

Amazing American Antiques Chippendale Period Webinar

.2 CEU

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**Beverly Vosko's
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Amazing American Antiques Chippendale Period Webinar Handouts

Welcome to our .2 CEU!

The evolution of American Furniture is really the evolution of furniture as we know it. Today's popular "clean lined" furniture wasn't created in a vacuum; it was inspired by and based upon the traditional furniture forms created in the 18th Century during what was known as the "Golden Age of Furniture". Though you may not realize it, much of the furniture sold in Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel, Pottery Barn, West Elm and other popular furniture stores today that we think of as transitional or contemporary, are really traditional furniture forms that have been updated and modified to reflect today's taste. This CEU will trace the evolution of American furniture and compare those amazing American Antique pieces that many people think of as "ancient relics", with many of today's popular pieces. You will be astounded to see how today's popular pieces were influenced and inspired by those Antique pieces: some pieces have been copied exactly while others have been adapted and had their lines simplified and their extraneous decorative details removed.

From the time Pilgrims landed on "Mayflower" in 1620, British furniture design was principal influence that shaped American furniture production.

Sotheby's taught me that American furniture design copied English furniture design – but that is not entirely accurate... Americans adapted English furniture design and created their own style

Period	English vs	American Dates
Chippendale	1745-1760	1750-1790

American Period Styles

Chippendale Period: Circa 1750-1790

English Chippendale Style C 1745-1760 was light playful whimsical style where straight lines were eliminated wherever possible and a deliberate asymmetry and a lightness of both form and ornament was sought after.

Chippendale style became popular in America around 1750 and continued in popularity to 1790 even after the Revolutionary War: It continued to be popular in America long after the Chippendale Style had stopped being popular in England, probably because the war temporarily severed relations between the 2 countries and many American cabinetmakers didn't have any information on the newer, later Hepplewhite and Sheraton styles

The Chippendale Period was the Age of Mahogany. Mahogany, which was imported from Honduras, was the Primary wood used on the majority of the pieces made at this time. Since it was an expensive wood and expensive to import, the cabinetmakers used a less expensive Secondary wood on the parts of the piece that were not visible, such as the bottoms and sides of the drawers. Also less expensive, local woods (such as Walnut, Maple, Cherry and/or Fruitwoods,) were also used as the Primary wood on less important pieces for less important rooms.

American Period Furniture cannot be viewed as a single entity during the Chippendale Period, but must be subdivided into a few important regions, each with its own individual Regional style

New England

New England was most important area of colonies in early 18th C, up until about 1760, but it fell into a recession in 1760 and never recovered. Since most good New England cabinetmakers were proficient in making Queen Anne style furniture from Boston's earlier heyday, much of the furniture they made throughout Chippendale Period still retained many Queen Anne features.

Stylistic Generalizations in New England: Puritan, simple, thin, and devoid of decoration

New England can be further subdivided into Boston/Charlestown, Newport RI, and rest of rural England

--Boston and especially the section of Boston called Charlestown, under the great Charlestown cabinetmaker Ben Frothingham, made lovely furniture in a combination of the Queen Anne and Chippendale Styles. Many pieces still retained thin-ish cabriole legs terminating in club or ball and claw feet and were decorated with either a bit of carved detail or the same block fronted facades that are typical of Newport Rhode Island.

-Newport, Rhode Island and its great cabinetmakers Goddard and Townsend, became famous for its block fronted chests (with its rhythmic play of convex and concave shapes) and beautiful shell carving that rivaled not only Boston but even high society "Philadelphia Style"

Philadelphia, PA- Philadelphia "came into its own" during the Chippendale Period. It became the seat of government for the American colonies and "the place" for "High Society" with many rich inhabitants who had money to spend on furniture. Therefore many great cabinetmakers flocked to Philadelphia at this time, and produced the most beautifully carved, most highly developed Chippendale furniture made in America. The Philadelphia cabinetmakers, especially the 2 most famous Philadelphia cabinetmakers, Thomas Affleck and Benjamin Randolph, didn't copy the English designs exactly. Instead they modified and adapted the furniture popularized in the great pattern-books popular at that time, especially Thomas Chippendale's "The Gentleman and Cabinet-Makers Director", creating their own version of this furniture style which represented Philadelphia's taste and style, and was called the "Philadelphia Chippendale" style. The city of Philadelphia epitomized the Chippendale style in America.

Stylistic Generalizations in Philadelphia: very elegant furniture with rich deep naturalistic carving

Many more furniture forms were invented and became available in Chippendale Period and more people could afford to purchase them. Chairs, Easy Chairs and Settees were readily available. Beds were still very important furniture items. Tea Tables and Card Tables became even more popular. Many new tables and case furniture pieces appeared: Slab tables, Sideboard tables, Bureaus, Desk and Bookcase/Secretary Desks, Chest on Chests and Butler's Secretary's. Highboys were now often bonnet topped and elaborately carved; they became absolutely splendid pieces of furniture. Lowboys were made in suite to match.

