
CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Bombé Desk and Bookcase

Desk and Bookcase, 1780–1800, mahogany;
eastern white pine, the Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of
Miss Ima Hogg, B.69.139.



MISSION

During and after the American Revolution, Americans wished to demonstrate their identity as an independent nation worthy of respect from themselves and people of other nations. With this in mind, what do these historic objects tell us about American identity—what it meant to be an American—during this time period?

Bombé Desk and Bookcase

This desk and bookcase were owned by a wealthy merchant in Boston and would have served as his “home office,” where he would store important documents, ledgers, and books. It is made of mahogany and the cabinetmaker utilized a technique on the bottom called bombé, which refers to the way that the sides of the desk swell out. This complex style was most prominent in Boston and was used only on very fine furniture pieces, commissioned by the city’s wealthiest clientele. The bust on the top of the desk depicts English poet John Milton.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why is this desk placed in a bedroom?

During this time men generally conducted business from their homes, instead of going into an office. Clients or customers would have seen this desk when they came to do business with the merchant who owned it.



Who is John Milton and why would someone want a carving of him on their desk?

John Milton was considered by some to be the greatest English author of his time, and his poetry was highly regarded. Displaying a bust of him would have served as a sign that the owner was sophisticated and well-read.



What made the bombé technique so special?

The cabinetmaker would have carved the swelled shape out of expensive mahogany (as opposed to steaming or bending it), a technique that would have wasted a lot of expensive wood in order to achieve this look.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Bedstead and Bedhangings

Bedstead, 1750–1800, mahogany,
the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of
Miss Ima Hogg, B.69.137.



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Bedstead and Bedhangings

The term *bed* refers to the mattress and blankets, *bedstead* refers to the wooden frame, and *bedhangings* refers to the textiles that drape over the bed and bedstead. A fully dressed bed like this was one of the most luxurious things an 18th-century colonist could own. In addition to their decorative function and the way they would have signaled the owner's affluence and fashion, the wool bedhangings also helped keep the sleeper warm on cold nights, when heating rooms was a difficult task.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



How much fabric is on the bed?

About sixty yards of imported wool fabric would have created these bedhangings with the cost equaling a luxury automobile today.



Why would someone spend so much money on their bed?

It was common during the 18th century for people to invite guests into their bedroom to drink tea, play cards, or conduct a business transaction. There was not as clear a division between "public" and "private" spaces within the home that we have today, and having such luxurious bedhangings would have been a sign to guests of the owner's wealth and status.



What are the bedhangings made of and how do they work?

The red fabric is a kind of wool called moreen. The shiny pattern on it was ironed into the fabric with a technique called calendaring, which used heat to impress the pattern onto the fabric. The curtains on the sides of the bed can be lowered and raised (like a theater curtain) using a series of cords.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Boy with a Toy Horse

Charles Willson Peale, *Boy with Toy Horse*,
1768, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of
Miss Ima Hogg, B.55.15.



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Boy with a Toy Horse

At first glance, this painting may appear to be of a young girl, but it is actually a young boy. The artist Charles Willson Peale painted this while visiting England. The child is standing next to a chair, holding a toy horse. If you look over the mantel, you'll see a painting within a painting. Peale was interested in creating visual tricks in his paintings and often utilized clever techniques like this one.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



How do we know it's a boy?

One clue is that the child is playing with a toy horse. Girls during this time would have more commonly been depicted holding a doll. A young girl would also have likely been wearing a cloth cap, which this child does not. The pink dress is not a sign of gender—both boys and girls wore pink, which was considered to be a more masculine color during the 18th century.



Why is he wearing a dress?

Young girls and boys both wore dresses out of utility. Boys did not start wearing pants, or breeches, until between the ages of four and eight, when they could button and unbutton their pants themselves.



How do we know this was painted in England?

Charles Willson Peale went to England to study with artist Benjamin West during the 1760s, when this portrait was likely painted. By that time England had depleted its sources of firewood and coal was burning in English fireplaces, as we see here. Wall-to-wall carpet, also seen in this painting, was more common in England during this time.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Destruction of the Royal Statue in New York Print

Etching by François Xavier Habermann; after Balthasar Friedrich Leizelt; published by Habermann and Leizelt, Augsburg, *Vue d'Optique/Die Zerstörung der Königlichen Bild Säule zu Neu York (Optical View/ Destruction of the Royal Statue in New York)* from *Collection des Prospects*, c. 1776, etching and engraving with polychrome watercolor on laid paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by First Interstate Bank of Texas, N.A. in honor of Peter C. Marzio at "One Great Night in November, 1995", B.95.13.



