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# FURNISHING PLAN FOR THE NELSON HOUSE

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# COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

LAVINIA DeNOOD

1976

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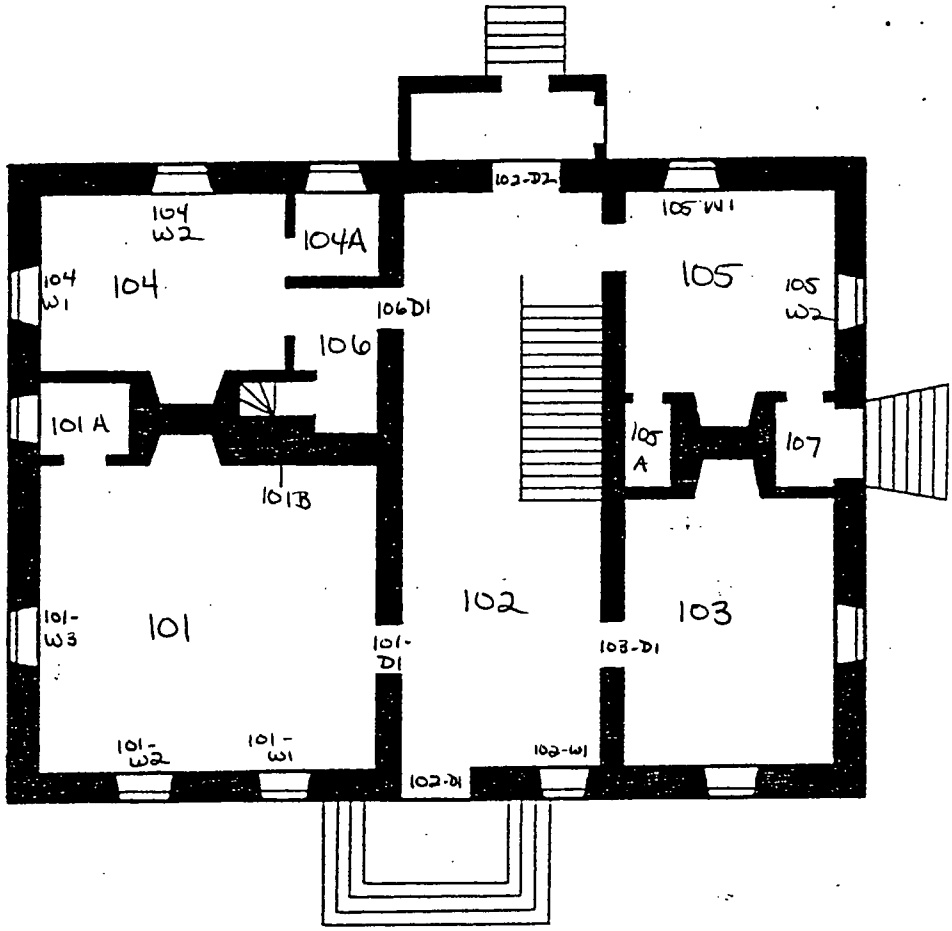
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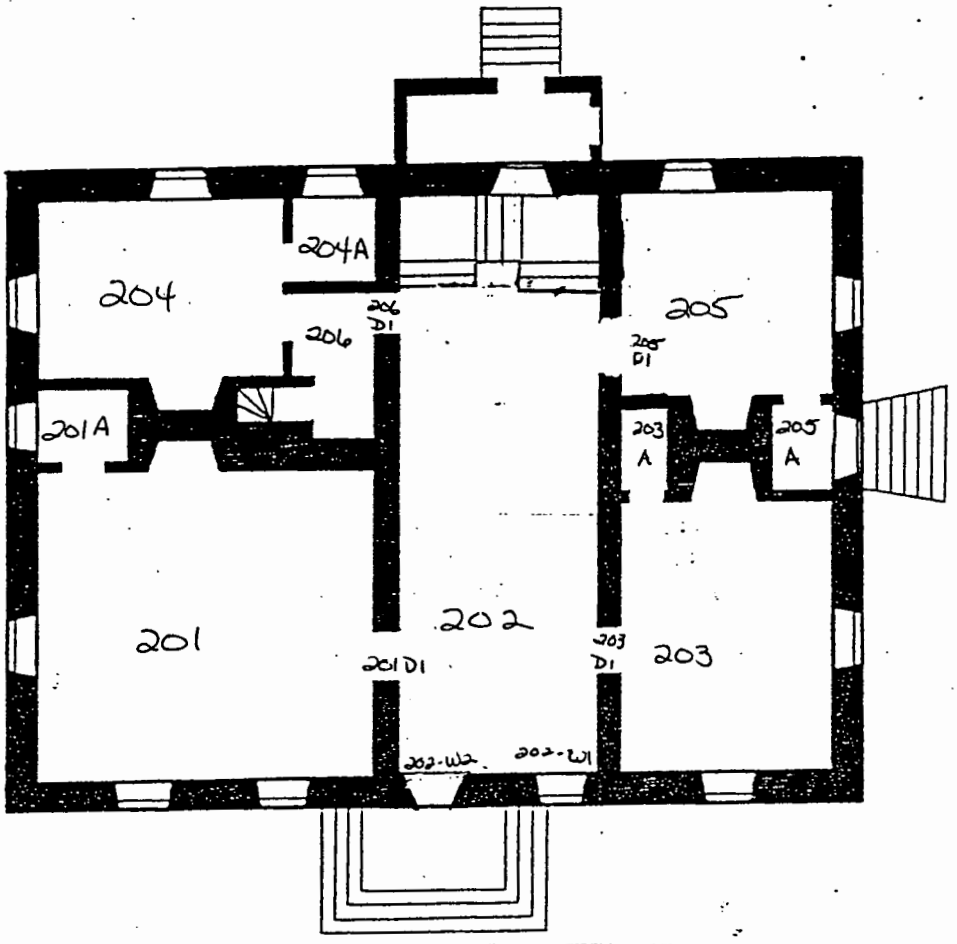
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FURNISHING PLAN FOR THE NELSON HOUSE
COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

While the main purpose of this study is to interpret room use and furnishings of the Nelson House, an attempt has been made first to identify the occupants and to determine their cultural relationship to the surrounding community. From this introduction, the guiding staff should be able to inform the visitor of the social and historical relevance of the decorative art objects. The individual room analyses which follow go on to provide stylistic justification for the furnishings.

The furnishing plan is written to cover the period from 1766 to 1789, the years of the Revolutionary leader Thomas Nelson's occupancy.[1] In terms of the decorative arts, the period of the 1760's to 80's coincides exactly with the popularity in America of the Chippendale style. Family wills, inventories, letters, and other contemporary accounts have made it possible to reflect not only the period, but to a great extent, the Nelson family's individual room use and decoration.

Thomas Nelson: His background and character as they help establish a picture of his domestic life.

Before we can consider Nelson's style of living, we must appreciate Nelson's privileged status as part of Virginia's planter aristocracy and his relatively sophisticated urban life in and out of Williamsburg, which through 1780 was the main urban center for a large part of the South. We must also

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[1] The Nelson House was built around 1740 by Thomas Nelson, an immigrant from Penrith, England, who established one of Yorktown's earliest mercantile concerns and founded one of Virginia's most prominant families. (Confusion between a building date of 1711 and 1740 arises from local legend, which contends that the cornerstone of the building was passed ceremoniously through the infant hands of either William (b. 1711) or Thomas Nelson (b. 1738) son and grandson, respectively, of Thomas Nelson the immigrant.) Though Thomas Nelson died in 1745, his widow (second wife, Francis Tucker Nelson) continued living in the house until her death in 1766, whereupon Nelson's grandson Thomas moved into the house with an already growing family.

Successive generations of Nelsons used a limited number of forenames. For clarification, a family geneology is given (Appendix A), including appellations ascribed to individuals in the family, as Scotch Tom, the Secretary, the Signer, etc.

recognize Nelson's nine year period of formal education at Cambridge, England. The outcome was a highly individual man of conviction and taste. His background and activities deserve closer attention as they help establish a picture of his domestic life.

Thomas Nelson belonged to that strong-willed and self-reliant Virginian aristocracy which exasperated English governors serving the colony. For three generations the Nelsons had consciously allied themselves through marriage with established and wealthy Virginia families, and at the same time had aggressively assumed the political prerogatives that accompanied social position.[1] Through their political power this local gentry tended to protect their business and land interests. But at the same time their responsibility to the community brought with it leadership in matters of taste and behavior. Nelson belonged to a style-setting society. From a desire to keep up not only with neighbors but with English fashion, Nelson's letters, like those of so many other Virginia planters to English factors, repeatedly call for goods in the "latest London mode".

Nelson, his father, and his uncle, had three of the largest and most elegant houses in Yorktown (fig. 1). One of the two major ports serving Williamsburg, Yorktown was flourishing in the half century before the Revolution. Its prosperity was due largely to the establishment in 1730 of the warehouse inspection system which required every hogshead of tobacco in the colony to be checked for quality before shipment. While some large plantation owners had their own warehouses and hired officials, Nelson's several warehouses in Yorktown handled a great flow of Virginia's tobacco. Nelson family wealth also derived from a retail store carrying English commodities for colonial consumption, and from a provision trade with the West Indies. As early as 1720, Nelson's grandfather owned 1/3 interest in

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[1] Nelson's father, William Nelson, was a member of the Executive Council and acting governor of Virginia between Lord Botetourt and Lord Dunmore. Nelson's uncle, Thomas, was Secretary of the Colony, a lucrative and significant post in which he supervised the operations of all county courts. Nelson himself was elected to the House of Burgesses, made justice of the peace, and colonel of the county militia by the age of 22; later he became delegate to the Continental Congress, Commander of Virginia forces, and Governor of Virginia.

the sloop Martha, carrying Virginia pork and corn to Barbados. It is likely that the Nelsons imported small numbers of negroes from the West Indies as an adjunct to regular trade there. It is known that they participated in another aspect of the African slave trade, that of receiving slaves on consignment. Of the 11,000 slaves brought to Virginia between 1718 and 1727, 8,500 entered the York River on consignment from English firms.[1] Since there was little ready cash in the colonies, the highest prices for slaves could be gotten only through the extension of credit. For their services in judging the amount of credit a local planter was good for, merchants like the Nelsons realized an approximate 8% commission on gross slave sales. For them it was a very profitable and low risk trade. There is no question that the Nelsons had money to spend on elegant furnishings, that fine surroundings were important to them, and that, as merchants as well as planters, they were in a position to secure the very best that could be had from England.

The luxury of the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg would have been familiar to Thomas Nelson, but unlike the majority of leaders in colonial Virginia, Nelson also had first-hand acquaintance with England's high fashion interiors. Nelson, like his father and uncle, was sent to England for his education. This, it must be remembered, was the exception rather than the rule because of the great expense of a lengthy stay, in addition to the risk an unexposed colonial took in catching smallpox.[2] Thomas Nelson was sent to England in 1753 at the age of fourteen, and returned to Virginia when he was twenty-two. One can assume these were impressionable, formative years. Therefore it is important to note the environment in which young

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[1] Emory G. Evans, Thomas Nelson of Yorktown, Revolutionary Virginian (Williamsburg, 1975), p. 7.

[2] It became even less common in the second half of the eighteenth century, partly because of fear that licentiousness and corruption prevailed among English youth at that time, and partly due to a growing reliance on early colonial institutions like the College of William and Mary, or on tutors trained in the northern colonies. Even William Nelson, though he sent his oldest son, decided against an English education for Hugh, twelve years Thomas' junior. In reply to a London business associate's offer of guardianship, he wrote: "I have no thoughts at present of sending him, and he no great Inclination to such a Voyage, indeed the Temptations to Expence and Dissipation of Money and Time are too great for our Estates here; Especially as the Improvements of our youth are Seldom answerable to Such great Expences as they often incurr." Edmund S. Morgan, Family Life in the Eighteenth Century (Williamsburg, 1952), p. 11.

Nelson lived while in England. He was left in the care of Edward Hunt, a mercantile acquaintance of Nelson's father, and Reverend Beilby Porteus, then a Fellow of Cambridge University and later Bishop of London, whose parents were native Virginians. Under this distinguished supervision, Nelson spent five years in a preparatory school at Hackney, where he was surely exposed to a taste for material goods, if one might believe contemporary accounts:

> The Village of Hackney being antiently celebrated for the numerous Seats of Nobility and Gentry, occasioned a mighty Resort thither. . . And tho' this Place at present be deserted by the Nobility, yet it be so greatly abounds with Merchants and other Persons of Distinction that it excels all other Villages in the Kingdom, and probably upon the Earth, in the Riches and Opulency of its Inhabitants, as may be judged from the great Number of Persons who Keep Coaches therein.[1]

A gold snuff box (fig. 2), which reportedly was given by the father of one of Nelson's schoolfriends as a token of gratitude, seems to indicate the sophisticated taste of his acquaintances. It is during this period, in 1754, that a portrait of Thomas Nelson was commissioned of Mason Chamberlain, showing the boy in a gray suit with gray velvet collar and black hat (fig. 3).

Nelson entered Christ College at Cambridge in 1758, and continued there under the tutorship of the Reverend Mr. Porteus until 1761. This degree of training was to stand him in good stead for future political duties. One obvious outcome reflected in the furnishing plan is Nelson's extensive library, discussed in Rooms 104 and 202.

During school vacations, Nelson was placed with noted agriculturalists in preparation for handling the family properties in Virginia. Nelson's father also thought this constant industry necessary to keep the boy from idle indulgences. Many of the elder Nelson's letters seem to be preoccupied with Thomas's moral and religious character. While the father's concern over his son's deportment may have been justifiable at the outset, Nelson matured into a vigorous, highly principled man. A cousin, Robert Carter Nicholas, assessed Thomas's character eleven years after his return

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[1] William Maitland, The History and Survey of London from its Foundation to the Present Time. (London, 1756) II, 1365-66.

from England:

> [He] had a liberal & expensive Education at Cambridge, & tho' this might not appear very striking upon his first coming over to Virginia, when he was young & more inclined to juvenile Diversions, yet it has proved a Foundation for him to build a Stock of manly Sense on; I believe he has as good a Heart as any Man living; his morals are sound; his Conduct steady, uniform & exemplary; & in point of Fortune, which necessarily gives a Man an Independency of Spirit, he is inferior to very few.[1]

Nelson had a reputation for honesty, integrity, and generosity. He entertained large numbers regularly. He aided in sponsoring an English education for several Virginians only distantly related. During the Revolution his liberal extension of personal funds to the Revolutionary cause almost exhausted the family's resources. In the words of one of his servants, "it is unpossible for me to tell you, how much he did spend for the soldiers. If any of them was hungry, or wanted shoes, or clothes, I let you know, they soon found the way into our yard."[2] The servant goes on to say the soldiers revered him "next to General Washington." Nelson's sacrifices to the Revolution included personal property as well as money. During the siege of Yorktown in 1781, he reportedly gave the order for cannon to fire at his own mansion, saying to Lafayette that he should "spare no particle of my property so long as it affords comfort or shelter to the enemies of my country."[3]

Both Thomas Nelson and his father William were strong supporters of the Association for the non-importation of British products, William decreasing the Nelson firm imports by 50 % in 1770-- a significant sacrifice for merchants so immediately affected by diminished trade with England.[4] Yet despite his ideological views, Thomas Nelson's honor

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[1]Letter of Robert Carter Nicholas to John Norton, Nov. 30, 1772, in Francis Norton Mason, ed., John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia (Richmond, 1937), p. 285.

[2]Susannah Nelson Page, "Lucy Grymes Nelson," Ms, April 10, 1835, Smith-Digges Papers, 1789-1843 (Colonial Williamsburg, Ms 52 [M-1211]), p. 12.

[3]Richard Channing Moore Page, Geneology of the Page Family in Virginia (1893), p. 168.

[4]The Association was formed May 1769 and dissolved July 1771.

bound him to repay English debts. In a 1778 House of Delegates debate over methods of raising funds to continue the war effort, Nelson opposed Thomas Jefferson's proposal that debts to British merchants could be paid, at a devalued paper money rate, into a recently established state loan office. Nelson argued that debts incurred should be repaid in terms originally established. "By God," he concluded, "I will pay my debts like an honest man."[1]

Nelson's speeches were often forceful. John Adams characterized him as "a speaker, alert and lively for his weight."[2] This reference to Nelson's portly stature is one of several that help supply a personal as well as political image of the man. Nelson appears to have enjoyed dining and the pleasures of family life. He chides a friend in London for remaining single:

> You old Bachelors are strange beings, why don't you get a Wife? The many solitary Howers you must pass. I should detest the thought of going to bed alone so often as you do. Prithee look out for some pretty lady . . . that [will] make you pass the waves of this troublesome World with satisfaciton.[3]

At home in Yorktown or Offley Hoo,[4] Nelson was surrounded most of the time by his eleven children. Except for a short stay of private tutoring for two of the boys in Philadelphia,[5] none of his children went further

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[1]John Sanderson, Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence (Philadelphia, 1823-27), VII, 282.

[2]Lyman H. Butterfield, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams (Cambridge, Ma., 1961) II, 179.

[3]Thomas Nelson to Samuel Athawes, Oct. 8, 1774, Nelson Letter Book, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[4]While the Nelsons maintained the Yorktown house throughout the Revolutionary years, they spent a great deal of time after 1775 at a small estate in Hanover County. The French officer, Major General Chastellux describes the modesty of Offley as "by no means [matching] General Nelsin's wealth or the consideration he enjoys in Virginia; it is a middling plantation where he merely erected the buildings necessary for the improvement of his lands and for the lodging of his 'overseer'". Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782, Howard C. Rice, Jr., ed (Chapel Hill, 1963) p. 382-83.

[5]In 1780, Mrs. Nelson was reportedly shocked to see two of her boys marching toward the James River with some others from The College of William

away than Williamsburg for his education, and by the time of Nelson's death only three of his eleven children had married and moved away. Nelson also enjoyed the constant companionship of his wife, Lucy, even taking her with him to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1775.

Lucy Nelson: Her deeply religious character and other personal attributes

Lucy Grymes Nelson and her husband were considered "among the most strictly pious Episcopalians known."[1] The most significant event for Mrs. Nelson in Philadelphia at the time of the Continental Congress seems to have been hearing for the first time a Presbyterian dissenter and visiting a Catholic chapel. Her very strong religious character is reflected in the Room Studies, for indeed it appears to have regulated activities in the household.

> She brought up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They were brought into her Chamber every morning while she was dressing, and said their prayers and a short catechism, such as Who made you? Who Redeemed you? etc. and then read the Psalms and Lessons for the day with the collect Gospel and Epistle, for the preceding Sunday . . . She was remarkable in her attention to the Holy Sabbath, for she never permitted a piece of work, or any thing that belonged to [weekly] business, to lay about the house on that day. And she never read, or permitted one of her children to read, any other than a pious book on the Lord's day . . . You may hear her grandchildren and her great grandchildren, asking on the Sabbath for a Sunday book to read.[2]

Lucy was also a strict disciplinarian with her children. "One of the most pious of her sons . . . well remembers her giving him a severe chastisement. While she was correcting him for some fault, he burst the door open and said he would stand it no longer. He attempted to leap over the paling of the yard, when she desired a servant to catch him; he

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and Mary to fire on the British, and so it was arranged for them to study for a time with the astronomer and mathematician David Rittenhouse in Philadelphia. William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1857) I, 424.

[1] Page, "Lucy Grymes Nelson", p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

caught him by the skirt of the coat just as he was attempting to clear himself, and brought him back, [whereupon] she chastised him for the fault he had committed, as also for his misconduct to herself."[1]

At some colonial plantations, a tutor largely assumed responsibility for supervising the children. While the Nelsons did have a tutor for the boys and, it seems, a governess for the girls, one has the impression that Mrs. Nelson was very attentive to her children's upbringing. Her other responsibilities were likely to have included supervising the household staff, planning meals for family, staff, and frequent guests, and administering to the health of family and servants alike. One of her joys seems to have been her garden. A relative remembers seeing her "after having finished her reading, put on her bonnet and shawl, and walk up and down the different flights of steps and the long walks of her garden, giving directions to her gardeners occasionally, or stopping to look at some vegetable or admire some flower."[2]

A woman in Mrs. Nelson's position was above all to maintain the appearance of leisure. According to contemporary records, she dressed elegantly, played the harpsichord with special talent, and danced unusually well. She was also fond of reading and better educated than most women of her time, having attended the same private school[3] as her husband before he was sent to England.

Lucy Nelson was subject to her husband's authority, despite her individual strength (she lived, incidentally, to the age of 87). Chastellux describes the Nelson's house as "truly patriarchal". "In the absence of the General", he writes, "Mesdames Nelson, his mother and his wife, received me with all the politeness, ease, and cordiality natural to this family. But as in America the ladies are never thought sufficient to do the honors of the house, five or six Nelsons had gathered to receive me; among others, Secretary Nelson, the General's uncle, with his two sons, and two of the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] The Peaseley School in Gloucester County, run by William Yates, later president of the College of William and Mary.

General's brothers."[1]

Thomas Nelson appears to have kept most business matters to himself, sharing them with his wife only as his illness advanced. A servant recounts this exchange:

> My mistress is as noble-minded a woman as ever was; I wish you could have seen how she did bear Master's sickness, and how she did command her feelings when she was with him. And once, when he sent for her, and there was nobody in the room but me sitting by him and he told her where to find his papers and things, that he wished her to take in her special care, and said he knew he could depend on her. And she did look so calm all the time, and I knew her heart was almost broke.[2]

It would seem that this servant might have been the specially-favored colored woman whom Mrs. Nelson taught to read, and whom she eventually freed. Even though white housekeepers were common, this colored woman appears to have been nanny for the Nelson children, and may have slept in the nursery with the youngest.

The children's tutor for a time was Jacob Hall, Jr.[3] Hall probably ate with the family and would have participated in their activities almost as a social equal. Philip Fithian, tutor to the Robert Carter children at Nomini Hall Plantation, advised his successor in 1774 that he should assume a position in the family "at a perfect equidistance between father and the eldest Son."[4] Hall would most likely have had his accommodations in the main house. In a letter to his sister,

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[1]Chastellux, Travels, II, 383.

[2]Page, "Lucy Grymes Nelson", p. 12.

[3]A young scholar from Pennsylvania, later President of Cokesbury College. Maryland Historical Magazine, VIII, 217-235.

[4]Hunter D. Farish, ed., The Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, new edition (Williamsburg, 1965), p. 161.

Hall describes his position:

> I am now living with Col. Tom Nelson, one of the Delegates of the Congress, a gentleman of the First Fortune and Interest in this Colony. He allows 10£ a piece for each of his 5 sons, with the Liberty of taking in 4 or 5 more, gives me my Board and Accommodations, a Servant to wait on me, and makes a Compliment of their Board to the Boys in my Favor-- I have the Benefit of his Library which is a fine collection; make no doubt that I shall live as Comfortably as these troublesome times will admit.[1]

For a time Mrs. Nelson's three sisters and two young boys, Augustine and Thomas Smith, also lived with the Nelson family. And still they found room to put up visiting neighbors and dignitaries.

With this brief picture of its inhabitants, the Nelson House will, hopefully, begin to take on greater individuality.

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[1] William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser. (1914) XX, 158-59. The manuscript letter is not dated, but was probably written in 1775 or 1776. In 1912 the letter was in the possession of Mrs. William Emlen Studdiford, 124 East 36th St., New York City.

FURNISHINGS: Their generally elegant character; their purchase through a consignment and credit system with English merchants

The Nelson House appears as refined as its occupants. Architecturally its proportions are generous, its materials and workmanship superior. Carved pilasters and full panelling embellish the dining room, hall, and drawing room; cornices are deep, fireplaces are faced with marble; windows are elegantly arched, and fitted with interior shutters.

An English traveler who visited Yorktown in 1742 wrote of "a great air of opulence amongst the inhabitants, who sometimes built themselves houses, equal in magnificence to many of our superb ones at St. James's . . . The country surrounding is thickly overspread with plantations and the planters live, in a manner, equal to men of the best fortune."[1] Concerning personal appearance, another traveler wrote of Virginia's "Lace and Lac'd Fellows" that they "toil not nor do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not array'd like one of these."[2]

Nelson surely displayed a similar opulence. A visitor to his home in 1768 reported that "Colonel Nelson" lived like a prince.[3] Indeed, Nelson's orders for personal items demonstrate his extravagance. At a time when he could least afford it, Nelson paid £100 sterling to buy his mother a "genteel chariot with six Harness" with the Nelson coat of arms on the side, and his inventory of 1789 lists one of the few silver épergnes recorded in colonial Virginia.

The cult of grandeur was one of the effects of increased income during profitable tobacco years from 1740 to 1770. As the Virginia planters developed their trade and colony, they continually sought a higher standard of living. This was fostered by an easy credit system which encouraged the Virginia élite to live beyond their means. In time, however,

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[1]Edward Kimber, quoted in the William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser, XV, 223.

[2]Jonathan Boucher, quoted in the Maryland Historical Magazine, VII, 5.

[3]Robert Fairfax to Rev. Denny Martin, Aug. 24, 1768, Culpeper-Fairfax-Martin Letters, Wykeham-Martin Mss, Archives of Kent, Maidstone, England, quoted in Evans, Thomas Nelson, p. 23.

it seems that fashion was not the only pressure which demanded luxurious furnishings and dress. With debts mounting toward the eve of the Revolution, it became necessary to keep up the appearance of wealth in order to maintain a reputation for solvency. Success in late colonial times seems to have depended on the ability to command credit.[1]

"Debt to British merchants became hereditary from father to son for many generations, so that the planters were a species of property annexed to certain mercantile houses in London."[2] This remark by Jefferson indicates how prevalent debt was among the tidewater aristocracy. The Nelsons were for a time an exception, making profits up to the 1770's. When William Nelson died in 1772, £35,000 was owed the firm. Tobacco prices began falling, however, and after two years, Thomas Nelson had been able to collect only £6,000 of the £35,000 due the family company. Meanwhile he began incurring his own debts. In 1773 he bought tobacco from smaller planters which he shipped along with his own at a loss, for tobacco prices were extremely low that year. In 1774 Nelson overbought again, sending 300 hogsheads, of which only 122 were his own. By 1775 Nelson owed £2,300 to the firm of Thomas and Rowland Hunt and over £1,000 to John Norton & Sons. And yet he continued making major purchases, including 120 acres of land and new slaves, as well as the silver épergne and six harness chariot mentioned earlier. Perhaps Nelson was trying to uphold his own credit standing with such extravagances and felt he had adequate reserves to withstand temporary price depressions in trade.

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[1]Samuel M. Rosenblatt, "The Significance of Credit in the Tobacco Consignment Trade: A Study of John Norton & Sons, 1768-1775," W.M.Q., 3rd series, XIX, 387.

[2]Quoted by Arthur Pierce Middleton in his Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era (Newport News, Virginia, 1953), p. 134. While British customs records show a balance of trade in favor of the colonies for the years 1697-1775, Middleton explains that these import-export statistics do not take into account freight, customs, insurance duties, or commission rates, all of which were charged against the planter's credit. According to Mr. Rosenblatt's figures (p. 387-88), John Norton, with whom the Nelsons dealt extensively, charged 2 1/2 % commission on goods it purchased for planters, 2 1/2 % on freight for these goods, £2 per hogshead on freight for tobacco, and 3 % commission on the gross sale price of tobacco. Many planters added to their debits by charging outright loans to their accounts. Robert Burwell, a close Nelson relative, wrote to John Norton: "I this day had a sudden demand on me for . . . Fifty pounds, and not being in cash, have made bold to draw on you for forty pounds sterling; which I shall be obliged to you to honour." Jan. 24, 1769, Robert Burwell to John Norton, Ms, John Norton & Sons Papers, 1750-95, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Va.

FURNISHINGS: Their character -- English vs. colonial, old vs. new

Before the specific furnishing descriptions of the room analyses, some general observations should be made justifying the preponderance of high-style English goods along with the inclusion of colonial and pre-Chippendale furniture.

As merchants, the Nelsons would have kept abreast of English fashion, and in this respect they may even have been exceptional. Dependency on English products, however, had long been the rule. In 1700 Robert Beverly wrote of Virginians:

> They are such abominable ill husbands that though their country be filled with wood, yet they have all their Woodenware from England, their cabinets, chairs, tables, stools, chests, cart-wheels, and all their things, to the eternal reproach of their laziness.[1]

Beverly does not acknowledge that this reliance on English goods was imposed by British statutes which restricted colonial manufacture in order to maintain a market for its own products in exchange for raw materials. Furniture made in England from Virginia walnut and then re-exported to Virginia is typical of this exchange. Advertisements like this one in the South Carolina Gazette, Charleston, May 15, 1755, are commonplace:

> To be sold very reasonable, a very neat house chair, and one dozen new fashioned house chairs made of Virginia Black Walnut, neatly carved, Spanish leather bottoms, lately imported per Capt. Ball, from London.

In his reports on manufactures to the Lords of the Board of Trade, Virginia's royal governor, William Gooch, played down the activity and quality of Yorktown's "poor potter" to minimize any fear of competition to the British ceramic industry. Similarly, England

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[1] Mary Mann Page (Newton) Stanard, Colonial Virginia; its People and Customs (London and Philadelphia, 1917), p. 89.

controlled colonial importation of Continental and Asian goods, all of which had to pass through the mother country as entrepôt.

The ties of the tobacco trade prolonged Virginia's dependency on England. Planters who shipped their tobacco to England in exchange for credit naturally put that credit toward English goods. Virginia craftsmen found much less support than their northern counterparts. Out of the 1,345 known colonial cabinet makers listed in a recent study, only 10 can be firmly attributed to Virginia, compared to 218 for Boston and 119 for Salem, Massachusetts.[1] Indeed, imports from Great Britain to the Tidewater area steadily increased right up to the Revolution, the value of imports for Virginia and Maryland combined estimated to be £350,000 in 1750, £500,000 in 1760 and £920,326 by 1771.[2]

The Nelson firm regularly did business with firms in Bristol, Liverpool, and Whitehaven, as well as London, a fact that strongly justifies the inclusion of ceramics and textiles from factories in the areas of these various cities as well as goods from London.

It is important, too, to realize that the Nelson family trade was equally diversified at home, extending north to Philadelphia, New York and Rhode Island. Naval Office shipping lists for Virginia (1698-1769)[3] show extensive intracoastal shipping before the Revolution.

> New England boats in numbers bring
> Notions and many a wooden thing

This simple Virginia rhyme[4] points up two truths: it was largely northern furniture which was traded for Virginia grain, and usually by means of New England vessels. Newspaper advertisements offer

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[1] Ethel Hall Bjerkoe, Cabinetmakers of America, quoted by Ivor Noel Hume, Here Lies Virginia (New York, 1963), p. 234.

[2] Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 133.

[3] Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

[4] Anne Ritson, A Poetical Picture of America (London, 1809), p. 76.

numerous examples: The Sloop Jenny, from Rhode Island "with 4 desks, 36 chairs" or "Entered inwards Sloop Success, Capt. Bohanan from Phila., with 32 Tierces Rum, 10 Barrels beer . . . 12 Windsor chairs, etc."[1] Philadelphia shipped many Windsor chairs to the South. One of the five known Virginia Windsor chair makers, William King, offered in competition the following advertisement:

> The subscriber takes this method to inform the public, that he carries on that business of TURNING, in all its various branches; where may be had WINDSOR CHAIRS, common house ditto, large & small SPINNING WHEELS . . . . The Subscriber flatters himself that he will be able to give full satisfaction to any of those, that pleases to favour him with their custom, as he has well-experienced hands from the city of Philadelphia.[2]

The Association between the Burgesses and the leading merchants of Virginia (1769-71) forbidding importation of slaves, wines, and certain British manufactures, encouraged local industry. In 1770 William Nelson wrote:

> They have already taught us to know that We can make many things for ourselves, & that We can do very well without many other things we used to indulge in. I now wear a good suit of clothes of my son's wool. . . my Shoes' Hose buckles, Wigg & Hat etca. of our own Country, and in these We improve every year, in Quantity as well as Quality.[3]

Such accounts indicate a growing self-reliance on the part of colonials which should be reflected by the inclusion of some American furniture and textiles. Yet English furnishings should prevail, especially in view of the Nelsons' business and background already described.

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[1] Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, March 31, 1768, 2-3 and Virginia Gazette, or Norfolk Intelligencer, June 23, 1774, 3-3

[2] Virginia Gazette, or the Winchester Advertiser, Jan 30, 1790,3-4 "W. Cox" is the name researchers at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts have turned up most frequently on southern Windsors.

[3] Mason, John Norton & Sons, p. 122.

FURNISHINGS: Old vs. new

Reverend Michael Smith, "late of the city of Williamsburg, but now in London" suggests that old furniture was commonly used together with the more up-to-date in Virginia: "There are many of the eminent planters whose houses are pretty well furnished; but as much of that furniture is of an hundred years date, so it would serve an hundred years hence . . ."[1] Old furniture does not appear to have been sold as frequently as other commodities, partly because it would not bring its proper value in a society so aware of changing fashion and short of actual currency. It seems rather to have been the custom to repair as long as possible, and then relegate old furniture to back rooms or to servants' quarters.

Those objects termed "old" in Thomas Nelson's inventory probably date from 1715 to the early 1740's, the period during which Thomas Nelson's grandfather would have been acquiring home furnishings. The latter first married in 1710 and died in 1745. His second wife appears to have continued living in the house alone until 1766 and probably would have done little in the way of either augmenting or discarding the house furnishings. Meanwhile Thomas Nelson had been living with his father William across the street during his first five years of marriage, and would not have needed to buy much furniture up to this point. Upon moving into his grandfather's house in 1766, Thomas in all likelihood acquired much of the "old" house furnishings.[2]

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[1] Virginia Gazette, November 29, 1770, quoted by Mary R.M. Goodwin, "The Colonial Store," Colonial Williamsburg Research Dept. Ms report, March 1966, p. 46.

[2] By terms of the elder Thomas Nelson's will both house and furniture were to go to his son William. Since William was well established across the street, Thomas, most in need with a growing family, while also William's eldest son and natural heir, was likely to have inherited many items of household furniture in situ.

THOMAS NELSON'S INVENTORY: "A yardstick only" --caution in adhering to too strictly

The term "old" in the 1789 Nelson inventory (Appendix B) is as open to interpretation as other descriptions in the inventory. The monetary appraisal of each item helps to determine the item's condition. For example, a pair of andirons, tongs, and shovel in the room over the dining room are valued at 40 shillings, whereas the same implements in the room over the drawing room are worth only 12 shillings. In Thomas Nelson's brother Hugh's inventory, a new mahogany press is appraised at £4..10..0, while "one old press" is valued at 12 shillings.[1] Clerks who made up inventories in the eighteenth century were not always accurate, consistent, or comprehensive. Hence, while the Nelson inventory is a very useful guideline, it cannot be relied on exclusively.

Many objects are wanting from the inventory which are documented elsewhere. One example is the "Virginia Amathyst Seal set in Gold" that William Nelson willed to his son Thomas.[2] The sales record of some of Thomas Nelson's personal property in 1810 includes significant items not listed in the 1789 inventory, as a silver coffee pot, a sofa, and a painted press.[3] Objects such as paintings with documented Nelson provenance also exist and yet are omitted from the inventory. Also, one must amplify the documents to include common household accessories, such as inkwell stands, warming pans, and chamber pots.

Possible explanations for these omissions may be found in Nelson's having maintained other residences in Williamsburg and at Offley Hoo, in possible pillage during the siege at Yorktown,[4] or in family members having acquired some pieces before the inventory was written. Certainly this would seem to be the case with the painting of Thomas Nelson as a young boy (fig. 3), which, up to the twentieth century, hung at Rosewell, once the home of Nelson's daughter Elizabeth, who had married the year before Nelson's inventory was taken. From this, one must realize that, to use Ivor Noel Hume's expression, an inventory is only a yardstick by which to gauge the appearance of a home.

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[1] York County Records, Wills & Inventories, XXIII, 549-52. (Jan. 28, 1800).

[2] Y.C.R., Wills & Inventories, XXII, 132-36. (Dec. 21, 1772).

[3] Y,C.R., Will Book No. 10, p. 36-39.

[4] Other Yorktown families presented claims for property damage; unfortunately no such record can be found for the Nelson family.

ROOM STUDIES

Very little architectural analysis will be given in the room studies, as that is supplied by Lee H. Nelson's Historic Structure Report: The Nelson House Architectural Data Section, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1973). It must be repeated, however, that the Nelson House displays the basic Georgian floor plan of a central hall flanked by two rooms on either side. Following the English manner, this first floor was clearly "a floor of taste, expense, state and parade."[1] As if to show off Nelson's position in society and his gracious manner of living, the first floor rooms--dining room, hall, drawing room, Nelson's chamber, and back parlor--are largely devoted to entertainment and pursuits of leisure. Areas for privacy, the bedrooms, are mostly on the second floor, although some of these rooms would also have been used for entertaining. Space for utilitarian duties is not provided. "All their Drudgeries of Cookery, Washing, Daries, &c. are perform'd in Offices detacht from the Dwelling-Housees, which by this means are kept cool and Sweet."[2] Free of the fuss and clutter and smell and heat of the kitchen and other outer buildings,[3] the dwelling house displays elegance and fashion.

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[1] John Fowler and John Cornforth, English Decoration in the 18th Century (Princeton, 1974), p. 63.

[2] Robert Beverly, The History of the Present State of Virginia, Book IV, p. 53.

[3] A 1796 sketch made for insurance purposes shows six outbuildings: a kitchen and wash house, servants' quarters, a poultry house, smoke house, spinning house, and dairy. See Charles E. Hatch, Jr., The Nelson House and the Nelsons, General Study (Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., August 1969) Illustration no. 7; also see fig. 50, this report.

ROOM 101: Dining Room

According to the English architect-decorator Robert Adam (1728-92), dining rooms "are considered as the apartments of conversation, in which we are to pass a great part of our time. This renders it desirable to have them fitted up with elegance & splendour, but in a style different from that of the apartments."[1] Even without furnishings, the full panelling, marble fireplace and carved pilasters of the Nelson dining room create an atmosphere of refinement. The dining room was largely a showplace of Nelson's affluence, as here the inventory lists the greatest concentration of luxurious objects. And as such, as Adam suggests, the room would have been used much more than at meal time alone.

The concept of a formal dining room with chairs pulled up around one long central table was not introduced until the 1780's. It was then that dining rooms became more or less limited in use. The Nelson inventory with its "2 Mohogony Dineing Tables" reflects the tradition prevalent until that time of having several medium-sized tables, "generally . . . of eight or ten people each," that could be moved about as the occasion required.

Both of these tables should be of sophisticated craftsmanship, English or American, similar to fig. 4, with acanthus leaf carving at the knees and claw-and-ball feet. Figure 5 shows a popular oval top, although the table's slipper feet and overall simplicity may otherwise be too plain for the dining room.(It is to be noted here that detailed descriptions, dimensions, and dates of all objects illustrated are given beneath the illustrations for reference, but are omitted form the main text. While such details could be helpful in selecting appropriate furnishings, they encumber the text unnecessarily.) The rectangular table might be closed, and placed to the right of the fireplace. The oval table should be open and set for dinner to show the likely arrangement of dishes.[2]

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[1]Robert Adam, Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam (1773), Vol. I, Plate V, quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 67.

[2]See Appendix C for "The Arrangement of a Dinner or Supper Table, Consisting of Nine Dishes" including "Bills of Fare," taken from Suzannah Carter's The Frugal Housewife: or, Complete Woman Cook . . . (London and Philadelphia, 1796), p. 128-32.

Fragments unearthed from the Nelson lots by the Southside Historical Sites Foundation[1] indicate that Nelson could have had dinner services of Chinese export porcelain (fig. 289a,b), Queen's ware (fig. 290a,b) and a feather-edge creamware (fig. 291 a,b).[2]

The guide should impress on the visitor the variety of activities besides dining, that might have gone on in the room. It was not unusual, for example, to find a backgammon table (fig. 6) in the dining room. Not only is this location documented in the Nelson inventory, but also in the dining room at Corotoman plantation.[3] What is surprising is that such a table should be found in the Nelson household at all. While board games, usually played for money, were very popular in Virginia, the Nelsons' religious fervor seemed to frown on such diversions. In 1782, the French officer Chastellux wrote of his two day visit with the Nelson family at Offley Hoo: "It is worth observing that on this occasion, where fifteen or twenty people (four of whom were strangers to the family and to the country), were assembled together, and by bad weather forced to stay indoors, there was no mention whatsoever of playing cards. How many parties of tric-trac, whist, and lotto would with us have been the inevitable consequence of such obstinate bad weather?"[4] The backgammon table shown is triple-flapped, one flap marked for chess, another covered with baize for cards. Round cornered gaming tables are associated with the 1740-50's; square corners would be more appropriate. Depending on the design of the table obtained, silver candlesticks with rounded or square bases should be

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[1]Archeological research on the Nelson lots is currently being done by Southside Historical Sites Foundation, of the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va. Because of surviving glass and ceramic fragments, this is the one area in which the refurnishing of the Nelson House can be highly accurate. My suggestions for ceramics and glass have been made with some reference to the Southside field notes generously made available to me by Norman F. Barka and his assistant Jan Fry. I recommend, however, that the definitive interpretation of Nelson ceramics be made following publication of Southside's findings.

[2]Figures 289-291 are to be found in Appendix C.

[3]Virginia Magazine, VI (1898-99), 145.

[4]Chastellux, Travels, II, 383.

placed on at least two corners (fig. 7). Since the backgammon table need not be served by any other furniture, it can be placed out of the way by the east window (101-W3).

Two of the "Dozen green Windsor Chairs" can be pulled up to the backgammon table, six placed around the set dinner table, one at the writing table mentioned below, and the remaining three placed against the wall to the right of the fireplace (fig. 8). These Windsors were probably of the fan or sack-backed style made in Philadelphia (see page 15 above). Today's values make it difficult to imagine Windsor chairs in any kind of formal setting. Yet in the eighteenth century they were considered dignified, well articulated chairs, especially appreciated for their strength. They are sturdy because the wood grain, being steamed and bent, runs up and around the back, unlike conventional chairs, where grains of opposing directions are joined at points of stress. "Strong, neat and plain," are the exact qualities George Washington specified for his dining room chairs in 1783.[1] A bill written in the 1790's for a merchant in New York calls for yellow checked seat covers to be made for both Windsor and mahogany dining room chairs, indicating that both types of chairs were meant to be used together in the dining room.[2] Indeed, Nelson's brother Hugh seems to have had "green stick chairs" in his dining room too.[3] Windsors were frequently painted a grayish or blueish shade of green, black, or even orange.

Because twelve chairs alone would not accommodate even the core group of Nelson family members (parents, six sons, five daughters), let alone the fluctuating numbers of temporary residents (tutor, three sisters-in-law, two "adopted" wards) and visiting guests, I suggest expanding the number to include six mahogany side chairs. These should be "sturdy and plain" and yet exhibit fashionable Chippendale characteristics (fig. 9): fig. 9 shows the same basic seat rail, knees, feet and pierced splat as the drawing room chairs (fig. 83) but embellished to a much lesser degree.

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[1] From a letter written Sept. 22, 1783 to his nephew, Bushrod Washington in Philadelphia, quoted in Florence Montgomery, Printed Textiles, English and American Cottons and Linens, 1700-1850 (New York 1970), p. 82.

[2] For this reference I am grateful to Nancy Goyne Evans, Registrar of the Winterthur Museum. Her forthcoming book, American Windsor Furniture, will greatly expand our appreciation for this type of furniture.

[3] Y.C.R., Wills & Inventories, XXIII, 549.

Their upholstery should be of the same brocade as the curtain material specified below. One of these side chairs can be placed at the harpsichord, one on either side of the sideboard, and the remaining three against the west wall.

The largest room on the first floor, this was a likely place for dancing. "They will dance or die!" remarked the tutor Philip Fithian.[1] Dancing classes were taught by an itinerant master who came for several days at a time, during which he would instruct the children of the house and invited neighboring youngsters. For adults, impromptu minuets were as common as elaborate balls, and because Mrs. Nelson was reported to have been a talented musician as well as dancer, I suggest a harpsichord be placed in the northeast corner of the room (fig. 10-11). Benjamin Carter, the teenage son of a family similar to the Nelsons, is reported by his tutor to have kept "good Instruments; he has here at Home a Harpsichord, Forte-piano, Harmonica, Guittar, Violin & German Flutes."[2] Metal harmonica parts and guitar frets have been unearthed in the archeological dig around the Nelson House, so it would be appropriate to place such instruments near the harpsichord.

One of the most luxurious items for the time would be the "large Turkey Carpet." Carpets from the Near and Middle East (indiscriminately designated as "Turkey") began to be heavily imported to England only in the early 1700's, and such carpets were a special symbol of affluence and fashion on this side of the Atlantic. Thomas Jefferson's father-in-law seems to have viewed them as ostentatious: "In 1740 I don't remember to have seen such a thing as a turkey Carpet in the Country except a small thing in a bed chamber, Now nothing are so common as Turkey or Wilton Carpets, the whole Furniture of the Roomes Elegant & every appearance of Opulence."[3]

Ushak, Anatolian and Transylvanian carpets were the most commonly imported; one of these would be the most accurate choice among oriental carpets. A Transylvanian type is illustrated in fig. 12 covering a table.

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[1] Farish, Journal, p. 177

[2] Ibid., p. 29-30

[3] John Wayles, August 30, 1766. W.M.Q., 3rd ser. (1962), 517-23.

This practice, a carry-over from the seventeenth century when such carpets were considered too valuable to be placed on the floor, may explain the "2 ps. Carpeting side Board" also listed in the Nelson inventory.

Regarding textiles, the guide should be able to discuss the curtain treatment. Here American practice closely followed English for the years we are concerned with, offering a choice of straight hanging, Venetian, or festoon (fig. 13). Venetian curtains would complement the carved columns by the windows, and would be appropriate for the elegance of the dining room. The curtain tops should be concealed by shaped cloth-covered valances outlined with contrasting borders (fig. 14-15). Carved wooden cornices of the type illustrated in Thomas Chippendale's Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Directory (1762) (fig. 16) might have appeared in a house like the Nelson's, but would be unobtainable today. A heavy damask or brocade of a silver-lavender shade is recommended, to complement the gray architectural elements. The use of fabric in the dining room is more restrained than in other rooms, for according to the English architect Adam once again, dining rooms should not be draped too profusely but instead ". . . adorned with statues and paintings, that they may not retain the smell of the victuals."[1]

The English tradition of numerous paintings in the dining room is also documented in Virginia. Among the "various paintings and rich pictures" belonging to Colonel John Tayloe at nearby Mt. Airy, "In the Dining-Room . . . are twenty four of the most celebrated among the English Race-Horses, Drawn masterly, & set in elegant gilt frames."[2] Horse paintings would be particularly appropriate for the Nelson dining room. Thomas Nelson, like others in his family, took a special interest in breeding horses. Nelson's brother William is reported to have had one of the first ten Arabian horses to come to the colonies, and Nelson himself supplied George Washington with the horse he used in the Revolution.[3]

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[1]Quoted by Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 68.

[2]Farish, Journal, p. 95.

[3]Evans, Thomas Nelson, p. 174, n.39.

Paintings offer an opportunity to bring out a variety of Nelson's other pleasures and pursuits. Besides sports and hunting scenes there could be marine paintings or landscapes relating to his shipping and tobacco business. Thomas' brother Hugh had three "landskips" in his dining room[1] and their father William professed admiration for John Collet's landscapes. Family portraits and conversation pieces (portrait of the family grouped together around a table or in a garden setting, as in fig. 12, 17, and 18) would be highly suitable.

At least one such painting should be chosen, of sophisticated artistic quality and substantial size, to hang above the side table against the west wall.

The wall panel between the north windows is in a prominent position, and calls for special decorative treatment. Here I suggest placing the "large Looking Glass with sconces" mirroring across the room a matching chimney glass with sconces, also called for in the inventory. Appropriate types, illustrated in figures 19-20, show the rococo taste for lively, intricate carving.

Even more highly esteemed might have been a cut-glass chandelier in the center of the room, originally hung by means of a counterbalance (disguised with decorative cord and tassel) for ease of candle replacement and snuffing (fig. 21). Throughout the eighteenth century, a chandelier was a symbol of prestige. Such extravagant lighting would also have reflected Nelson's hospitality, for to the eighteenth century mind, the quantity of candles lit reflected the importance of the visitor or occasion. Letters describing balls frequently count the number of candles as well as the people attending. In an English reference, one guest was obviously complimented, having "dined in the hall which was lighted by 130 wax candles, and the salon with 50; the whole expense of that article being computed at fifteen pounds a night."[2] Equally conspicuous might have been two English candelabra (fig. 22) on the side table. Here the guide could

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[1] Y.C.R., Wills & Inventories, XXIII, 549.

[2] Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 222.

explain that the main dinner in colonial Virginia was served between two and three p.m., so that candles would not belong on the table set here for dinner. While no such cut-glass objects are mentioned in the inventory, it must be pointed out that this document is conspicuously deficient in the area of lighting fixtures. Apart from a hall lantern, its references to lighting are limited to the dining room. Of those articles listed in the dining room, "6 Brass flat Candlesticks" (probably chambersticks, fig. 23), "7 pair Steel snuffers," and "2 Tin Lantherns" (fig. 24) were likely to have been assembled there as a convenient and set location for ready use to be carried to other parts of the house or outside. These articles might thus be placed either in closet 101-A or on the writing table.

Guns might be similarly located in easy access to the front door. The "Silver mounted Fowling piece" (fig. 25) could stand in the northwest corner of the room, and the "pair Silver capt Pistols" (fig. 26) on the writing table in the same corner. The brass barrel pistols also called for in the inventory could be placed in or on the desk between the windows of the north wall(fig. 27).

In view of its appraised value (£3) this "black Walnut Desk" was probably not a full secretary desk like the "large Desk" in Nelson's bedroom, valued at £10. In all likelihood it was a slant-top desk similar to the New York or Virginia pieces shown in figures 28-29. More examples of this type survive in Virginia than any other type of case furniture, attesting to the form's popularity.

A black walnut writing table (probably a desk on frame) (fig. 30), is also called for in the inventory. Located to the right of door 101-D1, it could hold the pistols and chambersticks mentioned above and various pieces of writing equipment (paper, quills, wax, etc.) more fully described in Room 104.

The "black walnut side Board" of the inventory would best be located centered on the west wall (fig. 31). The sideboard form as we know it, with drawers and cupboards, was only slowly evolving in the 1770's. Its forerunners were a side table like this one, flanked by pedestals with cabinets containing wine and table accessories. Nelson enjoyed wine "more

than was conducive to health and long life" his father thought, and kept a well stocked wine cellar in the basement; cases of madeira were among the first things he ordered after the war. Wine bottles should be present in a cellarette by the main table, or in a monteith or other cooler that could be kept beneath the side table, to be requested by diners, and never placed on the table itself.

Displayed on the sideboard would be some of Thomas Nelson's large quantity of silver--totaling over £223 in his inventory, even omitting, as it does, several substantial pieces documented elsewhere, as an elegant tea urn purchased in 1782, and his father William's "best silver cup."[1] Much of this silver would have been acquired by his father, and therefore would date around mid-century and would probably be English. New plate in the house was inventoried separately from the old, and includes only an épergne, flatware, casters and a milk pot.

The pièce de résistance is a silver épergne (fig. 32), one of the few documented in any colonial inventory, recorded as weighing 92 oz. 19dwt. Also prominent on the sideboard would be a large tray, tankard, and pint can (fig. 33-35).

On the table set for dinner would be salt cellars with spoons, pepper box, serving spoons, marrow spoon, and, under the central serving dish, a ring (i.e. the "rim" listed under new plate in the inventory) (fig. 36-41). Individual places at table should be set with forks and spoons (with the fork tines and bowl of the spoon face-down) and table knives (the remainder of the set in two knife boxes on the sideboard) (fig. 42-43).

Porringer and salvers could be placed with decanters and glassware (fig. 44-47) on an accessory breakfast table or stand near the large dining table (see fig. 18). The remaining silver, for tea service and dessert, will be considered in Rooms 103 and 205.

Between the dinner table and fireplace should stand a firescreen with well carved and turned elements. Similar to the pole screen in fig. 76 and 92, the panel would have added a degree of color and afforded a place for one of the Nelson daughters to show her needlework.

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[1] While Thomas inherited two thirds of his father's plate, and was meant to get this cup specifically, it is probably the "large cup" assessed in 1800 at £33..14, which turns up among Thomas' brother Hugh's possessions. Y.C.R., Wills & Inventories, XXII, 135; XXIII, 549.

Andirons and tongs are specified for the fireplace; shovel, poker and fender would also be appropriate (fig. 48-49). Brass, steel, paktong and bell metal were all used, in a variety of designs for the same period. The andirons illustrated show a baroque, movemented spiraling that would have been fashionable in Thomas' grandfather's day; these may be contrasted with the tightened, stylized spiral motif seen in a tong and poker set stylish in Thomas' day, during the 1750-70's (fig. 49).

The closet area (101-B) to the right of the fireplace was probably used for storing dinnerware and some supplies. Restoration architect Gordon Whittington was able to identify old rat nibbling on the closet shelves, as if food stuffs like sugar loaves, too valuable to be left in the kitchen, had been stored there.[1] This observation was one clue in determining which of the two front rooms had been used as the dining room. Most logical, of course, is for the dining room to be located closest to the kitchen. This favors Room 103, which at one time had egress to door 107-D1, on the side of the dwelling facing the kitchen and wash house (see fig. 50). Presumably for this reason, Room 103 is designated as the dining room in Lee H. Nelson's Historic Structure Report for the Nelson House. It is not inconceivable, however, that food could have been carried in via the back door (102-D2) or via the cellar entrance on the right side of the house and up through the hall, whereby Room 101 would be as convenient as Room 103. The rationale supporting Room 101 is strengthened by Mr. Whittington's conclusion that passage from Room 103 to Room 107 was blocked off early in the building's history, during the eighteenth century, as it is today. My own interpretation of the quantity and bulk of objects inventoried in the dining room and particularly in the room designated as being over the dining room (the second floor rooms following essentially the same floor plan as the first floor) sustains the choice of Room 101 as the dining room.

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[1] The Blow family also used Room 101 as a dining room in the twentieth century, but at that time this shelf area was blocked off, indicating that the nibbling predated the Blow's occupancy.

Closet 101B would probably have contained much of the ceramic and miscellaneous wooden and metal ware inventoried for the dining room. Items suitably stored on shelves here could include the tea kettle and trivit (fig. 51), the mahogany trays (fig. 52) and various japanned ware mentioned in the inventory. Made of painted and gilded tin or sheet iron--today called Pontypool for its manufacture in a town by that name in the county of Monmouth, England--japanned ware was popular through the 1780's. Nelson had one japanned plate warmer, two japanned waiters, and two tin (probably japanned) coffee pots (fig. 53a,b). The Virginia Independent Chronicle advertised in 1789 among a list of goods imported from Birmingham these particular forms along with japanned bread baskets, sugar chests, travelling cases, candlesticks, and snuffers.[1]

The dressing room 101A, might have been furnished with commode, washstand and looking glass (probably the "shaving Glass Mahogany Case" inventoried for the dining room). The appropriate washstand, linens, and other toilet articles are described in Room 201.

To enliven the room, one or several bouquets of dried or fresh flowers in ceramic bowls can be placed on a table top or window seats (fig. 54).

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[1](Richmond), January 7, 1789, 1-3.

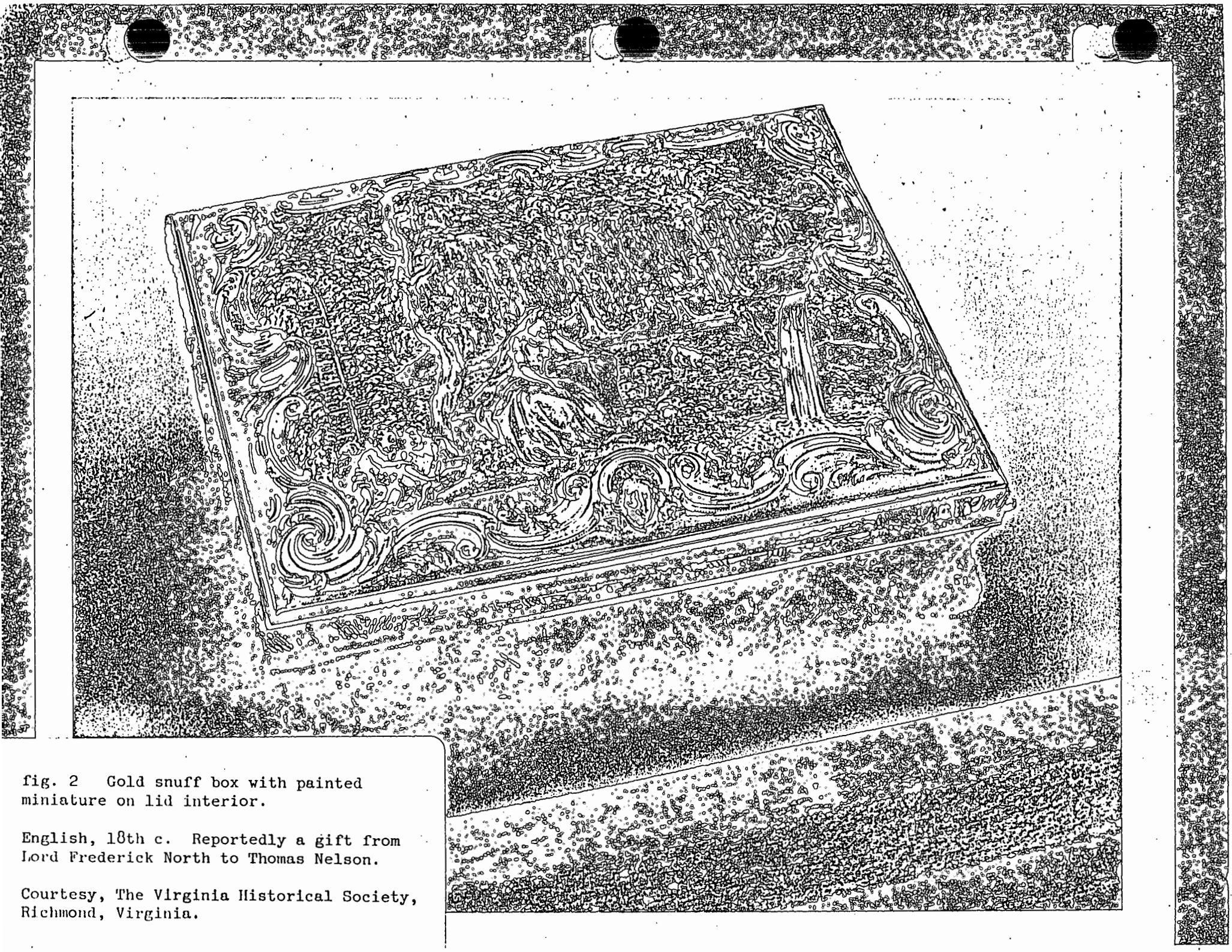


fig. 2 Gold snuff box with painted miniature on lid interior.

English, 18th c. Reportedly a gift from Lord Frederick North to Thomas Nelson.

Courtesy, The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.



fig. 3 Thomas Nelson by Mason Chamberlain, 1754.

Oil on canvas. 29 1/8" x 24 3/8".

Courtesy, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia.

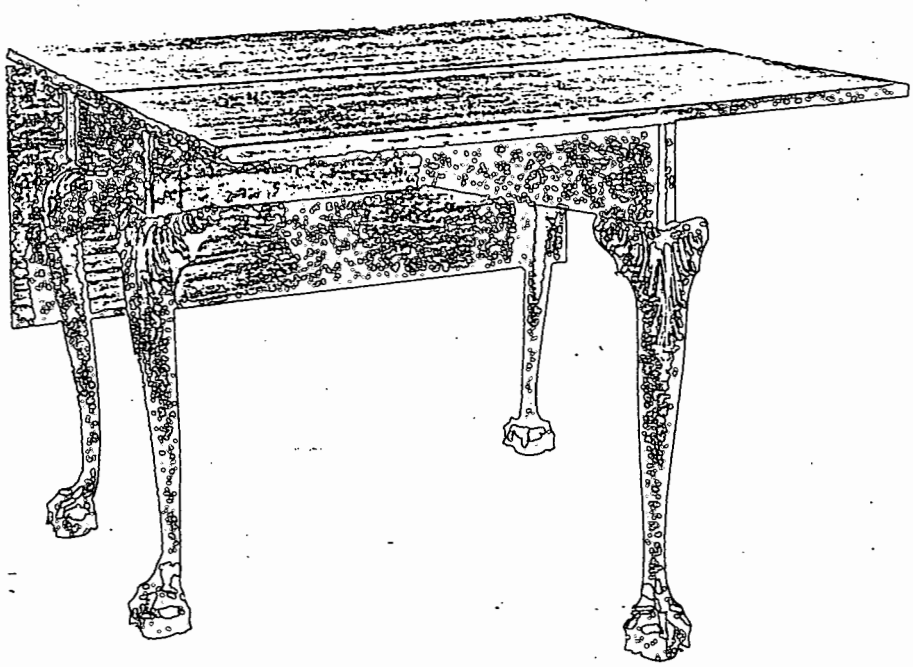


Fig. 4 Walnut dining table.
New York, 1755-65. h:29" w:51" d:38"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 5 Walnut dining table.
New York, 1730-50. h:29" w:65" d: 54"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

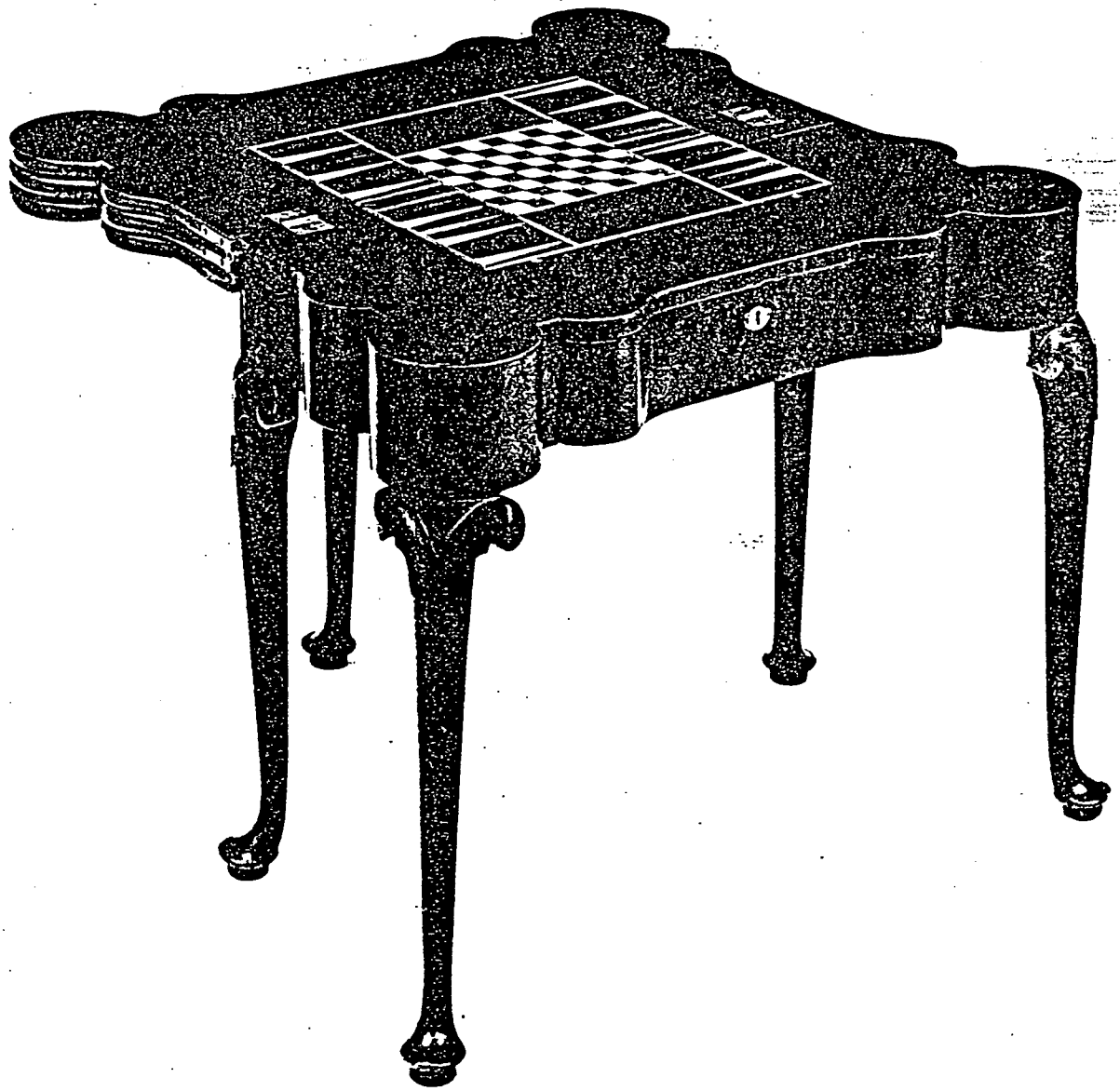


Fig. 6 Backgammon table.
—Irish or English, mid 18th c.
Shreve, Crump & Lowe, Boston, Ma.

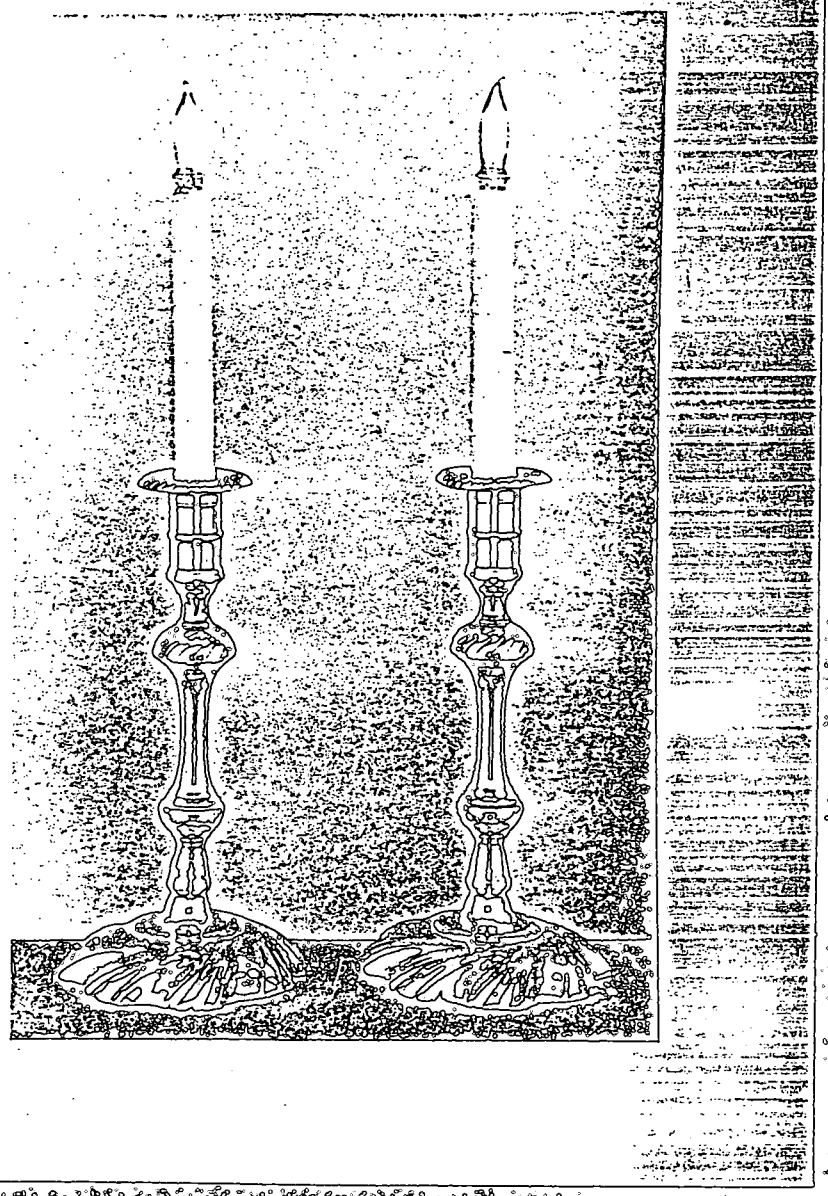


Fig. 7 Candlesticks, brass.
English, 1755-60. h: 9" diam.: 4 1/4"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

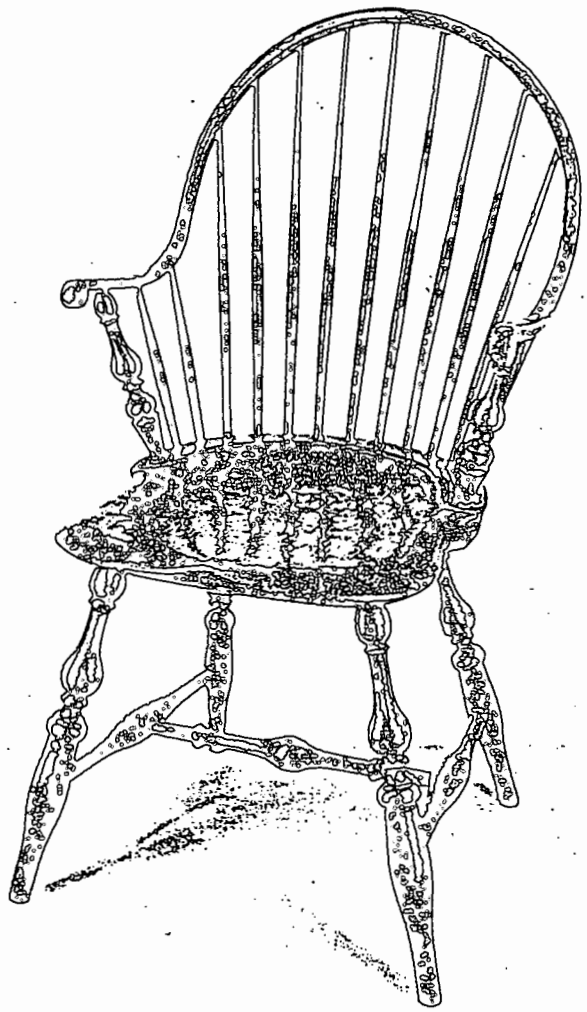


Fig. 8 Continuous bow Windsor arm chair. Circa 1780, prob. R.I.
h: 37" w: 20" d: 22"

Courtesy, The Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.

