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Types of Colonial Chairs

By GALE PUGH

WHEN we speak so blithely of Colonial Furniture, we do not necessarily mean the Colonial type; for Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton have all had their influences on American furniture. When we consider that Virginia was settled mainly by English, we can see how their household furnishings would have a very definite English influence. It has been said that early in the eighteenth century there was a great deal of wealth in the South, particularly in the state of Virginia, thus making possible the importation of furniture and the use of anything but of a poor quality. Then, in the North, we find a more stern, austere class of furniture as were the natures of the Pilgrim fathers, and Dutch and Flemish people. For some time, between 1702 and 1776, there was the introduction of that which we more loosely speak of as Colonial furniture. However, during this same period in New Orleans we find a strong French influence. After we stop to think, there is the question which arises before us, what is the Colonial style? By Colonial style we mean the using of classical lines, straight back chairs, and Sheraton have all had their influence. A rather unique type of the Windsor chair is the cradle rocker. It has a rocker for one to sit in at one end with a cradle made by an elongation of the seat. The Hitchcock chair is a rather low backed one which curves slightly backward near the top. The rail is round. In the back, instead of slats or spindles, there is a flat, usually rather decorative, which runs horizontal with the seat of the chair. The Hitchcocks have been said to have had their own factory, in which they worked during the winter months. Then, during the summer, they went about the country selling their wares.

America has had her furniture designers as did England. It has been said that Duncan Phyfe was more famed in his time than was Chippendale in England. He had a shop where Fulton street now is in New York City. After the Revolutionary War and up through the Civil War period we find great evidences of the use of lacquered and japanned furniture. In the latter part of this span of time there seemed to be greater tendency toward stencil work. There is one little Boston rocker in Iowa that has its stencil of fruit and flowers, on either side of which is “The Union—Forever.” Such a piece of furniture is indeed to be treasured and the owner should be exceedingly proud of her possession. As with other pieces of furniture, we find many lovely old chairs in our farm homes of Iowa. Many of these have suffered at the hands of careless and unappreciative owners, but some yet survive the era of commercialism through which we have just passed.

Today, in our commercial productions, we seem to have returned to those men who for many years have led the way in lovely furniture design, and to those periods when beauty reigned. We no longer are turning out great quantities of ugly, nondescript pieces as we did some 10 and 20 years ago. We are now beginning to feel the value of our old pieces which are still in existence and are trying to put them in their proper setting.

Dorothy Van Dyke Nutt, H. Ec. ’25, is living in Schenectady, N. Y., in the Vernon Court Apartments.

Ella Fay McCue, H. Ec. ’26, was a visitor on the campus the weekend of January 22. Ella Fay is teaching at West Liberty, Iowa, this year.

Anne Westrom Olson, H. Ec. ’25, is living in Riverside, Ill., and writes that she thoroughly enjoys housework. She says that making batik is a paying hobby.

Mildred E. Smith, H. Ec. ’26, has accepted a position in the Clothing Department of Oklahoma A. and M. College at Stillwater, Okla. She will have charge of sophomore and junior clothing courses.

Omicron Nu is backing the Home Economics Club in its annual Vodvil. Helen Swinney, president of Omicron Nu, is in charge of all the dressing for the performance, and Lois Jane Munn will have charge of make-up the night of the Vodvil. Other girls are taking parts in the production.

Those present at the meeting of the alumnae of Gamma chapter of Omicron Nu on January 30 were Iva Brandt, Amy Middleton Goss, Marci Turner, Avis Talcott, Neale Knowles, Mary Montgomery Pride and Vivian Jordan Brashier. A committee is working on a letter to be sent to all alumnae explaining the plans for a scholarship fund sponsored by Gamma Alumnae.