While Puritans railed against the “wanton ditties” and “foolish songs and ballads” current in New England, Governor Burnet, Henry Quincy, and many others dared possess harpsichords, violins, and flutes to furnish a major form of colonial entertainment. Although psalms were sung for pleasure as well as worship, there was a demand for such music as was contained in The Merry Mountebank, “humourous Songs for the Voice and Harpsichord, . . . Minuets, Scots Reels, Marches and Hornpipes, Handel’s Musicae Spiritus; Italian and English operas.” Above the keyboard of the harpsichord shown here, the oldest American one known, is inscribed: Johannes Clemm Fecit Philadelphia 1739. The maker was born in Saxony and came to Philadelphia in 1735. He moved to New York in 1745 and built the first organ for Trinity Church. He died in Bethlehem, the Moravian colony that counted music a part of daily life. Rogers Fund

William Penn’s “Holy Experiment” and Charter of Privileges began in 1681 and lasted until the Revolution. During that period the wealthy law-making Quakers lived well, if more soberly than the “worldly folk” in Philadelphia. The handsome walnut frame of the settee on the opposite page and its leather covering trimmed with brass nails recall the furniture in Penn’s inventory made in 1701 upon his final departure from Pennsbury. It has fared better than another described in the New York Gazette: During a storm the lightning “came down the chimney, and run along the Brass Nails that was in a Settee near the Hearth, blackening the Heads of all of them, it then entered the Settee, shivered it to Pieces, and took its Course thro’ the Hearth into the Cellar.” The settee is a gift in memory of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell by her children, Mrs. Henry M. Post, Mrs. Lewis E. Waring, and Amory L. Haskell.
Daybeds were very useful when bedrooms were few and families large. Even at public inns strangers often shared rooms, as Mme Knight learned in 1704 on her horseback journey from Boston to New York. The maple bed above was made in 1743, probably by Job Townsend of Newport. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Moore.
This Pennsylvania dower chest from Lebanon County, dated 1786, shows more directly the source of its ornament than any other known to us—a chest in Franken, Germany, dated 1742, with similar painted panels and applied balusters. The eagle, carved for a Lancaster firehouse, suggests a mediaeval lectern. Rogers Fund
This dresser was made about 1740 in the fertile Mennonite country of Pennsylvania, where the disciples of the Swiss emigré Menno Simons had settled soon after 1683. Its design expresses the honesty of a people who accepted only the authority of the Bible and man's enlightened conscience, denying the law of church and state. Its massiveness is softened by bold shadows cast by deep moldings and broad panels, by the tawny brown of ripened walnut wood, and by the loving detail of wrought hinges and latches. Its capacious shelves and cupboards are reminders of the hearty pleasures of living enjoyed by the “Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch” folk. Rogers Fund
The armchair at the left is one of a set of ten carved by Samuel McIntire in 1801 for the parlor of Jerathmeel Peirce, merchant and shipowner of Salem, at the time his Federal Street mansion was remodeled. The side chair (center) is a Philadelphia version of the ladder back, and its design is very much like that of a set made by Daniel Trotter for the financier Stephen Girard in 1789. At the right is a Philadelphia armchair after a Sheraton pattern. Like the other two, it indicates the adeptness of American furniture-makers. The designs of the two armchairs are dated 1792 in Sheraton’s Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer’s Drawing-Book. Rogers Fund

The Baltimore sideboard above is a unique and ambitious example of the Sheraton period, antipodal, indeed, to so much of the meager cabinetwork of the turn of the century. It creates a fresh picture of the scale of living in the new republic, with its marquetry veneers, glass panels decorated with gold leaf in the antique Roman style, and plates of Sheffield silver. It originally stood at Maizefield on the Hudson near Rhinebeck, the home of David Van Ness (1743-1818), a Revolutionary general, presidential elector, and state senator. It comes to the Museum from one of his descendants, by purchase and by gift from Mitchel Taradash.
This group of early New England furniture decorated in color continues a tradition of mediaeval England and recalls the “fine painted chests standing in the Quire of Winchester Cathedral with the bones of the kings of England” observed by the ubiquitous traveler Celia Fiennes in 1697. Four of these chests date from the early eighteenth century, when European trade with the Orient was filtering exotic luxuries into colonial seaports. Imports from the Far East made a lasting impression on native craftsmen, and the art of japanning furniture that flourished in Boston was a direct attempt to capture a bit of oriental magnificence. In Guilford, Connecticut, and Taunton, Massachusetts, there were “schools” of furniture painters that developed their own styles of decoration. The form and color of their designs reflect Eastern embroidery and porcelain ornament, but the inventiveness of the painter is dominant. The traveling chest (top, right), later in date than the others, is covered with an original conception of the Indian massacre at Deerfield and bordered with tobacco leaves. Because so much painted decoration has perished, survivals of the eighteenth-century “paint stainer’s” work are rarities today. This collection comes to the Museum as a gift from Mrs. J. Insley Blair.