Fabrics popular in the Chippendale Period were leather, gros point and petit point (fine stitch embroidery) hardy durable woolens, cotton chintz especially Toile de Jouy (a kind of chintz which originated in French town of Jouy near Versailles which depicts people & animals) silk and silk damask.

Stylistic elements of the Chippendale Period: The Chippendale style in America combined 3 design styles popular at that time, the French Rococo, the Gothic and the Chinoiserie style. An emphasis was placed on creating pronounced, exaggerated, undulating serpentine curves using motifs such as intricately curved “S” and “C” scrolls, foliated scrolls, acanthus leaves and shells which now became scalloped and pierced. Flame finials and cartouche shaped finials were very popular motifs on case furniture – especially Highboys.

Rococo motifs: interlaced acanthus leaves, ribbons, twisted branches, curved foliated scrolls, cherubs shooting arrows and rosettes

Gothic motifs: Gothic trefoils (3 leaf clovers), quatrefoils (4 leaf clovers), pointed arches and Gothic tracery

Chinoiserie motifs: icicles, china men, pagodas, pagoda roofs and Chinoiserie fretwork. The Cabriole leg now became very curvaceous and naturalistically carved- especially in Philadelphia

Furniture:

Chairs: Chair proportions change; backs became lower and were pierced in an infinite variety of ways, seats and legs get wider, splats, front legs, seats and entire frame becomes undulating and exaggeratedly carved while back legs often remain devoid of ornament because they were meant to stand against the wall when not in use. Straight Marlborough legs became very popular but the 3 dimensionally carved cabriole leg terminating in a realistically carved ball and claw foot was still the most popular foot in America.

In America arm chairs with rectangular backs and square seats with straight legs were called Marlborough chairs and were often decorated with blind or pierced fretwork

Easy Chairs now had undulating aprons and frames embellished with carved foliage

Sofas first really became popular in Chippendale Era. They had exaggerated undulating serpentine shaped backs, long stuffed seat accommodating two or more people, high scrolled stuffed arms, 6 curved 3 dimensionally carved cabriole or straight Marlborough legs and 3 dimensionally carved ball and claw feet

Beds: Beds had 4 posts and rested on either cabriole legs terminating in ball and claw feet or straight Marlborough legs. Bedhangings were still far more important than bedstead or frame

Tables: Many new tables appeared in Chippendale Period. Most of the surviving tables are either tea or card tables – with either round or square tops – leading us to believe that people at this time drank a lot of tea and played a lot of cards, which they did.

In Philadelphia most tea tables had round tops with piecrust edges and birdcage action but in New England, most tea table had square tops and round ones were usually devoid of carving. Tables with a raised fretwork gallery were called “China tables” and were more expensive than other tea tables.

Side tables were now called Slab tables because Chippendale called them “frames for marble slabs”

Sideboard tables were similar in form to side tables but were intended to be used in Dining room. Chippendale Card tables were rectangular with square corners, cabriole legs with ball and claw feet while in New England card tables were often plain with a blocked sculptural façade

Chippendale Case furniture was often the most elaborate of all Chippendale Furniture:

New England especially Rhode Island Case furniture was now block fronted

First Bureau appeared in Chippendale Period. Designed in one of 4 types according to their fronts:

1. Serpentine front (waving curve convex in center and concave at sides),
2. Reverse serpentine front (opposite – concave in center and convex at sides)
3. Blocked front
4. Straight front without curves

Philadelphia Highboys represent the highest Pinnacle of Chippendale furniture and carving exemplified by lovely bonnet tops with scrolled broken pediments topped with flame finials

What is interesting to note, is that nearly all these furniture forms have been reproduced for the last 250 years and are still available for us to purchase today!

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Biography

Beverly Vosko, Allied Member ASID, RID, UDCP (Universal Design Certified Professional), CAPS (Certified Aging in Place Specialist), L.E.E.D Green Associate, CGP (Certified Green Professional) is a full service, Registered Interior Designer in Texas #6333. She is President and founder of both Beverly Vosko Interiors and InteriorDesign-ED; both DBA's for C. V. Design Inc. For over 25 years, she has been designing homes across the United States and Europe, specializing in creating custom residential and commercial environments, be they traditional, transitional, contemporary or eclectic, that match her design clients' every need, through her design firm, Beverly Vosko Interiors. For nearly 20 years, she has taught Interior Design: first at Rice University, then at the University of Houston, and for the last 10 years nationally, with her Continuing Education company, InteriorDesign-ED. Specifically, she has taught Interior Design, Aging in Place, Green/Sustainable Design, Lighting and Antiques. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude from the University of Pennsylvania, studied Art History at Harvard University, received her MBA in Marketing from NYU Stern Graduate Business School, and completed Design and Antiques training from Sotheby's, the world-renowned Inghald School of Design and Houston Community College. Please view her websites, www.vosko.com and www.InteriorDesign-ED.com.

