to the label on this entry, another, on RIF13 (cat. 91 in the present volume), is simpler, and the copper printing plate belonging to the Newport Historical Society appears to include the letter “N” preceding “Meeting-Street,” possibly indicating a different address. All else about these two labels appears the same. RIF2808 (Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. [sale held Bolton], October 27–28, 1989, lot 207) is branded “HOLMES WEAVER / NEW PORT.”
5. For more on “Roxbury cases,” see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
6. The account book of Hanover, Massachusetts, clockmaker Calvin Bailey is in the collection of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors Museum in Columbia, Pennsylvania, and documents many of his business dealings from 1785 to the 1820s. It includes numerous transactions where movements and cases were changing hands between himself and his cabinetmakers. The account of Hingham, Massachusetts, cabinetmaker Abner Hersey (page 36) illustrates some of these transactions.

96

*Banjo Clock*

Attributed to John Young (1797–1884), casemaker  
 David Williams (1769–1823), clockmaker  
 Newport, ca. 1820  
 Mahogany

Throughout much of David Williams’s career, Rhode Island clockmakers played second fiddle to their Boston counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of tall case clocks and “patent timepieces,” wall clocks developed in the early nineteenth century known today as banjo clocks, were made in Boston. That town dominated the American clockmaking scene from the turn of the nineteenth century until the 1820s, when Connecticut factories took over.

Williams made many tall case clocks, but he struggled to compete with the wildly fashionable and less expensive Boston banjo clocks. He made this clock (and others like it) in reaction to a trend that was putting him out of business. Simon Willard patented his banjo clock in Roxbury (Boston) in 1802; by the next decade, it had almost entirely replaced the tall case clock in many parts of the country. Willard tried to prevent unrelated makers from infringing on his patent, but he allowed his apprentices and close associates in and around Boston to produce and export clocks of his design. Large numbers of these Boston-made clocks were then sold to Rhode Island customers, taking business away from local clockmakers. Willard complained in the newspapers about unauthorized timepieces made with the word “Patent,” sometimes including his name. He referred to these knockoffs as “vile performances.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Williams was one of those offenders.

Williams’s banjo clocks clearly exhibit a concerted effort to circumvent Willard’s patent. Although they are fine clocks, they may very well be the “spurious timepieces” about which Willard cautioned his readers. Every detail of Williams’s clock varies slightly from the Boston versions, including the dial decoration, bezel shape, hands, pendulum tie-down, movement gearing, escapement, case construction, and more.<sup>3</sup> Such deliberate, sometimes



minor, changes suggest that he designed the clock to avoid the patent. Williams significantly altered the movement format, though, incorporating an “A-frame” design with three pillars (fig. 1). This unorthodox departure from the standard rectangular movement occurs on his banjo clocks as well as those of his apprentice, Job Wilbour, and other Newport makers.<sup>4</sup>

The present clock has typical cross-banded mahogany frames holding glass eglomise (reverse-painted) panels, slightly wider than those on Boston models, giving them a distinctive look. Most Newport cases for banjo clocks are attributed to cabinetmaker John Young, who at Williams’s death in 1823, was still owed money on an 1822 bill for “32 mahogany timepiece cases.”<sup>5</sup> He made cases for Williams and other Newport clockmakers, but little is known of the then twenty-five-year-old Young.<sup>6</sup> Although some of Williams’s eglomise glass panels appear to be by Boston ornamental artists, other clocks indicate the hand of a



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 96, showing front plate of movement

local artist.<sup>7</sup> Williams had the throat glass in the center of this clock painted with the word “patent,” more of an advertisement of Willard’s reputation than a claim to a patent he had no right to reproduce. Another bit of promotion on the dial is the inscription, “D. Williams, Horologist, Providence.” Williams probably never worked in Providence, but he was eager to expand his client base in a prospering merchant class. The cross-banded mahogany frames, use of stenciling in the glass panels, and style of the bucolic scene in the lower glass all point to a date of about 1820. —GRS

*Cat. 96*

33<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 × 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (86 × 25.4 × 8.4 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass “A frame” timepiece

MARK: “D. Williams / Horologist / Providence,” in paint, on dial

INSCRIPTION: “Patent,” in paint, on throat glass

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Foley 2002, 89–90, figs. 203–6

PROVENANCE: Paul J. Foley, Plymouth, Mass. [RIF4616]

*Notes*

1. For more information on the influences of Boston-made clocks on Rhode Island clockmaking, see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
2. Quoted in Foley 2002, 9–10.
3. *Ibid.*, 87–90.
4. *Ibid.*, 87–91. In addition to clocks made by David Williams, examples by Walter Cornell, Barker and Mumford, and Edward F. Newton, as well as unsigned examples, are known.
5. *Ibid.*, 339.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 89.

# 97 *Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Paul Stillman (1782–1810), clockmaker

Osborne's Manufactory (Birmingham, England, active 1778–1813), dialmaker

Westerly, Rhode Island, 1807

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and light and dark wood and amboina (amboyna) inlay (primary); yellow poplar and pine (secondary)

Very few early American clocks survive with documentation as to their first owner's name, their date of purchase, and their price. Yet a bill of sale from clockmaker Paul Stillman accompanies this one and documents the details of a transaction by this little-known member of a significant Rhode Island clockmaking family.

Several Stillman clockmakers worked in Westerly, Rhode Island (see cat. 78), a small town in the southwestern corner of Rhode Island, next to Pawcatuck and Stonington, Connecticut. This is the only known work to survive from the short career of Paul Stillman. He made the clock for Thomas Noyes of Pawcatuck, a wealthy farmer who is seen fashionably attired in his portrait painted about 1799 (fig. 1). The receipt for the clock reads: "Westerly December 8<sup>th</sup> 1807 / Mr. Thos Noyes 2<sup>d</sup> to / Paul Stillman D<sup>r</sup> to an / \$ [cen]ts / Eight day Clock 38-00 / to a Clock case 30-00 / to a glass for clock head 00,75 / \$68,75 / Received payment in full / Paul Stillman" (fig. 2). Payment by Noyes, including prices for the movement (\$38.00), the case (\$30.00), and a piece of dial door glass (\$0.75) is acknowledged. In the clockmaker's lexicon, "eight-day clock" was the uncased movement and dial. A complete, fully cased tall clock was a "clock and case." Thirty dollars is a high price for the case, higher than the price for comparable cases just eighty-five miles away in Hanover, Massachusetts, where a movement typically sold for \$35.00 to \$40.00 and a fine inlaid mahogany case for \$20.00 to \$22.00.<sup>1</sup> In the same month of the same year, Hanover clockmaker Calvin Bailey sold the most expensive clock recorded in his account book, for only \$60.67.<sup>2</sup> Its case was comparable to this one and cost only \$20.67.<sup>3</sup>

The Stillman clock is one of very few clocks made in Rhode Island at the height of the Federal period.<sup>4</sup> The



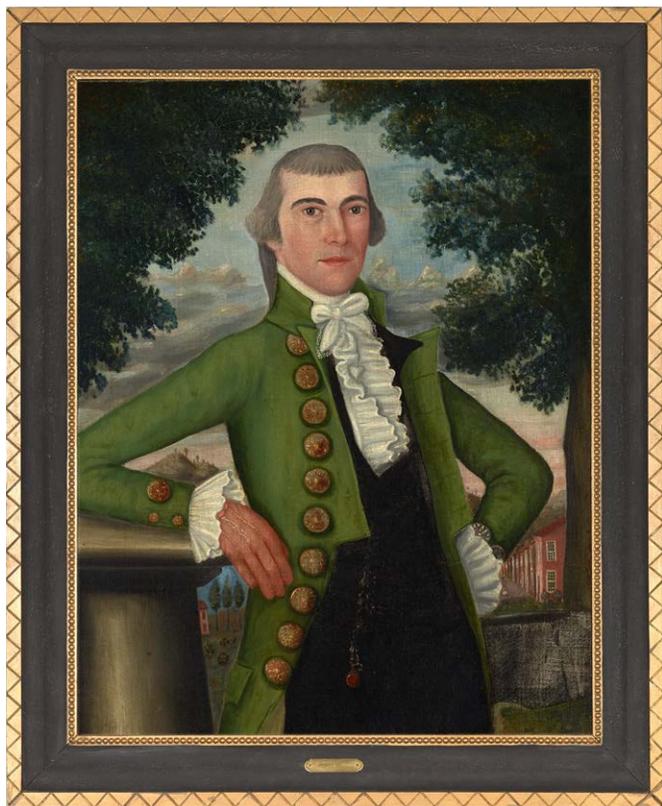


Fig. 1. Denison Limner (probably Joseph Steward), *Thomas Noyes* (1755–1844), ca. 1799. Oil on canvas, 33½ × 26¾ in. (85.1 × 67 cm). Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park, R.I., inv. no. 8. [R1F6093]

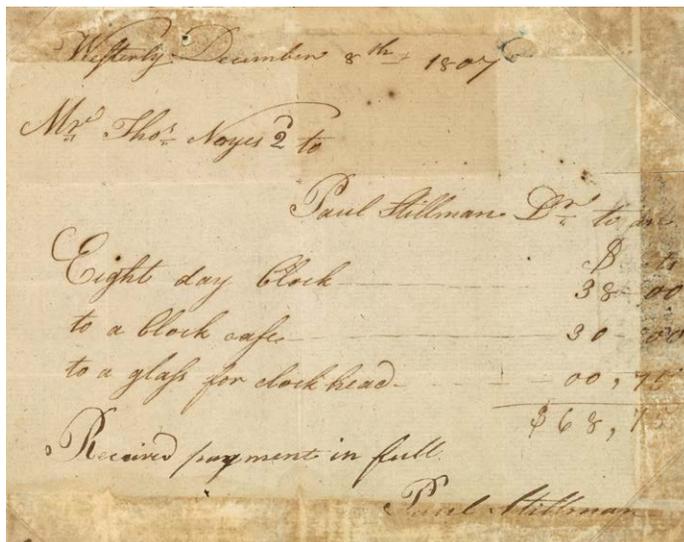


Fig. 2. Receipt for cat. 97, from Paul Stillman to Thomas Noyes. Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park, R.I.



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 97, showing hood

big-city details it displays—including a stylish veneer, elaborate cross-banding on the door and base, and fine inlay in imported wood—are unusual for a small-town clockmaker such as Stillman. The short scrolled pediment (fig. 3) is similar to some Federal cases with movements by Caleb Wheaton and Son of Providence and has antecedents in earlier Providence cases that have similarly shaped short scrolls combined with earlier block-and-shell style doors.<sup>5</sup> A clock with a very similar case is signed by Stillman's brother Barton—"Barton Stillman No. 4 AD 1814"—on the snail of the movement.<sup>6</sup> Case styles had changed very little in that seven-year period.