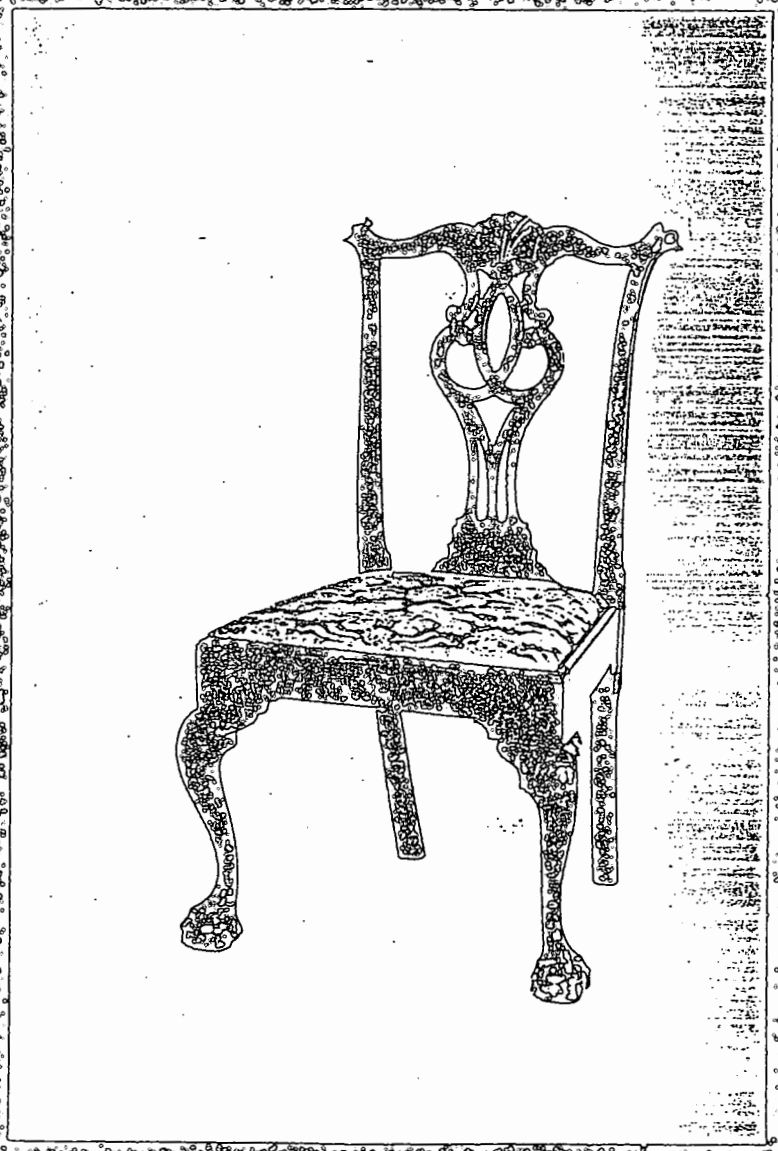


Fig. 9 Side chair.
New York, 1760-80.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

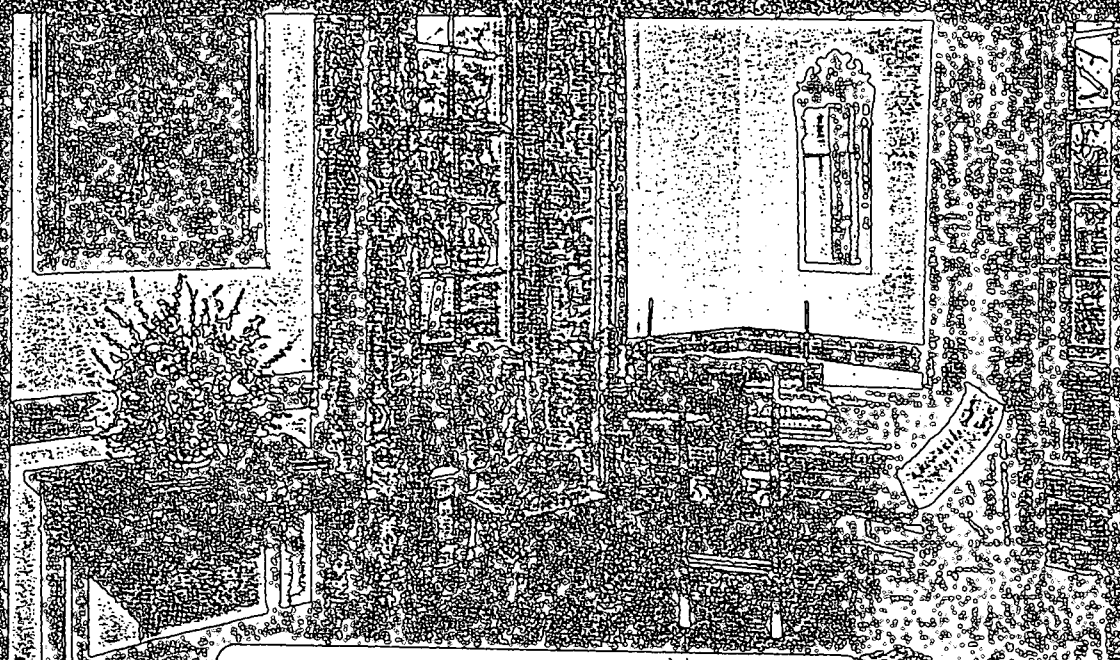


Fig. 11 Harpsichord, lute, and music stand in the parlor of the George Wythe House, Williamsburg, Va.

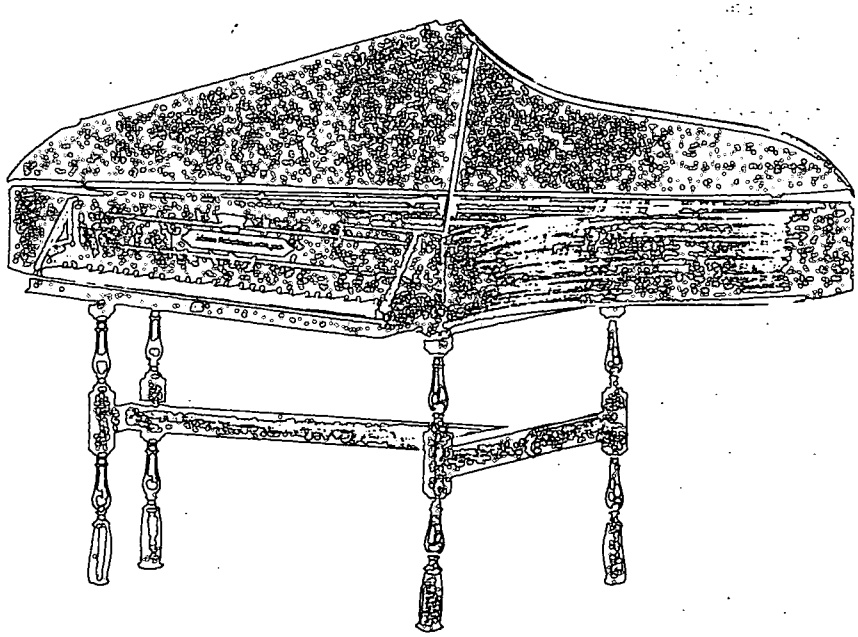


Fig. 10 Spinet. English, 1743-60
h:30" w:71" d:27"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

Fig. 12. Isaac Royall and Family by Robert Feke, 1741. Oil on canvas. h: 56 3/16" w: 77 3/4". Courtesy, Harvard University.

Shows a Transylvanian carpet, one of the most commonly imported types during the eighteenth century.

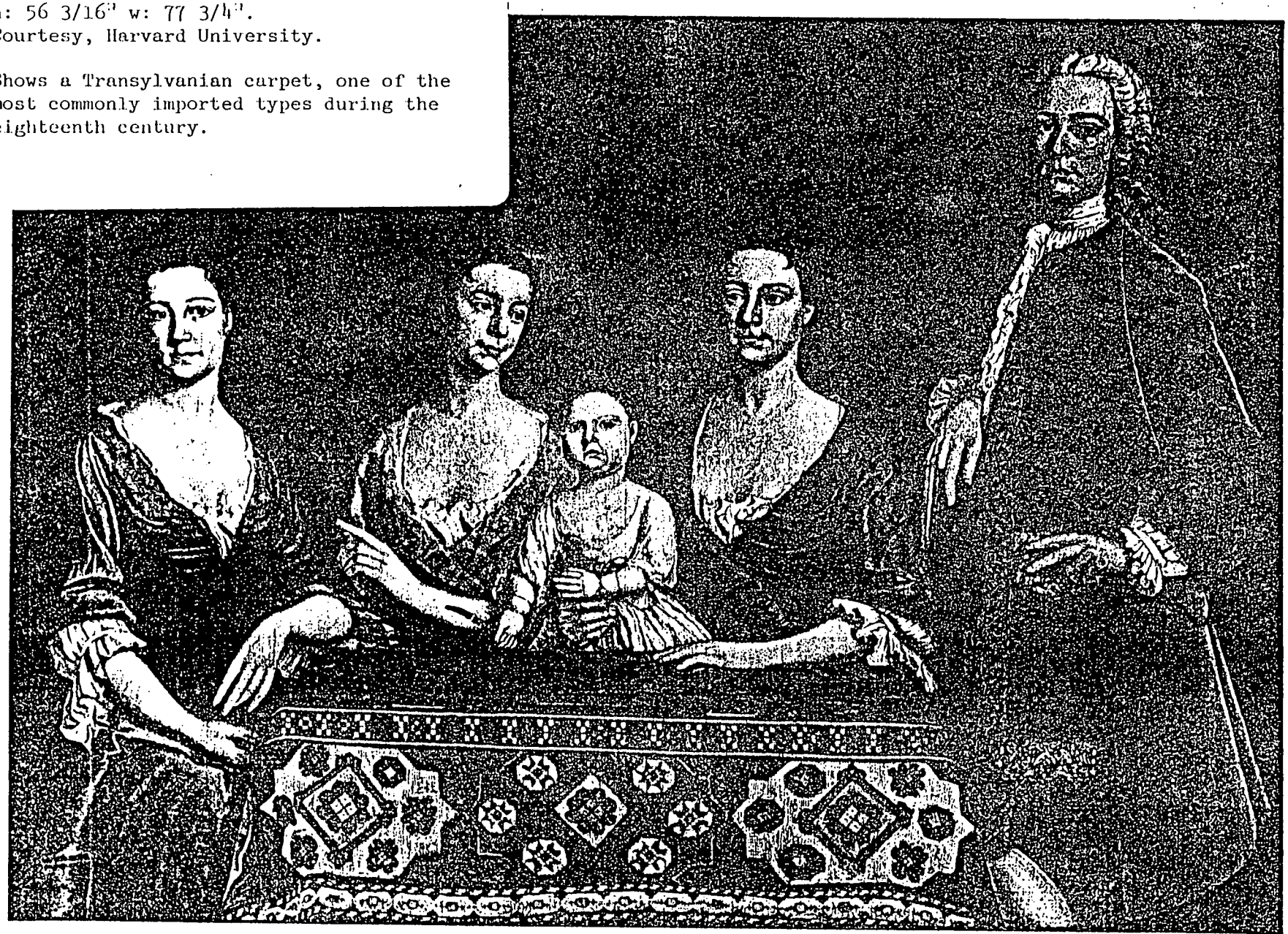
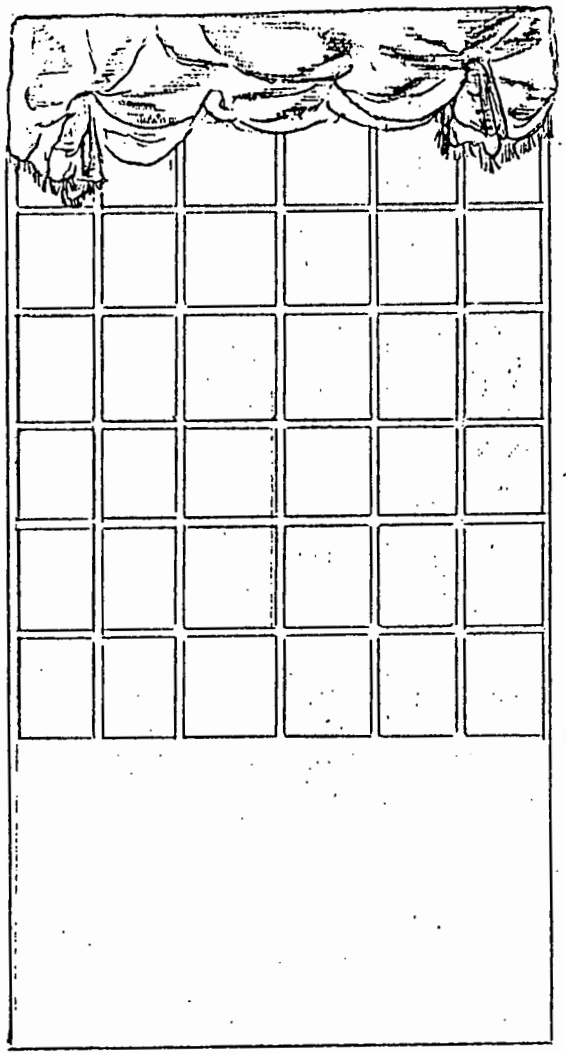
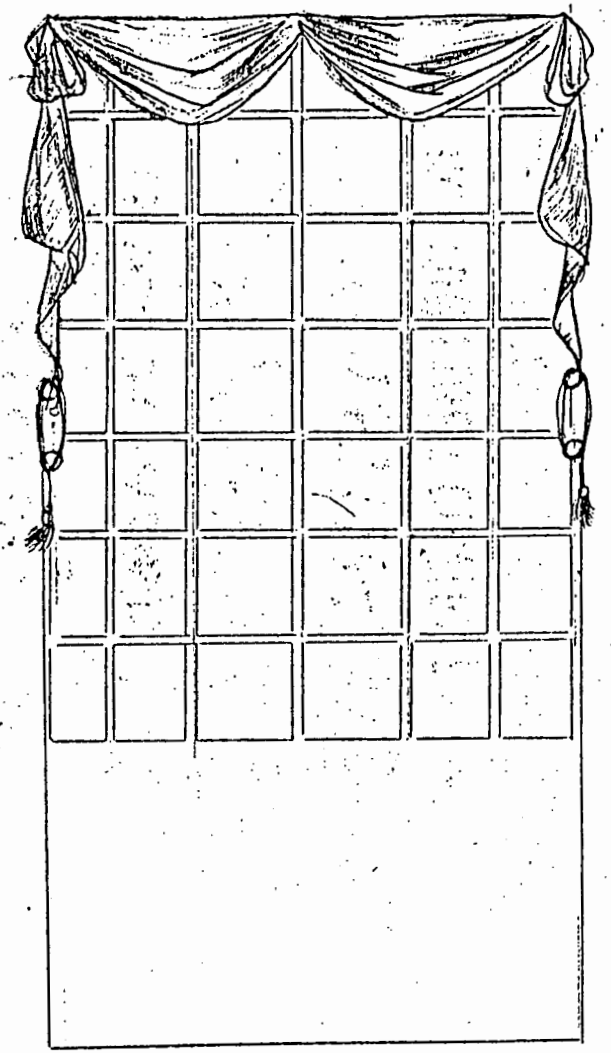


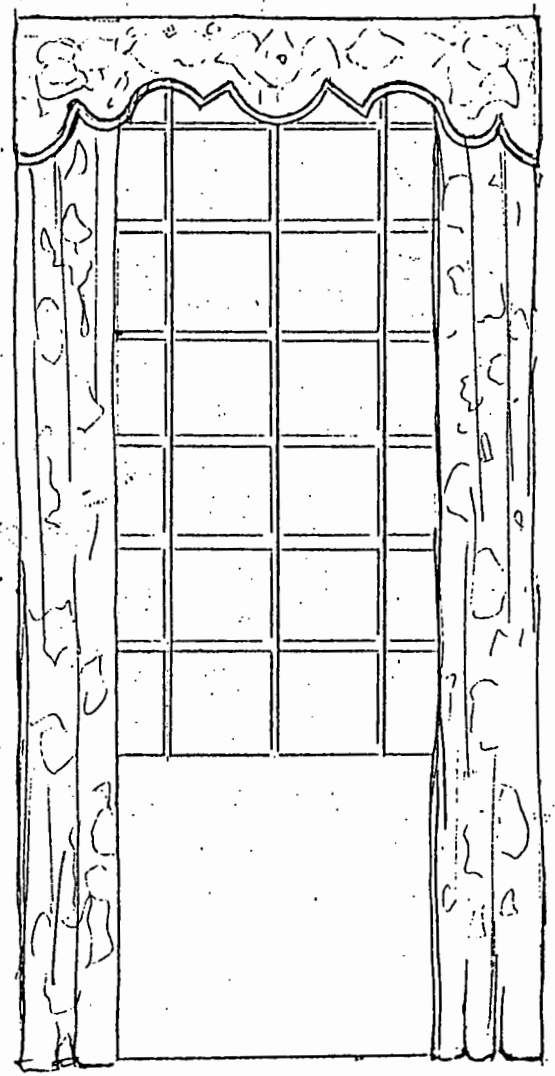
Fig. 13 Sketch of straight hanging, Venetian, and festoon window curtains.



Venetian

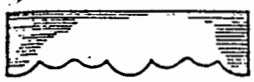


Festoon



Straight-hanging

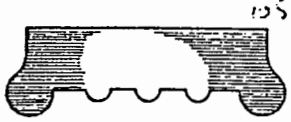
## *Typical Valance Designs ed in Colonial Williamsburg*



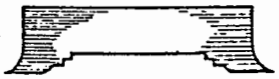
*a.* A soft-shaped valance of regular and inverted scallops. This relatively informal design calls for a small-patterned or figured fabric.



*b.* A more formal valance than *a*, and more suitable for a fabric with a large design.



*c.* "Dog ear" valance, an English design. It is suited to fabrics with an over-all or flowing pattern.



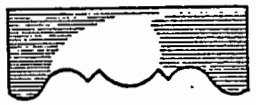
*d.* A more formal "dog ear" valance with an oriental motif in its pagoda shape. The design is used in the Wythe House parlor and is most appropriate for a formal fabric.



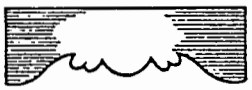
*e.* A Chippendale-type design. This valance is suitable with a large-patterned formal fabric.



*f.* A design in the European style. Large-patterned fabrics are suitable here.



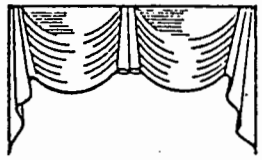
*g.* A transitional shape. This valance is adaptable to most fabrics, whether the design is an over-all or a definite pattern.



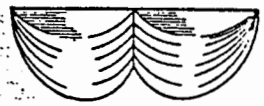
*h.* A versatile design taken from an antique in the Williamsburg collection. It is suitable for a plain or small-patterned fabric.



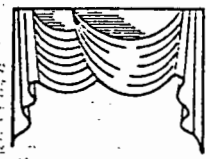
*i.* Soft festoons calling for a damask or similar formal fabric. The shape is influenced by French designs of the eighteenth century.



*j.* A treatment similar to Jefferson's sketches of hangings at Monticello. This festoon and jabot design is formal and best suited to damasks.



*k.* A less formal treatment using festoons alone. This valance design can be adapted to most fabrics.



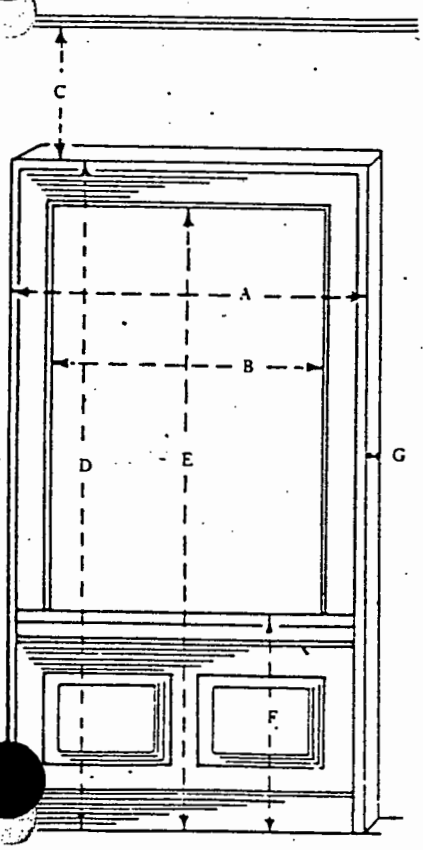
*l.* A very formal, heavily draped treatment with a French feeling. It is late-eighteenth-century and is most often used with damasks.



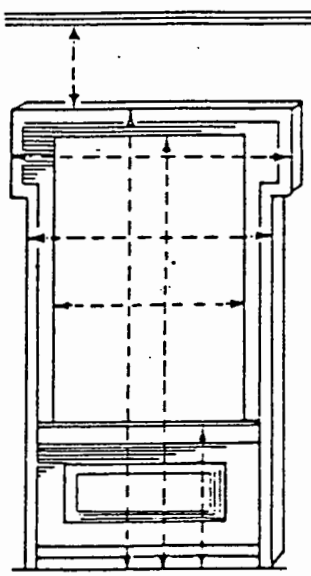
*m.* A single shirred valance. This simple, easy-to-make design is appropriate for an informal fabric.

## *Correct Method for Measuring the Most Usual Kinds of Windows*

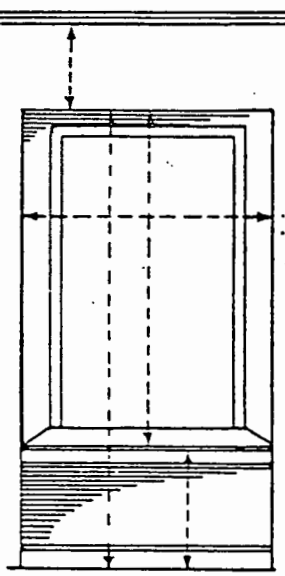
A. EXTREME WIDTH
B. INSIDE WIDTH
C. TOP OF TRIM TO CEILING
D. EXTREME HEIGHT
E. INSIDE HEIGHT
F. SILL TO FLOOR
G. RETURN



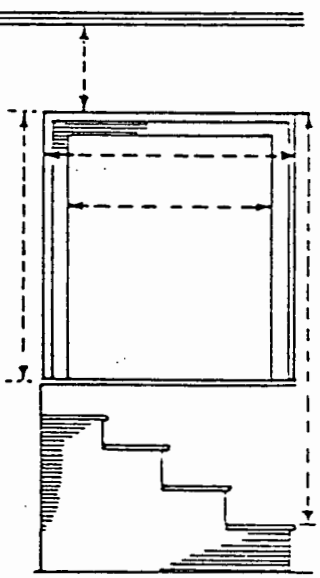

*Normal Window*



*Crossetted Window*



*Casement Window*



*Stairway Window*

Fig. 14 Valance designs used in Colonial Williamsburg and available through that corporation's Craft House



Fig. 15 Venetian curtains and covered cornices, from an English caricature (1743)

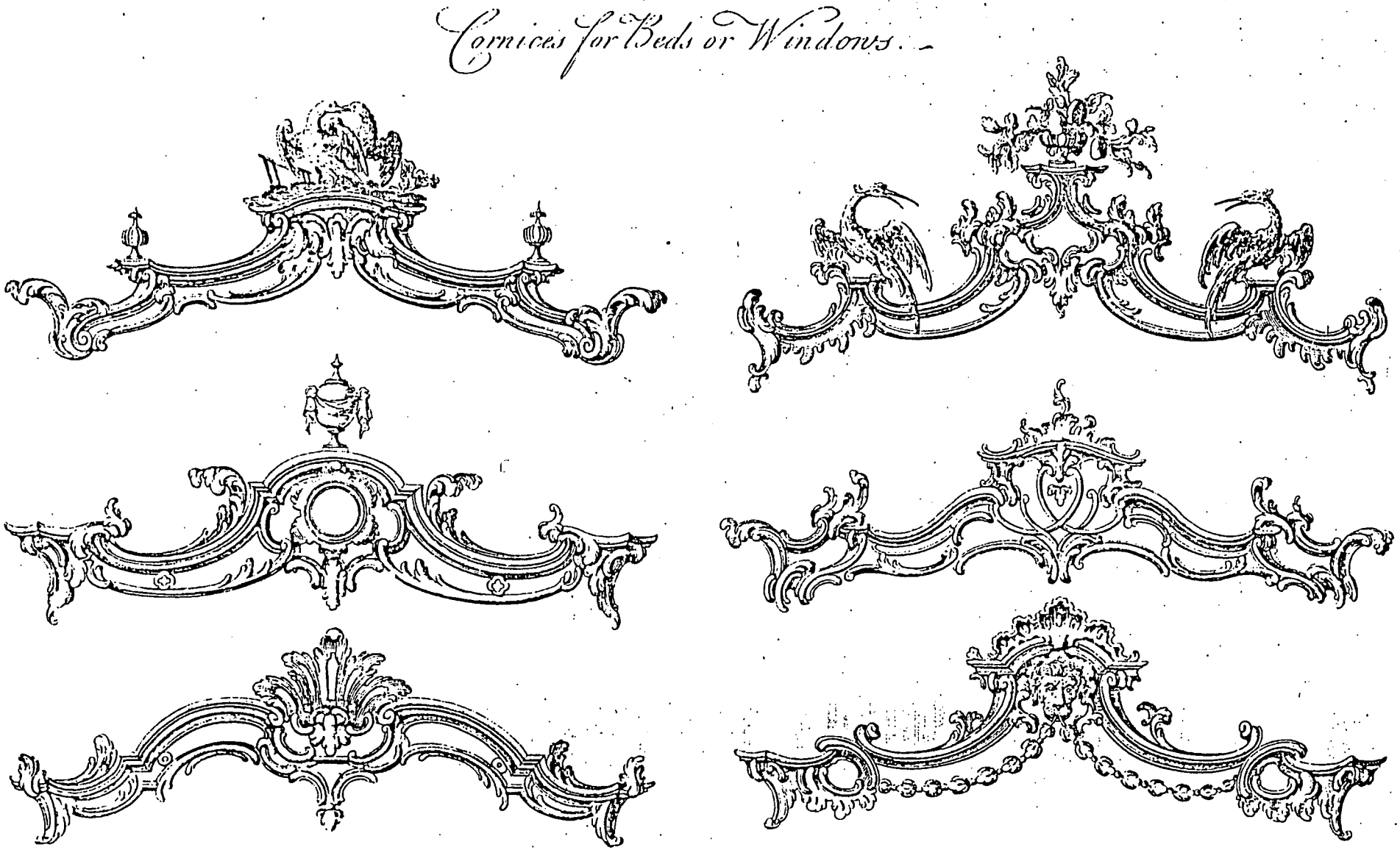



Fig. 16. Designs for window cornices from Plate XXXVII of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

A Design for a Cornice for a Venetian Window

N°. XXXI

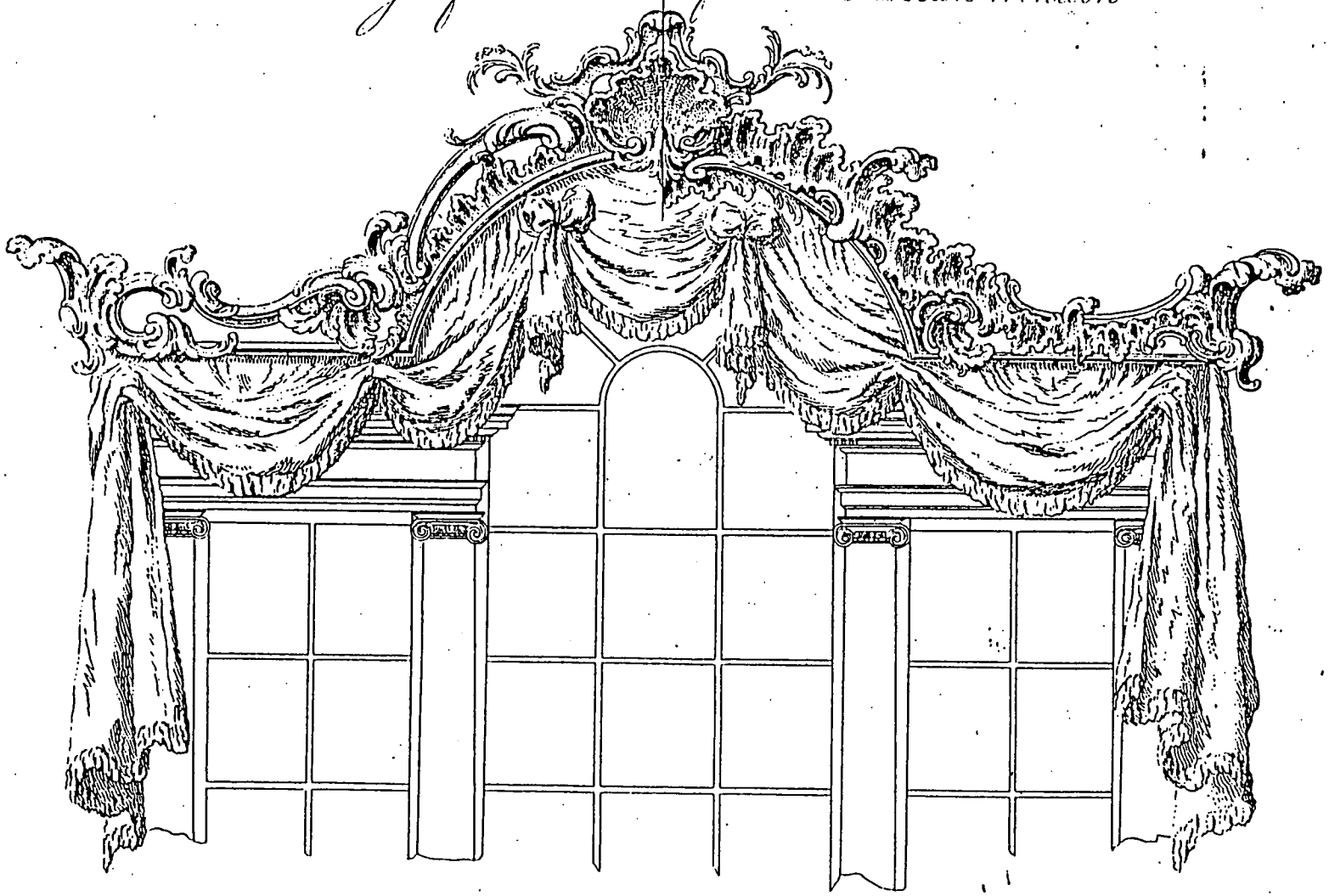




Fig. 17 The Edward Lloyd Family by Charles Willson Peale, 1771. 48" x 57". Winterthur Museum.

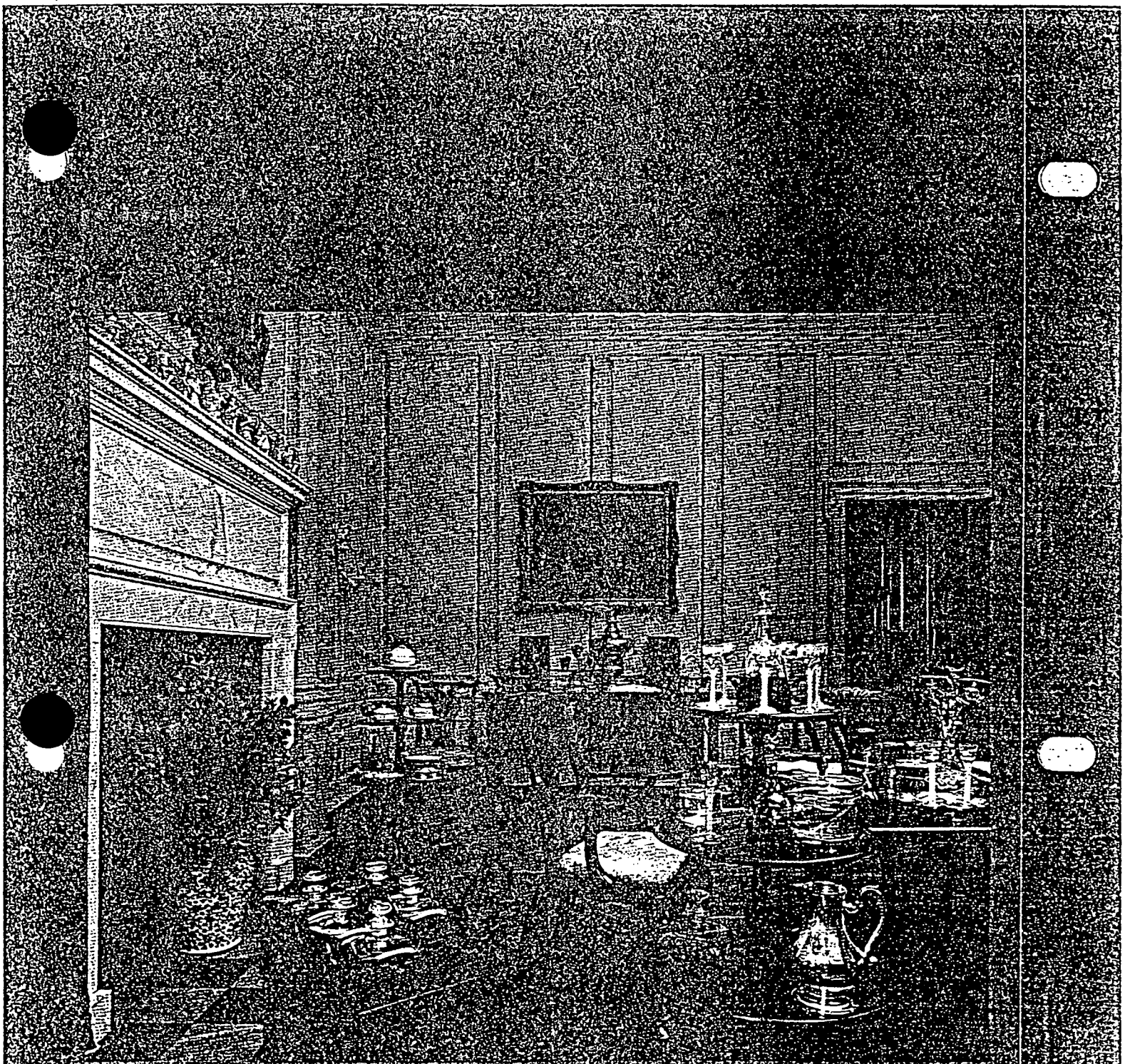


Fig. 18. Dining room of the Governor's Palace, Colonial Williamsburg.

The painting over the sideboard shows impromptu dancing in a setting resembling the Nelson House dining room.

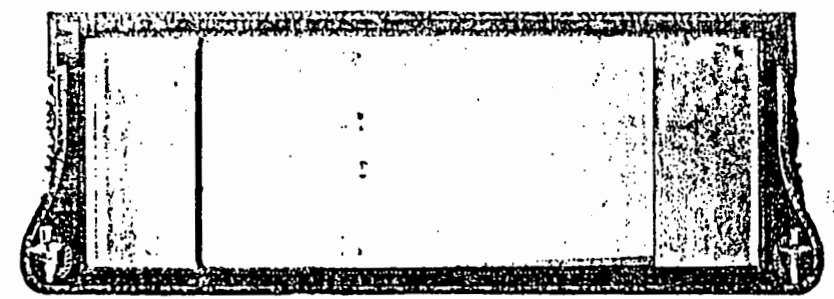


Fig. 20. Walnut and gilt overmantel looking glass with sconces. English, c. 1750. l.: 5'. Henry Ford Museum

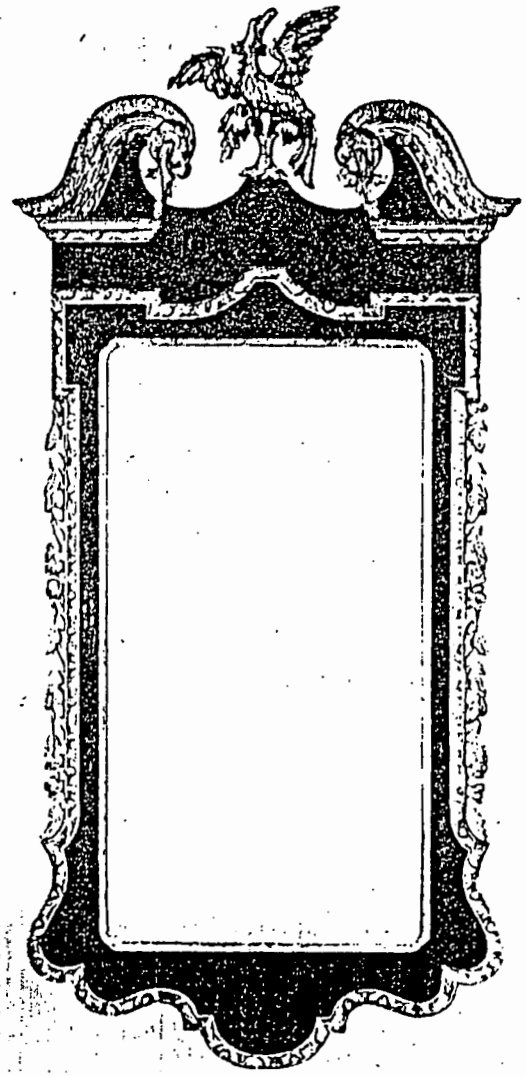


Fig. 19. Looking glass, mahogany and gilt. Philadelphia, 1753-61. 62" x 28" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

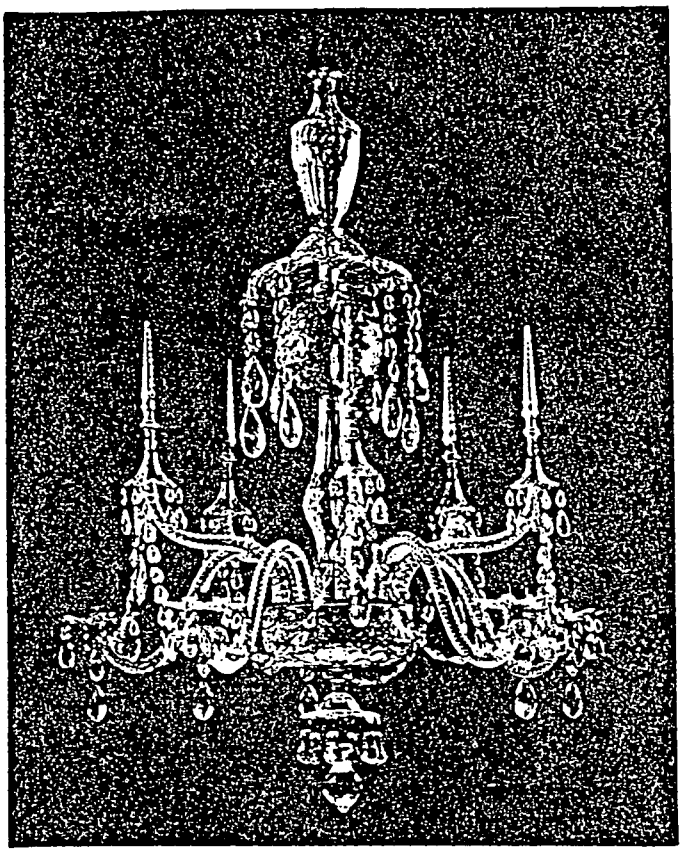


Fig. 21 Cut glass chandelier.
English, 1780-90. h.: 45"
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan

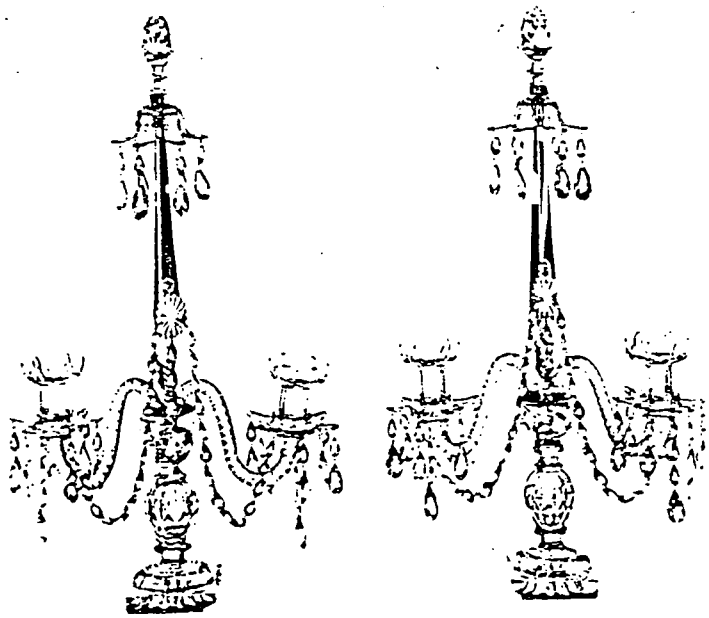
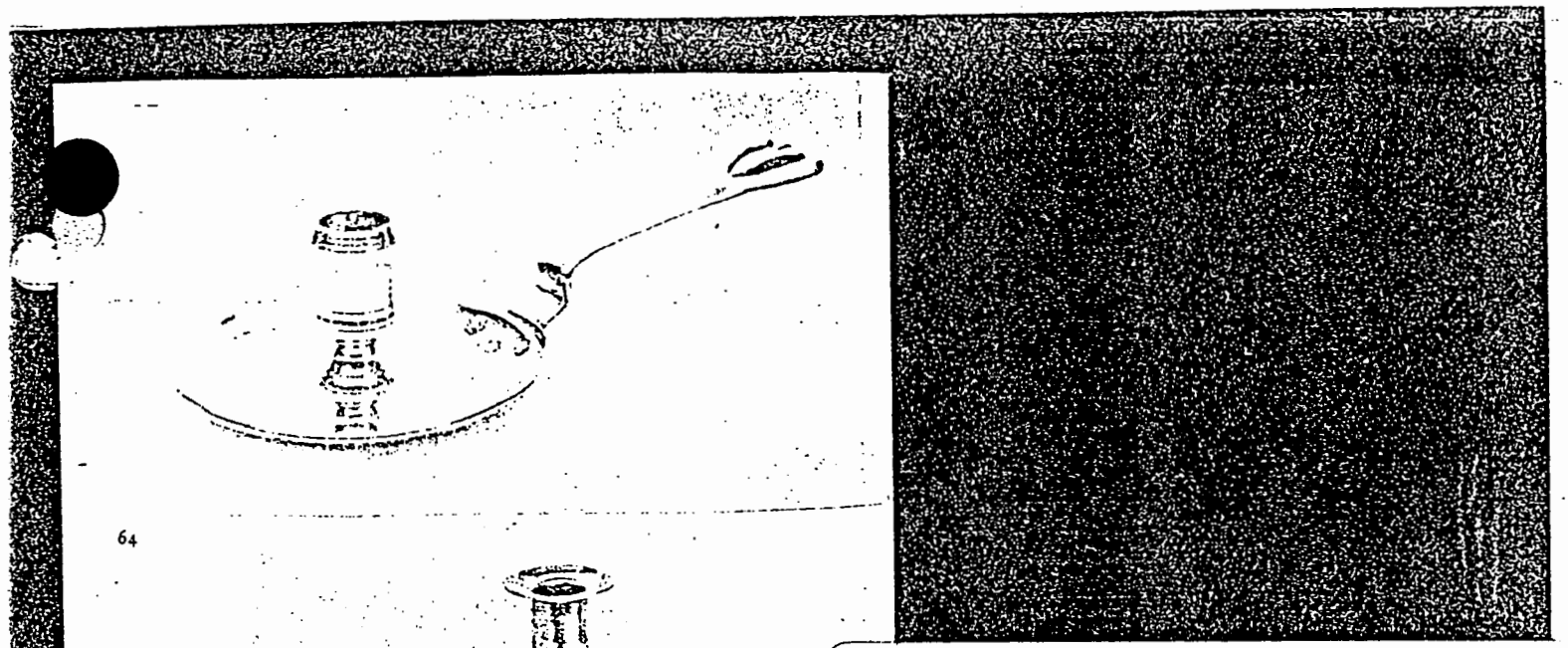
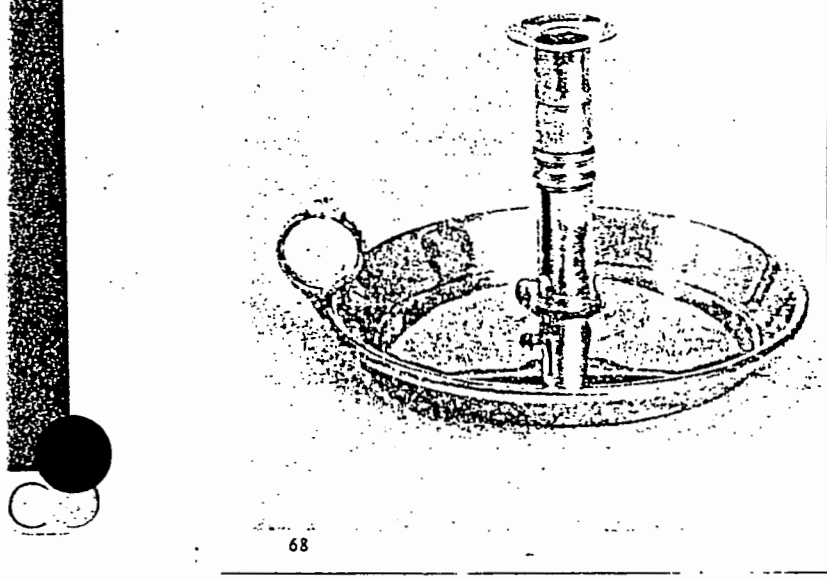


Fig. 22 Cut glass candelabra.
English, c. 1790. h.: 24"
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan



64



68

Fig. 23. Brass chambersticks, reproduced from Rupert Gentle and Rachael Field's English Domestic Brass, 1680-1810 and the History of its Origins (New York, 1975), p. 128-29. Note especially figures 63, 64, and 68.

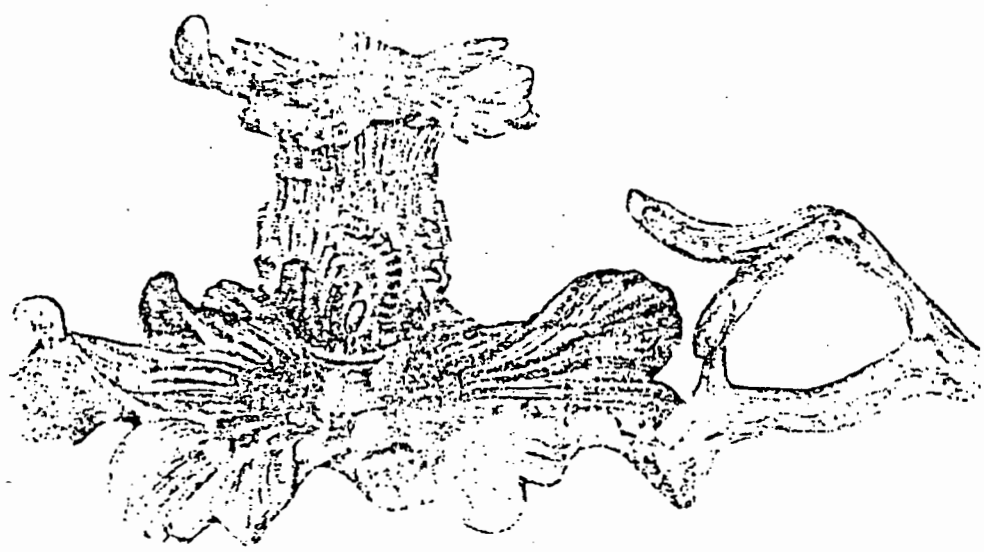
## Chambersticks

63 A rare Rococo chamberstick with a naturalistic theme. The handle is rustic and there is a caterpillar on the nozzle.
*6½ inches long overall, c. 1750–60.*

64 A fine chamberstick with rather more detail than usual. The simplicity of its design suggests that it dates from the first quarter of the eighteenth century.
*9½ inches long, 2⅜ inches high, French or English, c. 1725. Winterthur Museum.*

65 A neat design with an unusual turned wooden handle. Cast brass with a plainness which dates it to the same period as the previous one.
*7¾ inches long, French or English, c. 1725. Winterthur Museum.*

66 A more delicate chamberstick with detail on the ring handle and well-turned decoration on the nozzle and dish. Cast brass.
*4½ inches long, 2¼ inches high, c. 1735. Charles Howard.*



63

68 A typical late eighteenth-century model, but made of sheet metal and not cast. It is soundly made and has a push-up ejector.
*5 inches high, 7½ inches diameter, c. 1780.*



Fig. 24 Japanned tin lantern.
French, 1790-1800. h.: 20"
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan

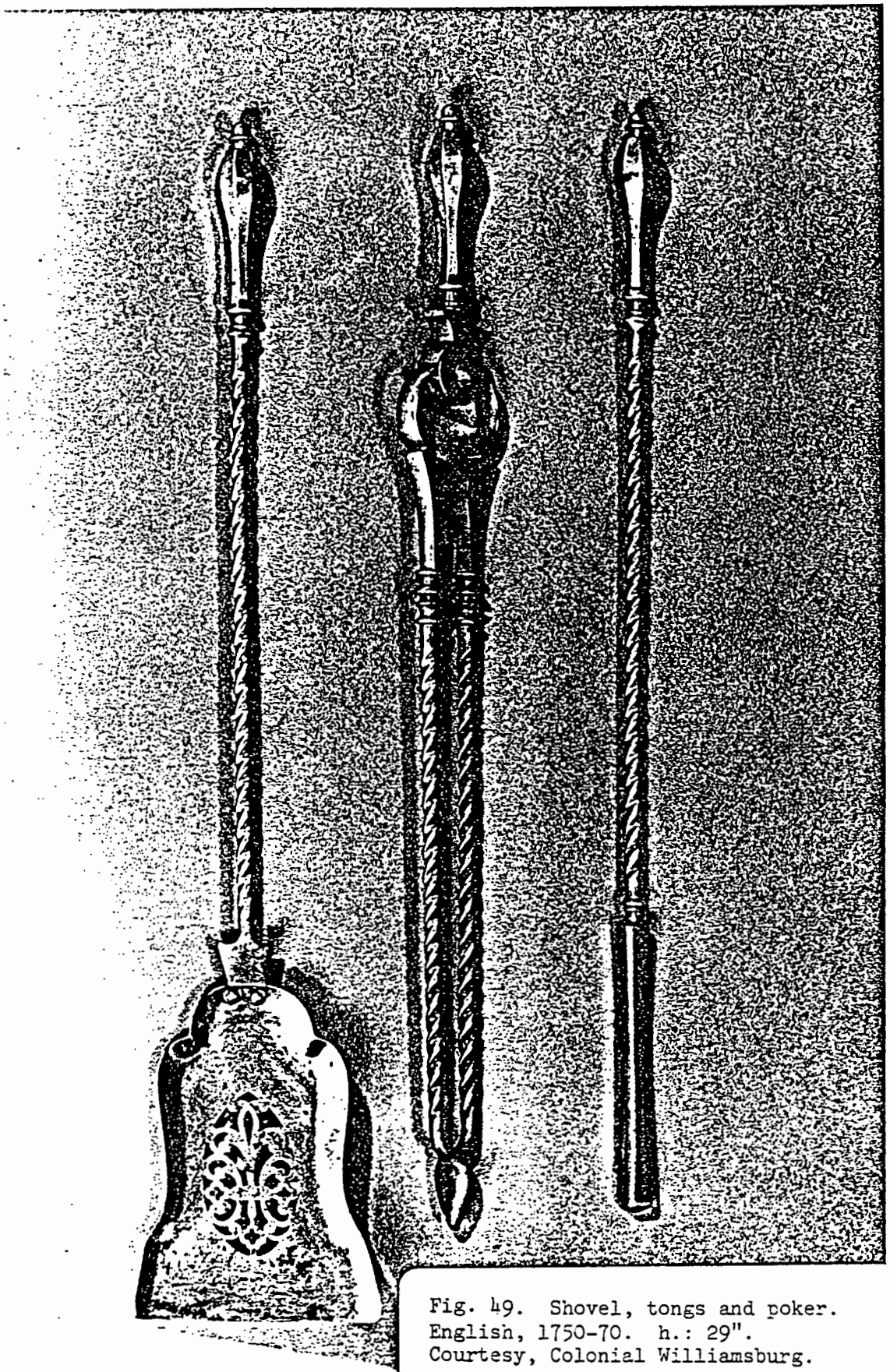


Fig. 49. Shovel, tongs and poker.
English, 1750-70. h.: 29".
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.

Notice how the baroque spiral motif fashionable in Thomas Nelson's grandfather's day (fig. 48) has tightened in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 50. Diagram showing the Nelson House in relation to its outbuildings, based on a 1796 insurance policy plan, reproduced by Charles E. Hatch, Jr., in his Nelson House (Washington, 1969), illustration number 7.

Plan of the Nelson House and its outbuildings, based on a 1796 Mutual Assurance Society Policy. Taken from Lee H. Nelson's Historic Structure Report: The Nelson House, Architectural Data Section (1973), p. 11

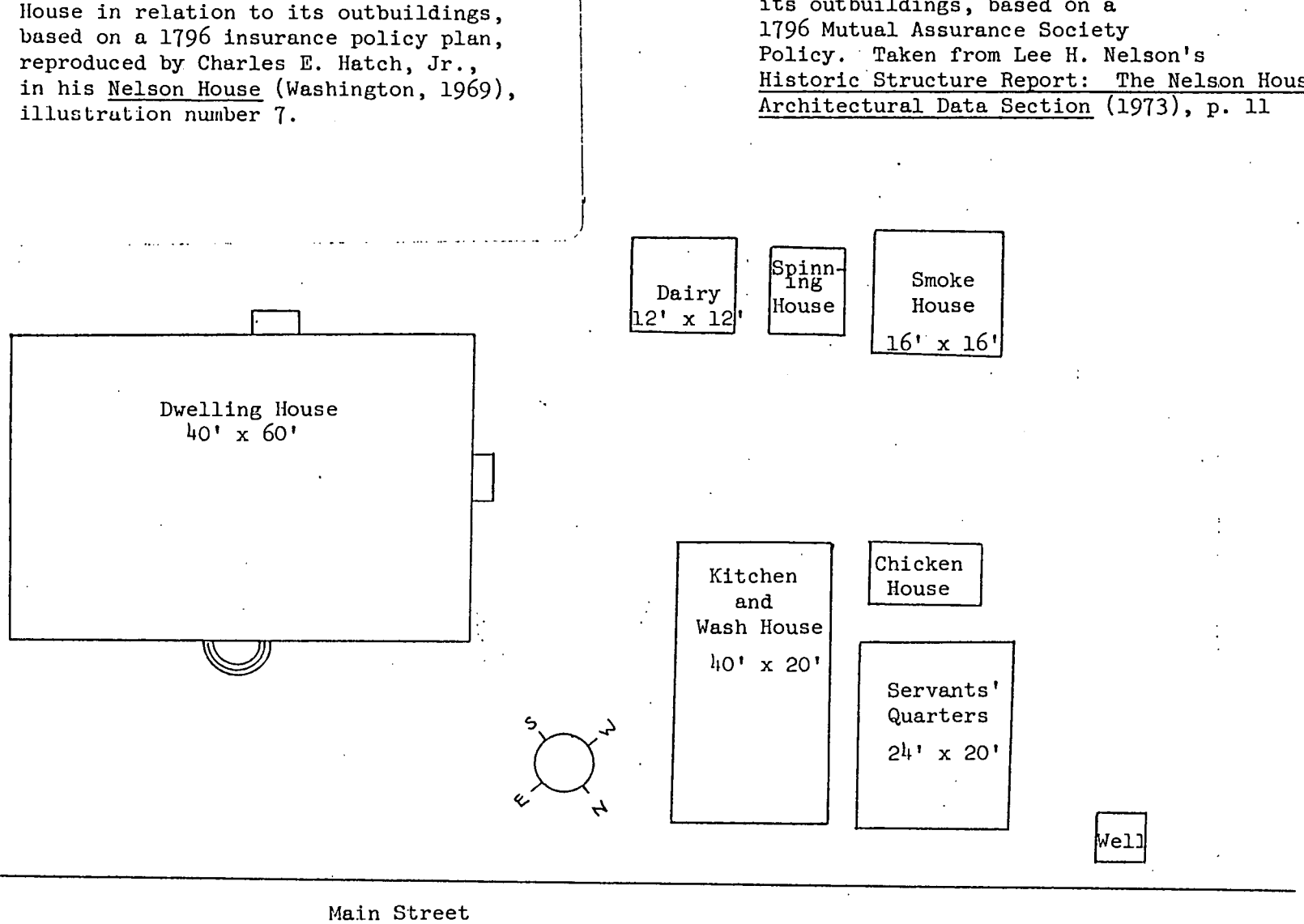




Fig. 51. Brass kettle and trivit.
English, c. 1725. h: 13"
Colonial Williamsburg

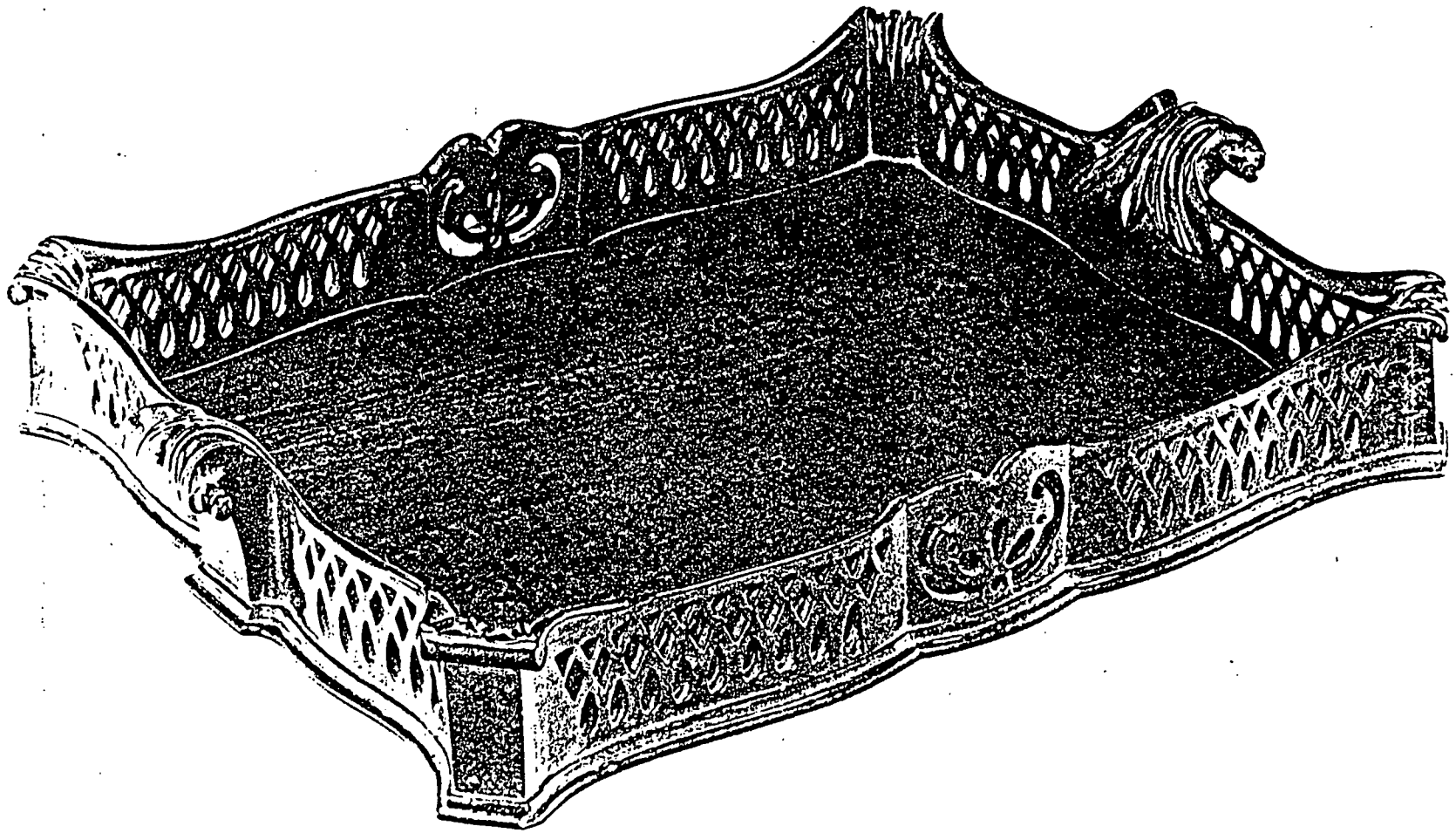


Fig. 52. Mahogany tray.
English, c. 1760. length: 22 1/2"
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg





Fig. 53 a-c. Japanned and gilded tin coffee pot and knife box (Colonial Williamsburg) and tray (Winterthur Museum).

English, 1760-1800.



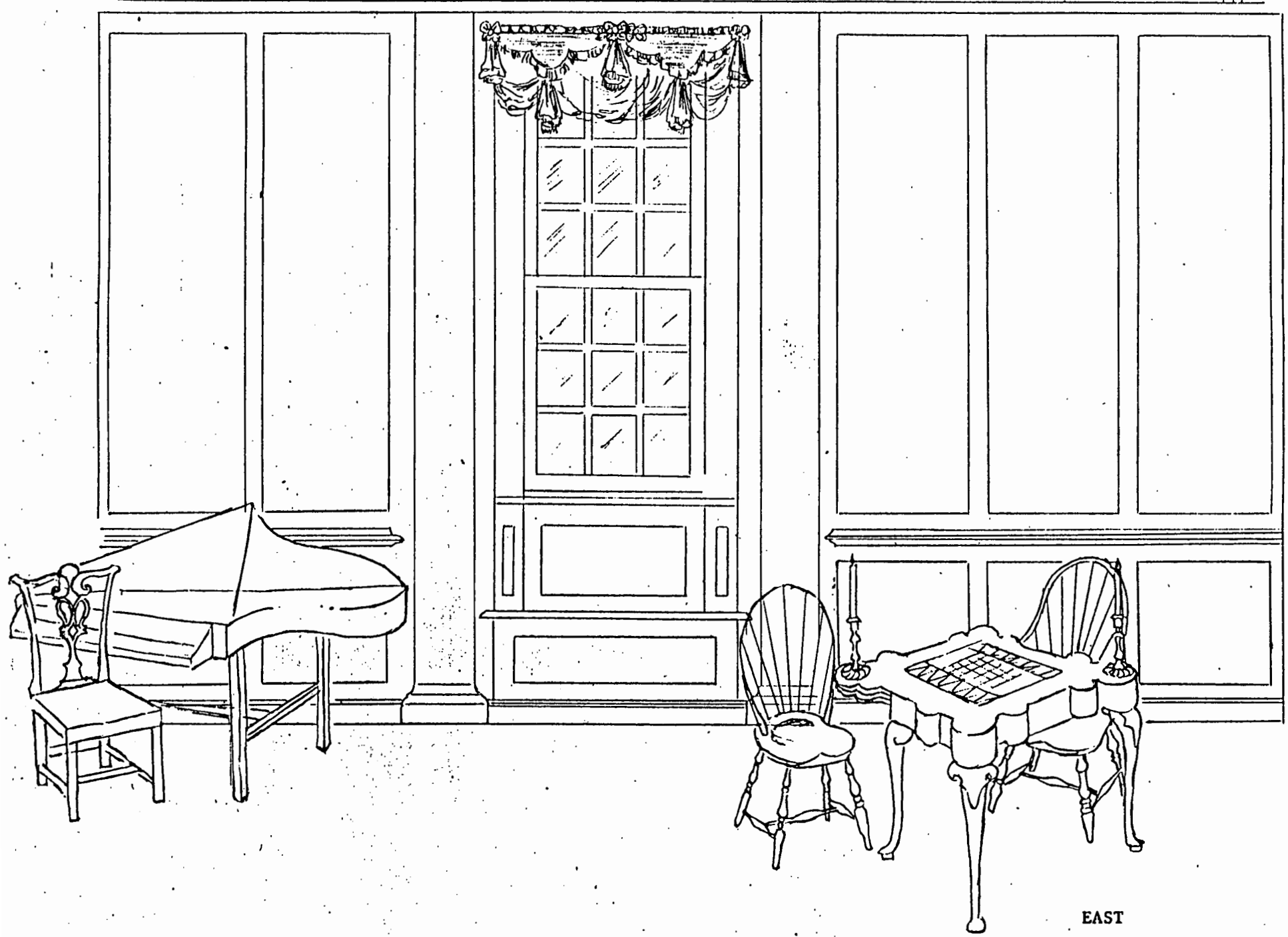


Fig. 54. Chinese export porcelain bowls, "cherry picker" pattern in polychrome enamel. 1750-1770. h.: 3 1/2" diam.: 7 7/8".

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

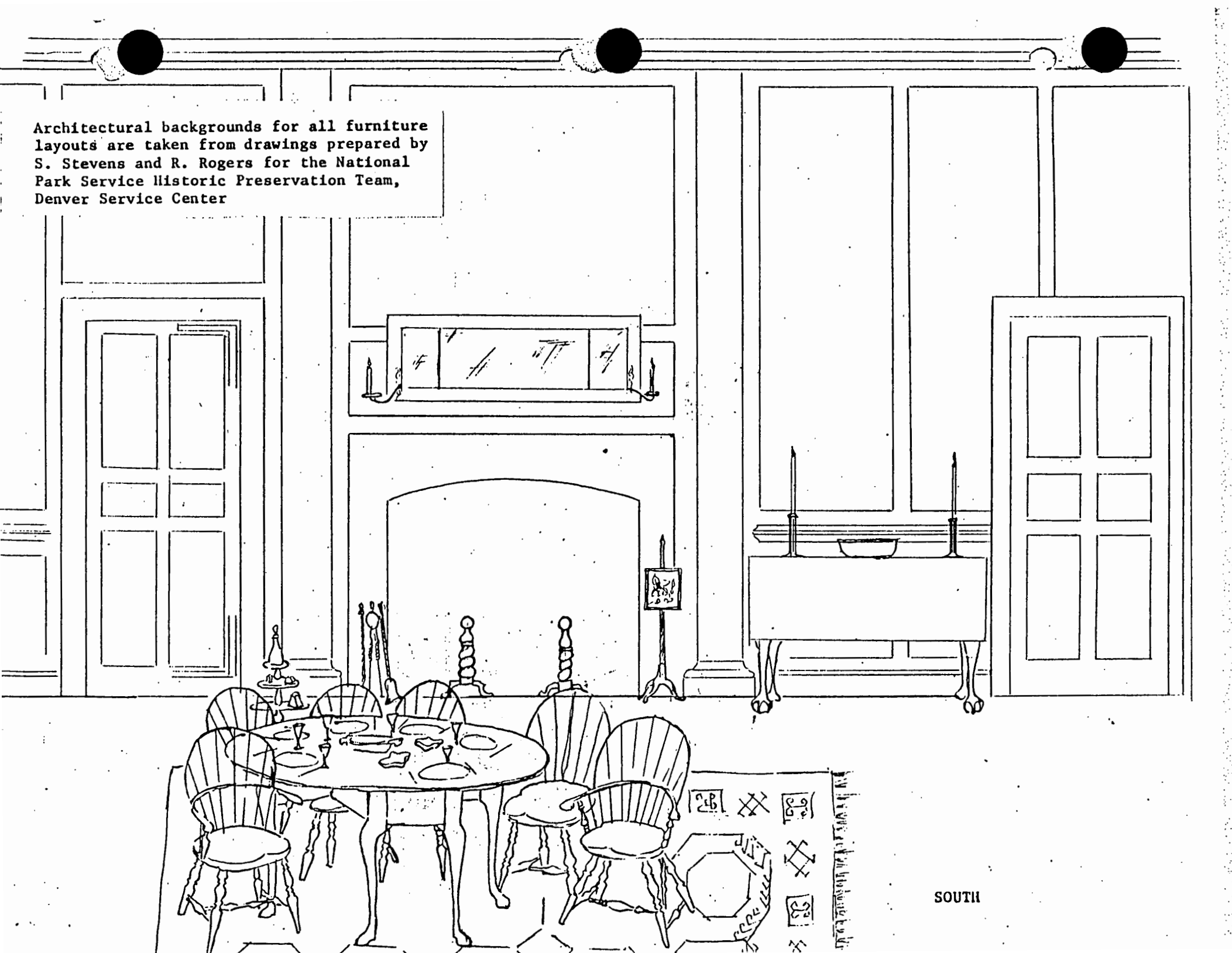


WEST



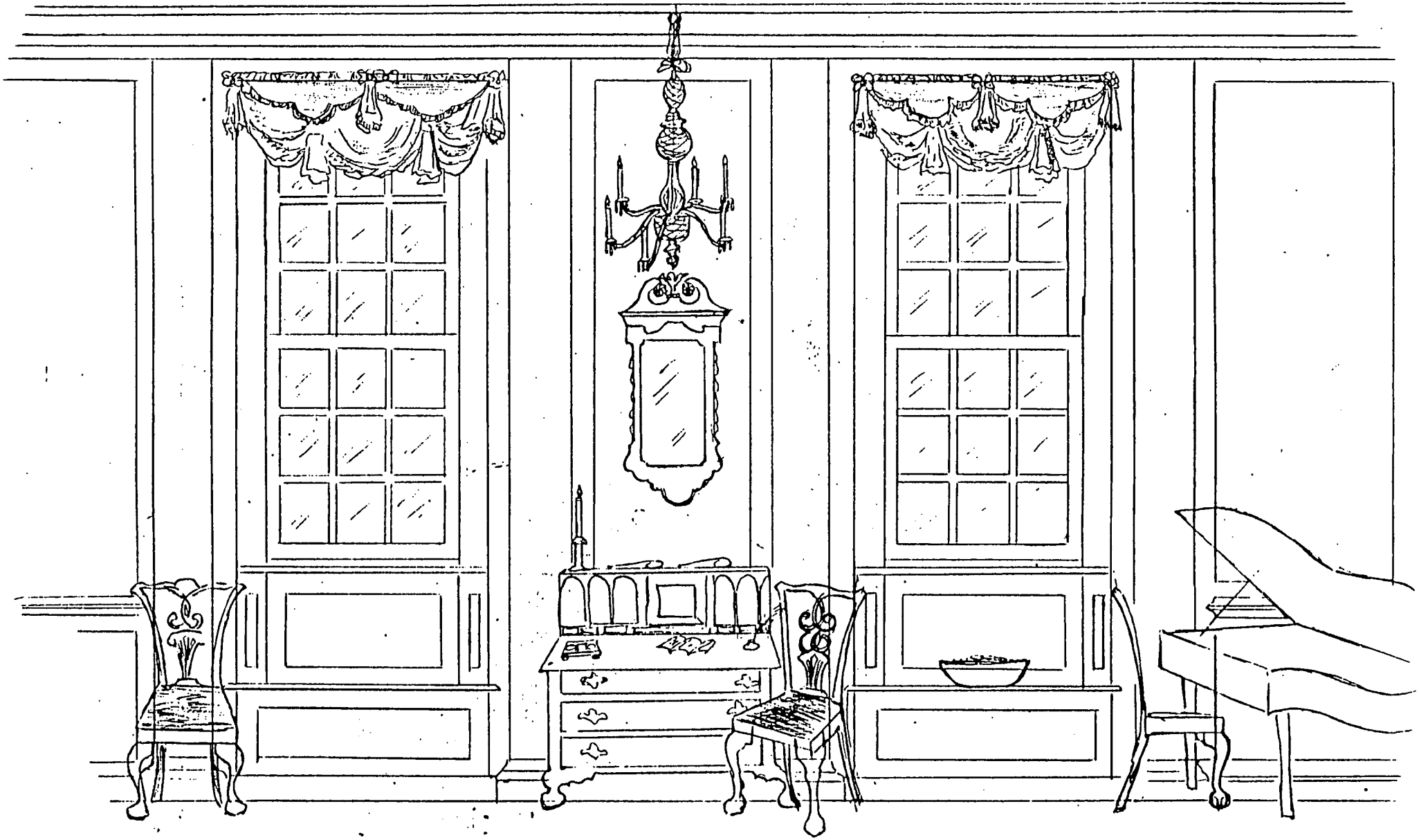
EAST

Architectural backgrounds for all furniture layouts are taken from drawings prepared by S. Stevens and R. Rogers for the National Park Service Historic Preservation Team, Denver Service Center



SOUTH

D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NY.
D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NY.