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Destruction of the Royal Statue in New York Print

This print was made to be viewed through a *vue d'optique*, an optical tool that would alter the viewer's perception of the piece. Viewed from above, a lens would magnify and reverse the image. This print shows citizens of New York tearing down a statue of George III in 1776, after hearing a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why are the people tearing down the statue?

After a series of taxations and growing resentment toward England from the colonists, they declared independence in 1776, which began the American Revolution. This scene depicts an angry crowd removing a statue of the English monarch.



Who would have seen this print? Where would they see it?

*This print was created in England for a European audience, as the British were eager to learn what was happening in the colonies. Prints like this one were intended to be seen through a *vue d'optique*, an optical device to view prints that was a popular form of entertainment during the 18th century.*



How was this print made?

It was created using the techniques of etching and engraving, and then the color would have been added by hand after the printing process was complete. The text along the top of the image is written backwards, as the print would have been seen in reverse through an optical machine.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

William Penn's Treaty with the Indians Print

John Hall; after Benjamin West; published by John Boydell, *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians*, 1775, engraving and etching with water-color on laid paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by Roy and Meredith Cullen in honor of Harry H. Cullen in November, 1995", B.95.12.



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William Penn's Treaty with the Indians Print

This print, created in England in 1775, depicts a well-recognized scene of William Penn's treaty with the Indians. It is based on a painting by Benjamin West (born in Pennsylvania) that was well-known at the time. In it, Penn—a Quaker and the founder of the state of Pennsylvania—is signing a treaty with the Indians in 1683.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why is William Penn signing a treaty with the Indians?

In 1682 Penn met with chiefs of the Delaware, Susquehannock, and Shawnee tribes, and agreed to exchange certain Indian lands for English goods. The treaty declared that they would coexist in peace and friendship. Quakers viewed this event as a model of cooperation with indigenous populations they thought could serve as an example for future negotiations. No documentation of a written treaty has survived.



Why would someone make a print based on a painting?

Printmakers would often reproduce paintings, allowing the images to be more widely seen by the public. The original painting was commissioned by the son of William Penn, and the print made the image widely available, as prints could be purchased more affordably. It also influenced other artists to create similar scenes.



How did the artist know what the scene of the signing looked like; was he there?

Benjamin West used his imagination to create this scene—choosing clothes for the Quakers and Indians that were contemporary, as opposed to what would have been accurate in 1683. He also chose to place the meeting under a large elm tree, with indistinguishable buildings in the background representing Philadelphia.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

A Society of Patriotic Ladies Print

Published by R. Sayer and J. Bennett, London, *A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton, in North Carolina*, 1775, mezzotint on laid paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by the Houston Junior Woman's Club, B.91.35.



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A Society of Patriotic Ladies Print

This print, created in England, shows a satirical scene of 51 women in Edenton, North Carolina, signing a pledge that they will not drink tea or wear dresses made of English fabrics. This was in response to the Tea Act of 1773, which taxed the beverage. As they sign the pledge, one woman in the back drinks her last sip, while collectors stand at the door to take away any remaining tea.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would the women sign a pledge not to drink tea?

Tea was a very popular beverage during the 18th century, and drinking it was also an important ritual for women across the socioeconomic spectrum. The average individual consumed approximately ten pounds of tea per year, so forgoing tea drinking and signing a petition was a way for these women to make a political statement.



Who was this print created for?

Like many prints depicting American scenes during the 18th century, this was created in London for an English audience. English satirical prints were very fashionable and were one of the period's predominant art forms, admired for both the skill of the printmaker and the message portrayed. Even though it is satirical in nature, it is significant because it shows a very early scene of women taking political action. While printed and sold in England, a print like this could have been found in a colonial home.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

George Washington Esqr. Print

Attributed to Samuel Blyth; after Charles Willson Peale; attributed to Joseph Hiller, Sr., *His Excellency, George Washington Esqr.*, c. 1776, mezzotint with handcoloring on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by the Houston Junior Woman's Club, B.99.7.



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George Washington Esqr. Print

This English print depicts George Washington, the commander in chief of the Continental Army, in 1775. On the eve of the American Revolution, there was great international interest in Washington. The artist, having never seen a likeness of Washington, created a fictitious image.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would someone want a print of George Washington?

There was great interest in George Washington, the commander in chief of the Continental Army, both in the colonies and abroad. Enterprising English printmakers produced fictitious images of him, not knowing what he actually looked like.



