

The neoclassical furniture of Norfolk, Virginia, 1770-1820

BY RONALD L. HURST AND SUMPTER PRIDY III



Pl. I. View of Norfolk from [Smith's] Point, by Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820), 1796. Pen and ink and watercolor on paper, 6 13/16 by 10 5/16 inches. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

Pl. II. Clothespress made by John Selden (d. 1777), Norfolk, Virginia, 1775. Inscribed "J. S./1775" in chalk on the bottom of the upper case. Mahogany and yellow pine; height 74 1/4, width 50 1/8, depth 23 3/4 inches. The clothespress and a chest of drawers inscribed "John Selden" (now at Shirley Plantation, Charles City County, Virginia) are original furnishings from Shirley Plantation. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. C. Hill Carter Jr., on loan to Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia; photograph by Delmore Wenzel.

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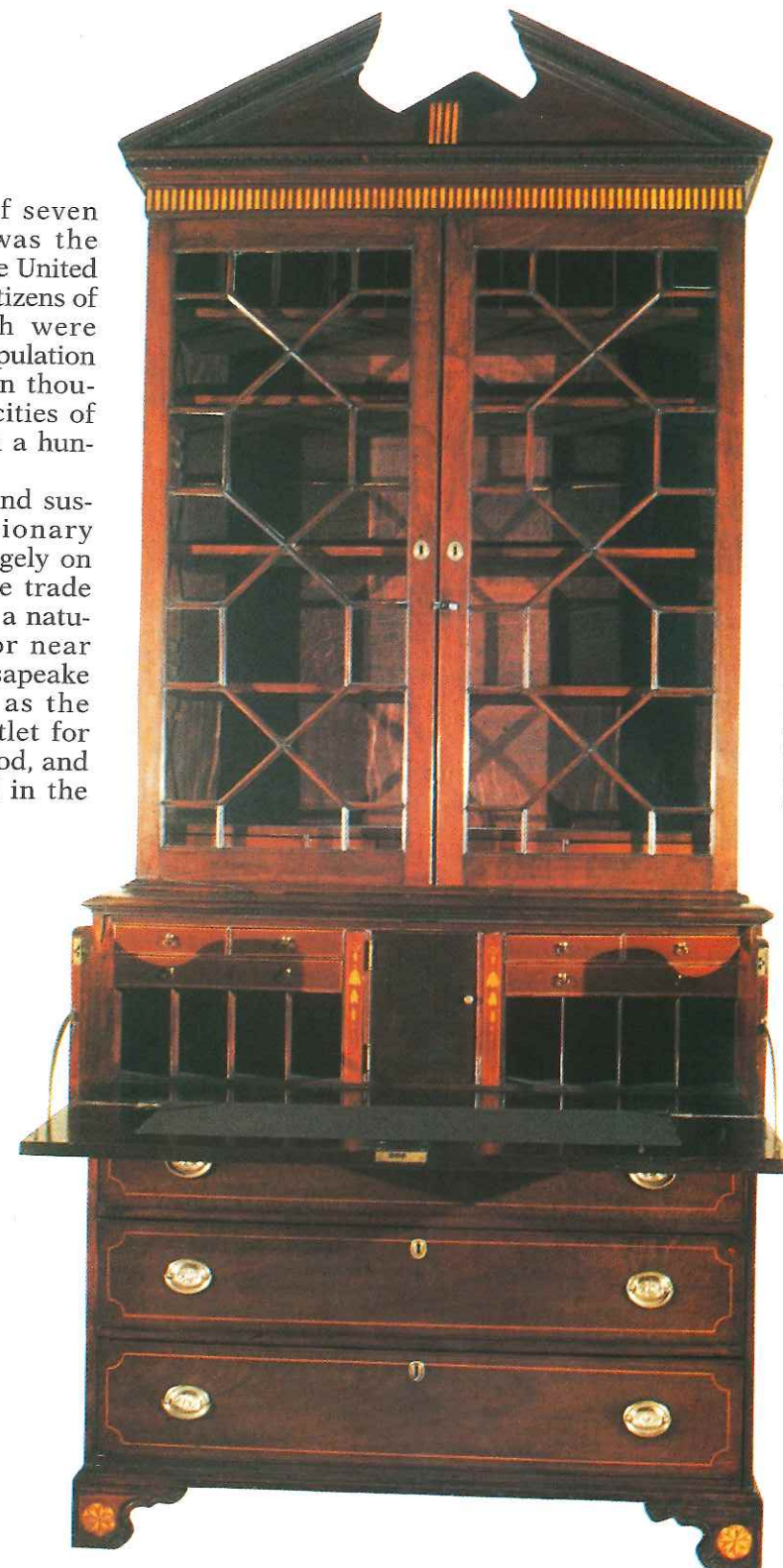


