TO DETERMINE AS MANY DISTINGUISHING
CHARACTERISTICS AS POSSIBLE OF
WOOD-CARVING DESIGNS OF
OTHER NATIONS

APPROVED:

Harold Brenklyn
Major Professor

S.A. Blackburn
Minor Professor

J.A. Odum
Director of the Department of Education

L.A. Sharp
Chairman of the Graduate Council
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By

Zelphia Bush, B. S.
90492
Collinsville, Texas
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the characteristic wood-carving designs of England, France, Italy, Germany, and China. The art of wood-carving was the chief type of decoration on wood for almost seven centuries; today, it is still commonly used, but is not done as skillfully as in the past. America has few wood-carvers of importance, practically none of whom are native-born Americans.

Wood-carving is taught in our colleges and public schools, but with emphasis on technique rather than on design. The writer believes that this situation is due to the lack of proper training and information on the phase of wood-carving design, and that better results could be obtained by recognizing that the design element should be of first consideration.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to determine as many distinguishing characteristics as possible of wood-carving designs of given nations, to present the findings in a form which will be of assistance to both college and public school teachers of wood-carving and to aid in classification of
typical types of furniture.

Delimitations

This study is limited to the countries which were most outstanding in wood-carving. The motif, arrangement, technique, and use of design are of major importance, while structure, social and historical influences and classification of wood are of minor importance and are discussed only to give a fuller understanding of the study.

Definition of Terms

Technique, as used in this study, is the method in execution of the particular details of carving.

Design means the arrangement of elements or details which make up a piece of decorative art.

Motif is the distinctive feature or element of design or ornament.

Relief is a raised ornament in which the carving is raised or cut above the background. Various styles are characterized by high or low relief carving.

Procedure

The information and drawings in this study were obtained by research and close examination of authentic pictures and data on the subject of wood-carving.
Related Studies

Many records and studies have been made of the art of wood-carving, but none have simplified it to a practical form for school shop use. Studies dealing with design have also been made by Ralph Monroe Coleman, Julius Jack Lamb, James David Welborn, Charles C. Ferguson, and Ray Karnes (unpublished Masters' Theses, Department of Education, North Texas State Teachers College).

Coleman's study deals with the use of design in the selection of projects which were made of ornamental iron.\(^1\) Lamb's study deals with the design of projects which are suitable to art metal work and also with the aim of developing an artistic appreciation for good design.\(^2\) Welborn's study shows that design was found to be a phase of industrial arts for which there was a felt need.\(^3\) Ferguson's study was to determine whether or not courses in design have equipped prospective teachers of industrial arts to

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\(^1\) Ralph Monroe Coleman, To Determine a Satisfactory Course of Study in Ornamental Iron for Senior High Schools in Terms of Pupils' interests, Home Needs, Good Design, and By An Analysis of the Field. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas, 1939)

\(^2\) Jack Julius Lamb, To Determine the Use Which Should Be Made of Art Metal Work in the Junior High School, As Indicated by the Seventh Grade of the Demonstration School, 1935-36, and by an Analysis of the Field. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas, 1936)

\(^3\) James David Welborn, An Analysis of Factors Which Will Determine the Application of Design to Industrial Arts Projects. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas, 1940)
recognize good designs as applied to woodworking projects. Karnes' study, which was on the adequacy of training junior high school teachers of industrial arts, revealed a lack of training in design. These studies help to show more clearly the need for practical information on the design aspect of wood-carving.

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4 Charles C. Ferguson, To Determine the Effect That a Course in Design Has on Skill in Judging Structural and Decorative Design. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas, 1940)

5 Ray Karnes, Adequacy of Training of Junior High School Teachers of Industrial Arts In Texas. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas, 1938)
CHAPTER II

ENGLAND

Historical Influence

England's earliest period of wood-carving lasted roughly from 1190 to 1310. From that period there is not a great deal of wood-carving remaining, though enough still exists to tell us what it was like. The very earliest designs were influenced, to some extent, by those of stonework; however, in a short time the wood-carver learned that wood should be treated in a different manner. He then created and made his own patterns and designs in a manner to suit the material and tools with which he worked.

Following the decline of the stonework influence came the Norman period in England.

The characteristic feature of the Norman period is the rounded surface of the foliated forms which appear to have avoided hollows.¹

A simple bead carving was used to enrich the stems of foliage, and often the leaves were a series of lobes with a V-shaped sinking round the edge. The surface treatment was in general a series of ribs or small rolls.

In the early carvings of the thirteenth century the curves of the foliage are simple. The leaves usually start

¹Encyclopedia Britannica, XXIII, 717.
from a fairly thick stem which is cut very square in sections. The curve of the stem is sometimes reversed as it nears the end of the spray, and often it is one simple curve which quickens as it reaches the end of the leaf, and finally buries itself in a deep pocket in the centre lobe. "The building where this form of carving may best be studied in England is Wells Cathedral." 2

At the end of the Norman period, or the thirteenth century, wood-carvers were coming into greater prominence.

The next period of wood-carving in England, which began about 1300 and lasted some seventy years, is known as the Decorated Style period. Carving during this period had more than one characteristic. The tendency first followed was of very naturalistic forms; however, these naturalistic forms were treated conventionally. This style was more apparent in the work of the stone-carver than in that of the wood-carver. The portraying of natural forms probably did not last for more than ten or twenty years. It was succeeded by a very conventional and exaggerated treatment of the surface of foliage applied indiscriminately to leaves of every description.

It consisted of a large bump in the middle of the leaf, a smaller one in the centre of each lobe and a still smaller one on every serration. The effect of this arrangement was a deep hollow round each protuberance in the centre of the leaf, partly broken

2Ibid.
by the lip or raised edge of the circular eyes which divide the main lobes of the leaf.\textsuperscript{3}

De Bles states that during the fifteenth century the largest amount and finest quality of decorative Gothic woodwork that the world has ever seen was produced. A distinct style pervaded the whole period; yet there was more variety in expressing it than ever before. This period of work is known as the Perpendicular Style, which began about 1390 and continued until about 1550, after which time it continued to some extent for another hundred years.\textsuperscript{4} This time was one of great prosperity; elaborate and noble churches were built and sumptuously decorated, and often there was little difference in the style of building and decorating domestic homes and other buildings and ecclesiastical buildings.

Gothic furniture is Gothic architecture in miniature, and the backs of chairs, the sides of chests, the doors of credences (church cupboards) are all carved, either in strong relief or in pierced work, in the form of windows. [See Figure 1] The characteristic feature of all fifteenth century carving is then the four-centre arch. This is true to such an extent that whenever it is seen, either in architecture or in furniture, it indicates beyond possibility of question that the part of the Gothic building or any piece of furniture in which it appears could not have been constructed at any other time than the fifteenth or sixteenth century; or, in reproduction or outright fraudulent copy, later.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}Arthur de Bles, \textit{Genuine Antique Furniture}, pp. 36-37.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
Fig. I. A typical Gothic design.
The most noticeable features of the work of this period are that the carving was flatter, and that tracery was built up of several boards, with the broad, simple treatment as the outstanding characteristic of this carving. The carver worked more in a manner suited to his tools and materials. In the latter part of the fifteenth century some of the carved foliage is composed almost entirely of hollows divided by a V-cut to represent the stem of the leaf, or by a softly carved raised stem. Generally, the edges of the leaves are kept up and the serrations are produced by a vertical cut with a gouge at right angles to the edge of the leaf and a hollow cut with the same on the edge, getting deeper until the cut meets the final incision. "One type of leaf which was invented, for there was nothing in nature like it, was that in which the corners of the leaf ended in a tightly rolled ball." However, the type of work in England differs considerably in different parts of the country.

At the end of the fifteenth century the influence of the Renaissance began to make its appearance. The structural parts of the woodwork remained purely Gothic in design, the innovation first appearing in the carving. Records indicate that carvers were introduced from Flanders with which there was constant intercourse in connection with trade and that it was from this source that the splendid tradition of the

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6 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XXIII, 718.
Gothic period was undermined. Many pieces of furniture were made by Flemish craftsmen who settled in the Eastern countries.\(^7\)

"Flemish craftsmen at this time came as refugees and brought French and other versions of the basic Italian Renaissance designs.\(^8\) This process continued until 1603. The style had assumed a continental appearance, but it was plainly imposed upon the oldest forms. When the new form of art took hold of the popular imagination, the end of the Gothic was not far off. The Gothic art was derived from conventionalized classes by working out a series of naturalistic representations with mouldings, also all-over patterns and rhythmic repeat designs.