—GRS

*Cat. 97*

88 × 19 ½ × 10 ½ in. (223.5 × 49.5 × 26.7 cm)  
(with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike with arched cutouts in the plates

MARKS: "OSBORNE," cast into back of falseplate; "OSBORNES / MANUFACTORY / BIRMINGHAM," stamped on back of moon dial

INSCRIPTIONS: "Rodgers," in graphite, on back edge of seat board; "December / 1874," in graphite, on top of seat board; "Y184[?]," incised on top of seat board; "E. Hanna / August / 1898," in graphite, on interior of case door

PROVENANCE: Thomas Noyes (1755–1844), Pawcatuck, Conn., 1807; by descent to his granddaughter Mrs. Orson C. Rogers (née Mary Noyes, 1846–1938), Westerly, R.I.; bequeathed to the Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park, R.I., 1938, inv. no. 19 [RIF223]

*Notes*

1. The account book of Hanover, Massachusetts, clockmaker Calvin Bailey is in the collection of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors Museum, Columbia, Pennsylvania, and documents many of Bailey's business dealings from 1785 to the 1820s, including numerous transactions for movements and cases in these price ranges.
2. *Ibid.*, 39.
3. Jobe, Sullivan, and O'Brien 2009, 256–57. Calvin Bailey's account book (page 36) documents his value for rocking-ship dials of the type incorporated in this 1807 transaction as \$40.00. This would leave \$20.67 of the \$60.67 clock as the price of the case (this amount could possibly include a small delivery charge).
4. For more on this phenomenon, see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
5. See, for example, Christie's, New York, January 24, 1987, lot 243 [RIF2312]; Bonhams, New York, January 27, 2010, lot 1179 [RIF3385]; Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1957.4.2 [RIF6112]; and Historic Deerfield, Mass., inv. no. 1998.9.1 [RIF6274].
6. See <http://delaneyantiqueclocks.com/products/detail/205/Barton-Stillman-No-4-1814-of-Westerly-Rhode-Island> (accessed January 18, 2015) [RIF6070].

*Side Chair (from a set of eight)*

Probably Providence or New York, or possibly South Kingstown, Rhode Island, 1791  
Mahogany (primary); maple, birch, and yellow poplar (secondary)

According to an inscription on its front seat rail, this chair was a gift from George Brown of South Kingstown, Rhode Island, to his daughter Elizabeth on the occasion of her 1791 marriage to Benjamin Robinson. Brown served as lieutenant governor of Rhode Island from 1799 to 1800. Two other chairs of this form, probably made by the same shop, are currently known.<sup>1</sup>

Burke's Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs; being a reply to Paine, Mackintosh, &c.—3s.  
Macaulay's Observations on Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.—2s.  
Paine on the Rights of Man— 4 pril 25.

**George Shipley, Cabinet Maker,**  
**B**egs leave to return his sincere thanks to his friends and customers, for the many favours he has received, and hopes by a steady attention to business, to merit a continuance thereof; and as he has in employment a number of excellent workmen, he has no doubt of giving entire satisfaction to those that shall please to favour him with their commands. Articles in the above business made in the neatest and most fashionable manner, and on reasonable terms, and wishes to inform them that he has at his cabinet manufactory, a large and warranted assortment of mahogany furniture, of the newest fashion, which he means to sell very low, at No. 161 Water-street, between Backman and Burling-slip.

**MAHOGANY** for sale, very suitable for stair cases and other uses.  
**LIKEWISE** he has received from London, a quantity of fat in hair seating for chairs of the best quality, and Newest fashion, which he will dispose of on reasonable terms.

May 18. eod 2m

**JONAS HUMBERT,**

Fig. 1. "George Shipley advertisement," *Daily Advertiser* (New York), June 23, 1792, p. 4

Chairs with backs of this shape are referred to as "pedestal back" in the *London Chair-Makers' and Carvers' Book of Prices for Workmanship*, published in London in 1802. The splat features Prince of Wales feathers, a motif derived from the three white ostrich plumes of the heraldic badge of the Prince of Wales. The feathers appear on splats in the pattern books of English cabinetmakers Thomas Sheraton and George Hepplewhite, though not in this exact form. It is likely that the present example is based on adaptations of these designs by English makers, whose influence was felt in America through both imported objects and the immigration of the craftsmen themselves. One such craftsman was George Shipley, who probably immigrated to New York about 1789 when he advertised his services as a cabinetmaker and house carpenter.<sup>2</sup> In 1792 Shipley informed his customers that "his cabinet manufactory" had "a large and warranted assortment of mahogany furniture, of the newest fashion," illustrating his advertisement with a shield-back chair with a splat almost identical to that of the present example (fig. 1).

In 1961 Yale University Art Gallery curator Meyric R. Rogers published a set of eight newly discovered side chairs from a private collection with splats of virtually the same design as the present example, one with a label for "Shipley's Manufactory" attached to its original webbing (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The splats of these chairs closely resemble those of the Brown chairs in the spiral ends of their scrolls and the size and placement of their plumes. The design differs in that the central feather of the labeled chairs folds forward rather than standing straight, and the bottom of the central pedestals are solid rather than pierced. The Shipley chairs also have fluted front



legs and molded crests and stiles, extra ornamental features that also would have increased their cost. The location of the labeled example is not known, making it difficult to determine with certainty whether the Brown chairs were also made by Shipley or by a Rhode Island craftsman looking to New York for inspiration.<sup>4</sup> Shipley certainly had Rhode Island connections: a card table with his label has been attributed to Providence based on its construction and inlay, and two Pembroke tables with identical inlay also bear his label.<sup>5</sup> Such evidence suggests that in addition to making his own furniture, Shipley may have retailed pieces made elsewhere.

A set of four chairs with very similar splats in the collection of the Litchfield Historical Society

in Connecticut was originally owned by Elijah Boardman, a successful merchant and politician from New Milford, Connecticut (see fig. 3). Their splats differ from those of the Brown and Shipley chairs in that they have scrolls that terminate in rosettes and plumes that are more elaborately carved. All the aforementioned examples are closely related to another group of chairs with pedestal backs and splats that feature urns rather than feathers. These were made in large numbers in both Connecticut and Rhode Island, including a birch example with a history of having been made by Robert Sterry Burrough of Providence, in whose family they descended.<sup>6</sup>

—JNJ



**Fig. 2.** George Shipley, *Side Chair (from a set of eight)*, New York or Providence, 1791–95. Mahogany and chestnut, 38½ × 21 × 17½ in. (97.8 × 53.3 × 44.5 cm). Location unknown. [RIF6208]



**Fig. 3.** *Side Chair (from a set of four)*, Connecticut or possibly New York or Providence, 1790–1805. Mahogany, 39 × 21 × 17 in. (99.1 × 53.3 × 43.2 cm). Litchfield Historical Society, Conn., inv. no. 2013-100-1 A. [RIF6209]

*Cat. 98*

38 × 21 × 17 in. (96.5 × 53.3 × 43.2 cm)

INSCRIPTION: “1791 given to Elizabeth Brown by [illegible] / Gov Brown on her marriage to Benj. Rob[inson] / in 1791 son of John and grandson of Gov. Wil[illegible],” in graphite, on interior of front seat rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Nathan Liverant and Son Antiques, advertising supplement, no. 21 (Winter 2004), n.p.

PROVENANCE: Gov. George Brown (1746–1836), South Kingstown, R.I.; given to his daughter Mrs. Benjamin Robinson (née Elizabeth Brown, 1769–1855), South Kingstown, R.I., upon her marriage, 1791; by descent to her great-grandson Roland Rodman Robinson (1862–1934), South Kingstown, R.I. Nathan Liverant and Son, Colchester, Conn., 2004; sold to a private collection, 2004 [RIF866]

*Notes*

1. “Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement,” *Antiques* 180, no. 2 (March–April 2013): ill. back cover [RIF5740].
2. “George Shipley advertisement,” *Daily Advertiser* (New York), September 29, 1789, p. 2, ill.
3. Rogers 1961, 374, ill.; see also Richards 1968, 9, fig. 8.
4. For a discussion on the influence of Shipley and other New York makers on Connecticut furniture, see Richards 1968.
5. For the Providence card table, see Hewitt, Kane, and Ward 1982, 150–51, no. 32, ill. [RIF3409]; see also Barquist 1992, 208–9, no. 107, ill. One of the Pembroke tables is illustrated in Downs 1951, 47, ill. Joseph K. Ott discusses the furniture trade between New York and Rhode Island in Ott 1969a, 15–16. For an example of a New York chair design made by a Newport cabinetmaker, see Heckscher 2005, 181–83, no. 48, ill.
6. Ott 1965a, 16, no. 16, ill. [RIF426].

## 99

*Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Squire Millerd (1750–1820), clockmaker

Warwick, Rhode Island, 1795–1805

Maple (primary); chestnut (secondary)



Seven clocks by the Warwick clockmaker Squire Millerd are known.<sup>1</sup> They are housed in attractive cases, often in cherry, with stylistic origins in Newport and Providence designs.<sup>2</sup> Four of the seven examples have the familiar Rhode Island block-and-shell carved pendulum doors, which differ from their more urban cousins in being cut from a solid block of wood. The carved shells have distinctively rounded lobes, giving them a different look from other Rhode Island clock cases. The other three examples have plain doors with tombstone-shaped tops like this one.

Millerd probably completed his apprenticeship in the early 1770s when composite brass dials were popular, but no clocks by him from that period are known. All of his clocks have engraved sheet-brass dials with silvered surfaces and date from the 1780s to about 1810 (fig. 1). Although painted dials were already in general use when this clock was made, Millerd chose the silvered, sheet-brass dial, long out of fashion in urban centers. Some clockmakers in Rhode Island and Connecticut continued to engrave their own brass dials, rather than buy more fashionable painted ones. Millerd filled the engraving on some of his dials with polychrome coloring to create a more decorative look than the standard black wax or shellac. Remnants of this coloring survive on some examples.

The latest of Millerd's known clocks, this one shows the cabinetmaker's attempt to "update" the case by adding three plinths, brass urn finials, and pierced fretwork. No other clock cases of this Warwick type with original fretwork are known. Millerd's other clocks show no evidence of ever having fretwork and were not designed to include it. With the exception of some later Federal examples, pierced fretwork is rare on Rhode Island clocks. It is unheard of on clocks with this hood type—the Newport



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 99, showing hood

style, with a small molding just above the dial door, below a frieze and a heavy cornice molding. Very probably this unknown Federal-period Warwick cabinetmaker added fretwork to imitate the latest Boston styles. There are other transitional details: the base panel has grown higher than its width, and the stiles on either side of the pendulum door have narrowed, both Federal design elements. The waist molding has a familiar Rhode Island ogee curve. Like this one, Millerd's clocks often have very elaborate hands, which stand out against the silvered dials. —GRS

*Cat. 99*

93 × 20½ × 11¼ in. (236.2 × 52.1 × 28.6 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike

MARK: "Squire / Millerd / Warwick," engraved on arch of sheet-brass dial

PROVENANCE: Dr. Paul H. Ernest, Jackson, Mich. [RIF6035]

*Notes*

1. In addition to this example, five are in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive. See Sotheby's, New York, January 20–21, 23, 2005, lot 1165 [RIF637]; "Carlsen Gallery advertisement," *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* (May 9, 2008), 124, ill. [RIF2713]; A. Sack 1950, 122, ill. [RIF4217]; Bonhams and Butterfields, New York, January 22, 2009, lot 1175 [RIF4251]; and an unpublished clock formerly in the Stanley Weiss Collection [RIF5709]. In addition, a clock with a block-and-shell pendulum door is in the files of Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Canton, Mass.
2. For further discussion of Millerd and Warwick clockcases, see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.

# 100 *Tall Case Clock*

Unknown casemaker

Josiah Gooding (1777–1867), clockmaker

Bristol, Rhode Island, 1810–15

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and light and dark wood inlay (primary);  
pine (secondary)



Josiah Gooding was born in the small town of Dighton, in southeastern Massachusetts. Along with his brothers, Alanson, Henry, and John, he was trained in clockmaking by his older brother, Joseph, one of the area's earliest and most prolific makers. The brothers learned and practiced their craft in Joseph's small shop on the main road to Taunton, where it still stands today.