NORTH

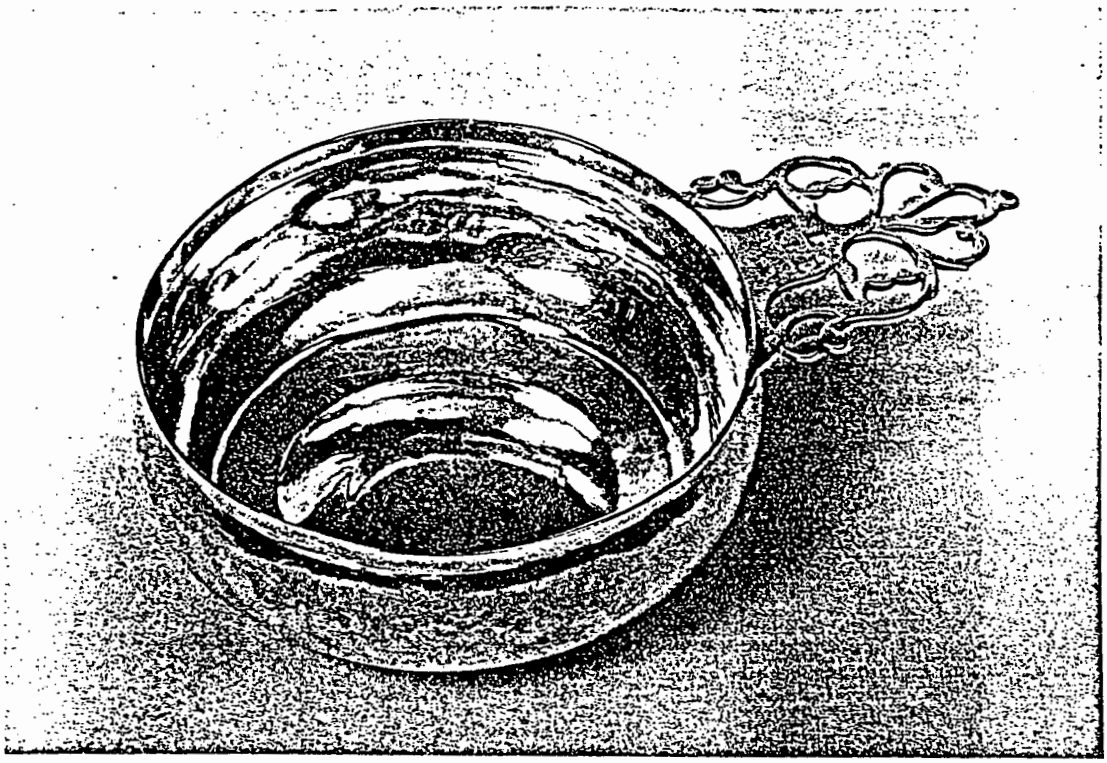


Fig. 44. Silver porringer
Connecticut, 1735-76.
Courtesy, the Winterthur Museum

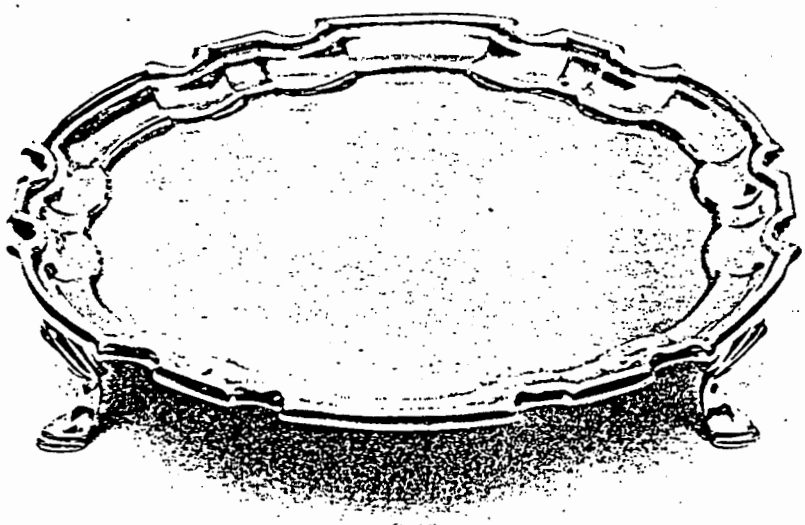


Fig. 45. Silver salver. Philadelphia,
c. 1745. h:1" diam: 6"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

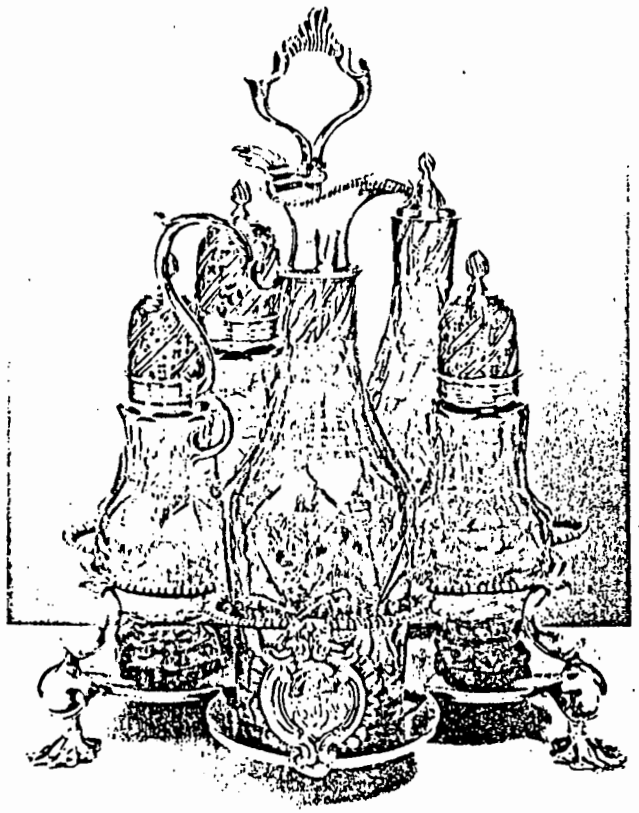


Fig. 47b. Silver and glass cruet stand. English, c. 1763.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

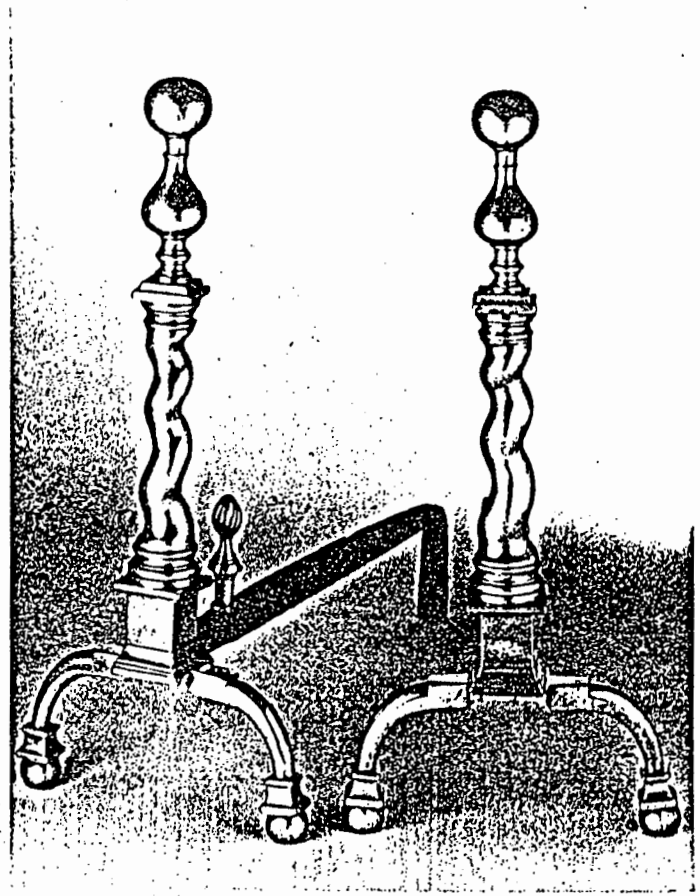


Fig. 48. Brass andirons. English, 1700-25. height: 27" depth: 25"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

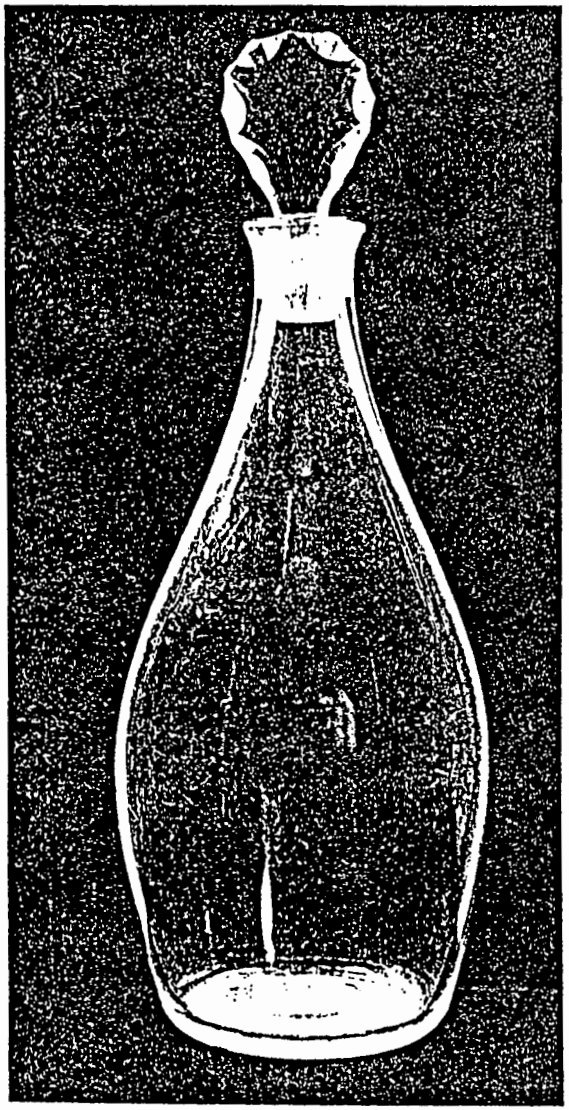


Fig. 46. Glass decanter —Pennsylvania, 1770-90. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

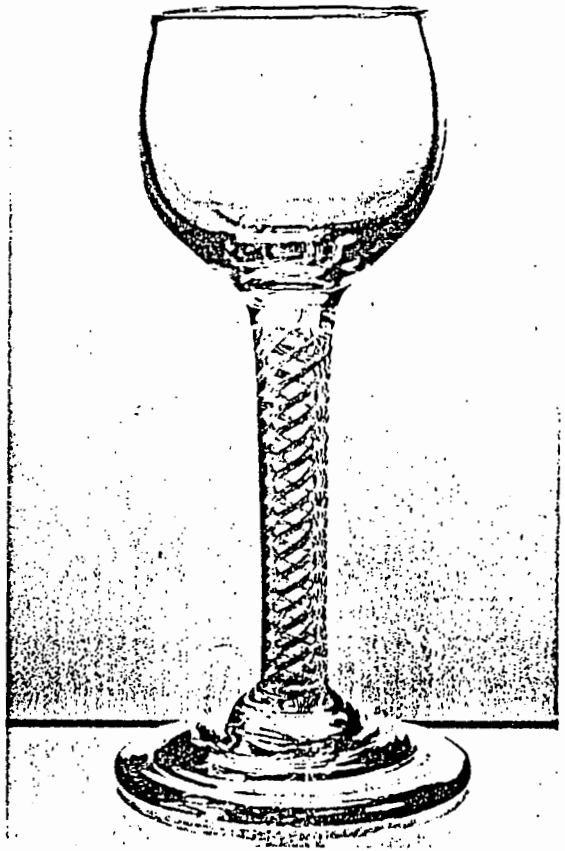


Fig. 47a. Wine glass with spiral twist enamel stem. English, 1760-1800. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

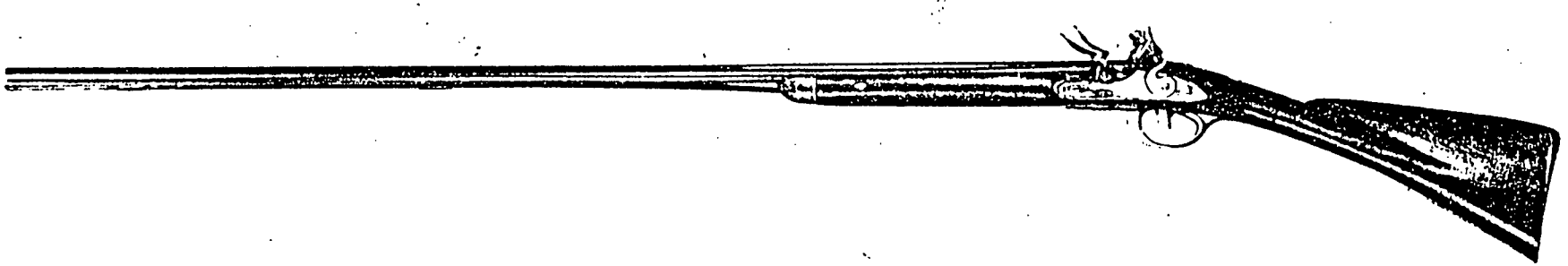
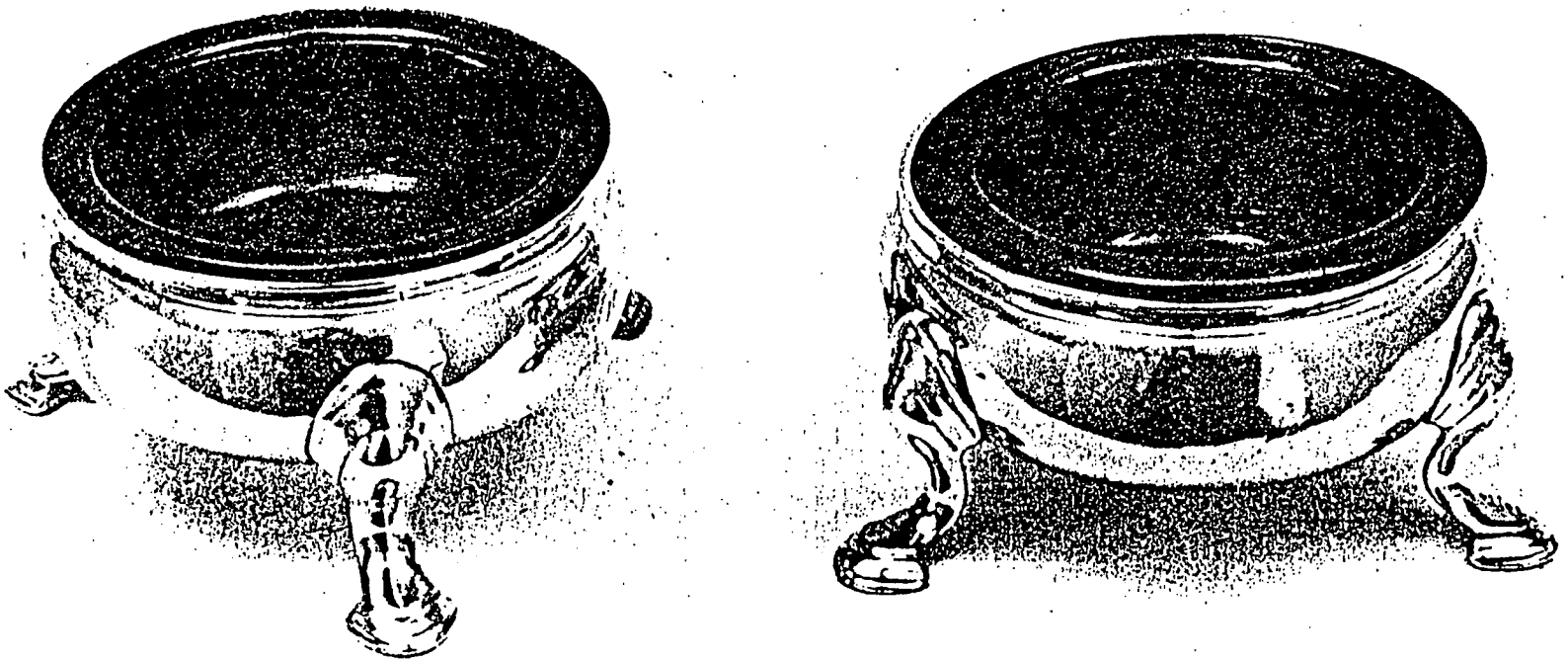


Fig. 25. Flintlock fowling piece. Walnut stock, steel barrel and lock, silver and brass mounts. Maker: Wilson. English, circa 1750. Length: 57 1/2".

Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.

Fig. 36. Silver salt cellars.
English, circa 1740.
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.

These particular salts are believed to have a Nelson family provenance. See E.M. Davis, "Historical Silver in the Commonwealth of Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, v. 49 (April 1941) p. 112.



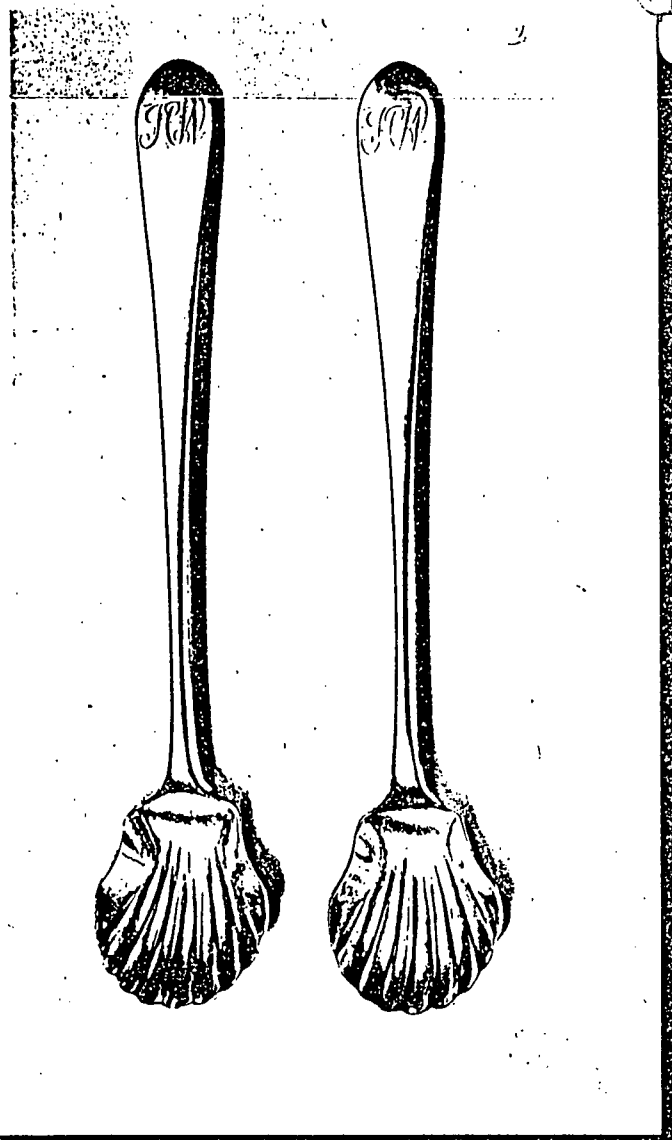


Fig. 37. Silver salt spoons.
Boston, 1790-1810.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

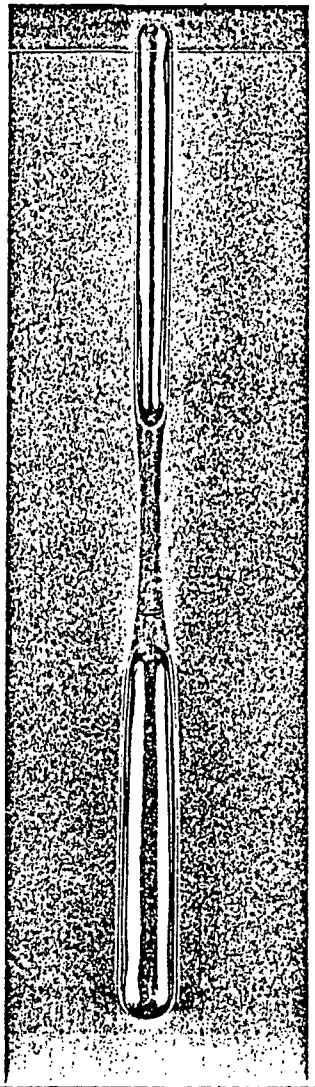


Fig. 38. Silver marrow spoon.
English, 18th century.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 39. Silver pepper pot.
New York, 1730-60.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 40a Silver serving spoon.
—Boston, 1711-40.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

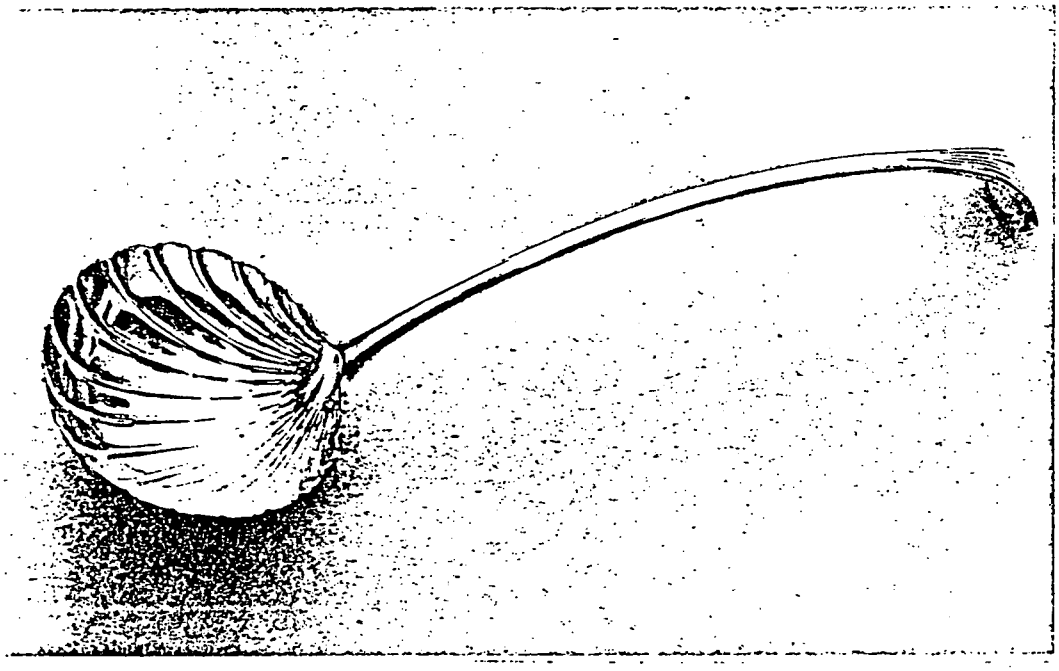


Fig. 40b Silver ladle.
—Maryland, 1760-80.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

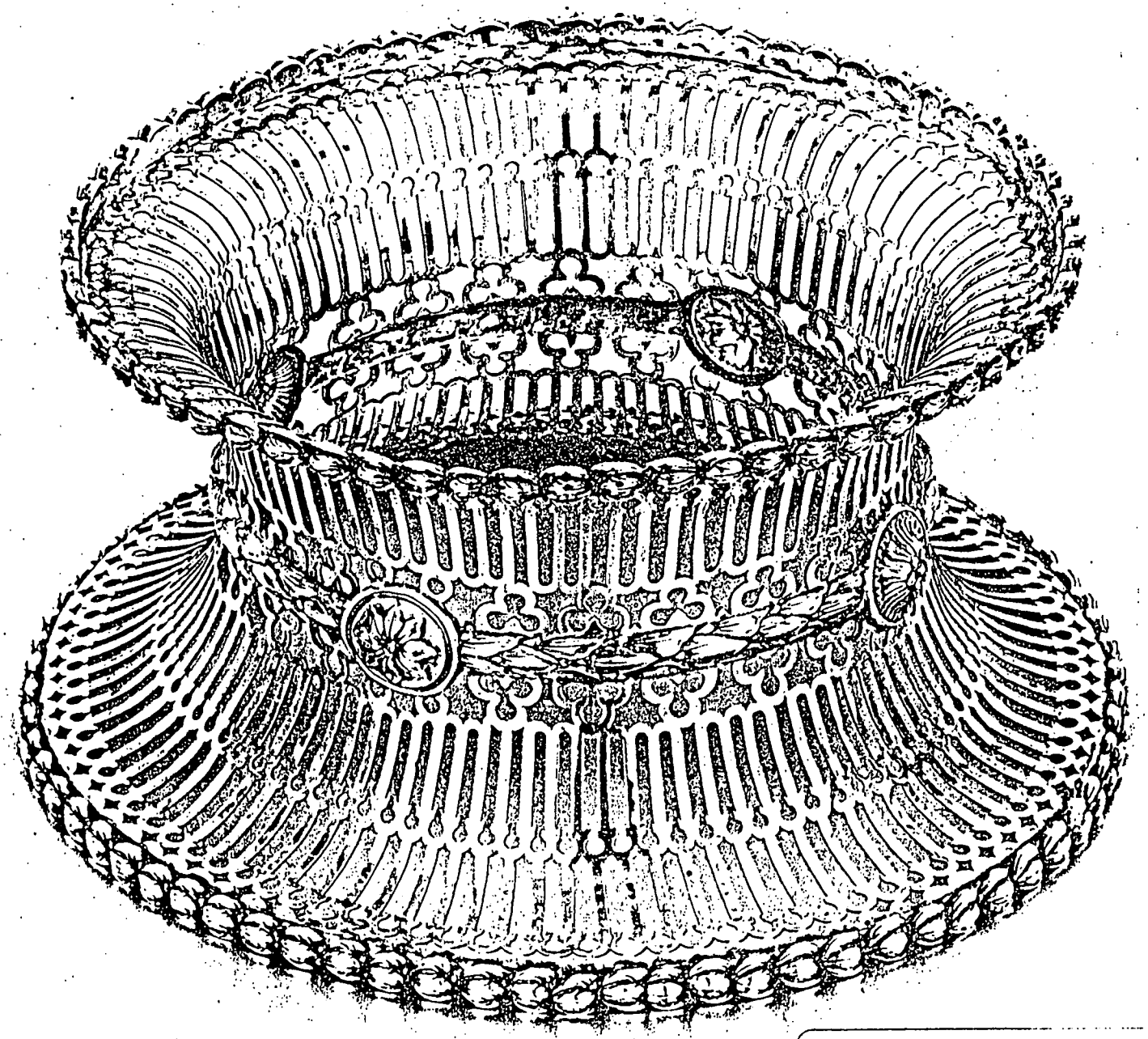


Fig. 41 Silver dish ring. English, 1771-72. h:5" diam: 8 1/2".
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

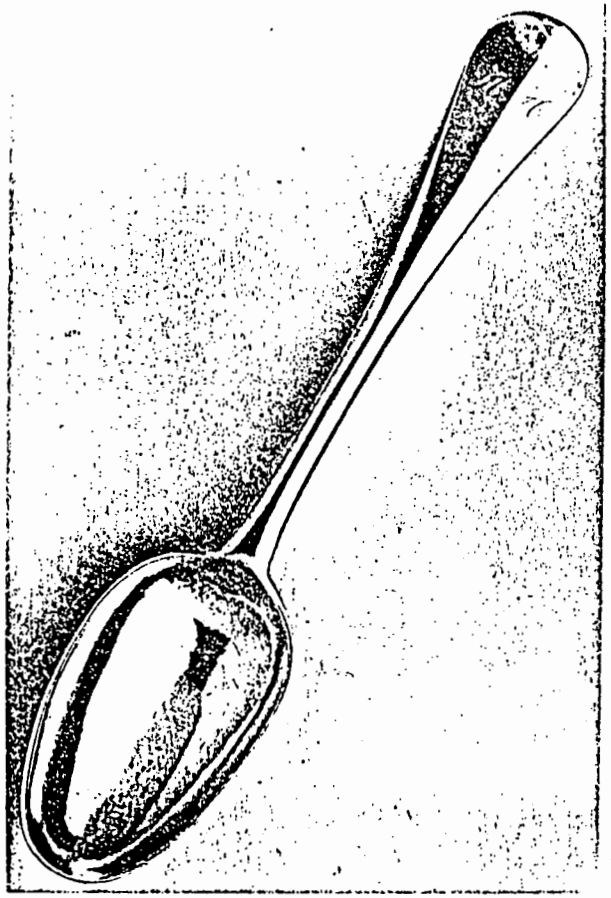


Fig. 42 Silver table spoon.
Boston, 1735-74.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

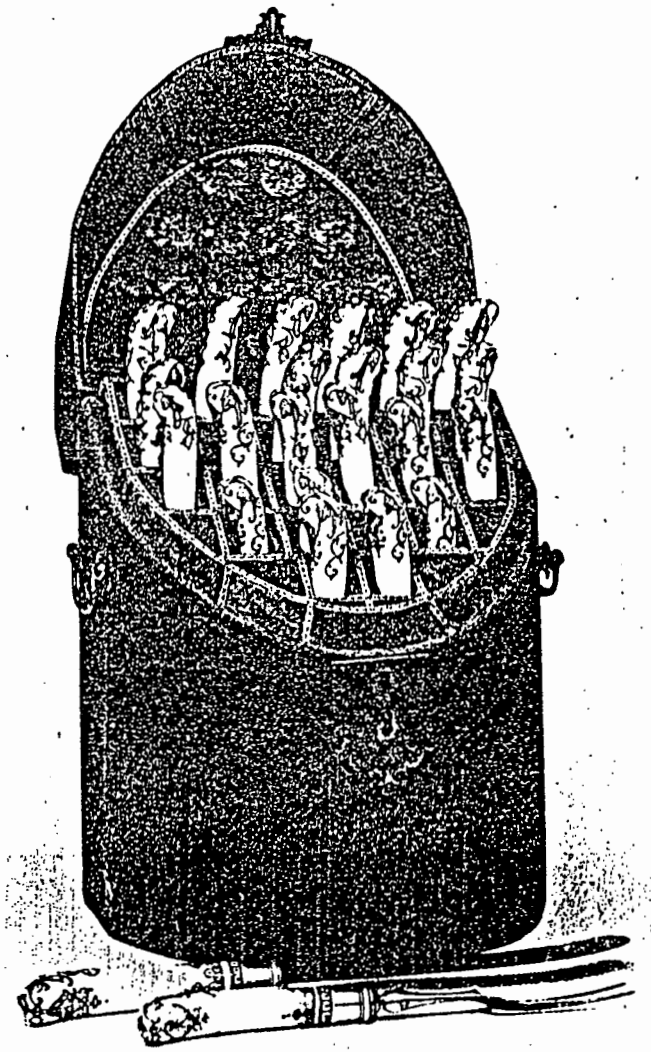


Fig. 43. Pistol shaped porcelain handled knives and forks, with case.
English or French, mid 18th c.

Courtesy, the Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum

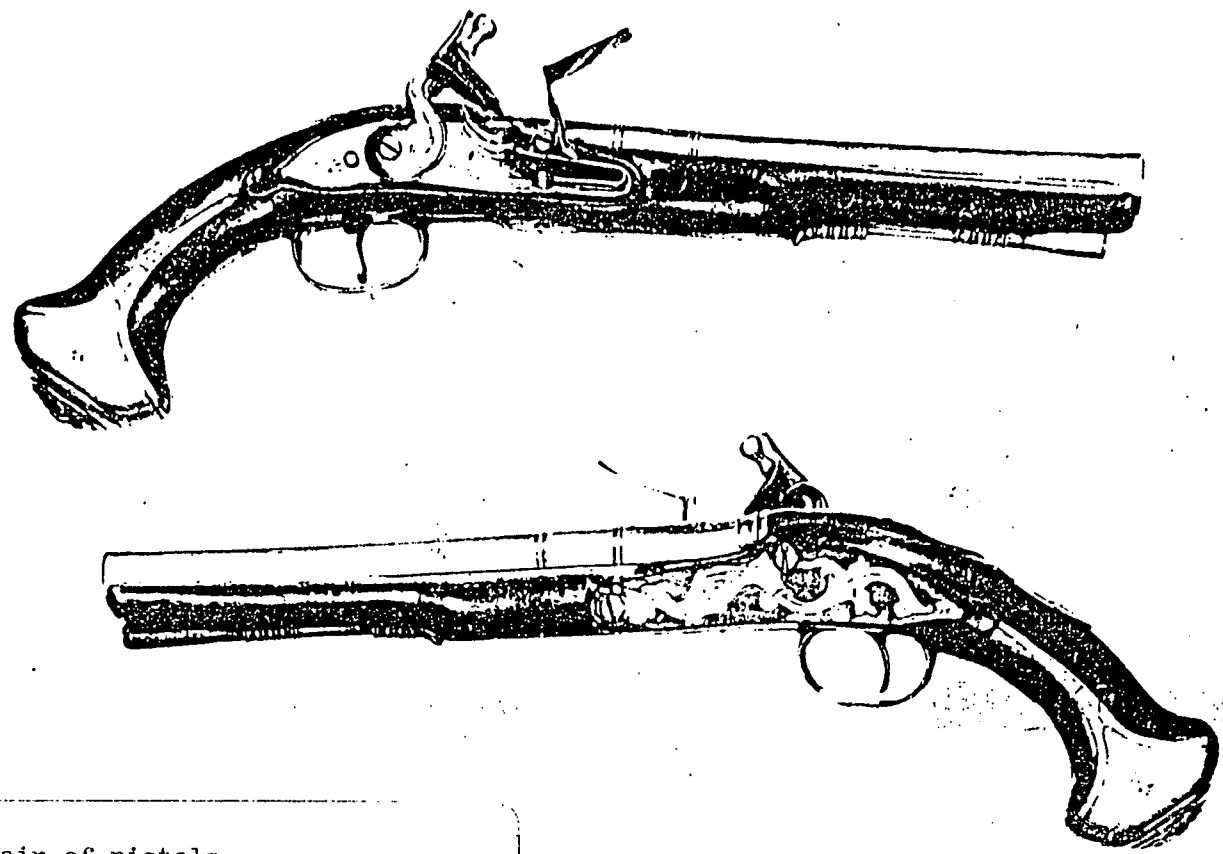


Fig. 27. Pair of pistols.
Walnut stock, brass barrel and fittings.
London, 1725-75. Maker: John Hawkins.
Length: 15 1/4".

George Washington owned a similar pair of pistols made by Hawkins.

Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.



Fig. 28 Slant-top desk. Mahogany & tulip. New York, 1765-80. h:45" w:48" d:24" Winterthur Museum



Slant-top desk, Virginia, c. 1750-1770.
Another view of this desk appears in Fig. 2.
*Private collection; photograph by Delmore A. Wenzel.*

Fig. 29 Slant-top desk. Virginia, c. 1750-70. Reproduced from the Magazine Antiques, Oct. 1973, p. 673.

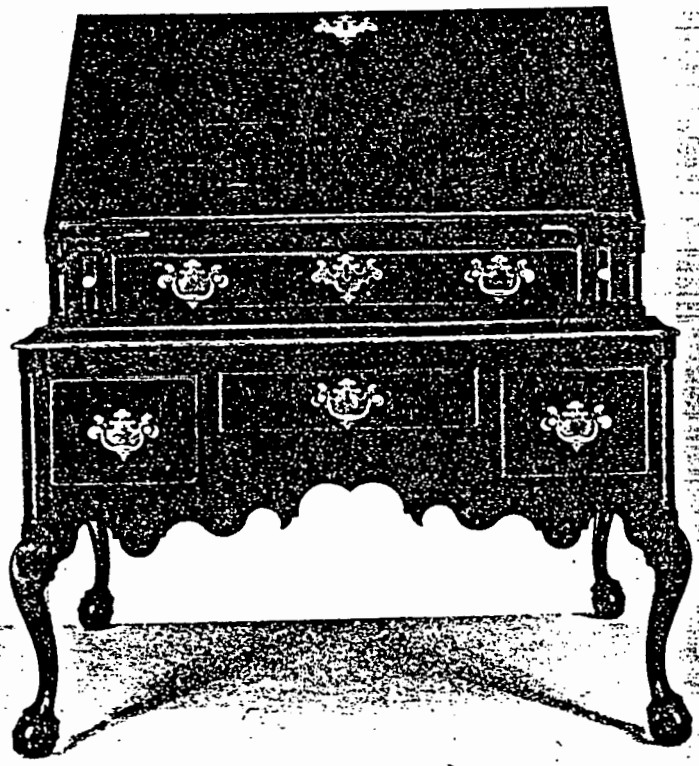


Fig. 30. Walnut desk on frame.
Phila., 1755-65. h:42" w:38" d:25"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

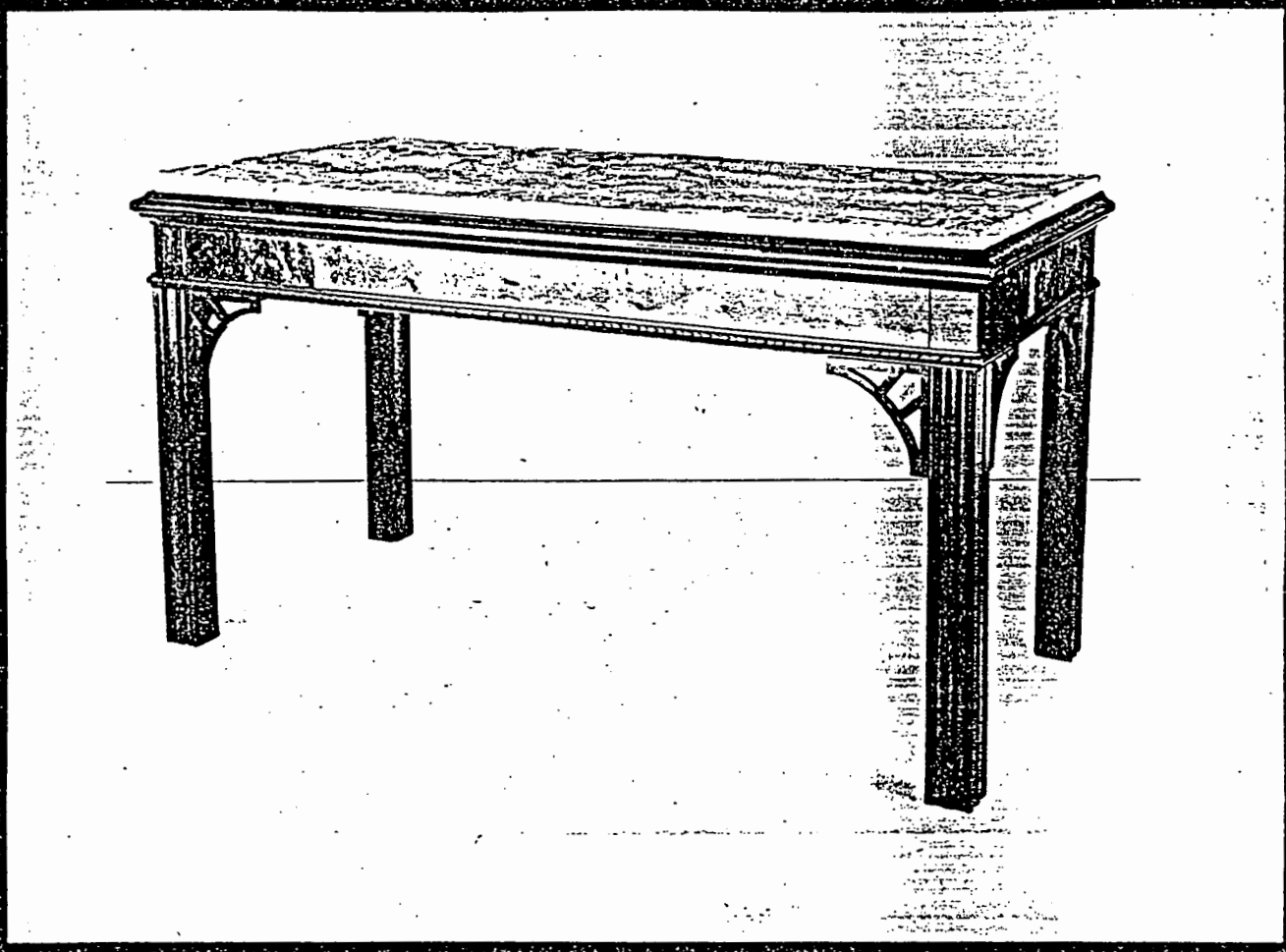


Fig. 31. Mahogany and marble side table. New York, 1760-75. h:32" w: 58" d:28" Winterthur Museum

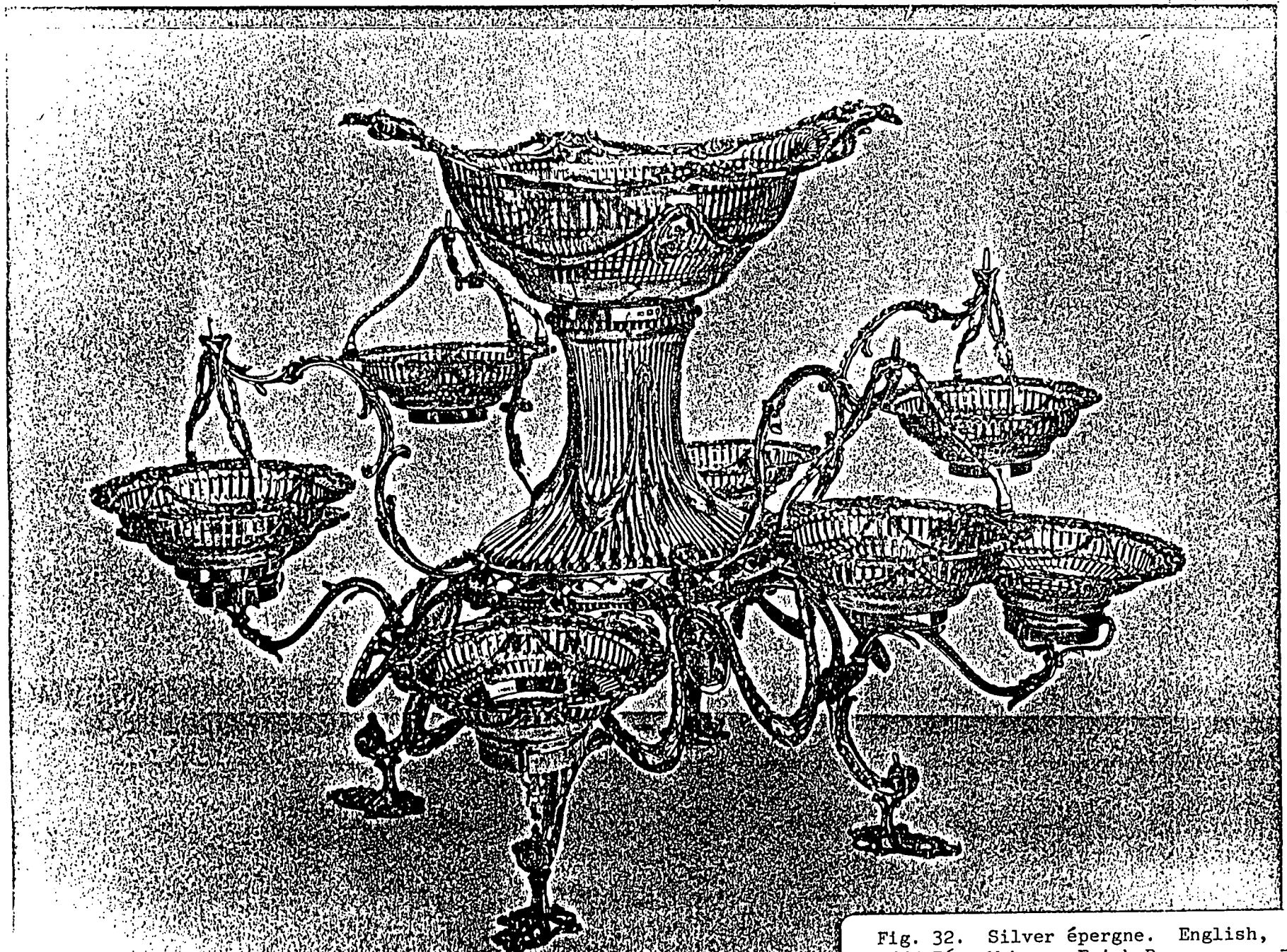


Fig. 32. Silver épergne. English, 1775-76. Maker: Emick Romer. Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

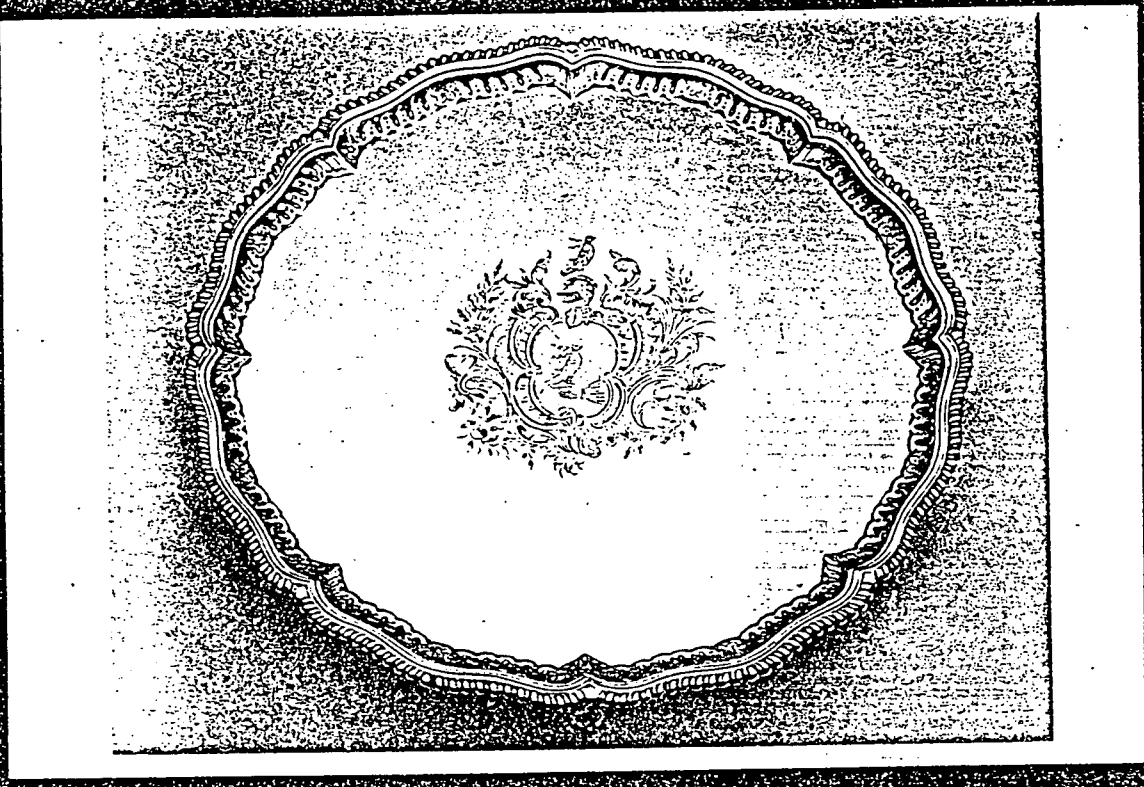


Fig. 33. Silver tray. New York, c. 1765. h:1" diam:15"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 34. Silver tankard. Boston, 1730-50. Maker: Paul Revere. h: 8 1/4". Winterthur Museum

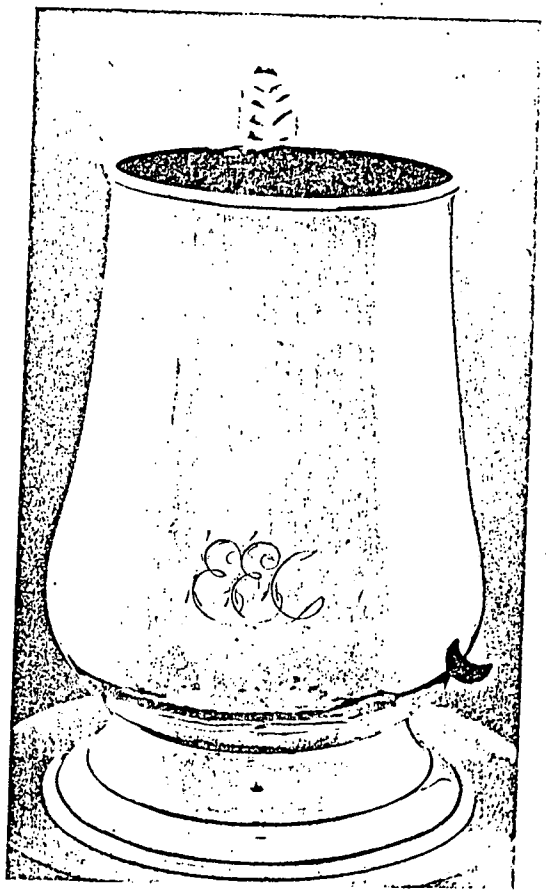


Fig. 35. Silver cann. New York, 1750-80. h. 6". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

## Room 102: The Passage, or Hall

Contemporary references suggest that the hall was not just for passage, but was frequently used as an auxiliary living quarter in its own right. One English traveler to America wrote:

> The hall, or saloon as it is called, is always a favorite apartment during the hot weather in a Virginia house, on account of the draught of air through it, and it is usually furnished similar to a parlour, with sofas, etc.[1]

The tutor Fithian records that upon arriving at a neighboring plantation on a "warm, funky day. . . we took our seats in a cool passage where the company was sitting . . ."[2] In his Complete Body of Architecture (1768), Isaac Ware advises the hall be "made large and noble"; he continues with a suggestion of its various uses: "It serves as summer-room for living; it is an ante-chamber in which people of business . . . can wait and amuse themselves; and it is a good apartment for the reception of large companies at public feasts."[3]

The Nelson hall is of large proportions, being nearly as wide as the drawing room and back parlor. One reference to a specific incident which occured in the hallway gives us an idea of the activity that the Nelson house must have seen with eleven children about. Reverend Meade tells the story of Thomas Nelson's oldest daughter and niece carrying around in play a local character named Selim, in Mrs. Nelson's sedan chair. When they finally set him down in the hall, Selim "rose up and sang Dr. Watt's hymn for children, 'How glorious is our heavenly King.'"[4]

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[1] Isaac Weld, Jr., Travels through the States of North America and the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797 (London, 1799), p. 89.

[2] Farish, Journal, p. 130.

[3] Page 335.

[4] Legend has it that Selim was an Algerian of property, who, after reverses, was to be sold as a slave in America, but escaped into the Virginia woods and swamps. Found almost starving, he was nurtured and converted to Christianity. Because of his devotion and his intelligence and fluency with languages, he came to be adopted by Virginia's élite. He reportedly

A portrait of Selim was commissioned of Charles Willson Peale by one of Nelson's relatives, and is supposed to have hung in the hall at Rosewell, showing him eccentrically dressed, wrapped in a blanket and wearing a straw hat tied on with a checked handkerchief.

A second Peale painting with a closer Nelson history is his portrait of George Washington at Princeton (fig. 55), which Washington is supposed to have presented to his friend and supporter Thomas Nelson. The painting probably went to Nelson's daughter Mary, who married Robert Carter of Shirley in 1792, because it remained at Shirley plantation until this century, when it was acquired by Colonial Williamsburg.

A painting of this size might have hung on the wall between the two doors of the west wall (101-D1 and 106-D1). Failing acquisition of a large and suitable painting, smaller sports or landscape paintings of the type described for Room 101, or prints and maps resembing those described for Room 202 would be appropriate substitutes.

A key location for a map or some other print of especial significance is on the panel just to the right of the foot of the stairs. Here it would be well lit by the front window and could be easily seen by a large number of people at a time, as the guide refereed to it. Visitors appreciate getting close to objects singled out as important, and here they could with safety.

With only one window, the hall is fairly dark. I suggest hanging a looking glass at the end of the hall, to the left of door 101-D2, to reflect light from the front window. A matching looking glass could hang on the front wall, between window 102-W1 and door 102-D1 (fig. 56a,b). The examples shown (English, circa 1730-40, of gilded gesso on a firwood base) are owned by a Nelson descendant and reportedly once hung in the Nelson House.[1]

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returned to his home in Algeria but was disinherited because of his conversion, whereupon he found his way back to Virginia, allegedly mentally deranged. Meade, Old Churches, I, 348.

[1]Mrs. John Cecil Cary, of 2314 Monument Avenue, Richmond, Va., is interested in selling the pair for $10,000. J. Paul Hudson, Museum Curator of the Yorktown Colonial National Historical Park, estimates that restoring them would cost another $1,000.

Some light would be shed by a hall lantern, recorded in the inventory. For its appraised value, £6, it probably had an elaborate brass frame-work, similar to those pictured in Chippendale's Plates CLII and CLIII (fig. 57a,b, 58). The candles would be held inside the lantern by a grapple-shaped candleholder with arms, suspended from the central flame finial, or held in a dish placed on the lantern's glass bottom. Also recommended are Colonial Williamsburg Craft House reproductions K11751 (the "Brush-Everard lantern", of polished brass with four electrified candles) or, preferably, K12892 (the "Governor's Palace lantern" of polished brass with six electrified candles) (fig. 59a,b). Smaller versions of both of these lanterns are also available, but seem less suitable to the proportions of the Nelson House.

A pair of sconces (fig. 60) is needed against the east wall between doors 101-D1 and 106-D1 and another one, preferably two sconces, on the south wall, to the left of door 102-D2.

A Venetian curtain of a yellow or gold brocade with matching fringe would brighten the hall. More color could be introduced by carpeting.

A frequent covering for the hall was a floor cloth, or oil cloth, made of a gum mastic and india rubber composition on a linen canvas, usually painted with a geometric design imitating marble or brick (see fig. 61).[1] In 1773 Thomas Nelson ordered a floor cloth from John Norton & Sons, of London, but then complained that "The Cloth is injur'd by being role'd before the paint was dry."[2] Although floor cloths were very common in the eighteenth century, they were not substantial and only a few fragments survive today. Therefore, a reproduction (like the one in the Peyton Randolph House, Colonial Williamsburg, fig. 62) or another type of carpet altogether must be considered. In view of the amount of traffic the hall must receive, I recommend that this floor be left bare. Bare floors are discussed further in Room 105.

No seating furniture is specified for "the Passage" in the Nelson inventory, which could imply that some dining room chairs were

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[1] These designs are taken from John Curwitham's Various Kinds of Floor Decorations represented both in Plans and Perspective, Being useful Designs for Ornamenting the Floors of Halls, Rooms, Summer Houses, etc. whither in Pavements of Stone, or Marble, or with Painted Floor Cloths (London, 1745).

[2] Mason, John Norton & Sons, p, 343.

at times placed in the hall. It appears that in the eighteenth century home, tables and chairs were frequently moved about to accommodate immediate needs.[1]

Because eighteenth century inventories often list either large numbers of chairs or a sofa in the hall, I recommend this latter alternative. A sofa is listed in the 1810 sale of Nelson property. It could have been American or English. Chippendale's Plates XXIX and XXX (fig. 63) show an appropriate model for either an American or English sofa of the 1760's. Of these designs, Chippendale says "When made large, they have a Bolster and Pillow at each End, and Cushions at the Back, which may be laid down occasionally, and form a Mattras." American examples frequently dispense with some of the carving and often retain the deep C-scroll arms of pre-1750 design. The sofa should be upholstered in a yellow damask or brocatelle similar to the curtain, although not necessarily of the same material. Differing materials of similar hue can add life and interest, and still retain the desired unity. The sofa can be centered against the east wall, between doors 101-D1 and 106-D1.

No case furniture is specified in the inventory for the hall, but tables would seem likely in a room of this size. A pair, or similar side tables would be most serviceable to the left of door 102-D2 and to the right of door 103-D1 (If it blocks the supply register, the second table may stand to the left of the sofa). These side tables should be relatively sophisticated, for the hall--the first room to be seen by visitors then as today--was important in establishing the general effect and character of Nelson's furnishings. The design might resemble Chippendale's Plates LVII and LVIII (fig. 64) scaled down "according to the Bigness of the Rooms they stand in", like the American example of fig. 65. (In this illustration the relief carving has been powdered to show a fretwork pattern which seems to have been more popular in the South than in New England).

A Chinese export or English bowl (fig. 66) with flower arrangement might be placed on one table while on the other might be such items as gloves and riding crop, etc., as if laid down casually upon entering the house.

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[1]According to one woman's letters, to supplement the formal, ornamental seating furniture in a drawing room, chairs were brought in "to sit in which were easier chairs than those belonging in the room." Quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration ,p. 72.



Fig. 55. *George Washington at Princeton* by Charles Willson Peale, c. 1780. Colonial Williamsburg.

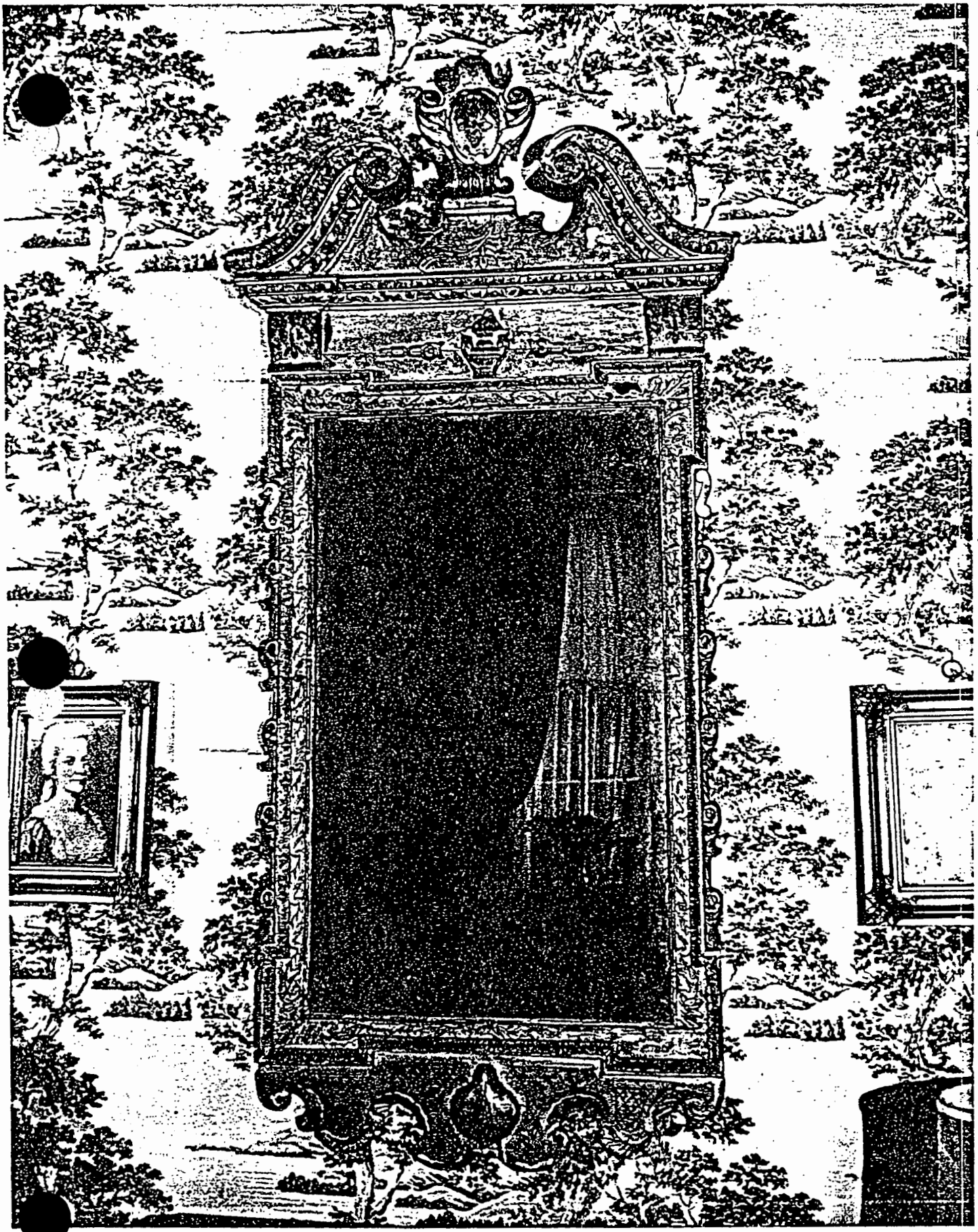
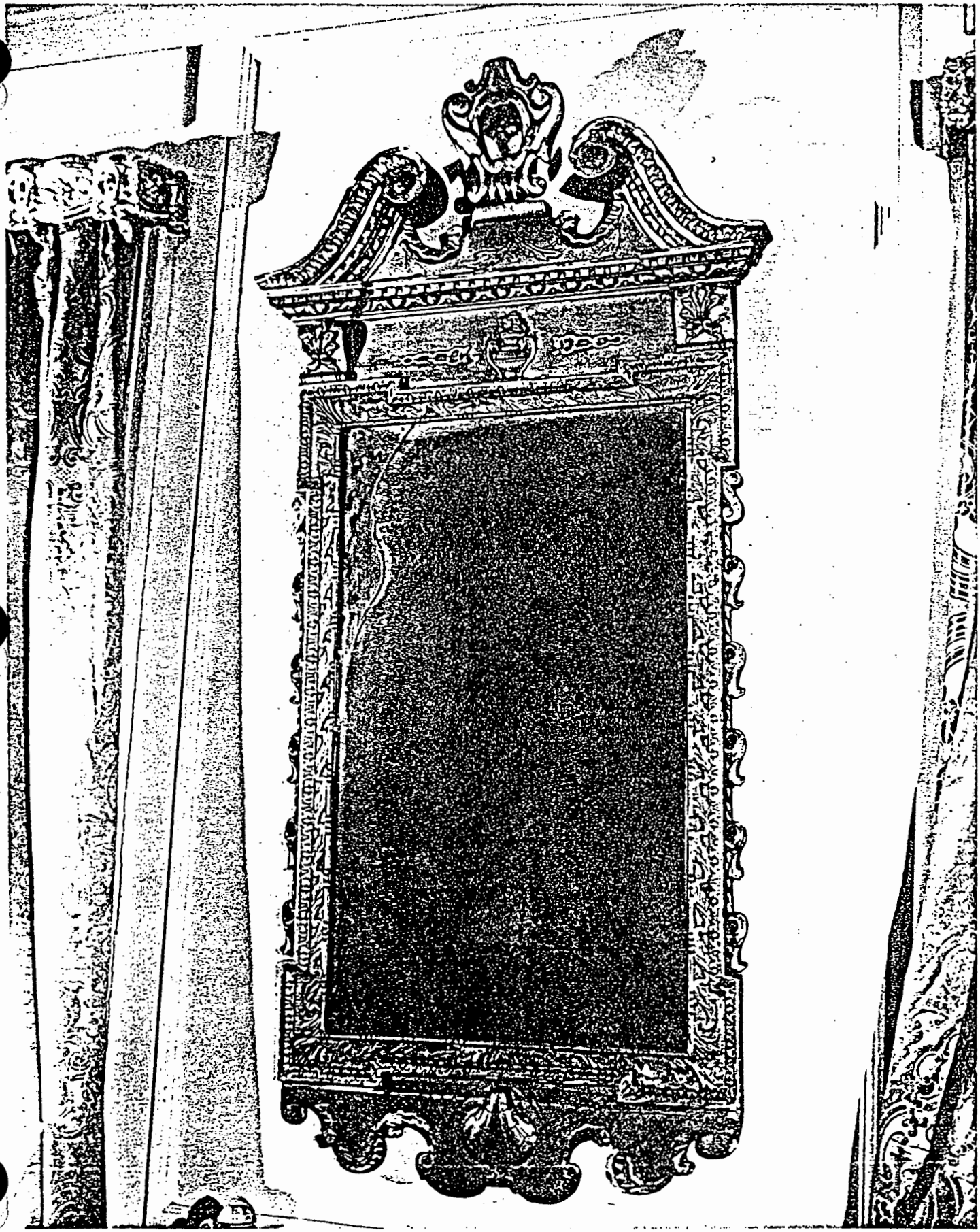


Fig. 56a-b. Looking glasses, gilded gesso on firwood base. English, c. 1730-40.



— Property of Mrs. John Cecil Cary,—
Richmond, Virginia

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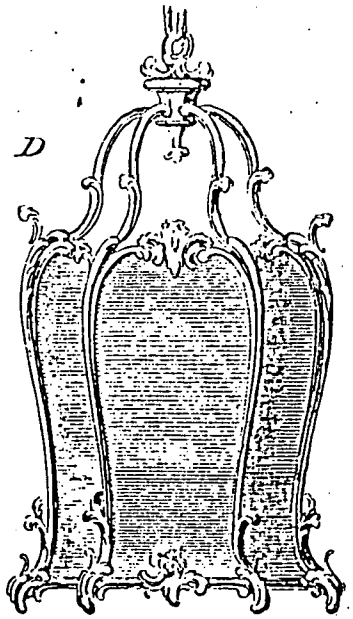
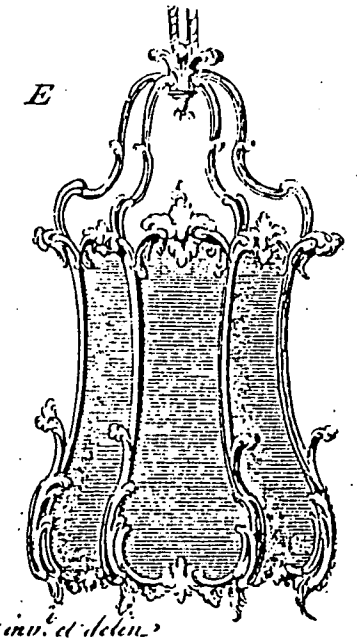
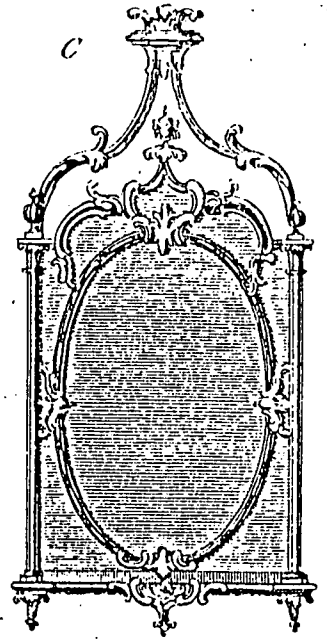
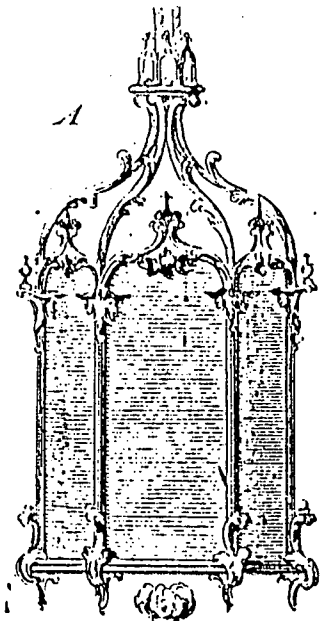
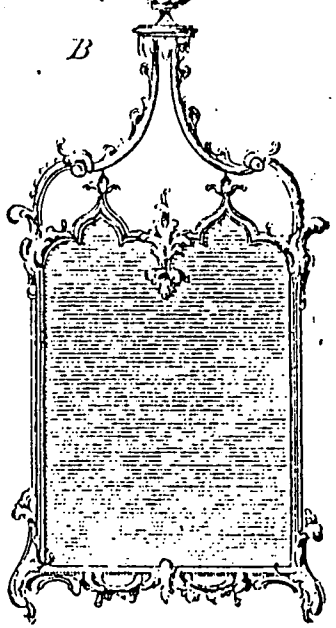
# Lanthorns for Halls or Staircases.

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I. Taylor Sculp.

Fig. 57a. Chippendale's designs for hall lanterns, from Plate CLII of his Director, 1762.

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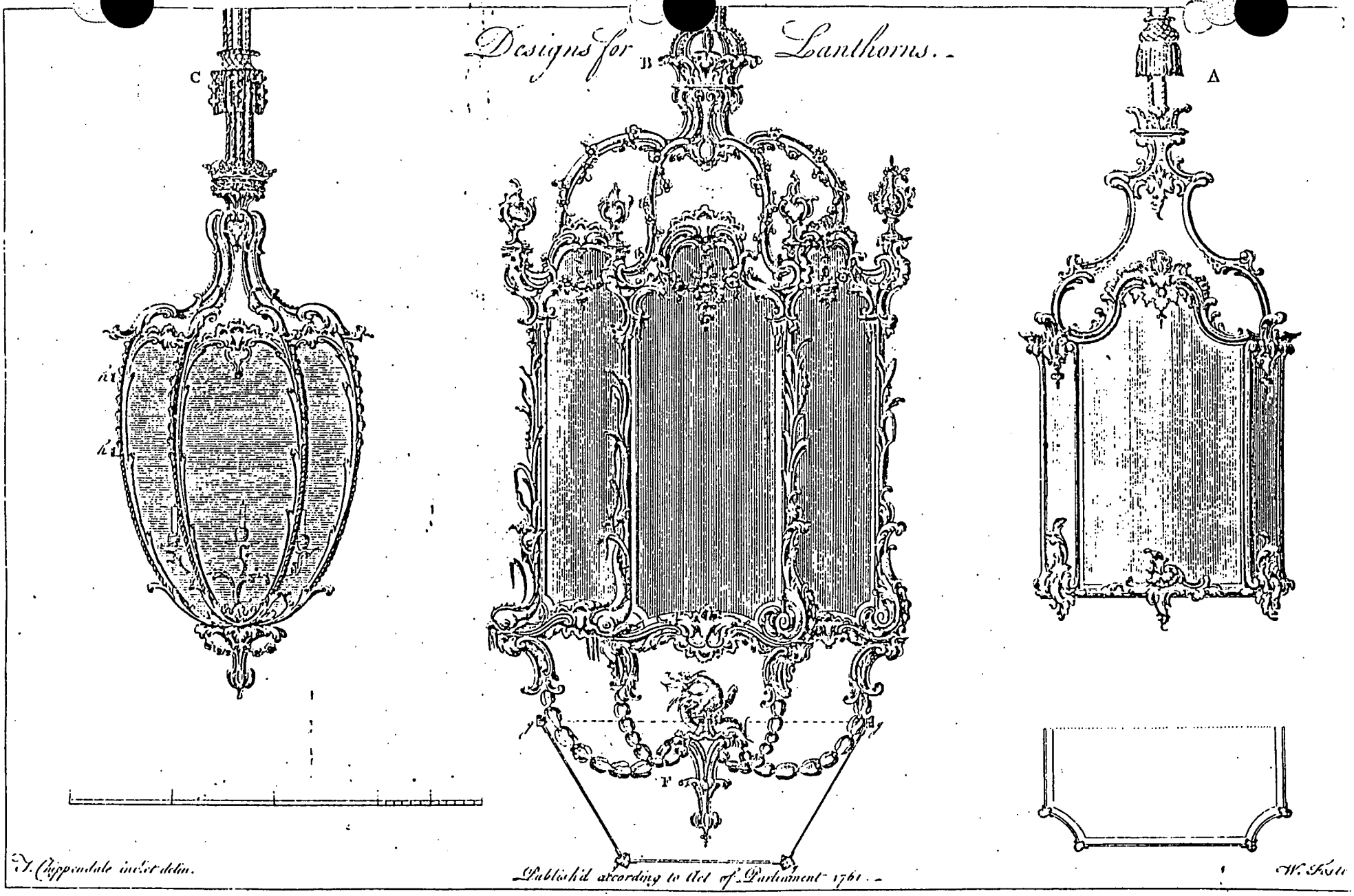



Fig. 57b. Chippendale's designs for hall lanterns, from Plate CLIII of his Director, 1762.