One of the largest cabinetmaking communities in the South in the late eighteenth century was centered in the thriving port city of Norfolk, Virginia. In fact, between 1770 and 1820, dozens of Norfolk cabinetmakers, upholsterers, carvers, and windsor-chair makers plied their trades in more than sixty separate shops. These men and women sold much of their output locally, but also exported quantities of furniture and upholstery to plantations and small towns throughout southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.¹

Given its size and location, Norfolk was well-suited to be a regional cabinetmaking center. Founded in 1680, it had quickly grown to be the largest and most important commercial hub on the lower Chesapeake Bay. By 1800,

with a population of seven thousand, Norfolk was the eighth largest city in the United States, and when the citizens of adjacent Portsmouth were included, the urban population climbed to roughly ten thousand. There were no cities of comparable size within a hundred-mile radius.

Norfolk's economy and sustained post-Revolutionary growth were based largely on a flourishing maritime trade (see Pl. I). Situated on a natural deep-water harbor near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, the city served as the principal shipping outlet for most of the tobacco, food, and naval stores produced in the



extensive hinterland. The resulting convergence of wealthy planters, merchants, and shipbuilders established Norfolk as one of the leading business and cultural centers of the middle Atlantic region by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

It is difficult to study the colonial antecedents of neoclassical Norfolk furniture because the city was destroyed by fire at the outbreak of the American Revolution. Nonetheless, the few documentable pieces surviving from the years between 1750 and 1780 are, in almost every case, strongly British in both design and construction.

Pl. III. Desk-and-bookcase made by Thomas McAlaster, Norfolk, 1787-1792. Inscribed "Thomas McAlaster Fecit." Mahogany and yellow pine; height 9 feet, 7/8 inch; width 47 3/4 inches; depth 23 1/8 inches. The desk-and-bookcase descended in the Deans-Mayer-Wallis family of Gloucester County, Virginia. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



Pls. IV, IVa. Chest of drawers, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany; mahogany veneer, satinwood veneer, oak, white pine, yellow pine, birch, red cedar, white cedar, and ivory; height 40, width 49 3/8, depth 22 3/8 inches. The chest was found in Princess Anne County (now Virginia Beach), southeast of Norfolk. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; photographs by Hans Lorenz.

A signed and dated clothespress produced by the Norfolk cabinetmaker John Selden in 1775 is typical of extant colonial work (Pl. II). It is copied almost line for line from Plate 129 of Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* published in London in 1762 (third edition). Structurally, it is precisely like the best London furniture of its time, featuring a paneled back to the upper section; laminated, horizontally grained blocks supporting the bracket feet; and dust boards between the drawers that are both the full thickness of the drawer blade and the full width and depth of the case. These expensive and time-consuming structural refinements are rare in North America outside Virginia's urban centers, and they offer important evidence of the potent British influence on most of the colony's urban furniture makers during the colonial period.²

After the Revolution, some of the local craftsmen who had been trained in the British style before the war maintained that tradition in Norfolk, and English, Scottish, and Irish cabinetmakers continued to arrive as well. Even so, a growing proportion of those joining the local trade after the war were from places outside the Anglo-Virginian sphere, and they significantly influenced the design and construction of later neoclassical furniture in Norfolk.