The Renaissance scrapped the Gothic system and resurrected the ancient patterns but quickly changed them to their means and fancy; therefore, Renaissance classicism is usually distinguishable from the antique.\(^9\)

The simple structural form is considered ornamental if it is adapted in the slightest way to any use other than pure structure. For example, an arch is ornamental if any other than the true structural principle is employed. The Renaissance, which looked backward to ancient times, employed


\(^9\)Ibid., p. 143.
these architectural forms, while the Gothic derived ornamental character from the deft manipulations of lines, planes, color, and organic details.

Wood-carving of the Renaissance was chiefly in walnut, and since the Renaissance was in essence the revival of classic motifs, familiarized by ancient examples in marble, which material was well understood in Italy, it is not surprising that much of the work lacked a distinctive wood-like effect. Nevertheless, the release of limited symbolism brought forth a style that was greater than any carving previous to that time.

England was one of the last countries to be affected by the Renaissance movement, Italy being first. However, England was gradually influenced by Italy, either directly or through an intervening country. This is especially noticeable in typical Italian border designs which were used occasionally on English furniture (See Figure 8). In England the Renaissance carving is associated with the development of strapwork, which is a carved surface ornament in bands or panels, based on interlacing strap-like bands. It was probably imported with French Renaissance and Italian and Flemish models.

Eberlein and McClure state that the term "Jacobean" is restricted to the period from 1603 to 1649. The developments between 1649 and 1660 are classified as "Cromwellian." To
everything subsequent to the Restoration and prior to 1688, the term "Carolean" is applied.¹⁰

In the Jacobean period a predominance of straight lines and simplicity of structure and craftsmanship was shown. It represents the growth of foreign influence and the passing of the oak style. Ornament changed from Early Renaissance type to Baroque. Motion is the essence of Baroque, as distinguished from the repose of the classic ideal, so large curves, fantastic and irregular, were frequently used. However, the early work was actually free of plastic decoration, at least more nearly free than was the late Renaissance type.

Sundry methods of carving were practiced in early Jacobean times and gave variety of effect in the hands of a skillful craftsman. The most usual were (1) the 'Modelled' type of carving where the design stands out in well moulded relief, the surrounding back-ground being lowered by gauge and chisel. Such carving is usually sunk well into panels so that the part in highest relief does not project above the surface of the object. (2) 'Flat' carving was also popular. In this, short, flat surfaces predominated and were thrown into relief by the groundwork being 'sunk' or sharply gouged out. (3) 'Scratch' carving was an easy form for execution and inexpensive and hence widely practiced. It was just the reverse of ordinary carving in that the design, usually of simple foliage, was vigorously and sharply incised. All these methods were sometimes used in ornamenting the same piece of furniture.¹¹

¹¹Ibid., pp. 55-56.
The latter part of the Jacobean period was known as the Restoration period. In this period there was a free, flowing treatment of roses and acanthus, and sometimes human figures, along with the conventional Baroque scrolls. Ornament was highly decorative, gay and frivolous, lighter than the preceding styles. Scales and proportion had new meanings. Everything was calculated to strike the eye, to excite rather than to suggest quiet and harmony.

In carving, whether 'modelled,' 'flat' or 'scratch,' the most frequently recurring types of design were as follows:

Gulloche, which is an ornamental pattern of enrichment in the form of two or more interlacing bands or ribbons so braided or intertwined as to repeat the same figure in a continued series of circles. The circles frequently enclose rosettes, paterae, or other decorative details.

Diaperwork, which is a decorative pattern in regular repeats, especially of a geometrical character consisting of interlaced circles. It is generally used in friezes or as a decoration for flat surfaces.

Strapwork, an ornament of architectural origin consisting of narrow fillets or bands folded and crossed or interlaced in sundry patterns and repeats. Lunettes, or half-circle patterns more or less elaborate and floriated and often repeated in line.12

Some other types of design which were frequently used during this period were:

Tulip, either natural or conventionalised, or a motif which suggested the tulip leaf and flowers.

Rose, apart from political considerations, was in high favor and is repeatedly found under varying motifs, but always in recognizable forms.

12Ibid., p. 60.
Still others were:

_Acanthus_, conventionalized leaf of a plant growing in Asia Minor. It is found as the basis of all foliage ornament in Classic Greek and Roman decoration. Every style has used the acanthus in exuberant or restrained manner. 13

Foliated and Floriated Scrolls were especially affected in the adornment of creasings for chair backs and for filling in narrow panels.

Channeling, a system of parallel, vertical or horizontal grooves or channels cut or gouged into the surface of a frieze or other woodwork.

Reeding, a series of parallel lines of small convex or beaded moulding or wood carved in relief. Being 'raised' from the surface, it is the reverse of fluting which is 'sunk'.

Plunting, hollows or channels cut perpendicularly in columns.

Grapevines, for both fruit and foliage were a much-used device for the enrichment of narrow panels and also for rails and posts or stiles.

Gadroons are a ruffle or fluted ornament occurring in a diversity of forms and in surfaces both straight and circular in contour, often used on edges of table tops and is found in both concave and convex forms.

Nulling, made up chiefly of beading, cabling and hollows, is often used to ornament the bulbous legs of Jacobean furniture as well as other places.

Laurelling, or a decorative band of laurel leaves, usually on a half-round moulding. 14

A representative of this rich, deep carving, with such varied types of design, was that of Grinling Gibbons who was a native-born Englishman. His subjects are chiefly birds, flowers, foliage, fruit and lace, characterized by delicacy and elaboration of details, and truthfulness of

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imitation. Many of his carved flowers trembled when shaken by a breeze. The finest of all his products is a ceiling at Petworth. In 1714 Gibbons was appointed master carver in wood to George I.

The Jacobean period was influenced by the Dutch, Flemish, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italians. According to Eberlein and McClure, this wrought a vast change in the fashion and form of English furniture.\(^{15}\) Howard and Crossley state that an outstanding example of the Italian influence during this period was shown in English church woodwork. This was especially noticeable in foliage carved on bench-ends. The carving was of various types, but the seaweedy foliage, bold and deep cut, was very common. A characteristic feature of English church woodwork is the trail of foliage around each bench end.\(^{16}\) Chairs of the Jacobean period show a strong French influence in the carving on the backs.

The Jacobean period was followed by the period of William and Mary, which was of short duration and, consequently, styles had not the same opportunity to run through numerous changes.

Carving in the round (carving is called "in the round" when in independent figures or motifs) was considerably

\(^{15}\)ibid., p. 54.

\(^{16}\)P. E. Howard and F. H. Crossley, English Church Woodwork, pp. 302-306.
practised and, though Grinling Gibbons carved no furniture other than mirror frames, his school of followers executed much admirable and elaborate work. Motifs used in the round carving were flowers, fruit, terminal figures, heads, and laurel swage. These, of course, occurred on highly ornate stands and consoles.

In addition to the countries named above, other countries influenced to some extent the carving of this period.

Some of the chairs bear characteristics of the late Restoration, such as the richly-carved front stretcher with its typical basket of fruits and flowers repeated in the cresting. This was one of the most important of Stuart marks. Some of the walnut chairs were Franco-Dutch in design. They have the shell, the trellis, the half-circle ornament, and occasionally specimens of acanthus, pendent husks and similar motifs were used. Sometimes almost all these features were combined in one piece. However, it came about that the most characteristic feature of William and Mary style is not of Dutch origin, but an evolution of a typical early Louis XIV feature. 17

Because of the necessarily rapid transition to the Queen Anne style, the William and Mary epoch lasted but fourteen years; some of the typical forms and processes were of short duration. 18

The Queen Anne was the outcome of Dutch, French, and Chinese modes and was the most distinctively English furniture we have. 19

The earlier part of the period was confined largely to representations of the scallop or cockle shell, and

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19 MacIver Percival, Old English Furniture and Its Surroundings, p. 58.
occasionally the Greek key ornament which was found on the cresting of chair backs and seat rails. These designs were also used on knees of highboys, lowboys, and knees of fiddle-back chairs. The escall shell, in both convex and concave forms, was found also as a certain decorative motif on drawers of highboys and on aprons of various pieces of cabinet work. The pendent fuchsia flowers and honeysuckles were used occasionally in conjunction with cockle shells on legs of chairs.

