

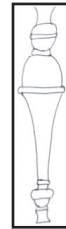
## Early Furniture Design

America has been designing and creating furniture since the first settlers arrived in the mid 1600's. These first pieces of furniture were rectangular wooden boxes, made out of oak with hinged tops called chests or trunks. Sometimes these boxes had carvings. They had no feet or legs, which allowed them to be packed in the hold of the ship. Over time these chests evolved into great pieces of furniture that became showpieces in peoples homes. Even though chest were the first piece of furniture, other needs had to be fulfilled which helped everyday life, being chairs, tables, beds, and cupboards. The evolution was broken up into different eras that were first named after kings and queens of England and later were represented by prominent individual designers. An era is a design language of simple ideas that evolve to a point where they become too elaborate. That is when a new era starts where most of the older ideas are eliminated, while retaining a hint of the past.

The first American furniture era is Jacobean. Chairs, chests, beds, and tables had vast amounts of flat carvings with ball or turnip shaped feet, were popular in the 1600's. These were heavy and low furniture crafted out of oak that got American home interiors on their feet.



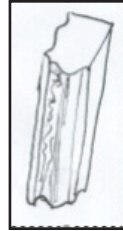
The style after Jacobean was called William and Mary 1700-1725. William married Mary who was from Holland, and she brought Dutch ideas to England. This style, raised chests off the ground having turned tulip legs with stretchers. These were placed 4 in the front and two in the back. The cyma curve began and walnut was used along with the oak. During this era Spanish and Flemish feet evolved and gate-leg fold-up tables were created.



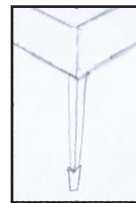
Queen Anne came along after William and Mary in 1725. This design era had furniture with refined limited decorative carvings that extensively used the cyma curve. The cyma curve, called the most beautiful line, is a convex and concave curve put into one flowing line. ~ The new design of the raised chest known as a highboy sat on top of 4 cabriolet legs. Creative brass handles were used along with acorn drops for looks.



In 1755 a carpenter named Thomas Chippendale began a style of furniture that mirrored Queen Anne in style with extensive use of carvings. These elaborate delicate carvings were made possible because of a new wood, mahogany being imported from the tropics. Mahogany, growing in a constant climate had an even grain that made carving easier and stronger. In the middle of the Chippendale era, Thomas divorced his earlier ideas and embraced straight legs and continued the use of cyma curves throughout. The second half of Chippendale had many rectangular shapes and carried on with limited use of the cabriole leg.



Around 1780, furniture transitions into the Adam Brothers design, it was not very popular in America. A similar era, Hepplewhite furniture was known for its shielded chair backs and striped cloth. Straight tapered legs with spade feet and extensive use of veneer wood and inlays were common. The Sheraton era came in 1790 with its tapered lines and curved flutes. Spade feet were popular as well. Veneer and inlaid woods were used. Sheraton and Hepplewhite are very close in their language.



Dunkin Phyfe, 1810-1820 was a type of furniture that was squarer and fatter than the ones right before. Straight feet, ball and claw, bracket, and cabriole feet were used for much variety. Europeans called this era Empire furniture.

From the very beginning of the settling of America to what can be considered modern day furniture there are eight distinct furniture eras. These started out very primitive and later transitioned into fine American period furniture. After these eight distinct periods, modern day furniture took advantage of newer materials and the industrial revolution to make pieces using production methods. Even after each step in the evolution of American furniture, craftsmen found ways to keep a portion of the older design languages in the new era showing continuity throughout these eight eras.