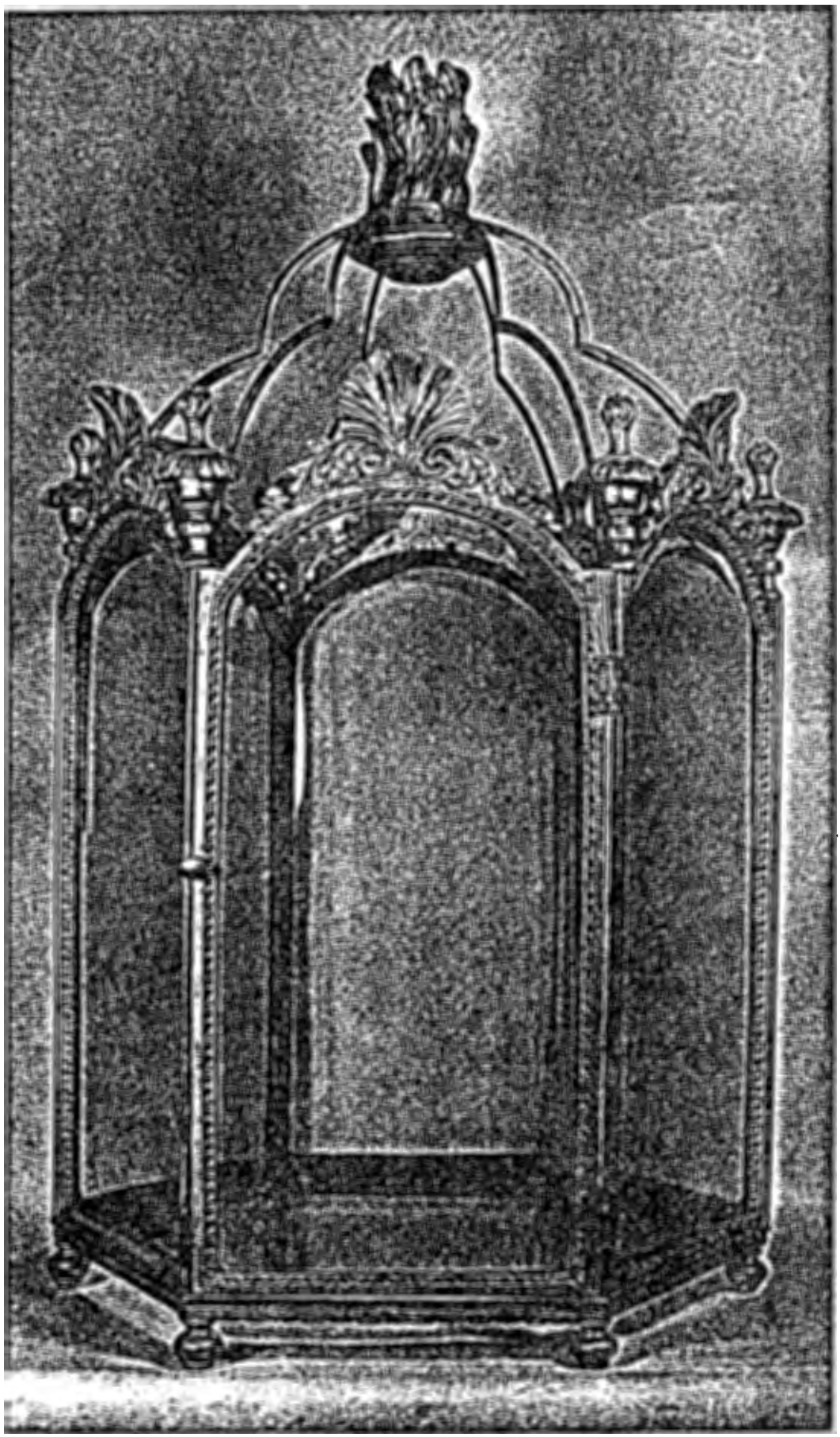


Fig. 58. Hall lantern. Wood, gilt, gesso, brass, glass. English, c. 1720. 43" x 27". Colonial Williamsburg.

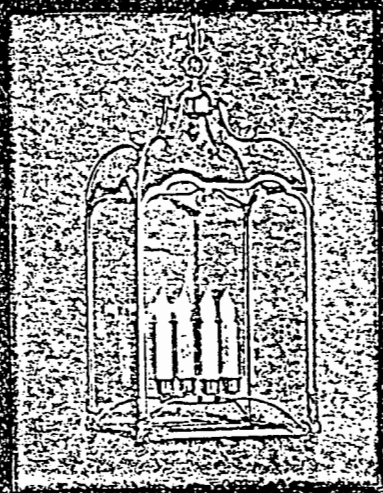


Fig. 59a. Colonial Williamsburg Craft House reproduction brass lantern:

The "Brush-Everard Lantern" of polished brass with four electrified candles (cat. no. K11751). Height 23" Width: 10 1/2". Total length with two feet of suspension chain is 47".

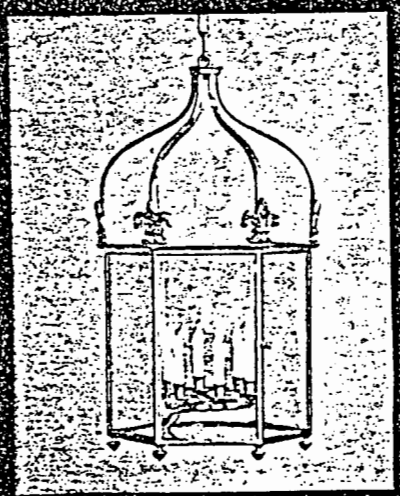


Fig. 59b. Colonial Williamsburg Craft House reproduction brass lantern:

The "Governor's Palace Lantern" of polished brass with six electrified candles (cat. no. K12892). Height: 34" Width: 18". Total length with two feet of suspension chain is 58".

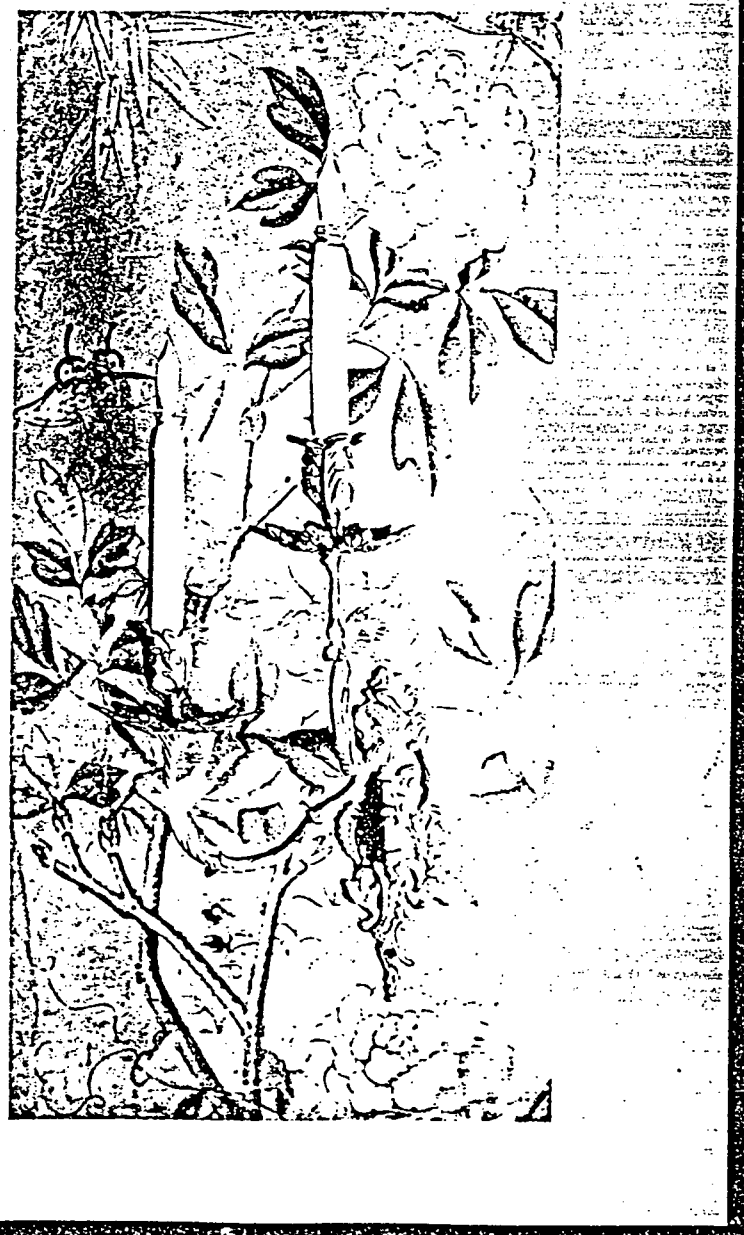


Fig. 60. Gilded sconce. English, 1740-70. h: 9" w: 3"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

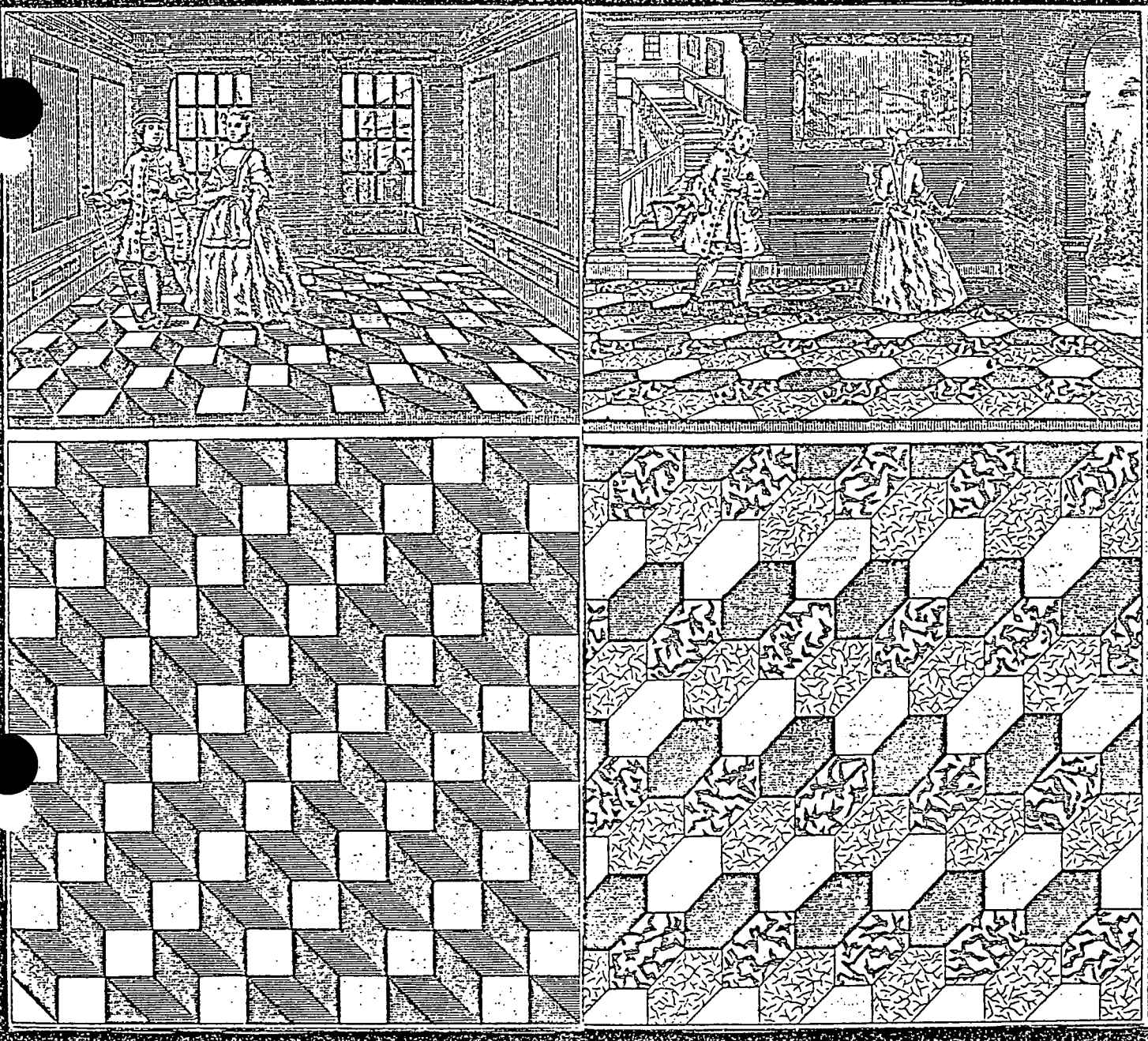


Fig. 61a-c. Designs for floor designs from John Curwitham's Various Kinds of Floor Decorations represented both in Plans and Perspective, Being useful Designs for Ornamenting the Floors of Halls, Rooms, Summer Houses, etc., whither in Pavements of Stone, or Marble, or with Painted Floor Cloths . . . London, 1745.

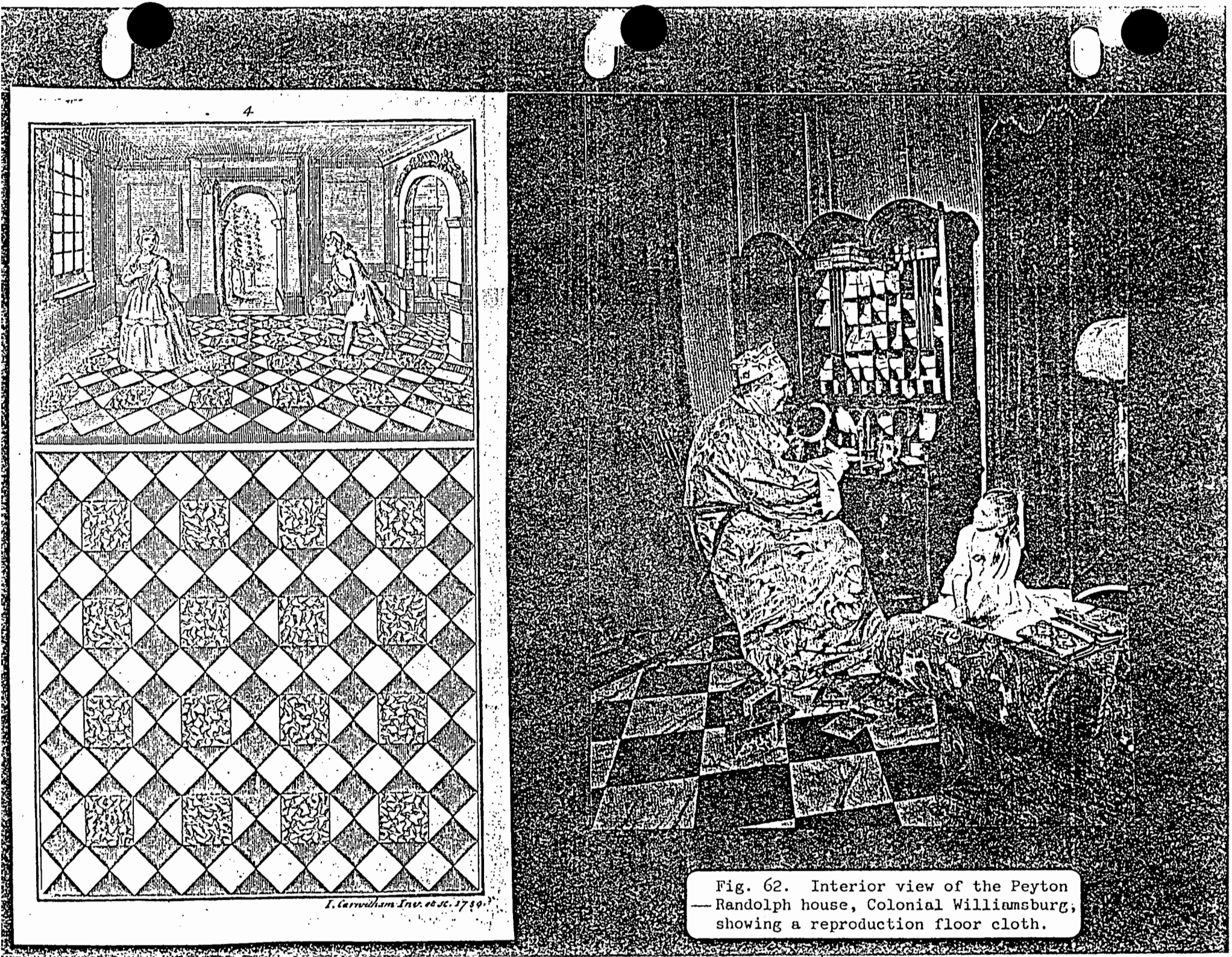
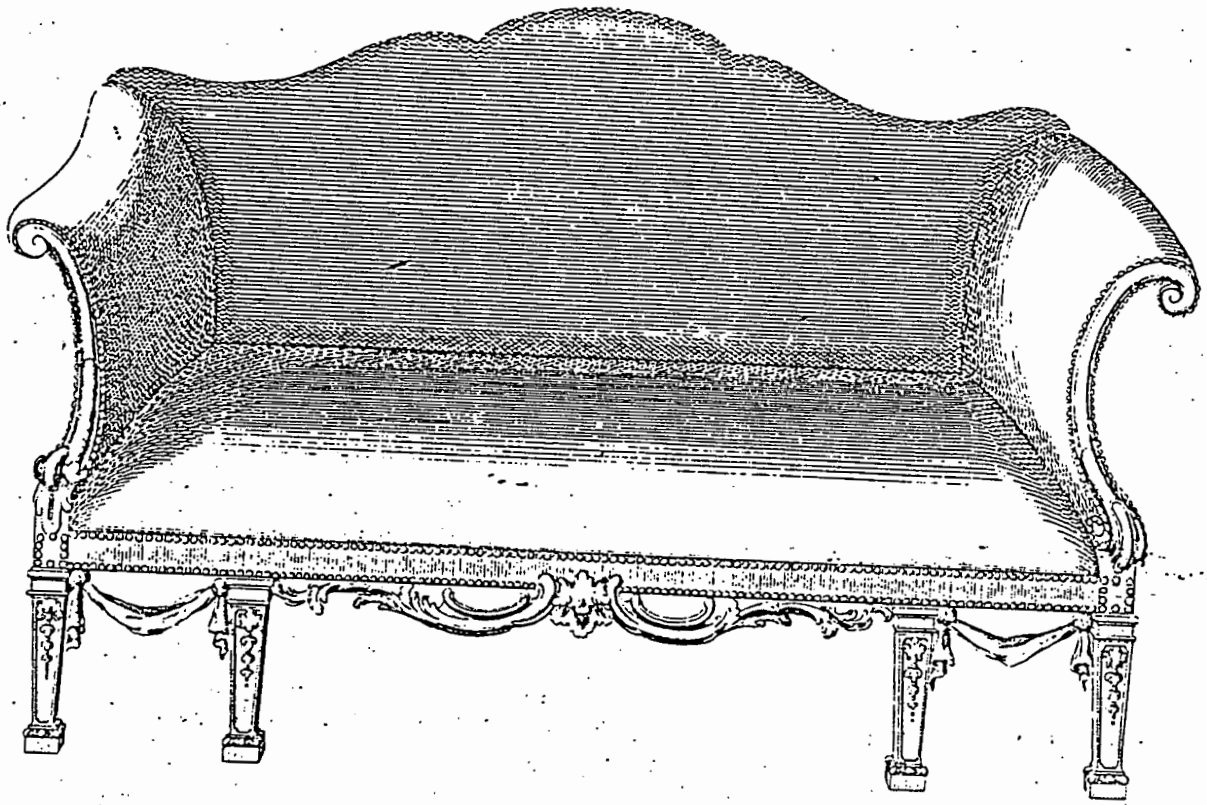
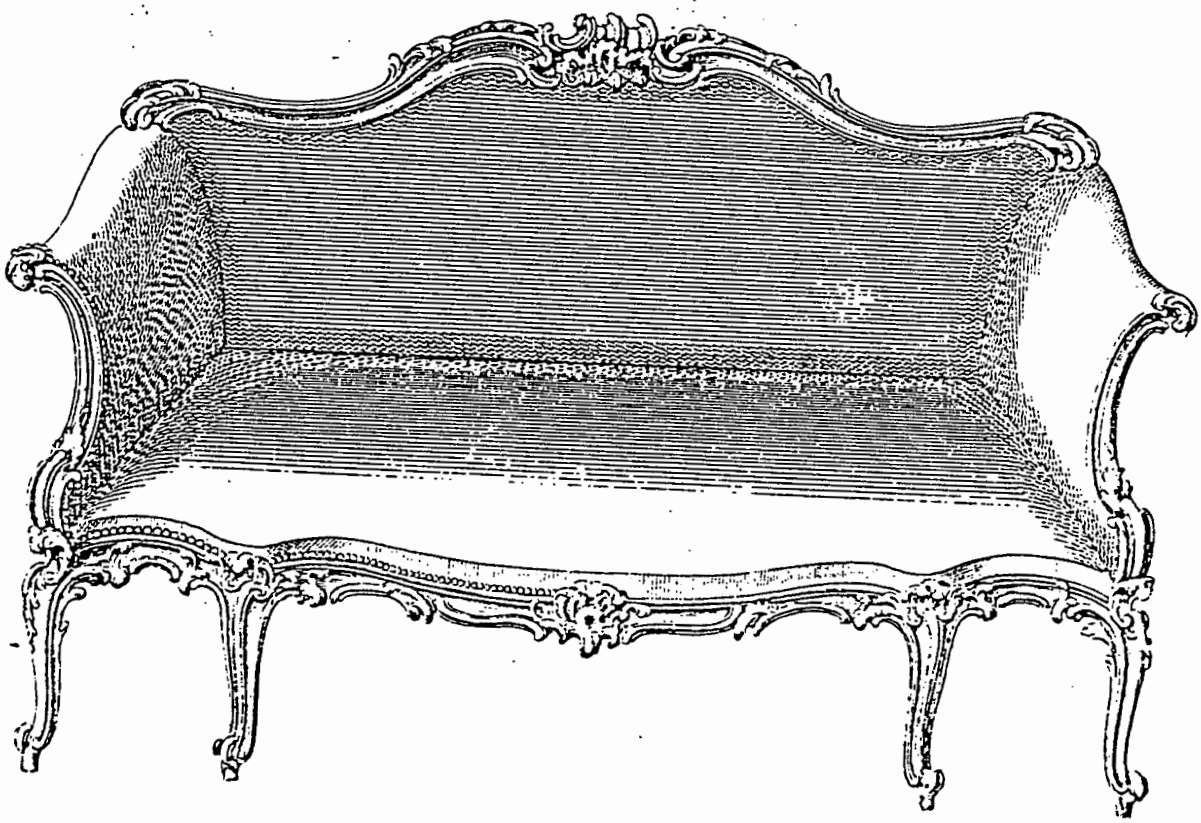


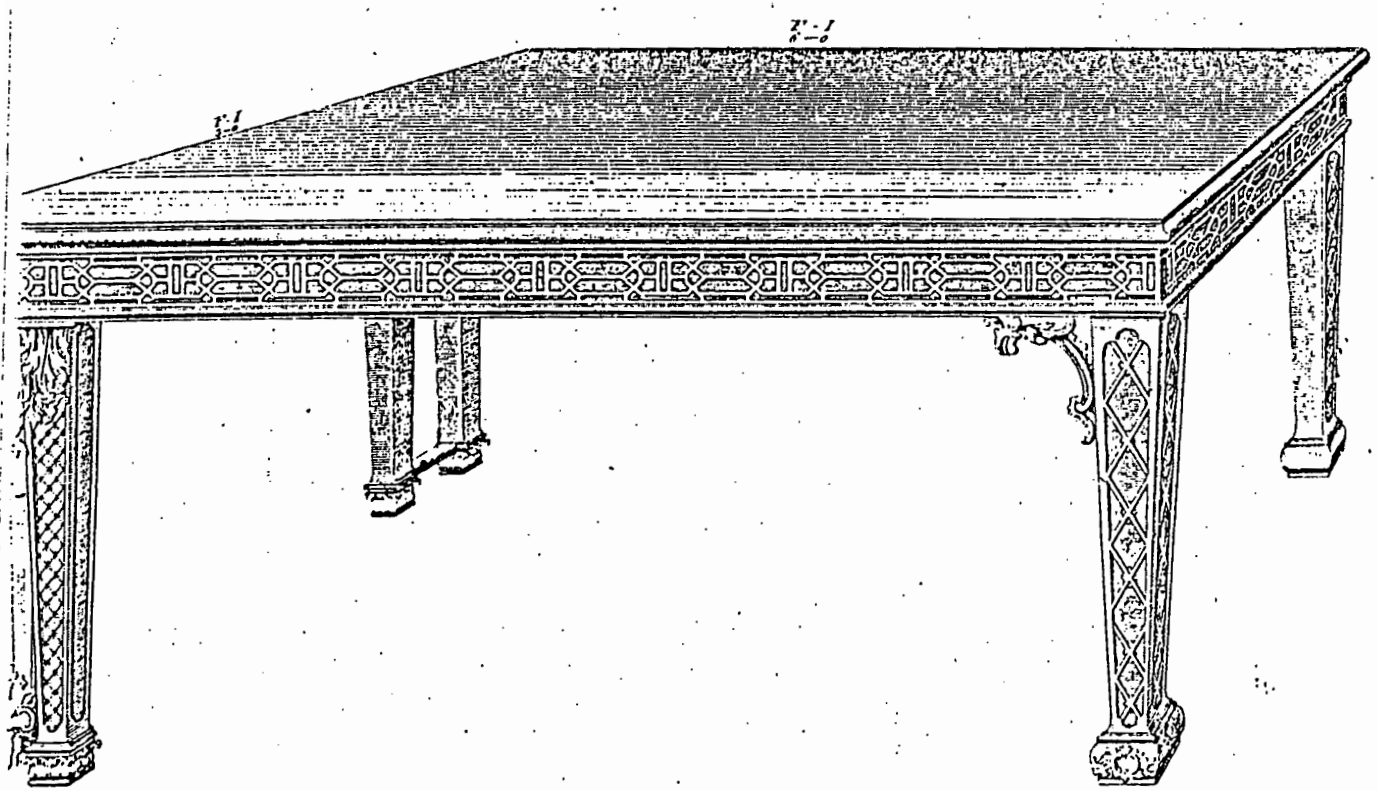

Fig. 62. Interior view of the Peyton—Randolph house, Colonial Williamsburg, showing a reproduction floor cloth.

Fig. 63. Design for sofa, from Plate XXX of Chippendale's Director, 1762.





# Side Board Table



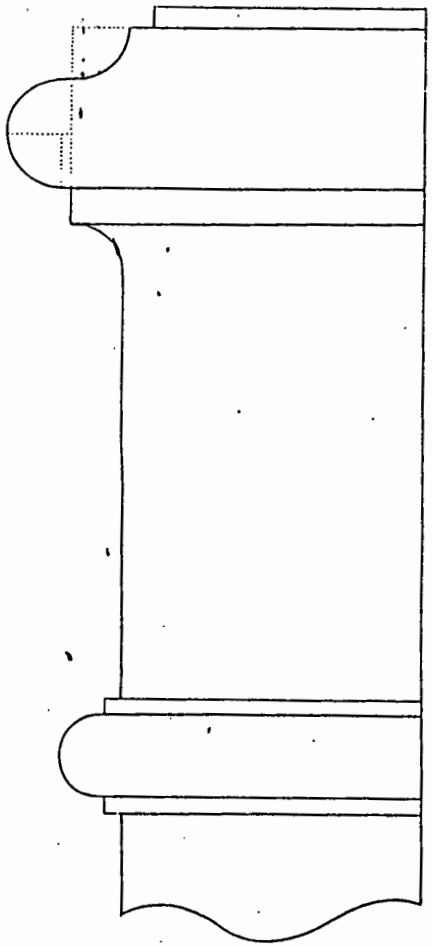


Fig. 64. Design for side board, from Plate LVIII of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

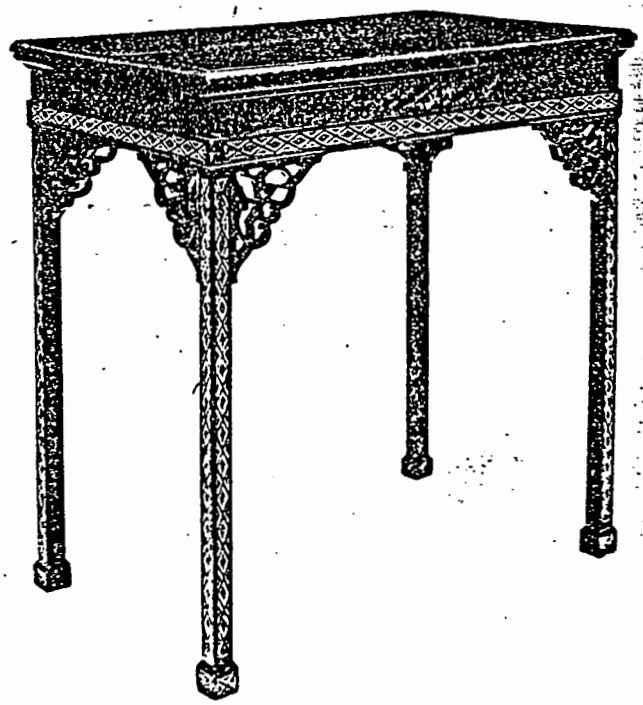


Fig. 65. Side table. Charleston, S.C. (?), 1770-80. Pine, tulip and mahogany. h: 26" w: 17"

Powdered to show fretwork carving. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

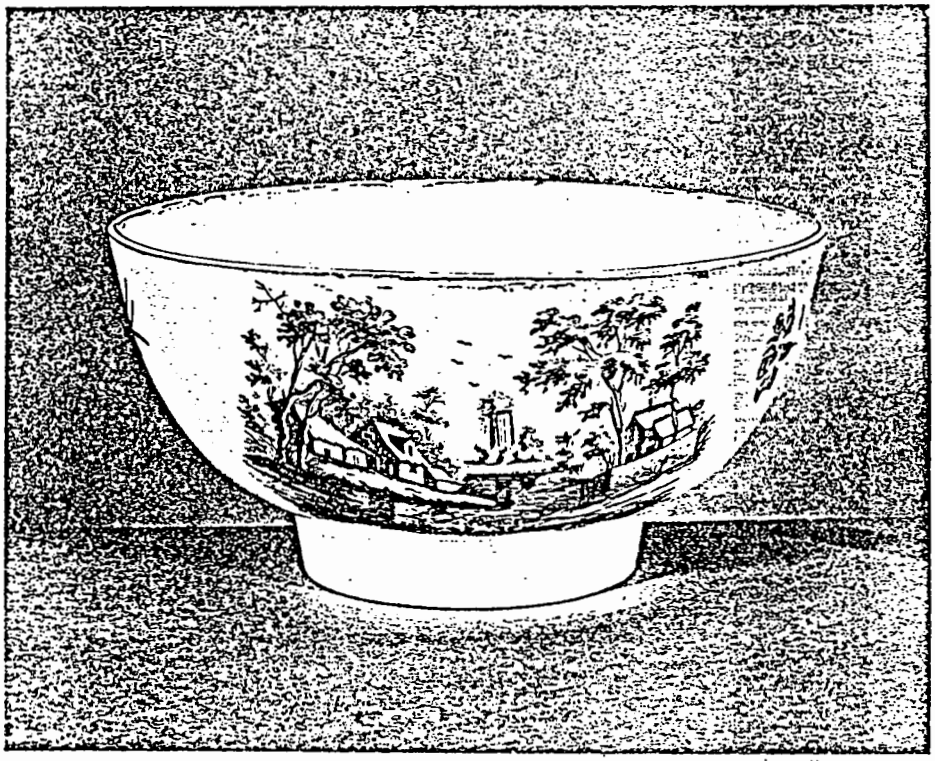
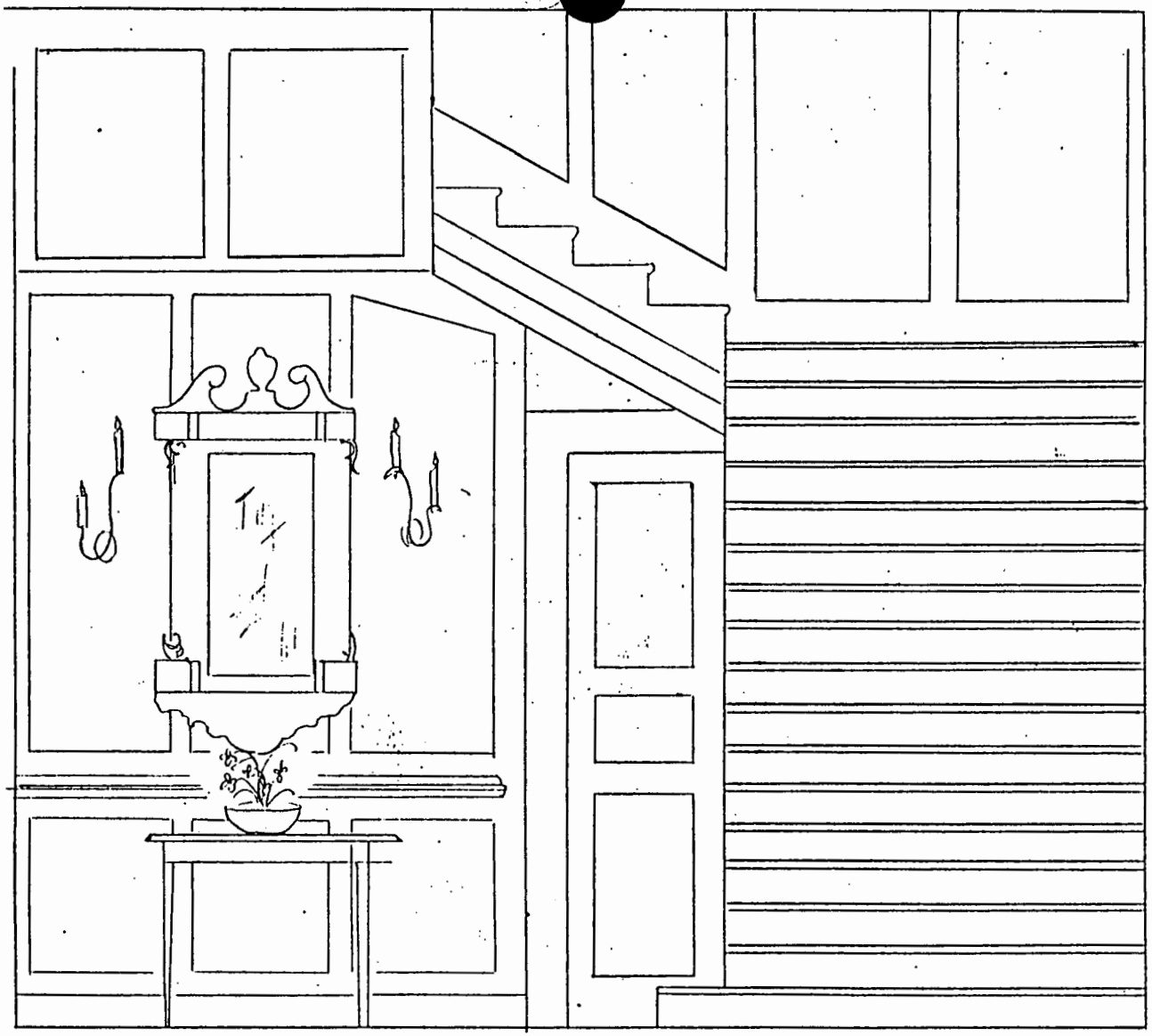


Fig. 66. Earthenware bowl with transfer print design. English, 1770-90. h.: 3" diam.: 6 1/4"



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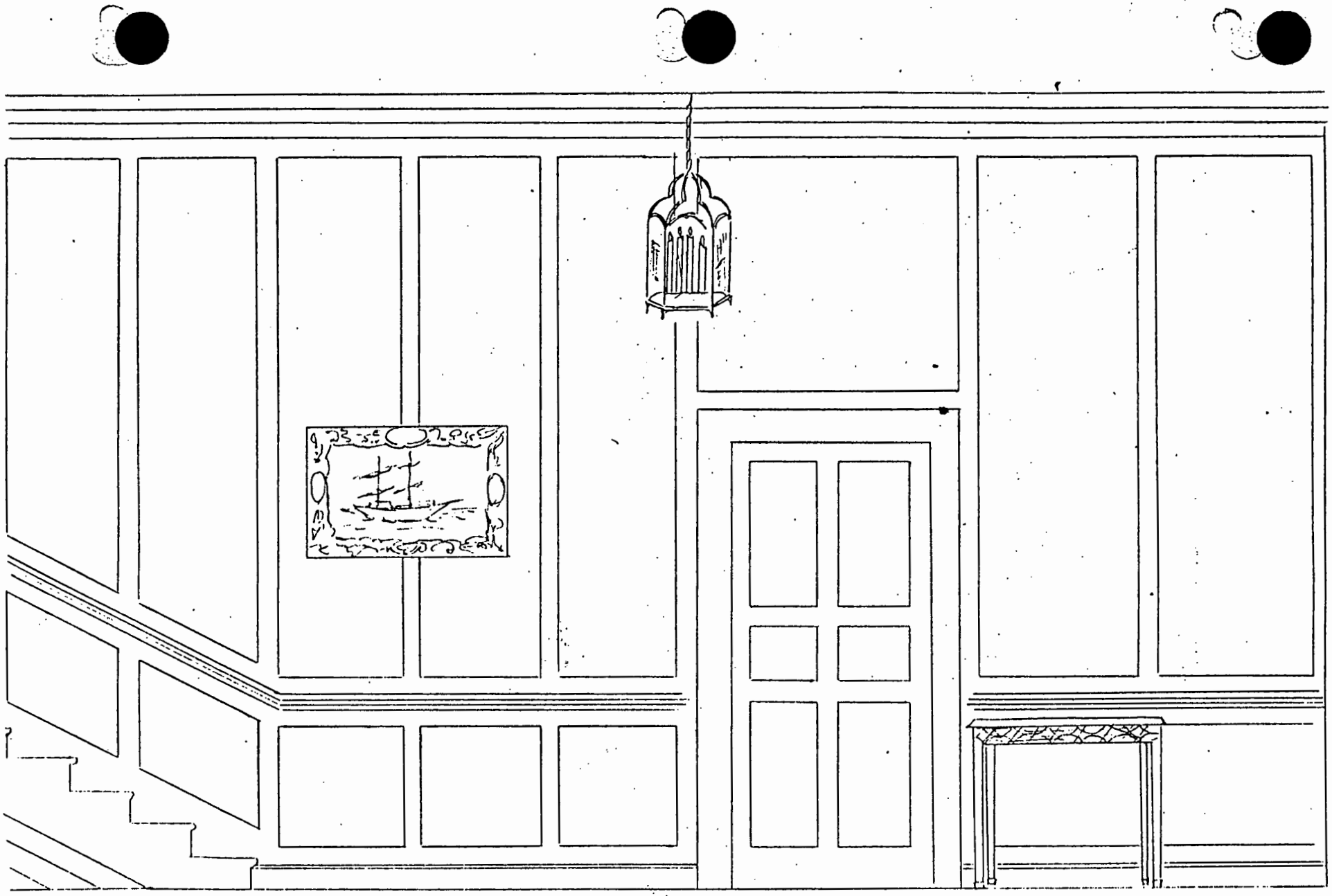

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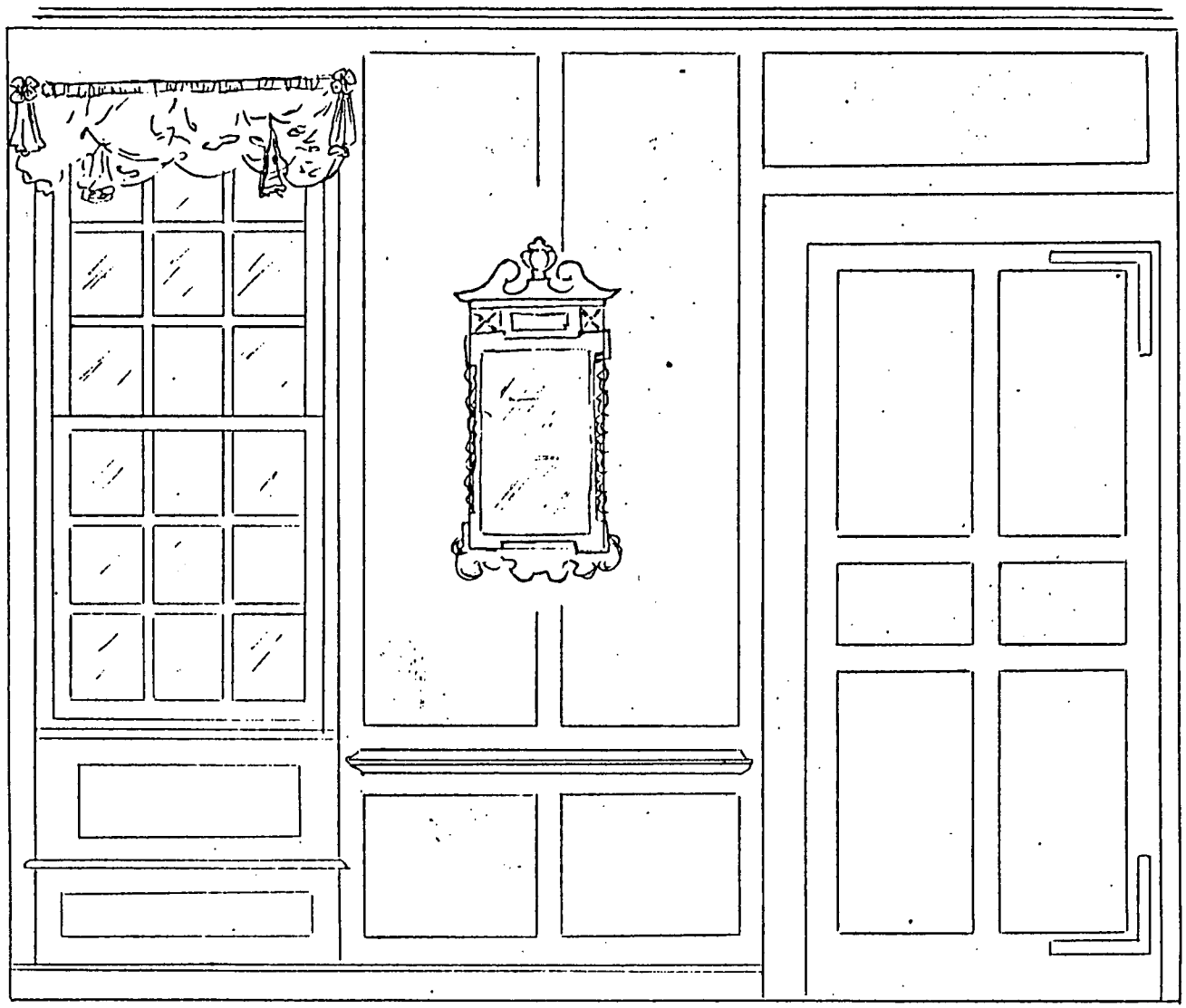

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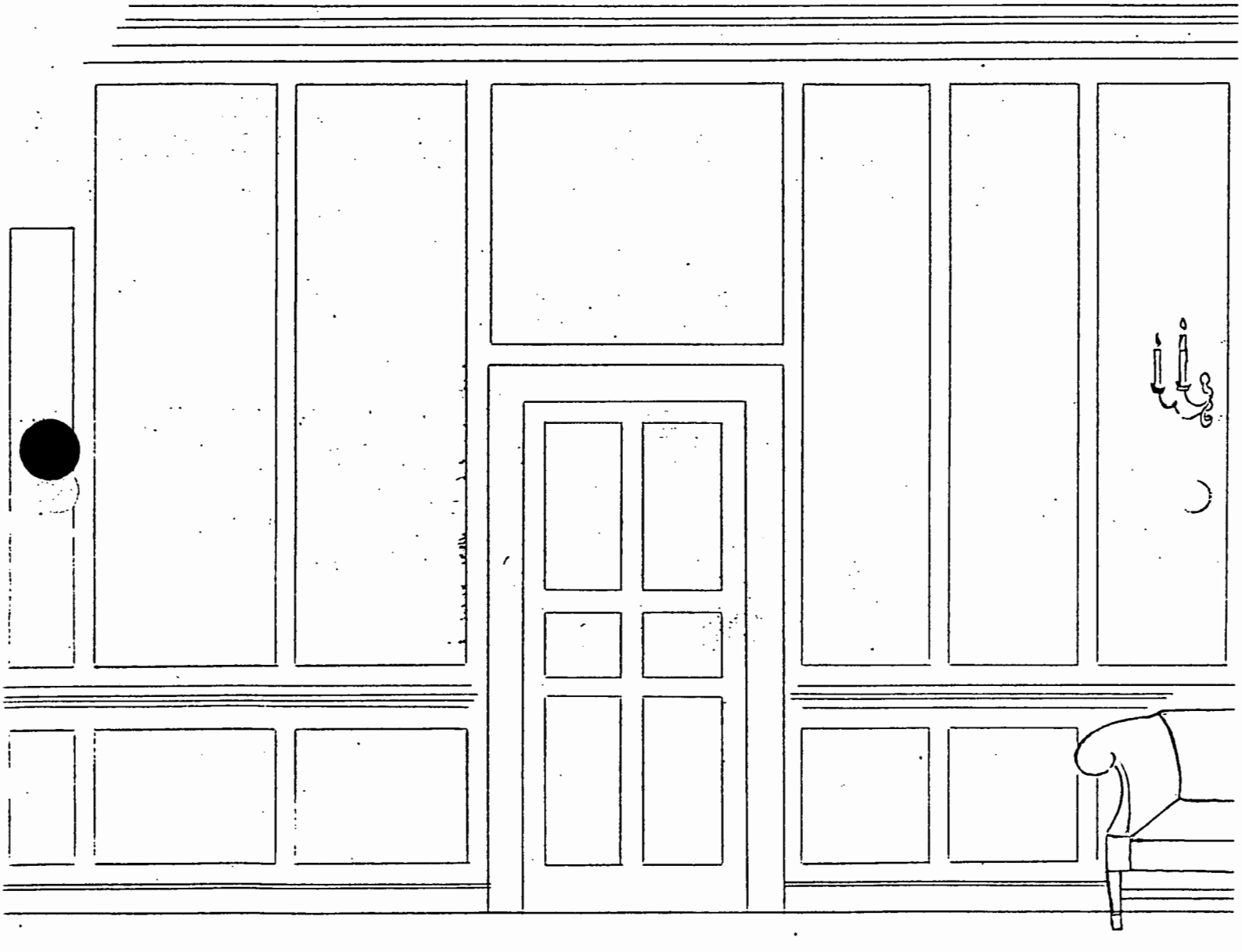

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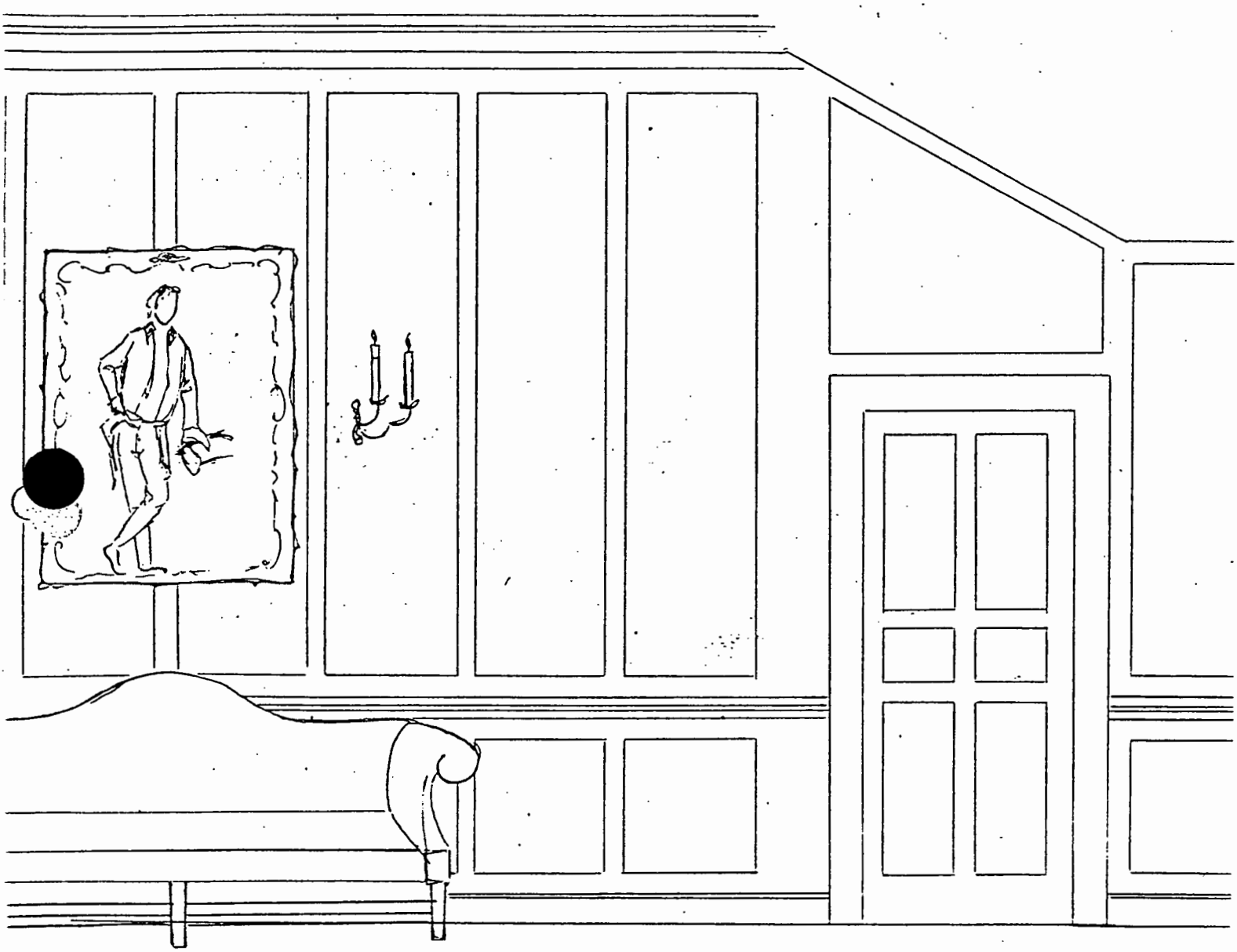

EAST

Room 103: Drawing Room

By contemporary records, the drawing room is usually the place of show above all others. This room would have been reserved for entertaining the family's most distinguished guests, and would have contained some of their finest furniture.

If one object in the room were to be chosen to develop the theme of Nelson's position, it would be an ancestral portrait. We are fortunate in having located three such portraits in a private collection. They are of course not available for purchase, but considering their artistic quality and historic importance, it would seem justifiable to have good quality photographic reproductions made if consent could be gotten from the owner.[1] Figure 67 shows Margaret Reade Nelson, Thomas' grandmother. The artist is unknown, but he would have been one of the finest of the day. Robert Feke was commissioned to paint Thomas' father, William (fig. 68), and his mother Elizabeth Burwell Nelson (fig. 69). These two paintings hung in the Nelson House well into the nineteenth century, when Thomas Nelson's grandson was living there. On visiting the house during a trip through Virginia to gather material for his Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution (New York, 1860), Benson J. Lossing recorded seeing "upon the walls the mutilated portraits of President Nelson and his lady, the parents of the governor. They were thus injured by the British when they rifled his house at Hanover (i.e. Offley Hoo), whither he had taken his family and furniture for security."[2] This is one of the few specific references we have to Nelson having removed his furniture to Offley during the British invasion. It offers an opportunity for the guide to explain destruction of property by the British as one possible reason for the Nelson inventory's obvious omissions. (See p. 17 of this report) In view of the ancestral portraits, this room is also an ideal location for providing the visitor with Nelson's family history, beginning with Thomas Nelson, the immigrant from Scotland, ? Perth, England who founded a mercantile business and gained firm social footing by marrying Margaret Reade, descendant of one of Virginia's earliest families.

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[1] Photographic reproductions can be made on a surface imitating canvas to appear quite authentic.

[2] Quoted in Hatch, Nelson House, p. 109.

Paintings, prints and even reproductions (all being hygroscopic) are best hung on inner walls, to avoid harmful effects of temperature changes most likely to occur on outer walls. Therefore I suggest photographic reproductions (if they might be obtained) of Thomas' parents hang on the east wall to the right of door 103-D1. Margaret Reade, (again, if reproduction is possible), could hang to the left of door 103-D1.

Their position having been made for them in the preceding generations, Nelson and his wife appear to have taken considerable time for leisure and amusement. They could afford to entertain friends and relatives, and seem to have done so with great regularity.

Tea in the afternoon was a fashionable form of home entertainment, generally served around four or four-thirty. Dinner was usually between two and three in the afternoon and a light supper between eight and nine. Mrs. Nelson would preside at tea, seated close to a round mahogany tea table (fig. 70). This could be American or English, but should date around 1770. The Newport piece illustrated is unusual for its tripod base fitted with a door (which unfortunately is not shown open to reveal its five wedge-shaped drawers for tea implements).

On this table, to impress on today's visitor the patriotism of many Virginians, a tray might be set with a silver coffee pot and silver milk pot, sugar dish and tongs (fig. 71a,b, 72). The tutor, Philip Fithian, recorded in 1774 that his family "drank coffee at four, they are now too patriotic to use tea."[1] A kettle stand with tea urn (fig. 73-74) might be relegated to the corner to the left of the fireplace. The tea urn, ordered by Nelson in 1782, should be English and should approximate this date. The kettle stand was a new form developed only in the 1770's; most kettle stands were imported from England, although the example illustrated is a sophisticated Newport piece.

The urn could alternatively be placed on a china table (fig. 75-76), another form new to the Chippendale period, designed with a raised gallery to protect the avidly collected porcelain tea sets from full skirts and men's coats. The china table could stand to the right of the fireplace and would normally hold a tea service, figurines, or perhaps a bowl with flowers or fruit (fig. 77-79).

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[1] Farish, Journal, p. 110.

A cherry, as well as mahogany tea table is specified in the inventory. This tea table might hold coffee cups and saucers and a dish with sweetmeats (fig. 80). A cherry tea table was most likely to have been American and might have resembled the New York example of fig. 81. The tea tables can be placed generally in front of the fireplace. Small, delicate tables like these help create the feeling of elegance which should characterize the room.

The custom of several small tables in one room is shown in this extract from a contemporary diary: "At seven, Mr. Keyes, the groom of the chamber, told us tea was ready. We had each our little table, our candles and work, conversed upon ye news of ye day, fashions, dress, etc."[1] A Belgian painting, dated 1788 (fig. 82) illustrates a scene of this kind. Individual worktables, fitted with sewing baskets, did not appear until the late 1770's, and are associated in America with the Federal and Empire periods. The guide could therefore point out this secondary use of tea tables as worktables in a house of the Nelson period.

Upholstered chairs like the two low slipper chairs illustrated in fig. 75 would be appropriate for the "best room" of the house, but specified in the inventory are "2 Arm & 1 Dozen Mahogany Chairs with leather Bottoms." Such chairs are likely to have had well, intricately carved cabriole legs ending in claw-and-ball feet (fig. 83-84). The side chair illustrated is American, made by one of Philadelphia's finest craftsmen, Thomas Tuft, and closely resembles Plates XIII and XVI in Chippendale's Director. English chairs of similar design would be preferable, with the slip seat covered with leather, as stated. Leather in place of a fabric covering could be interpreted as indicating that the Nelsons used their drawing room heavily. Two arm chairs (fig. 84) and five side chairs can be grouped by the tea tables toward the center of the room. The remaining seven side chairs should be placed against the east, north, and west walls.

Also practical for its strength, besides the leather, is the double-weave Scotch carpet called for in the inventory. So named because Scotland produced them in quantity, this type of carpet (also known as

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[1]Percy Macquoid, A History of English Furniture (London, 1906; Dover reprint, New York, 1972) III, 241.

doublecloth or ingrain) is pileless and reversible, characterized by an all-over pattern in a limited number of colors (fig. 85). The cloth was woven approximately one yard wide and then sewn together and finished off with a border. Benjamin Franklin sent his wife similar carpeting for "a best Room floor" with the following instructions: "There is enough for one large and two small ones, --it is to be sew'd together, the Edges being first pull'd down, and care taken to make the Figures meet exactly. There is Bordering of the same."[1] In his Complete Body of Architecture (1768), Isaac Ware states that these carpets were usually fitted "to cover a room entirely."[2] The predominant color for the carpet might be green, highly fashionable for the period.

The color of the curtains should accord with the Scotch carpet--green if a green carpet is found. Because the dining room and hall display Venetian curtains, the visitor might here be shown an example of festoon curtains, equally popular at the time. These curtains are meant to draw up and out at the sides (fig. 86; see also fig. 13) and could be made of two or just a single piece of cloth. Franklin wrote to his wife in 1765: "The blue Mohair Stuff is for the Curtains of the Blue Chamber. The fashion is to make one Curtain only for each Window. Hooks are sent to fix the Rails by at Top, so that they might be taken down on Occasion."[3]

Both a looking glass and chimney glass were inventoried for the drawing room. A fashionable chimney glass might have resembled fig. 87, in the "Chinese" taste. It is fitting that in the Nelson's most stylish room, various Chippendale characteristics be represented, the three acknowledged inspirations for the style being the rococo of Louis XV, and a reinterpretation of Gothic elements, and a Chinese motif. The looking glass of fig. 87 is English, but the craftsmen in Philadelphia adapted the Chinese motif with equal skill (fig. 88).

With no mantel shelf to hold candlesticks and other garniture in any room of the Nelson House, sconces help relieve the problem of lighting.

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[1] Albert H. Smyth, ed., The Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin (New York, 1906) V, 382, quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p.213.

[2] Page 123.

[3] Smyth, Franklin, IV, 359, quoted in Montgomery, Printed Textiles, p. 70.

For their extreme delicacy, English cut-glass sconces (fig. 89) are recommended for the south wall, one on either side of the fireplace. From the center of the ceiling might have hung a chandelier (fig. 90), although it is important to emphasize that such objects were a special luxury, and even the Nelsons would probably not have had one in both the dining room and drawing room.

It might shock our own tastes, but green candles (an almost transparent lime green from myrtle wax) might have filled these lighting fixtures. Myrtle wax was appreciated for its delicate fragrance and was considered superior to white which tended to yellow. Beeswax was in turn superior to tallow, because it gave more light and needed less trimming, but cost three times as much. In this, the last of the three rooms in the Nelson House to be fully panelled (the others being the dining room and hall), the guide might point out that the smoothness of wainscotting helped to reflect candlelight. Ware, in his Complete Body of Architecture (1768), says that six candles in a wainscot room equalled eight candles in a roughly stuccoed room, and ten in a room with hangings (meaning all-over hangings, like wall tapestry).[1]

The inventory lists a higher value for the drawing room andirons, shovel and tongs than for similar equipment elsewhere in the house. These items should therefore be newer (i.e., closer to the 1780's) and more stylish than the fireplace equipment of other rooms. The andirons might have resembled the English pair of fig. 91, with elegant reeded shafts, flame finials and claw-and-ball feet. The shovel and tongs should also be English, and should have brass heads, according to the inventory.

One or two firescreens (fig. 76 and 92) should stand between the fireplace and the chairs grouped by each tea table.

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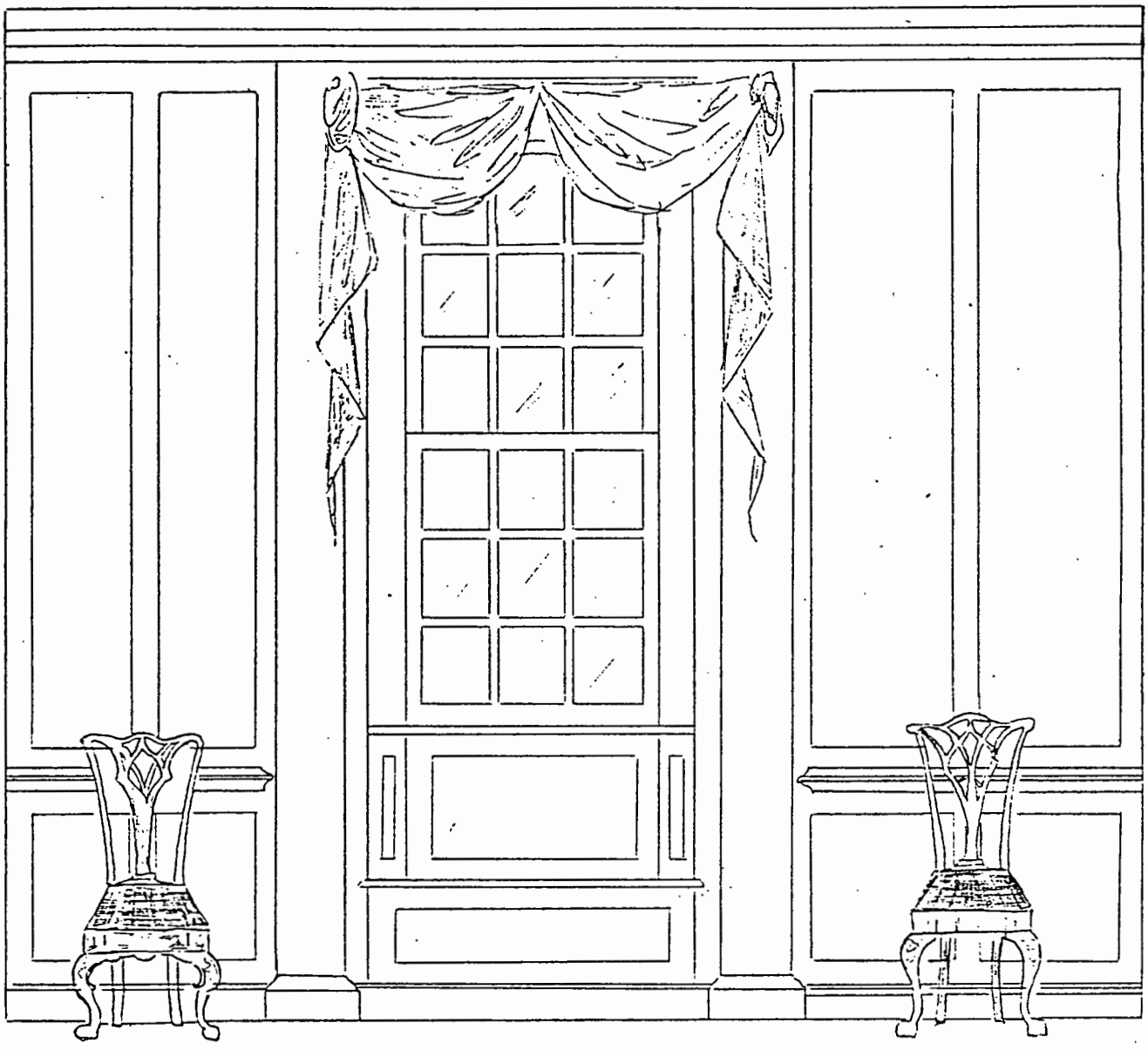

NORTH

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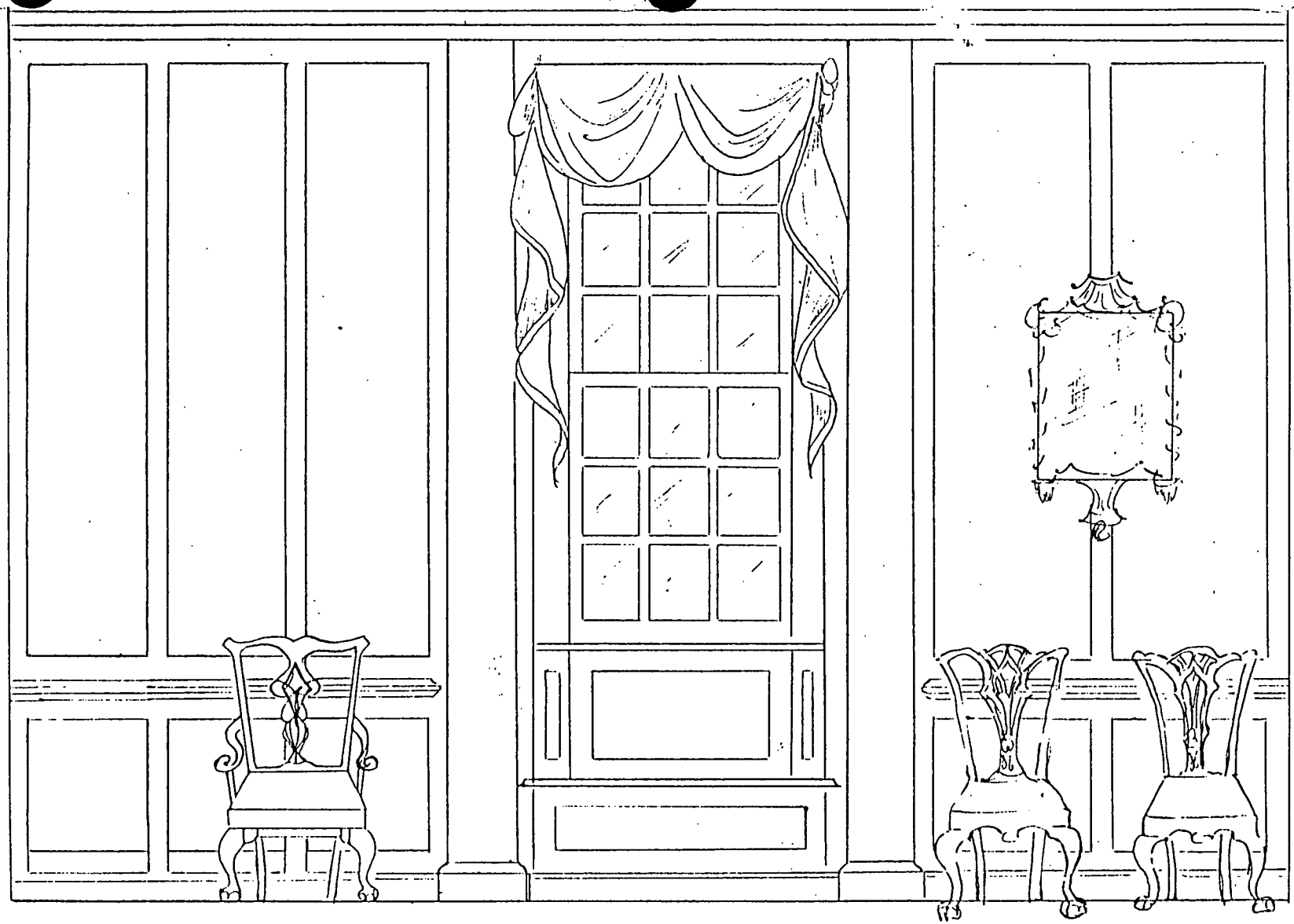
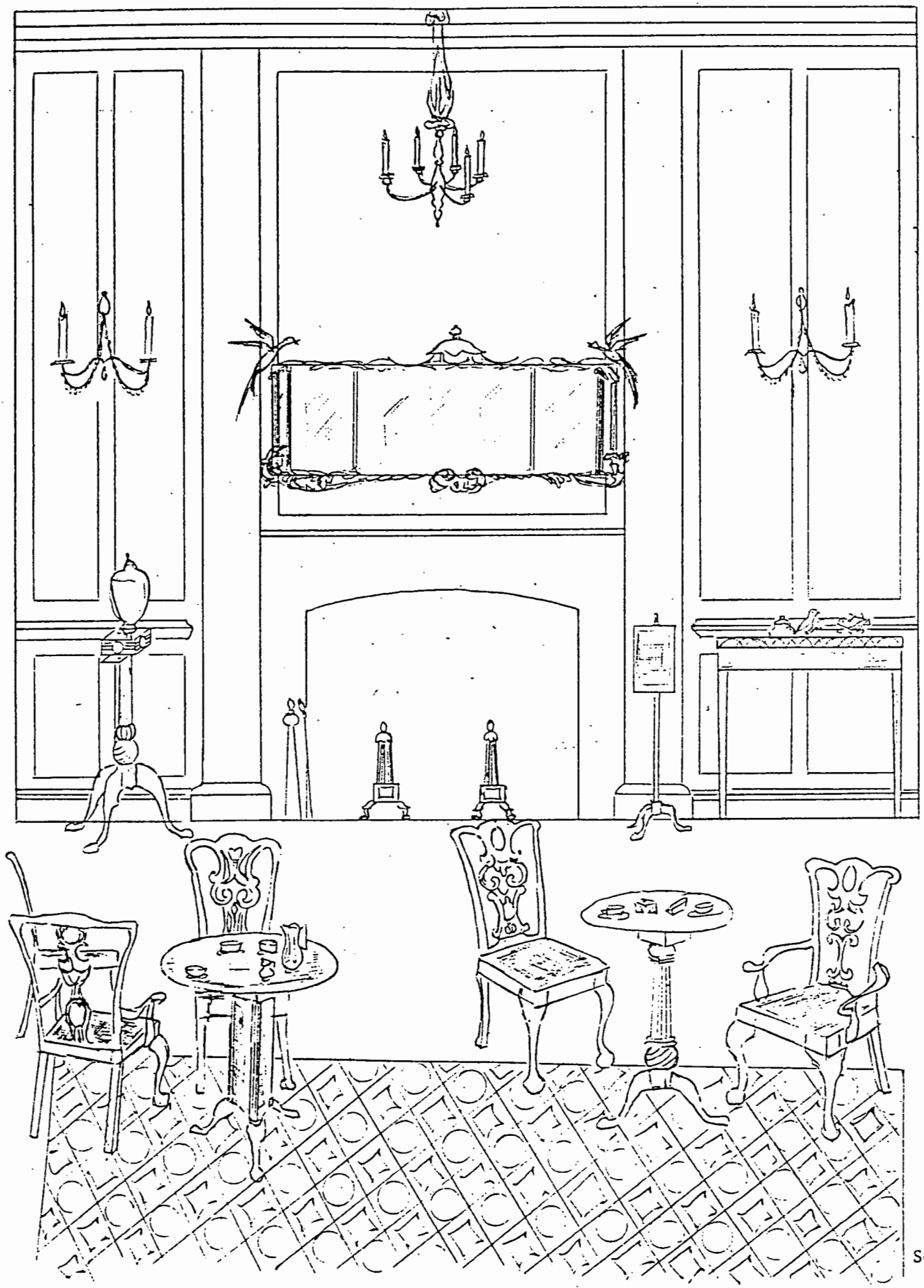
D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3





WEST



SOUTH

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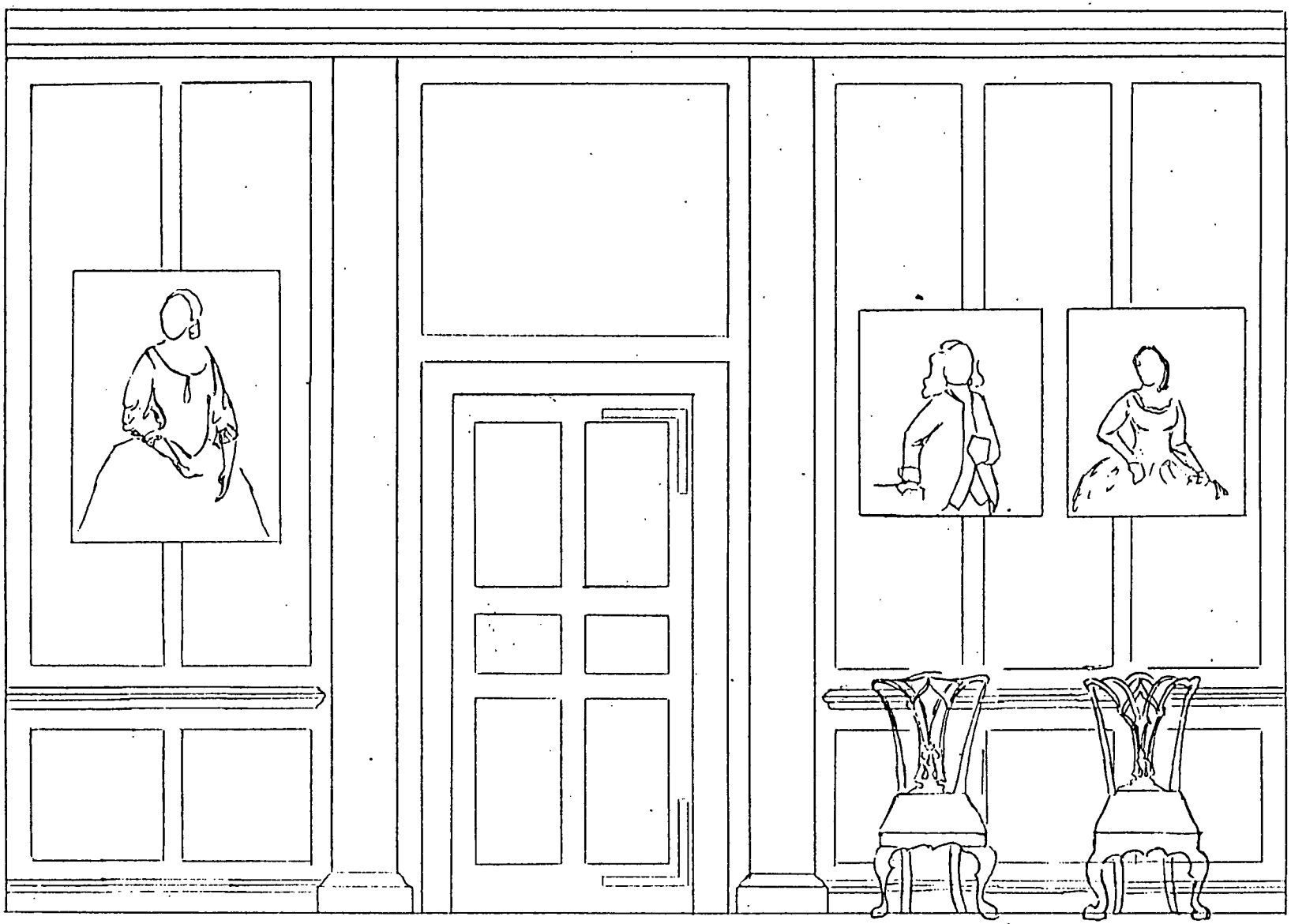


EAST



Fig. 67. Margaret Reade Nelson,
Thomas Nelson's paternal grandmother.
Early 18th c., artist unknown.

