



ANTIQUES

Antiques or old furniture make a home more interesting and lift it from the hum-drum existence of a place to eat and sleep. Beautiful and interesting furniture and accessories create a center of interest on which the eye can dwell contemplatively, arousing memories and associations.

A home should be interesting. The furnishings should express one's own personality and tastes and not meekly follow the current fashions. Antiques and old furniture give a feeling of permanence and a link to the past.

According to a U.S. Customs ruling in 1967, an antique is an item that is 100 years old or older. Until then, it had to be made prior to 1830. It may be further defined as having artistic merit, aesthetic appeal and not be a utilitarian object. Some definitions add that mechanically produced items that were made in large numbers will never be an antique.

MIXING PERIOD AND STYLES

Furniture from different periods mix to create an interesting interior. The following are some general principles to guide you in combining different periods and styles of accessories and furniture successfully.

1. One style of furniture and one or two types of collections should dominate, but a few well-chosen pieces of another style or collection for contrast can be the unifying element.
2. Woods may also offer a cue in combining. They do not have to match, but should be compatible. The same wood used on all pieces can be the unifying element.
3. Pieces of the same characteristics and scale are usually compatible when used together.
4. Color can be the ingredient that unifies a grouping made of different styles.
5. Contrast adds interest and the differences are emphasized. Line, texture, woods, and other elements can be contrasted.
6. Change the character of a piece by putting casual or modern fabrics on formal or antique chairs and vice-versa.
7. Coordinate too much of a mixture with color and fabric.

A home's most important feature is unity within the living space. To achieve unity, a home needs continuity or harmony. An easy way to accomplish unity is to use repetition of certain elements. Color, texture, line and form can all be repeated to gain rhythm.

PLAN ANTIQUES PURCHASES

The most important thing to remember when searching for antiques or collectibles is to have a plan.

A plan for buying antiques and collectibles involves the following:

- Be suspicious of bargains when shopping for antiques and collectibles.
- Do not buy antiques solely as an investment.
- Be wary of the heavily restored or excessively refinished piece. Look for items in good condition.
- Be wary of reproductions and fakes.
- Study the field and learn all that you possibly can about antiques; then plan your purchases.
- Confine your collecting instincts within manageable bounds.
- Resist the temptation to buy mammoth objects at great distance from home.
- Collect for pleasure alone.
- Choose some antiques and collectibles which are useful.
- Choose objects with lovely colors and good line, texture and shape.
- Choose items with patent numbers and dates on them or sets if they are available.
- Choose good examples of a period, style or of a particular item.
- Collect things you know how and where you can use or display them.

Most of the furniture found in antique shops, at auctions, second-hand shops and flea markets cannot be classified as true antiques. It can be called “collectibles”, or “new antiques”, or just “used furniture”.

The following is one way of classifying American furniture 1870-1930.

THE EASTLAKE STYLE - 1872-1890

Charles Eastlake was not a furniture designer or cabinet maker but a tastemaker. He published a book, Hints on Household Taste In Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details, that was a best seller in America during this time.

Eastlake furniture could be called squared-off Victorian. "Honesty" and "Sincerity" in construction and design were aims of this style. Oak, rosewood and walnut with only a light coat of varnish are characteristic woods used in the Eastlake style. Other identifying factors are squarish form, shallow incised carving, prominently displayed ornamental hardware, narrow display shelves on sideboards and balustrade-type turnings.

MISSION STYLE - 1886-1930

The Mission style of furniture was an outgrowth of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. The philosophy behind this style was that art and work are a form of religion. Therefore, craftsmanship and severely plain structural forms characterize Mission Style. Oak is the wood used in Mission Furniture. The form is geometric and the construction is sturdy.

The Morris Chair is one of the most famous pieces of this style. It is an adjustable recliner with heavy upholstered cushions (often in leather).

ART NOUVEAU - 1890-1930

Art Nouveau was related to Louis XV designs. It features floral ornamentation, curvilinear shapes and asymmetrically. Motifs that identify this style of furniture are tapering supports for display shelves, tulip carvings or cutouts or simply carved curvilinear designs. Staining and painting were common and various woods were used.

GOLDEN OAK - 1890-1930

The center of production for this elaborate and ornate oak furniture was Grand Rapids, Michigan and the style often bears the name Grand Rapids. The furniture was inexpensive, mass produced and often available through mail-order catalogs. Golden Oak is very popular today. Pressed back chairs, rolled top desks, kitchen cabinets, pedestal tables, iceboxes and bow-front china cabinets are popular items of the Golden Oak period.

Woods other than oak were used in the cheaper mass produced furniture such as elm, chestnut or soft maple. Carved decorations except on chair legs or pedestals are usually glued on.

BARONIAL STYLE OF 1920'S

Massively designed in Gothic period style; Baronial furniture may have carvings, turnings and elaborate veneers. Gumwood was often used and stained to simulate more expensive woods.

SPECIALTY FURNITURE

- BRENTWOOD:** Thonet first manufactured bentwood furniture about 1840. In 1876, he began producing Vienna café chairs made of Carpathian beechwood. Over fifty million have been sold to date.
- BRASS BEDS:** Good solid brass beds actually have a cast-iron core that is wrapped with brass tubing. Finials should be solid brass.
- IRON BEDS:** These were for people who couldn't afford brass beds, the most expensive iron models originally cost about one-third as much as a brass model.
- STEEL BEDS:** Steel beds were popular in the 20's and 30's. They were enameled in wood grains or solid colors and often decorated with painted patterns.
- WICKER:** Wicker is a generic term that covers furniture made from all sorts of materials—prairie grass, rattan, cane, rush and paper rush. The earliest pieces, circa 1850-90, were tightly woven by hand around hardwood frames, then painted or left natural. Around 1900, less expensive pieces were made with an open weave. Around 1917, a loom that could weave paper rush was invented. Wicker went out of fashion around 1930.

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