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## PINE ROOM

### *Plate Depicting William III and Mary II*

*Plate*, 1689–94, tin-glazed earthenware, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by Lee Hage Jamail in honor of Rose Cullen, B.94.16.



## MISSION

Before the American Revolution, the territories that became the first thirteen states were English colonies. Many colonists looked to England for political, social, and cultural leadership and as the source of national identity. 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?

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## *Plate Depicting William III and Mary II*

This English plate, made in a ceramic style that copies Chinese porcelain, shows King William III and Queen Mary II of England.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would a colonist want to own a picture of William III and Mary II? *William III and Mary II reigned over England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1689 until Mary died in 1694 and William died in 1702. Most colonists considered themselves English, and might have enjoyed owning a picture of the monarch in the same way that people own depictions of the current royal family today.*



Why would someone want a plate made to imitate Chinese porcelain? *Asian goods were rare, precious, and very desirable in 1600s Europe and America. Because Westerners did not know how to make Chinese-style ceramics, they created similar-but-different pottery like the tin-glazed earthenware used here.*



Why would an American own a plate made in England? *Americans were unable to make fine ceramics until the early 1800s because they were too complicated and expensive to produce with the resources available in the colonies. If you wanted an elegant and fashionable plate like this, you had to import it.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *Chinese Porcelain Charger*

*Charger*, c. 1700–20, hard-paste porcelain with underglaze cobalt, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.49.4.



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## Chinese Porcelain Charger

This large plate, or charger, was made in China but the figures on it depict European musicians.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



How would people in England and her colonies obtain Chinese ceramics? *Charles II married a Portuguese princess whose dowry included trading ports in Asia that gave England access to Asian goods like porcelain, tea, and silk. English law required American colonists to buy anything from outside the British Empire through English ships and merchants so that it could be properly taxed.*



If the figures on the charger are supposed to depict European musicians, why do the people look Chinese? *China carefully restricted its citizens' contact with European traders. All trading and purchasing was done through a small group of merchants who would act as intermediaries between Chinese farmers and craftsmen and the Westerners who wanted to buy their goods. The Chinese painter who decorated this plate probably never met or saw a picture of a Westerner, so he painted what was familiar to him.*



Why would an American colonist have wanted a charger like this? *Asian goods were exotic and fashionable to Westerners; they were also mysterious because Western craftsmen couldn't figure out how to duplicate them, making them expensive to acquire because of the limited supply available in Europe. Items like porcelain and tea were not just desirable in their own right, but also because only wealthy people could afford them, making them a mark of status.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *General Wolfe Fireback*

*Fireback*, 1760–80, cast iron, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.58.94.



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## General Wolfe Fireback

This iron fireback shows the profile of General James Wolfe. Wolfe became a hero to the British Empire when he died at the Battle of Quebec during the Seven Years' War.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would an American colonist want a picture of an English general in his or her home?

*Until the American Revolution, colonists considered themselves English even if they disagreed with certain actions of the British government. Also, keep in mind that a significant proportion of American colonists remained loyal to England throughout the war.*



Why was Wolfe considered such a heroic figure?

*He led the British forces to victory at the Battle of Quebec; this victory, in which the British surprised and quickly defeated French forces, was a key milestone toward the English defeat of the French in the Seven Years' War.*



Why would one need a fireback in a colonial fireplace?

*The brick used in colonial homes and fireplaces was rather soft and would be damaged by the heat of fires over time. If you could afford it, an iron fireback would protect the back wall of the fireplace and prevent costly repairs, and possibly dangerous chimney fires. It also provided a space that could be decorated with your choice of ornament.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *Daybed or Couch, Boston 1720–40*

*Couch*, 1720–40, soft maple, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by the Agnes Cullen Arnold Endowment Fund, B.90.5.



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## *Daybed or Couch, Boston 1720-40*

This couch, also called a daybed, was a new form of furniture around 1700. The idea came from Europe but was widely copied in the American colonies; this example was made in Boston.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



How would a family use a daybed like this?

*It might be used for relaxing during the day, or as an extra bed for a houseguest at night.*



How does this daybed show that life in the home was changing?

*People put more importance on having objects in their homes that increased comfort and convenience for their families. These new ideas about the home started out in France and England but quickly made their way to the American colonies.*



What does this daybed tell us about how the colonies were changing?

*As colonies became wealthier and less frontier-like, more people could afford fashionable new objects like this one.*



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## PINE ROOM

### *High Chest*

*High Chest*, c. 1700–25, black walnut, burlled walnut veneer, soft maple, and aspen; eastern white pine, hemlock, and birch, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.69.43.



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## *High Chest*

This high chest was made in Boston around 1700. It reflects many ideas that were new in that era, including the way it was made, its use, and its decorative style. All of these ideas were copied from English precedents, though.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



What is innovative about the way this high chest was made?

*Woodworkers were using a new kind of joint called the dovetail, which allowed much thinner pieces of wood to be used in furniture making and for the bulk of the furniture to be lifted on fairly small legs.*



What is innovative about the form of this high chest?

