

Winterthur Library

An Introduction to Resources



Colonial Revival

Among the many survivals and revivals of styles in American decorative arts, the most persistent is the furniture and crafts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The words *colonial revival* can be viewed in two ways. In the narrower sense of a distinct phase of American architectural and decorating history, it begins at the time of the 1876 Centennial and ends with the advent of modernism in the years just before World War I. In the broader view, it begins with the reworking of colonial styles as early as 1830 and continues to the present. The Winterthur Library can support research in many aspects of colonial revival study with a wealth of primary and secondary material and visual resources.

Furniture

The library holds the business papers of a number of companies that specialized in the manufacture and repair of colonial style furniture. Among the most important are the archives of the Nathan

Margolis Shop of Hartford, Connecticut, which produced high-quality reproduction antique furniture from 1894 until the mid-1960s. In addition to numerous photographs and extensive financial records, there are two thousand full-size templates, patterns, and hardware pieces in the Margolis Collection.

The Cyrus Dodge Furniture Company records, which date from 1841 to 1960, include photographs, drawings, and account books from the Manchester, Massachusetts, company. Two twentieth-century southern Pennsylvania shops, that of Jesse William Bair of Hanover and the Bair Cabinet Shop of Abbottstown, are documented through patterns, photographs, and business records.

Metalwork

Major collections of two colonial revival silversmiths are available: George Christian Gebelein (1878–1945) was referred to during his fifty-year career as “the modern Paul Revere.” The collection, which dates from 1903 to the 1930s, consists of scores of silverwork designs, primarily done in watercolor, and many drawings of jewelry. More than half the silverwork designs are for tea and coffee services, and many are reminiscent of colonial and English pieces.

Charles Osborne, active from 1870 to 1920, designed patterns for silver objects for the Whiting Manufacturing Company and Tiffany and Company. The collection includes both rough and finished designs for silver hollowware and cutlery as well as photographs of design sources and personal and professional papers.

The Georgian Lighting Shops flourished in Philadelphia between 1921 and 1950. The company designed lighting fixtures, decorative metal scrollwork, railings, and fireplace equipment appropriate for homes decorated in the colonial revival style.



Photograph of lathe worker at Dodge Furniture Company, n.d. Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.



Charles Osborne, drawing of a spoon, 1904. Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.



Mary Northend, photograph of an old-fashioned party, ca. 1910. Decorative Arts Photographic Collection, Winterthur Library.

The collection consists of two parts: microfilm of 1,927 designs on paper owned by descendants of a shop employee and a collection of 527 original designs selected from this group.

Connoisseurship

Ernest Hagen (1830–1913) was a highly respected authority on Duncan Phyfe as well as an accomplished cabinetmaker. The library has a draft of his memoir, “Personal Experiences of an Old New York Cabinet Maker,” which offers rare insight into trade practices during the second half of the nineteenth century. Also in the collection are his handwritten notes on Duncan Phyfe.