Evidence of the still-dominant British influence in the immediate postwar period is clearly seen in two desks-and-bookcases made and signed by Thomas McAlaster, a cabinetmaker listed on the Norfolk County tax rolls between 1787 and 1792 (see Pl. III).³ In both pieces McAlaster employed most of the features of British furniture construction preferred by tidewater Virginians since the colonial period: paneled backs to the bookcases, horizontally laminated blocks supporting the bracket feet,⁴ and complete, full-thickness dust boards. The McAlaster desk-and-bookcase not illustrated features an elaborate British type of drawer construction wherein a central, front-to-back strut is used to create a two-part, paneled drawer bottom.⁵

As can be seen in the desk-and-bookcase shown in Plate III, McAlaster's work reflects a period of transition for Norfolk furniture in which neoclassical



Pl. V. Chest of drawers, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany; mahogany veneer, satinwood, ebony, white pine, yellow pine, red pine, and birch; height 40 1/2, width 46 1/8, depth 23 3/8 inches. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.

details were superimposed on late colonial forms. The outline of the bracket feet, the pitch of the pediment, and the Chinese design of the mullions are features frequently found on local Anglo-Virginian furniture of the 1760's and 1770's, but the inlaid flutes on the frieze, stringing on the drawer fronts, and compass inlay on the paneled feet clearly document the emerging neoclassical style in Norfolk.⁶

Slightly later in style, but perhaps contemporary in date, is a group of five serpentine-front chests of drawers that represent the zenith of English cabinetry as practiced in eastern Virginia during the last decades of the eighteenth century (see Pls. IV, V). They are unusually broad and their front corners are often canted. Like the example in Plate IV, the canted front corners sometimes incorporate panels of satinwood or zebrawood veneer surrounded by complex banding. Several have canted feet as well, some adorned with inlaid medallions (see Pl. IVa), while others have aprons with inlaid paterae. One example even has curly-maple drawer fronts.⁷

These chests of drawers employ many of the same British construction techniques seen on the McAlaster desks-and-bookcases: paneled backs, complete dust boards, two-panel drawer bottoms with central struts, and horizontally laminated blocks supporting splayed French feet. However, unlike those on the desks-and-bookcases, the dust

boards are thinner than the drawer blades. They fit into grooves in the side of the case where they are held in place by a continuous line of rectangular blocks glued to the bottom of the dust board and butted to the side of the case. The grain of the blocks parallels that of the dust boards. This technique, which duplicates the best London workmanship, allows for expansion and contraction of the wood and consequently prevents the side panels from cracking, as often happens when drawer supports were nailed to the sides.⁸

The serpentine-front Norfolk chests normally incorporate a wide variety of secondary woods, including yellow pine, white pine, walnut, gum, oak, yellow poplar, mahogany, ash, cypress, and even spruce or fir. Such diversity within a single piece of furniture was probably necessitated by the fact that by the mid-eighteenth century the forests of eastern Virginia had been largely cleared to make way for cash crops. Documents show that New England white pine was shipped into the South as early as 1750, and even European woods were sometimes imported,⁹ thus complicating the identification of early Norfolk furniture.

None of these chests is signed or dated, but two have histories in Princess Anne County (now Virginia Beach), just outside the city of Norfolk.¹⁰ These histories, together with the presence of local secondary woods and construction methods typical of eastern Virginia, support the Norfolk attribution.

Pl. VI. Chest of drawers, Norfolk vicinity, c. 1800. Mahogany veneer and yellow pine; height 38, width 46 1/2, depth 20 inches. Private collection; photograph by Katherine Wetzel.





Pls. VII, VIIa. Corner cupboard, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and yellow poplar; height 83 3/4, width 51 3/4 inches. The cupboard was found in Portsmouth, Virginia, across the Elizabeth River from Norfolk. MESDA.

The straight-front chest of drawers in Plate VI is clearly derived from the serpentine-front examples, yet its construction is significantly different. The drawer bottoms do not have a central strut and are not rabbeted and nailed to the drawers but fitted into grooves in the front and sides of the drawer. Instead of dust boards, drawer supports are set into grooves in the sides of the case and tenoned into the back of the drawer blade.¹¹ The back is not paneled, and the feet are supported by single vertical blocks. While the sides of the case appear to be solid mahogany, they are actually mahogany veneer on yellow pine. This combination of provincial structural details is found throughout southeastern Virginia and well into the central Virginia Piedmont, and attests to Norfolk's influence over a wide geographic area.

The relatively large number of surviving formal corner cupboards with Norfolk histories suggests that, as in Britain, this form was preferred over china presses, or "bowfats." One of the most sophisticated examples, found in Portsmouth, Virginia, is shown in Plate VII. It would be difficult to distinguish from English work were it not that the case is constructed of mahogany veneer on local yellow poplar. Also echoing British practice, all the exposed secondary wood was originally coated with a pink wash intended to harmonize it with the dominant mahogany color.¹²

The inlaid medallion in the center of the frieze (Pl. VIIa) is the earliest and most fully developed example of a medallion that became one of the hallmarks of the neoclassical style in Norfolk. A simplified version, in which the design is reduced to a four-petal flower, or quatrefoil, is frequently seen on neoclassical furniture made throughout southeastern Virginia, and is another important measure of the influence of Norfolk's artisans on the regional cabinet trade.