One exception to this early simplicity in the matter of carving was shown on consoles, side tables, and mirror frames upon which a wealth of painstaking detail was lavished. Animals, birds, and human figures, boldly carved in the round, supported these tables, while the framing and other parts displayed successions of evolutes, drops, swags, and sundry classic repetitive details. The furniture of the Early Georgian period was a continuation of Queen Anne, but was heavier and more solid. "In the reign of the early Georges, beginning 1714, there was a mania for everything French and for the Chinese motifs popularized in England by Sir William Chambers." 20

The first years of the Georgian period were an age of design and invention; a multiplicity of patterns was the direct result of foreign influences. These influences were

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from Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and even from the Far East, according to Cescinsky. 21

Orderly extravagance reigned; masks, shells, scrollwork, swags of fruit and flowers, tropies and cornucopia, festoons and ribbons and miles of egg-and-dart enrichment developed in disciplined formations across every surface. The massing of ornament, its disposition and grouping were decided with a sureness of touch and a sureness of taste that had never before enlivened any phase of elaboration in English furnishing or interior decoration. 22

What France thinks today, the rest of Europe will think tomorrow. This dictum was uttered many years ago. It was largely true then, and it has continued so up to the present. France not only set fashions but set mobiliary fashions as well, and England, despite her insular position, did not escape the French influence. A particular result of this influence was shown during the reigns of Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze. So strong was the French influence in England during this period that the period in the history of English furniture from 1643 to 1774, which overlaps the Queen Anne and Early Georgian periods, was named in honor of the two French rulers.

Carving, both in the round and in relief, was employed in both hard and soft woods. The technique somehow suggested the use of natural forms in design, and rocks, shells, flowers, and birds became the basis of a manner dubbed "Rock and Shell," which, years later, became Rococo, by which name

21 Herbert Cescinsky, The Old World House, II, pp. 16-17.
22 John Gloag, English Furniture, p. 94.
we characterize furniture (See Figure 2). Acanthus leaves, which were used in nearly every age, were a decorative necessity and were employed for foliage effects. Oak leaves and egg-and-dart designs were also frequently used. All of these were freely used during the Louis Quatorze period, but the design of the Louis Quinze period developed into what is known as Rococo (See Figure 6).

The term arose from the passion that existed during a portion of this period for employing rocks and shells along with wisps of nondescript foliage carved with bewildering scrolls in every conceivable place and in every conceivable variety of shape, as the prevailing details of ornamentation.23

The Rococo style was followed by a style which was called Chippendale, and from 1705 to 1779 was known as the Chippendale period in English furniture, in honor of Thomas Chippendale, who has been called "The Most Famous of English Cabinet Makers." Chippendale's father was a carver, and Chippendale's talent for carving was an inherited instinct, as well as an assiduously cultivated taste.

Chippendale adapted features of Chinese designs and combined them with those existing in England. Thus, we have a very strong Chinese influence. Carving was the chief decorative process applied to his furniture. The great development of delicately carved ornament that took place at this epoch would not have been possible with any other wood than

23MacIver Percival, Old English Furniture and Its Surroundings, p. 58.
Fig. 2. A typical English design.
mahogany, which supplied just the necessary medium for this intricate work so highly esteemed (See Figure 3). It is said that Chippendale never lost an opportunity to lavish the most elaborate carving upon any piece for which his patrons could be induced to pay. Some of his work is so overloaded with carving that its beauty is destroyed. These flights of excess, however, were rare, and most of his pieces, though more or less ornate, kept within the bounds of good taste. His most pleasing and graceful work is of the "inexpensive" type. The Chippendale imitators, for the most part, refrained from attempting the most elaborate type of work, and when they did, their inability to manage proportions and details at once betrayed their inferiority.

A change which displaced the forms exploited by Chippendale and his school was that brought about by the Brothers Adam. Their work covered the period from 1762 to 1792. The elder son spent four years in Italy, where he had been fascinated with the excavations of Herculaneum to such an extent that it became his, and though his influence, England's basis of decoration for half a century. They believed that every detail of the house and its furnishing must grow from the same mind and carried this out in all the minutiae of decoration. The Brothers Adam usually

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Fig. 3. A typical Chippendale design.
applied carving to mahogany, or else to the pine and lime objects that were to be gilded. According to Eberlein and McClure the types of decorative design used were exceedingly rich in variety, and might be classified as architectural, floral, and animal. Under the architectural motifs may be included swags, both floral and drapery, beading guilloche, interlacing, pasterae, both circular and oval, masques, Ionic capitals, and anthemion or classic honeysuckle patterns, urns, vases, minute and varied Pompeian details, spandrel fans, and egg-and-dart mouldings. Under floral motifs were pendent husks, water leaves or endives, roses, palmetto pattern, pineapple, acanthus leaves, and fuchsia drops. All the floral motifs were thoroughly conventionalized and of architectural affinities. The animal motifs included rams' heads, goats' heads, goats' feet, lions' heads, griffins, birds, and human figures. Ribband designs were also used.\textsuperscript{25}

In the period of Brothers Adam the Hepplewhite style became a definite factor. Due to the fact that other designers were of almost equal importance at that time, this cannot be called the Hepplewhite period, but this style flourished until 1786 and represents a combination of influences, all of which are closely and clearly traceable in one form or another. The work of the Adams extends a marked

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp. 184-200.
influence of design on the work of Hepplewhite. Another classic influence came through the French channel of the Louis Seize style. Hepplewhite was a faithful exponent of the curvilinear tendency. Carving of great elaboration and delicacy of detail was used for the mahogany furniture, especially chairs, tables, and console cabinets. The type of design used by Hepplewhite furniture included all the classic motifs included by Brothers Adam. Besides those were reeding, fluting, beading, pearling, spandrel fans, rosettes, and ribbons. Designs that were particularly distinctive of Hepplewhite furniture were the three Prince of Wales feathers, ears of wheat, and the lyre motif, the last-named being appropriated by Sheraton.

Aronson states that another style which existed from 1774 to 1793, and which was of especially significant interest because of the influence it had upon later work, was the design of Thomas Sheraton. It supplied him with inspiration and a wealth of decorative motifs, from which he evolved by discriminating adaptation one of the most beautiful and graceful phases of furniture developed in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.26 In the carving in both high and low relief, there were floral wreaths and ribbons, baskets of flowers, acanthus, celery, pastoral and musical emblems, laurel, acorns and oak leaves, guilloche

patterns and rosettes, chequering and diaper-work, thistles, arabesques, myrtle, lyres, pendent husks, vases, urns, and sundry other classic details. Round medallions, paterae and ovals were peculiarly characteristic forms. Heads, busts, and human figures were also used. Fluting, reeding, pearl- ing and beading, too, were much in vogue.

Thomas Sheraton's whole influence, so far as form was concerned, made for great simplicity of line and restraint in the placing and quality of carved decoration. Much of his work might be said to be executed in a "perpendicular" mode. Sheraton employed most of the classic types of design which had been introduced in English furniture by Brothers Adam. There were swags, spandrel fans, floral wreaths, square, oval and round paterae, and water leaf motifs. There were certain designs, however, that were characteristic of Sheraton. Those were the oval, the slender, and graceful shaped urn, the conch shell and the star. He used also the water leaf pattern. He borrowed the lyre pattern from the Hepplewhite period, but the Roman diamond lattice, which he used so largely in his chair and settee backs, was of his own introduction. He used also the fluting and reeding extensively.

From 1793 to 1830 England went through what was known as the Empire period or style, however this style was but an echo, and often a clumsy one, of the French Empire. Carving
was heavy, deep cut and bold; however, the details were carefully wrought out. The types of design characteristic of the entire period are nearly all of classical origin. The chief designs were lions' or bears' claw feet, wings, cornucopias, conventional classic honeysuckle, the acanthus leaf, pineapples, and pillars. Besides these, there was the Egyptian winged motif, the imperial N (Napoleon), star and bees, and the bundles of fasces, as well as the swords.

After the end of the eighteenth century wood-carving in England was confined to the reproduction of the style of the past without any regard for nationality or the expression of individuality; as a result, there has been a great decline of wood-carving.

Outstanding Characteristics of Design

England had very few purely original designs in wood-carving, and those which were original did not prove to be the outstanding characteristics of English wood-carving. However, no country used as great a representation of characteristic carving designs of other countries as did England. She lavishly used the Greek acanthus leaf, combined with the various typical designs of other nations. The acanthus leaf was used by many countries, but none used it to so great an extent and in as many variations as did England. Figure 4

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shows the influence of other countries on English wood-carving.

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*The numbers 1 through 10 indicate the number of times that each country was mentioned as being of influence during different periods.

**Fig. 4**—Influence of various countries on English wood-carving.

Were it not for the extensive use of the acanthus leaf, it would be difficult to detect English carving from that of various other countries.

**Summary**

English carving has probably had a greater influence on America than has that of any other nation. Due to the fact that England was greatly influenced by other countries and did little original designing, other nations had little to obtain from her at the time wood-carving was at its best.
Now, we look to her carvings as the most complete examples of the characteristic designs of the carving age.