In 1799 young Josiah fled the competition of his own family and relocated to Bristol, Rhode Island, taking a shop "next door to Mr. GEORGE COGGESHALL'S Boarding-House," where he advertised that he "makes and mends all Kinds of CLOCKS and WATCHES at the shortest Notice."<sup>1</sup> He spent his career in Bristol, finding ample work as a clockmaker, watchmaker, and grocer.<sup>2</sup> Seven of his clocks survive, all of them inscribed at Bristol. Gooding favored rocking-ship dials (with painted tin depictions of a ship moving back and forth with the motion of the pendulum), such as the one on the present example (fig. 1). Five of his seven known clocks incorporate these Boston-made rocking-ship dials.<sup>3</sup> Extras such as this or a moon phase in the arch of the dial added a few extra dollars to the clock's price.<sup>4</sup> Gooding's use of these uncommon dials marks him as a craftsman of the first rank. His most active years (ca. 1805–15) are also the period when Boston's ornamental artists were producing these special dials.

The case shows the strong influence of the "Roxbury cases" used with the Willard school clocks made in Boston.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is impossible to state with certainty that this case was made in Rhode Island. The intricate pattern inlays, excellent proportions, and superb mahogany veneer indicate an unknown craftsman from an urban center. A feature one would



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 100, showing hood

not expect on a “Roxbury case” is the unusual fretwork pattern. This pattern of opposing oval devices is common on Federal clock cases made in the vicinity of Taunton, Massachusetts, an easy thirty miles up the Taunton River from Bristol.<sup>6</sup> A clock casemaker trained in Boston could have moved to a town on the Taunton River and provided high-quality cases to the region’s clockmakers. With its myriad of skilled craftsmen, Newport would have been a ready market for cases. These cases were also possibly ordered from Boston with their own regional style of fretwork. Some clockmakers purchased their cases at a distance. Since all cabinetmakers were not necessarily clock casemakers, some clockmakers would pass up local cabinetmakers, preferring to use clock-case specialists in other towns.<sup>7</sup>

A date of 1810 to 1815 is unusually late for a tall case clock made in the shadows of Boston. By that time, tall case clock production in Massachusetts, and to a lesser degree in New England, had almost ceased, yielding to the more affordable and popular Boston-made banjo clocks. Gooding was one of only a few Rhode Island makers who continued to produce tall case clocks into the Federal era. —GRS

**Cat. 100**

96½ × 20¼ × 10 in. (245.1 × 51.4 × 25.4 cm) (with finial)

MOVEMENT: 8-day brass time and strike

MARK: “J. GOODING. / BRISTOL.,” in paint, below winding holes on Boston painted dial

INSCRIPTIONS: Illegible mark and “4.84” [in rectangle] / “Cleaned Jan 30<sup>TH</sup> 1878 / Mr. P. Farrington / Repaired March 7 1869 / By W F Adams,” in graphite, on top of interior of door

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 181, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 8, ill.

PROVENANCE: Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Inc., Sharon then Canton, Mass., 2010; sold to a private collection, 2016 [RIF5721]

**Notes**

1. *Herald of the United States* (Warren, R.I.), August 17, 1799, transcribed in Harris 2003, 167–68.
2. For a fuller discussion of the Gooding family of clockmakers, see Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 265–67, 357.
3. The additional examples include four with rocking-ship dials: a clock sold at Brunk Auctions, Ashville, N.C., March 12, 2011, lot 600 [RIF5374]; a clock that descended in the family of a Bristol sea captain sold by Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, Sharon, Mass., ca. 2008; a clock with bracket feet sold by Gary R. Sullivan Antiques, ca. 1995; and a clock with French feet at the Lakeville Public Library, Mass. [RIF6262]. Two clocks with moon-phase dials include one at the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, Mass., inv. no. 1929.1 [RIF6263], and another sold by Gary R. Sullivan Antiques to Delaney Antique Clocks, West Townsend, Mass., in 1998 (the author is grateful to clock historian Paul J. Foley for providing images of the latter clock).
4. The account book of Hanover, Massachusetts, clockmaker Calvin Bailey is in the collection of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors Museum, Columbia, Pennsylvania, and recorded transactions illustrate that plain-dial clocks were generally \$35.00, as compared to moon-phase and rocking-ship dial clocks, which were usually \$40.00. Examples of both appear on page 39.
5. For more on “Roxbury cases,” see the essay by Kane and Sullivan in the present volume.
6. The present author identifies this pattern of fretwork as the “Pitts style,” based on its appearance on a clock made by Taunton clockmaker Abner Pitts. It is found on several clocks from southeastern Massachusetts as well as Bristol, Rhode Island; see Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 280.
7. Examples of this practice include Hanover and Hingham, Massachusetts, clockmakers such as John Bailey, Jr., Joshua Wilder, and Reuben Tower, who were working in close proximity to accomplished cabinetmakers, yet traveled to Weymouth, several miles away, to purchase cases from cabinetmaker Abiel White. Numerous examples of signed or attributed Abiel White cases housing movements by Hingham and Hanover clockmakers are known.

# 101 *Card Table*

Attributed to James Halyburton (active 1790—at least 1800)

Warren, Rhode Island, 1795–1800

Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and light and dark wood inlay (primary);  
maple and pine (secondary)



In 1965 Eleanore Monahan published this card table and attributed it to a Warren, Rhode Island, cabinetmaker she identified as Allie Burton on the basis of the history provided by the family in which it descended.<sup>1</sup> When Thomas Michie published a closely related table in the 1986 catalogue of the furniture collection at the Rhode Island School of Design, in

Providence, he wrote that no cabinetmaker with this name could be found in Rhode Island records.<sup>2</sup> The extensive research in town records conducted by the current study has also turned up no evidence of this individual. There was, however, a cabinetmaker named James Halyburton (Haliburton), known through newspaper advertisements to have worked in Warren in the

late 1790s. Presumably, in the family's oral tradition, Halyburton became Allie Burton.

In an advertisement dated December 23, 1796, Benjamin Cole and James Halyburton announced their partnership in the cabinetmaking business, stating that they made "fashionable Plain and Inlaid, Mahogany, Cherry-Tree and Maple Work."<sup>3</sup> The specific mention of inlay in the advertisement adds credence to an attribution of this table to Halyburton since the use of inlay on it is unusually elaborate. Cole and Halyburton's partnership was short-lived; it was dissolved on September 21, 1797, according to another advertisement.<sup>4</sup> There was a joiner named "Benjamin Cole 2<sup>nd</sup>" recorded in Warren deeds in 1787, who may have been the individual in the partnership.<sup>5</sup> It is also possible that the Benjamin Cole in the advertisement was the son of Warren joiner Ichabod Cole; Ichabod's son Benjamin was born in 1775, although evidence identifying him as a joiner has not been found. The parentage of James Halyburton has yet to be established. James Halyburton was listed in the federal census in Warren in 1790 and 1800, and a James Halyburton married Susannah Reed in Providence in 1792. Whether they are one and the same individual is uncertain. The name "J Halyburton" is inscribed on the bottom of an interior drawer on a secretary and bookcase thought to be made in Providence about 1805 to 1810 (see cat. 63).<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 101, showing floral inlay on skirt

The present card table is closely related to another example at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, that can also be attributed to Halyburton.<sup>7</sup> Both tables have blossoms with pinwheeling petals at the end of sprigs that arc from a central stalk (fig. 1). Bellflowers ornament the legs (fig. 2), and a large half-patera inlay adorns the back center of the top leaf (fig. 3). Two additional tables that are closely related to one another, one in a private collection and the other owned by Asa Pierce, Sr., also use similar but more elaborate floral sprigs; they feature diamond-shaped stringing along the edge of the top but lack paterae on their tops.<sup>8</sup> The differences in the inlay suggest that these two tables were made in another shop. The inlaid decoration on all four tables, however, is similar to desks made in Warren by Ichabod Cole, some of whose prospect-door shell carving has streamers with small-petalled flowers and pointy leaves (see cat. 79, fig. 2). This sprightly floral decoration is clearly a regional style. —PEK



Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 101, showing bellflower inlay on legs

*Cat. 101*

27½ × 35¾ × 17¾ in. (69.9 × 90.8 × 45.1 cm) (closed)

INSCRIPTIONS: “X,” incised on interior of proper-left leg and adjacent side rail; “/,” incised on interior of proper-right leg and adjacent side rail

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Monahon 1965a, 575, fig. 5

PROVENANCE: Probably Mrs. James Wheaton Brayton (née Roby Easterbrook, 1759–1843), Warren, R.I., 1795–1800, or her daughter Mrs. William More Hubbard (née Hannah Brayton, 1781–1864), Warren, R.I., ca. 1800; by descent to Mrs. William More Hubbard’s daughter Mrs. Joseph Seymour (née Eunice Hubbard, 1801–1887), Warren, R.I.; by descent to her son Manuel Francis Seymour (1844–1906), Barrington, R.I.; by descent to his son Walter Francis Seymour (1872–1963), Providence and Barrington, R.I.; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Paul W. Fletcher (née Margaret Seymour, 1900–1981), East Providence, R.I.; by descent to her granddaughter Sarah

Ray Fletcher, Warwick, R.I.; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Peter and Daphne Farago Purchase Fund, 1986, inv. no. 1986.120 [RIF4259]

*Notes*

1. Monahon 1965a, 575.
2. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 141.
3. “Cole and Halyburton advertisement,” *Herald of the United States* (Warren, R.I.), January 14, 1797, p. 988.
4. “Cole and Halyburton advertisement,” *Herald of the United States* (Warren, R.I.), April 20, 1798, p. 1255.
5. Sara Steiner, alphabetical file on cabinetmakers, list c2, Rhode Island Furniture Archive, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., referencing Warren Deeds, vol. 3, p. 73.
6. Sotheby’s, New York, January 22, 2005, lot 841 [RIF641].
7. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 85.015 [RIF709].
8. Jobe, Sullivan, and O’Brien 2009, 138–39, no. 43, pl. 43 [RIF706]; and *ibid.*, 138, 412n1 (under no. 43) [RIF5026].