Why doesn't it look like other images of George Washington?

The artists had never seen George Washington or a portrait of him done from life, so they made one up. The inscription at the bottom says "Done from an original Drawn from the Life by Alexr. Campbell of Williamsburg in Virginia," but no such artist is known. Washington saw a copy of the print and found it amusing, noting that he had never met or sat for Alexander Campbell.



How was this print made?

It was made using a technique called mezzotint, where the artist roughens up a metal surface, creating a fine, somewhat gritty texture. The artist then uses a tool to smooth out areas of the metal plate to create the image. When he rubs ink on the plate and wipes the surface, the dark ink adheres to the rough areas, while the areas that appear white have been wiped clean.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Naby Lord Sampler

Abigail (Naby) Lord, *Sampler*, 1765, silk and metal on linen mounted on wood, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, purchase funded by the W. H. Keenan Family Endowment Fund, B. 2012.3.



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Naby Lord Sampler

This sampler was stitched by 11-year-old Abigail “Naby” Lord in 1765. She has stitched a border of flowers, trees, and birds, and the center panel contains the alphabet, numbers, her name, age, date, and the phrase at the bottom that reads “Who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies.”

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why did girls like Naby Lord make samplers?

Needlework was a skill taught to girls beginning at a young age. It was the major subject taught in schools for girls, and it was thought to teach neatness, attentiveness, and patience.



Why did girls learn needlework in school?

Young boys went to grammar school to learn skills necessary for a professional life, while young girls learned skills they would need to successfully run a household. In addition to needlework, girls may have learned music, painting, reading, and geography. Schools were not free, and a completed needlework served as a status symbol for the family and can be compared to diplomas received today.



Where does the style of the sampler come from?

Naby was schooled in Connecticut, and the style of this sampler is similar to others from this period and region. Women began creating samplers in America in the 17th century, and they looked very much like contemporary British examples. Over time, different regions and schools developed more distinct styles and patterns, which today help experts to determine where they originate. Naby's younger sister completed an almost identical sampler just one year before.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

Pocketbook

Pocketbook, c. 1770–1800, wool and linen, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.69.155.



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Pocketbook

This pocketbook is stitched with wool yarn in a zigzag pattern known as Irish stitch. This type of stitch made the needlework piece very sturdy, so it would endure frequent handling. It has three interior pockets lined with silk. This pocketbook would have been owned and used by a man, but it was likely made by a woman.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would a man have used this pocketbook?

A man might use a pocketbook like this to carry important documents or money. Although we think of a pocketbook as a woman's item today, women didn't have regular occasion to carry money or documents during colonial times. They also wore a "pocket" tied around their waist that could be accessed through a slit in their skirt, where they would carry important letters or objects. Men had pockets sewn into their clothing, as we are accustomed to today.



Who would have made this pocketbook?

Most needlework was done by women, and it was a skill taught to girls beginning at a young age. It was the major subject taught in schools for girls, and it was thought to teach neatness, attentiveness, and patience. It also gave them opportunities to socialize and earn money.



Why was it decorated this way?

The Irish stitch design is one that was frequently used, copied, and reused and would have also been seen on objects like chairs and book covers. Having such a finely stitched pocketbook would have also been a symbol of a man's status and fashion. It may have been made by his wife, which would have reflected well on their family.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

The Tea-Tax Tempest, or the Anglo-American Revolution Print

Attributed to Carl Gottlieb Guttenberg, after an engraving by John Dixon, *The Tea-Tax Tempest, or the Anglo-American Revolution*, 1778, engraving and etching, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by First Interstate Bank, Texas, N.A., at "One Great Night in November, 1993," B.93.25.



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The Tea-Tax Tempest, or the Anglo-American Revolution Print

This allegorical print uses symbolic figures to talk about the American Revolution. Father Time is using a magic lantern (like a projector) to show four figures representing Europe, Asia, Africa and America a battle between British and American forces.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS:



Who created this image?

A German artist, Carl Gottlieb Guttenberg, adapted this image from a British print. However, he changed the design to make the image more sympathetic to the American cause.



Why is there an exploding teapot in the center of the battle scene?

Guttenberg is reminding the viewer that a trigger for the American Revolution was the clash over British regulation of the tea trade, which resulted in the Boston Tea Party.



Why is there a chicken flapping its wings by the teapot?