The designs most commonly combined with the acanthus leaf were the honeysuckle, shells, pineapple, vases of flowers, baskets of fruit, animals, and the human figure. Figure 2 shows a combination of the shell and acanthus leaf. England used the human figure more than did many other countries. Vases of flowers, cornucopias, and baskets of fruit were seldom used by countries other than England. Beading was combined with almost all designs, and swags were a common form of design arrangement. The egg-and-dart was the most common border design used by the English. Curves were an outstanding characteristic of the English carving. Carving in the round with deep cuts was the most frequent technique. England ranks first in the use of naturalistic forms, but these forms were given a conventional treatment.
CHAPTER III

FRANCE

Historical Development

There is very little to be said about the wood-carving of France before the first half of the seventeenth century. Up to 1400 French carving was indistinct from the whole Gothic style of Northern Europe. Carving at this date was designed from the same impulse, using the same ornamental designs and motives, as that of the stone and metal. There was a quality of uniformity throughout, and design was scarcely susceptible to outside influence. Social conditions were unsettled; people of high estate lived a semi-nomadic life, while the submerged classes were too poor to afford or require furniture and certainly not design. As a result of the nomadic and unsettled life the chest or "coffer" became the pre-eminent article of furniture.

A portable catch-all for bedding, clothing, valuables, it also served as a bench, a serving table, a bed for retainers and other extemporaneous devices. At first mere planks with heavy iron reinforcements, its weight was the measure of strength. About the fourteenth century some genius invented the framed-in panel, a stout frame with thin filler-panels, which lightened and strengthened the whole structure. There were armoires, cabinets, or cupboards; stools and forms, rude tables, chiefly demountable trestles and elementary seat structure. Oak predominated.
Carving developed with the style, utilizing architectural details, conventionalized flora, grotesques. ¹

With the rise of a semblance of political organization in the fourteenth century there were a few individuals capable of dominating or subduing their neighbors and rivals. They acquired wealth and satellites, and to their courts they imported from Italy and Spain, both carvers and materials.

According to Aronson, the period from 1453 to 1515 might well be called the Gothic period because the arts and architecture were persistently Gothic. There was a strong Italian influence in decorative carving details throughout the entire period. The rinceaux motive which was a continuous ornament of spiral, or wavy form, sometimes called the branching scroll when intertwined with stems and leaves, was the most frequently used. ² The acanthus was used in connection with the rinceaux motives on some pieces of furniture. However, aside from all popular motives of design, France, like other countries, used the pure form of Gothic design (See Figure 1).

The early Renaissance covered a period in France from 1515 to 1547.

France was reluctant to forsake the Gothic style and did not embrace the Renaissance idea until

¹Joseph Aronson, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 76.
²Ibid., pp. 76-77.
the reign of Louis XII (1498-1515). The introduction of this style was brought about through the intermarriage of the current French monarchs to wives of the Italian court, thus offering a welcome in France to native Italian craftsmen who were experienced in Renaissance expression. Later the style was sponsored by Francis I, who ordained that it should be followed in reviving the architecture and furnishings of the royal edifices of Chambord and Fontainebleau. Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III (1574-1589) all yielded to the Renaissance influence. At the time Louis XIII was enthroned, the French had become thoroughly familiar with the Italian style and had even commenced to make innovations upon it. Despite itself, the French Renaissance style was bound to retain some of the ponderous aspects of the Gothic. The massive feeling was somewhat subdued, and limited to rectangular architectural forms which were relieved and beautified by the lavish decorations induced during the Renaissance period.

The French Renaissance style involved elaborate carving which was based upon such motifs as the acanthus leaf, fleur-de-lis, porcupine, and the like. It likewise employed such ornamental form as fluted columns, sphinxes, lions' heads, human heads, and figures.3

There were also incidental influences from Spain and from Germany, and Flanders details by craftsmen were brought to the court from the North. Walnut waxed and rubbed to a deep finish became the dominant wood. Surface carving covered everything and high relief carving of plastic character was carried to the point of distorting the outlines. The homely Gothic vegetable ornament yielded to the olive, the laurel, and the acanthus.

The period from 1547 to 1643 was a period known as the

3 John Gerald Shea and Paul Nolt Wenger, Provincial Furniture, pp. 16-17.
"High Renaissance." Wealth and security speeded down through the classes. Merchants and peasants enriched their houses with furniture inspired by that of the local nobles, and in adapting these luxuries to their needs they omitted much of the ornamentation. They scaled the gigantic pieces down to their rooms and tempered the designs to their skill. The result was the school of French Provincial Furniture. There was a supreme development of the cabinet, or double-bodied cupboard, which had the upper section narrower than the lower. Pilasters, panelled and decorated with flat carving, framed the doors, which were often panelled geometrically, with stars and diamonds in bold relief. Broken pediments crown many of these structures. Cartouches and flat strapwork carving prevailed over the purer Italian decoration. Table bases were involved compositions of columns, balusters, caryatide and scrolls.

The epoch of Louis XIII (1610-1643) brought the High Renaissance to a vivid climax. Walnut and ebony were the principal woods. Carving was mostly in the Flemish style: rich and turgid. There were elaborate geometric panels and deep mouldings which were likely of Flemish origin, and which are an outstanding clue of Louis XIII furniture. Vegetable motives were displayed upon the panels and wound their way along in the hollow moulding of the cornices. According to De Felice, the most usual were the vine leaf and
the bunch of grapes, more or less conventionalized, and carving was very deeply cut, the thistle being used with real or fantastic beasts. Burgundy was outstanding in the art of carving. So exuberant was the carving that it almost stifled the architecture under its own abundance; everywhere with its accentuated reliefs it overflows the lines of construction. There was branchy foliage, and all the wildest monsters, cliaeras with enormously long necks, baroque griffins made with a lion's paw, a woman's bosom and an eagle's head. In many cases the eyes could not find a square inch of surface to rest upon that was not "carved with enrichment;" not a moulding, not a piece of turned work was left bare without the carver's chisel dealing with it. As a whole, French Renaissance furniture was produced under Italian tutelage; it paved the way toward the development of a typical independent French style—that of Louis XIV

The period from 1643 to 1715 is called the Louis XIV period, or in some instances, the "Baroque." Louis XIV came to the throne of a self-consciously powerful France; and Aronson states that he, with deliberation, proceeded to focus it into the center of the world. With the beginning of the

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5 John Gerald Shea and Paul Nolt Wenger, Provincial Furniture, pp. 16-17.

6 Joseph Aronson, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 79.
period France commenced to give her own free and artistic expression to furniture. Louis XIV possessed genius in his appreciation of the beautiful. Under his patronage, royal academies for the development of the industrial arts were established, and artists and craftsmen were encouraged in the practice of their talent. Paris became the center of art, drawing talent from other European cultural sections. Under such conditions, furniture making was elevated to a higher plane than it had ever previously occupied.

Carving was, of course, largely responsible for the ornate appearance of Louis XIV furniture. Many interesting motifs, such as the shell, cartouche, mascaron, cupid, and the like, appeared exquisitely carved on the typical pieces.

There were also animal forms of nature and mythology to express the current love of allegory. Masks, satyrs, lions' paws and heads, sphinxes, griffins, dolphins, water lilies, oak laurel, olive leaves, weapons, musical instruments, agricultural implements, ribbons, festoons, swages, and knots were used. Architectural details were sparingly used for small furniture prior to 1680. Woods were rich and varied; Aronson states that oak, walnut, ebony, almond, holly, box, and pear were used. Carving was in both the round and relief. Although Louis XIV influence may be ever-present in

7 John Gerald Shea and Paul Nolt Wenger, Provincial Furniture, p. 79.

French provincial furniture, still this furniture, when considered as a whole, includes very few individual pieces which may be altogether identified with that style.

Following Louis XIV was Louis XV, whose reign marked the display of refinement and culture. This period extended from 1715 to 1774, and during this time household furniture and furnishings were produced in most exquisite form. The designers and craftsmen of the period exerted every ounce of their artistic ability to please the taste of their titled patrons.

The craze for Chinoiserie is responsible for much of the ornamental character of the Regence and Louis XV style. Louis XIV's explorations and commercial exploitation of the Far East brought to Europe Chinese porcelains, jade, decorations depicting formalized landscapes and figures. The technique somehow suggested the use of natural forms in decorations, and rocks, shells, flowers and birds became the basis of a manner dubbed 'Rock and Shell'; years later this was unsympathetically contracted into Rococo, by which name we characterize furniture and manners emanating from this age, having a florid, gaily absurd manner.9

Every device was employed to alleviate the rectangle. In plan or elevation no piece of furniture was permitted straight lines, only flowing lines; everything was rounded so that the eye might follow any line without perceiving the junction of planes. In decorating this furniture all manner of ornamental motifs were employed. Typical among these were ornaments of rococo order, such as rock, shell, 

9Ibid., p. 62.
endive, celery, and other foliage and floral scrolls (See Figure 6). Besides those were musical instruments, pastoral objects like shepherd's crooks and baskets, all naturally and unconventionally rendered. Chinese themes were somewhat misinterpreted. Architecture alone was rejected as a source of ornament. Furniture of the Louis XV period has always received wide acclaim for the perfection of its design, thus today we shun all attempts toward revision.