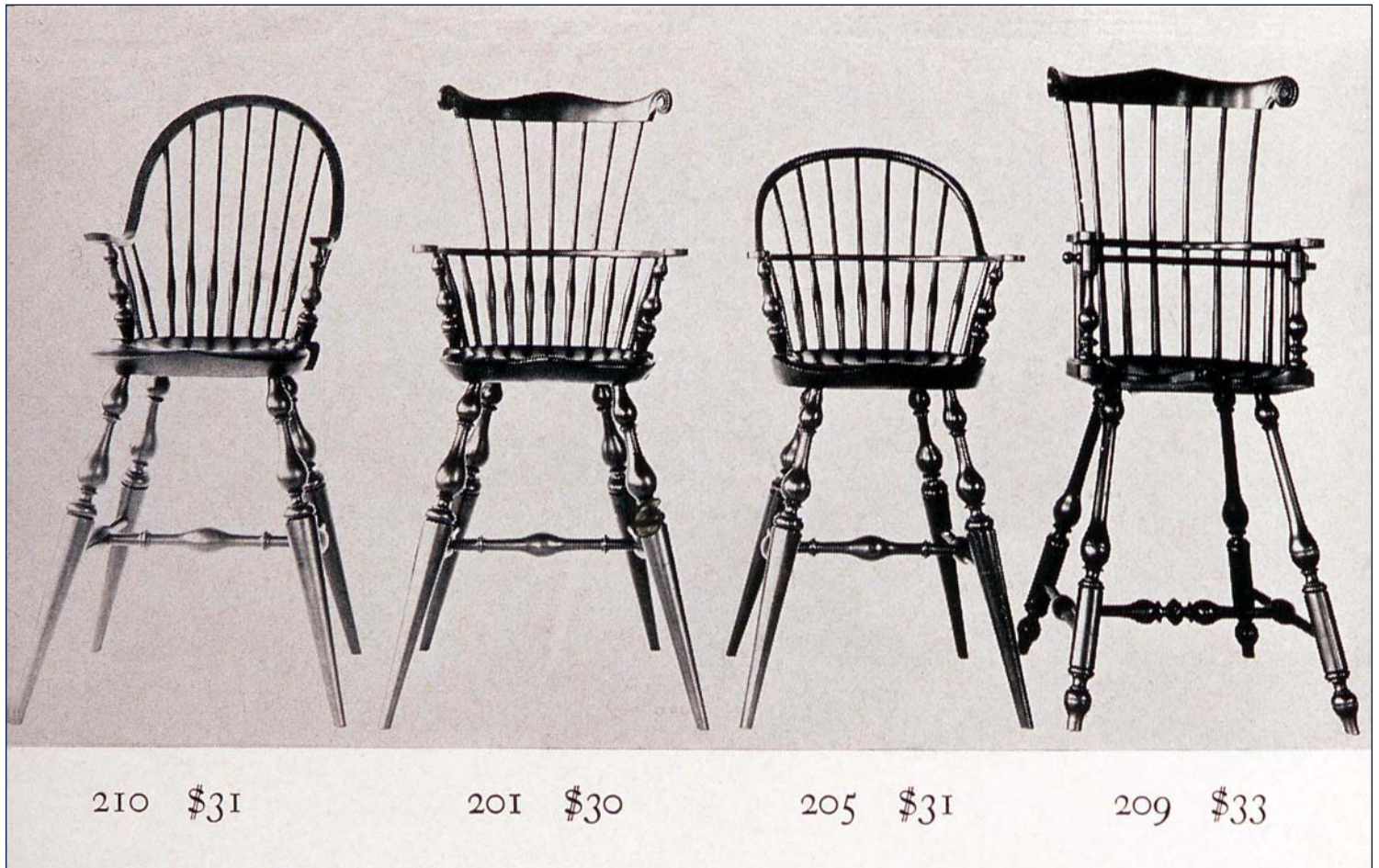
The papers and writings of prominent early twentieth-century collectors, dealers, and critics can add to the understanding of the attitudes toward colonial objects and styles during the revival period. Personal papers in the library include those of Winterthur founder Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969); dealer Samuel H. Laidacker (1904–94); writer and architect Mantle Fielding (1865–1941); and curators Benno M. Forman (1930–82), Florence M. Montgomery (1914–98), Gregor Norman-Wilcox (1905–69), and Joseph Downs (1895–1954).

Architecture and Interior Design

The colonial revival style was promoted by a series of romanticized books on the homes and lifestyles of the American colonists. Books by Alice Morse Earle, Marion Harland, and Anne Hollingsworth, published in the 1890s, are typical examples at Winterthur.

Mary Harrod Northend (1850–1926) brought the colonial revival aesthetic to a wide middle-class audience through her articles and books. Using her prominent family connections, she gained entry into old New England homes and employed a photographer to record the architecture and furnishings. In the library are 2,200 modern contact prints made from her original glass-plate negatives. In addition to interiors, there are many photographs of parties and meals with participants in colonial apparel.

Women’s magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Good Furniture* as well as decorating advice books from the 1870s and later contain many illustrations and descriptions of decor in the revival style. In addition, thousands of photographs of colonial and colonial revival objects from private and public collections are available in the library.



Wallace Nutting, *General Catalog* (Framingham, Mass.: By the author, 1937). Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library.

Many late nineteenth-century businesses produced items reflecting the styles of a hundred years before. Trade catalogues in the collection reflecting the colonial influence include Towle Manufacturing Company silver and Wallace Nutting furniture. Literature from household and building products manufacturers, particularly of paints, millwork, and lumber, offer products appropriate for colonial decor. Architects also looked to the past for inspiration. Seminal colonial revival books such as William R. Ware's *Georgian Period* (1899) and

Frank Wallis's *Old Colonial Architecture and Furniture* (1887), offered measured drawings and photographs of eighteenth-century New England dwellings.

Winterthur Library's outstanding collection of material on colonial revival architecture also includes the White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, which continued the interest in eighteenth-century style into the middle of the twentieth century.



Winterthur Library is located in the Crowninshield Research Building, accessible from the main entrance to Winterthur Museum & Country Estate.

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–4:30 pm

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