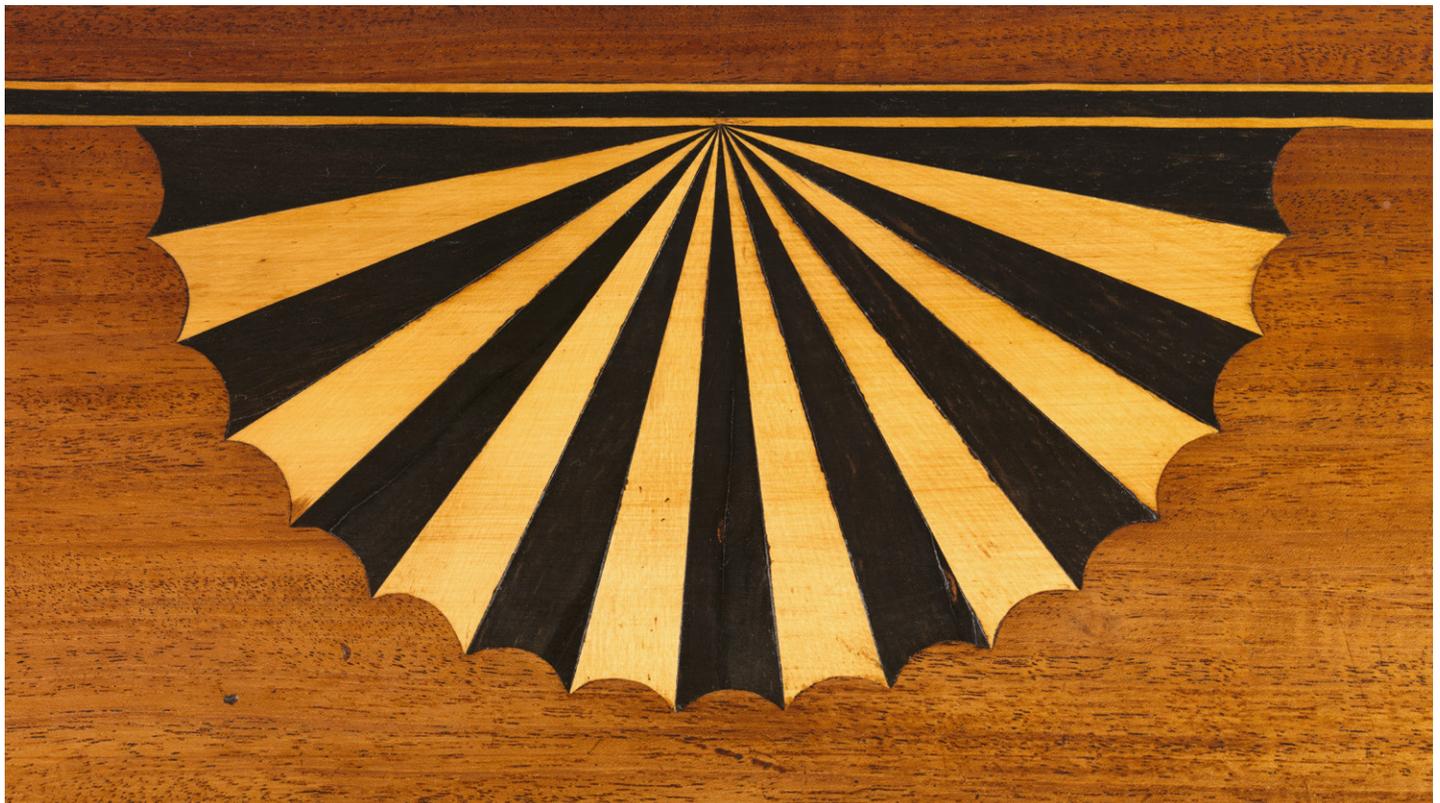


Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 101, showing half-patera inlay on top

John Carlile and Sons (active 1789–1803)

Providence, 1789–1803

Mahogany (primary); birch, maple, and pine (secondary)

Boston-born John Carlile, Sr., was working as a joiner in Providence by 1751, when William Olney sued him for damages in the amount of £24.<sup>1</sup> Carlile married in 1754 and had at least six children, several of whom would join him in his cabinet- and chair-making business. The name “John Carlile and Sons” on the label of this chair (fig. 1) appears to have been adopted in 1789 and may have been used as late as 1803, although the elder Carlile died in 1796. After his father’s death, John Carlile, Jr., was the most active in the family cabinetmaking business, also partnering with his brother Samuel in the sale of lumber. Rhode Island furniture scholar Joseph K. Ott has suggested that this side chair is the work of John, Jr., given that the shop seems to have made a greater quantity of sophisticated furniture after his father’s death.<sup>2</sup>

Though many chairs of this form survive, only a handful bear the John Carlile and Sons label.<sup>3</sup> The Neoclassical splat pattern, featuring an ancient Greek drinking vessel called a kylix, was the most

popular choice for Federal-era Rhode Island chairs. All of the labeled examples have shield backs, but a variation with the same splat design was made with a pedestal back. On a related group of pedestal-back chairs, the vertical piercings below the kylix are replaced by pendant leaves and husks of exaggerated proportions.<sup>4</sup>

Based on differences in their construction and decoration—not to mention the fact that over 125 examples of the shield-back variety are recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive at the Yale University Art Gallery—it is apparent that chairs of this type were made in multiple shops in Providence, and probably elsewhere in the state. Consistent construction details on the Carlile-labeled chairs examined for this study include side seat rails joined to the rear rail with through-tenons; a medial stretcher joined to the side stretchers with tenons rather than dovetails; a one-piece, shaped front seat rail; seats with corner braces and glue blocks at the front corners; a thin, molded strip applied to the top of the rear seat rail; and legs that are chamfered on their innermost corner. Their splats also share similar carved elements that tend to differ on the splats of unlabeled examples: the central feather at the top of the splat overlaps the outside bead of the crest; the foliate element that sits on top of the kylix does not overlap it; the swags do not give the illusion of passing through the central ring; each side of the fluted kylix has ten lobes; the top of the pedestal supporting the kylix has five flutes; and the horizontal petals of the rosettes are solid, while the vertical petals branch out to form

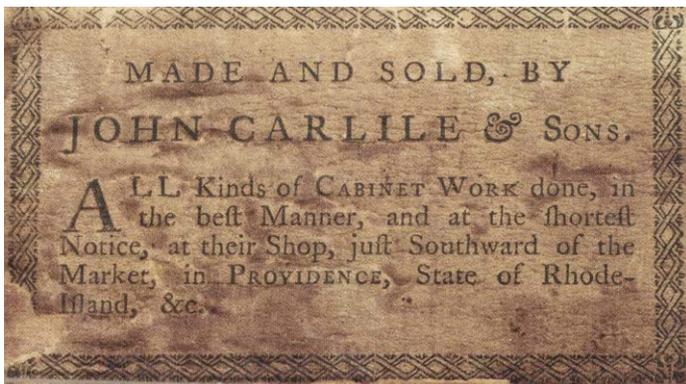


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 102, showing label on rear seat rail



upper and lower components. While these elements are consistent on the labeled examples examined for this study, given that there are so few of them on which to base these observations and the fact that John Carlile, Jr., employed journeymen, it would not be surprising if some chairs made in his shop differed in these details.<sup>5</sup> —JNJ

*Cat. 102*

39 × 21¼ × 19¾ in. (99.1 × 54 × 50.2 cm)

MARK: “MADE and SOLD, BY / JOHN CARLILE & Sons. / ALL Kinds of CABINET WORK done, in the best Manner, and at the shortest / Notice, at their Shop, just Southward of the / Market, in PROVIDENCE, State of Rhode- / Island, &c,” printed on paper label glued to interior of rear seat rail

INSCRIPTION: “[Two lines of crossed out text] / PROVIDENCE, R.I.,” stamped in black ink, on proper-right rear cross brace

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Cooper 1980, 28–29, figs. 29–30; Ott 1982, 1156–57, pl. 1, fig. 1; New York 2012a, 70–71, lot 157, ill.

PROVENANCE: Joseph K. Ott (1929–1994), Providence, by 1978; by descent to his wife, Anne Northrup Ott (1929–2015), Providence; consigned to Christie’s, New York, January 20, 2012, lot 157; sold to a private collection [RIF35]

*Notes*

1. William Olney, Providence, yeoman, v. John Carlile, Providence, joiner, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Providence County, vol. 3, p. 139, December 1751 term, Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
2. For the most comprehensive biography of the Carliles, see Ott 1982, 1156–57; see also the maker biographies on the Rhode Island Furniture Archive, <http://rifa.art.yale.edu>.
3. For the other labeled examples, see the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1976.7 [RIF297]; Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Mass., inv. no. AC 1951.147.a–b [RIF2554], a pair; and “John Walton, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 117, no. 6 (June 1980): 1146, ill. [RIF4932]. It could

not be confirmed whether one or both of the Mead chairs are labeled because the undersides of their seats were concealed by fabric and could not be examined.

4. For a pedestal-back example, see Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1963.12 [RIF1726]. For an example with pendant leaves and husks, see Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 177, no. 119, ill. [RIF3483].
5. In 1802 John Carlile, Jr., advertised for “two Journeymen Cabinetmakers, who are good Workmen in the several Branches of their Business,” promising them “constant Employ, and good Wages”; see “John Carlile advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, January 9, 1802, p. 3.

103

*Sideboard*

Providence, 1803

Mahogany and light and dark wood inlay (primary); cherry, pine, yellow poplar, and chestnut (secondary); silver plaques



The configuration of this sideboard, like a few others made in Rhode Island, is unusual, with tiers of three drawers flanking a central drawer that has a recessed cupboard below. Of the eight known examples recorded in the Rhode Island Furniture Archive, some, like this one, have a slide below the central drawer. A few, also like this one, have spade feet.<sup>1</sup> The sideboard's state of preservation is remarkable; the slide retains its original oilcloth cover, and the cupboard is still

lined with wallpaper. The rich inlay and silver mounts are unusual in Rhode Island. Bellflowers with forked veining decorate the lower sections of the legs; inlaid lozenges sectioned into smaller lozenges decorate the upper sections (fig. 1). Two-tone lozenges appear on the spade feet. The faces of the legs on the ends have overlapping tear-shaped inlays with forked veining on the light wood sections (fig. 2). Quarter-fan inlay marks each of the drawer-front corners, and alternating light



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 103, showing inlay on inner legs

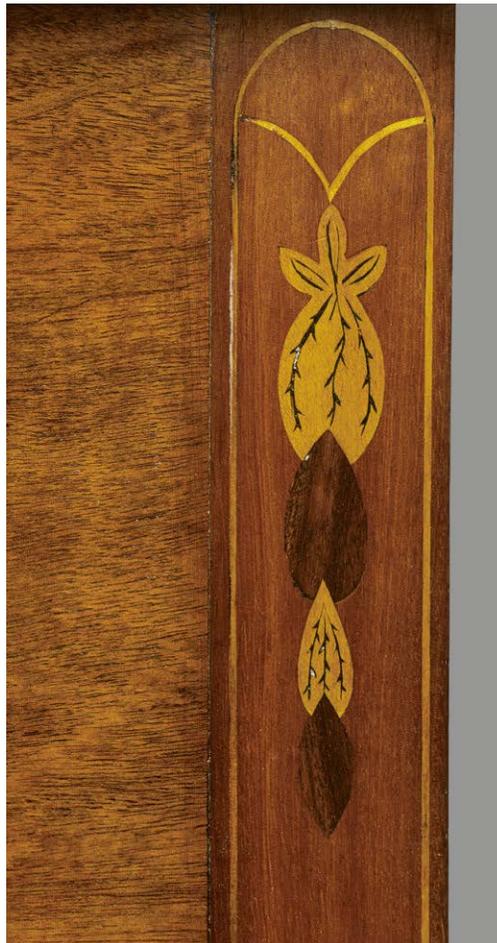


Fig. 2. Detail of cat. 103, showing inlay on outside of outer legs

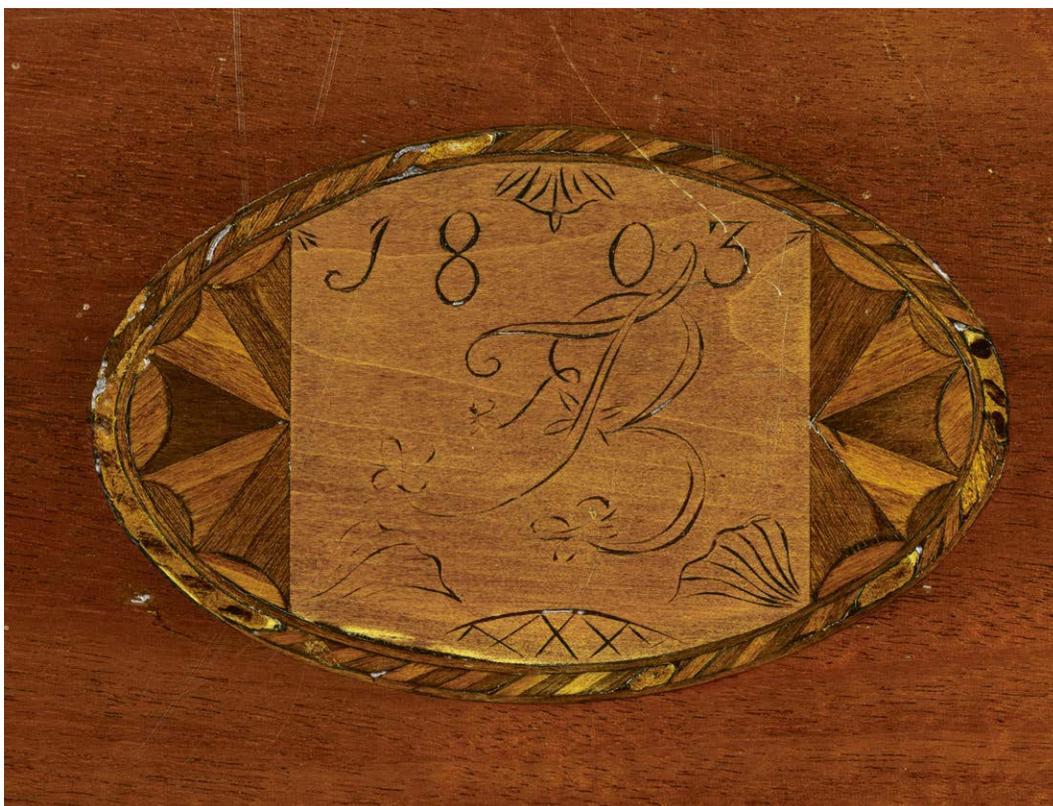


Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 103, showing inlay on top



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 103, showing silver plaque on door



Fig. 5. Detail of cat. 103, showing silver plaque on door

and dark rectangular stringing framed by light and dark chevron stringing ornaments the coves that flank the cupboard doors. There is larger chevron stringing on the front edge of the top. In the center of the top is an inlaid panel with the date 1803 and the initials "TB" (fig. 3); the cupboard doors have monogrammed silver plaques (figs. 4–5).