The inevitable revolt from curved line came some time before Louis XVI. The old king outlived the taste he fostered. All of this brought about an outstanding change when Louis XVI took the throne (1774-1793). Some time after 1760 the curve-weary demanded pointedly a return to simple forms and straight lines. It is Aronson's belief that the answer to this demand came from Italy in an intellectual movement not unlike the early Renaissance—the imitation of antiquity.

Excavations in Greek and Roman ruins had been in progress for many years but the unearthing of Pompeii and Herculaneum set off a new spark. Ancient architecture forms became the basis of furniture design as they had in the Renaissance.¹⁰

There was other influence also, and as a whole the style seemed to be somewhat English. Furniture decorations yielded to simple designs. Much of the elaborate decorative treatment employed in making French furniture of previous periods was discarded. Festoons of ribbons, flaming torches, fluted

¹⁰Ibid., p. 84.
Fig. 6. - A typical Rococo design.
columns, lyres, urns, rosettes, laurel, acanthus, fretwork, and rinceaux were prominent in decoration, and as a whole ornament was classic. Bound arrows, swans, wreaths, and fanciful animals were adapted from Greco-Roman sources. Mahogany was the preeminent wood and ebony returned to favor. Shea states that the conclusion of the reign of Louis XVI marked termination of the so-called "golden era of furniture design."¹¹

From 1793 to 1804 was a short period known as the period of the Revolution. All carving designs done at this time were typically a symbolism of the Revolution. The most common designs were the Phrygian caps, arrows, pikes, triangles, wreaths, clasped hands, the fasces and lictor of Rome. Practically no furniture remains of this period, and it is difficult to construe a full style out of the few scattered remains. Simplicity, grace, directness, charm; straight lines with restrained classic double curves; the swan, lyre, stars, in addition to the antique and Revolutionary symbols are the index of decorative motives. Woods were more often native fruitwood or walnut and oak than mahogany, because foreign trade was difficult.

The last period dealing with French wood-carving was the Empire period which extended from 1804 to 1815. Napoleon saw the political necessity of creating a new style of national

art and furniture. He turned the matter over to the care of eminent French artists, chief among whom were Percier, Fontaine, and David. In their labours they were inspired by the pompous military spirit of the time. Eberlein states that of all styles developed in France, that of the Empire period is least interesting and least French.\(^{12}\)

The Empire differs from the Louis XVI in the degree to which it absorbed classic forms whole and undigested. It took the few vestiges of ancient furniture literally, and tried to stretch them over the whole field of furniture without modification.\(^{13}\)

Carving was avoided as much as possible, except for the arms and posts of chairs and table legs. The decorative motives used included military symbols as the sword and shield, arrows and wreaths and winged figures, torches and the whole catalogue of ancient symbolism, all coldly archeological and precise. Napoleon invented a few of his own symbols: the bee and the letter N. Cornucopias, palm leaves, and laurels were stiffened and added to the list; in fact nothing available to the Greco-Roman researchers was overlooked. Mahogany was the overwhelming favorite of woods used, but rosewood and ebony were used to some extent. This period brought about a decline in French wood-carving. However, France was not individual in this because there was a decline in wood-carving over the entire European world.


\(^{13}\)Joseph Aronson, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 82.
Outstanding Characteristics of Design

France has served as the source and inspiration for designs for many centuries. However, it cannot be said that France was purely original; she was only extremely resourceful. Figure 7 shows the influence of other countries on the

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*The numbers 1 through 10 indicate the number of times that each country was mentioned as being of influence during different periods.

Fig. 7—Influence of various countries on French wood-carving.

wood-carving done in France. By close study of the origin of different designs it is quite evident that a large percent of her design motifs originated in Greece and Rome. France used these designs as an inspiration and from them she made great variations. France also had to transform the Roman and Greek designs into carving form because in most cases the original design was used as a design motif
on stone. The original form of these designs accounts for France's using so many architectural forms. As a whole the chief construction characteristic of French carving was the branching effect, be it in form of scrolls, vine and leaf, or leaves. It is very unusual to find a piece of carving that does not show this characteristic in some form. It was combined with almost all motifs, regardless of the subject of design.

Summary
The designs most commonly used by France were scrolls, vine and leaf, and leaves, in combination with most other designs. Those most frequently used as combinations were floral and vegetable motifs, fanciful animals, weapons, and musical instruments. Under fanciful animals were the eagle's head, lion's head, griffins, sphinxes, and various birds. The entire human figure was used very little, but the head was a most common design subject. The branching effect was used in combination with these designs to break the harshness and to give a feeling of movement. In some cases pure geometric designs were used, in form of stars, diamonds, and lines; and with these no branching effects were used.

Straight lines were the most outstanding line characteristic of the French carving. Flat, surface carving was the most frequent technique, the most common form being geometric combined with the conventional treatment.
CHAPTER IV

ITALY

Historical Influence

Geography made Italy the heir of the Roman Empire. If man's history should be divided into the Ancient Era, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times, the sources of the arts of the modern world would trace to Italy. "All roads lead to Rome," if we may believe the old proverb.

The Romans, of all the people of antiquity, were nothing if not pre-eminently and intensely practical. Practicality, indeed, was one of the Romans' dominant and distinguishing traits. But, combined with all their ever-present practicality was the force of fertile Latin imagination and its concomitant appreciation of beauty, so that they were irresistibly constrained to add grace as a basic ingredient in the design of all their creative work.¹

The chronology of the Italian furniture is based on the unfolding of the Renaissance.

The "Pre-Renaissance" period which extended from 1100-1400, unlike the homogeneous Gothic style, showed the Classic-Romanesque basis. During this period the adornment of the church was the chief object of fine and applied arts. Schottmuller states that in the House of God Romanesque and Gothic

art found manifold means of expression. Profane buildings were of second importance and for that purpose the forms developed in church ornamentation and church furniture were resorted to. Only toward the end of this first great epoch of Christian culture was a change noticeable, the precursor of a new great period, namely the Renaissance. Wealth and power being in the hands of the rich merchant families, their palaces displayed a cosmopolitan, secular style, but only a minimum of furniture was needed. The chest (Italian "Cassone") as elsewhere was all-important, but continued to be made of planks and heavy boards a long time after the superior framed-panel construction was the rule in France. Decoration showed an influence of Byzantine and Saracenic motives. Crusaders, sailors, merchants, and explorers brought influence from the Near and Far East and Africa. In the Piedmont and other localities, touched by the Alpine styles, appears evidence of Gothic details, but this Gothicism is superficial. Schmitz states that tracing carving, which as a rule was foreign to Italian Gothic furniture, flourished in Venice and its district, and that the majority of chests that displayed a wealth of such carving originated in Venice. It is also his belief that their tracery points to connections with the carved furniture of the Alpine countries.  

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were carved with geometric pattern. Italian furniture, like Italian architecture, was only superficially influenced by the Gothic.

The period from 1400-1500 is called the Early Renaissance period. This period showed a great improvement in the development of Italian furniture. The chests and cupboards, which before were box-forms, had bases, pilasters, and cornices, which were scaled down from architecture.

The architectural profile is a distinguishing Renaissance feature. From the Moorish folding chair came the Savonarola chair with interlacing carved slats with carved wooden back and arms, often with certosa ornament. Ornament was purely classic in character, with pilasters and scrolled volutes, fine mouldings enriched with egg-and-dart, dentils, etc.; panels with foliated scrolls, delicately carved.  

Aronson gives a few general characteristics that run through almost all Italian furniture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The wood was universally walnut and was oiled or waxed to a deep rich tone. Ornament was sparing, but increased progressively from simple early style to a highly decorative character later. Carving became the principal resource for decoration. Proportion was large and stately.  

During this period Rome began to develop the rich style of carving which came to dominate all furniture of the "High Renaissance."