The most ambitious cupboard in this group is capped by a scrolled pediment with a small ogee molding and simple, carved rosettes (Pl. VIII). Structurally, it is closely related to the cupboard shown in Plate VII, and an inscription on its back

indicates that it was owned in Norfolk. Interestingly, details of the pediment may be derived from American rather than English prototypes. The panel in the keystone topped by an astragal arch appears in New England work, and the line inlay that follows the outer contours of the tympanum is seen in Charleston, South Carolina. Whether these elements have native precedents, or come from unrecognized British sources, has yet to be determined.¹³

Records indicate that numbers of journeymen cabinetmakers migrated from New York City to Norfolk after the Revolution,¹⁴ creating one of the strongest non-British influences on post-Revolutionary Norfolk furniture.

A documented set of two armchairs and twelve side chairs (see Pl. IX) offers ample evidence of this New York influence. Made in 1803 by James Woodward for General John Hartwell Cocke of Surry County, the chairs are virtually identical to square-back chairs being produced in New York at the same time. Although Woodward may have copied the design from an illustration in Thomas Sheraton's *Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book*,¹⁵ it more probably arrived with one of the "best Workmen from... New York" employed in his shop by 1795.¹⁶ Today, a number of similar chairs survive in early Norfolk families.¹⁷

The shield-back chair, another New York City shape, appears in Norfolk less frequently than the square back (see Pl. X). Once thought to have been produced exclusively in New York and New England, the shield-back chair is now documented as far south as Charleston.¹⁸ A typical Norfolk example, the armchair shown in Plate X was originally owned by the Custis family at the lower tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore, just across the Chesapeake Bay from Norfolk. Although well-formed and com-

petently carved, it is somewhat heavier in its individual elements and slightly wider than most New York chairs. It is structurally identical to New York work of the same design.¹⁹

Norfolk sofas were also made on the New York model. The most fully documented example descended in the Galt family of Norfolk (Pl. XIII).

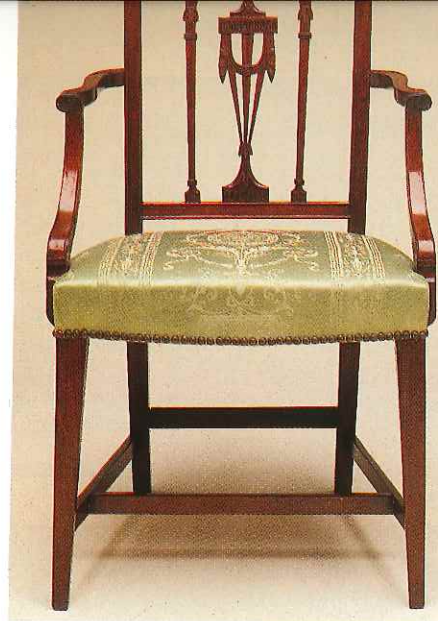


Pl. VIII. Corner cupboard, Norfolk, c. 1795. Inscribed "L. Steinberg(?) / South Norfolk / Va." in pencil on the backboards. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, and yellow poplar with lightwood stringing; height 94 1/2, width 52 1/8, depth 24 inches. The eagle medallion inlaid into the keystone is probably a later addition. The cupboard was found in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1930. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Mabel Brady Garvan Collection.

According to its original label it was made in 1811 at the shop of Chester Sully, who owned and operated a series of large cabinet shops and warehouses in Norfolk, Richmond, and Lynchburg, Virginia, and Edenton, North Carolina, between about 1805 and 1819.²⁰ This sofa is the only piece by Sully known today. Its shape and decoration may have been derived from Plate 1 of the third edition of Sheraton's *Drawing-Book* (1802), yet the New York influence on the final product is unmistakable. Sully, whose younger brother was the painter Thomas Sully, was apprenticed to an unknown cabinetmaker in the Norfolk area about 1800, but he almost certainly hired craftsmen from New York City,²¹ as did his competitor James Woodward.