The chicken, or cockerel, was a traditional symbol of France and is shown fanning the flames from the exploding teapot. The artist is pointing out the French involvement in the clash between American and British forces. Just as today, political satirists and cartoonists used symbols their audiences understood to talk about current events.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

The Bostonians in Distress Print

Attributed to Philip Dawe, *The Bostonians in Distress*, 1774, hand-colored mezzotint on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchased funded by Texaco, Inc., B.85.5.



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The Bostonians in Distress Print

After the Boston Tea Party, the British government closed the port of Boston to punish the city. Since many Bostonians depended on shipping, fishing, and other seagoing trades to make their livings, the closure of the port made their lives very difficult. This print symbolically depicts these events by showing the people of Boston in a cage hanging from a liberty tree, the symbol of the Patriot movement.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why are there people in a boat?

The other colonies who sent supplies to Boston are represented by the people in the boat handing fish up to the hungry Bostonians.



What does the paper the Bostonian is holding say?

One of the men in the cage holds a paper inscribed "They cried unto the Lord in their Trouble & he saved tham out of their Distress. Psalm cvii 13." This reference to the biblical Old Testament may refer to the Patriot belief in the rightness of their cause, or be meant to remind viewers of Massachusetts's religious origins as a Puritan settlement.



Was this image printed in color?

No. Printing images in color was extremely expensive and difficult in the 1700s. Instead, this image would have been printed in black and then hand-colored with watercolor paints.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

The Alternative of Williamsburg Print

Attributed to Philip Dawe, *The Alternative of Williamsburg*, 1775, hand-colored mezzotint on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchased funded by Fentress Bracewell, B.85.6.



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The Alternative of Williamsburg Print

This print depicts an event not long before the American Revolution when Patriots in Williamsburg, Virginia, forced local merchants to sign an agreement not to export or import goods from Britain.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



What does the title mean?

The “alternative” referred to is the scaffold in the background with a barrel of tar and a bag of feathers hanging from it. This reminds the merchants that if they refuse to agree, they may be tarred and feathered.



Why is the barrel of tobacco in the scene designated as a gift for John Wilkes?

John Wilkes was an Englishman who fought for the rights of ordinary citizens against the government. At the time of the American Revolution, he was mayor of London and an opponent of war against the American colonies.



Was this image printed in color?

No. Printing images in color was extremely expensive and difficult in the 1700s. Instead, this image would have been printed in black and then hand-colored with watercolor paints.

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

A New Method of Macarony Making Print

A New Method of Macarony Making, as Practised at Boston, 1774, hand-colored mezzotint on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchased funded by Bechtel Petroleum, B.85.3.



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A New Method of Macarony Making Print

In this scene, a British customs official, who has tried to collect newly imposed duties on tea in Boston, has been tarred and feathered by two men from the Sons of Liberty. When news of this event reached London, where the print was made, it was lauded by colonial sympathizers.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



What is tarring and feathering?

Tarring and feathering was a form of public humiliation and was typical punishment in the 18th century. It was often instigated by a mob as a form of vengeance; the mob would pour tar on their victims, then cover them in feathers and parade them around town.



Who were the Sons of Liberty?

The Sons of Liberty was a secret society of American colonists, formed to protect the rights of the colonists and to fight taxation by the British government. They played a major role in most colonies in battling the Stamp Act in 1765.



What does the inscription say?

It reads: "For the Custom House Officers landing the Tea, They Tarr'd him, and Feather'd him, just as you see. And they drench'd him so well both behind and before. That he begg'd for God's sake they would drench him no more."

CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM

The Bostonians Paying the Excise Man... Print

Attributed to Philip Dawe, *The Bostonians Paying the Excise Man, or Tarring and Feathering*, 1774, hand-colored mezzotint on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchased funded by Trunkline Gas, B.85.4.



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The Bostonians Paying the Excise Man...

Print

This scene depicts a British customs official, who was been tarred and feathered, being forced to drink tea by a group of Bostonians. Behind them is the Liberty Tree and off in the distance is a group of men dumping boxes of tea into the harbor.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS



What is tarring and feathering?

Tarring and feathering was a form of public humiliation and was typical punishment in the 18th century. It was often instigated by a mob as a form of vengeance; the mob would pour tar on their victims, then cover them in feathers and parade them around town.



What is an excise man?

The excise man was a British official responsible for collecting taxes in the colonies. Because the colonists opposed these newly imposed taxes, he was not a popular figure.



What was the Liberty Tree?

It was a famous elm tree in Boston in the years before the American Revolution. It was the site of the first rebellion against the Stamp Act and became a rallying point for the growing resistance against British rule over the American colonies.