The High Renaissance, which covered the period from 1500

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5Ibid., p. 110.
to 1600, developed consistently a furniture out of the early style. It added embellishing, expanded types, and used more decoration. With the urge of individualism and the more pronounced cultivation of the ego, the demand for richer and more comfortable furnishings for the house became livelier and more general. New forms, even new combinations of furniture, answering to the modern demand for comfort, were found and perfected. According to Bode, wall mirrors came in during the fifteenth century and no other piece of furniture was so uniformly fine in proportions, so delicate in its profile work, so choice and so finished in the drawing and carrying out of ornamentation as the mirror of that period. It is also his belief that the chief mode of decoration of this period was that of delicate flat candelabra and leaf ornament. However, that does not agree with the information given by other authorities on the subject. According to Aronson, dignified formal richness was achieved by bold carving, free and outstanding, utilized by the whole vocabulary of classical decoration. The acanthus leaf had infinite variety; likewise guilloches, rinceaux, flutings, animal forms, gargoyles, Caryatids, scrolls, and volutes. Never were the cartouches, strapwork, turned rosettes, and broken pediments more popular. Schmitz states that carving was applied to


large tables and chairs and that Genoa, together with Liguria, played a special part because of the rich development of four-doored cupboards, so rarely found in the rest of Italy. The four doors were carved in flat relief, and drawers were often inserted in the ornamental banding between them and flanked by pilasters.\(^8\) This period was indeed one of the golden ages of furniture.

The period which followed was that of the Baroque, which extended from 1560 to 1700. Italy is called the original home of Baroque and successfully influenced other countries. It was Italy that first created the forms of Baroque ornament, such as cartouche and rich scroll-work, which so impressed their characteristic features on carving. It consisted chiefly of an exaggerated, emphasized fullness of size, scale, and proportion.

It is not necessarily overrich in ornament, although lavish carving is typical. There were deep mouldings giving theatrical effects of light and shade.\(^9\)

There were also twisted turnings, broken and reversed curves. The distinctive features of Baroque furniture were apparent after 1580 and set a fashion for state apartments and "meubles de luxe" in France, England, and the German countries. Schmitz describes it as having splendor which rendered it incapable of

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\(^8\) Hermann Schmitz, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 17.

being scaled down or simplified; it furthermore was usually a group-design so that the individual pieces were often either downright ugly or meaningless or unbalanced by themselves. A design was studied not as a unit of furniture, but as a composition of wall and ceiling; architectural features and chairs, mirrors, candelabras and consoles were all one indissoluble picture. To add to the list of decorative ornamental design were the cherubim, mermaid, lion, eagle and negro, used in composition with scrolls, shells, leaves, and a great variation of border designs.

As in many other countries, the period following the Baroque was the Rococo. This period was of short duration and extended only from 1700 to 1750. At this time the best craftsmen found profitable occupation in France, Germany, and England; thus Italy began to face a decline. To Italy flowed the technique and ideas of the expanding nations. Furniture was still lavishly decorated; the motives favored foliage and ribbons, rocks and shells, and Chinese form, all increasingly naturalistic. Asymmetry and the curved line were most commonly used. Capricious gaiety was the tradition of the time. From France came the influence of Louis XV furniture, and from England came the William and Mary and Queen Anne influences. All were distorted, often badly designed and unsuitably adapted. The effect, however, was theatrical,

romantic, superficial, but charming.

Venice alone retained some of her prestige and wealth, and therefore led in the production of furniture. Consequently, most Italian Rococo work is described as Venetian.\(^{11}\)

Schmitz states, however, that to a certain extent, Italian Rococo held a place of its own. It was also his belief that Italian Rococo was characterized by its pronounced decorative and picturesque tendencies.\(^ {12}\)

The period from 1750 to 1900 is called the period of "Foreign Influence." During this period in Italy decorative furniture still retained ornamental tendencies. Until almost the end of the eighteenth century Italy borrowed from the mature Louis XVI and the Adam and Hepplewhite styles. This means that again Italy was looking to England and France as her chief sources of inspiration. Other countries impressed Italy little, or else they had little to offer from which to make an impression. Italy, like many other nations at that time, had turned to other interests and modes of furniture decoration. As a result, wood-carving became a decoration of the past.

**Outstanding Characteristics of Design**

To Italy we give the credit of being the originator of the Baroque ornament. That alone is outstanding recognition.

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to bestow on any one country. Italy had a technique and interpretation quite different from that of any other country. She seemed to involve the circle in all types of design subject matter. Even though she used designs which were not of her origination, she transformed them into a style which was typically Italian. Italy had at her command a first-hand source of Roman designs, and it is to her that we give much of the credit for transforming those designs into carving form. Border designs were used to such a great extent that they became a characteristic of Italian carving (See Figure 8).

Summary

Geography not only made Italy the heir of the Roman Empire, but it also gave her the seat of the church. As a result, the church was the center of interest for architectural and decorative expression, the home becoming of second importance. However, many home interiors show the influence of design which was secular, but which was poorly adapted to private homes. Perhaps that also gives reason for Italian craftsmen designing furniture as a part of a unit and not as an individual piece of furniture. Italy was the originator of the Baroque ornament, and it is for that reason that scrolls, cartouches, rocks, and ribbon designs were the most frequently used designs by Italians. No piece of carving was complete without a border design used in some manner, and often the
Fig. 8. Typical Italian border designs.
border designs were the most prominent form of design. The Italians seemed to be the first to use the Negro as a decorative design. The mermaid was also an unusual design subject. The technique seemed, as a whole, to be flat surface carving, giving the effect of light and shade. Asymmetry, combined with curved lines and circles, was the most common line used. Architectural profile and large stately proportion were a distinguishing feature of Italian wood-carving. Figure 9 shows the influence of various countries on Italian wood-carving.

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*The numbers 1 through 10 indicate the number of times that each country was mentioned as being of influence during different periods.

Fig. 9—Influence of various countries on Italian wood-carving.
CHAPTER V

GERMANY

Foreign Influences of Design

The German people, it is quite evident, derived their first ideas of furniture from Rome. There is evidence of turned members of chairs and tools drawn from Roman models. Scandinavian influence was also evident; it consisted of much open-work, carved dragons, intwined floral decorations which occurred on earlier medieval coffers. Chests on high legs, with sloping lids like a gable roof displayed both Celtic and Byzantine ornamentation. Most of the construction and decoration was Romanesque and crude. The chief technique of carving decoration was a scanty low-relief and chip-carving. Architectural motifs, such as round arches, were rare. The design and decoration of furniture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the outcome of utilitarian requirements and the technique of craftsmen. In the fourteenth century the Romanesque style is shown by carved ornament, which consisted partly of grotesque animals in circular patterns and were derived from motifs of Romanesque weaving and embroidery, according to Schmitz.¹

¹Hermann Schmitz, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 10.
The Gothic influence in design spread through Germany from France. This influence reached Germany early in the fifteenth century, but the Romanesque tradition remained in peasant work for several centuries. There is a distinct line of demarcation between North German and South German work. Aronson believes that this is due both to the nature of the accessible woods and the exposure to outside influence. North German work employs oak and follows the intricate ornament of the Scandinavian countries. South German work is in fir and pine and exhibits North Italian influences coming both by the Alpine countries and Flanders. In South Germany there was a wide range of coffers and cupboards in all stages of evolution, with the carved ornament freely Gothic. The free cities of Southern Germany had a flourishing trade with Northern Italy, and it is probably due to this reason that the first signs of the Renaissance appeared there.

Nuremberg was the centre of Early Renaissance work in Germany. In about 1542 Peter Flotner, the designer and carver, transplanted the ornamental forms of the Italian Renaissance for the enrichment of the panels of chests and cupboards. Nuremberg cupboards in the style of Peter Flotner consisted generally of two coffer-like boxes, a broad intermediate piece with drawers in it; a plinth also fitted with drawers; and a top piece, ornamented with a frieze and cornice. Gothic tracery was replaced by flat pilasters and friezes with fine, symmetrical acanthus patterns and vase ornaments; while the top was triglyphs, there were skulls of

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animals and similar decorative details; the cornice had dentals and oval mouldings; in short, a decorative composition appeared on the front of such pieces on the lines of the Italian Early Renaissance.

The wood used for cupboards was fir, which was also employed by their Late Gothic forerunners. Peter Flotner's woodcuts of early furniture, with clearly defined Renaissance forms, had a fruitful influence on the decorative furniture of South Germany. By 1550 Early Renaissance details and ornament had been introduced into most of the furniture workshops, and also in those of Middle Germany. About 1600, South German Renaissance work became mature. Schmitz states that the wainscoting in the Nuremberg Feller House, dating from 1605, proved that a mature stage had been reached. The framework of the niches was ornamented with pilasters, tapering toward the base, projecting consoles, swan-neck pediments, lozenges, lions' heads, and similar motifs. About 1630 scroll-work and ear-shaped ornaments were introduced.

In Northern Germany oak furniture continued to be made in the Gothic structural tradition about 1550. Cologne and Muenster seemed to be the centers of cabinet-making and carving. It was there that the early Renaissance first appeared in the work of John Kupfer and Aldegrave, according to Aronson.