Courtesy of Mrs. Douglas Crocker
Fitchburg, Massachusetts

36122



Fig. 68. *William Nelson* (1711-1772), Thomas Nelson's father, attributed to Robert Feke.

Courtesy of Mrs. Douglas Crocker
Fitchburg, Massachusetts



Fig. 69. Elizabeth Carter Burwell Nelson (m. 1738, d. 1798), Thomas Nelson's mother, attr. to Robert Feke. — Courtesy of Mrs. Douglas Crocker Fitchburg, Massachusetts

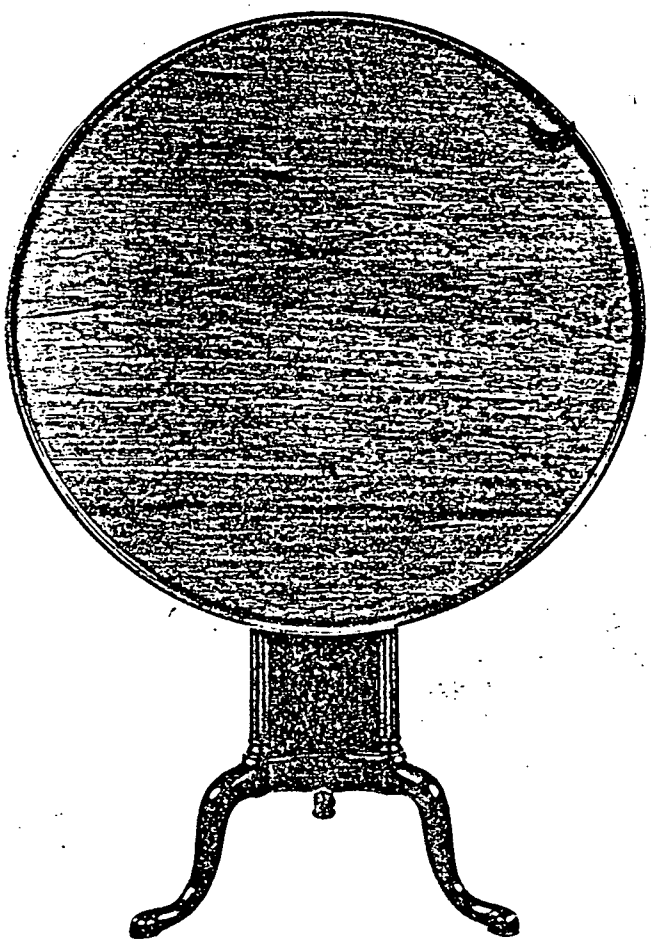


Fig. 70. Mahogany tea table. Newport, 1760-70. h: 28" diam: 32 3/4". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.




Fig. 71a. Silver plated coffeepot, a Colonial Williamsburg Craft House reproduction (cat. no. J8), from a sterling silver London model, 1740-41.
Height: 10 1/4".
Also note the silver plated sugar bowl (cat. no. J3) resembling the sterling silver example of fig. 71b.

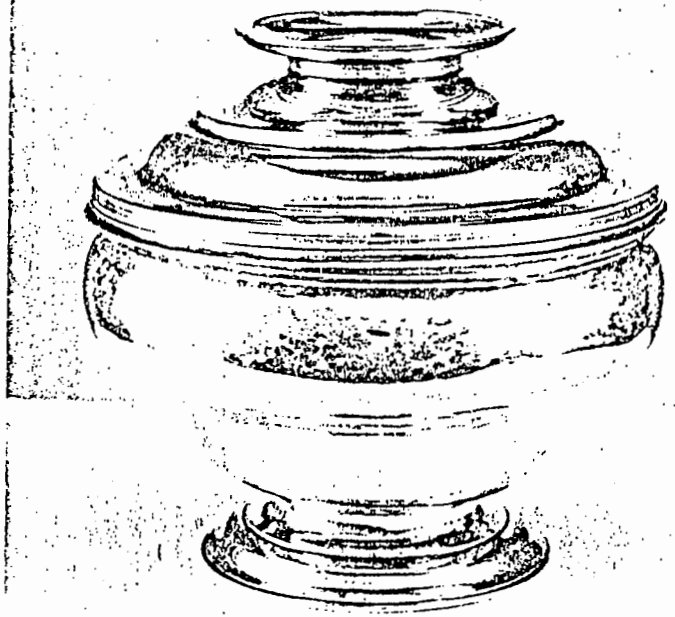


Fig. 71b. Silver sugar bowl.
—New York, 1750-85. Maker: Myer Myers.—
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

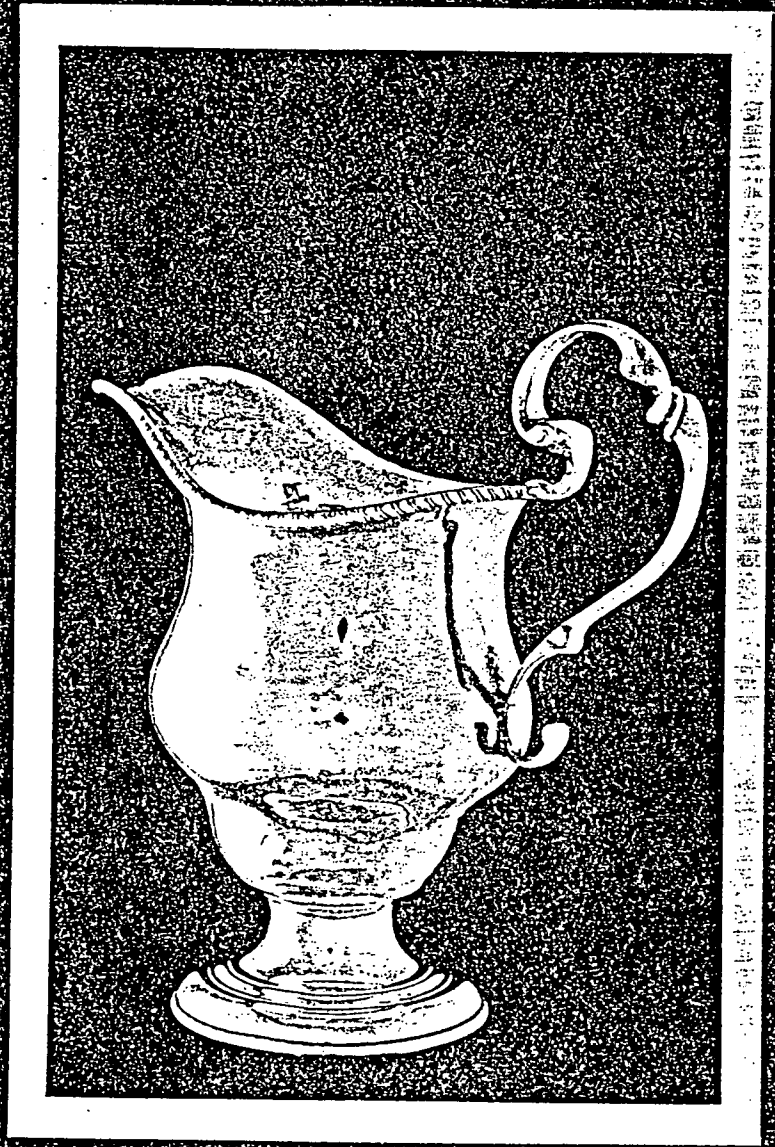


Fig. 72. Silver milk pot. New York, 1723-95. Maker: Myer Myers. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

Fig. 73. Tea urn, silver plate on copper. English, 1760-70. h: 19". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

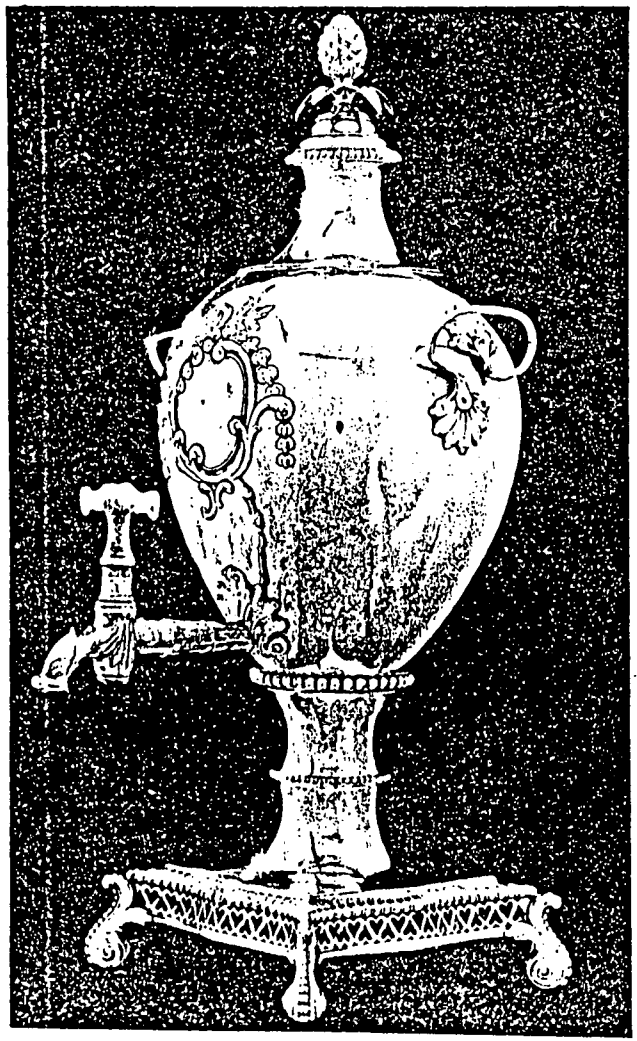
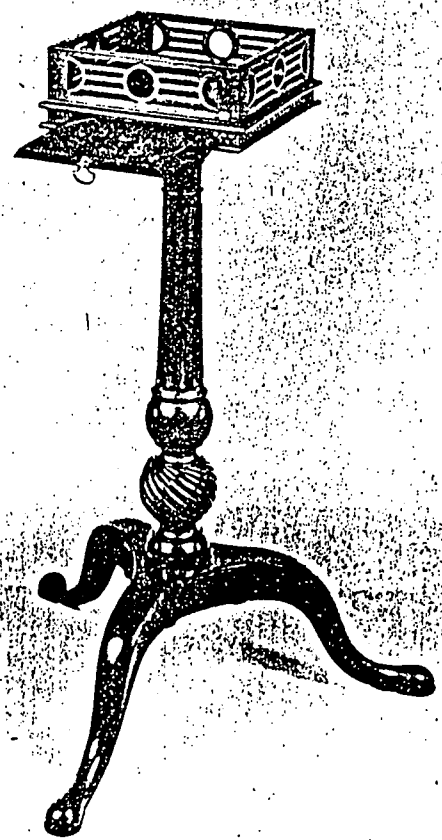


Fig. 74. Mahogany kettle stand. Newport, 1770-85. h: 29" w: 9" d: 8". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



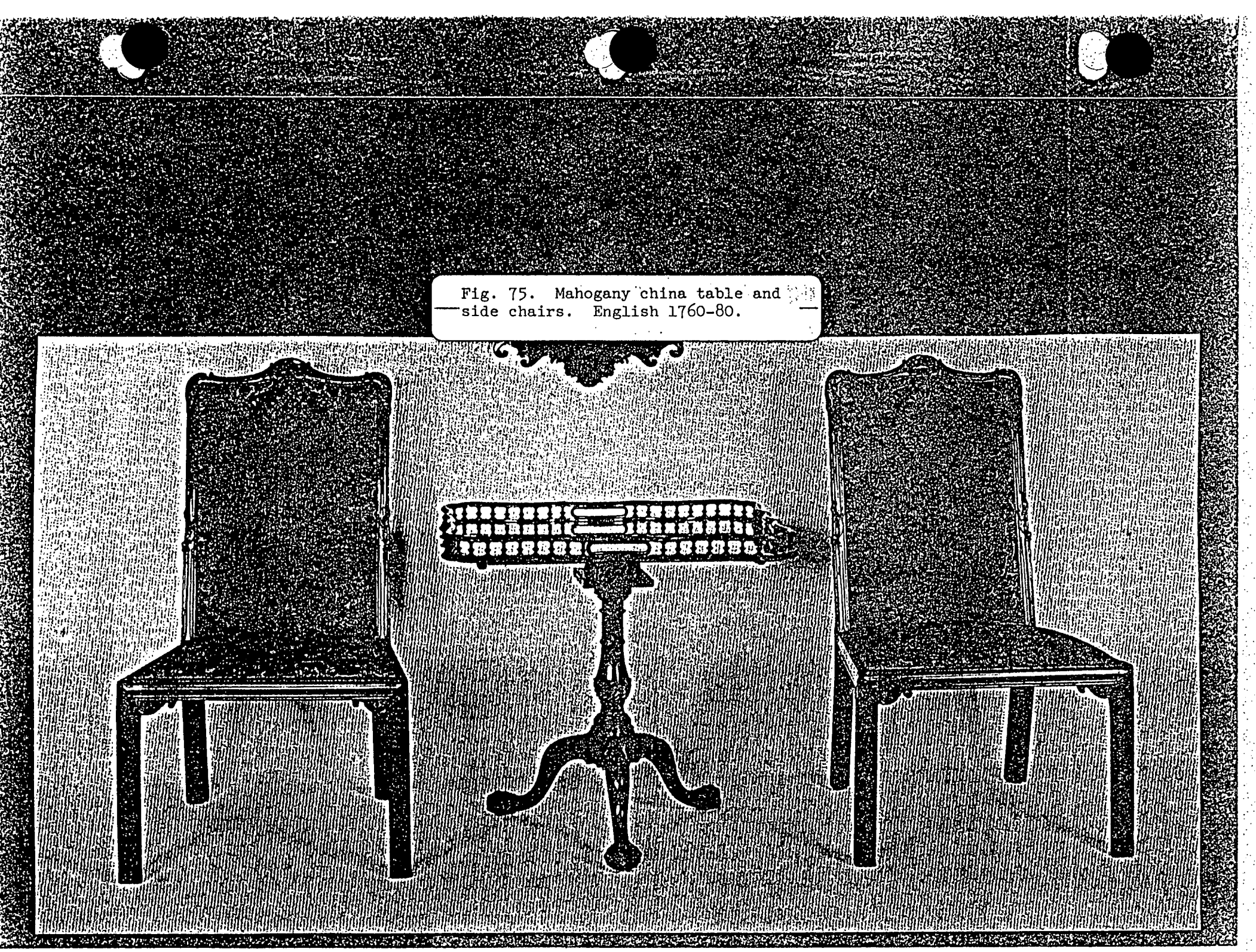


Fig. 75. Mahogany china table and side chairs. English 1760-80.

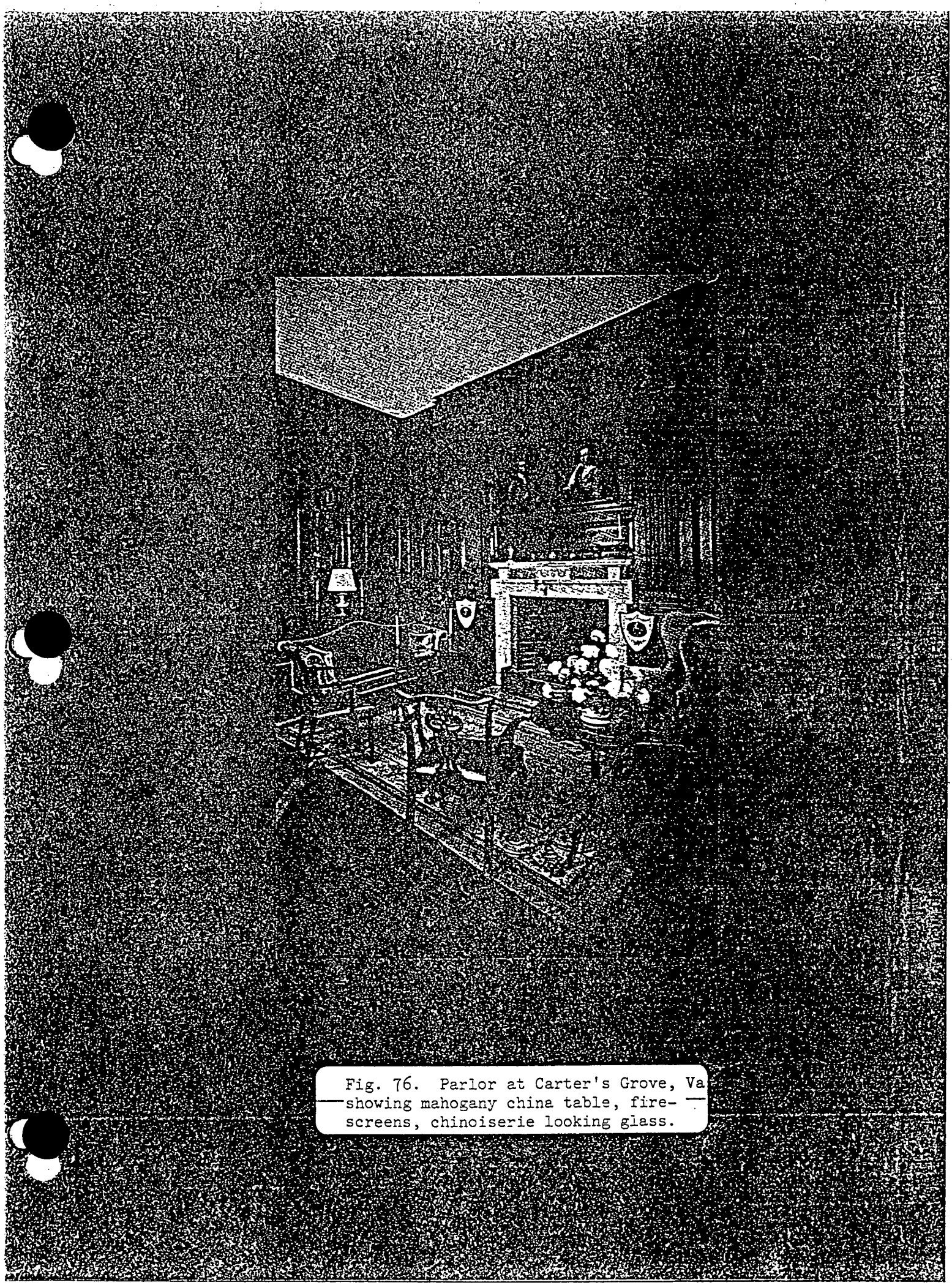


Fig. 76. Parlor at Carter's Grove, Va showing mahogany china table, fire-screens, chinoiserie looking glass.



Fig. 77. Tea service. Black basalt ware, with classical motifs molded on exterior. English, 1780-1800.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

This set represents both a style and material later than that of most ceramics suggested for the Nelson House. The formal front drawing room was likely to have been furnished with the newest fashions, such as this tea service.



Fig. 78. Porcelain figurines, English —circa 1768-75. h.: 5-6 1/2".



Fig. 79. Salt-glaze stoneware bowl, polychrome enamel. English, c. 1760. h: 4" diam: 9". Winterthur Museum

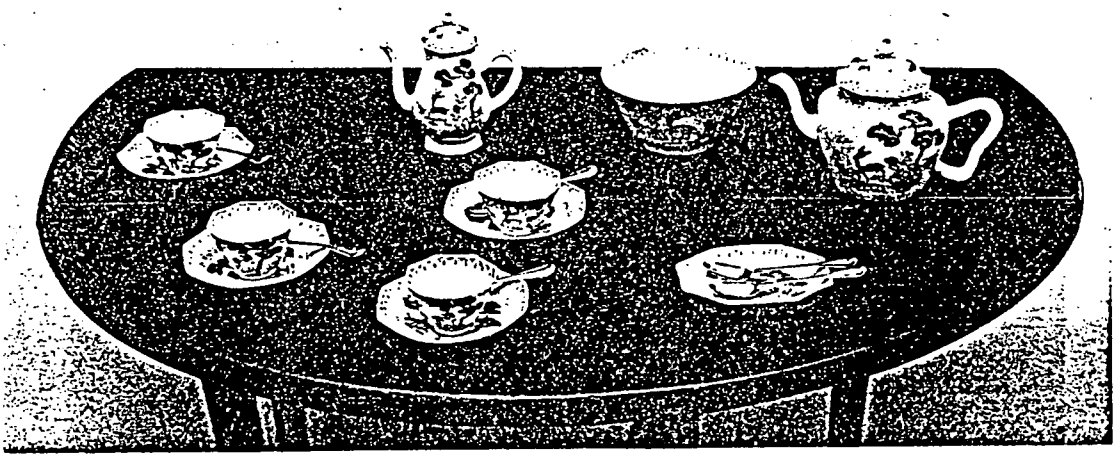


Fig. 80. Chinese export porcelain tea set, with polychrome overglaze enamels. 1755-75. Winterthur Museum.

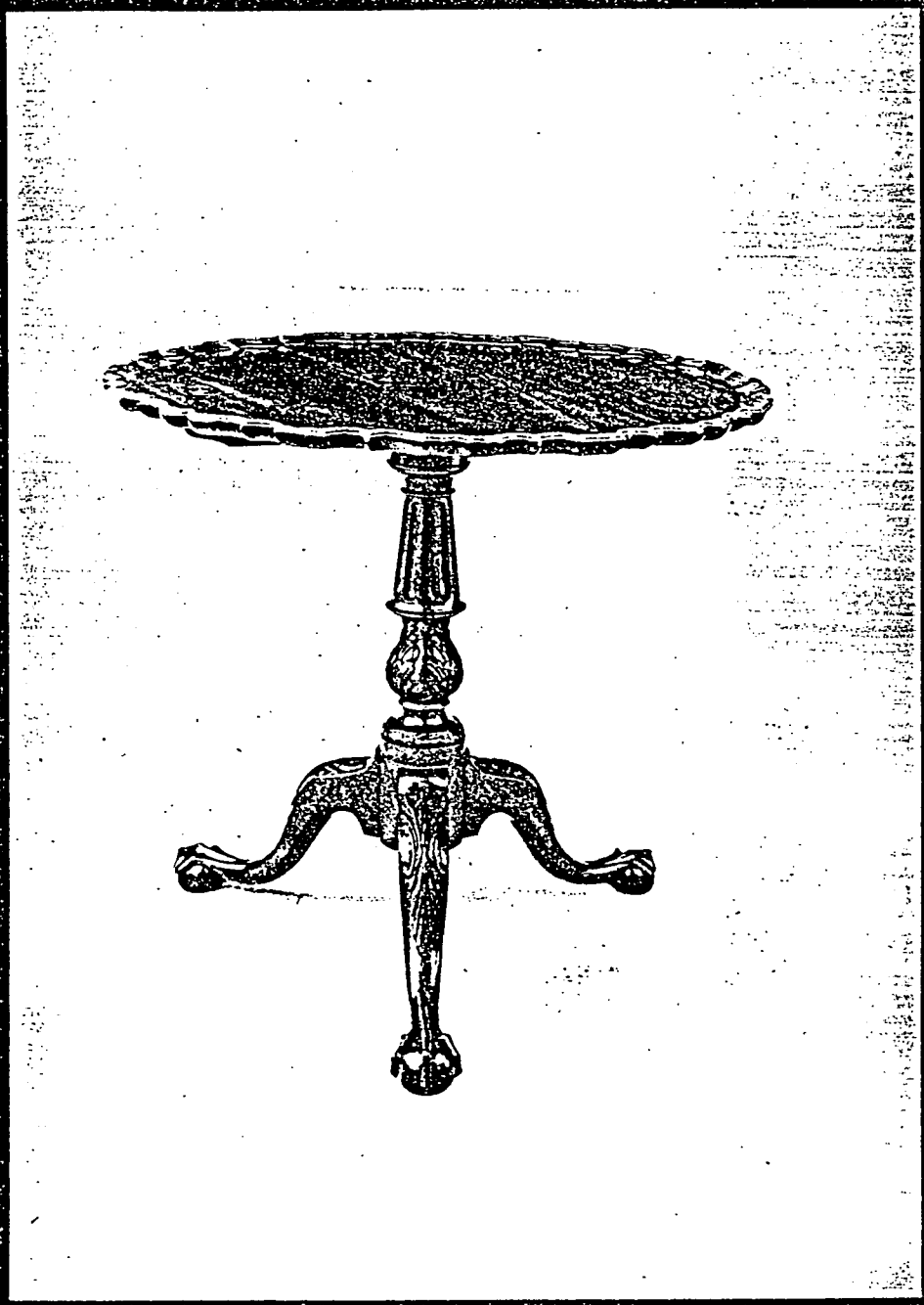


Fig. 81. Mahogany and cherry tea table. New York, 1765-75. h.: 28" diam.: 32". Winterthur Museum.



Fig. 82. Genre painting (dated 1788) showing tea being served in a room similar to the Nelson's drawing room. The painting, by J. Garemijn, is in the Musée Groeninge, Bruges.

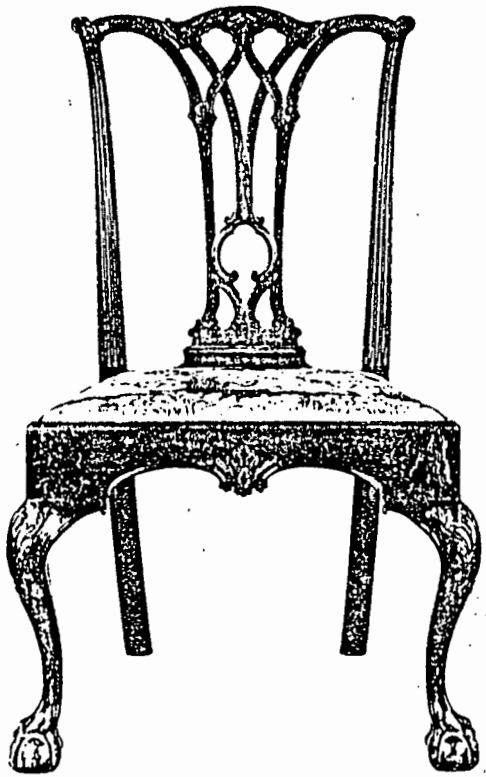


Fig. 83. Mahogany side chair with silk damask upholstery. Philadelphia, 1760-1780. Maker: Thomas Tufft.

h.: 38 7/8" w.: 23 3/4" d.: 21 3/8". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

This chair closely resembles Plates XIII and XVI in Chippendale's Director, 1762.

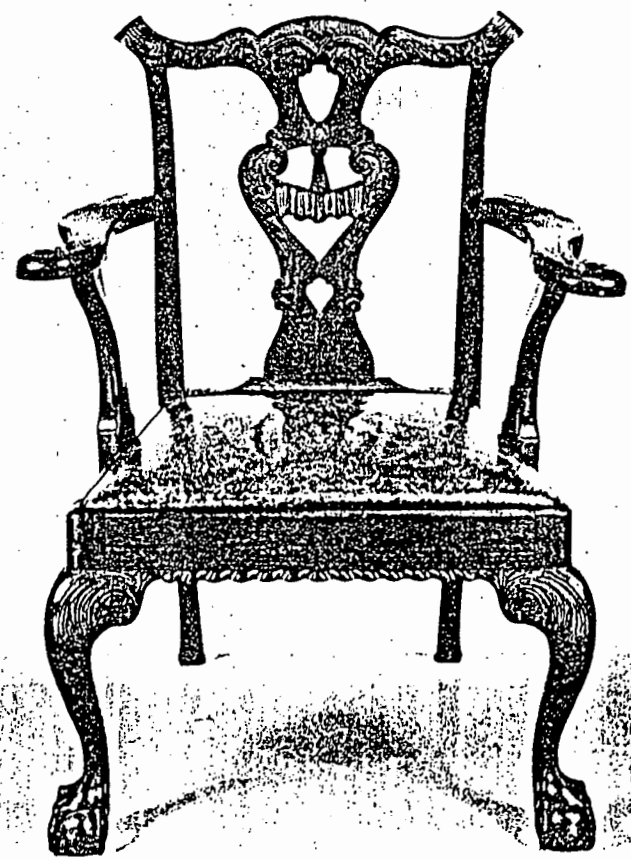


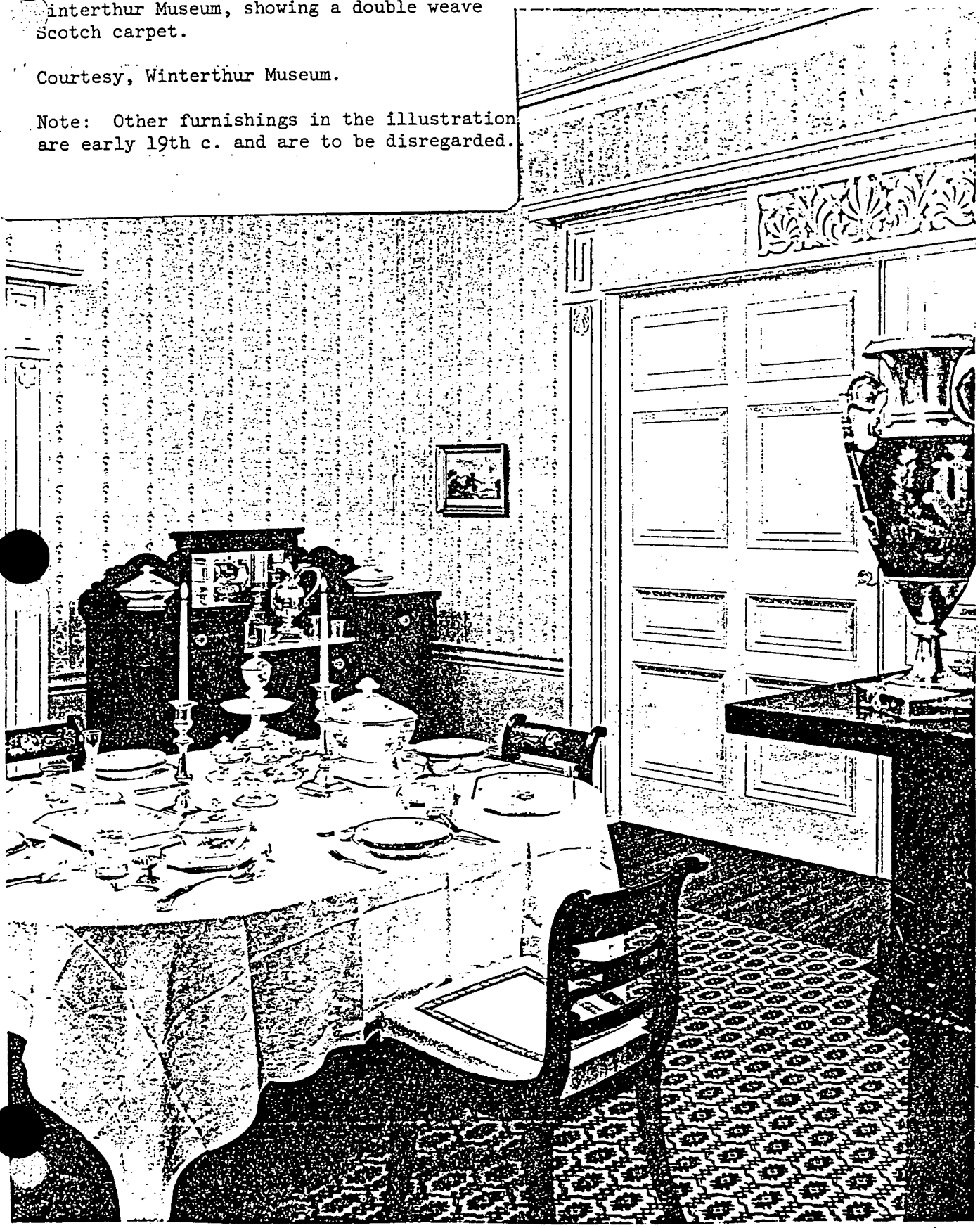
Fig. 84 Mahogany arm chair with leather upholstery. New York, 1765-75. h: 39" w: 23" d: 19"

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

Fig. 85. View of the Georgia Dining Room, Winterthur Museum, showing a double weave Scotch carpet.

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

Note: Other furnishings in the illustration are early 19th c. and are to be disregarded.



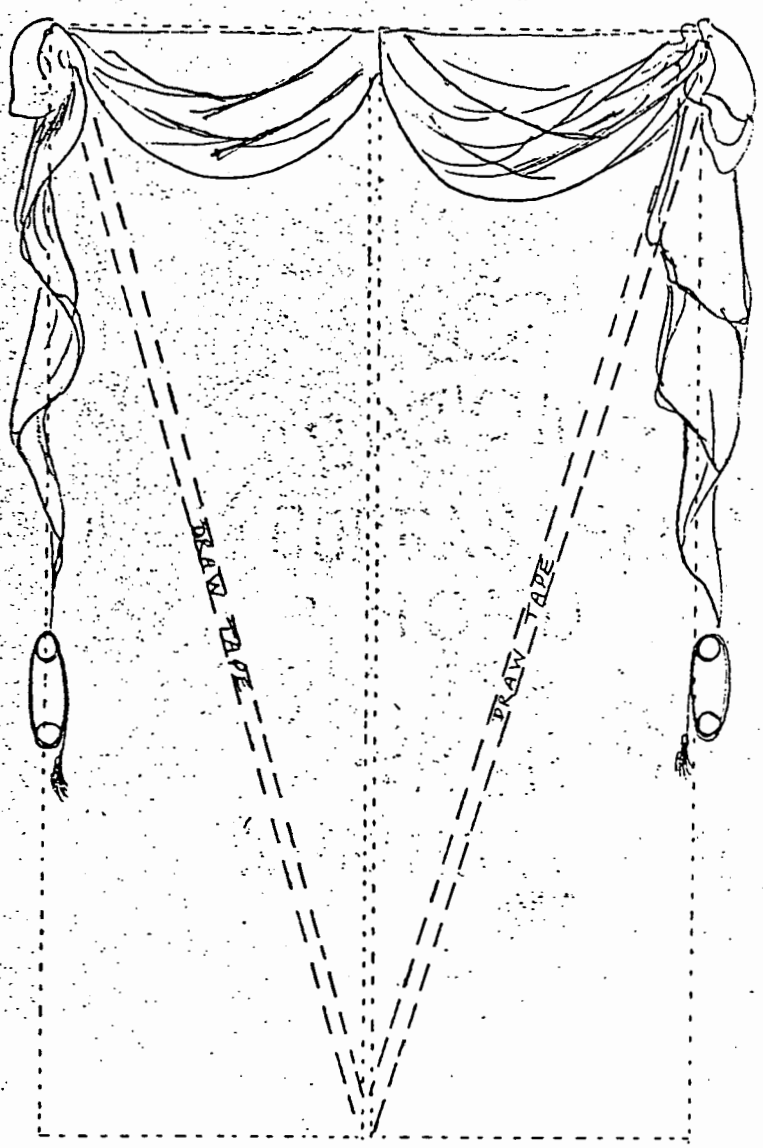



Fig. 86. Festoon curtains. Sketch shows curtains down (with diagonal draw tapes outlined by dotted line) and curtains raised (solid line), creating swags, or festoons of material. After a drawing by Jonathan Fairbanks, in Florence Montgomery's Printed Textiles, p. 72.

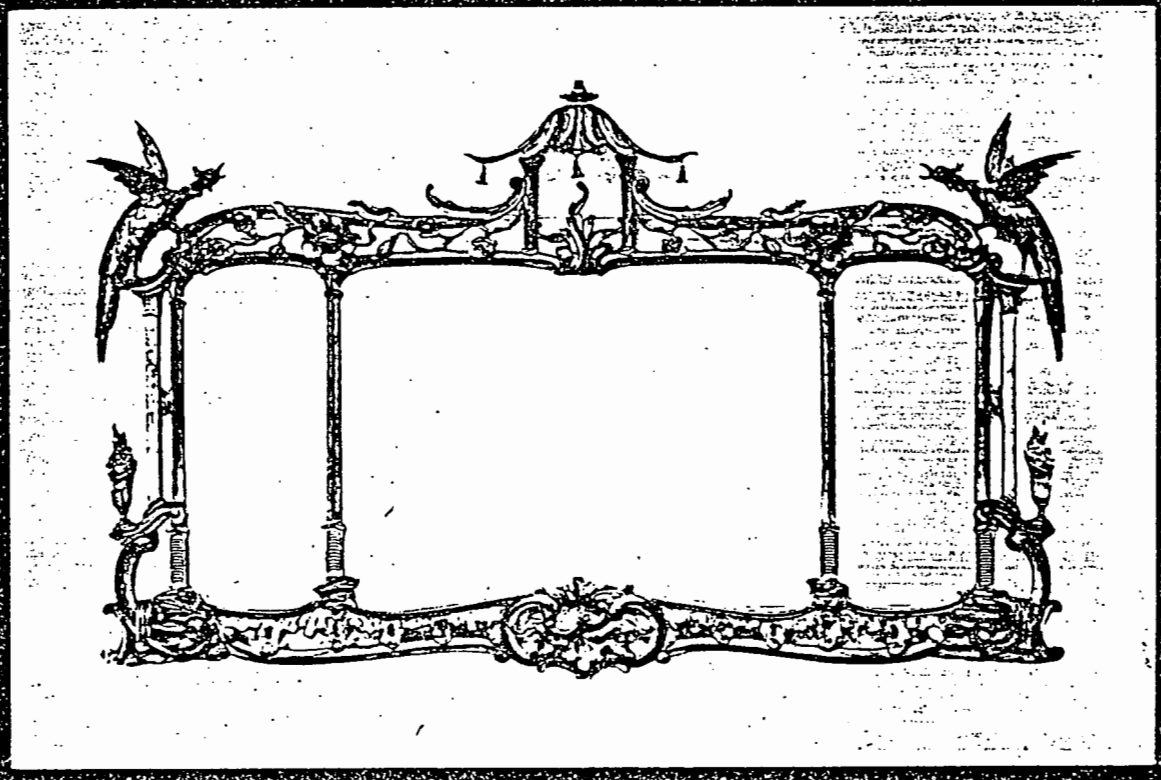


Fig. 87, Overmantel looking glass. Gilt on firwood base. English, 1760-1780. H: 29" w: 47". Winterthur

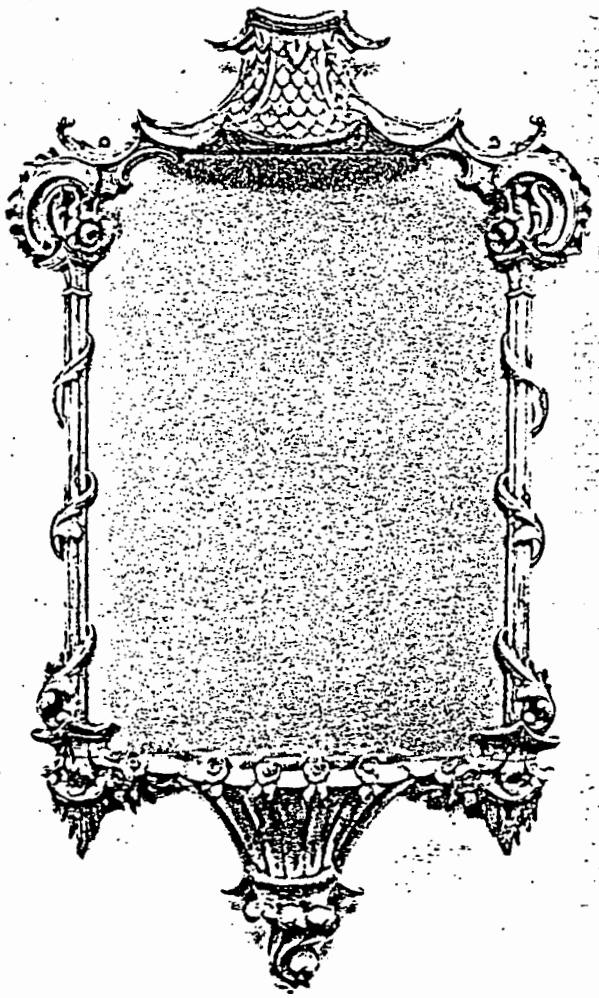


Fig. 88. Looking glass. Gilt on pine base. Phila., 1760-85. h: 45" w:29". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.



Fig. 72. Silver milk pot. New York, 1723-95. Maker: Myer Myers. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

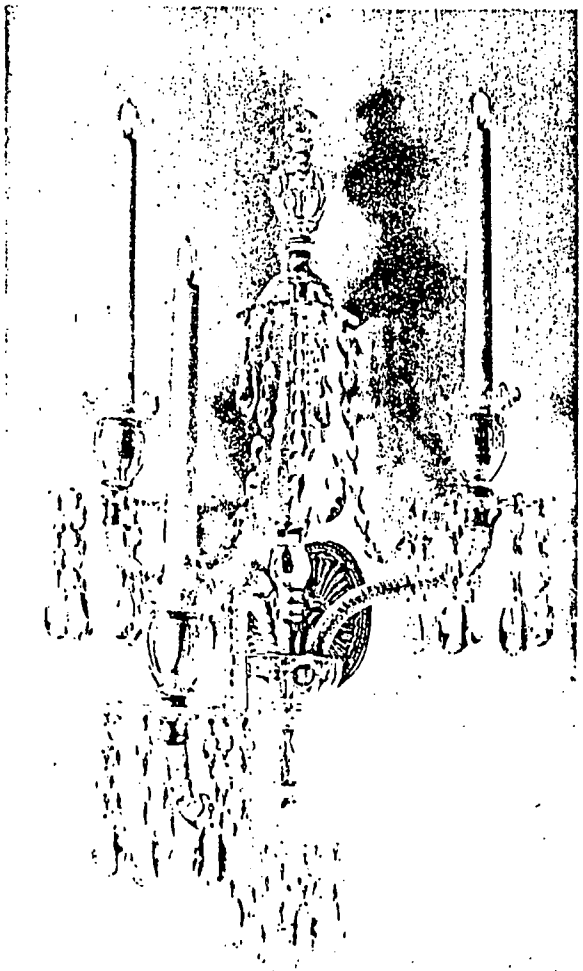


Fig. 89. Glass sconces with brass fittings. English or Irish, 1770-1800. h:28" w:16" d:14". Winterthur

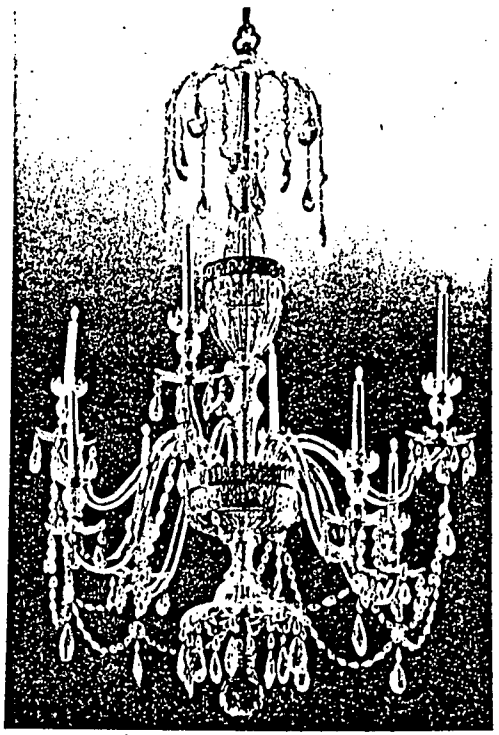


Fig. 90. Glass chandelier with brass fittings. English, 1760-80. h: 62" diam. 37". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

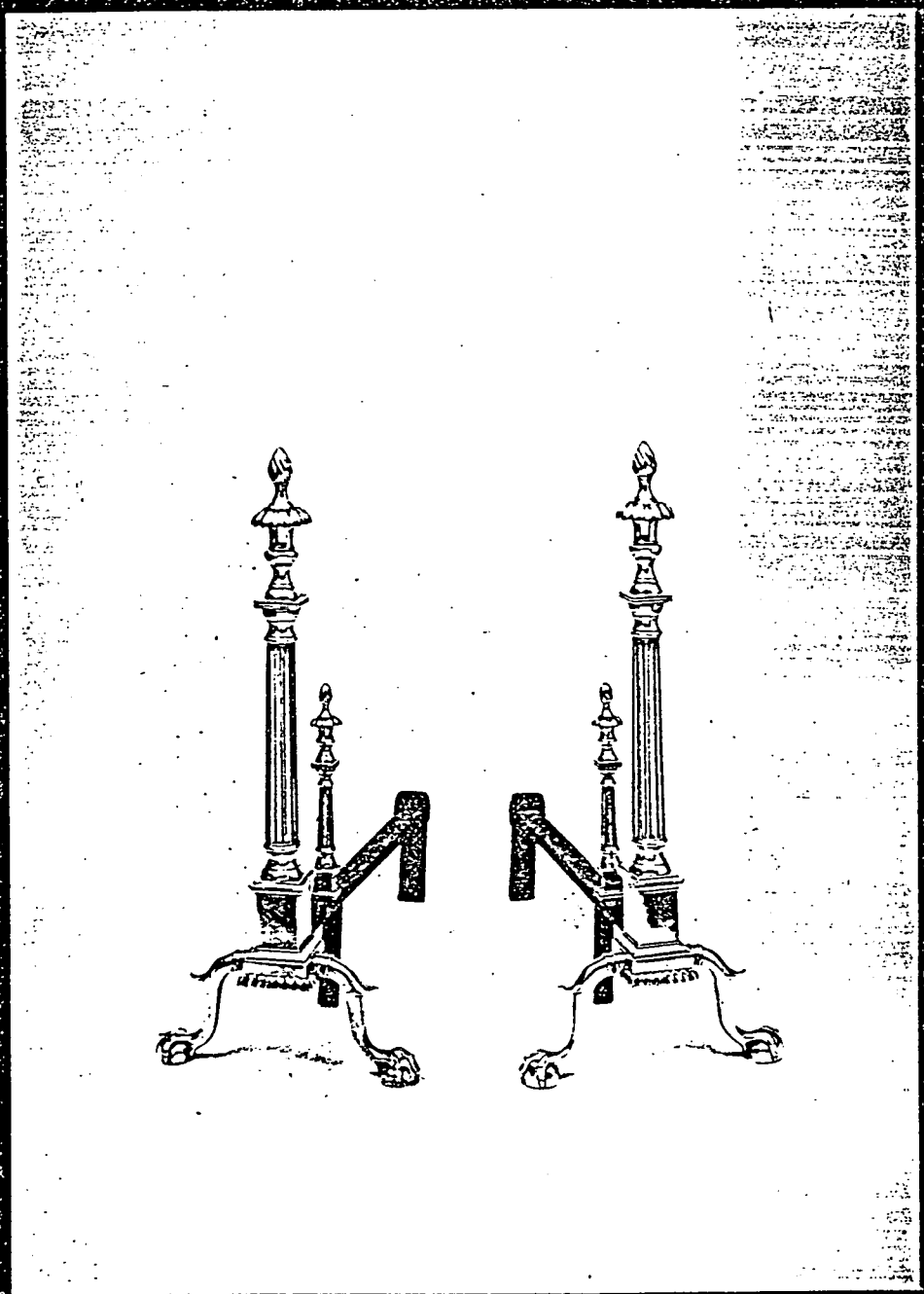


Fig. 91. Brass andirons with iron billet bar. English, 1760-80. h:28" w: 13" d: 25". Winterthur Museum.

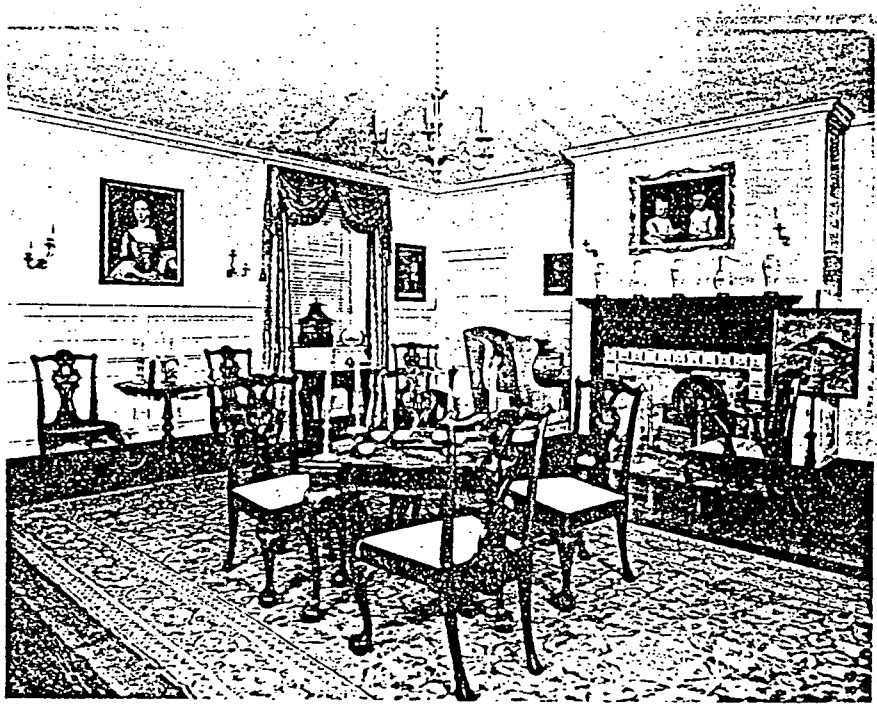


Fig. 92. View of the Bertrand Room, Winterthur Museum, showing firescreen, festoon curtains, bird cage, and sconces.

English and American furnishings, 1760-80.

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

Room 104: Nelson's Bed Chamber

Signaling Room 104 as Nelson's chamber is the presence in the inventory of a spice chest and sugar box. Spice and sugar were expensive, and frequently kept under lock and key. The inventory also lists in this room the most expensive bed and the largest, most highly appraised desk in the house. One can infer from the character of these items that this was Nelson's room.

It was considered a luxury in the eighteenth century to have separate living quarters. The man and wife who could afford it frequently had bedrooms on separate floors, or, if the same bedroom, had two separate dressing rooms. Nelson would have used this as a bedroom and an office. Here he might compose his political speeches and receive friends to talk over political issues; he might decide what provisions needed to be sent to his outlying plantations, and converse with his overseers about the operation of his 20,000 acres; he might write letters to English factors and entertain a ship captain who might have arrived with merchandise. Books, pictures, and desk accessories directly reflecting Nelson's interests and activities should be assembled in this room.

Four-post beds were highly esteemed, their degree of magnificence reflecting on their owner. If Thomas Affleck, a Philadelphia cabinet-maker well-known for his fine furniture, charged £12 for a bedstead, Nelson's bed appraised at £25 must have been richly ornamental.[1] Chippendale's Plate XLVIII (fig. 93) provides a good example. Because Southern taste frequently favored the Chinese motif in Chippendale design, a bed like that pictured in the Master Bedroom at Carter's Grove, Virginia (fig. 94) is equally appropriate.[2] The bed can be placed in the southeast corner, between windows 104-W1 and 104-W2.

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[1]This value includes the hangings, but still is very respectable. Thomas' brother Hugh's mahogany bed with japanned foreposts was appraised (probably including hangings) in 1800 at only £6.

[2]Mr. Edward Link of Binghamton, New York, has contacted the Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown regarding a four post bed that is supposed to have come from the Nelson House. Unfortunately this bed dates to the 1800-1840 period, as does much of the fine quality Nelson family material owned by the Comte de Grasse Chapter of the D.A.R. in Yorktown and by various descendants contacted.

The bed "furniture" (the contemporary term for hangings) was usually appraised together with the bed, and would have comprised two head curtains, two foot curtains (these arranged by cords and pulleys to draw and release) a top, back, top outer valance, top inner valance, and one bottom valance (see fig. 93). Trimming adorned these yards and yards of material. Bed hangings and window curtains ordered for John Cadwalader's bedroom in 1770 took "56 yards of fine red and white Copper plate cloth." More astounding still is a bill from a Philadelphia upholsterer for a "full trim'd Bed" at £43, when the cost of the bed itself was only £2..11..0.[1] Upholsterers "lately from London" were available throughout the colonies to execute London's newest style of bedhangings.

The inventory specifies yellow moreen, a popular material in the eighteenth century, usually wool, which was calendered to give a watered effect (fig. 95). The window curtains and chair coverings would be of the same material. Lavish festoon window curtains would be appropriate here and in Room 104A.

Room 104A was Nelson's dressing room and should be furnished with dressing table, looking glass, and wash stand (fig. 96, 97). These objects could be seen most easily by visitors if placed against the south and west wall. The dressing table could have been of the bureau type illustrated. The Newport block-front design, here especially well executed, was one of the few purely American contributions to decorative art design during the Chippendale period. It is fitting that one example be present somewhere in the house, and justifiable in terms of Nelson's trade with Rhode Island. On the table might be placed

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[1] Both of these examples are cited in Montgomery, Printed Textiles, p. 56.

a dressing box fitted with looking glass similar to the English box illustrated (fig. 98). A periwig, that "distinguishing badge of gentle folk", and various toilette accessories could also be placed on the table. The wash stand, like the dressing table, should date to the 1770's, in contrast to the earlier and less fashionable examples to be seen upstairs. The wash stand would hold ewer (fig. 99) and matching basin and a soap ball or dish. Damask and linen towels of the type described in Room 201 and a bed warmer (fig. 100) can hang on hooks. A metal or ceramic chamber pot can be placed on the floor. The archeological dig on the Nelson lot has turned up earthenware, creamware, and several "rhenish" gray stoneware chamber pot rim fragments. The stoneware pot fragments are decorated by cobalt banding (fig. 101).

While no press or chest of drawers is mentioned in the inventory for the entire house, there almost certainly would have been one. An attractive Virginia chest similar to fig. 303 in Helen Comstock's American Furniture (New York, 1962) and now at Berkely Plantation, might have stood to the left of the entrance to the dressing room.

The large mahogany desk inventoried for the chamber was probably a desk and bookcase resembling Chippendale's Plate CVII, or the Philadelphia example of fig. 102. Sophisticated secretary desks were being made in Charleston, South Carolina at this time, but Nelson's desk is likely to have been English. It might have stood between the entrance door (104-D1) and the fireplace.

Writing equipment should be placed on the open desk: a standish (fig. 103), a sander (fig. 104), quills, seals, sealing wax and a taper for softening the wax. Nelson had several seals. One "Virginia Amathyst Seal set in Gold"[1] was willed to Thomas by his father, and in turn by

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[1] Y.C.R., Wills and Inventories, XX, 134.

Thomas to his eldest son. The Virginia Historical Society has a manuscript with a wax seal imprint showing much of the Nelson coat of arms intact.[1] Nelson undoubtedly had a seal of the "borough of York" (fig. 105a,b), made around 1786 when the Virginia Assembly passed an act incorporating the town and authorizing the "mayor, Aldermen, and commonalty" to have a common seal for use in shipping and for official documents.

In view of Nelson's education and vast properties, drafting tools, a surveyor's level, and compass (fig. 106) would be highly appropriate. Use of these instruments was considered a gentleman's skill. Several books reflecting Nelson's particular interests could also lie on the desk. Nelson, for example, supported the Italian agriculturalist-diplomat Philip Mazzei in his attempts to establish silk, oil and wine production in Virginia; one title might therefore be Pierre Sauvage's Directions for the Breeding and Management of Silk-Worms . . . (Phila., 1770). A choice can be made from the list of books Nelson had or is likely to have had, found in Appendix D.

A "Coat of Arms in a frame" turns up in one Nelson family inventory (1750)[2] and was almost certainly a hatchment (from the French "achèvement") resembling fig. 107. Hatchments were originally connected with funereal ceremonies but came to hang in homes like ancestral portraits.[3] Surviving hatchments are executed in paint on wood or worked

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[1]The seal measures 20 mm. x 17 mm. and is to be found on Ms 11:2N3344:1.

[2]Y.C.R., Wills & Inventories, XX, 179.

[3]Boutell's Heraldry, revised by C.W. Scott-Giles (London, 1950),146-49.

in needlepoint. A modern rendition of the Nelson coat of arms might hang over the fireplace (fig. 108).[1]

On Nelson's walls might also have hung the 1754 portrait of him as a boy, painted by the English artist Mason Chamberlain, now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (fig. 3). Showing Nelson with blue eyes, sandy colored hair and dressed in a gray coat with gray velvet collar, this painting hung until the late nineteenth century at Rosewell, once the home of Nelson's daughter and son-in-law, Mann Page.

The most appropriate wall decorations for Nelson's room readily available today lies in the area of prints. Among these, mezzotints would be most fitting because in the latter half of the eighteenth century they were considered to be the most sophisticated form of graphic art. Originating on the Continent, the mezzotint technique became most highly developed in England. Mezzotints were particularly suitable for reproducing portraits of notable individuals. One showing Lafayette at the siege of Yorktown in 1781 (fig. 109) would be eminently suitable. Other examples are suggested in Room 105.[2]

View of Yorktown (fig. 1) is an example of the informality and charm drawings offer. Any drawing relating to Virginia, to tobacco, or

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[1] The Nelson coat of arms is described in Charles K. Bolton's Bolton's American Armory (Boston, 1927) as: Per pale argent and sable, a chevron between three fleur de lis counterchanged. A modern manuscript with gouache illustrations of the Nelson, Burwell, Armistead, Grymes, and related families arms is in the Virginia Historical Society (MSS6: 3B444:2, Bayne, "Some Virginia Armorials").

[2] The work of England's first rate mezzotint engravers should be chosen. This list includes John Finlayson, Valentine Green, Thomas Watson, William Dickinson, John Jones, John Raphael Smith, John Dean, James Walker, William Doughty, and Jonathan Spilsbury.

to the Revolutionary period would add a great deal. These illustrations could hang on the wall between Window 104-W1 and the fireplace, or in the antechamber, Room 106.

The spice cabinet and sugar box mentioned earlier might stand on a small, simple table (fig. 110) to the left of Window 104-W1. Figure 111 shows the general style of the classic spice "press" form which continued throughout the century; figure 217 in Percy Macquoid's English Furniture shows, on the other hand, a very high style mahogany chest, specifically in the gothic taste. Tea was another precious item for which special boxes were designed. Chippendale's Plate CLIX (fig. 112) gives an idea of a tea chest which might have been kept in Nelson's room during the 1760 to 1780's.

Small quantities of tobacco were also kept in special wooden or ceramic canisters. Much to his father's dismay, Nelson took up smoking when he was at school in England. A pipe, pipecase, tobacco box and snuff box would be appropriate. Tradition claims that a gold snuff box (fig. 2), now in the Virginia Historical Society was given to Nelson during his school days by Lord North, in gratitude for having saved his son from drowning. It is not established, however, that Lord North had a son even roughly Nelson's contemporary. Whatever the source, it is probable that the gold snuff box actually did belong to Nelson. The one small table could not hold the complete assortment of objects outlined above. Depending on what articles were available, a selection of one or two could be made.

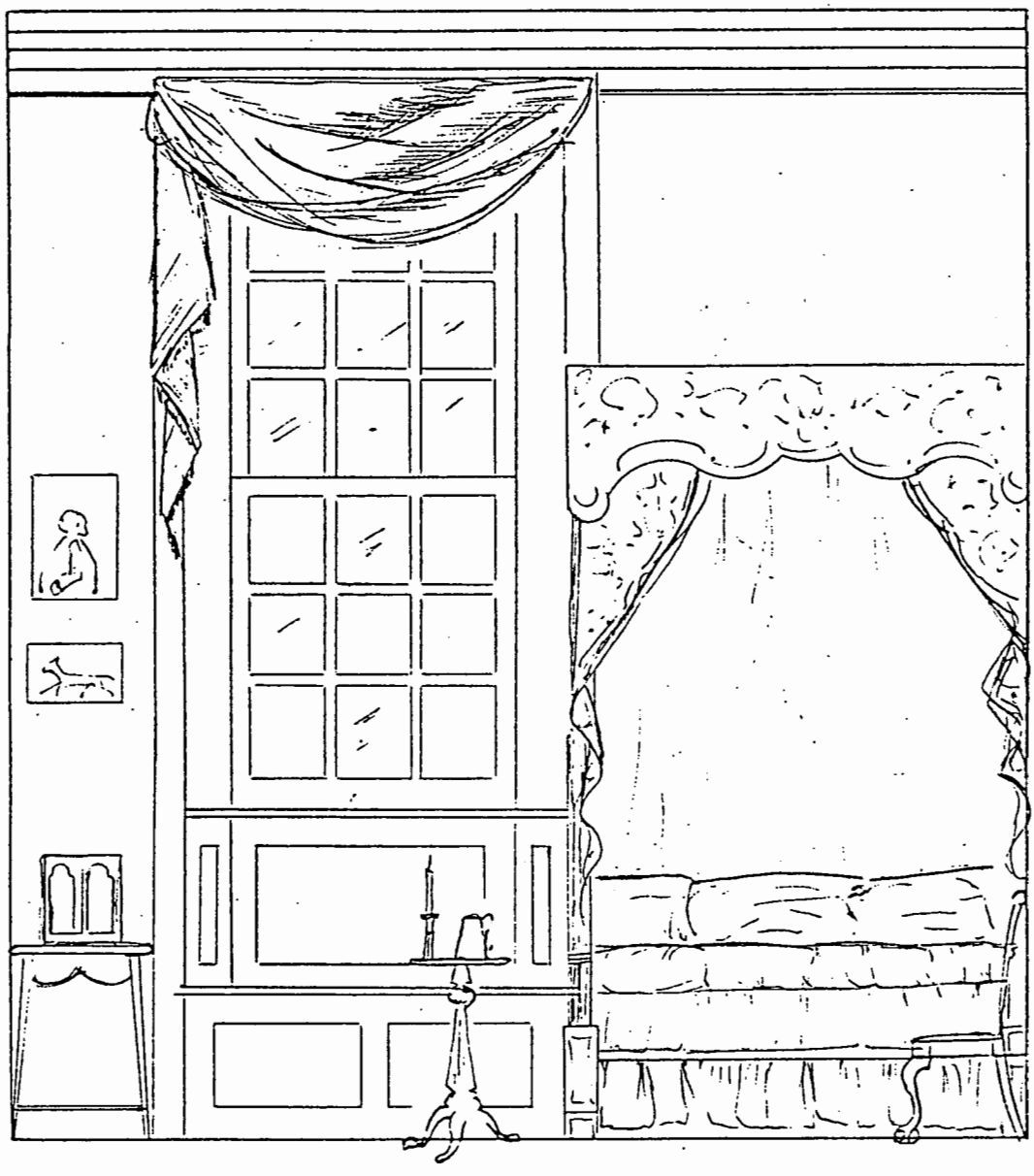
One of a pair of brass candlesticks (fig. 113) can be placed on the desk, the other on a candle stand beside the bed. English candle stands were generally much more ornately carved than American, often taller and designed almost as torchères for a formal room. They do not appear to have been imported in great numbers, and so a well-turned American mahogany candle stand, similar to fig. 114 would be suitable (also compare Chippendale's Plate CXLIV).

The antechamber, Room 106, has no natural light of its own, and is likely to have had a sconce (fig. 214) or simple hanging lantern, resembling figure 115.

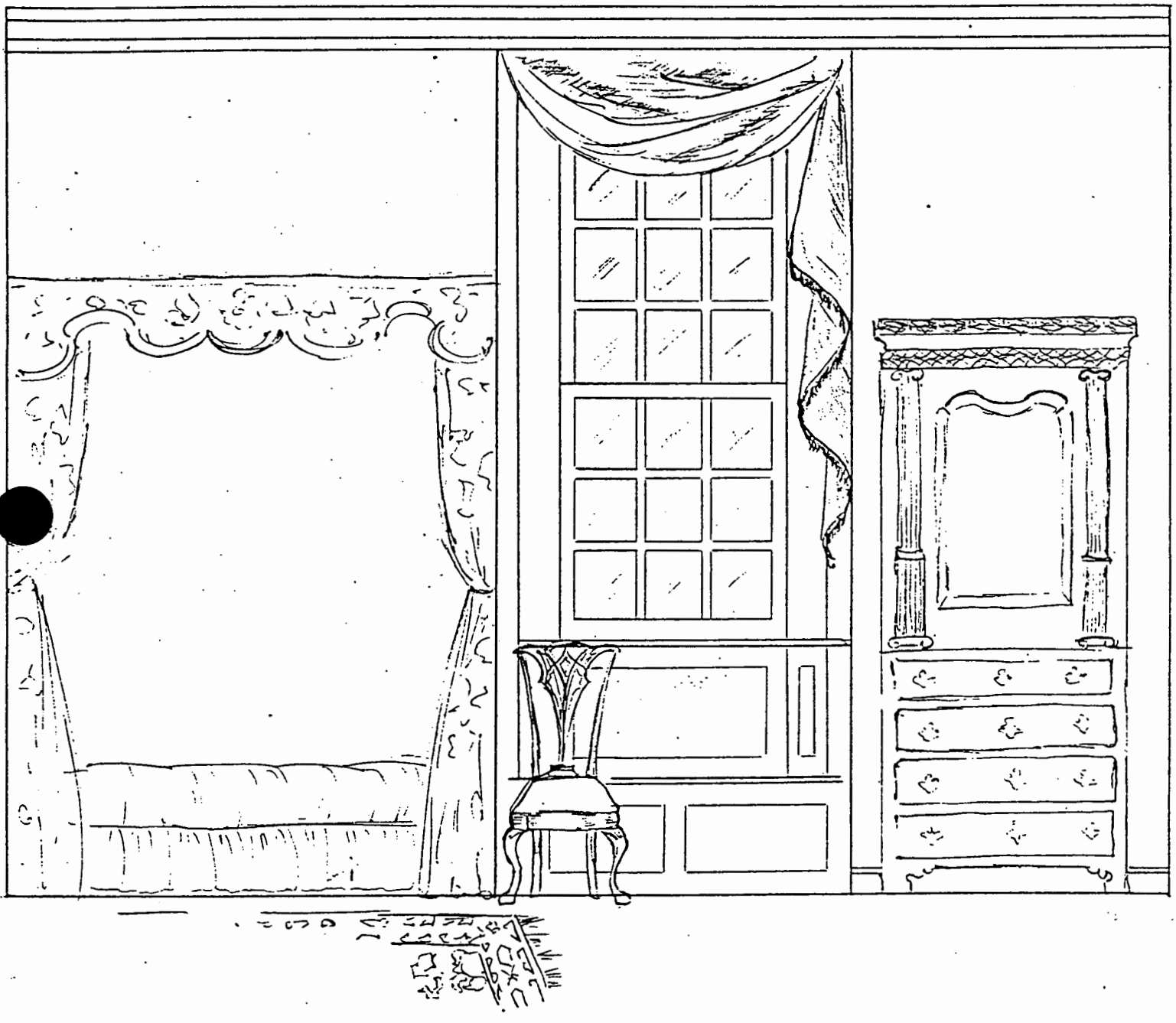
Six mahogany chairs are called for in the inventory. Several of these should be equal in quality to those of the dining room, possibly resembling figure 116. Others might be more simple (fig. 117). Three can be placed in Room 106, one at the foot of the bed, one to the right of the fireplace, and one at the desk. The chair at the desk could well be a corner chair, as these were especially favored in southside Virginia. Field researchers for the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts have found corner chairs with straight Marlborough legs and either pierced or solid splat to be common for the lower Chesapeake area. The popular theory that corner chairs accommodated ladies' full skirts and men's swords is a less convincing explanation for their popularity than simply the ease with which one could get up from a corner chair when pulled up to a table or desk.

A carpet is also called for in the inventory. This might be a small oriental carpet like the Kurdistan example (1750-1800) shown

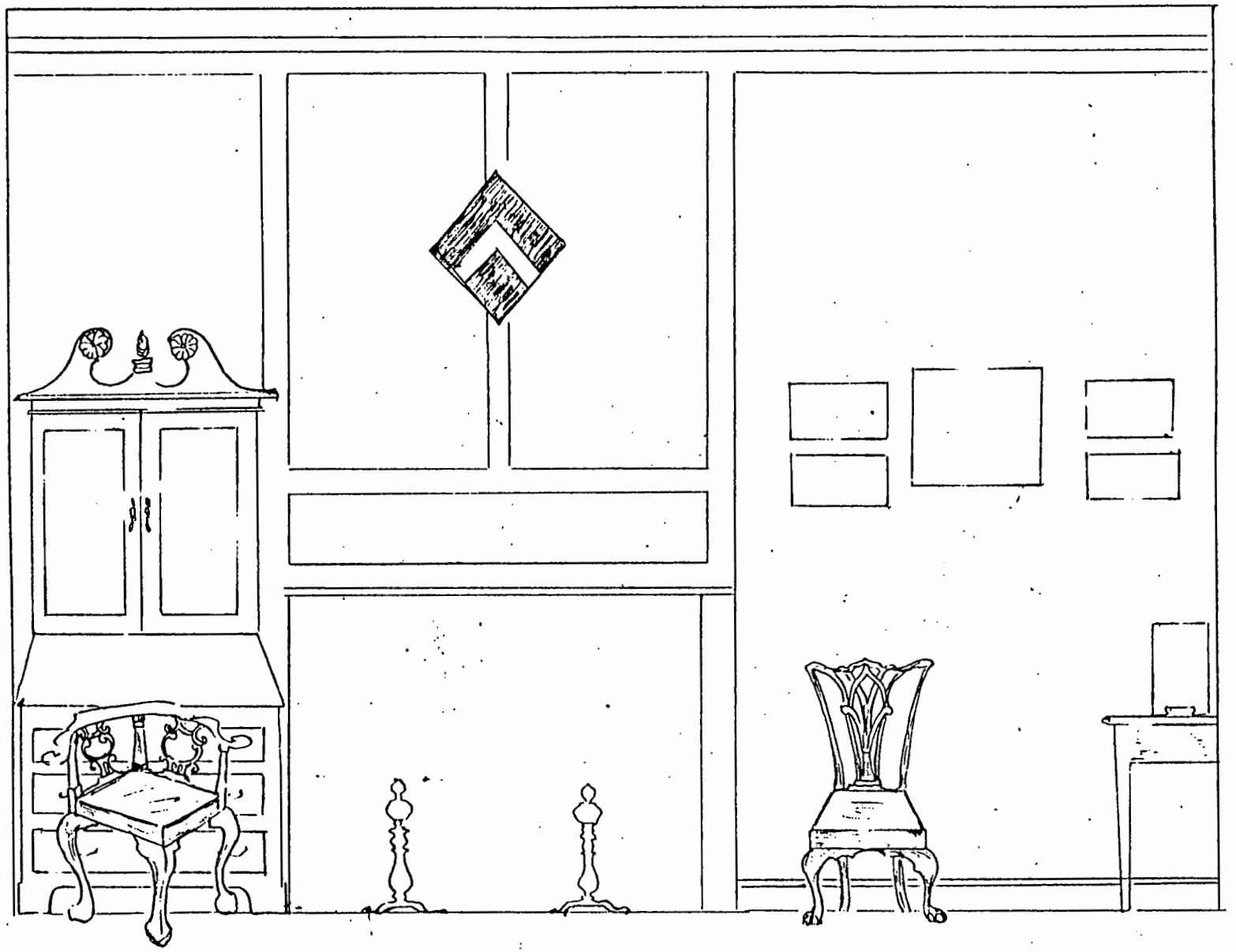
in figure 117. Andirons, tongs, and bellows inventoried for the room are not valued as highly as the fireplace equipment in the drawing room. These might therefore be older in style (fig. 119).