Few pieces of Rhode Island furniture are so winsomely ornamented. Among related sideboards, one on the market at Sotheby's in 2006 has some similar inlay—it displays the overlapping tear-shaped ornaments with forked veining on its legs—and may be by the same craftsman. Although the card tables attributed to James Halyburton (see cat. 101) of Warren, Rhode Island, also make use of abundant inlaid decoration, the patterns bear no direct correlation to the present sideboard. The cherry furniture documented and attributed to Nathan Lombard and Ebenezer Howard of Worcester County, Massachusetts, are related to this sideboard in the exuberance of the inlaid decoration, though the inlay patterns are not similar.<sup>2</sup> The Worcester County cherry furniture uses white pine as a secondary wood. This mahogany sideboard uses yellow poplar and chestnut secondary woods, which, in addition to pine and cherry, were favored by Rhode Island cabinetmakers. Its Providence attribution is based on its history of descent. The dates and monograms suggest that it was made to mark a particular occasion, probably a marriage, but the identity of its original owners has yet to be established. —PEK

### Cat. 103

40<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 66<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (102.6 × 168 × 60.6 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: "TB 1803," incised on oval patera on top; "April 20 / JB / 1803" and "April 20 / TB / 1803," engraved, on silver plaques on center of cupboard doors

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Monahan 1965a, 577, figs. 12–14; *Israel Sack* 1969–92, 7:1940, no. P5275, ill.

PROVENANCE: Bucklin family, Providence, ca. 1803; possibly by descent to Elizabeth Bucklin Rhodes (1811–1866) and James Thomas Rhodes (1800–1873), Providence; by descent in the Rhodes family, R.I.; sold to Israel Sack, Inc., New York, by 1982; sold to Linda H. and George M. Kaufman (1932–2001), Norfolk, Va., after 1982; sold to Leigh Keno American Antiques, New York, 2001; sold to a private collection, 2002 [RIF1352]

### Notes

1. For the other examples with spade feet, see Sotheby's, New York, October 7, 2006, lot 277 [RIF2083]; and "Harry Arons advertisement," *Antiques* 92, no. 5 (November 1967): 598, ill. [RIF2180]. The illustration of the latter is so poor that comparison of the ornament is not possible. For examples with plain feet, see Sotheby's, New York, October 13, 2000, lot 315 [RIF2127]; "Nathan Liverant and Son advertisement," *Antiques* 133, no. 1 (January 1988): 26, ill. [RIF2172]; Sotheby's, New York, January 18–19, 2001, lot 761 [RIF3491]; Sotheby's, New York, January 18–19, 2001, lot 776 [RIF3492]; and an unpublished example in a private collection [RIF4498]. Of these, RIF2172, RIF3491, RIF3492, and RIF4498 have slides.
2. Jobe and Pearce 1998. Christie Jackson, an organizer of the exhibition *Delightfully Designed: The Furniture and Life of Nathan Lombard, Old Sturbridge Village* (October 19, 2013–May 4, 2014), attributed some pieces of this Worcester County group to Ebenezer Howard.

*Dressing Bureau*

Attributed to Joseph Rawson and Son (active 1808–26)

Providence, 1814

Mahogany and mahogany, rosewood, and light wood veneer (primary); mahogany, chestnut, pine, and yellow poplar (secondary); ivory pulls and ornaments

The dressing bureau form—a chest of drawers elevated on tall legs, topped by a set of small drawers and a looking glass—was popular in Massachusetts in the Federal period. A handful of similar ones were made in Providence. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, in Delaware, owns one labeled by Levi Ruggles of Boston, and others have been attributed to Thomas and John Seymour of Boston.<sup>1</sup> Gov. William Jones of Rhode Island owned one of the Seymour dressing bureaus; it descended in his family. Robert Mussey has speculated that Gov. Jones's dressing bureau, with all the hallmarks of the Seymour shop, was copied by the Rawsons of Providence.<sup>2</sup> The lunette inlay along the lower edge of the case front on the present example has long been associated with Boston cabinetwork; the inlay may have been manufactured in Boston and sold in Providence.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the present example, two related dressing bureaus closely resemble Massachusetts models, but they use yellow poplar and chestnut, woods atypical in Massachusetts furniture but favored in Rhode Island. They have histories of ownership that reinforce their Rhode Island attribution. The present dressing bureau was made for Mary Ann DeWolf of Bristol, Rhode Island, who in 1814 married Raymond Henry Jones Perry, a brother of Commodores Matthew and Oliver Hazard Perry. A closely related example has two handwritten labels that also assist in attribution. One, written by Mary Wheaton's father, states that the bureau was made for her in 1813 at the time of her marriage to Thomas Rivers of Charleston, South Carolina. The second label, written by her descendant later in the nineteenth century, states it was made for Mary

in Providence by "Rawson."<sup>4</sup> That label is the basis for attributing these dressing bureaus to Joseph Rawson and Son.

The ivory knobs, bosses, and finials on the present example are characteristic of the finest Rhode Island Federal furniture.<sup>5</sup> Many of the ivory fittings found on Providence furniture may have been supplied by Providence cabinetmaker Thomas Howard. As early as 1812 Howard offered six hundred ivory knobs "on a new and improved plan," for sale among other cabinetmaking supplies.<sup>6</sup> Through the firm of Brown and Ives, Howard imported \$27,000 worth of ivory in 1816, and the ivory trade remained an important part of his business thereafter.<sup>7</sup> —PEK

*Cat. 104*

72 × 38 × 21 in. (182.9 × 96.5 × 53.3 cm)

INSCRIPTIONS: "N 1," in graphite, on backs of mirror, crest, and upper and lower case; "D Wolf[?]," in graphite, on back of mirror; "3 ¼ Hours," in graphite, on back of lower case; "BEKINS / VAN & STORAGE CO. / HOLLYWOOD CALF. / LOT PIECE / 32490," in blue ink, printed on paper label glued to exterior of back of lower case; "N 1," in chalk, on exterior of upper case back; "1" through "3," in chalk and graphite, on interior bottoms of drawers of upper case; an arc and "1" through "3," in graphite, on interior backs of drawers of upper case; "X," in graphite, on interior fronts of drawers marked "1" and "3"; an arc, in graphite, on interior front of drawer marked "2"; "1" through "3," in graphite, on front rail of upper case under corresponding drawers; "X1," in graphite, on interior back of upper drawer of lower case; "1," in graphite, on interior bottom of upper



drawer of lower case; “X<sub>2</sub>,” in graphite, on interior back of middle drawer of lower case; “V,” incised on interior back of middle drawer of lower case; “2,” in graphite, on interior bottom of middle drawer of lower case; an arc and “II,” in graphite, on interior front of middle drawer of lower case; an arc and “3,” in graphite, on interior back of bottom drawer of lower case; an arc and “III,” in graphite, on interior front of bottom drawer of lower case; “1,” in graphite, on interior proper-right side of lower case; “2[?],” in graphite, on interior proper-left side of lower case; “1” and “2,” in graphite, on tops of drawer dividers under top and middle drawers of lower case; “3,” in chalk, on top of drawer divider under bottom drawer of lower case; “Thayer,” compass work designs, doodle, and “N 1,” in graphite, on exterior top of lower case; an arc, in graphite, on underside of upper case

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** *Art Journal* 1977, 343, ill.; Monahon 1980, 140, referenced in fig. 12; Monkhouse 1980, 127, pl. 3; Woodward and Robinson 1985, 322, no. 276, ill.; Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 67–68, no. 14, ill.; Eckardt 1987, 986; New York 1999b, 187, under lot 729

**PROVENANCE:** Mrs. Raymond Henry Jones Perry (née Mary Ann DeWolf, 1795–1834), Bristol, R.I., 1814; by descent in her family; by descent to Patricia Payson Hunt (1927–2001), Lowell, Mass.; sold to Shreve, Crump, and Low, Boston, about 1975; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Furniture Exchange Fund and Mary B. Jackson Fund, 1977, inv. no. 77.020 [RIF1755]

## Notes

1. C. Montgomery 1966, 187, no. 144; and Mussey 2003, 262–63, no. 64, ill.
2. Mussey 2003, 263. The dressing bureau with the Jones family history is now in the collection of the White House, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1962.231.1 [RIF4655].
3. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 68; and Mussey 2003, 95–96.
4. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 67; and Monahon 1980, 140, fig. 12. This dressing bureau is in the collection of Steve Macfarlane; see “David Stockwell advertisement,” *Antiques* 102 (July 1972): 1, ill. [RIF1754]. Another example without a history is in a private collection, previously sold at Christie’s, New York, January 15–16, 1999, lot 729 [RIF4548]. It has a marking system very similar to that on the present example.
5. See, for example, the tall case clock by William Stanton in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 84.149 [RIF3467]; two lady’s secretary and bookcases, “Wickford Hill Antiques advertisement,” *Antiques* 10, no. 1 (July 1926): 60, ill. [RIF1905], and CRN Auctions, Cambridge, Mass., October 17, 2009, lot 88 [RIF4556]; a chest of drawers in the Stanley Weiss Collection, Providence [RIF5840]; a desk and bookcase, Sotheby’s, New York, January 23, 2011, lot 240, ill. [RIF5328]; and an unpublished chest of drawers in a private collection that was also owned by Mary Wheaton Rivers [RIF6197].
6. “Thomas Howard, Jun., advertisement,” *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, March 7, 1812, p. 3.
7. Monahon 1965b, 704.

*Looking Glass*

Unknown maker

Peter Grinnell and Son (active 1809–28), retailer

Probably made Boston; retailed Providence, ca. 1812–15

Gilded pine; silvered and reverse-painted glass



On the label affixed to the back of this looking glass, Peter Grinnell and Son proclaimed that they “executed in the neatest manner” picture and looking-glass framing at their shop in Providence, opposite the Providence Bank, and that they also sold window glass, paints, and oils of various types, including linseed, lamp, and whale oil, and did ornamental painting, among other things (fig. 1). The elder Grinnell was in partnership with his cousin William Taylor by 1789. That partnership was dissolved in 1809, and Peter Grinnell went into business with his son William Taylor Grinnell, who had advertised his services as an ornamental painter in September 1808 before entering into partnership with his father.<sup>1</sup> A needlework frame with the inscription “AURORA” is signed and dated 1813 by him on the glass.<sup>2</sup> Peter and his son continued their partnership until 1828, when another of Peter’s sons, George, joined the business and the name of the firm was changed to Peter Grinnell and Sons. The firm continued to have a gilding and framing department until 1830.