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4 Ibid.
It appears that restrained Italian ornament was merged with the Gothic. Holstein produced the most exuberantly carved cupboards with scroll-work, while other regions followed with imposition of the later Renaissance ornament upon later Gothic shapes. From about 1620 to 1650 decorative furniture flourished in Cologne. This was expressed most in carved oak credences, with upper parts supported by caryatides. Their vigorous lines, bulbous features, lions' heads, and lozenge ornamentation were influenced by the Antwerp Late Renaissance. The wainscoting, the multi-doored cupboards, credences, and chests of the peasantry of Cologne were ornamented for generations with strap-work and scroll-work, done in very low relief. North Germany was first to introduce the chair with four legs and carved backs. During the whole of the Middle Ages, the most decorative furniture of the northern Germanic countries of Denmark and Scandinavia was connected with that of the Low German-Flemish spheres of artistic influence. Flat carved, Early Gothic pointed arches and animal patterns are common to the oak chests of Denmark, Gothland, and Sweden, as well as to those of Lower Saxony, from Luneberg to Lübeck, according to Schmitz. Schmitz also states that special features of the Norwegian-Islandic districts were the armchairs and box-seats made of fine wood with carved animals, dragons, and figures.6

Most of these pieces originated from the time of the Renaissance and the periods following, just as chip-carved furniture of Norway and Sweden did. Most authorities on the subject agree, however, that the connections with the flourishing Scandinavian Romanesque wood-carving are more racial than direct. Furniture of a kindred nature with flat carved ornament and chip-carving survived as late as the nineteenth century in the peasant carving of the Estonian and Latvian peoples. It seems that about 1500 the makers of oak furniture in the few towns' seats of the Scandinavian nobility adopted the frame and carved panel construction from Dutch-Low German furniture. The lino-fold motif was also the favorite on Danish-Swedish wainscotting, chests, cupboards, and credences. The lino-fold ornament was often transformed into a flat, conventionalized form and interwoven with flat tracery and flower patterns. In all, the influences of these low countries on German furniture designing and carving was rather great, regardless of the fact that it was somewhat restrained and stiff. Aronson, in Furniture and Decoration, states that the fact cannot be overlooked that Germany, through the entire period of the Renaissance, followed the Paris styles. This was done in a somewhat crude attempt, or interpretation, but often quite noticeable. 7

English styles, combined with styles of other countries,

7Joseph Aronson, Furniture and Decoration, p. 124.
often became so altered that they were scarcely recognizable. Local interpretations are always a source of interest to the furniture archeologist, revealing as they do the process of communication and interchange of ideas, and the effects of local variations. It is the writer's conclusion that the Empire versions of Sweden, the Flemish and Dutch Renaissance, the classic styles of Russia, and also the styles of Paris were all highly distinctive interpretations.

Like other countries, Germany next accepted the "Baroque." However, she was rather late in doing so. It was in 1660, twelve years after the end of the Thirty Years' War, that Baroque was completely adopted by Germany.

The differences in the character and design of the furniture made in South Germany and the Alpine countries and that produced in Low Germany were partly effected by the introduction of Baroque. But still there are differences: decorative furniture in the Free Towns of Franconia and Swabia, in Nuremberg and Augsburg, besides in Frankfort-on-the-Main, or in Bale also, was different from that of the Hanse Towns of Hamburg, Lubeck or Danzig.  

The replacement superimposed miniature architectural details and scroll ornament by large pilasters, columns, and banded frames were common in Germany during the period from 1660 to 1670. Dutch influence seemed to produce more pronounced curves. German Baroque furniture of the burgher type in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and in the beginning of the eighteenth century differs from that of the

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8Hermann Schmitz, The Encyclopedia of Furniture, p. 36.
Dutch and English middle-class furniture in its boldness of profile. In South Germany, Nuremberg is a center of Baroque decorative furniture. The Nuremberg two-doored wardrobes combine the carved ear-shaped and elaborate foliated ornament of Early Baroque with the turned columns, the notched band frame, and the wave moulding which were already used on the Augsburg and Nuremberg decorative cupboards at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. Bale was the center of Early Baroque in Switzerland. The heavy columns and carved ear-shaped ornament of German furniture are an influence of Bale. From the Dutch came the added decorative touch and from the Italians the most stately touch of all. Like all other countries at all other stages in furniture designing, Germany obtained ideas from many, but gave to it her own alterations.

The next period in the historical development of German furniture was the Rococo. Of this period little is to be said, other than that it was the most elaborate of all, but covered a shorter period of time. The carvers of the Rococo period gloried in magnificently carved decorations for backgrounds and furniture alike. Consoles, mirror frames, commodes, chairs, and canapes were embellished with carved birds, fruit, flowers, garden tools, and musical instruments. The main source of inspiration for this decorative influence again came from Paris. However, English forms were also a source of inspiration. Following this short period is a period,
if it could be termed a period, which was thought of as the late eighteenth century period. Berlin and Vienna were the outposts of classic decorative furniture of this period. Mahogany, pear, ash, and poplar were the most common woods used. The furniture took on a new form—that of simplicity. Simple lines were used throughout in both construction and decoration. As a result Germany ceased to do wood-carving. It must be kept in mind that this radical change did not appear over-night. The change covered a lapse of time which was a re-adjustment period in furniture designing.

Outstanding Characteristics of Design

The most outstanding characteristic of design in German furniture is that of turning. The greater portion of German furniture had either turned legs, columns, or arms, or sometimes all three. This characteristic has become a much-used type of design in many countries, and is used extensively even today. The turning designs were varied and very skillfully done. Turning was combined with all types of designs; yet all carving designs and construction designs of furniture were very substantial. The appearance was somewhat heavy in many instances. There was a boldness of design, as a whole, which did not appear in furniture designs of other countries.

Summary

The German people derived their first idea of furniture design and construction from Rome. Turning was the most
outstanding characteristic of decorative design. Germany, perhaps, did less wood-carving than did many countries; yet she produced a type quite different in technique from that of the time. The turning was of great quantity and heavy; thus the carving was done to correspond beautifully to the turning. As a result, German wood-carving is large in design unit, and is executed in a corresponding manner. It was classical with a naively architectural detail; it utilized the native woods, cherry, pearwood, and beech. It replaced the imperialist symbols with domestic flora. It tamed the martial spirit and made it placid and amiable. In many instances the German designers of the time probably thought they were designing in the French style (See Figure 10). The fact that they made good solid Empire furniture of light cherry wood did not change their feeling about it. This revealed a process of communication and interchange of ideas, and the effects of local variations. The technique of carving throughout all periods was unusually flat. The relief was low and much chip-carving appeared in the early periods. The technique, like the design and the construction, was of solid and substantial appearance.

As may be seen from Figure 11, the wood-carving of Germany was influenced by a large number of other countries, ranging from a great deal of influence to practically no influence at all.
Fig. 10. A typical German design.
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*The numbers 1 through 10 indicate the number of times that each country was mentioned as being of influence during different periods.

Fig. 11—Influence of various countries on German wood-carving.
CHAPTER VI

CHINA

Historical Influence

China has next to nothing remaining of her early wood-carving. However, of the little that can be found the subject most commonly used for carving seemed to be that of Buddhist figures. It is the belief of Langdon Warner that these figures represent perhaps the most important examples of an art once more commonly practiced than stone or bronze sculpture and probably developed to significant heights in China from the sixth to the twelfth centuries.¹ As for any accurate or definite records or examples of the complete development of Chinese wood-carving, the writer has found none. Writers on the subject of wood-carving give little definite information. However, the writer feels that to overlook China is indeed a grave mistake in the study of wood-carving. Due to the fact that the wood-carving of China has not been discussed by many writers on the subject, this study is therefore limited. To the average American, Chinese furniture suggests heavy, ornately-carved pieces. Contrary to

this prevailing idea, native Chinese furniture is, in the main, of extreme simplicity.

Dignity and simplicity are the keynotes of Chinese taste, and native Chinese furniture is of a distinctly simple nature. The Chinese, while willing to make anything for profitable export, never adopted the heavy, ornate type for their own domestic use. It seems that the native architect's opportunity for interior ornamentation was confined largely to the richly carved entrances and window-grilles. The intricate gilded carvings of the doorways, with their designs of birds and flowers, contributed more than the furniture to the rich effect of the Chinese interior. The window-grilles, in contrast to the doorways, were often very plain, though in certain parts of central and northern China there are variations without number. In temples and palaces the columns and ceilings were gorgeously decorated in carving on which gold and colors had been put. Yet D. E. Newell states that the decorative note of the dwellings was always the note of dignified simplicity.²

The same general scheme of furniture decoration and arrangement varied little throughout China. Chairs were placed against the wall in pairs, or fours, with a high stand for the tea cosy, set at regular intervals.