EAST

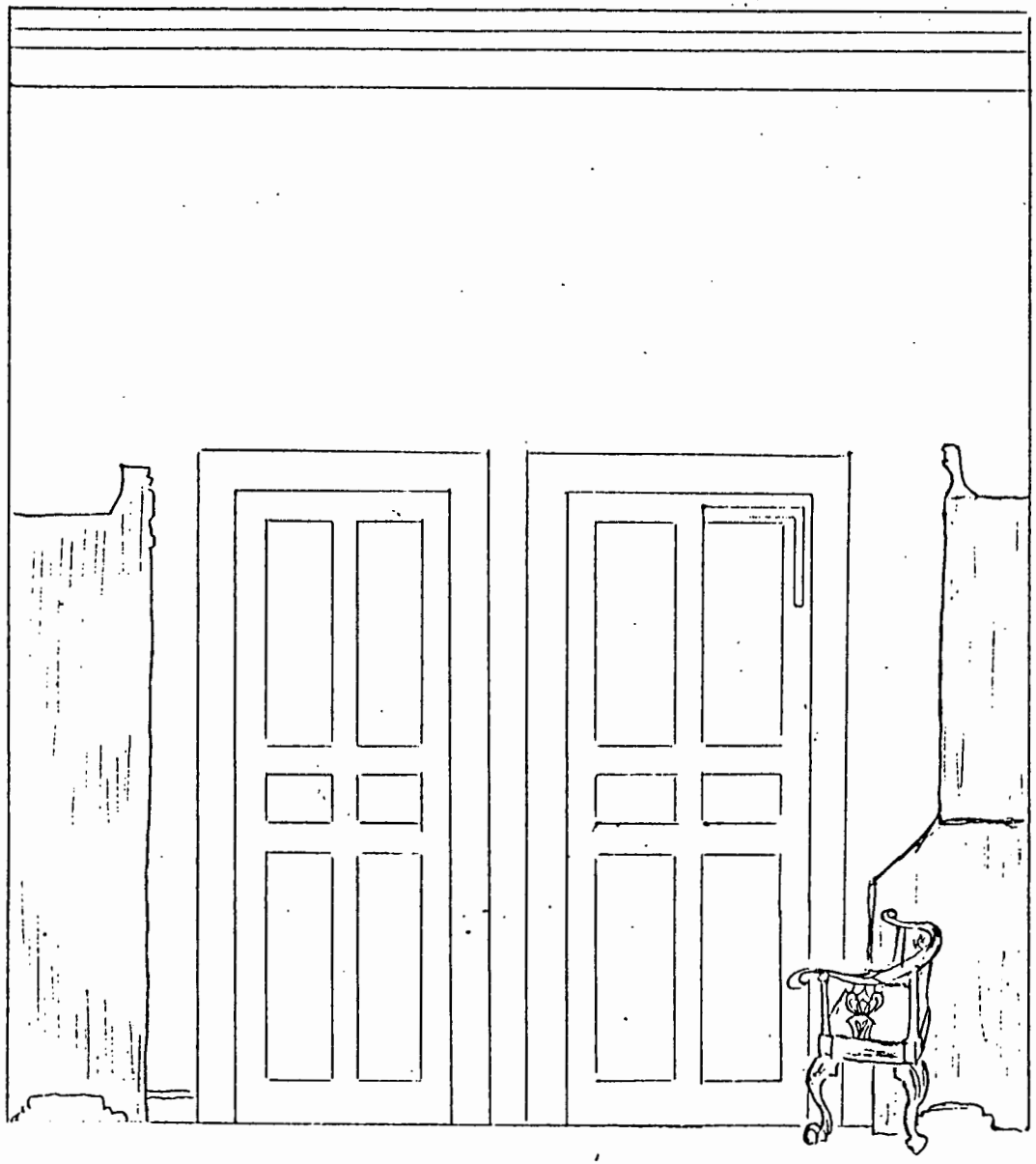


SOUTH



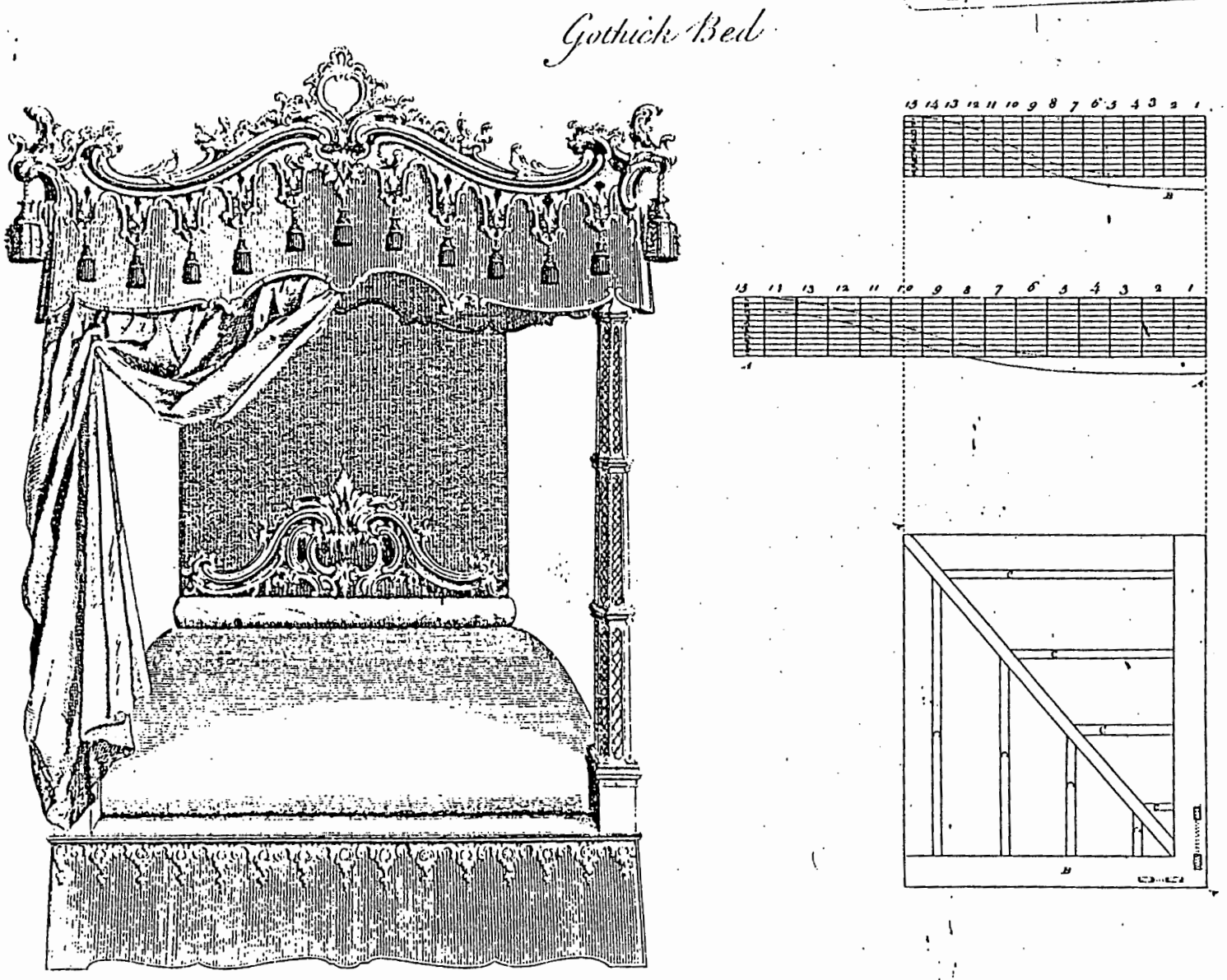
NORTH

D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3
D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3



WEST

Fig. 93. Design for a bed, Plate XLVIII of Chippendale's Director, 1762.




Publish'd according to Act of Parliment

I. J. Müller Sculp.



Fig. 94. View of the Master bedroom, Carter's Grove, Va., showing four post Chinese style bed, 1760-90.

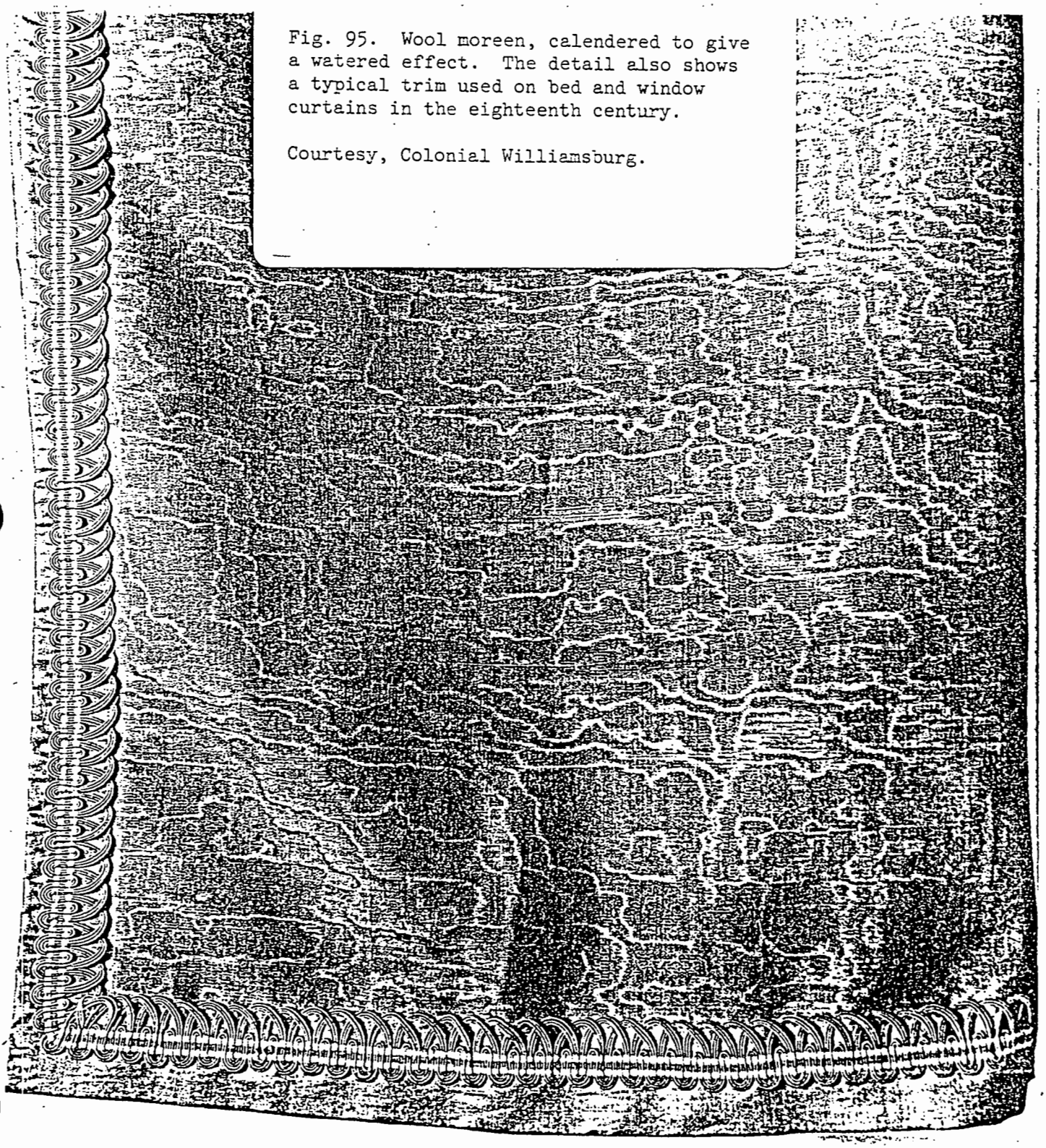


Fig. 95. Wool moreen, calendered to give a watered effect. The detail also shows a typical trim used on bed and window curtains in the eighteenth century.

Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.

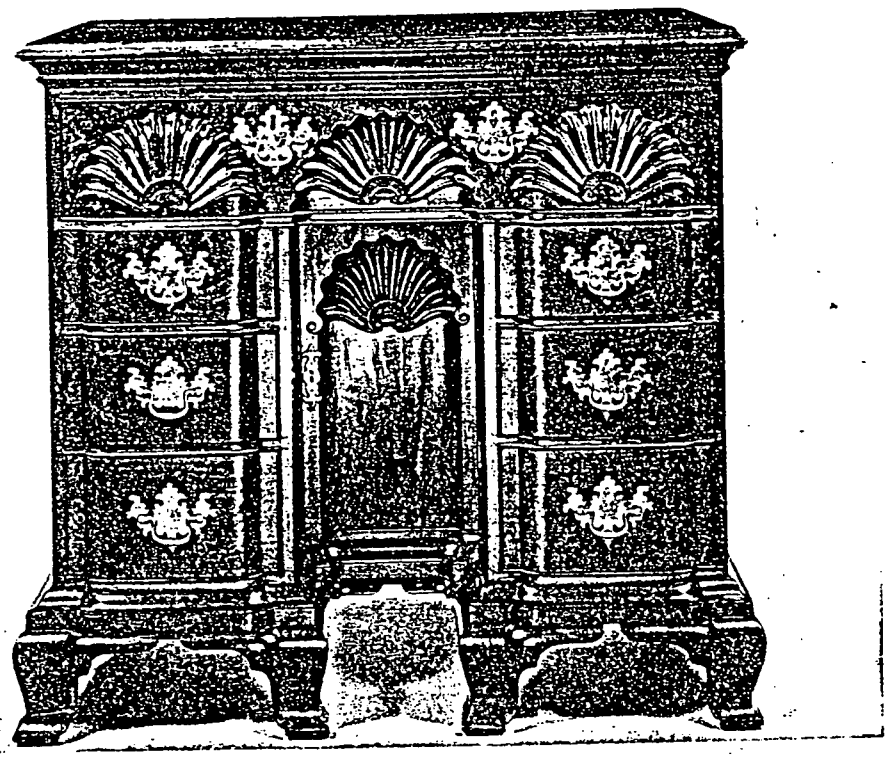


Fig. 96. Mahogany block-front dressing table. Newport, 1765-75. h: 34" w: 38" d: 20". Winterthur Museum.

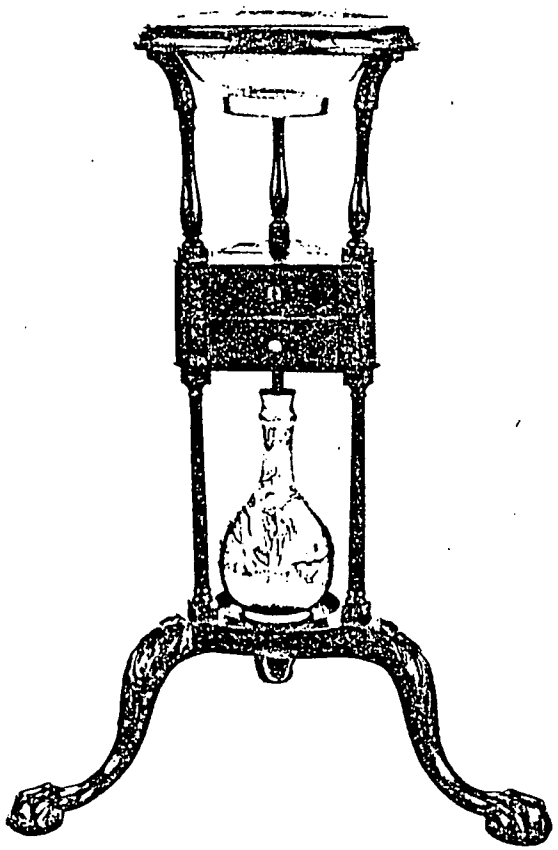


Fig. 97. Mahogany and tulip wash stand. Probably New York, 1770-80. h:32" w:21" Winterthur Museum.

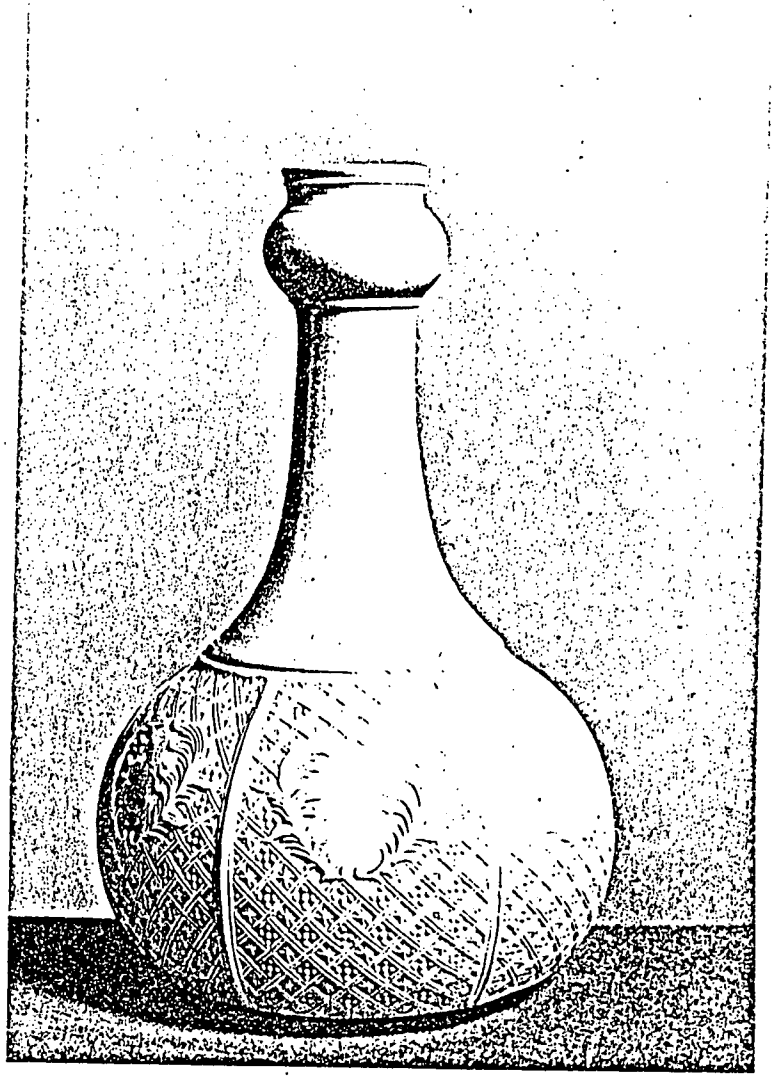


Fig. 99. Stoneware ewer with diaper pattern molded relief. Staffordshire, 1750-70. h:9" w:5". Winterthur Museum

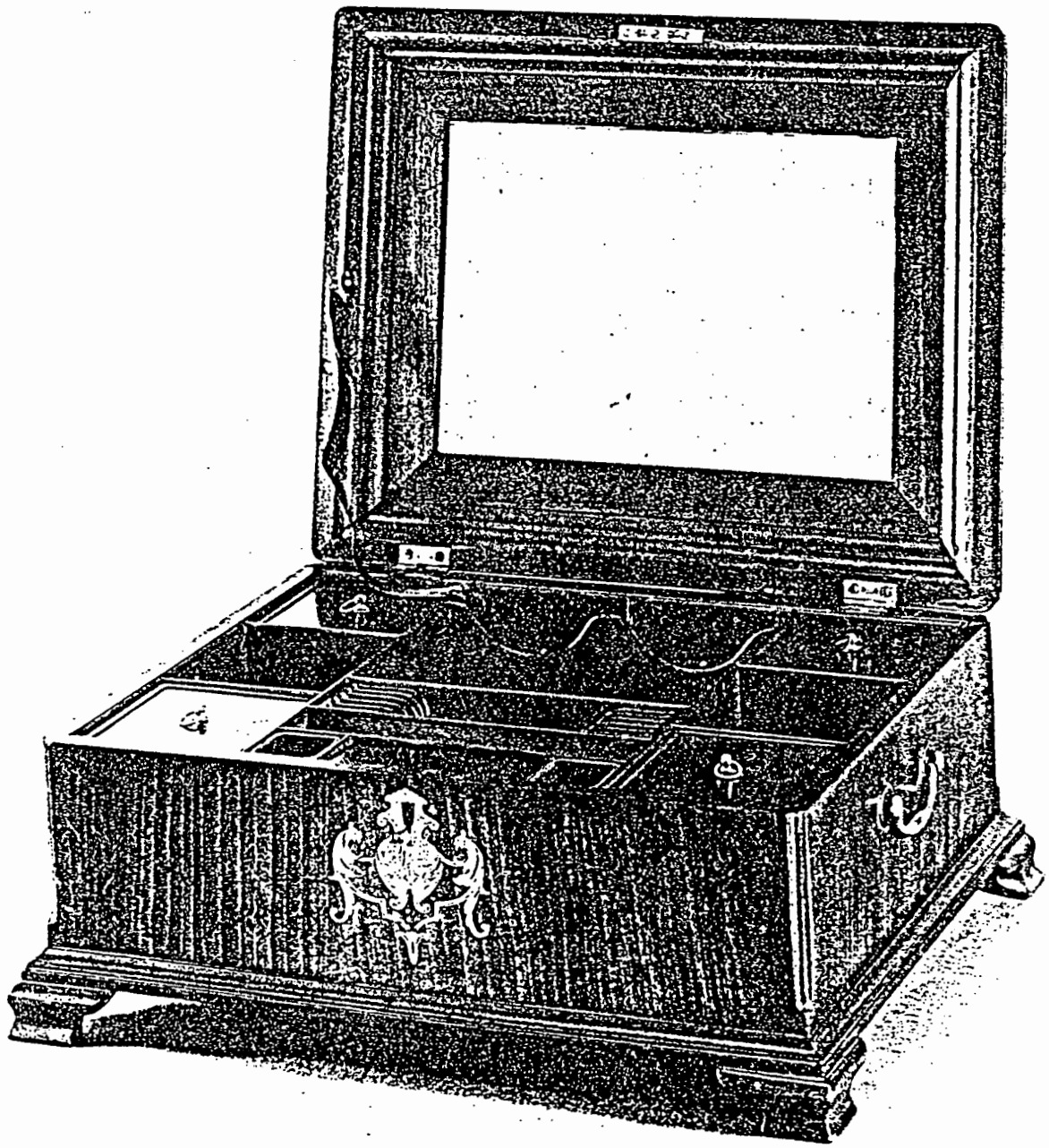


Fig. 98. Dressing box. Mahogany with ebony molding on box covers; fitted with looking glass. English, 1750-70. h: 8 1/2" w: 18" d: 14" Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

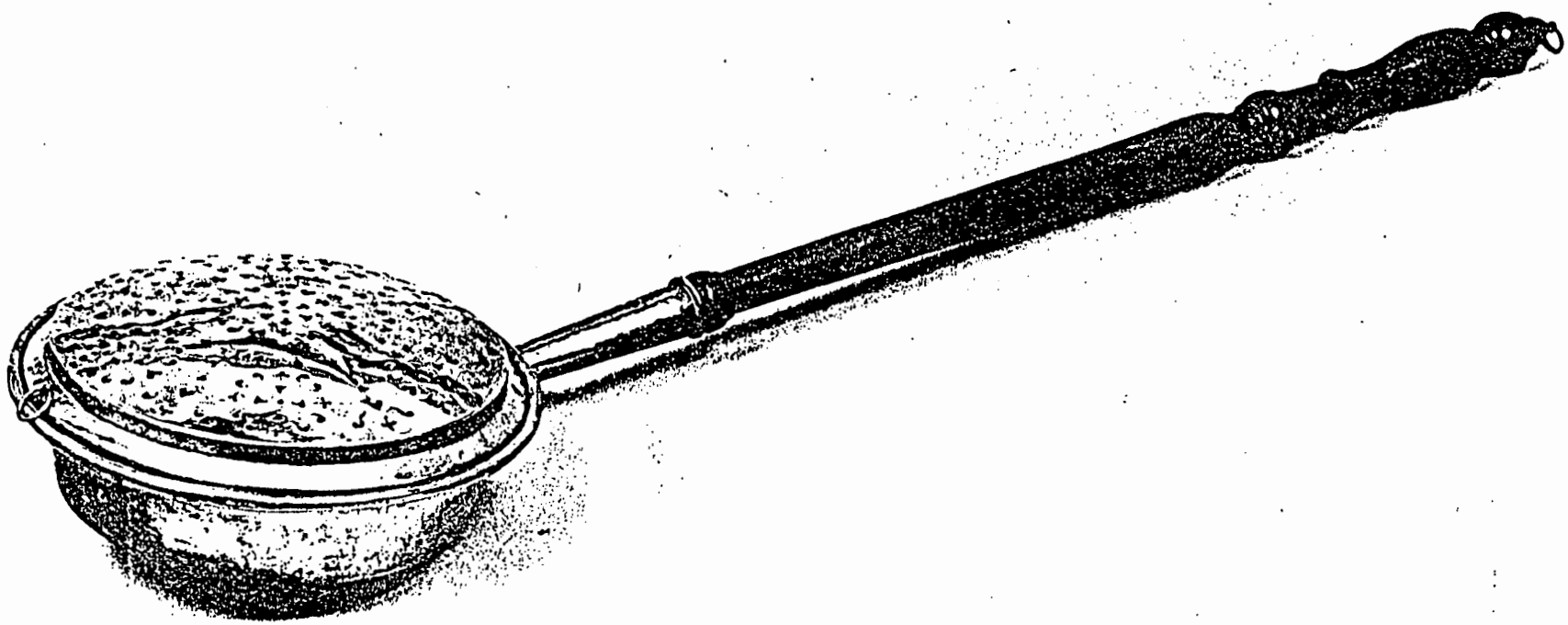


Fig. 100. Bed warmer, brass and walnut. English, 1750-80. l.: 46" diam.: 12". Colonial Williamsburg.



Fig. 101. Gray stoneware fragments (top and bottom of photograph) unearthed in Nelson lot.

—Southside Historical Sites Foundation—

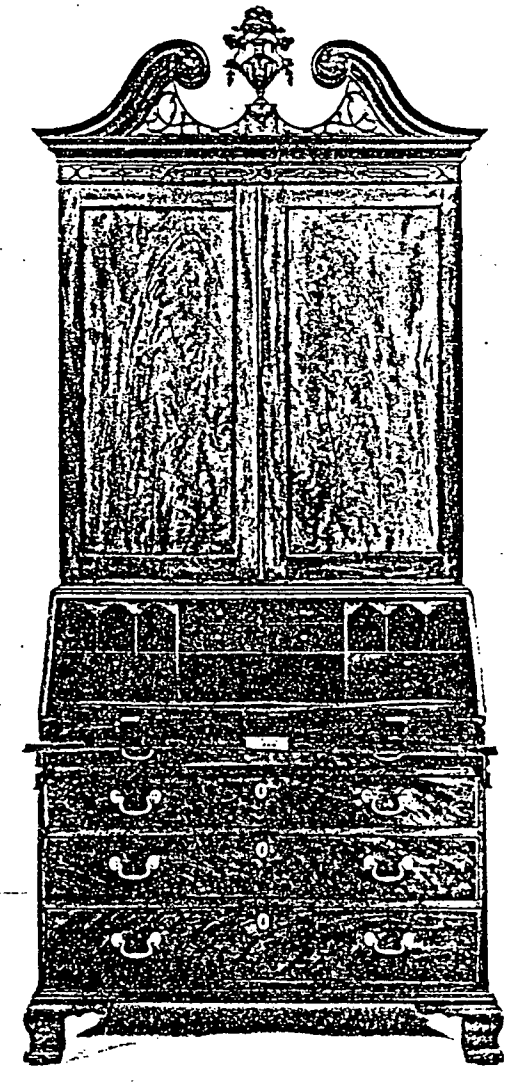


Fig. 102. Mahogany desk and bookcase. Phila., 1760-80. h: 100" w: 45" d: 24" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

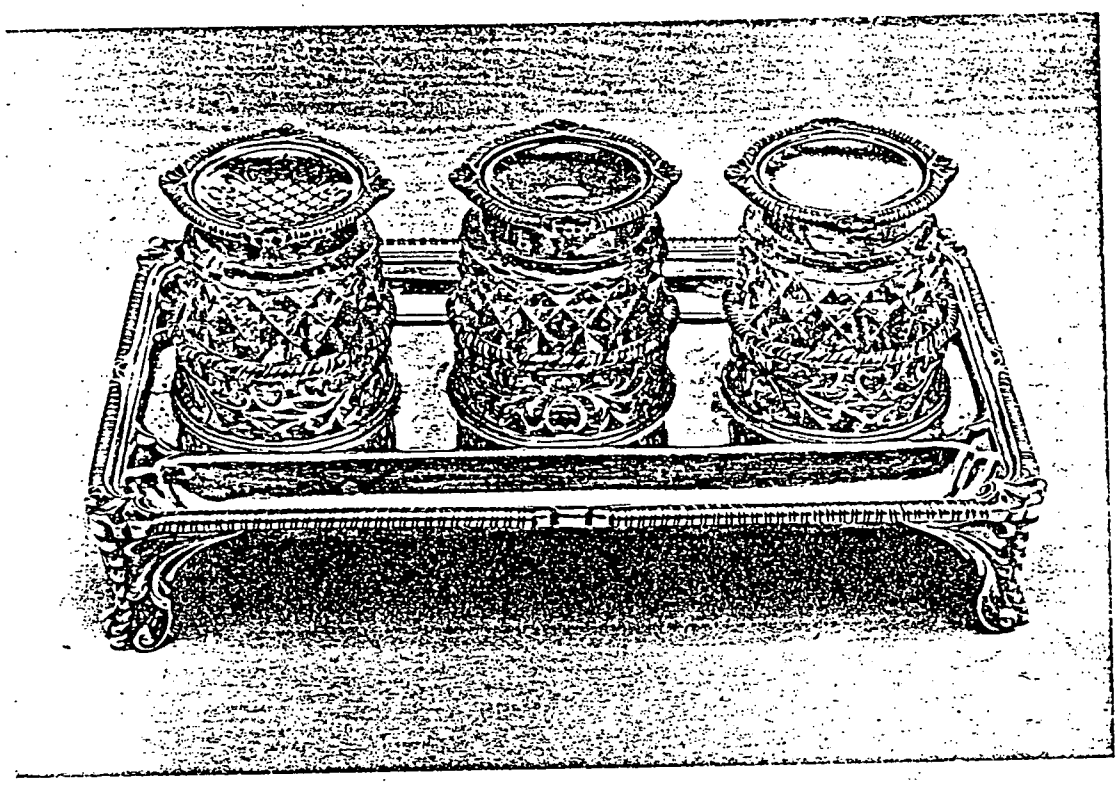


Fig. 103. Silver standish. English, 1774-75. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

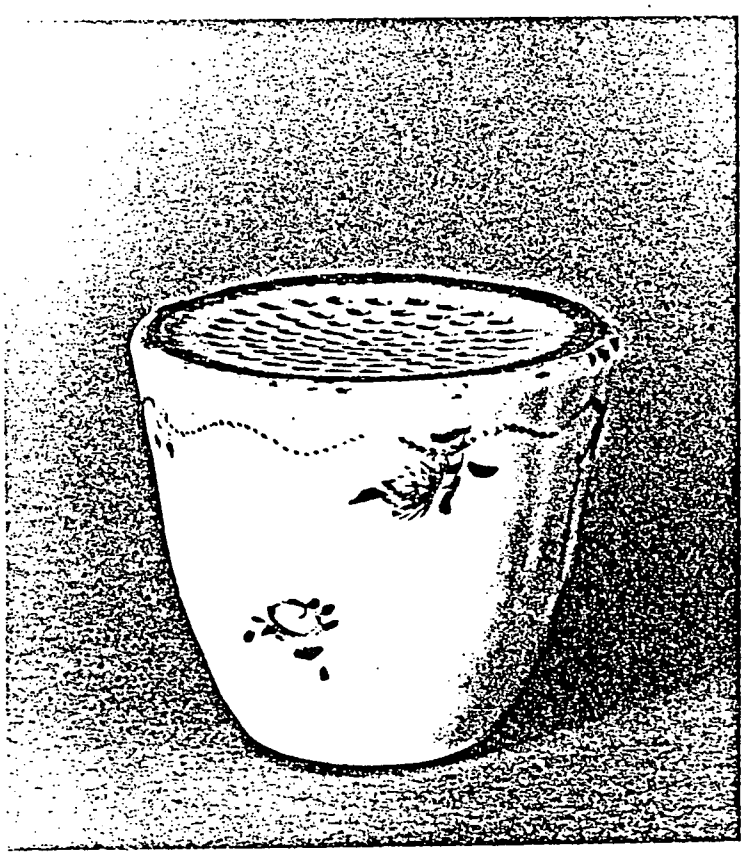
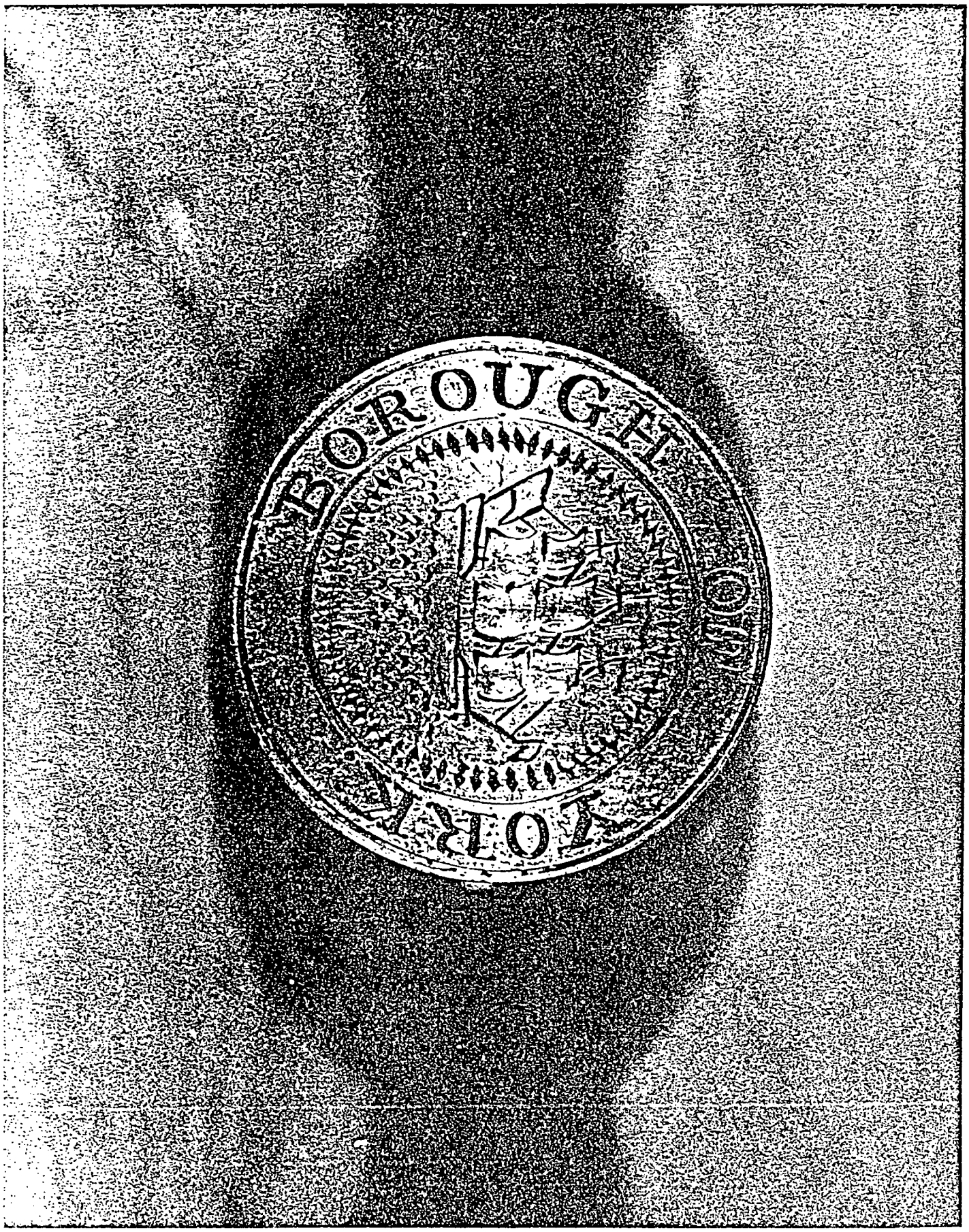


Fig. 104. Chinese export porcelain sander with polychrome enamel. 1755-1800. 2 1/8" x 2 5/16"

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum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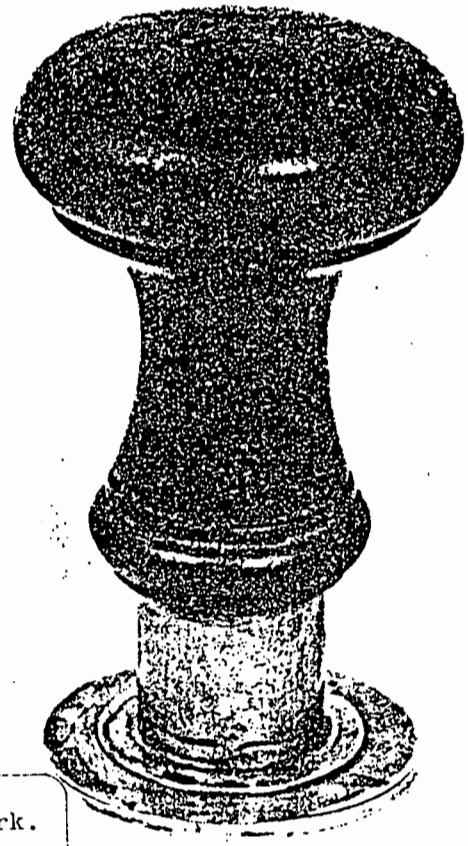


Fig. 105a-b. Seal of the Borough of York. Silver with mahogany handle, circa 1786. Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg.

In 1786 the Virginia Assembly passed an act incorporating the village of York as a town, authorizing the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty to have a common seal. Previous acts attempting to establish a seal for the port of York had been disallowed by Queen Anne in 1709.

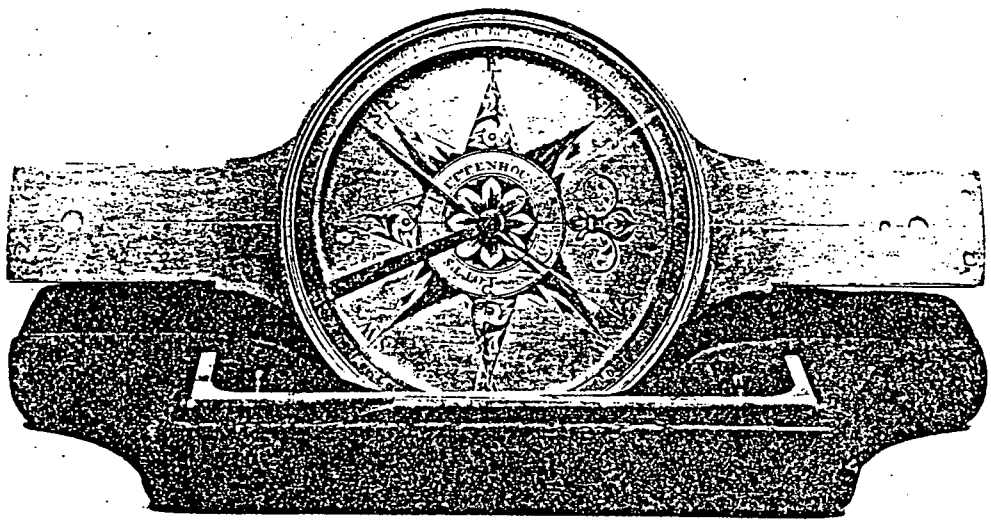


Fig. 106. Surveyor's compass and case.
Philadelphia, 1750-75.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.



NELSON COAT-OF-ARMS.

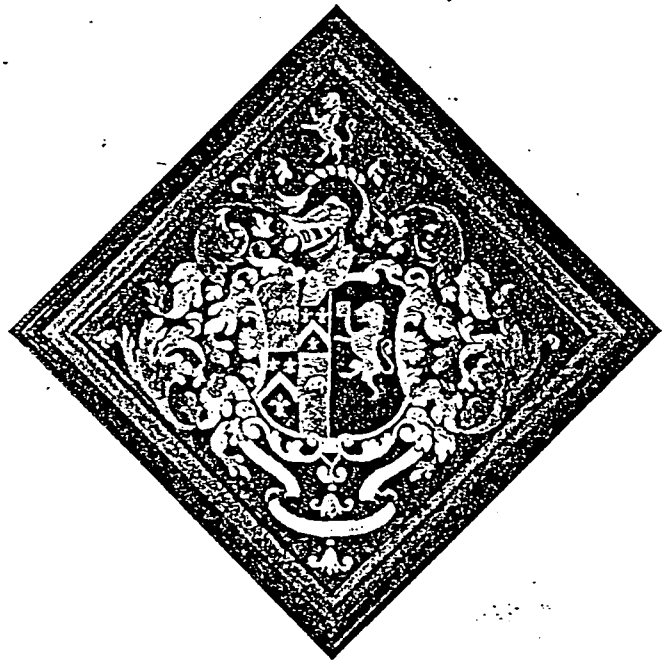


Fig. 107. Hatchment. Wool and silk on canvas. Boston, 1740-60. h: 27" w: 27". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

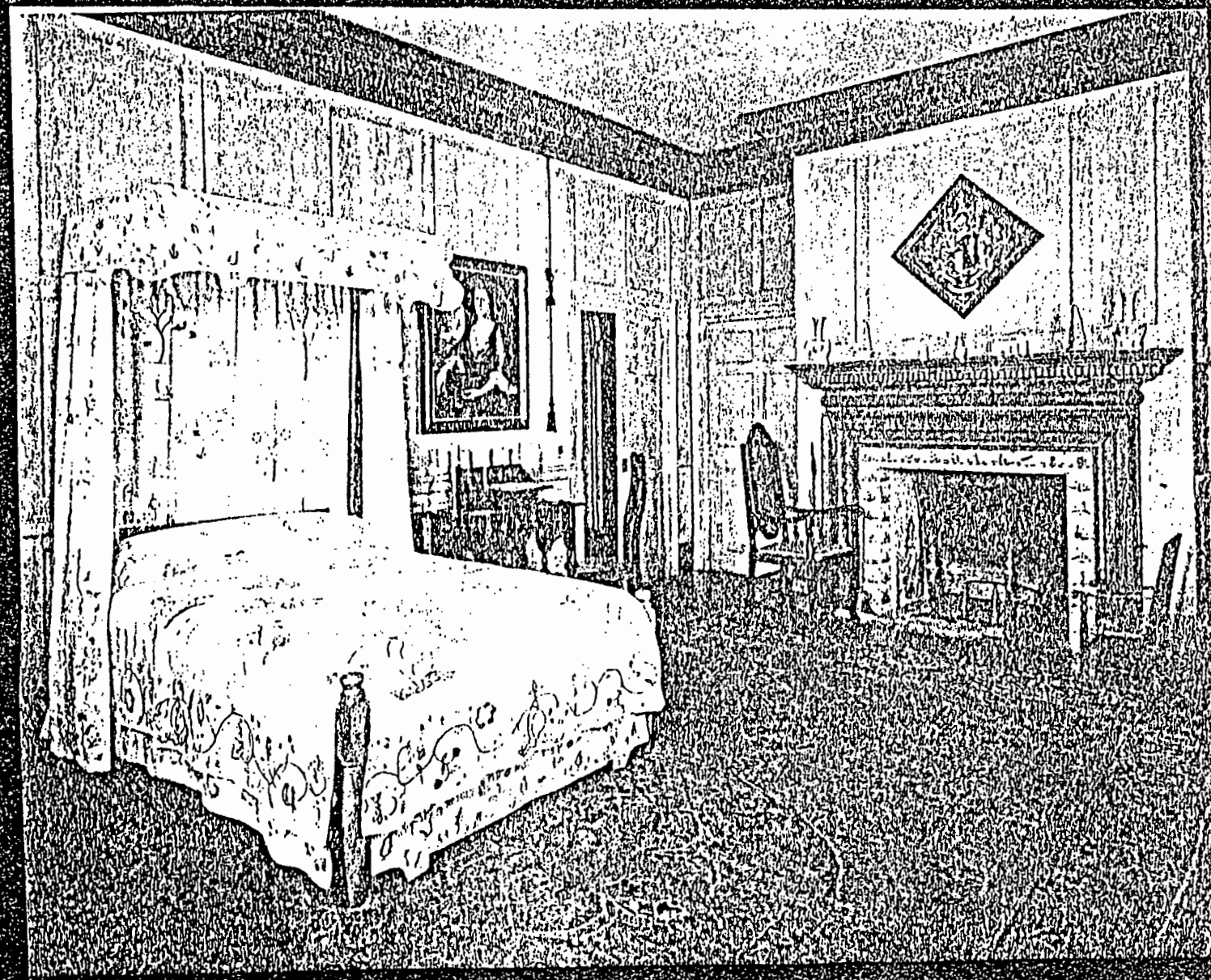
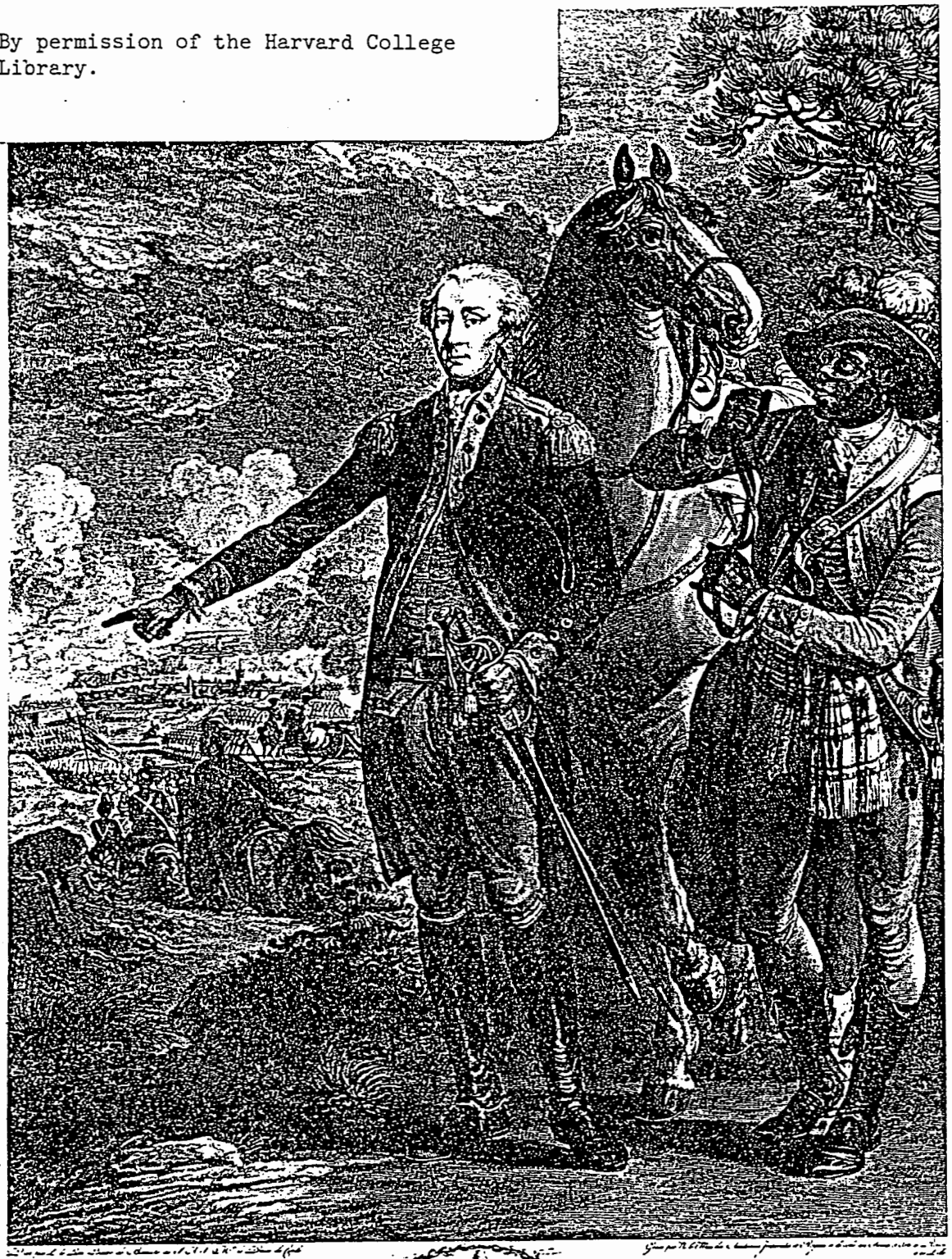


Fig. 108. View of the Walnut Room, Winterthur Museum, with panelling from Belle Isle, Va., showing hatchment

Fig. 109. Conclusion de la Campagne Liberté de 1781 en Virginie, mezzotint by N. le Mire after a painting by L. le Paon.

By permission of the Harvard College Library.



CONCLUSION DE LA CAMPAGNE LIBERTÉ DE 1781 EN VIRGINIE.

*To his Excellency General Washington this Likeness of his friend, the Marquess de la Fayette, is humbly dedicated.* By le Mire

Cette Estampe se vend avec Privilège du Roy, à Paris chez le Mireuë et porte St. Jacques, à côté du Caffé d'Aubertin N° 111

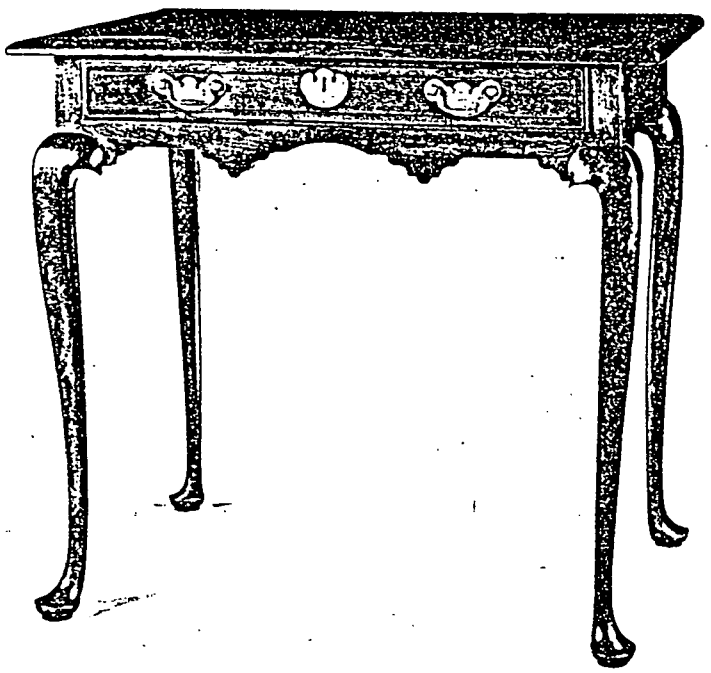
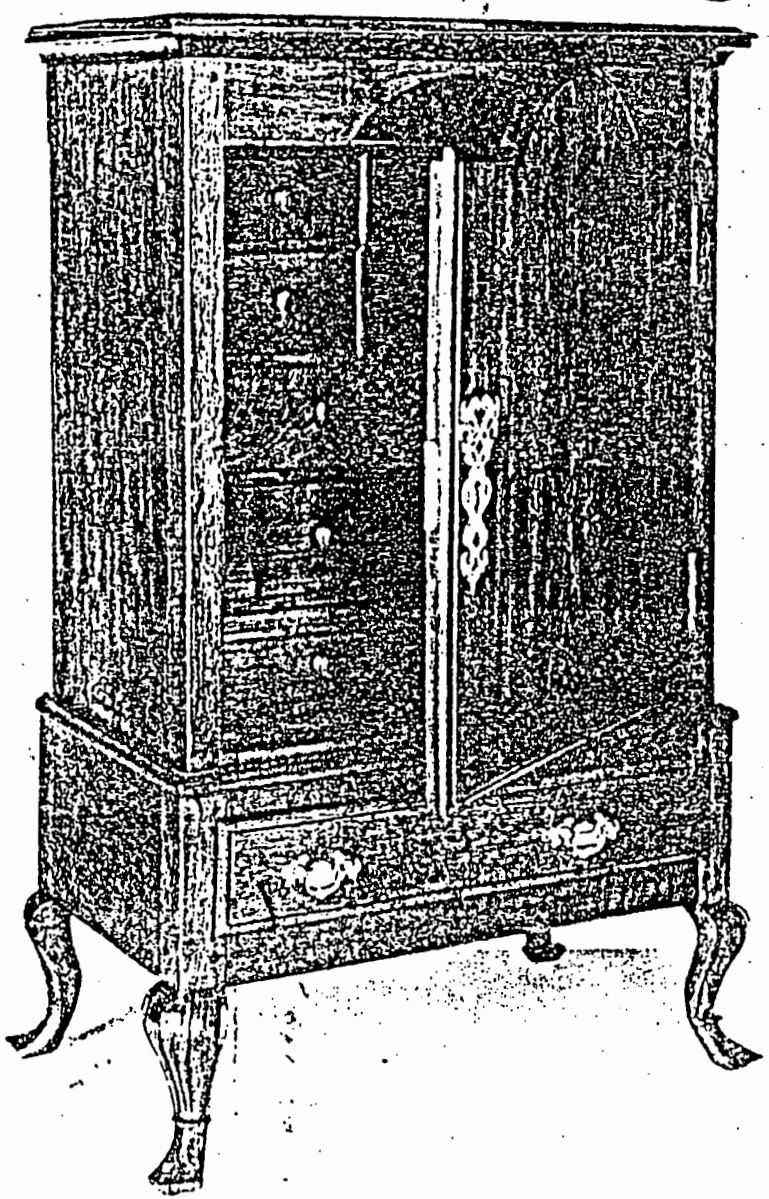


Fig. 110. Walnut dressing table.
—Mass., 1720-40. h:29" w:33" d:21". —
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.



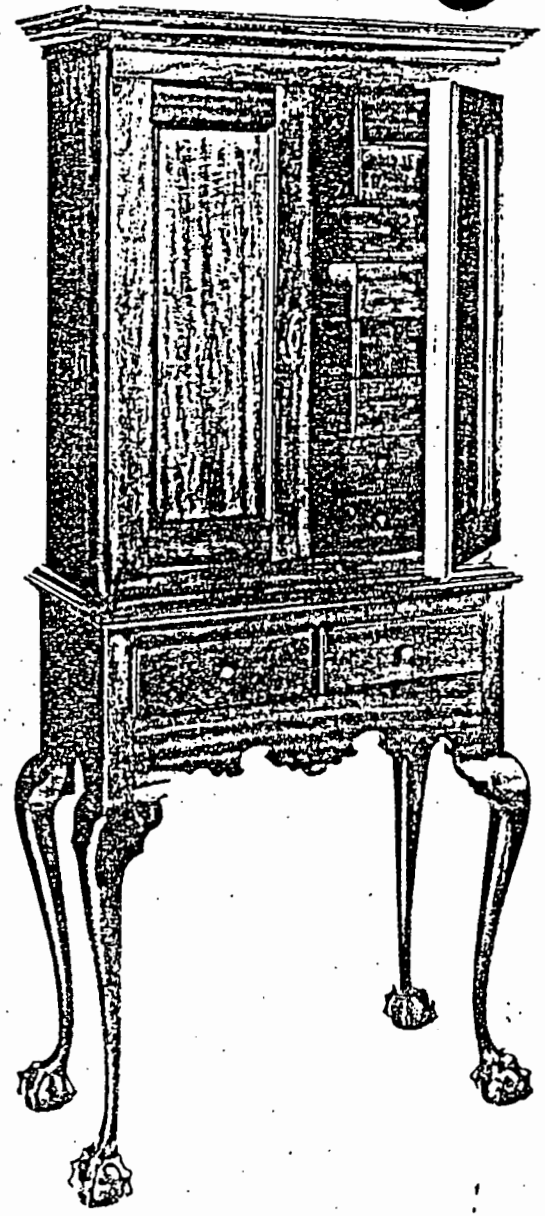


Fig. 111. Two spice chests on stands. —Pennsylvania, 1720-50. Reproduced from Joseph Downs' American Furniture

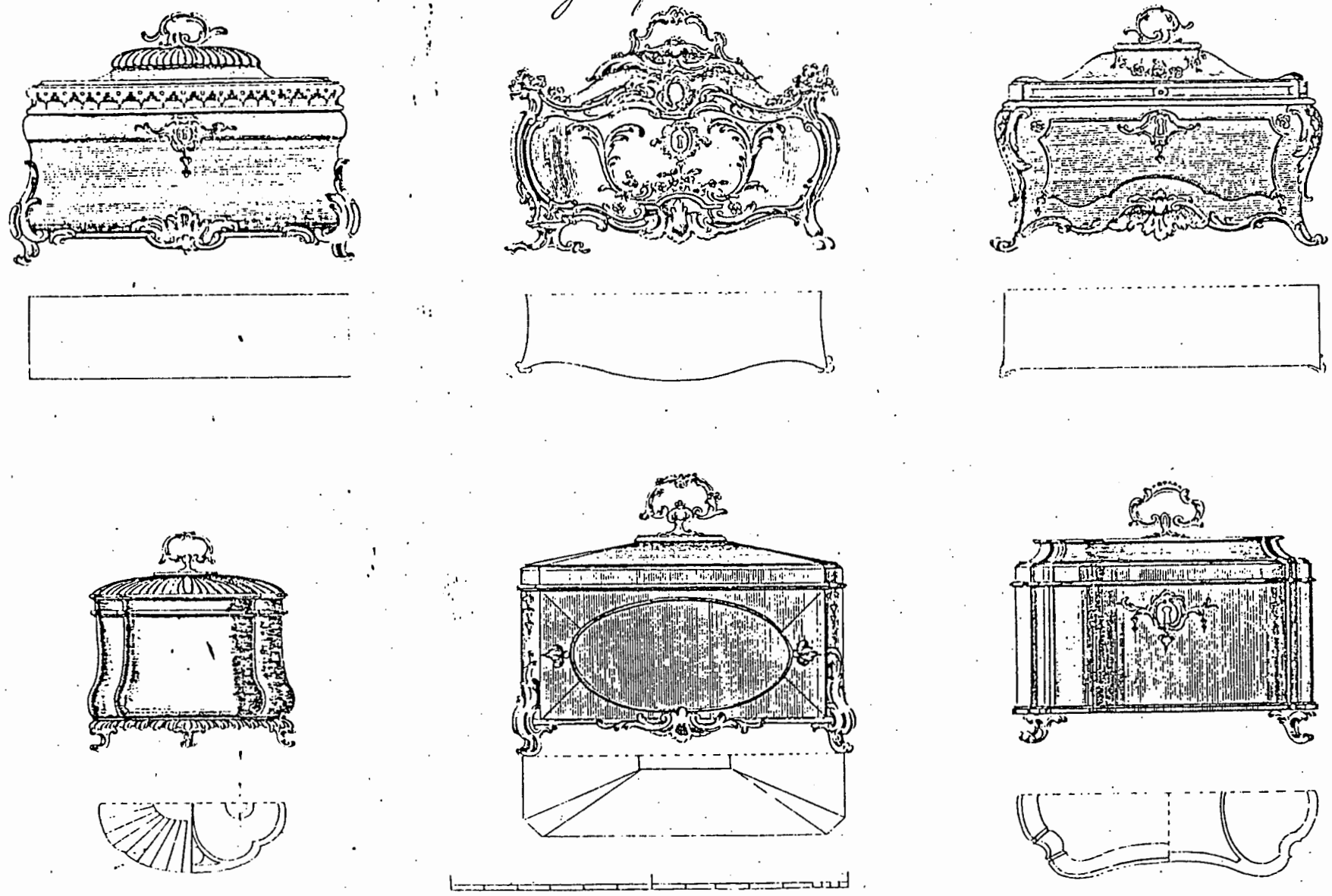



Fig. 112. Designs for tea chests, Plate CLIX of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

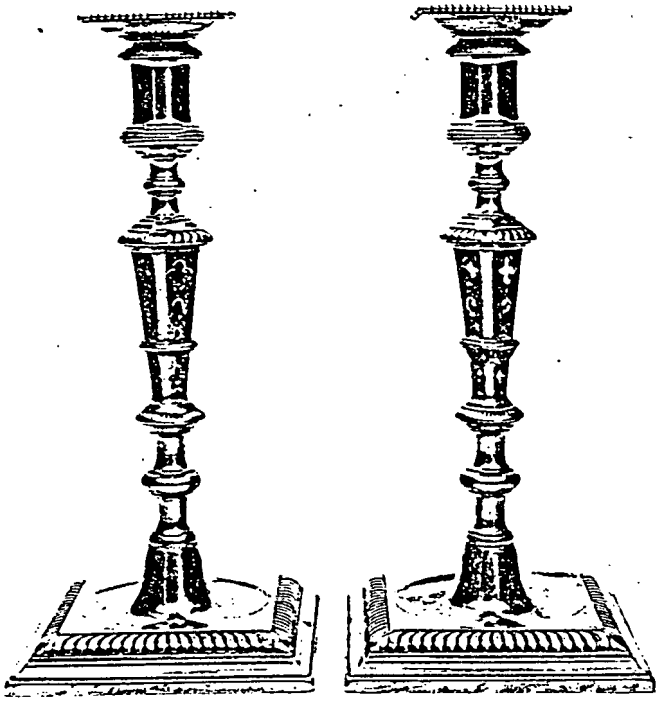


Fig. 113. Pair of paktong candlesticks — English, 1760-70. h: 12" d: 6". — Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

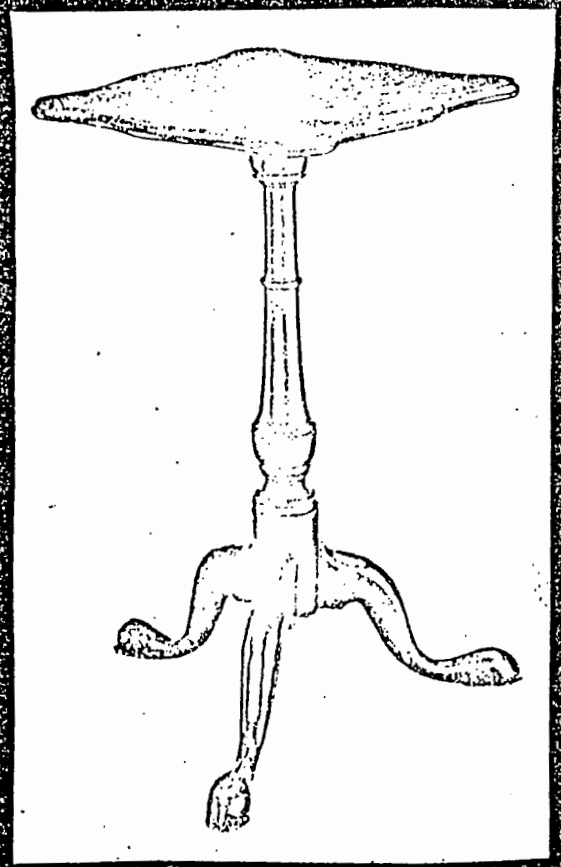


Fig. 114. Mahogany and cherry candle-stand. New England, 1760-90. h:28" diam: 16". Colonial Williamsburg

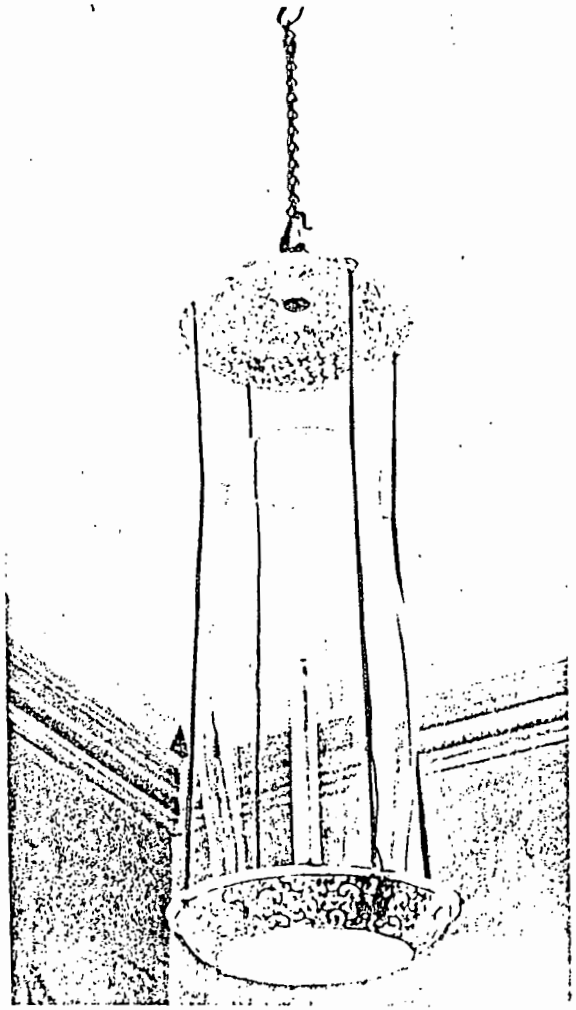


Fig. 105. Hanging lantern. Chinese export porcelain dishes. 1755-1800. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

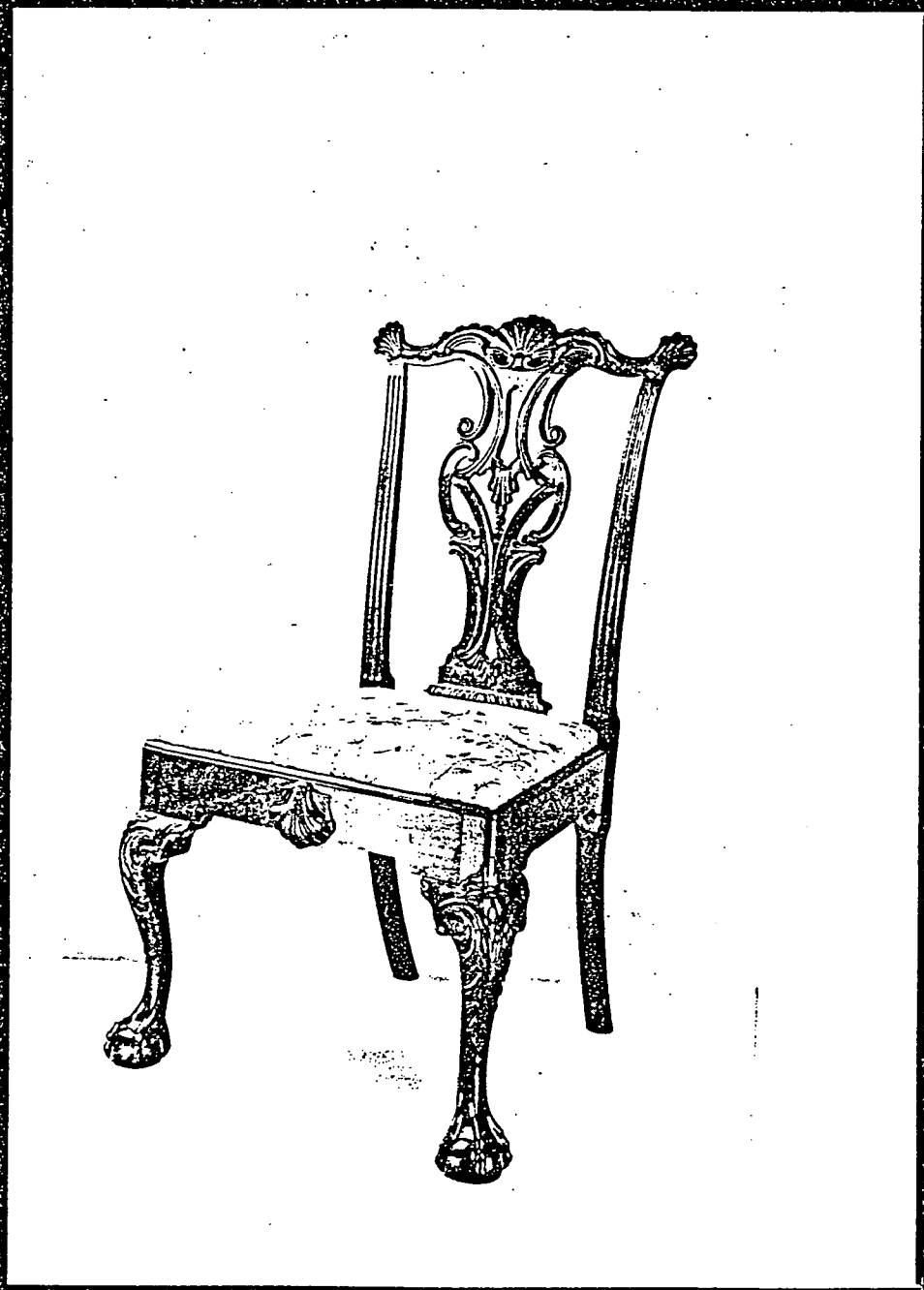


Fig. 116. Mahogany side chair. Philadelphia, 1760-70. h: 40" w:22" d:17". Winterthur Museum.



Fig. 118. Wool carpet. Kurdistan, 1750-1800. 22" x 5' 9".
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.

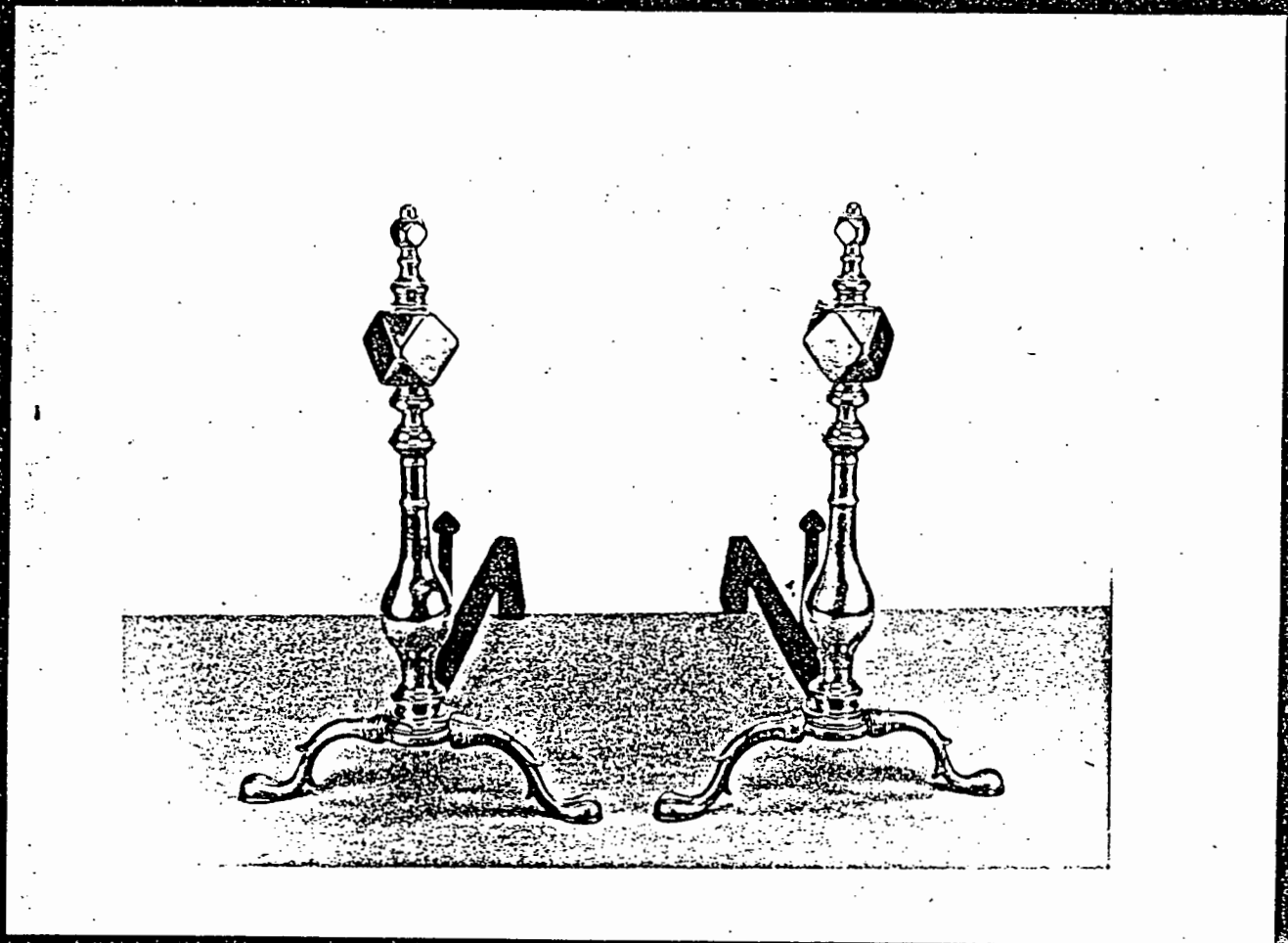


Fig. 119. Brass andirons with iron billet bar. English, 1735-75. h:19" — w:11" d:18". Winterthur Museum.