In addition to seating furniture, Norfolk card tables of this period were more often produced in the New York style than in any other. At least seven are known, and they typically have a rectangular top with indented ovolo corners, a hinged fifth leg, and an array of single and triple stringing with inlaid medallions (see Pl. XI). Like New York tables, the table illustrated has laminated front and side rails and a rear leaf-edge tenon intended to combat warping of the leaves.²² The façade (Pl. XIa) is divided into a series of panels defined by stringing and punctuated by four complex inlays depicting ovoid, eight-pointed flowers reminiscent of those on the corner cupboard in Plate VII.²³ As it does on many Norfolk table and chairs, the stringing on the legs continues past the inlaid cuff to the ground.

Another Norfolk card table (Pl. XII), structurally identical to the last and also framed in yellow pine, exhibits variations in ornament that were equally popular in Norfolk. The four ovoid inlays (see XIIa) are related to those seen on other pieces in this study, although much simplified. In this instance the four-petal flower is surrounded by radiating leafage rather than serpentine rays. It is important to note that the petals and the medallion are respectively highlighted and outlined with lines incised with a V-shaped chisel known as a parting tool and then filled with a black



Pl. IX. Armchair made by James Woodward (d. 1839), Norfolk, 1803. Mahogany, ash, and yellow poplar; height 36 1/8, width 22 1/2, depth 19 inches. The bill of sale from James Woodward to General John Hartwell Cocke, dated June 18, 1803, lists "12 Mahogany Chairs at 10 Dol. Each" and "2 Elbow Chairs at 15 Dol. Each." The bill is among the Cocke family papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, Faith P. and Charles L. Bybee Collection of American Furniture.

drawer fronts in alternating diagonals was popular throughout southeastern Virginia and into the central Piedmont of the state.

Both craftsmen and products from New England can be documented in early Norfolk, and not surprisingly they influenced the design and construction of a small group of local furniture. An example is a desk originally owned by General Robert Barraud Taylor (1774-1834), Norfolk's most decorated hero in the War of 1812 (Pl. XIV). It closely parallels the tambour desks of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and constitutes a marked contrast to the usual Norfolk preference for desks with bookcases. The use of tambour is rare in the coastal South, and with the exception of a group of desks made in Wilmington, North Carolina,²⁷ few examples are known. Otherwise the desk is representative of Norfolk production in both construction and materials. The interior, made of local yellow poplar and yellow pine, has drawer supports that are tenoned into grooves in the drawer blade,²⁸ and the drawer bottoms are set into grooves on the drawer sides and front—all

resinous material instead of colored wood.²⁴ This inlay technique, frequently encountered in Norfolk during the neoclassical period, was also used on the card table shown in Plate XI.

Decorating the four stationary legs of the table in Plate XII are a total of eight bellflower chains. The individual flowers have the concave outer petals common to Norfolk work,²⁵ and like the medallions on the skirt, they have been accented with black resinous fill.

New York's influence is also clearly evident in the profile of the skirt and the tall, delicate feet of a serpentine-front chest of drawers with a history of ownership in Princess Anne County (Fig. 1).²⁶ Departing from the British techniques seen in other Norfolk furniture, the drawer bottoms are set into grooves and reinforced below with glue blocks. Instead of dust boards, the drawer supports are set into grooves in the sides of the case. The use of boldly striated veneers applied to the

features found on much Virginia work of this period. The frieze above the tambour section also exhibits the concave bellflowers described above.

Philadelphia was another northern influence in post-Revolutionary Norfolk, although not as pervasive as New York or even New England. Current evidence indicates that the Philadelphia style in Norfolk was confined to seating furniture, but further research may reveal case furniture in the Philadelphia mode.

Among the finest examples of Philadelphia-style seating furniture made in Norfolk is a side chair that descended in the Galt family (Pl. XV). The design of the back²⁹ has hitherto been seen almost exclusively in Philadelphia, although there can be little doubt about the Norfolk origin of this chair. Aside from its history of ownership, the chair is made almost entirely of black walnut, a wood rarely used in urban furniture outside the South at this time.

A closely related, although somewhat simplified, version of this chair is more frequently seen in Norfolk (Pl. XVI).³⁰ These chairs with their slightly naïve carving have a single drapery swag in each splat, rather than a pair, and lack the contrasting inlaid cloak pins seen on the previous example.