Design motifs most commonly used for chairs were the bat and gong motifs, Whistler moulding, chow and bat (symbols of long life and happiness), musical gong, bat motif, bamboo motif, and the Chinese fret. For meals a round or square table in the center of the room was used—the diners generally sat on stools. Many of these tables had marble tops for the purpose of cleanliness. Against one of the side or end walls was a long altar table on which was arranged a five-piece altar set. Chinese beds in the wealthier homes were made with four posts, a carved grille on the top of a design somewhat akin to that of the windows. Many of the four posts showed German influence. The beds were also used by opium smokers, a low tabouret placed in the center at the back held the lamp or smoking utensils. Newell writes that in South China the hard teakwood invariably was used; in the valley of the Yangtze a softer and lighter species was used, and in Peking a soft wood, lacquered and elaborately carved, decorated the palaces of the Manchu Princes. However, Newell is of the opinion that teakwood was most commonly used. 3  

This was not of native origin and was probably imported from Siam or Burmah. Teakwood is best compared to rosewood. A remarkable characteristic of all Chinese furniture making and designing is that it was done entirely in small shops or homes,

3 D. W. Newell, "Chinese Furniture for American Rooms," House and Garden, XLIII (April, 1923), 146.
and placed on sale. There were no factories in the eastern sense of the word. The carving and finishing were done either on the floor or on low benches. One coat of stain was used for the finish, and with constant cleaning the beautiful patina was developed within a few years. Lacquer was used more in China than in other countries. Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Simmong of San Antonio, Texas, have furnished a home with Chinese furniture which they actually purchased in China. Much of their furniture is of redwood, one piece of which is very unusual—a mirror frame decorated with intricate carving and with pieces of Chinese money. Another piece quite typical of the Chinese is an elaborately carved screen. This panel was carved and then colored by a process even more intricate than that necessary in making the decorated lacquered furniture. The figure of an aged person is often carved as a form of decoration. In China age is venerated, and some of the rare pieces of carving are representations of aged persons. Often this type of carving was done from the root of a tree.\(^4\) According to the *Arts and Decoration* magazine, the Chinese also practiced the custom of having, at the birth of every child, a craftsman retained in the establishment who began elaborate carving for the child's future home. This custom, however, was practiced only by the

\(^4\)"San Antonians Furnish Home With Chinese Furniture," *San Antonio Express*, October 6, 1932.
wealthier Chinese.  

Chippendale designed numerous pieces in Chinese manner, but they have not, of course, the true character of real Chinese furniture. Chippendale only copies from the Chinese. Little information is available on the history of Chinese furniture, but paintings of hundreds of years ago show the same general types of construction and decoration as are in use today.

Outstanding Characteristics of Design

The Buddhist figure was China's most treasured design. Every design was a symbol of some interpretation, and the human figure was always a representation of age.

Summary

Little accurate information is available on Chinese wood-carving. However, a few definite facts, after being combined, give us a most interesting description. First, we found that Chinese wood-carving was of extreme simplicity and that dignity and complicity were the keynotes of Chinese taste. Secondly, we found that the Chinese were willing to make anything for profitable export, but that they never adopted the heavy ornate type for their own use. Interior ornamentation was confined to richly carved entrances and

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5 "Chinese Furnishings Dominate This Charming Shanghai Home," *Arts and Decoration*, XXXVII (May, 1932), 18-19.
Fig. 12. A typical Chinese design.
window-grilles. The designs most commonly used for these purposes were of birds and flowers. (See Figure 12). Those most commonly used for such pieces of furniture as chairs and tables were the bat and gong motifs, Whistler moulding, chow and bat (symbols of long life and happiness), musical gong, bamboo motif, and the Chinese fret. From this we conclude that almost all Chinese design subjects were some form of symbol and that the symbols were of great variety.

The same general schemes of furniture decoration and arrangement varied little throughout all China. The Chinese are noted for their ability in arrangement. The wood most commonly used was teakwood. Redwood and other softer woods were used also. Lacquer was used extensively in China. Styles of furniture construction and decoration vary little with the passing of time in China. Outside countries had little or no influence on Chinese design. The people of China thought for themselves and borrowed from no one.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

Findings

The writer finds the following facts to be the most outstanding characteristics of the countries included in this study. The type of design most commonly used in England was that of foliage. The acanthus leaf was used more frequently than all other types of foliage design combined, and was used more by England than by any other country. Due to the fact that the acanthus leaf was used so extensively, curves became the most common line characteristic. Carving in the round with deep cuts was the most frequent technique used. England used a more naturalistic representation of the various design subjects than did the other countries. Yet, in the most conventional treatment the commonly used form of design arrangement was that of the swag. The egg-and-dart border design was the most popular of all border designs. Along with this and the acanthus leaf were the honeysuckle, shell, pineapple, baskets of fruit, vases of flowers, animals, and the human figure.

France, unlike England, did not use the human figure, except for the head. She used both floral and vegetable motifs, but in combination quite frequently with fanciful animals,
weapons, and musical instruments. To obtain a feeling of movement, and to break the harshness, a branching effect was used. This effect could well be called the chief characteristic of all French carving. However, in some cases pure geometric design was used, in form of stars, diamonds, and lines. All lines showed a tendency for straightness. Flat surface carving was the most frequent technique used. In Italy the circle played the all-important part of being the characteristic unit of all design arrangement and combination. It was involved in all types of designs. Many of the designs most frequently used by Italy were of Roman origin, and it is through Italian interpretation that we have those designs today. Italy was the originator of the Baroque ornament, and it is for that reason that scrolls, cartouches, rocks, and ribbon designs were the most frequently used designs. On all pieces of Italian carving could be found a border design; no country has ever produced as many border designs in carving as did Italy. As a whole, Italian technique was that of flat surface carving, giving the effect of light and shade. The distinguishing feature of the carving was of large stately proportions and architectural profile. In Germany the furniture also had a very substantial appearance, but this brought about no conflict in distinguishing between the furniture of the two countries. All German furniture had, as some part of its design, turning, which was by far the most outstanding characteristic of German furniture.
designing. Since turning was of great quantity and very heavy, the wood-carving was large in design unit and was executed in a corresponding manner so as to correspond with the turning. Germany frequently used the imperialist symbols with domestic flora. The technique of German wood-carving was unusually flat; the relief was low, and much chip-carving was used in its early stages. China used as her most common carving designs birds and flowers, musical gong, bamboo motifs, and the Chinese fret. The bat was one of the chief birds used and served as a symbol. In fact, almost all designs were symbols of some type. All Chinese furniture was lacquered, China being the only country to finish furniture in this manner. Chinese wood-carving was of extreme simplicity, and dignity and simplicity were the keynotes of Chinese taste.

Conclusions

The writer has summed up her conclusions on the carving influence of various countries in figure form. From that investigation the writer makes the following conclusions. France, more than any other country, influenced English wood-carving. The country of second importance in influence was Flanders, and ranking third were China and Holland. Italy, Germany, and Spain ranked fourth. From carving designs of these countries and others, England produced the world's greatest variety of designs. In France, Italy was of greatest
influence, while Spain ranked second. Flanders ranked third, with Germany and China ranking fourth. France showed little or no pure originality in wood-carving designs, but the fact that she transformed ancient Greek and Roman designs into carvable designs for wood shows that she was certainly not completely lacking in originality and adaptability.

The writer concludes also that the chief characteristic of the French carving design is the delicate, but deep cut, branching scroll effect. Italy and France both made adaptable for carving the Greek and Roman designs, but in a very different manner. However, that source alone readily accounts for the great Italian influence on French carving. The similarity of Italian and French carving is great, but its greatest difference is due to the fact that England ranked first in influence on Italian carving designs, while France adapted no designs from England. China ranked third, with Germany and Africa ranking fourth. Italy was the only country to be directly influenced by Africa. It is to Italy that we look for the world's greatest variety of border designs. The great variation of extensively used border designs is the chief characteristic of Italian wood-carving designs. Italy was of greater importance to the German designers than was any one country to another. Scandinavia and Denmark ranked second, with France and Sweden ranking third.
England and Flanders ranked fourth, and Norway ranked fifth. From that it is concluded that Germany obtained her wood-carving designs from more different sources than did any other country, yet she did less wood-carving than did the other countries. Turning is the most outstanding, and has proved to be the most outlasting, characteristic of all German carving. China, unlike all other countries, obtained wood-carving designs from no other country. As a result, her designs are distinctly different. That difference appeared to be in the form of symbolism. All Chinese designs were symbols; this cannot be said of any other country. However, a slight use of turning indicates a German influence might have existed.

Foliage was the most commonly used subject matter by all countries, on an average. The most common type of foliage used was the Greek acanthus leaf. This leaf was used in so many variations that it is often somewhat difficult to distinguish it from other types of foliage. Due to its many design possibilities, it combined well with almost all types of design, or even made a pleasing design when used alone.
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