Despite the label’s claim about executing frames in the neatest manner, in her work on the firm Betty Ring questions whether Peter Grinnell and Son actually made most of the looking-glass frames they sold, pointing out that their newspaper advertisements between 1813 and 1819 were often headlined, “LOOKING GLASSES, Just received and for Sale.”<sup>3</sup> Ring suggests that the firm’s looking glasses may have been made in Boston and New York. The Grinnells are known to have purchased looking glasses from the Boston maker John Doggett. William Taylor Grinnell also conducted business in New York; William T. Grinnell and Company, commission merchants, are listed in New York directories in 1815 and

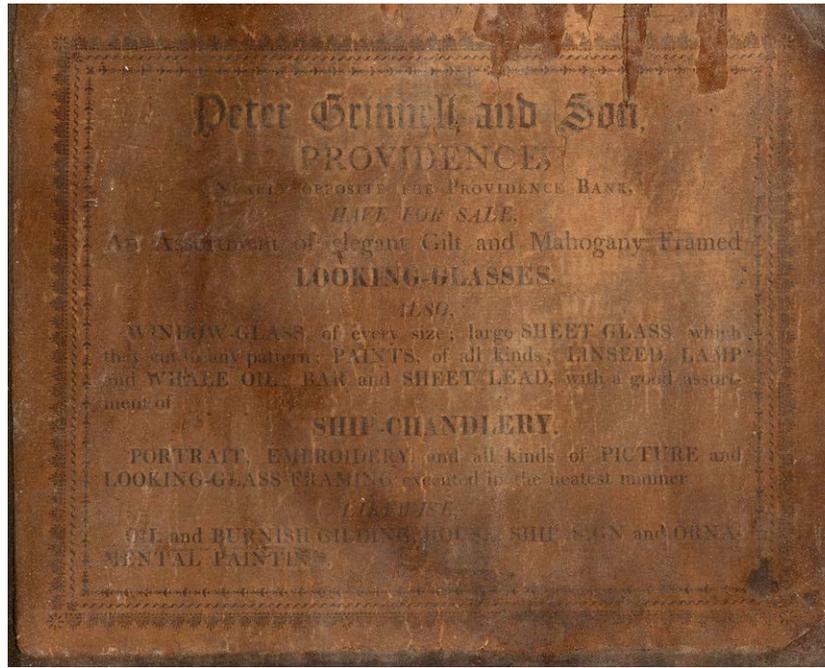


Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 105, showing label on back

1816.<sup>4</sup> On the present looking glass, the letter forms in the word “Commerce,” especially the shapes of the “C”s, “M”s, and “R,” are very similar to those on a frame for needlework documented to Doggett.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that this looking glass was bought in Boston and sold in Providence, another example of Federal-era Rhode Island furniture makers retailing products produced elsewhere (see, for example, Kane and Sullivan essay, fig. 12). —PEK

*Cat. 105*

41¼ × 20½ in. (104.8 × 52.1 cm)

MARK: “Peter Grinnell and Son, / PROVIDENCE, / Nearly opposite the Providence Bank, / HAVE FOR SALE, / An Assortment of elegant Gilt and Mahogany Framed / LOOKING GLASSES. / ALSO, / WINDOW GLASS, of every size; large SHEET GLASS, which / they cut to any pattern; PAINTS, of all kinds; LINSEED, LAMP / and WHALE OIL; BAR and SHEET LEAD, with a good assort / ment of / SHIP CHANDLERY. / PORTRAIT, EMBROIDERY, and all kinds of PICTURE and / LOOKING GLASS FRAMING executed in the neatest manner. / LIKEWISE, / OIL

and BURNISH GILDING, HOUSE, SHIP, SIGN and ORNA / MENTAL PAINTING.,” in black ink, printed on paper label glued to backboard

INSCRIPTION: “Commerce,” painted on eglomise panel

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Boston and Marlborough 2009, 83–84, lot 326, ill.

PROVENANCE: Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), November 8, 2009, lot 326. Stanley Weiss Collection, Providence, 2010 [R1F4618]

*Notes*

1. Foley 2002, 260, citing the *Providence Gazette*, September 3, 1808. For a definitive discussion of the firm, see Ring 1980; the issue of manufacturing is addressed on pp. 215–16.
2. *Ibid.*, 214, fig. 6, pl. 2; and Ring 1983, 194–95, no. 97, figs. 40–41.
3. Ring 1980, 215.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Ring 1993, 1:98, fig. 104.

*Card Table*

Samuel and Joseph Rawson, Jr. (active 1826–52)

Providence, 1828–35

Mahogany and mahogany veneer (primary); yellow poplar and pine (secondary)



The brothers Samuel Rawson and Joseph Rawson, Jr., established the firm Samuel and Joseph Rawson, Jr., following the 1826 dissolution of the firm Joseph Rawson and Son. Occupying the same premises as the earlier business, they advertised for sale an “extensive supply of CABINET WARE; such as Bureaus, various patterns and sizes, Grecian claw feet Tables, Grecian Sofas, Cherry Tables, various patterns and sizes Bedsteads-Mahogany, Curled Maple and Cherry, of all sizes.”<sup>1</sup> This card table, which bears their label, is an example of one type of “Grecian claw feet Tables” that they advertised (fig. 1). “Grecian” is a descriptive term applied to American furniture beginning in the first decade of the

nineteenth century, especially for pieces that take their cue from the architecture and artifacts of the ancient world.

The form, in which the frame and fold-over top are supported by double pairs of columns resting on transverse plinths with paw feet and braced by a central stretcher, relates to English Regency-style tables. In 1808 the British designer George Smith published *A Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*. Plate 78 shows a “Backgammon Work Table,” with slight variations on the components described above.<sup>2</sup> Charles Honoré Lannuier of New York made at least one worktable supported at each end by pairs of columns on plinths, with paw feet and a central

stretcher.<sup>3</sup> Lannuier's worktable has richer details, such as brass decorative banding and mounts, than the Providence example. On the Rawson table the decorative band of anthemions along the lower edge of the frame is stenciled in gold-colored paint, a less expensive alternative. The stenciling pattern is found on so many labeled Rawson pieces that it is said to be a "hallmark" of the firm when it appears on unlabeled pieces.<sup>4</sup>

The history of the table illustrates a new kind of patronage—that of the industrial entrepreneur—that did not exist in Samuel and Joseph's grandfather's day. The card table was owned by Orray Taft of Providence, who may have purchased it for the new house he built on Westminster Street in 1828.<sup>5</sup> A native of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, Taft made a fortune as a cotton broker, allowing him to build a grand house and fill it with the products of one of Providence's leading cabinetmaking firms. He was later one of the owners and organizers of the Wauregan Cotton Mill in Plainfield, Connecticut. His table is very similar to two others, also with paper labels glued inside the storage compartment and visible when the leaves of the table are swiveled.<sup>6</sup> These tables all use one of the firm's three labels that include "Providence" as part of the firm's address. A virtually identical label without the word "Providence" is found on other pieces.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the earliest label, found on two dining tables, includes the date 1828.<sup>8</sup> —PEK

#### Cat. 106

29 7/8 × 36 1/2 × 19 in. (75.9 × 92.7 × 48.3 cm) (closed)

MARK: "Furniture Warehouse / S. & J. RAWSON, JR. / NO. 68, BROAD STREET, PROVIDENCE / HAVE CONSTANTLY ON HAND, OF THEIR OWN MANUFACTURE, AND WILL MAKE TO ORDER, / ALL KINDS OF / CABINET FURNITURE, / SUCH AS / SIDEBOARDS, SECRETARIES AND BOOK CASES, SOFAS, &C. / Which they will dispose of as cheap as any regular Cabinet Maker in town. / ALSO, [column left] PIER TABLES, a very superior article; / Pillar, Claw, Card and Dining TABLES; [column right] WARDROBES, BUREAUS; / Mahogany and birch BEDSTEADS / All orders from a distance will be than[kfully r]eceived and



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 106, showing label in storage compartment

punctually attended to.," printed on paper label glued to bottom of interior compartment

INSCRIPTIONS: "This table belongs to / Franklin Keith Taft," in ink, written on paper label glued to interior bottom of interior compartment; "IIII," incised on exterior bottom of interior compartment

PROVENANCE: Orray Taft (1793–1865), Providence, 1828–35; by descent to Franklin Keith Taft (1875–1944), Providence, then New York; by descent to Mrs. John Bentley (née Eliza Taft, 1913–2005), Westwood, Mass.; given to the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, 1997, inv. no. 1997.123.1 [RIF6113]

#### Notes

1. "Fashionable Furniture," *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix*, November 29, 1826, p. 3.
2. C. Montgomery and Forman 1970, 15, pl. 78.
3. Kenny 1998, 148, no. 123, pl. 70.
4. Monkhouse and Michie 1986, 143n2.
5. *Ibid.*, 143.
6. See the table in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 76.191 [RIF3871], and one that has been in the marketplace but whose current location is unknown [RIF6154].
7. The label without the word "Providence" is found on the card table sold at Skinner, Boston and Marlborough, Mass. (sale held Boston), November 8, 2009, lot 367 [RIF4621], and on the one illustrated in Monahon 1980, 144, figs. 19–19a [RIF5538].
8. See Ellesin 1975, 954, ill. [RIF5200]; and Monahon 1980, 139, 143, pl. 6, fig. 18 [RIF5199].

## *Appendix*

# *Cabinetmakers' Component Marking Codes*

PATRICIA E. KANE

In the process of making a piece of furniture, cabinetmakers often used marks and written words to indicate the correct orientation of the pieces of wood they were assembling into a finished object. These marks are used extensively in case pieces and are typically in chalk or graphite, or are incised.

Michael Moses was the first scholar to draw attention to the marks used by Rhode Island cabinetmakers.<sup>1</sup> He discussed John Townsend's use of letters on drawer backs and an "M" finishing mark, pointing out their usefulness, along with construction and decorative details, as diagnostic tools in attributing unsigned pieces to Townsend. He noted that Edmund Townsend and Job Townsend, Sr., used numbers instead of letters, and that even though John Goddard used letters, he did so infrequently. More recently, Erik Gronning and Amy Coes used infrared photography to show that John Townsend's father, Christopher Townsend, used letters and the "M" finishing mark extensively.<sup>2</sup> They also determined that the Townsends used another finishing mark: a double loop. Following these leads, the present study records other cabinetmakers' marks to see if additional patterns can be discerned.

In addition to the types of marks used, the placement of the numbers or letters on the elements of the case pieces is also important. For instance, Christopher and John Townsend and John Goddard all used letters on the large drawers of their case pieces, but while the Townsends put them on the exterior drawer backs, Goddard put them on the interior drawer backs. The Townsends also

used letters on the exterior and interior drawers of their desks, but Goddard used numbers on the interior drawers. Numerous pieces of furniture attributed to Rhode Island with letters on their drawer backs, however, were made by neither the Townsends nor Goddard. For instance, Daniel and Thomas Spencer, nephews of Goddard, and Benjamin Baker also used letters on their drawer backs.<sup>3</sup> Typically craftsmen used corresponding numbers or letters on the drawer dividers of the exterior drawers.