*The idea of chests full of small drawers was a new one. As the wealth of England and its colonies grew, people owned more items and needed more and better organized storage for their belongings. Large chests or boxes were no longer sufficient to store what a wealthy family needed.*



What is innovative about the decorative style of this high chest?

*The idea of lifting this chest of drawers up on high legs was a new one, as was the idea of covering it with eye-catching veneers. Owning a piece of furniture in the brand-new style would show that you were wealthy enough to afford it and also aware of the latest fashions in England.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *Tea Kettle and Stand*

*Tea Kettle*, 1750–1800, brass, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.59.120.1.A., B.

*Kettle Stand*, c. 1725–50, brass, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.60.13.



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## *Kettle and Stand*

This brass kettle and stand would have been used to make tea. The set was made in England, which was also where the American colonists learned about the new fashion for tea drinking.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why did the English and their American colonists start drinking tea in the late 1600s?

*Charles II married a Portuguese princess whose dowry included trading ports in Asia that gave England access to Asian goods like porcelain, tea, and silk. The English rapidly developed a tea-drinking habit that gradually spread throughout society, from the wealthy to the poor.*



How did tea connect to the growing wealth of American society?

*Not only was tea itself expensive, but it required specialized equipment—at least a teapot and cups, but possibly also a kettle like this one, a special table for serving tea, and objects like tea caddies, waste bowls, and strainers. Although these could be purchased at various levels of cost, drinking tea definitely required a certain investment.*



How did tea drinking connect Americans to the global economy?

*Tea itself was brought from China, along with the porcelain in which the wealthiest served it. Many tea wares were made in English potteries and shipped to America, while the mahogany for tea tables and the sugar to sweeten drinks originated in the Caribbean.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *Easy Chair*

*Easy Chair*, 1730–75, black walnut, soft maple, hard maple, beech, and sylvestris pine, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.69.252.



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## *Easy Chair*

This easy chair was a new kind of furniture that was introduced around 1700 from Europe. The idea of attaching upholstery and padding directly to furniture for greater comfort was a novelty.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Was a chair like this expensive?

*Yes! Between the cost of the fabrics, which had to be imported from England, and the cost of the labor, because a chair like this was complicated to put together, an easy chair was very much a luxury item.*



Who would make a chair like this?

*A woodworker would make the frame, but an upholsterer would do the job of adding the padding and the fabric. Upholsterers also filled the role of interior decorators—they could supply curtains and other room furnishings and design a room whose furnishings went together, which was also a new idea in the late 1600s. Upholsterers were often some of the wealthiest craftsmen in the community.*



Who would have used this chair?

*Easy chairs were originally designated for the elderly or ill, because they provided a sheltered, soft spot to recline. Many included a chamber pot under the seat for additional convenience to invalids.*

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## PINE ROOM

### *Two Caned Chairs*

*Armchair*, 1685–1700, beech, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.58.142.

*Armchair*, 1730–45, soft maple and birch, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.61.40.



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## *Two Caned Chairs*

These two chairs with caned backs and seats show how styles were adopted from England to America in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The fancier version is English, and the simpler one is American.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



Why would an American own an English caned chair when America had plenty of furniture makers?

*English furniture makers were so efficient at producing caned furniture that it was cheaper to buy English chairs that were shipped across the Atlantic than to buy similar chairs that were made in the colonies. Plus, English furnishings were considered elegant and desirable.*



Why would a colonist buy an American chair if English ones were available?

*We don't know for sure, but possibilities include replacing an English chair that had been damaged, or not wanting to wait the time it would take to have English furniture shipped across the Atlantic.*



Where did the idea of caned chairs come from?

*The idea of caning, and the materials used for it, originated in Asia and came to Europe when trade with Asia increased in the 1600s. Westerners quickly took to the idea of furniture that was lightweight, sturdy, and easy to clean.*



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## PINE ROOM

### *Portrait of Samuel Pemberton*

John Smibert, *Portrait of Samuel Pemberton*, 1734, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by Miss Ima Hogg, B.72.7.



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## Portrait of Samuel Pemberton

This portrait of Samuel Pemberton, who was approximately 11 years old, by artist John Smibert depicts Pemberton as a young English gentleman and a member of respectable Boston society.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS



How does this portrait tell us about Samuel Pemberton's economic and social status?

*Not only is Pemberton dressed in expensive fabrics cut into a fashionable suit, but he is wearing a costly wig and standing in the proper posture for a gentleman. The very fact that his parents could afford to have portraits of him as well as two of his sisters painted indicates that they were quite wealthy.*



How does this portrait connect Pemberton with England?

*He is wearing imported fabrics; the American colonies did not have the technological or financial resources to weave fine fabrics until after the American Revolution. Moreover, his posture, clothing style, and the way his portrait was painted were copied from English models. England was still the cultural leader for the American colonies at this point in history.*



Why would an artist like John Smibert be interested in immigrating to America?

*The growing wealth of the colonies and the limited competition from other trained artists meant that he had plenty of customers for his work; well-off colonists knew that wealthy Englishmen and women often had their portraits painted, so they wanted the same.*