Several pieces of Norfolk furniture exhibit unusual combinations of design and construction that reflect the difficulties of dissecting the influences at work among the city's cabinetmakers. The first is a desk-and-bookcase (Fig. 3) that descended in the Southgate and Leigh families of Norfolk, and was signed by John Lattemore, described in 1775 as a Scot "22 or 23 years of age" who "professes the cabinet business."³¹ Local records document Lattemore's presence in Norfolk by 1787.³²

The bracket feet with a cove base molding, the pattern of the mullions, and the design of the writing interior of the desk-and-bookcase are conservative, British-inspired features often found in Norfolk neoclassical pieces, but structurally the piece contains both urban and rural elements not often

encountered together. For instance, the bookcase section has a paneled back, but the case does not have dust boards or laminated blocks supporting the feet. Even more puzzling, and despite Lattemore's Scottish background, the proportion and detail of the pediment suggest a New England or Charleston influence. This is particularly evident in the cross-banded frieze with interlaced stringing and bellflower inlay, the cove cornice with a dentil course, and the compass-inlaid rosettes. Several of these features clearly suggest an affinity to the pedimented Norfolk corner cupboard illustrated in Plate VIII.

Yet another piece to combine urban and rural traits is a desk-and-bookcase made by Samuel B. Smith³³ that descended in the Galt and Grigsby families of Norfolk (Fig. 2). The writing interior, with its banks of drawers and pigeonholes, is decidedly British in inspiration, and the mullion pattern is derived from Plate 27 of Sheraton's *Drawing-Book*. More provincial in design are the inlaid swags and the style of the one-piece bellflowers with their rounded outer husks and their elongated central husk (Fig. 2a). Both appear to be unique to Norfolk. Similarly, the inlaid roundels in the fillet of the cornice diverge significantly from other known examples, although cornices pierced with drilled holes are common in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

This desk-and-bookcase also departs from the Norfolk norm in its construction and, like the one in Figure 3, bears a far greater affinity to provincial workmanship. While the upper case does have a paneled back, the drawer bottoms are set into grooves rather than rabbeted, and the lower case does not have dust boards. In short, it is apparent that some comparatively coarse, rural techniques were employed in Norfolk alongside the more sophisticated majority.

Equally difficult to pinpoint is a side chair with a heart-shaped back (Pl. XVII), one of at least six identical examples. While chairs of this configuration were

Pls. X, Xa. Armchair attributed to Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, ash, and white pine; height 38 7/8, width 22 1/4, depth 17 13/16 inches. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.





Pls. XI, XIa. Card table, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, yellow pine, white pine, and soft maple; height 29 1/2, width 35 1/2, depth 17 7/8 inches. The table descended in the Talbot family of Norfolk. Collection of Caroline B. Talbot; Lorenz photograph.

popular in a number of urban centers, the unusual light and dark inlaid fan at the top of the splat, and the unconventional sword-shaped inlays on the legs are extremely rare in American furniture.³⁴ Although none of the chairs in this group has a firm history, the Norfolk attribution is based on the presence of concave bellflowers and the generous use of resinous fills within the inlays on the legs.

In sum, the neoclassical furniture made in Norfolk represents an amalgamation of influences from a number of divergent sources. Migrating artisans from Britain, New England, and the Middle Atlantic states converged in the city and, together with locally trained artisans, created a distinctive regional style. Most of the pieces they produced were well-designed, and many of them represent a level of structural sophistication rarely achieved elsewhere in Federal America. Like other cities in the South long recognized for their furniture production, Norfolk served as an important regional center for the dissemination of the neoclassical style.

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¹ For more about the cabinetmaking community in Norfolk, see Ronald L. Hurst, "Cabinetmakers and Related Tradesmen in Norfolk, Virginia: 1770-1820" (Master's thesis, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1989).

² For more about colonial Virginia's adaptations of British cabinetmaking, see Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790* (Virginia Museum, Richmond, 1979).