The sequence of the numbers and letters is also important. Most makers sequenced from proper right to proper left and from top to bottom. But some makers, like the Warren shop joiner Ichabod Cole, sequenced from proper left to proper right and from bottom to top. Many makers simply used an "X" as an indicator. It seems that Providence makers were more likely to use "X"s or "B"s with letters or numbers, though the names of most of these makers are not known.<sup>4</sup>

This appendix describes and illustrates the marking systems found on the signed or otherwise documented case pieces by the various makers in the Yale University Art Gallery's Rhode Island Furniture Archive. Although these marking systems are useful as a diagnostic tool, it should be kept in mind that in large shops with two or three journeymen, the marks may be specific to the journeyman and not to the master of the shop. Age and wear can also make some of the marking codes difficult to decipher. For more detailed inscriptions on the pieces of furniture described here, see the entries in the catalogue and in the online database at <http://rifa.art.yale.edu>.

## BENJAMIN BAKER

The signed high chest by Benjamin Baker in the present catalogue (cat. 58) has the letters “A” through “C” from proper right to proper left on the three small top drawers of the chest’s upper case; letters starting with “D” are used at center on the interior backs of the upper case’s long drawers, from top to bottom. The letter “A” (fig. 1) is used at center on the interior back of the long drawer of the lower case. The signed dressing table by Baker at the Preservation Society of Newport County, inv. no. PSNC.1707 [RIF981], does not clearly follow this pattern; it has illegible chalk on the interior and exterior back of one of the small drawers and the word “Back” on the interior back of the case.



Fig. 1. Detail of cat. 58, showing letter “A” on interior back of long drawer of lower case

## JOHN CARLILE, JR.

The signed slant-front desk by John Carlile, Jr., now at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 2001.7 [RIF248], has “X” on the exterior backs of the exterior drawers; “X” on some interior and exterior sides and backs of some of the interior drawers; faint numbers on some interior sides, backs, and fronts of some interior drawers; and “N 3 To[?],” “N 2 M,” and “N 1 B” (fig. 2) at center on the interior fronts of the prospect drawers (the small drawers behind the prospect door), from top to bottom.



Fig. 2. Detail showing mark “N 1 B” on interior front of bottom prospect drawer, from John Carlile, Jr., *Slant-Front Desk*, Providence, 1785. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund, inv. no. 2001.7. [RIF248]

## ICHABOD COLE

The signed desk and bookcase by Ichabod Cole in the present catalogue (cat. 79) has distinctive markings of a slash next to Roman numerals (fig. 3) on the top edges of the drawer sides near the front corners. The interior drawers have vertical lines (fig. 4), often capped by a dot, on the interior backs and sometimes on the fronts as well. Cole sequenced his numbers from proper left to proper right and from bottom to top.



Fig. 3. Detail of cat. 79, showing marks on top edge of interior drawer side



Fig. 4. Detail of cat. 79, showing marks on interior back of interior drawer

## DANIEL GODDARD

The bureau table in the present catalogue with Daniel Goddard's name on the frieze drawer (cat. 55) has the letters "A" through "F" on the interior front corners of the small drawers. The form of Goddard's "A" (fig. 5) is more like those used by Christopher and John Townsend than by Daniel's father, John.



Fig. 5. Detail of cat. 55, showing letter "A" on interior side of proper-right top small drawer

## JAMES GODDARD, JR.

The bureau table signed by James Goddard (cat. 52) has illegible chalk, possibly the number “1,” on the interior back of the upper drawer and the numbers “1” through “3” (fig. 6) on the interior back, bottom, and sides of the proper-right small drawers, from top to bottom, with occasional omissions of the numbers in these locations. The numbers “4” through “6” are used at the same locations on the proper-left small drawers.



Fig. 6. Detail of cat. 52, showing number “1” on interior back of proper-right top small drawer

## JOHN GODDARD

A signed slant-front desk by John Goddard now in a private collection (Kane essay, fig. 9) has letters at center on the interior backs of the exterior drawers, from top to bottom; the letter on the top drawer is illegible and those below are “B,” “C,” and “D.”<sup>5</sup> Numbers starting with “1” are used at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the interior sides of the interior drawers, from proper right to proper left. Numbers starting with “1” are also at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the interior sides of the valance drawers (the small drawers above the open compartments flanking the prospect door), from proper right to proper left. The numbers on Goddard’s interior desk drawers are continuous, beginning with the tier of three drawers on the proper right, then the drawer below the proper-right open compartment, the three drawers behind the prospect door, the drawer below the proper-left open compartment, and the tier of three drawers on the proper left. The desk and bookcase by Goddard in the present catalogue (cat. 57) exhibits the same marks as the slant-front desk, starting with a partially legible “A” (fig. 7) in graphite on the top exterior drawer. The labeled desk in the catalogue (cat. 27) has the same

placement of letters on the exterior drawers but no numbers on the interior drawers. The letter “A” on this desk is only partially legible beneath the label that covers it. The other signed slant-front desk by Goddard may have a “B” on the interior back of one exterior drawer.<sup>6</sup> Chairs attributed to Goddard also use Roman numerals to identify certain parts (see cat. 69).



Fig. 7. Detail of cat. 57, showing letter “A” on interior back of top exterior drawer

## JOINER D

This joiner is unidentified, but his unusual marking system is found on four objects: a desk, a dressing table, and two chests of drawers.<sup>7</sup> They all have a schematic “D,” or hemisphere and slash (fig. 8), in chalk, on the exterior back of each exterior drawer. The dressing table and desk also have horizontal lines, in chalk, across the exterior back of some drawers.

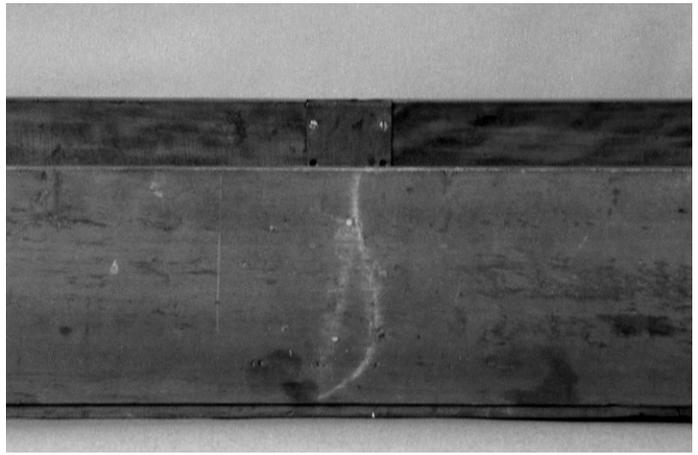


Fig. 8. Detail showing letter “D” on exterior back of drawer, from *Chest of Drawers*, probably Newport, 1715–35. Newport Restoration Foundation, Gift of Doris Duke, inv. no. 2002.18. [RIF2163]

## JOSEPH RAWSON, SR.

A labeled chest of drawers by Joseph Rawson, Sr., has the numbers “4,” “5,” and “6” on the exterior back of its three upper drawers, from top to bottom.<sup>8</sup> The labeled chest of drawers at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, inv. no. 78.146 [RIF877], has a slash on the exterior drawer backs, and numbers “1” through “4” on the interior drawer bottoms and tops of drawer dividers, both from top to bottom. Another labeled chest of drawers in a private collection has loops with slashes or inverted “V”s at center on the interior drawer backs (fig. 9) and at front center on the interior drawer bottoms.



Fig. 9. Detail showing loops and slash on interior back of drawer, from Joseph Rawson, Sr., *Chest of Drawers*, Providence, 1790–1800. Private collection. [RIF5469]

## DANIEL SPENCER

The signed desk and bookcase by Daniel Spencer owned by Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc. [RIF2912], has letters starting with “A” at center on the interior backs of the exterior drawers, from top to bottom; “I [in script]” or “1” at the front corners on the interior sides of the top, third from top, and bottom drawers; the number “2” at the front corners on the interior sides of the second drawer from the top; numbers starting with “1” at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the sides of the interior drawers, from proper right to proper left; and numbers starting with “1” at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the sides of the valance drawers, from proper right to proper left. The form of Spencer’s “A” (fig. 10), written with a continuous stroke, relates to marks found on the work of his brother Thomas Spencer (see, for example, cat. 75) and to those found on work attributed to his uncle John Goddard (see, for example, the high chest at the Art Institute of Chicago, inv. no. 1989.158 [RIF516]). The number “1” or letter “I” at the front corners of drawers by Daniel Spencer (see fig. 11) is also found on the work of his brother.



Fig. 10. Detail showing letter “A” on interior back of top exterior drawer, from Daniel Spencer, *Desk and Bookcase*, Newport or Providence, 1765–85. Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc. [RIF2912]



Fig. 11. Detail showing number “1” or letter “I” near front corner of interior side of exterior drawer, from Daniel Spencer, *Desk and Bookcase*, Newport or Providence, 1765–85. Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc. [RIF2912]

## THOMAS SPENCER

The desk and bookcase by Thomas Spencer (cat. 75), documented to him through an account, has letters “A” through “D” at center on the interior backs of the exterior drawers, from top to bottom; a “1” or an “I” at the front corners on the interior sides of the exterior drawers; numbers “1” through “6” at center on the interior backs of the valance drawers, from proper right to proper left; and numbers “1” to “11” on the interior backs and front corners of the interior drawers, from top to bottom and from proper right to proper left. The bureau table attributed to him through a nineteenth-century inscription now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (cat. 75, fig. 2), has the characteristic Spencer “A” on the interior back of the frieze drawer (fig. 12) and letters and numbers starting with “A1” on the interior backs of the proper-right set of small drawers, from top to bottom; the number “1” or letter “I” is also on the interior front corners of those same drawers (fig. 13). Letters and numbers starting with “A2” are on the interior backs of the proper-left set of small drawers; the “2” is also on the interior front corners of those same drawers.



Fig. 12. Detail of cat. 75, fig. 2, showing letter “A” on interior back of frieze drawer

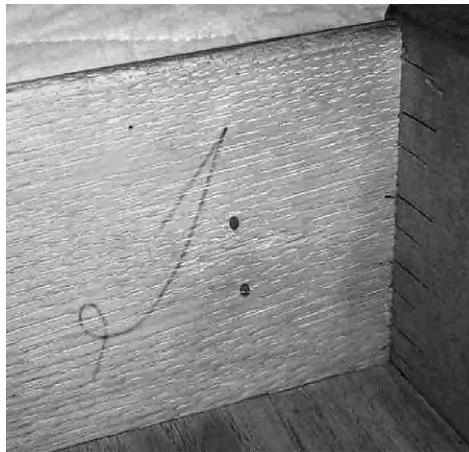


Fig. 13. Detail of cat. 75, fig. 2, showing number “1” or letter “I” near front corner of interior side of drawer

## CHRISTOPHER TOWNSEND

Five documented pieces offer evidence of Christopher Townsend's marking codes: a desk and bookcase (cat. 29); two high chests of drawers (cat. 31 and Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. 1975.61.1 [RIF817]) that are also signed by John Townsend; a high chest signed and dated 1748 and now in a private collection [RIF205]; and a slant-front desk also in a private collection [RIF4780].<sup>9</sup> The desk and bookcase (fig. 14) and the Philadelphia high chest have an "M" finishing mark with concentric flourishes at the center. An "M" finishing mark was also used by Townsend's son, John, but does not have the concentric flourishes. The desk and bookcase and the slant-front desk have double loops in chalk on some exterior drawer backs (fig. 15). The drawers are lettered, starting with "A" on their exterior drawer backs, and are sequenced from proper right to proper left for drawers aligned horizontally and from top to bottom for drawers aligned vertically. The interior drawers have the letters "A" (fig. 16) through "C" on the interior fronts of the proper-right interior drawers, from top to bottom, and "F" through "H" on the interior fronts of the proper-left interior drawers, from top to bottom. The prospect drawers are lettered "A" through "C," and the long drawers flanking the prospect drawers are lettered "A" and "B." The valance drawers have letters "A" through "F" on the interior and exterior bottoms, from proper right to proper left. The signed high chests of drawers and the slant-front desk have the same sequences of letters on the exterior drawers. On the slant-front desk, the prospect drawers have a different sequence than the other interior drawers, like the desk and bookcase. The signed and dated high chest of drawers has only a few scattered numbers, an anomaly.