Room 105: Back Parlor

> No more the cedar Parlour's formal gloom
> With dulness chills, 'tis now the Living Room'
> Where Guests, to whim, a taste, or fancy true,
> Scatters in groups, their different plans to pursue.

The formality of English drawing rooms seems to have brought with it a coldness and reserve which the English landscape architect Humphrey Repton satirizes in this poem and in two accompanying sketches (fig. 120). What seems to have been sought in the last decades of the eighteenth century was a more casual living room where "there are such a varitey of occupations . . . that people cannot be formal in it."[1]

Whether following English fashion or through natural family use, Room 105 would appear to have served as this more modestly and comfortably furnished second parlor. When the house was built around 1740, Room 105 was meant to be a room of "show" as much as any other first floor room, for it has the most ornately detailed overmantel panelling in the house. However, Room 105 is unique in one other respect: it has direct access to the outside through the vestibule, Room 107. By eliminating the formality of reception through the hall, this entrance would probably have been reserved for and favored by immediate family and most intimate friends, especially as it led to the garden area and not to the street. The back parlor's situation, then, would

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[1] Humphrey Repton, in his Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (London, 1816) and Lady Louisa Conolly, writing in the 1770's; quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 75.

have encouraged its use as an informal and practical living room area.

Essential to such a general living area was a central table:

> If you look at the oblong table in the centre, you will see the rallying point of the family, who are usually around it, reading, writing, or working.

Or, from another English woman's account of the royal family's activities:

> I have been several evenings at the Queen's Lodge, with no other company but their own most lovely family. They sit round a large table, on which are books, work, pencils & paper.[1]

The large table in Room 105 could quite possibly have been Nelson's grandfather's dining table relegated to the back parlor. Its value was estimated at £1..10, whereas Nelson's two dining tables together were valued at £11. The table could have been English or Virginian, and might have resembled the table illustrated in figure 121. Dating to the 1725-40 period, Virginia features of this table are, chiefly, the hard pine underframing in conjunction with walnut, the stout cabriole legs and the vertical moulding which flanks the arched skirt. Open, the table's width is 60", its depth 50". Large and unwieldy, it would not be moved around like the multiple use tea tables of the drawing room, but would be centered in the room, the "rallying point" for various activities.

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[1] Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 74.

Four walnut chairs called for in the inventory can be placed around the table. These were presumably side chairs contemporary with the table (i.e. early to mid-eighteenth century). Figure 111 in Joseph Downs' American Furniture, showing the typical vasiform splat, yoke crest rail, and horseshoe seat of a Queen Anne chair, is an appropriate model.

A walnut tea table and a pair of andirons are the only other items listed in the inventory for this room. The tea table is appraised at half the value of the drawing room tea tables. It might therefore have been of the outmoded Queen Anne fashion, like the table and chairs.

Tea tables of the early to mid-eighteenth century were usually not of the tripod, pedestal, and circular top design we see in Room 103, but were instead four-legged, rectangular tables distinguished by an applied or carved rim on the top (fig. 122). This table could be placed toward the southwest corner of the room, to the left of window 105-W2. On it could be placed a tea service, porcelain bowl, vase, or figure. Because the back parlor appears to have seen continual family use, an ordinary but well designed tea set, like the English earthenware illustrated in figure 123, seems most appropriate.

While not called for in the inventory, a small side table resembling fig. 65 can be placed against the east wall of the vestibule facing door 107-D1. On the table can stand one or several porcelain figures. "Figures for ornament (depicting) harlequins, sailors, boys, flowers, birds, squirrels, lambs, dogs, sheep &c."[1] were prized in colonial Virginia. Governor Botetourt's inventory of 1770 lists

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1 Advertised in the Virginia Gazette, July 25, 1766.

"11 Chelsea China figures" in the parlor and eleven more in his dining room. In these numbers, the figures would have been placed on mantels. One or two figures of the Chelsea or Staffordshire type (fig. 78 and 270) would be suitable for a small table. Above the side table can hang a mahogany frame looking glass of very basic Chippendale period design, similar to the Philadelphia example illustrated in fig. 124.

Windsor chairs belong to a class of furniture that seems to have been moved from room to room as needed. Two well turned Windsor side chairs (fig. 125) can be placed on either side of window 105-W1. A wire bird cage (fig. 203) can be set on the window seat between the two Windsors. Pet birds and squirrels were common in colonial Virginia, evidenced by portraits of children holding such pets and by advertisements for cages and watering bottles.

Andirons, the last item inventoried for the back parlor, are specified as old, and valued at only 5 shillings. The English andirons with steel finials, shafts, and legs illustrated in fig. 126 show a form outmoded enough for the back parlor yet sophisticated enough for the first floor.

As noted earlier, no lighting equipment is mentioned anywhere in the inventory except in the dining room and hall. In a room used regularly for family activities, where children and adults might gather for evenings of reading and handwork, it might be appropriate to introduce the pump lamp (fig. 127). These were not exceedingly common, but Nelson's cousin Robert Carter Nicholas mentions them specifically: "I have heard a great character of the Pump Lamps &

reading candlestick made by Gideon Dare of Cock and Spurr Street; pray send me one of each by the first Opportunity."[1] Nelson and his father were curious about inventions and were ready to pay for them, as evidenced by the latter's purchase of a novel engine and hose for watering the garden.[2] The novelty and improved light of such lamps would be instructive for visitors. Argand lamps, while patented in 1784, were not common until the 1790's, and so cannot be considered.

Other alternatives for lighting include sconces, candlesticks and, less likely, a brass or pewter chandelier. I recommend simple sconces, resembling fig. 213, or the brass armed "Bruton Hurricane Sconce" reproduced by Colonial Williamsburg. One sconce can be on either side of the fireplace, and one on either side of window 105-W2. The pump lamps could be placed on the central table. Until such lamps could be found, a pair of brass or silver plated candlesticks of good but plain mid-eighteenth century design could be substituted.

The relative austerity of this sparely-furnished room can be alleviated by a number of accessory items (a fan, books, needlework, etc.) on the central table and by gay, informal copperplate printed curtains. Usually printed on linen and cotton in red, sepia, or blue, copperplate textile designs were often pictorial, drawing from contemporary literary and historical sources. A good means of catching the visitor's interest and impressing an idea of the culture behind

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[1]Letter from Robert Carter Nicholas to John Norton, dated November 30, 1772. Mason, John Norton & Sons, p. 286.

[2]Ibid., p. 14.

the objects is to relate two seemingly unlike items: a printed textile depicting Captain Cook's voyages, for example, (fig. 128) could be related to ceramic figurines of the Four Continents; scenes of a military encampment (fig. 129) could be complemented by a book in the room on military tactics. The side chairs around the central table could be covered with slip covers of the same curtain material.

The back parlor would seem to have been a room for action, whether for indoor games of children or for an overflow for guests from Thomas Nelson's chamber across the hall. In view of its heavy use for less formal purposes than the other first floor rooms, it is doubtful that a carpet would have been laid here. Our modern taste for carpeting in all rooms is not accurate for eighteenth century homes, even as elegant as the Nelsons'. Bare floors were common; in the heat of the summer they were almost universal, except among those who "sacrifice reason and utility to show".[1] Wooden floors were often left unpolished. In her Servants Directory (London, 1760), Hannah Glass gives instructions for dry scrubbing:

> . . . take some sand, pretty damp, but not too wet, and strew all over the Room, throwing it out of your Hand hard, and it will fly about the Floor and lick up all the Dust and Flew. . . Take Tanzy, Mint, and Balm; first sweep the Room, then strew the Herbs on the Floor, and with a long hard Brush rub

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1 "It already appears they have carpets, elegant carpets; it is a favourable taste with the Americans . . . A carpet in the summer is an absurdity; yet they spread them in this season, and from vanity: this vanity excuses itself by saying that the carpet is an ornament; that is to say, they sacrifice reason and utility to show." --Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville, New Travels in the United States of America, Performed in 1788 (London, 1794), I, 270.

> them well all over the Boards, till you have scrubb'd the Floor clean. When the Boards are quite dry, sweep off the greens, and with a dry Rubbing brush dry-rub them well, and they will look like mahogany, of a fine brown, and never want any other washing, and give a sweet smell to the Room.

Again, Virginia practice seems to have followed the English. Philip Fithian speaks of the Carter children at play "imitating what they see in the great House": "Sometimes they get sticks & splinter one end of them f(o)r Brushes, or as they call them here, Clamps, & spitting on part of the floor, they scrubb away with great vigor . . . "[1]

A distinct pathway was worn from repeated use in the floor of closet 105A.[2] This closet space possibly held a safe or money scales. One large pair of scales is listed in the inventory, but no room location is given. The closet is too small to accommodate furniture of any size.

In the late eighteenth century, the parlor often doubled as the library. Indeed, Chastellux records "some very good French and English books at hand" in the parlor of Nelson's house at Offley. There is no evidence, however, of a great number of books having been kept in the back parlor; most seem to have been housed in Nelson's own chamber (Room 104) and upstairs (Rooms 201 and 202), possibly for the benefit of the boys' studies.

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1 Farish, Journal, p. 189.

2 For this observation I am grateful to restoration architect Gordon Whittington.

As mentioned above, the overmantel panelling in the back parlor is more complex than in other rooms. The guide may wish to point this out, and at the same time explain that in the eighteenth century pictures were often hung with little attention to the pattern of the panelling. A large print over the fireplace would quite accurately over-ride the panel mouldings. This large print could be of a classical or genre subject, engraved after a well-known European artist. Smaller prints can be grouped on the east wall between doors 105-D1 and -D3 and on the south wall, to the right of window 105-W1. Their subject matter could be contemporary political figures, like the allegorical mezzotint by Charles Willson Peale of William Pitt, 1768 (fig. 130), or political cartoons, like The Horse America throwing his Master, 1779. A letter written by William Nelson in 1769, refers to his pleasure in having received a print of Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807), the Corsican leader revered by American patriots for his role in freeing the island from rule by Genoa and France. "Just as I was receiving a fine Print of Paoli We received the mortifying News of the total defeat of that wonderful Hero: Yet I hope that so great a (Genius?) find some Resources to restore his (. . . ); or every (. . .) of Liberty must drop a Tear for his Fate."[1] William Nelson ordered a copy of James Boswell's Account of Corsica (London, 1769) just two days after writing his sentiments on Paoli in the above letter. The frontispiece to this volume (fig. 131) gives us an idea of what Nelson's print might have looked like. Again, a book on the table can pick up the theme of the print; if not Boswell's volume, it could be George Cockings' The Paoliad, or Corsican

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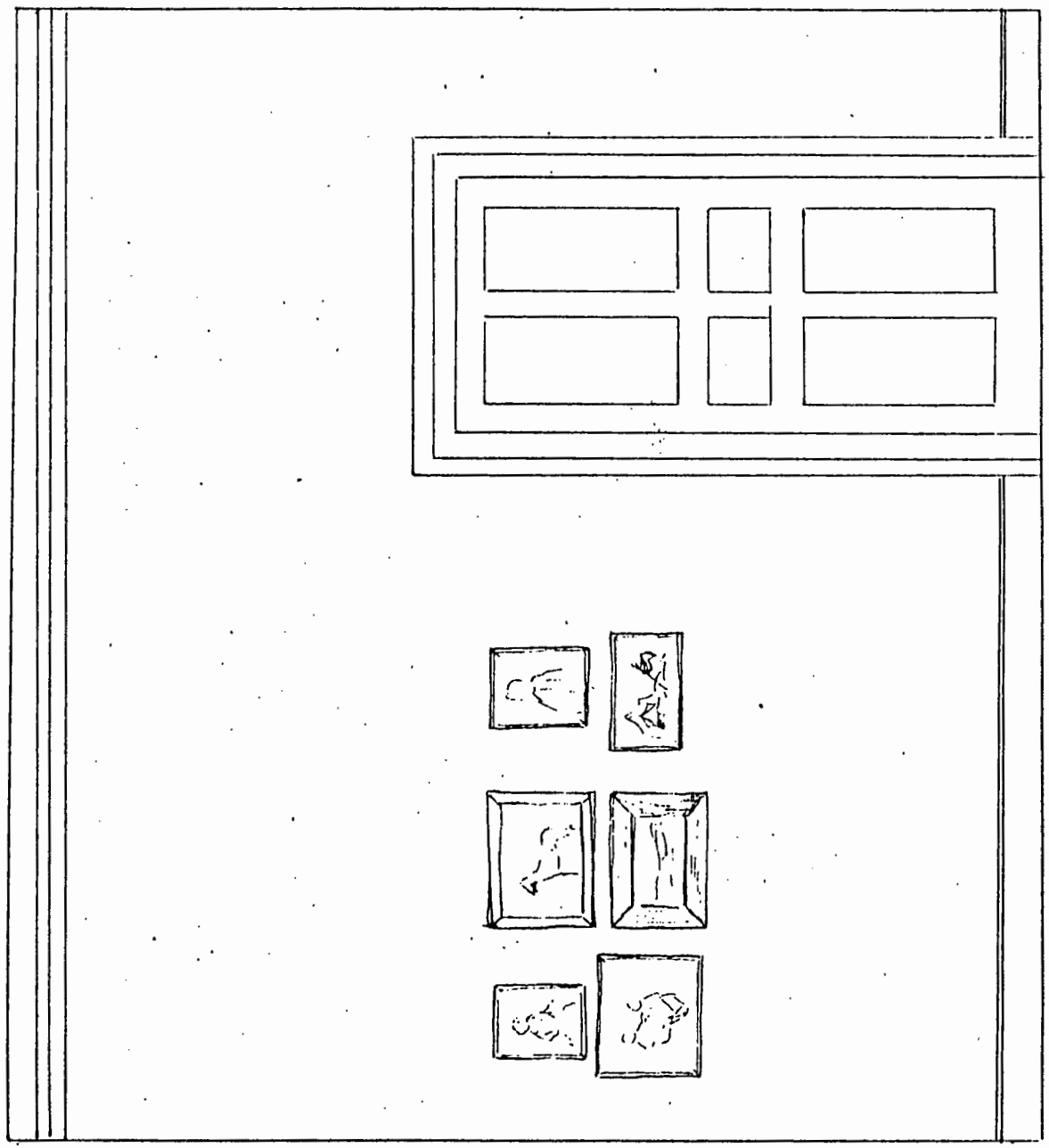
[1] Ms letter from William Nelson to Arthur Lee, September 2, 1769. Manuscript Department, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Memoirs: a Poem (London, 1769).

Other choices for prints include Officers of the War of Independence in America, a series of twelve portraits by Thomas Hart, John Morris, and C. Shepherd engraved in London (1775-78), or individual portraits like that of Lafayette engraved by Boutran after Meyer (fig. 132).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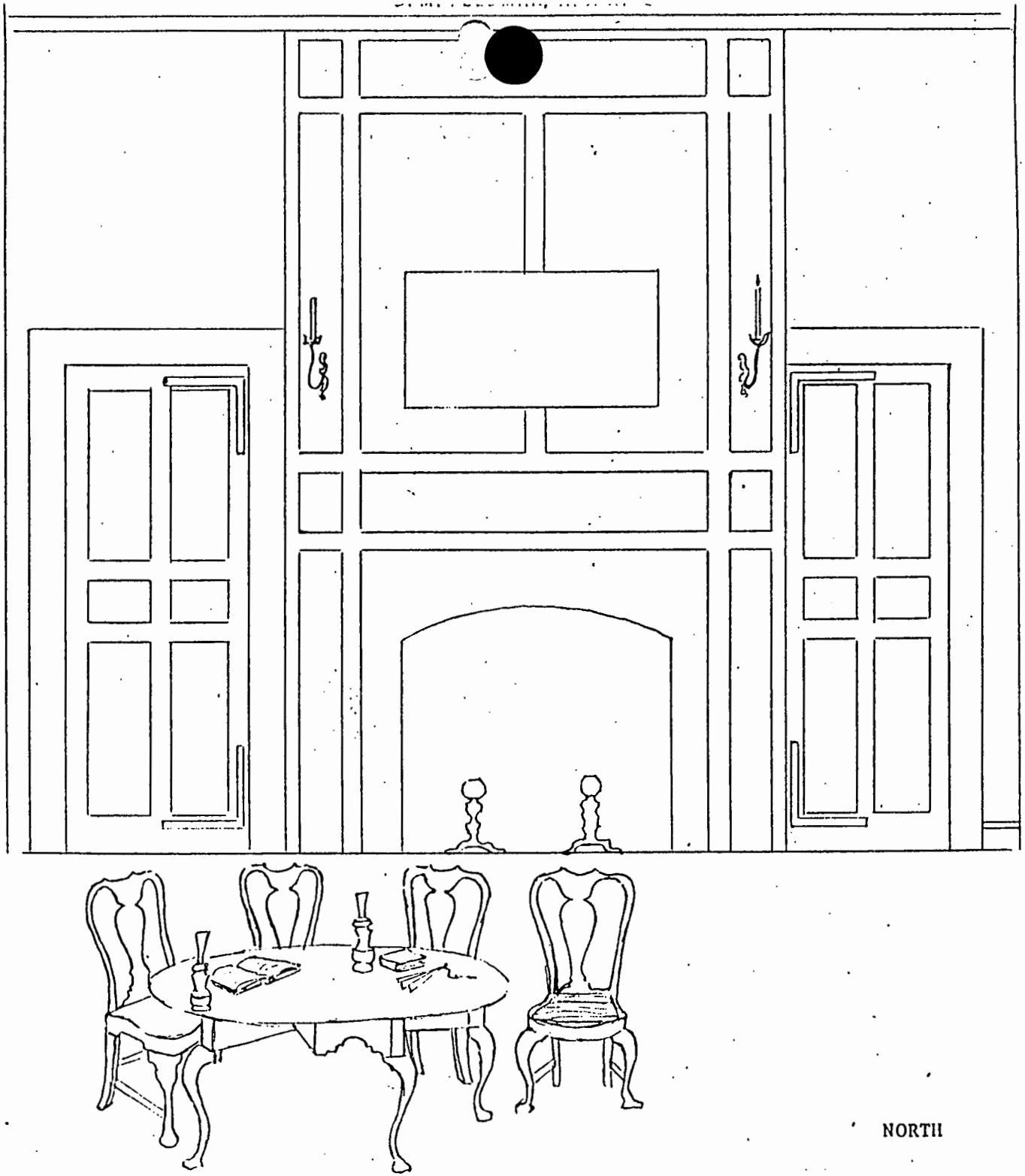

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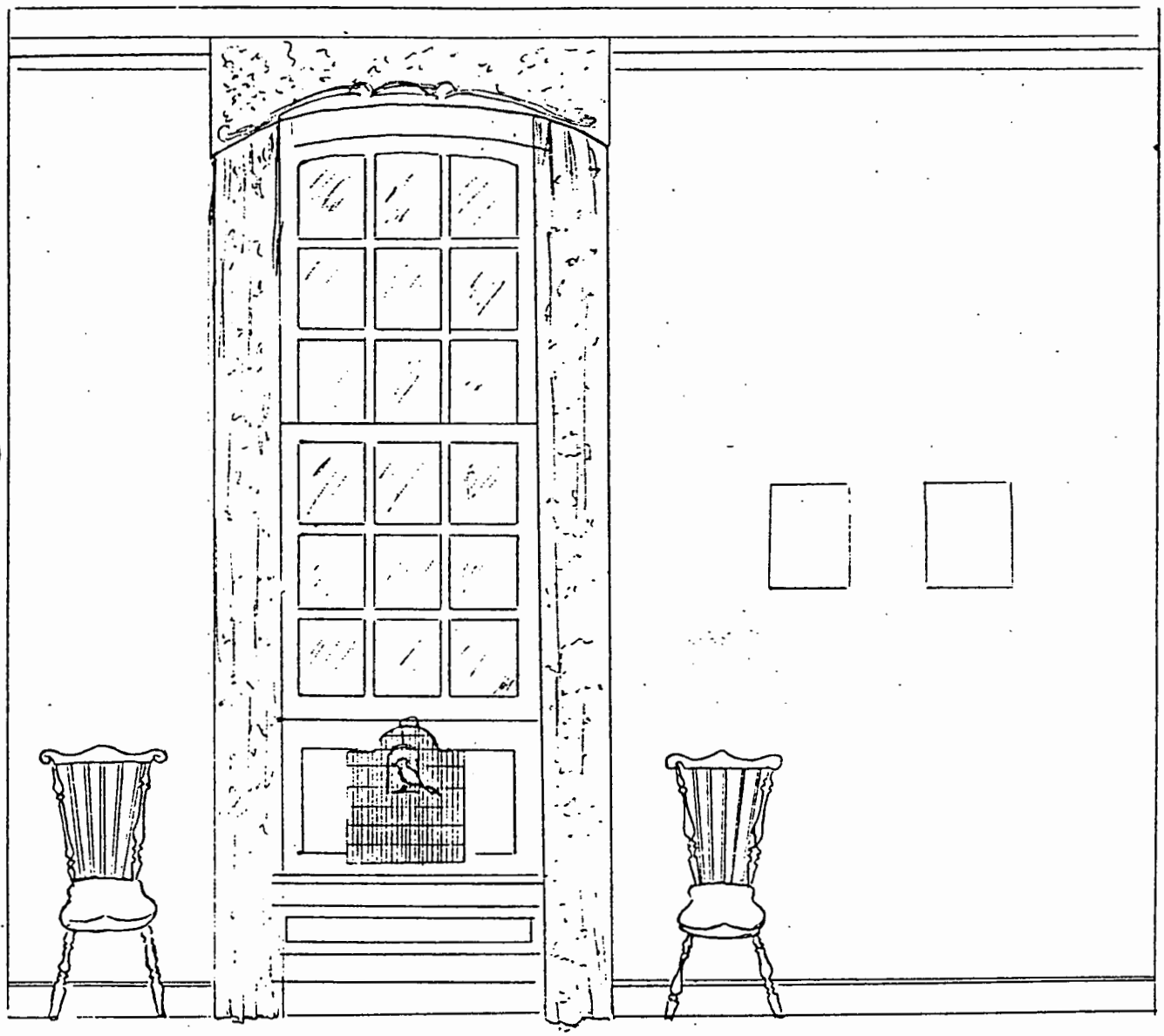

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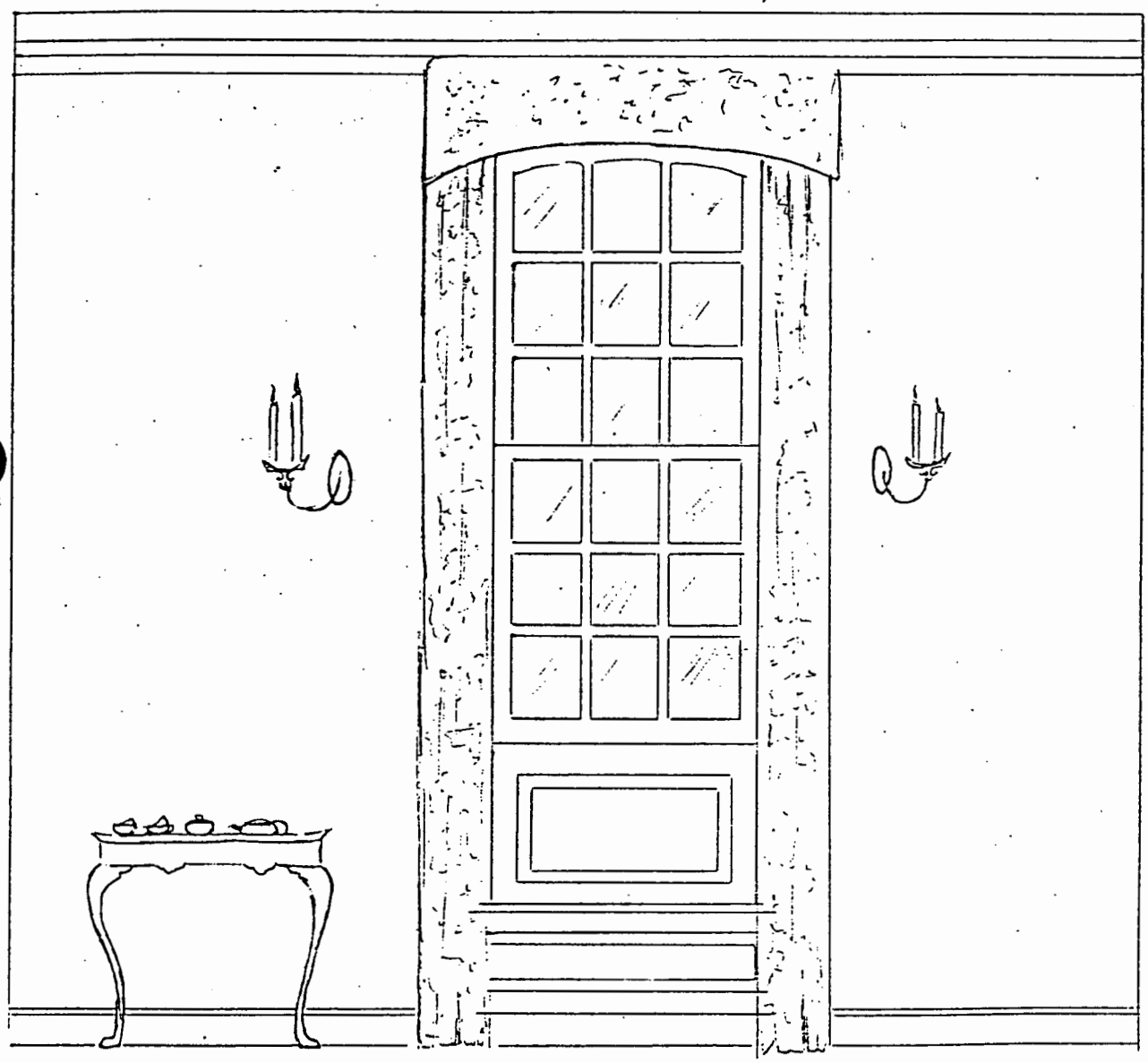

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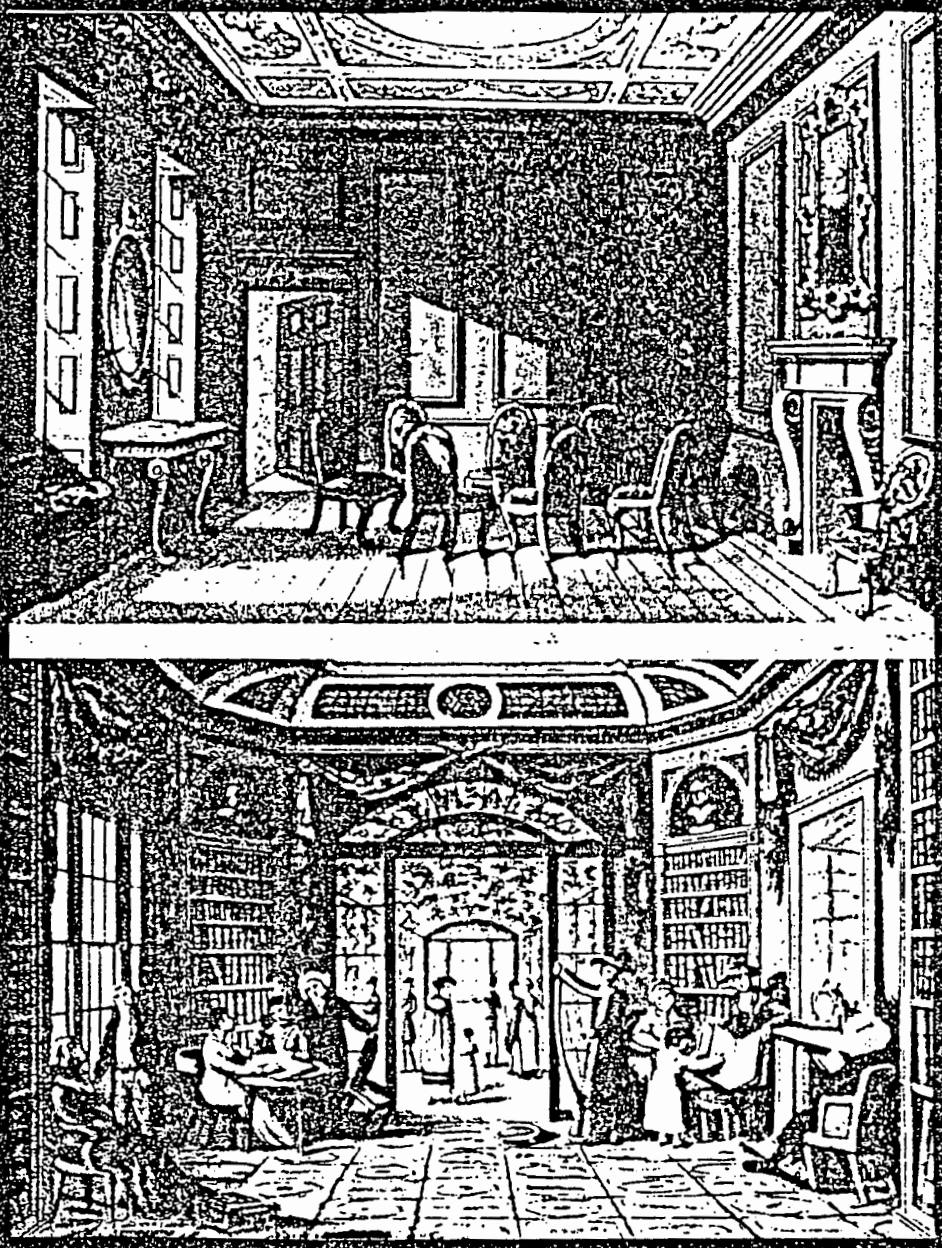


Fig. 120. Plates from Humphrey Repton's Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1816) contrasting a gloomy, formal drawing room (top) with a more casually arranged living room (bottom).

Reproduced from Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 76.

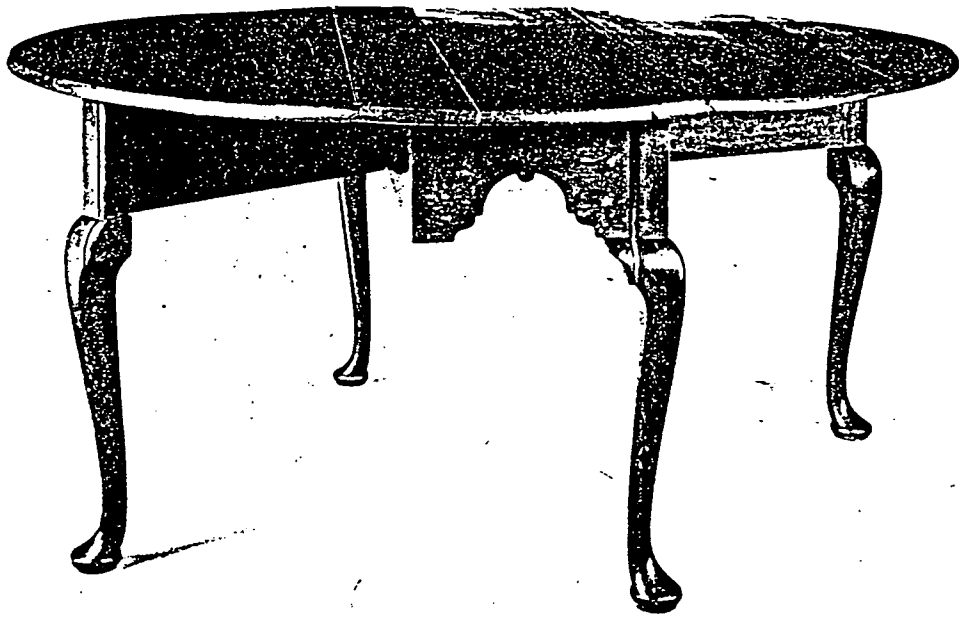


Fig. 121. Dining table. Walnut, hard pine. Probably Virginia, 1725-1745. h: 28" w(open):60" d: 50"

Courtesy, the Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum



Fig. 122. Walnut and cherry tea table. Massachusetts 1730-40. h:25" w:30" d:20" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 123. Earthenware tea set.
English, 1775-80.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

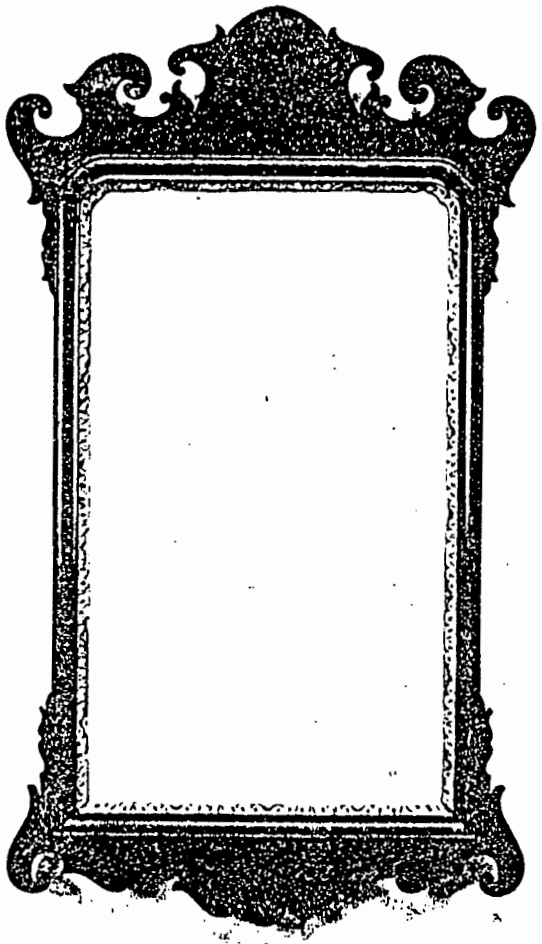


Fig. 124. Looking glass, mahogany with gilt. Phila., c. 1770. 50" x 27"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 125. Windsor side chair.
c. 1765-90. Maker: Francis Trumble, Phila. H:36" w:18" d:19". Winterthur

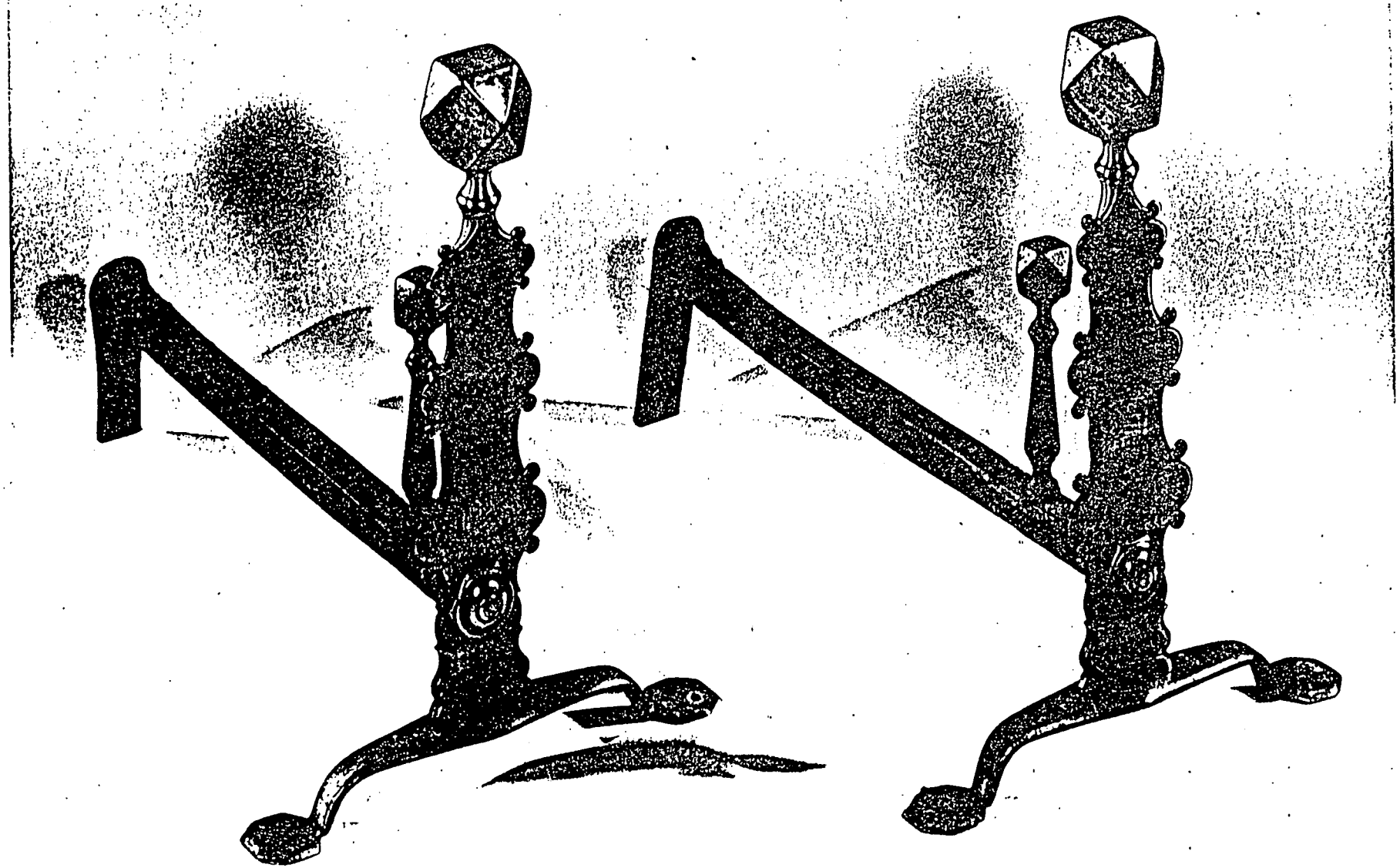


Fig. 126. Andirons. Steel finials, shafts, legs; iron log rests. English, 1680-1700. h:15" w:11" d:18"

Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

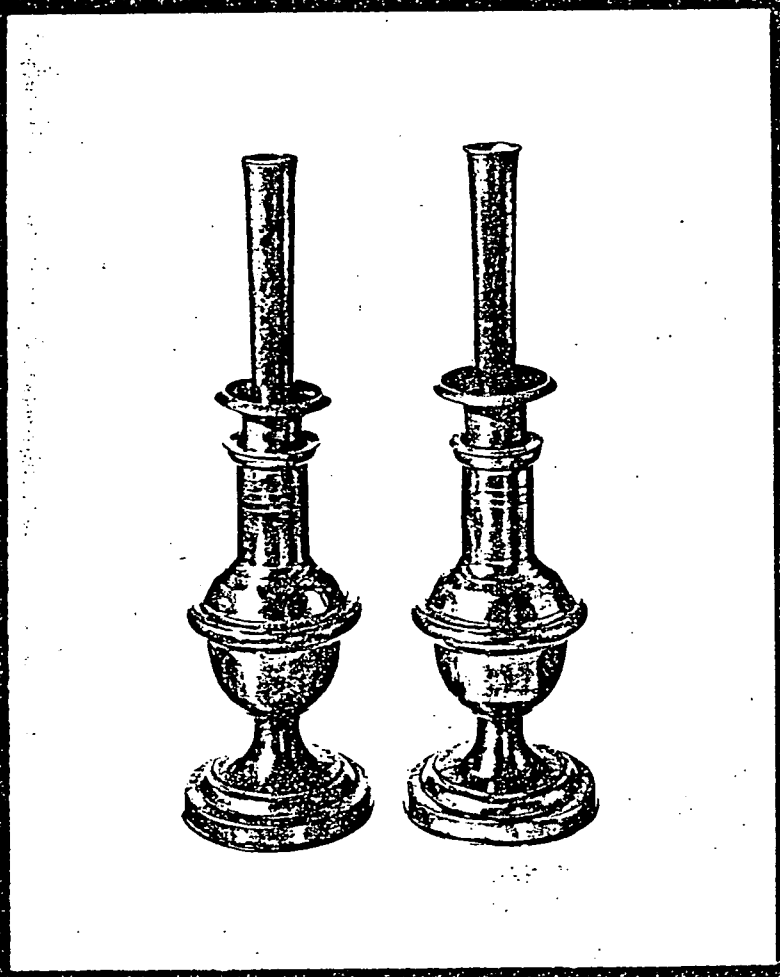


Fig. 127. Pewter pump lamps. French, c. 1775. h: 12". Courtesy, The Henry Ford Museum.

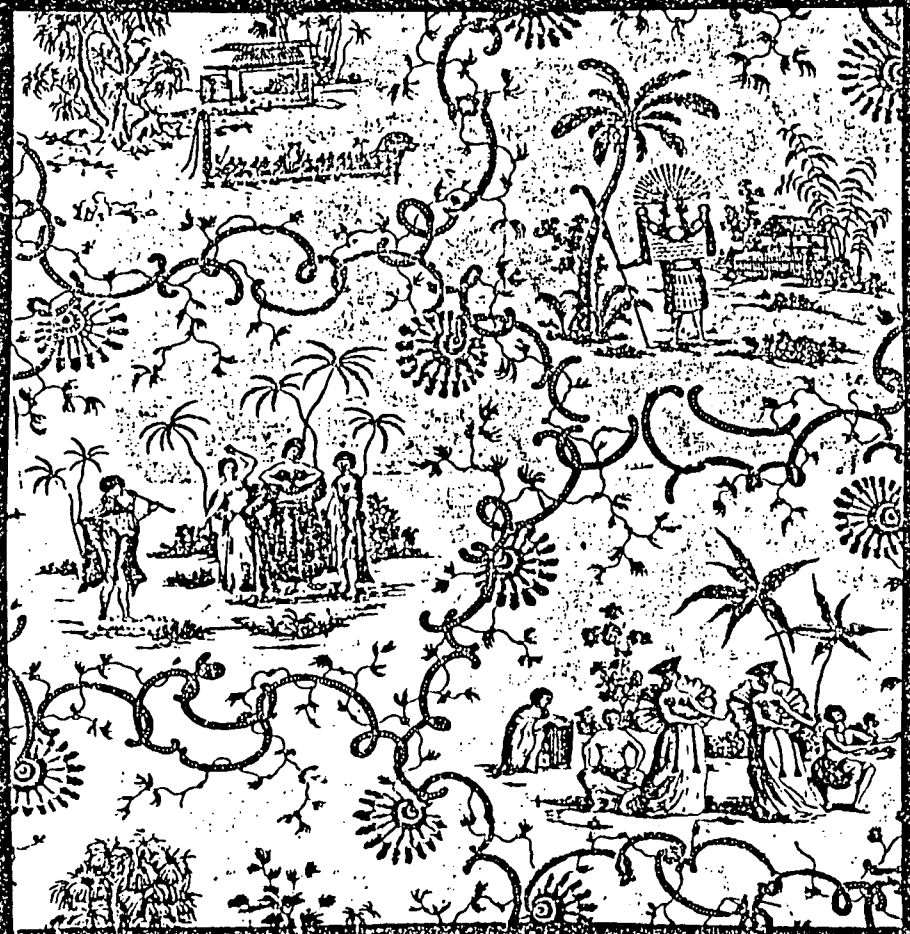


Fig. 128. Cotton, copperplate printed in sepia, showing scenes from Cook's voyages. English, c. 1780



Fig. 129. Cotton, copperplate printed in black, showing a military encampment. English, 1780-90. Winterthur.



Fig. 130. Worthy of Liberty, Mr. Pitt. —Mezzotint by Charles Willson Peale, c. 1768. 23" x 15". Winterthur.




Fig. 131. Pasquale Paoli, engr. by J. Lodge after Henry Benbridge, 1769. Frontispiece to James Boswell's An Account of Corsica, London, 1769.

AN

# ACCOUNT

OF

# CORSICA,

THE JOURNAL OF A TOUR

TO THAT ISLAND,

AND MEMOIRS OF

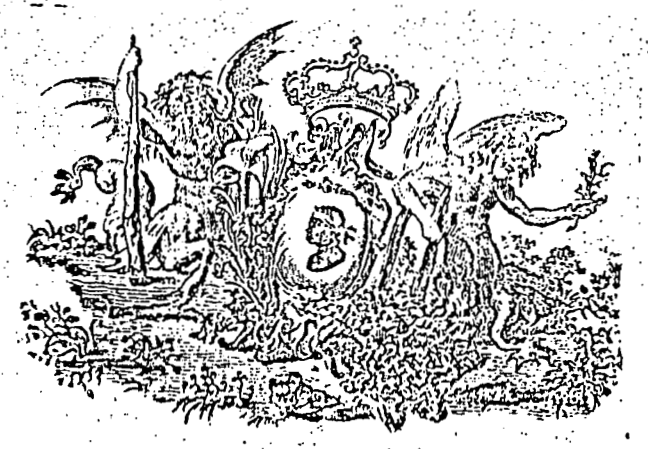
# PASCAL PAOLI.

BY JAMES BOSWELL, Esq;

ILLUSTRATED with a New and Accurate MAP of CORSICA.

Non enim propter gloriam, divitias aut honores pugnamus, sed propter libertatem solummodo, quam nemo bonus nisi simul cum vita amittit.
Lit. Comit. et Baron. Scotiæ ad Pap. A. D. 1320.

THE THIRD EDITION CORRECTED.



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR EDWARD AND CHARLES DILLY
IN THE POULTRY.



M.r Meyer Del.

Boutran Sculp.t

# LE GÉNÉRAL LAFAYETTE,

*Né en Auvergne le 6 Sep.bre 1757.*

*Ami de Washington digne Emule de sa Gloire.*

Campagne d'Amérique de 1777. &.&.

*Déposé à la Direction.*

*A Paris, chez l'Auteur, Rue des Francs-Bourgeois S.t Michel N.o 6.*

Fig. 132. Le Général Lafayette, engr. by Boutran after Meyer. Paris, —

Room 201: Room over the dining room (Boy's room)

When Thomas Nelson first moved into the house in 1766, his sons Thomas and William were ages two and three respectively, and Philip just an infant. When Nelson died in 1789, his eleven children ranged in age from seven to twenty-six. Written for the twenty-three year span of Thomas Nelson's occupancy, the furnishing plan cannot reflect all the changes that must have gone on to accommodate the growth of the family during this period. For two reasons the year 1784 has been selected to show the children's bedrooms. First, the Nelson family was complete at that point in terms of the number of children, and second, there exists for that year a bill for whitewashing the "nursery" --a specific reference to room use on which the plan can build.

The type of items inventoried and their appraised value suggest good quality furniture for the room over the dining room. The chairs and one of the beds are valued as highly as those of any first floor room. I believe this may have been the older boys' room, to be shared with guests when necessary. In 1784, the two oldest boys were away at the College of William and Mary, leaving at home four brothers ages 6, 16, 17 and 18.

In the inventory are listed two mahogany bedsteads and one black walnut bedstead. For their appraised value, they must have been well carved and fitted with generously cut and trimmed bed hangings. One of the mahogany beds was specified as being a low bedstead, a relatively uncommon type (fig. 200). It can be placed against the east wall facing window 201-W3, and can be covered with a white quilt. This bed could have been fitted with a trundle bed for the youngest boy.

An elaborately carved four post mahogany bed (fig. 201) with full, red moreen curtains is also indicated in the inventory. This

bed, apparently one of the finest in the house, might be placed in the southwest corner of the room.

A simpler four post walnut bedstead can stand in the northwest corner of the room facing the fireplace (fig. 202). Its bedhangings can be of linen, plate printed in red on white background. Varying the types of fabric but keeping to related colors relieves the static effect that can come with too much matching material. Straight hanging window curtains and chair slip covers can be made of the same printed cloth as the hangings for the walnut bedstead. Benjamin Franklin described the plate printed fabric he saw in London, at that time new and generally more expensive than woodblock-printed material:

> There is also 56 yards of Cotton, printed curiously from Copper Plates, a new Invention, to make Bed & Window Curtains; and 7 yards Chair Bottoms, printed in the same Way, very Neat. These were my Fancy; but Mrs. Stevenson tells me I did wrong not to buy both of the same Colour . . .[1]

In addition to window curtains and the interior shutters, the windows of Room 201 may have been fitted with Venetian blinds, called Venetian shades in the eighteenth century (fig. 203). People were as aware then as we are today of the damaging effect that strong sunlight has on fine furniture. Because this second floor front room appears to get much light, blinds would be good protection for the furnishings.

It is uncertain if a tutor was still employed by the Nelson family by the mid 1780's. In any case his accommodations were likely to have been on the third floor. Augustine and Thomas Smith, for whom Nelson accepted guardianship after the death of their father around 1780, may have also shared the top floor apartments along with

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[1]Letter from Franklin to his wife, February 19, 1758; quoted by Montgomery in her Printed Textiles, p. 29.

occasional guests. In the eighteenth century the attic did not have today's pejorative association. Indeed, some "top storey" garrets in English country houses have traces of expensive flock paper, and were described at the time as "very handsomely furnished".[1] The furnishing plan does not include the third floor, for this area will be closed to the public.[2]

While no desk or table is listed in the inventory for this room, there probably would have been one if not both. With books, atlases, globes, and orrery in the hall outside, the boys were likely to have done a certain amount of studying in their room. It is possible that classes were conducted in this room under the tutorship of Jacob Hall; alternatives for study areas would be the dining room or back parlor. A slant top desk similar to the one described in the dining room may have stood between windows 201-W1 and -W2. A looking glass (fig. 204) can hang over the desk.

A high style English dressing table with looking glass can stand between the bed and door 201-D1 (cf. fig. 202; fig. 205 and 206). On the table can be miscellaneous boxes (fig. 207 and 208) and any variety of small items that might reflect teen-age boys' interests, such as a knife, a compass, or prisms.

A large chest of drawers or clothes press might have stood against the wall across the room, to the right of window 201-W3. A painted

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[1]Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 63.

[2]The stairs leading to the attic apparently do not meet requirements established for large numbers of visitors to pass safely.

clothes press is listed among Nelson's personal property sold in 1810. Figure 209 shows one of Chippendale's designs for a clothes press which could have inspired the large press made in Virginia (fig. 210) on display at the Peyton Randolph House at Colonial Williamsburg. Hatboxes can lie on top of the press or chest.

Six mahogany chairs are listed in the inventory for Room 201. They are highly appraised, and so should have very well articulated, rich carving, possibly with the hairy paws, cabochons, and gadrooning evident in fig. 211. Four English side chairs and two arm chairs dating to the 1770's would be best. They could be upholstered in red moreen, with slip covers made of the red and white linen print mentioned above. The two arm chairs and two of the side chairs can be grouped around a card table in front of the fireplace, another side chair at the desk and one beside the clothes press. In addition, two low-backed Windsor arm chairs like the Pennsylvania example illustrated (fig. 212) would be a likely addition. One can be placed to the right of the fireplace, the other at the head of the bed by window 201-W1.

There is no way of knowing what kind of carpet was in this room. It was appraised at approximately one fifth the value of the Scotch carpet in the drawing room, and yet at more than twice the value of the carpeting in Room 203. A medium-sized Axminster or Exeter carpet to fit the sitting area in front of the fireplace might be suitable (fig. 213). Predominant colors can be red, mustard, and white.

Andirons, tongs and shovel should resemble the high style and superior quality of the fireplace equipment in Room 103; both sets were appraised at a substantial £2.

Two of four silver plated candlesticks[1] can stand on the card table, one on the desk, and one on the dressing table. Simple brass sconces (fig. 214) can be placed on either side of the fireplace and to the right of windows 201-W2 and -W3.

Over the mantel might hang a sporting picture relating to hunting, horse racing, or perhaps the gentleman's art of fencing (fig. 215). Prominent English artists of the sporting scene include John Wooton, James Seymour, Thomas Spencer, James Roberts, John Sartorius, Francis Sartorius, George Stubbs, and Arthur Devis. A large number of prints were engraved after the work of these artists. Failing acquisition of a painting, a set of four prints can hang on either side of the fireplace.[2]

A washstand can stand beside the clothes press and before the door to Room 201A. It should be English, 1760-80, resembling fig. 96 or 203. On the stand should be a porcelain basin and water bottle (fig. 217) and possibly a soap dish and one of the damask towels described below.

A chest or shelves in Room 201A should store the quantity of house linens listed in the inventory. Shelves would be better for displaying these materials. The inventory list includes two bed carpets (fig. 218, an American needlework example, 1783); five pairs best blankets (Nelson's brother Hugh's best blankets were a rose colored wool); five

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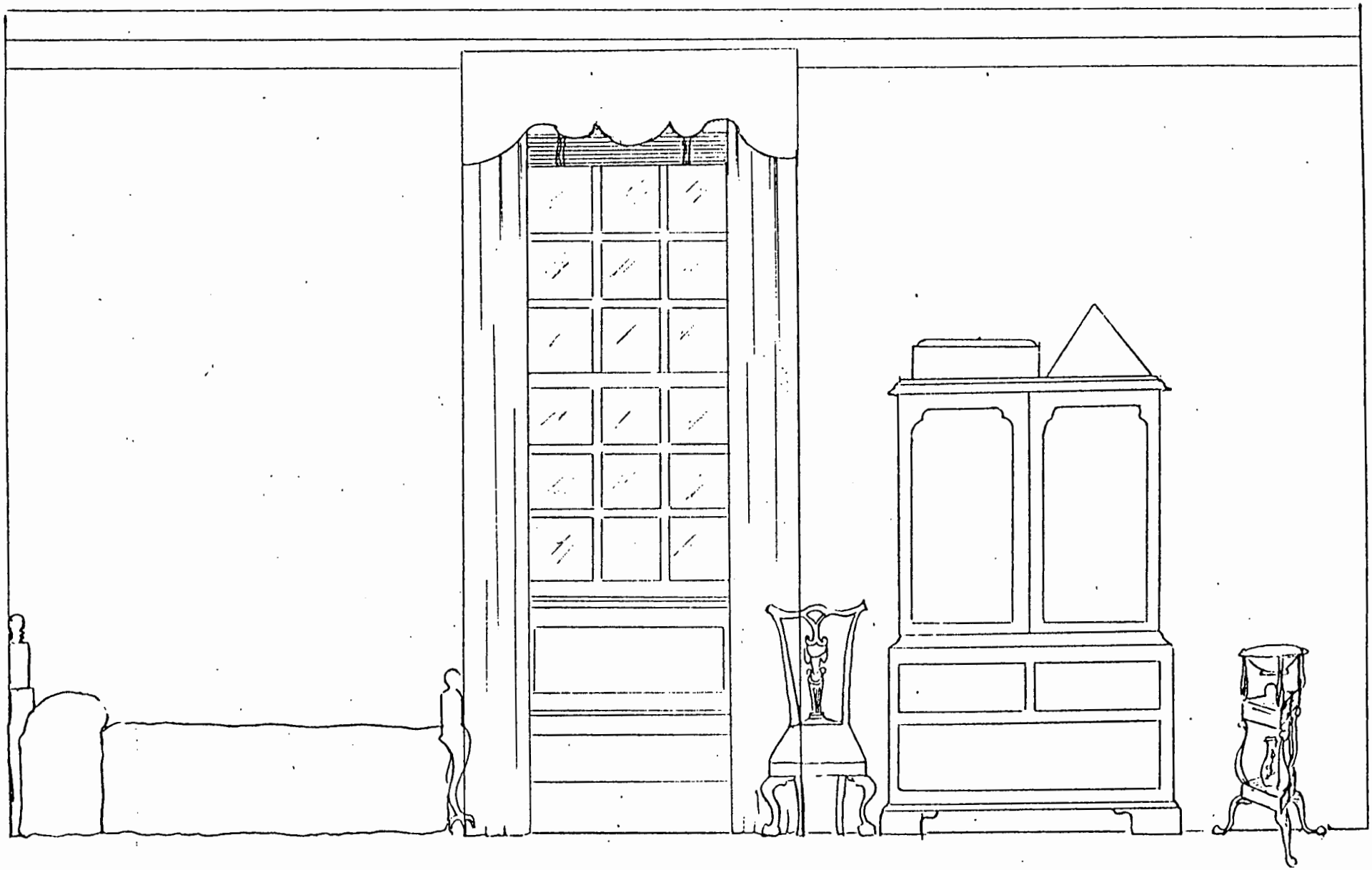
[1]Silver plated candlesticks are listed in the 1810 sales record of Thomas Nelson's personal property, but not in the inventory.

[2]Examples of such sporting prints, suitable for Room 201, are: Subduing, Shoeing, the Cavison and Pillar, from a series of four by W. Elliott after T. Smith (1758); Shooting by William Woolett after George Stubbs (1779); The Setting Dog and Partridges by Smith after James Seymour; The Portraiture of Flying Childers (1756-70); The Pointers & Hare by Thomas Burford after James Seymour; and A Race over the Beacon Course at Newmarket (1770) by R. Houston after John Sartorius (fig. 216a-c).

old blankets (these could be plain white wool, possibly embroidered with Lucy Nelson's initials in one corner); twenty one pairs of sheets (these would probably have been English linen, and again could be initialed "LN" in cross stitch); two "Mersails Quilts" (a corruption of Marseilles, the French city which produced much of this fabric, a stiff cotton similar to piqué); four calico patchwork quilts (another fabric named for its original place of manufacture, Calicut, India); six white counterpanes (fig. 202); eight checkered counterpanes (these were probably a Virginian "homespun" of cotton or linen or a combination, fig. 219); eighteen pillow cases; forty towels of different sorts (either homespun cotton, imported linen, or damask); sixteen damask tableclothes (fig. 220a) some of which could have been Continental, exported through English ports; and thirty eight damask napkins (fig. 220b). Nelson had his own weavers, but the linens used for entertaining were likely to have been imported.



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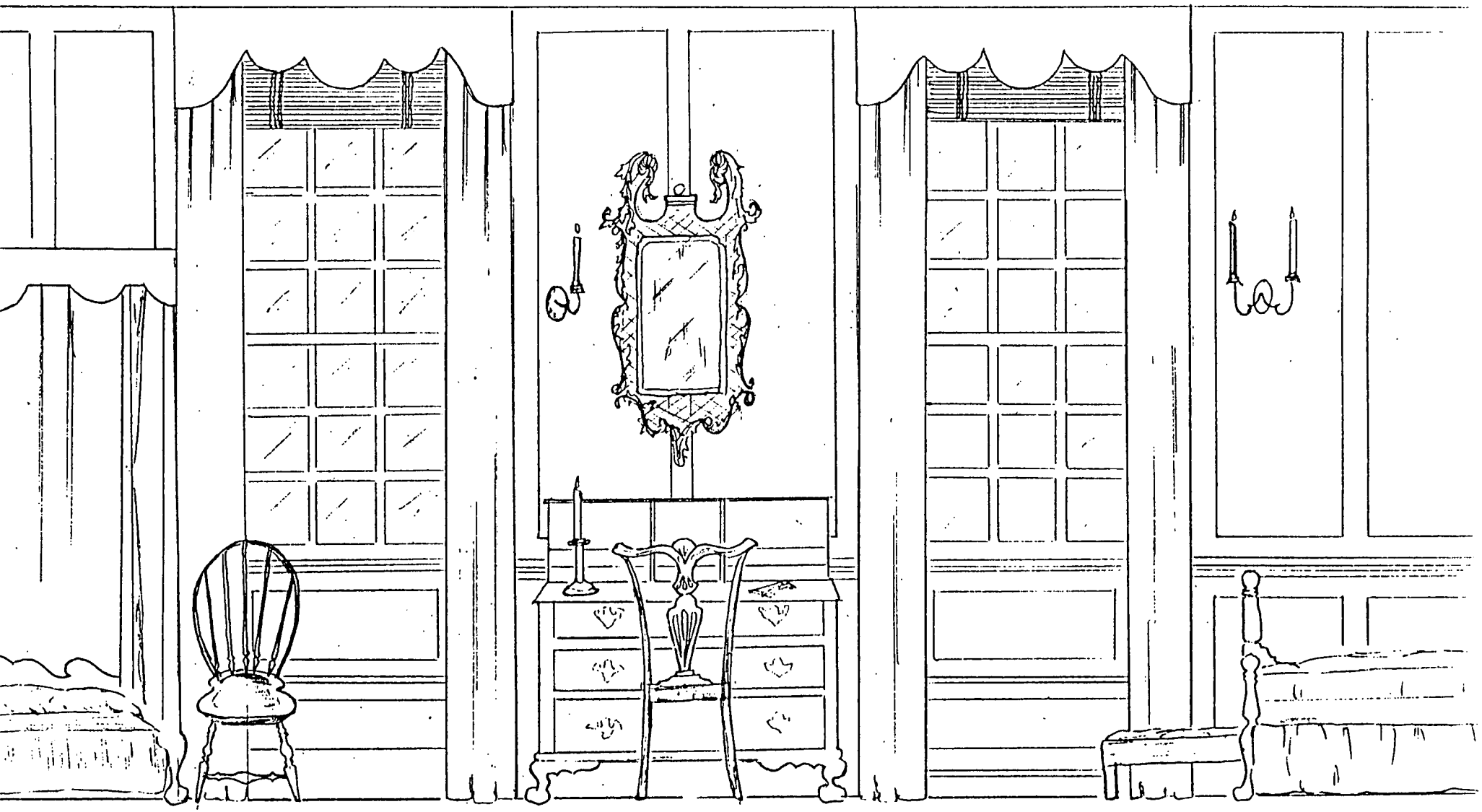

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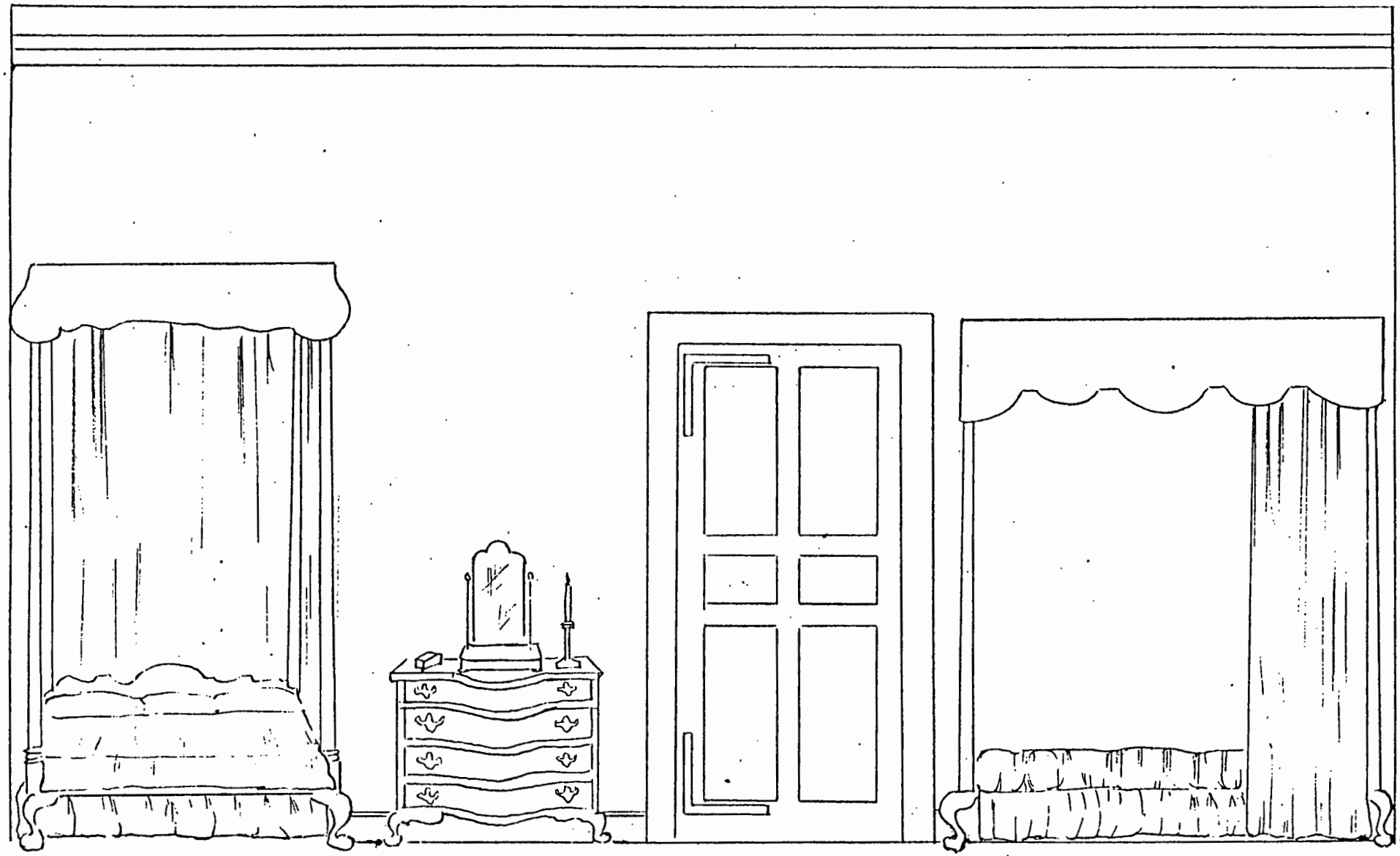

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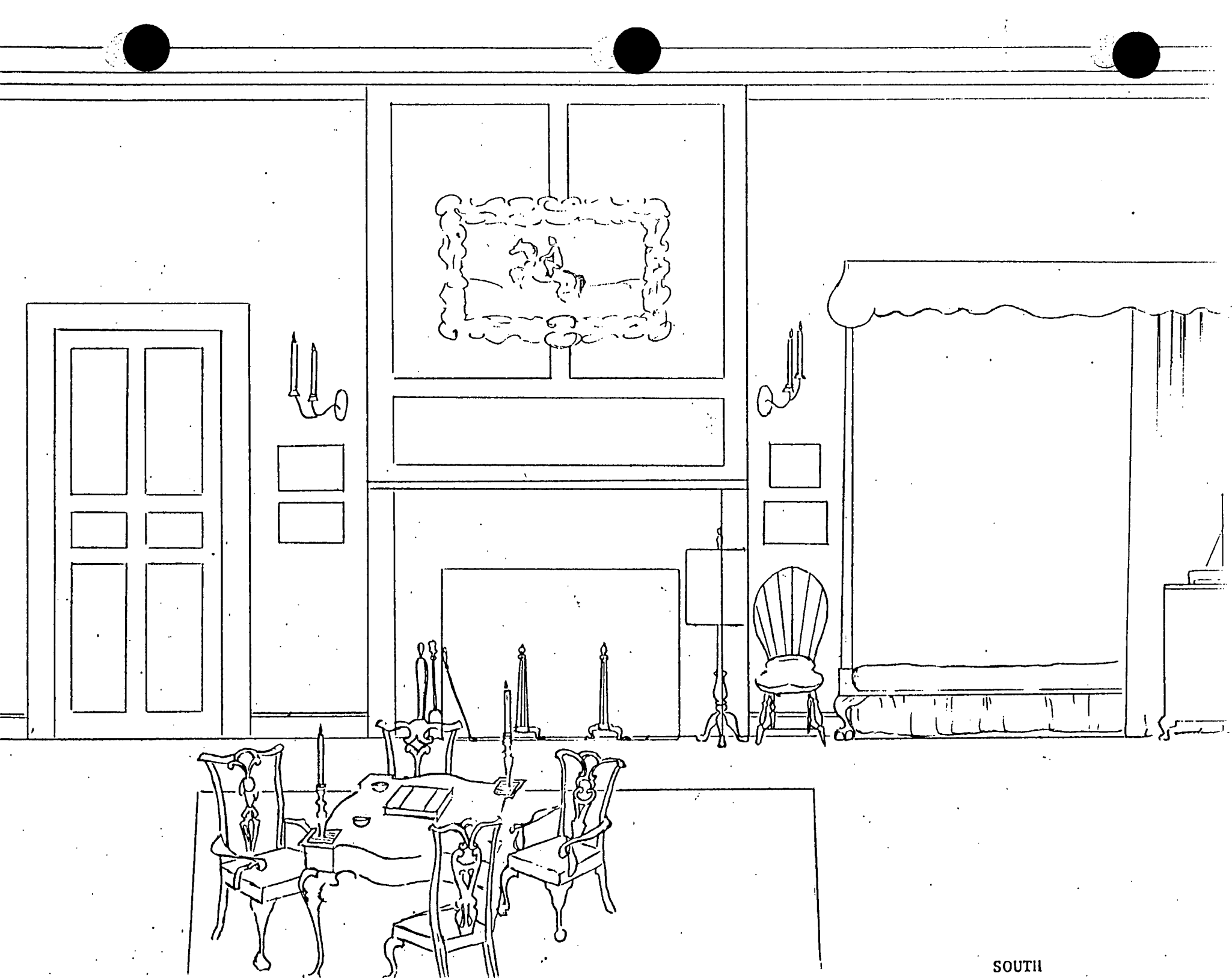
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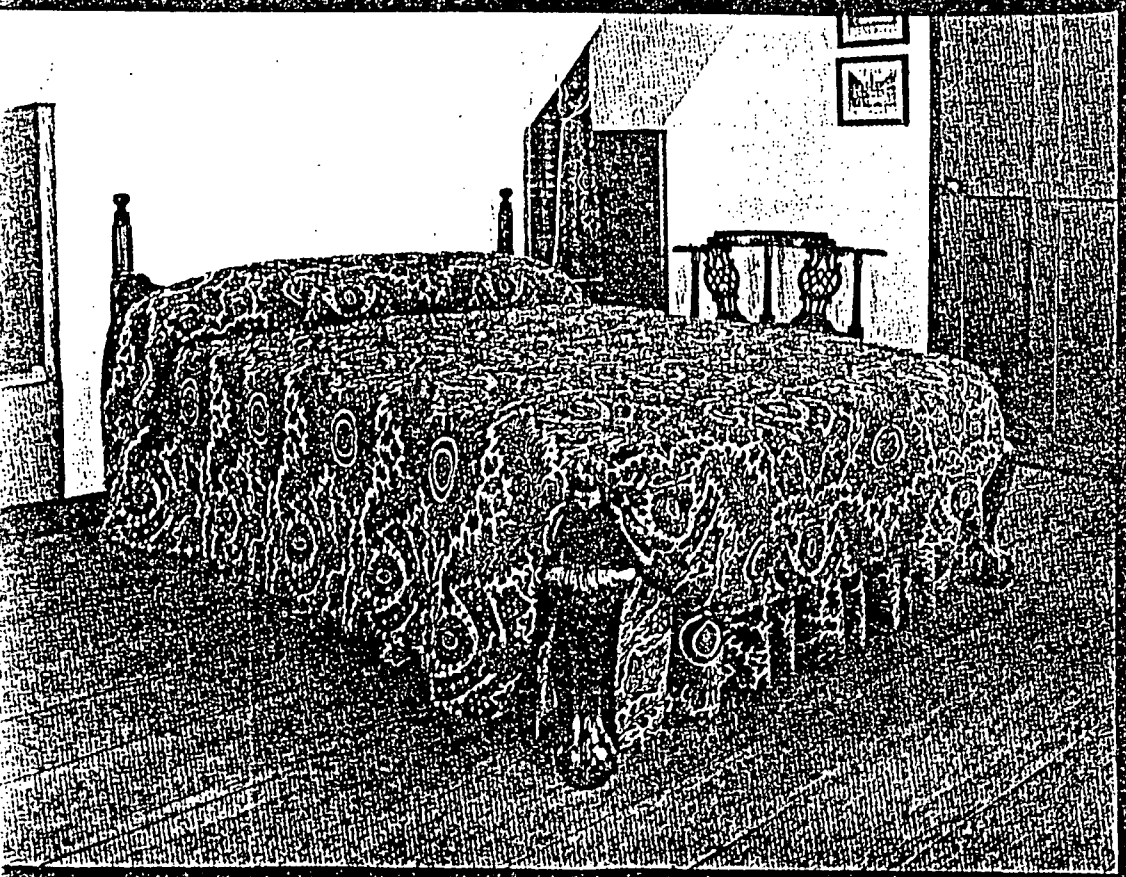


Fig. 200. Mahogany low-post bed. —Probably Massachusetts or R.I., 1760–1790. Colonial Williamsburg.