³ The second example, with a later bookcase, has been documented in the Field Research Program carried out by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (photograph No. S-4503), and has a history of ownership in Isle of Wight County, Virginia. It is signed on the bottom drawer in pencil "Tho. McAlaster/sculpt." and in red chalk "Tho. McAlaster/fecit." Neither desk-and-bookcase is dated. McAlaster disappears from local records after 1792, and since he has not been found in other Virginia records before 1787, he may (as his surname suggests) be one of the many Scots who immigrated to eastern Virginia after the Revolution. We are grateful to Susan P. Shames for first locating McAlaster in the Norfolk records and to Dywana M. Saunders for carrying out further research in the Norfolk personal property and land tax rolls.

⁴ The desk-and-bookcase in Pl. III does not have horizontally laminated blocks supporting the feet. The other signed desk-and-bookcase (see n. 3) does.

⁵ The two panels are nailed into rabbets on the drawer front and sides and are set into grooves in the strut. In America such drawer bottoms are frequently found in Charleston furniture, perhaps as a result of the large number of Scottish artisans working there (see E. Milby Burton, *Charleston Furniture, 1700-1825* [Charleston, 1955], Fig. 36. The piece illustrated is now in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia). These artisans are occasionally found in late colonial Virginia as well (see Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg*, pp. 159-160 and Fig. 111).

⁶ This desk-and-bookcase, like others made in Federal Norfolk, reflects the emergence of a fashionable new form in eastern Virginia. When the slant-front desk went out of style in urban England it was replaced by a chest of drawers with a "secretary" drawer that opened to reveal a writing interior, as defined by George Hepplewhite in his *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's*

Pls. XII, XIIa. Card table, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, yellow pine, white pine, and soft maple; height 29, width 35 3/8, depth 18 inches. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.





Pl. XIII.
Sofa made by Chester Sully (1781-1834), Norfolk, 1811. Affixed to the bottom board is a printed label that reads "CHESTER SULLY, /Cabinet-Maker, Upholsterer and Undertaker, /No [torn] Main Street, Norfolk, /INFORMS his Friends and the Public in general that he exe-/cutes all Articles in the Line of his Profession, in the neatest and/most fashionable manner, and upon terms, which he presumes to/think, will give satisfaction, as his prices shall be reasonable./MATRASSES made to any size [torn] Orders from the Country/executed and attended to with punct[torn]d dispatch./May 1811." Mahogany, yellow pine, yellow poplar, and ash; height 37 3/4, width 72 1/4, depth 27 inches. The original linen cover and Spanish moss and wheat straw under-upholstery survive. The black haircloth cover is a later replacement. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.

Guide, 3rd edition (London, 1794), p. 9. As early as the 1770's fashionable Virginians were following this English precedent, and of the neoclassical desks attributed to Norfolk, most follow this format. A clothespress of c. 1775 that descended in the Haxall family of Petersburg is the earliest Virginia piece currently recognized to have a secretary drawer (see Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg*, pp. 87-89 and Fig. 56).

⁷ This chest, now in the White House collection, also has floral quadrants inlaid on the drawer fronts, shell inlays on the feet, and an inlaid medallion depicting a basket of flowers in the skirt.

⁸ Similar dust board construction is found in a large group of case furniture made in colonial Virginia. However, the grain of the supporting blocks runs perpendicular, rather than parallel, to the case bottoms (see Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg*, pp. 42, 48).

⁹ Consider, for example, that in 1804 the Norfolk looking-glass maker Rachel Atkins advertised for sale fourteen thousand board feet of "Irish Northern plank" (*Norfolk Herald*, July 7, 1804). But whether this is a hardwood or a conifer is unclear.

¹⁰ These are the chest shown in Pl. IV and one in the collection at MESDA.

¹¹ In this case the tenons of the drawer supports were slid into grooves in the drawer blade which diminished in depth as they approached the center of the drawer blade. This meant that the drawer supports could be pivoted into place after the case was assembled. This method is commonly encountered during the neoclassical period in work from eastern and Piedmont Virginia and the northern Shenandoah River valley, particularly around Winchester. Most often the drawer supports are mortised into the back of the drawer blade. Sometimes they are half-lapped onto the blade

from above, and occasionally they are tenoned into a continuous groove running the full length of the back of the drawer blade.

¹² Two other Norfolk corner cupboards made of mahogany veneer on yellow poplar are in the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware (see Charles F. Montgomery, *American Furniture: The Federal Period* [New York, 1966], Fig. 445).