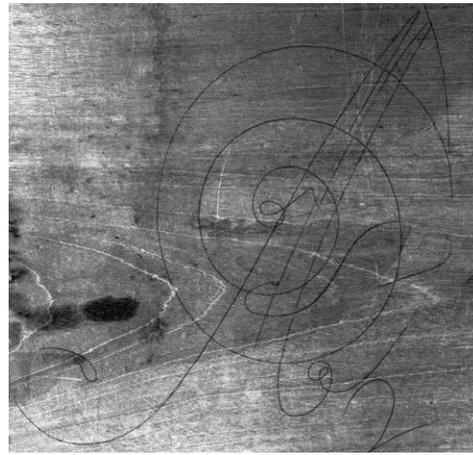


Fig. 14. Detail of cat. 29, showing letter "M" finishing mark on interior bottom of second exterior drawer from top



Fig. 15. Detail of cat. 29, showing double loops on exterior back of third exterior drawer from top

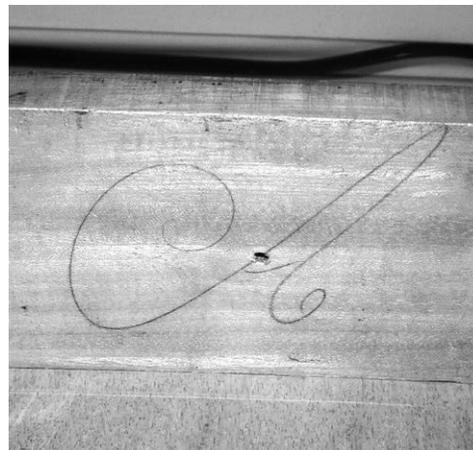


Fig. 16. Detail of cat. 29, showing letter "A" on interior front of proper-right long interior drawer

## EDMUND TOWNSEND

The bureau table labeled by Edmund Townsend (cat. 51, fig. 3) has the numbers “1” through “3” at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the interior sides (with some corners unmarked) of the proper-right small drawers, from top to bottom. Numbers “4” through “6” are at the same locations on the proper-left small drawers. The bureau table catalogued in this volume (cat. 51) has the same sequence of numbers on the small exterior drawers and numbers “1” through “5” at center on the interior backs (fig. 17) and at the front corners on the interior sides of the interior drawers.



Fig. 17. Detail of cat. 51, showing number “1” on interior back of proper-right top small drawer

## JOB TOWNSEND, SR.

Few pieces are documented to Job Townsend, Sr. Those that are documented show that he used numbers sparingly. The desk and bookcase by Townsend in the present catalogue (cat. 28) has the numbers “1” through “8” at center on the interior backs of the interior drawers, from proper right to proper left, and “1” through “3” at center on the interior backs of the prospect drawers, from top to bottom. Like the Christopher Townsend desk and bookcase (cat. 29), Job’s prospect drawers follow their own sequence, which is discontinuous with the numbers/letters on the other interior drawers. The dressing table by Job Townsend now in the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1958.2 [RIF349], has the letter “I” or number “1” at center on the interior back and at the front corners (fig. 18) on the interior sides of the top drawer.

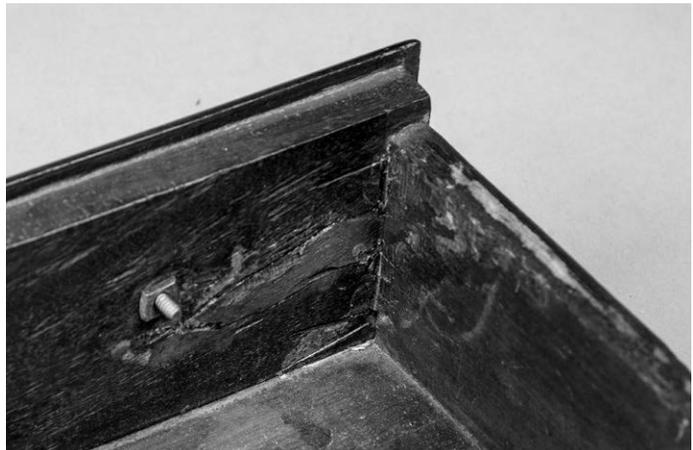


Fig. 18. Detail showing letter “I” or number “1” near front corner of interior side of top drawer, from Job Townsend, Sr., *Dressing Table*, Newport, 1746. Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, inv. no. 1978.1. [RIF349]

## JOB TOWNSEND, JR.

A signed slant-front desk by Job Townsend, Jr., now in the Milwaukee Art Museum, inv. no. MI985.33 [RIF515], has the letters “C” through “D” at center on the interior backs of the lower three exterior drawers. It also has the numbers “1” through “4” at center on the interior backs and at the front corners on the interior sides of the interior drawers, from proper right to proper left. As on his father’s desk and bookcase (cat. 28), the prospect drawers on the Milwaukee desk are numbered separately—“1C” (fig. 19) through “3C,” from top to bottom. A signed dressing table in a private collection has the numbers “1” through “3” at center on the interior back and at the front corners on the interior sides of each drawer, from proper right to proper left.<sup>10</sup>



Fig. 19. Detail showing “1C” near front corner of interior side of bottom prospect drawer, from Job Townsend, Jr., *Slant-Front Desk*, Newport, 1750–65. Milwaukee Museum of Art, inv. no. MI985.33. [RIF515]

## JOHN TOWNSEND

There are more signed case pieces by John Townsend than by any other maker. They include three chests of drawers (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 27.57.1 [RIF14]; private collection [RIF1472]; and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Va. [RIF1816]); a document cabinet in a private collection [RIF21]; a sideboard whose location is unknown [RIF6166]; two slant-front desks (Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1976.0063 [RIF97], and current location unknown [RIF639]); a bureau table in a private collection [RIF1784]; and four high chests of drawers—two signed with his father, Christopher (cat. 31 and Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. 1975.61.1 [RIF817]), and two signed by John alone (cat. 32 and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., inv. no. 1984.32.26 [RIF3606]).<sup>11</sup> The signed high chest of drawers in the present catalogue (cat. 32) has letters starting with “A” at center on the exterior backs and interior bottoms of the small drawers of the upper case, from proper right to proper left, and letters starting with “D” at center on the exterior backs of the long drawers of the upper case (fig. 20), from top to bottom; the letters “A” and “B” on the exterior backs of the



Fig. 20. Detail of cat. 32, showing letters “A” through “F” on exterior backs of drawers

deep drawers in the lower case; and the letter “M” within scrollwork (fig. 21) on the interior bottom of the middle small drawer of the lower case, on the interior bottom of the middle long drawer of the upper case, and on the backboards of the upper and lower cases. The other pieces use sequences of letters starting with “A” on their exterior drawer backs, from proper right to proper left for drawers aligned horizontally and from top to bottom for drawers aligned vertically. The two slant-front desks have different sequences. RIF97 has letters “A” through “L” on the interior drawer bottoms, including on the prospect drawers. RIF639 has letters “A” through “H” on the interior drawer bottoms, excluding the prospect drawers. This pattern relates to Townsend’s father’s desk and bookcase (cat. 29). On RIF97 the valance drawers have the letters “A” through “F” on the interior and exterior bottoms.

## THOMAS TOWNSEND

The signed bureau table by Thomas Townsend in the present publication (cat. 53) has no markings. The labeled chest-on-chest in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 2005.52 [RIF630], has the numbers “1” through “4” on the interior corners of each drawer (fig. 22), beginning at the proper-left front corners and proceeding clockwise. This piece also bears the name of Nicholas Easton; it is possible that the marking system is his.



Fig. 21. Detail of cat. 32, showing letter “M” finishing mark on interior bottom of small center drawer of lower case



Fig. 22. Detail showing number “2” on interior corners of drawer, from Thomas Townsend, *Chest-on-Chest*, Newport, 1772. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of the American Wing Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Goelet Gift, Sansbury-Mills Fund, and Leigh Keno and The Hohmann Foundation Gifts, 2005, inv. no. 2005.52. [RIF630]

## Notes

1. Moses 1984, 88–89, 102–3.
2. Gronning and Coes 2013.
3. See also a slant-front desk in the Stanley Weiss Collection, Providence [RIF2071], that has the letters “A” through “D” on the exterior backs of the exterior drawers; and a chest of drawers in a private collection (Sotheby’s, New York, January 20–21, 2012, lot 289 [RIF5187]) that has the letters “A” through “C” at center on the interior backs of the drawers.
4. See, for example, a chest of drawers attributed to Joseph Rawson, Sr., at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1949.1.1 [RIF112], that has “B1” through “B4” on the drawer backs; a desk and bookcase attributed to Grindall Rawson in a private collection (Cooper and Gleason 1999, 181–82, 188, 191–95, figs. 17, 36, 39–42 [RIF582]) that has “[number] / B” on the drawer backs; a chest-on-chest in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, inv. no. 1984.27.1 [RIF1079], with a Providence history that has “[number] [fraction] B” on the drawer backs, where the numbers and fractions relate to the spacing of the drawer supports; a desk and bookcase with a history in the Corlis family now in a private collection (Cooper and Gleason 1999, 176, fig. 12 [RIF2110]) with “X B” on the drawer backs; and an unpublished chest of drawers with the distinctive Providence foot (having a rounded nubbin in place of the Newport peak) in a private collection [RIF6155] that has “[number] B” and an “X” on the drawer backs.
5. For this desk, see Moses 1984, 202, pl. 14 [RIF600].
6. For the “B” on this desk [RIF241], whose current location is unknown, see Christie’s, New York, January 21, 2006, lot 680, ill. On the desk, see also Moses 1984, 140, 201, 216, 221, figs. 3.66, 4.1, 5.9a–b, 5.9d.
7. See, respectively, “John S. Walton Antiques, Inc., advertisement,” *Antiques* 113, no. 6 (June 1978): 1154, ill. [RIF208]; Moses 1984, 41, figs. 1.25–1.25a [RIF1537]; Sotheby’s, New York, October 7, 2006, lot 300 [RIF2079]; and *Antiques* 1963, 454, ill. [RIF2163].
8. Ott 1965a, 80–81, 167 (detail), no. 54, fig. 54 [RIF1853].
9. For the two objects in private collections, see Gronning and Coes 2013, 27–28, figs. 61–62 [RIF205]; and *ibid.*, 19–20, figs. 38–43 [RIF4780].
10. See Christie’s, New York, June 19, 1996, lot 113, ill. [RIF643].
11. For the chest of drawers in a private collection, see Heckscher 2005, 115–17, no. 19, ill. [RIF1472]. For the document cabinet, see *ibid.*, 106–7, no. 16, ill. [RIF21]. For the sideboard, see Sotheby’s, New York, January 20–22, 2006, lot 568, ill. [RIF6166]. For the slant-front desk whose current location is unknown, see Skinner, Boston and Bolton, Mass. (sale held Boston), February 19, 2006, lot 49, ill. [RIF639]. For the bureau table in a private collection, see Heckscher 2005, 4–5, 1117, fig. 2 [RIF1784].

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