¹³ For further information on such pediments, see Gerald W. R. Ward, *American Case Furniture in the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1988), pp. 410-411 and Fig. 213. For Charleston examples with related pediments see Burton, *Charleston Furniture*, Figs. 15, 44, 45.

¹⁴ See Hurst, "Cabinetmakers and Related Tradesmen."

¹⁵ (London, 1791), Pl. 36, No. 1.

¹⁶ *American Gazette* (Norfolk, Virginia), April 21, 1795.

¹⁷ For more about these chairs see Charles L. Venable, *American Furniture in the Bybee Collection* (Austin, Texas, 1989). Related Norfolk square-back chairs include those in MESDA field research files S-3625, S-3631, and S-3804.

¹⁸ See Burton, *Charleston Furniture*, Figs. 123, 125, 126, 127.

¹⁹ For early documentation of the Custis history see *ANTIQUES* for November 1930, p. 430. A similar shield-back chair attributed to the Gloucester County, Virginia, cabinetmaker Jesse Hudgins (1775-1860) has been documented by MESDA (research file S-4871). New York chairs of the same design were also imported into Norfolk, including a surviving set at the Moses Myers House, Norfolk. It is sometimes impossible to distin-



Fig. 1. Chest of drawers, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, yellow poplar, and yellow pine; height 39 1/8, width 43 3/4, depth 23 1/2 inches. The chest was found early in this century in Princess Anne County, Virginia. MESDA.

Pl. XIV. Tambour desk, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, yellow poplar, and yellow pine; height 49 3/8, width 38 1/4, depth 19 3/8 inches. MESDA.



guish between local chairs of this design and those that were imported into Norfolk.

²⁰ Although Sully's Norfolk shop was in operation from 1805 to 1819, his ventures in Richmond, Edenton, and Lynchburg were of relatively short duration, none lasting longer than two years. See Hurst, "Cabinetmakers and Related Tradesmen," pp. 138-146.

²¹ These may well have been among the "Five to Seven good Journeymen Cabinetmakers" for whom he advertised in the *Norfolk Herald*, September 8, 1815.

²² For a description of rear leaf-edge tenons see Benjamin A. Hewitt, Patricia E. Kane, and Gerald W. R. Ward, *The Work of Many Hands: Card Tables in Federal America, 1790-1820* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1982), p. 96.

²³ For related Norfolk card tables in the New York style see MESDA research files S-2438, S-3881, and S-3908.

²⁴ Although no sample of this resinous material has yet been analyzed, it may be composed of pitch or mastic.

²⁵ Closely related concave bellflowers appear on New Hampshire furniture. A documented example that descended in the Stark family of Dunbarton, New Hampshire, was offered for sale at Skinner's Auction of Americana, January 13, 1990, Lot 110.

²⁶ Chests documented and attributed to Michael Allison of New York City often have closely related feet and a similar skirt profile. See Berry B. Tracy, *Federal Furniture and Decorative Arts at Boscobel* (New York, 1981), Figs. 62-64, pp. 94-97.



Figs. 2, 2a. Desk-and-bookcase made by Samuel B. Smith (d. 1834 or 1835), Norfolk, c. 1810. Inscribed "Samuel B. Smith" in pencil on the bottom of one of the drawers. Mahogany, mahogany veneer, lightwood, ebony, yellow poplar, and yellow pine; height 86 3/4, width 47 1/4, depth 20 1/2 inches. The feet and base molding are early replacements. Private collection; photograph by courtesy of MESDA.

Fig. 3. Desk-and-bookcase made by John Lattemore (b. c. 1752), Norfolk, c. 1790. Inscribed "John Lattemore, Esq." Mahogany, mahogany veneer, satinwood, ebony, yellow pine, white pine, and yellow poplar; height 99 3/4, width 48, depth 21 inches. Private collection; photograph by courtesy of MESDA.



Pl. XV. Side chair, Norfolk, c. 1790. Black walnut and holly; height 34 1/2, width 18 3/8, depth 17 1/2 inches. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.

Pl. XVI. Armchair, Norfolk, c. 1795. Mahogany and yellow pine; height 35 7/8, width 23 1/4, depth 18 inches. Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, Moses Myers House Collection.

Pl. XVII. Side chair attributed to Norfolk, c. 1790. Mahogany, holly, ebony, and ash; height 38, width 20 1/4, depth 17 inches. MESDA, on loan to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lorenz photograph.