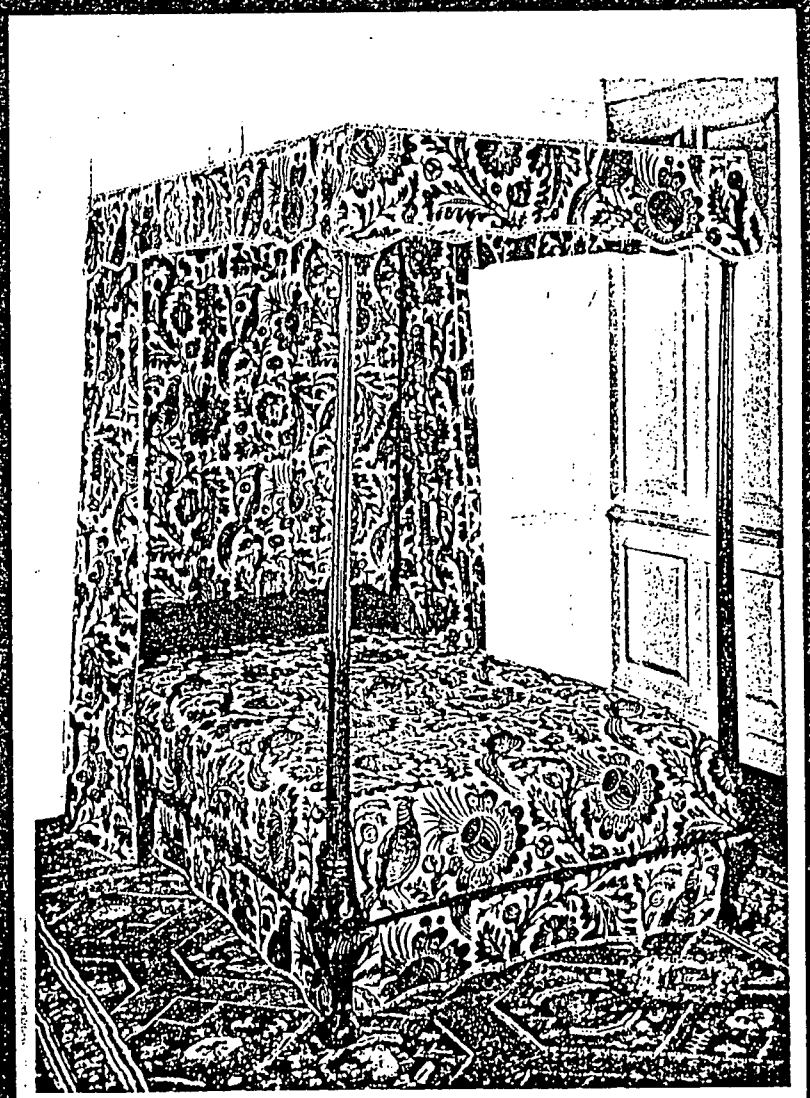


Fig. 201. Mahogany four post bed. — New York, 1760-75. h:7'3" w:4'6" — 1:6'6". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

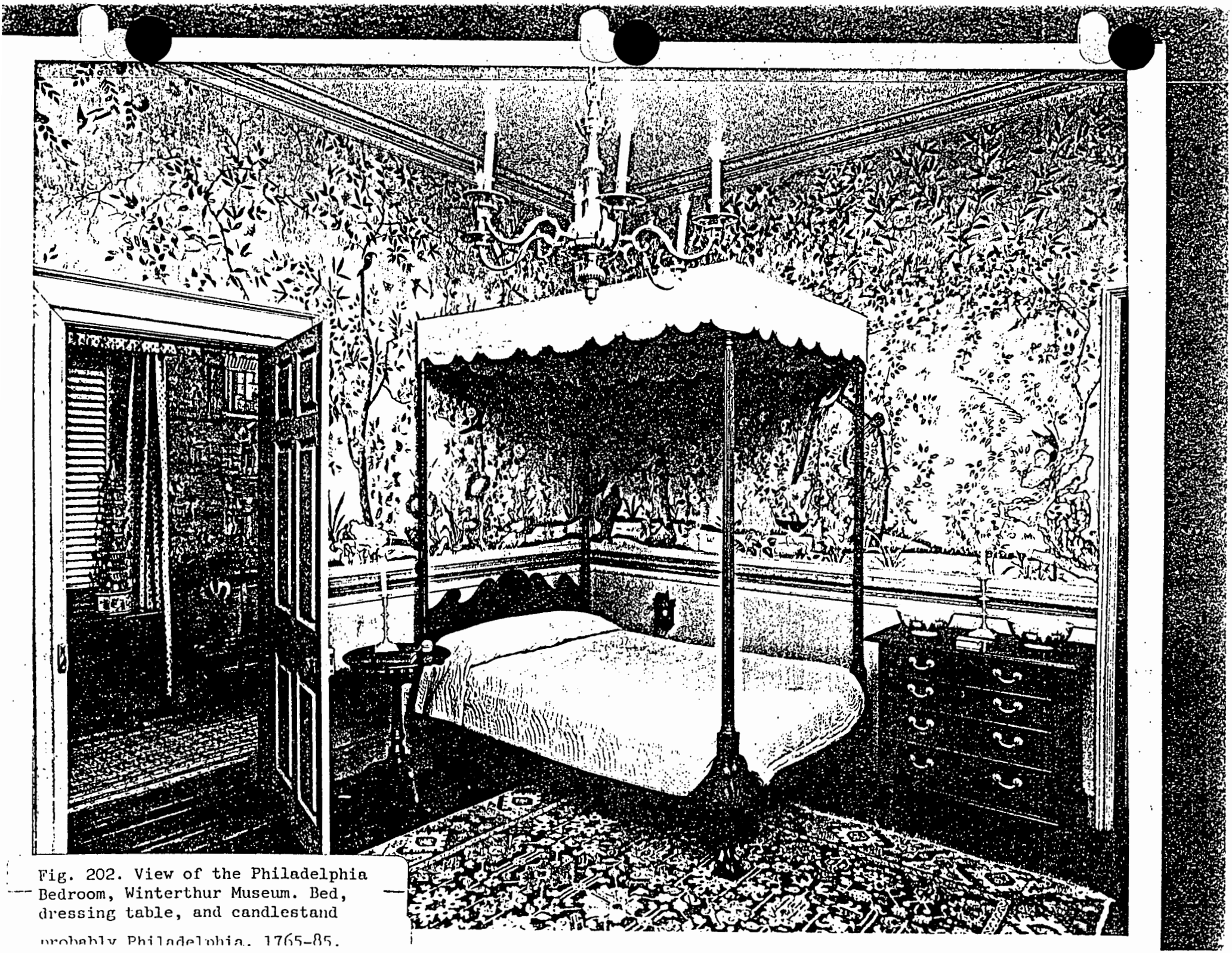


Fig. 202. View of the Philadelphia Bedroom, Winterthur Museum. Bed, dressing table, and candlestand probably Philadelphia, 1765-85.

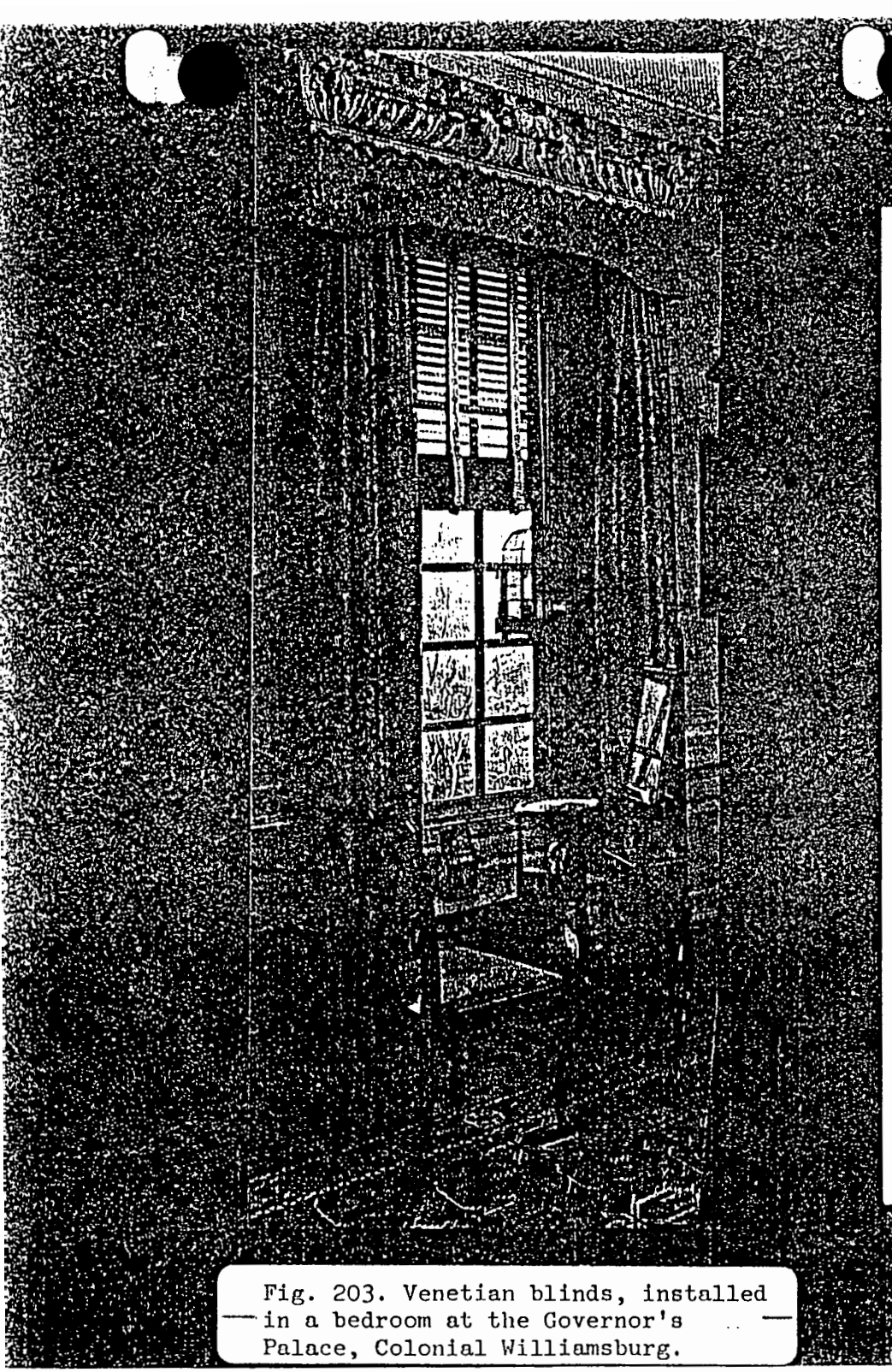


Fig. 203. Venetian blinds, installed in a bedroom at the Governor's Palace, Colonial Williamsburg.

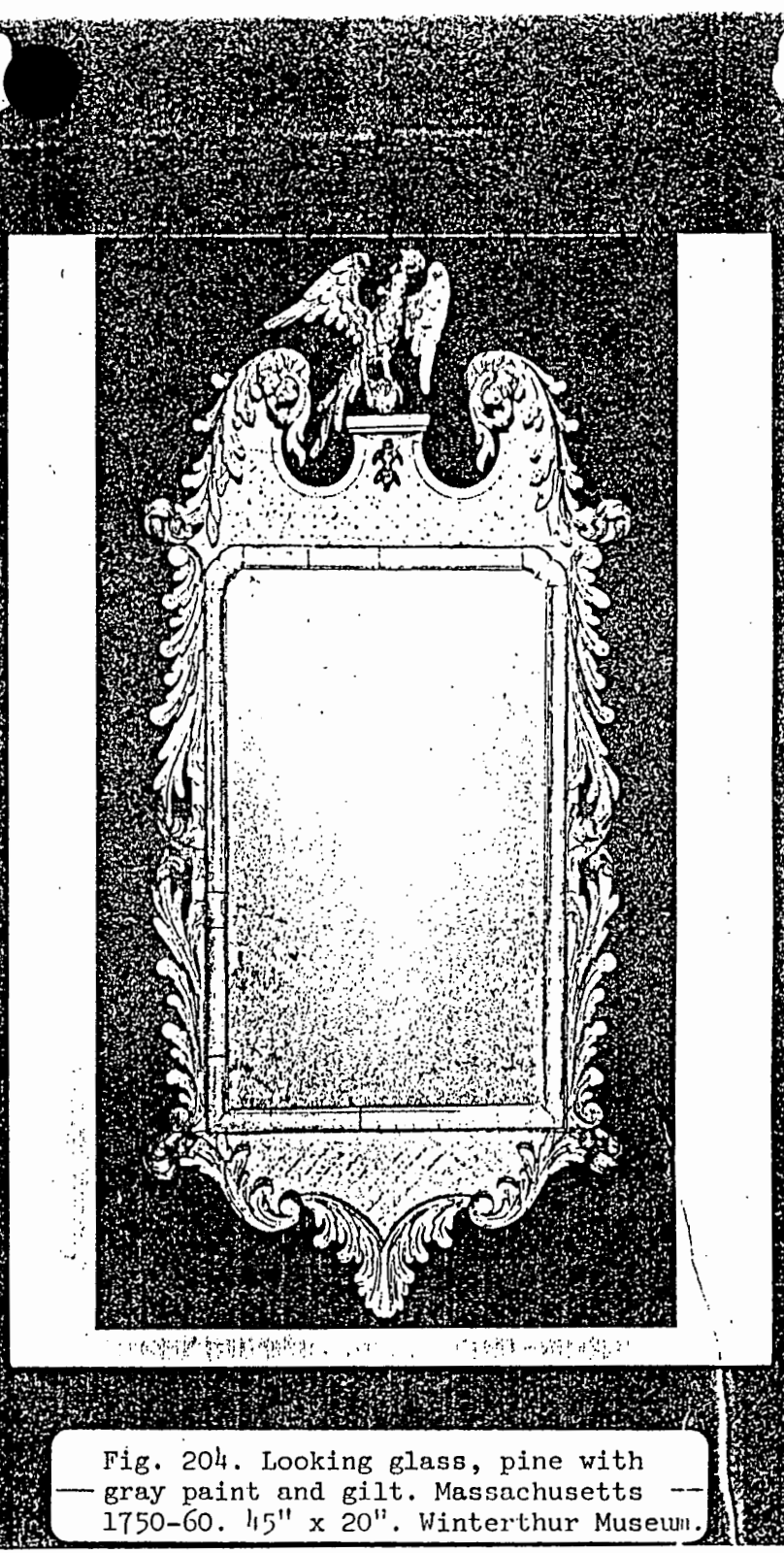


Fig. 204. Looking glass, pine with gray paint and gilt. Massachusetts -- 1750-60. 45" x 20". Winterthur Museum.

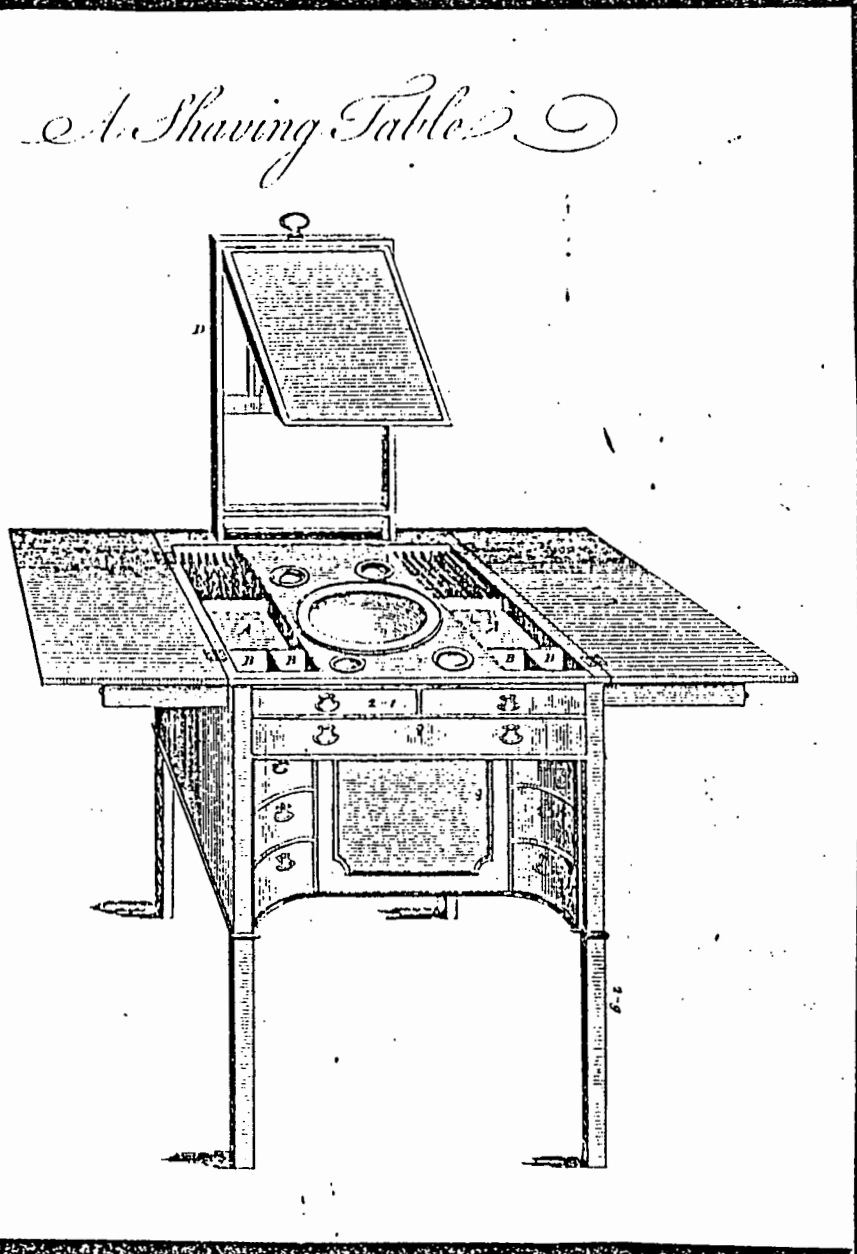



Fig. 205. Design for a shaving table, Plate LIV, from Chippendale's Director, 1762.

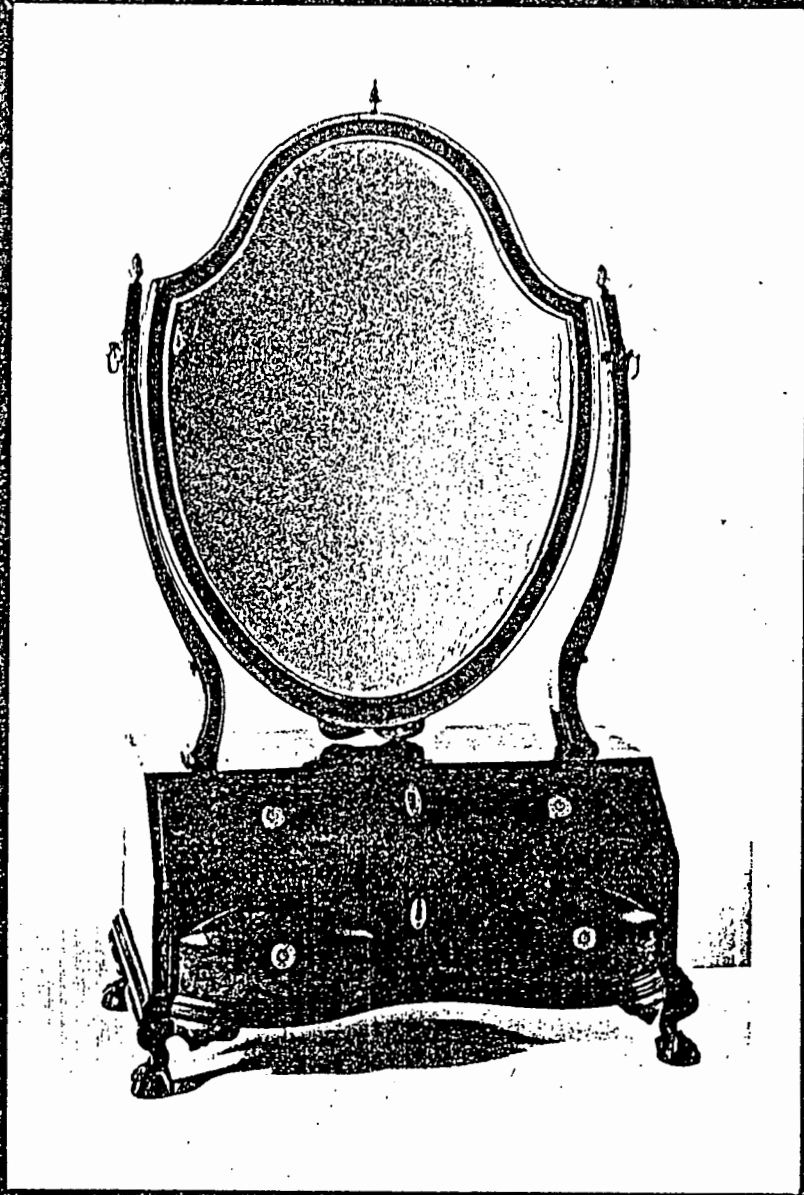


Fig. 206. Mahogany dressing glass. American, c. 1785-95. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

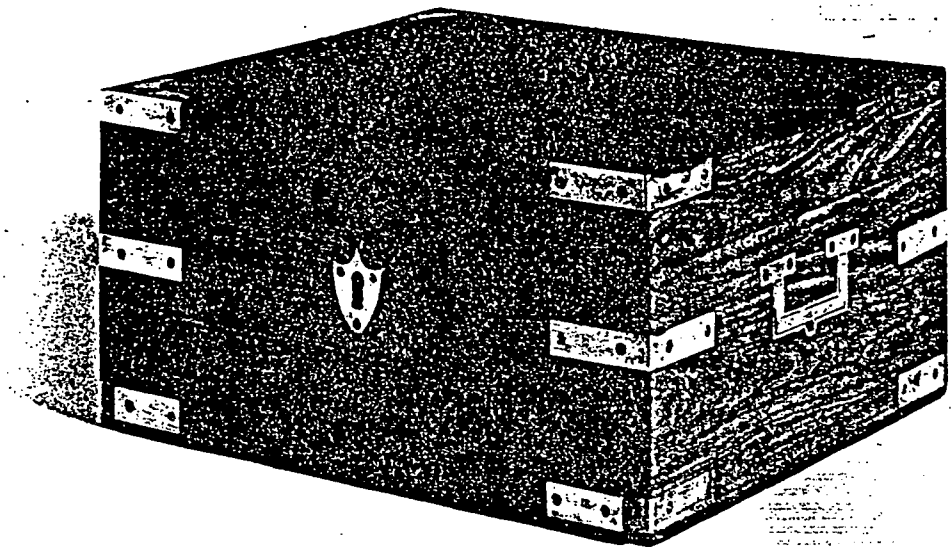


Fig. 207. Mahogany dressing box. English or American, c. 1785. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

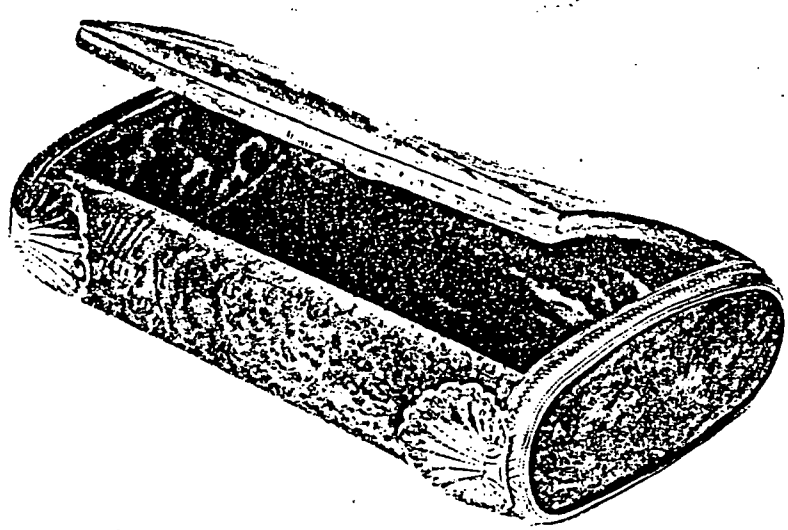
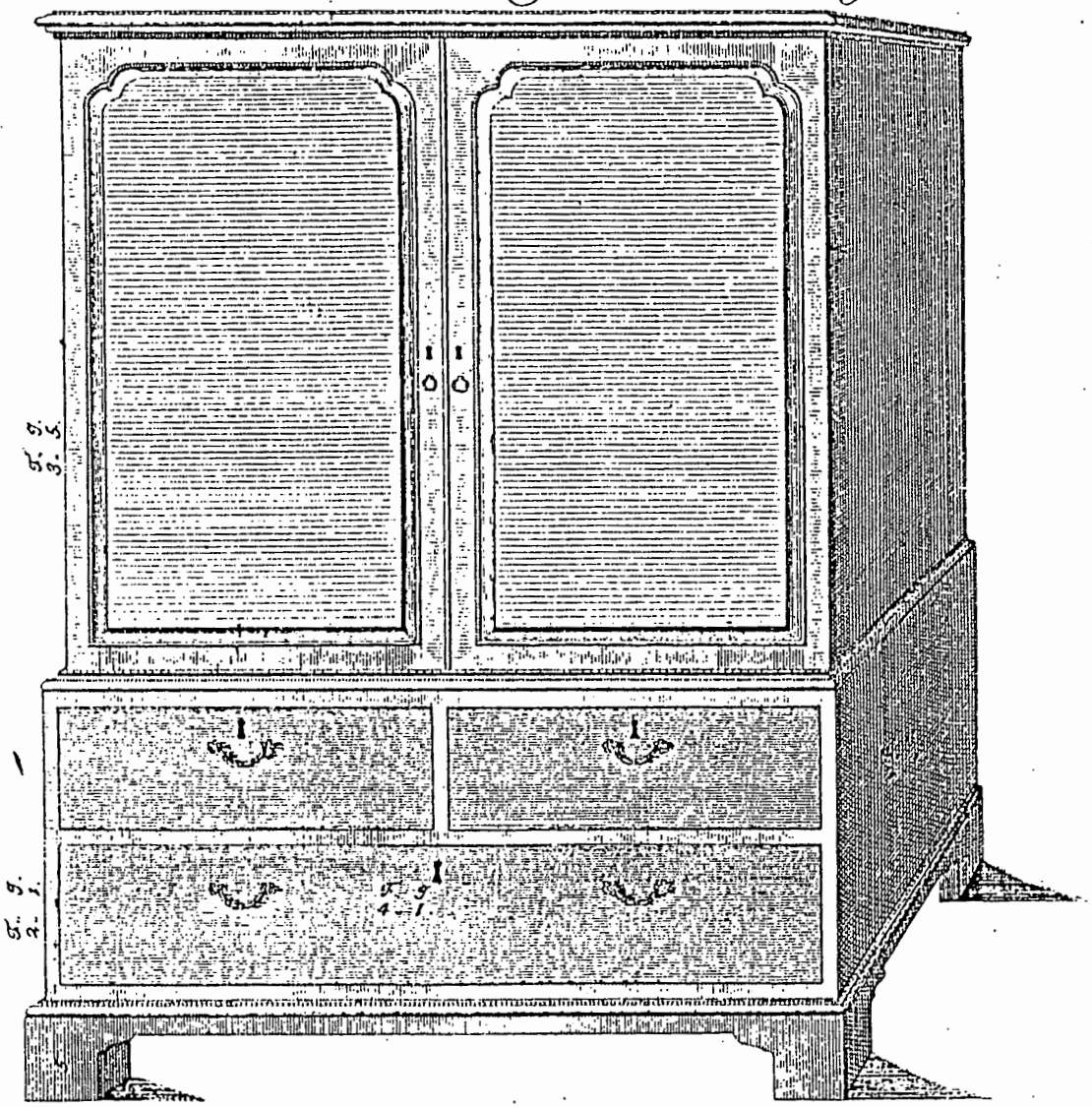
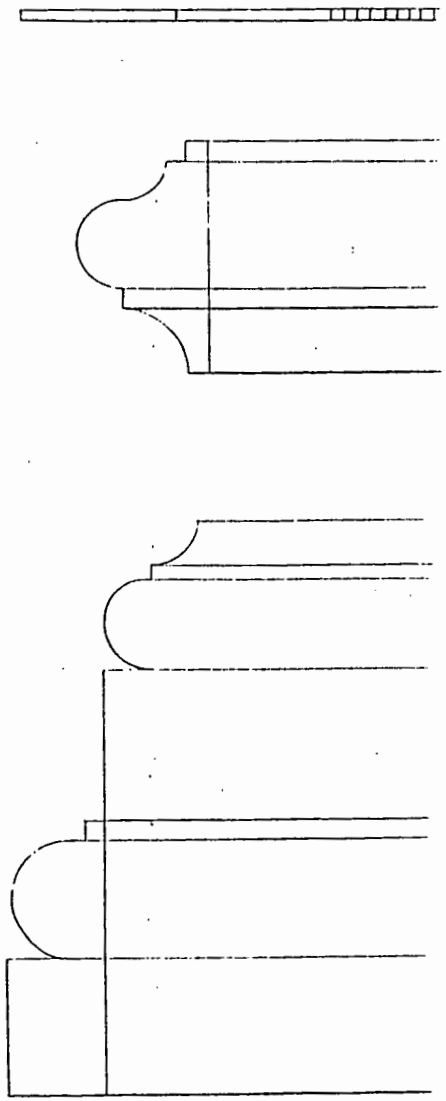


Fig. 208. Walnut, tortoise shell and silver box. English, 1715-55. Approx. 4" x 2". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

N.° CXXIX.

# Cloaths Preſs.





T. Chippendale inv.t & del.

Fig. 209. Design for a clothes press, from Plate CXXIX of Chippendale's Director, 1762.



Fig. 210. Virginian clothes press, c. 1765-85, on display at the Peyton Randolph House, Colonial Williamsburg.

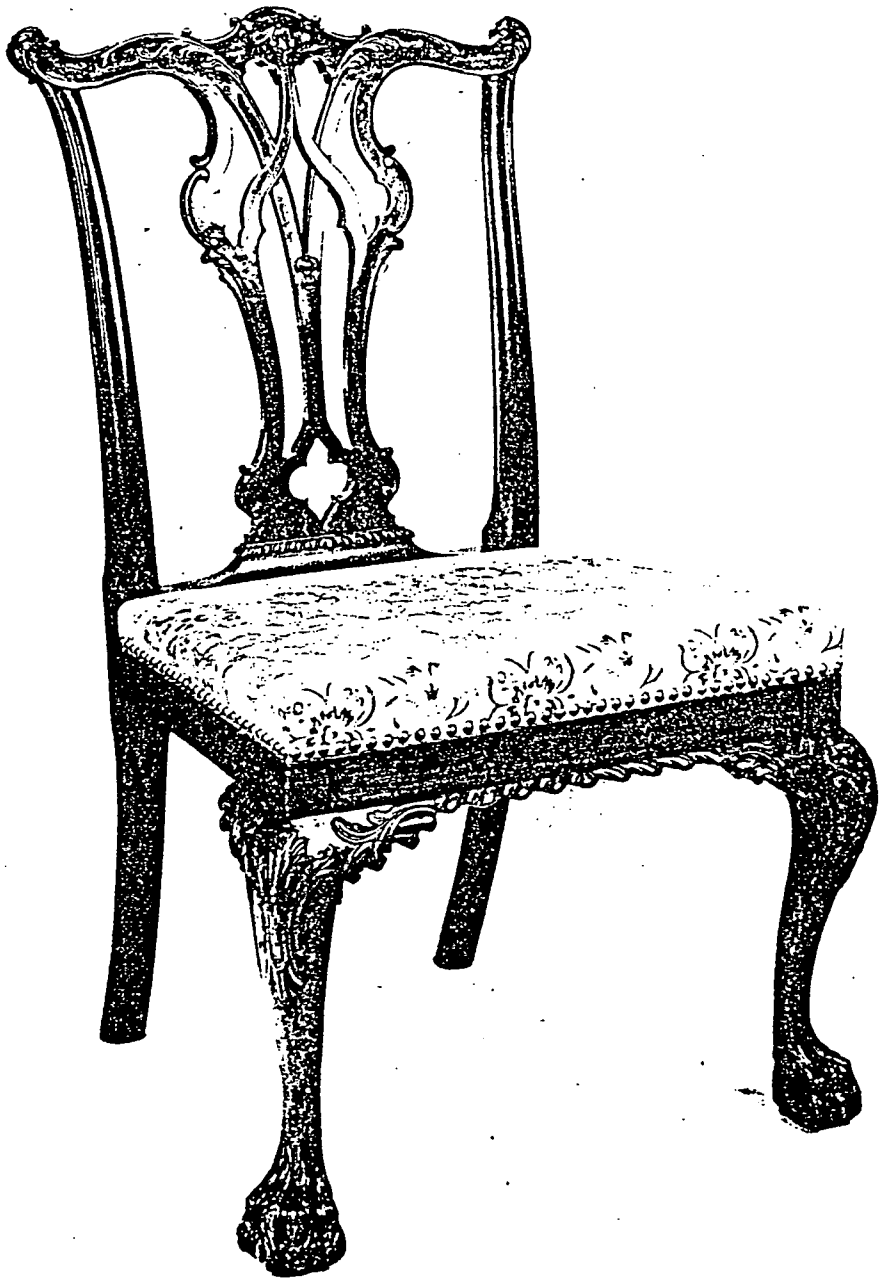


Fig. 211. Mahogany side chair. Phila.



Fig. 212. Low-backed Windsor arm chair. Penn., 1760-80. h:27" w:27" d:22" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

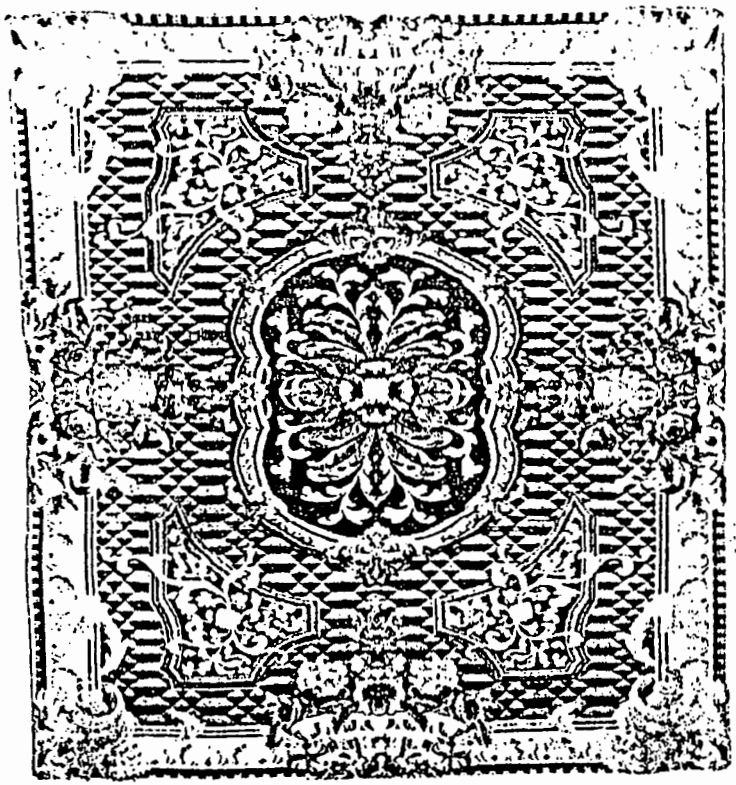


Fig. 213. Wool carpet. Exeter, England, c. 1760. 184" x 163". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

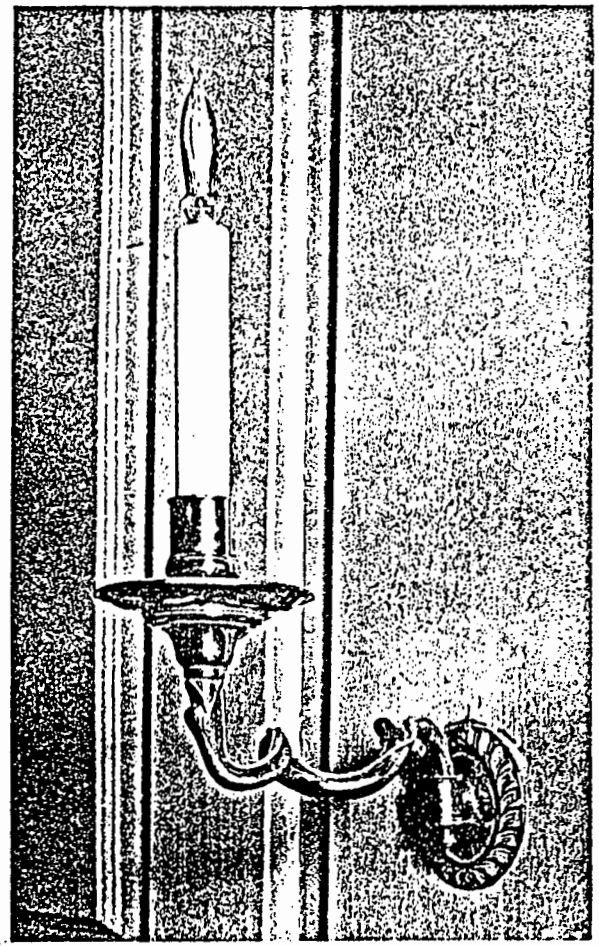


Fig. 214. Brass sconce. England, 1740-60. h:6" w:3" d:9". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 215. Thomas Hollis Fencing with Mr. Martin, by John Green, 1746. Oil on canvas. Harvard University.



Fig. 216a. Subduing, Shoeing, the Cavison and Pillar, engr. by W. Elliott after T. Smith, 1758.

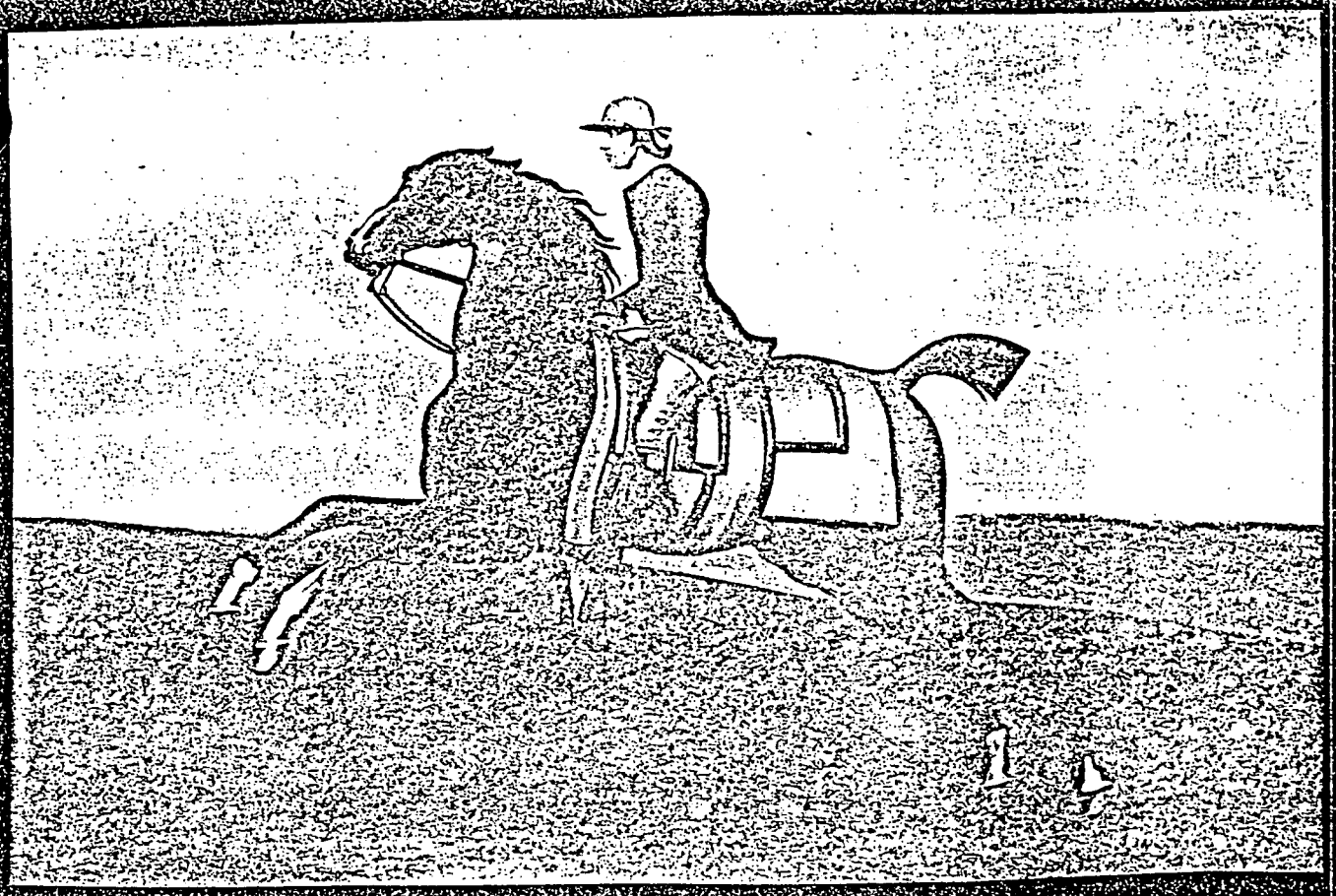


Fig. 216b. Flying Childers, by James Seymour, 1740. Oil on canvas, 35" x 53". Ackermann & Son, London.



Fig. 216c. The Duke of Richmond . . .

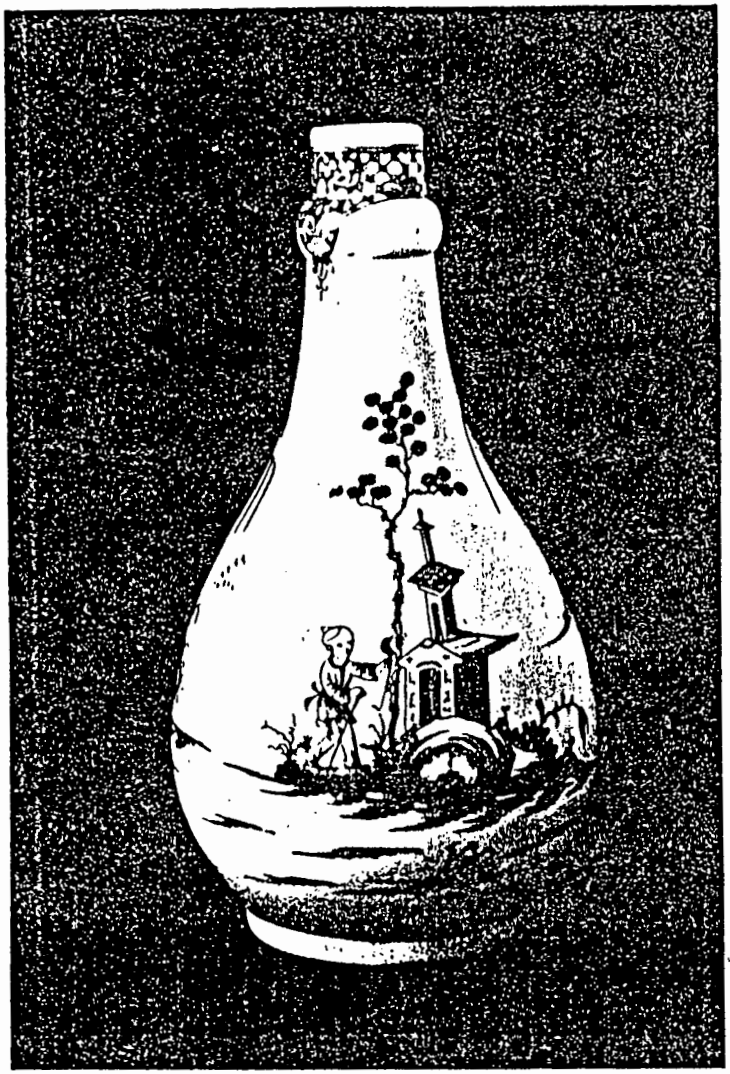


Fig. 217. Water bottle. Worcester, England, 1755-65. Soft paste porcelain with underglaze transfer printed decoration. h.: 9" w.: 5" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

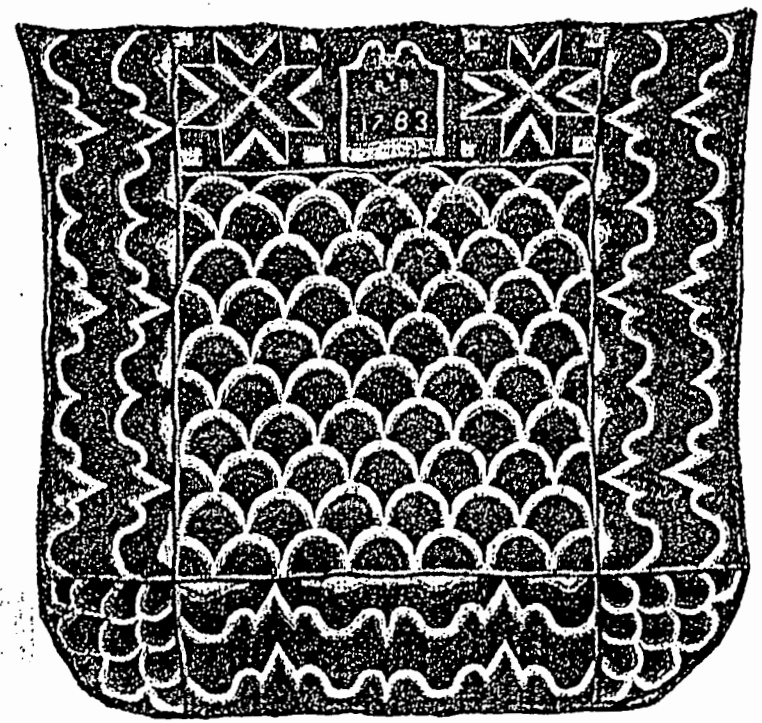
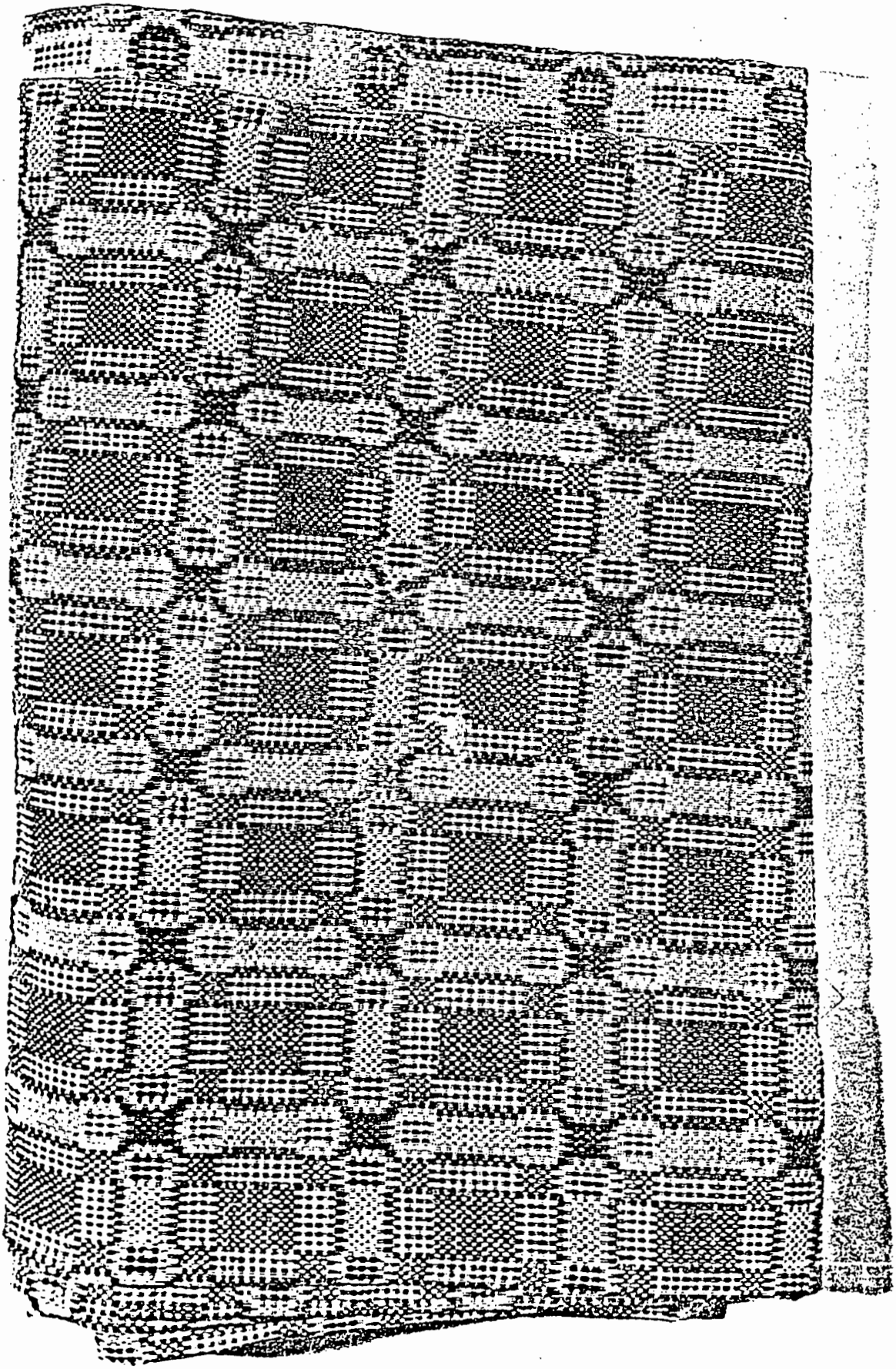



Fig. 218. Bed carpet, needlepoint wool backed with linen. American, 1783. 90" x 87". Winterthur Museum



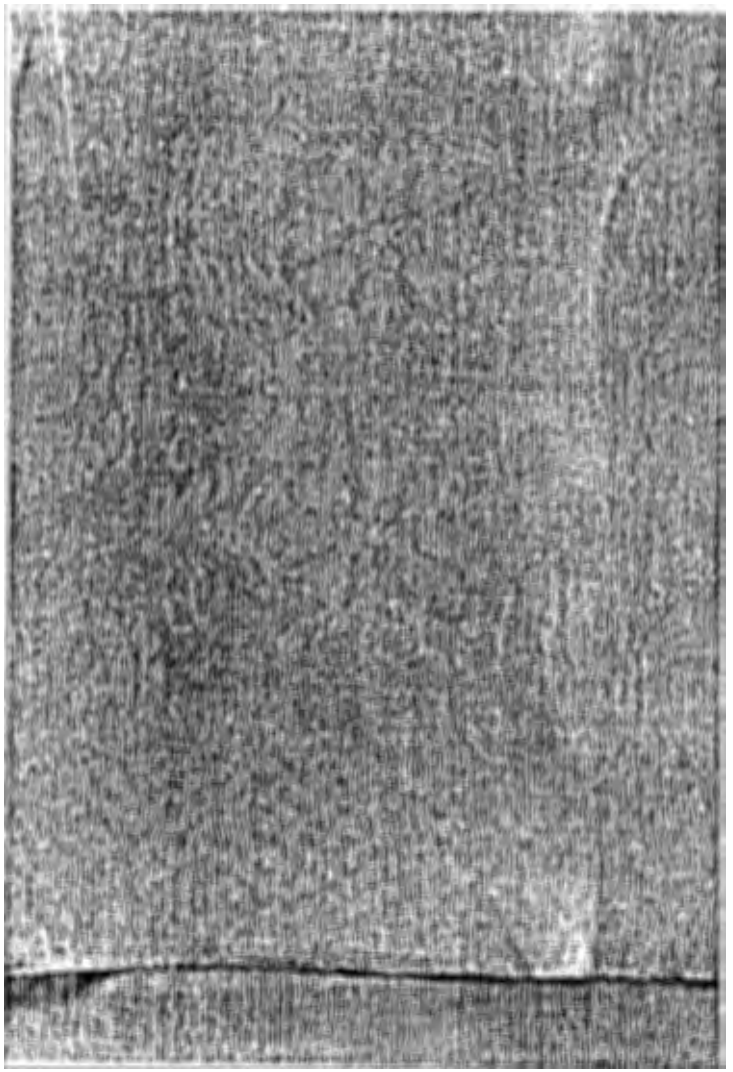


Fig. 220a. Linen tablecloth.
Germany, 1744.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 220b. Linen napkin. Possibly
Germany, c. 1740.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Paul Sandby by Francis Cotes, c. 1760, reproduced from Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 106.

We can imagine one of the Nelson boys striking a similar pose in Room 201.

Room 202: Hall

The stair well is fully panelled only to the first landing, just as the stairs in the Bannister-McKaye House[1] outside Newport, R.I., are painted to imitate marble only to the first landing. There is ample room on the landing for a tall case clock (fig. 221 and 222). While there are many references to watches in Nelson documents, I have not yet found a reference to a clock. If Nelson had a clock, it would probably have been English, made between 1760 and 1780. The wall from the landing to the second floor is white plaster, on which the Nelsons may have hung prints. A set of four, preferably colored prints depicting flowers or the seasons would be appropriate. Examples include Robert Furber's Twelve Months of Flowers (London, 1732) or Thomas Burford's glass transfer prints of the months (London, 1745-47; fig. 223).

The hall is slightly over thirteen and one half feet wide, and is likely to have held a significant amount of furniture. Linen presses and trunks are frequently listed in hallways in Virginia inventories. In the Nelson inventory one trunk is listed, described as being covered in leather with brass nails. In 1785, the Virginia Gazette also advertised "gilt and hair trunks". A large trunk in good condition should be selected from these types. It can be placed against the east wall between doors 201-D1 and 206-D1.

A pair of globes were also inventoried "In the Passage Up Stairs". There is no way of knowing if these resembled the table model of fig. 224,

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[1]This house was also built for a merchant, John Bannister; its stair and hall are now installed at the Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware.

or a larger type, pictured in the very appropriate hall scene of fig. 225. In 1767, William Nelson ordered books and globes from John Norton for the use of his son Hugh. Hugh, Thomas Nelson's brother, was then seventeen years old, approximately the same age as several of Thomas Nelson's sons in the period we are discussing. Usual features of a globe made in the second half of the eighteenth century include a wooden horizon, brass meridian circles, and columnar wooden base; names on the terrestrial globe were printed in English, while text on the celestial globe was printed in Latin.[1] Contemporary books on the subject which could lie on the window seat close by are G. Costard's History of Astronomy exemplified by the Globes (London, 1767) and E. Moore's Supplement to all Treatises on the Use of Globes (London, 1751).

A scientific instrument enjoying almost as much popularity as globes was the orrery,[2] an apparatus which shows the positions and rotations of the bodies of the solar system. Like globes, orreries could be of the table variety (fig. 226) or larger, meant to stand on the floor. A mezzotint engraving of this subject (fig. 227) could hang to the left of door 201-D1, and a book like James Ferguson's The Use of a New Orrery (London, 1746) could lie on the window seat.

The globes, and if possible an orrery, could be placed on a small table (fig. 263) in front of windows 202-W1 and -W2, or, preferably, be of a size to have their own floor stands.

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1 The best known globemakers of the eighteenth century were Gilles and Didier, Robert de Vaugondry, L.C. Desnos, N. Lane, Charles Messier, George and Dudley Adams, Nathaniel Hill and James Ferguson.

2 Named after Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery (1676-1731).

Maps have been mentioned as alternatives for other wall hangings on the first floor, but the ideal location for selected maps to hang is in the second floor hall. Not only would maps continue the geographical theme of globes and supplement the boys' study materials at hand, but they would also be well exhibited on the large white area of the east wall and the west wall between door 203-D1 and window 202-W2.

My suggestions for maps lie in three areas:

I. A map showing Cumberland County, England, the birthplace of Nelson's grandfather, where Nelson inherited family property.[1]

II. Eighteenth century maps of Virginia and more generally of North America and the Caribbean area, to show the extent of Nelson's trading, north and south. Examples include:

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America with Roads, Distances, Limits and Extent of the Settlements (by Thomas Kitchin after John Mitchell) London, 1755 (40" x 72"). This map, commissioned by the English Lord of Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, is significant because of its size and accuracy and because it was based on original surveys, not on the French sources which dominated maps of North America until this time.

A New and Accurate Map of Virginia (by Thomas Jefferys after John Henry) London, 1770 (38 1/4" x 51 1/2").

The British Colonies in North America (by William Faden) London, 1777 (21" x 25"). The cartouch, lower right, shows a plantation owner overseeing the loading of his tobacco onto ships.

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[1] Nelson was forced to sell this ancestral land in 1773-74 to cover a debt; see Evans, Thomas Nelson, p. 26-28; on Nelson's debts, see p. 12, this report.

A Map of the Most Inhabited part of Virginia, Containing the Whole Province of Maryland (drawn by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, 1751; engr. by Thomas Jefferys) London, 1755 (31" x 48"). Fry was a professor of mathematics at the College of William and Mary, and a member of the House of Burgesses; Peter Jefferson was Thomas Jefferson's father. Referring the the 1751 Fry-Jefferson map. Thomas Jefferson wrote that it was "the first map of Virginia which has ever been made, that of Captain Smith being merely a conjectural sketch."[1] The map is recognized today as being one of the greatest examples of early American cartography. Even a reproduction would be valuable for the Nelson House, because the map marks the seats of Virginia's prominant families with a particular symbol; also the cartouche, lower right, shows appropriately a plantation owner and a merchant discussing business on a wharf while ships in the background are being loaded with tobacco (fig. 228).

A Map of the Caribee Islands (by Thomas Jefferys) London, 1756 (7" x 13"); published in the Gentleman's Magazine (XXVI, 368) London, 1756 (fig. 229). There are many other good maps of the colonial West Indies, some indicating trade routes between Virginia and the islands.

III. Maps of the Yorktown campaign of 1780-81. For examples, see Coolie Verner's "Maps of the Yorktown Campaign," Map Collector's Circle, Map Collector's Series No. 18 (London, 1965). In this highly detailed article, Mr. Verner lists 29 printed maps and 136 manuscript maps of Yorktown, classifying them by (a) the Southern campaign in Virginia

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1 P.L. Ford, Writings of Jefferson, I, 2, quoted in Emerson D. Fite and Archibald Freeman's Book of Old Maps (New York, 1969), p. 243.

(b) the setting (c) the naval engagement (d) the investment of Yorktown (e) the seige and (f) later maps. Of the maps described in the article, I mention only the Map and Chart of those Parts of the Bay of Chesapeake, York, and James Rivers which are at present the Seat of War (London, 1781, published by J. Bew) because a facsimile of this map is readily available through Colonial Williamsburg, Inc.

Nelson's inventory modestly lists "a parcel of books" in the second floor passage. In view of his education and a variety of documented references, we can surmise that Nelson's library was more substantial than a "parcel" might indicate. In the 1810 sale of his personal property, Nelson's law books alone brought $53;[1] the Marquis de Chastellux wrote that Nelson had "some very good French and English books at hand;[2] and the tutor Jacob Hall wrote of his fortune in having "the Benefit of (Nelson's) Library which is a fine Collection."[3]

The bulk of Nelson's library is likely to have been historical. Appendix D lists books bought by Thomas Nelson and his father William at the Virginia Gazette printing office in Williamsburg, books owned by Nelson's son William, and books appropriate to Nelson's personal and business interests.

Ideally, a bookcase standing between doors 203-D1 and 205-D1 should be filled with titles chosen from Appendix D. It was not unusual

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[1]York County Records, Will Book No. 10, p. 36-39.

[2]F.J. Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782 (University of North Carolina Press, 1963) II, 383.

[3]"Letter from Jacob Hall, Jr., to Mrs. Hannah Nice", William and Mary Quarterly, 1st series (1914), p. 159.

in eighteenth century English or American houses for bookcases to be placed in the hall. Figure 230 shows an English bookcase of the 1760's, now in the hall of the Governor's Palace at Colonial Williamsburg, which closely resembles Chippendale's Plate no. XCV (fig. 231). Chippendale's Director of 1762 gives fourteen designs for bookcases, most of which are architectural in character, with broken pediments, pilasters, classical cornices and, often delicate mahogany mullions in the doors.

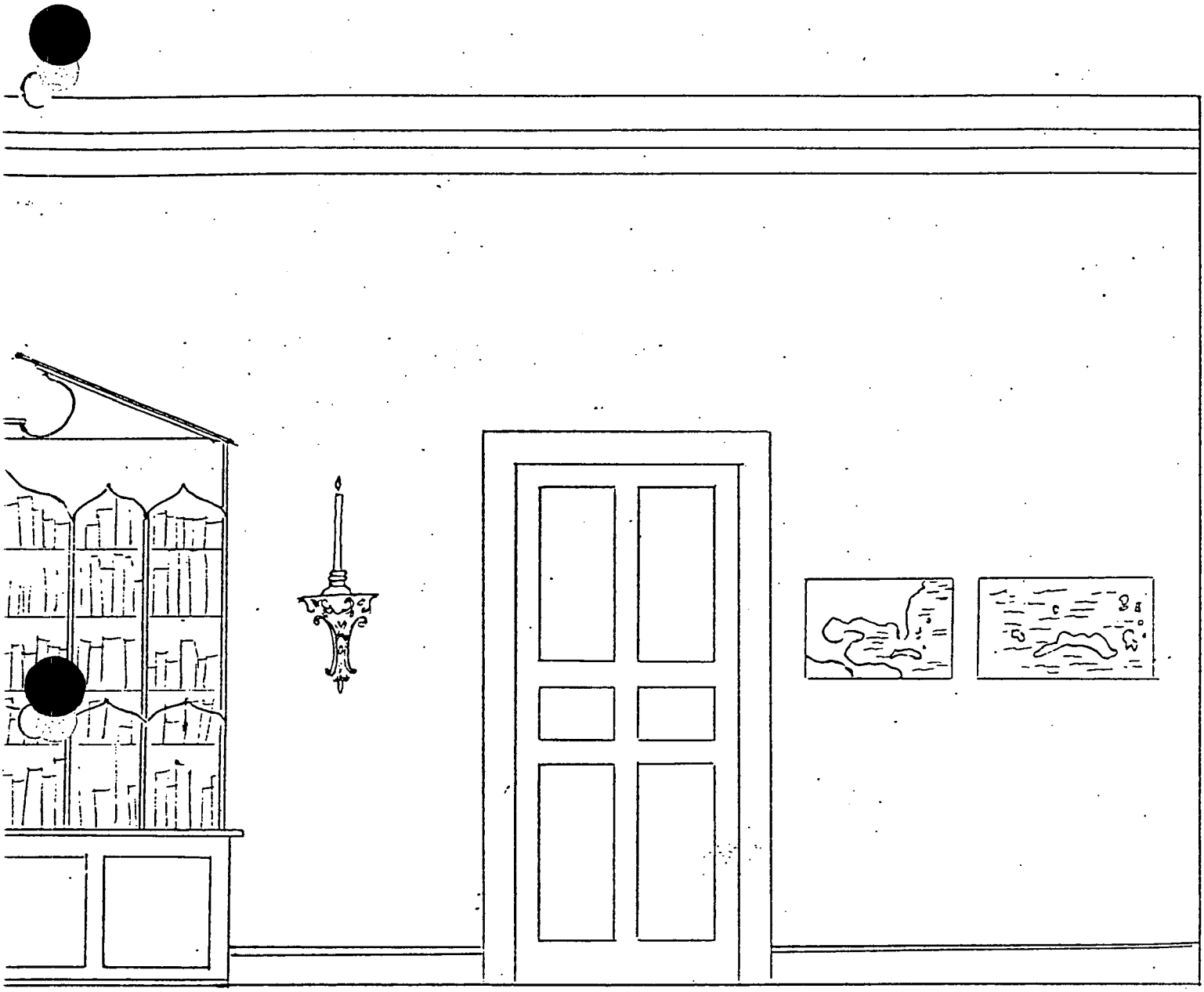
A simple but elegant lantern like the one illustrated in fig. 59a or fig. 232 can hang over the stairwell. More light can be given by tall brass candlesticks (fig. 7) on the small table between windows 202-W2 and -W3. Brass sconces (fig. 60 and 213) or candlesticks on wall brackets (fig. 233) can be placed on either side of the bookcase.

Venetian curtains should be made for windows 202-W1, -W2 and -W3 resembling the yellow or gold curtain made for window 102-W1. This will help to unify the first and second floor halls.

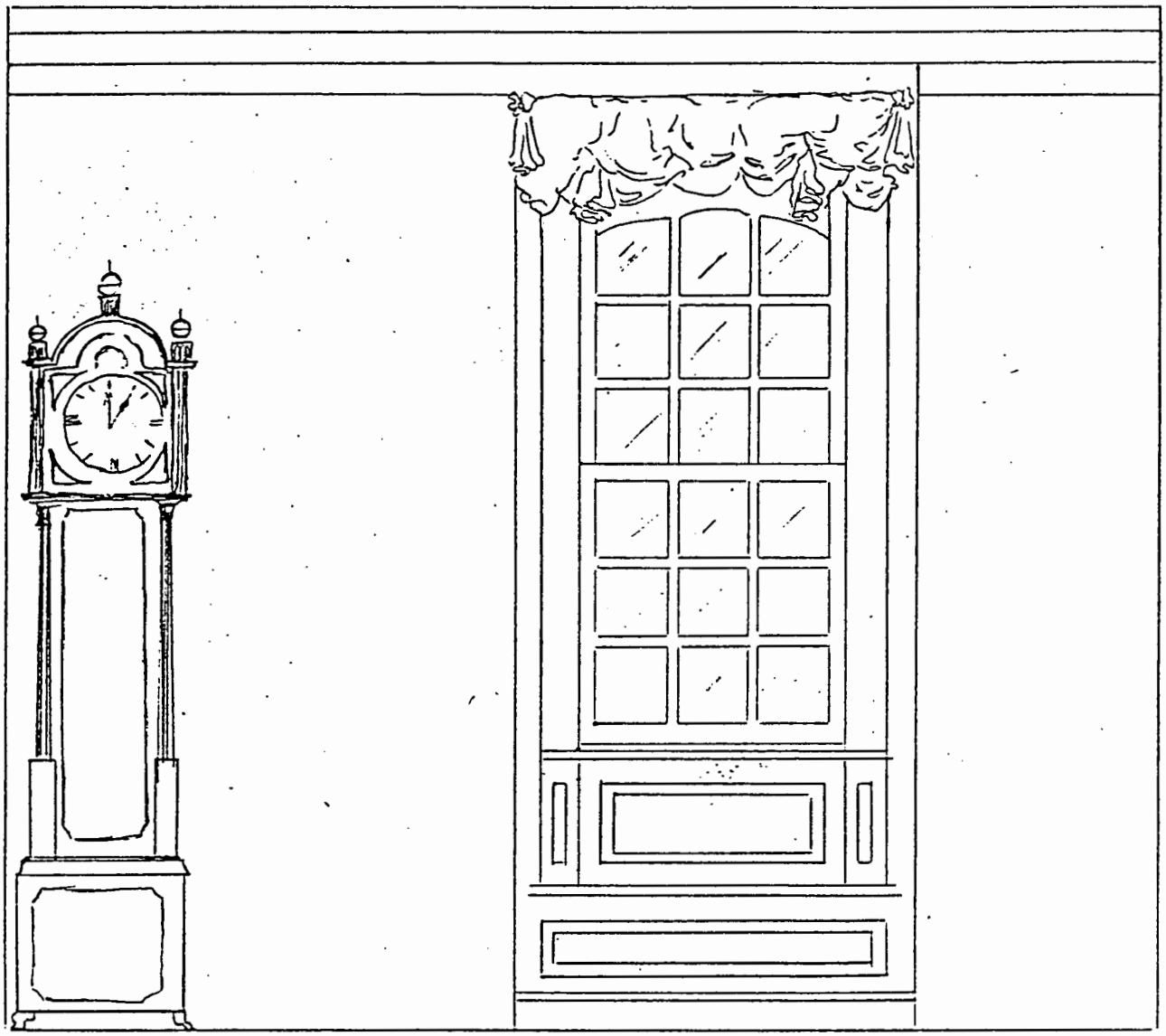
No carpet is recommended for the second floor hall.



WEST



WEST



SOUTH

D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3

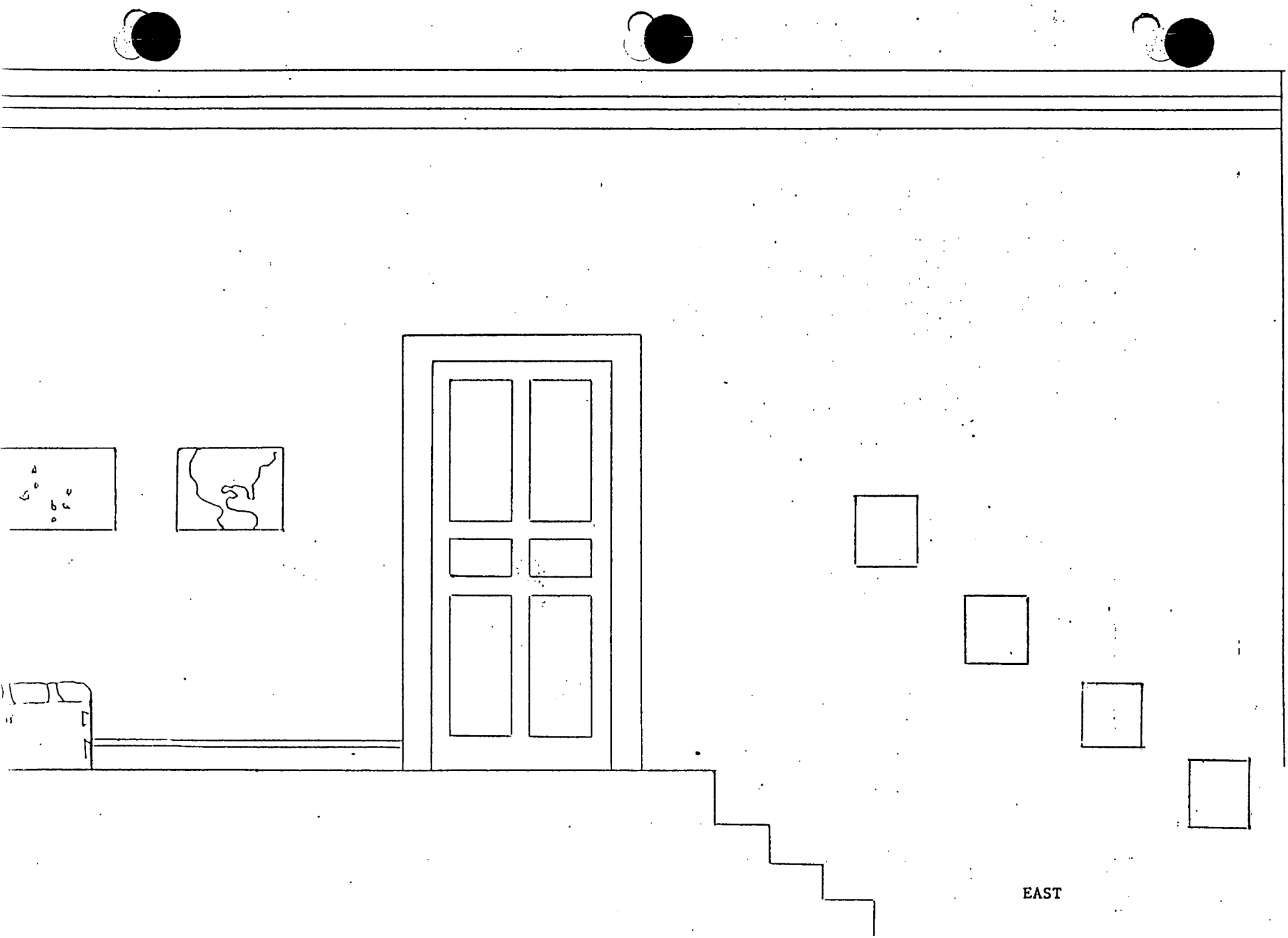
D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3

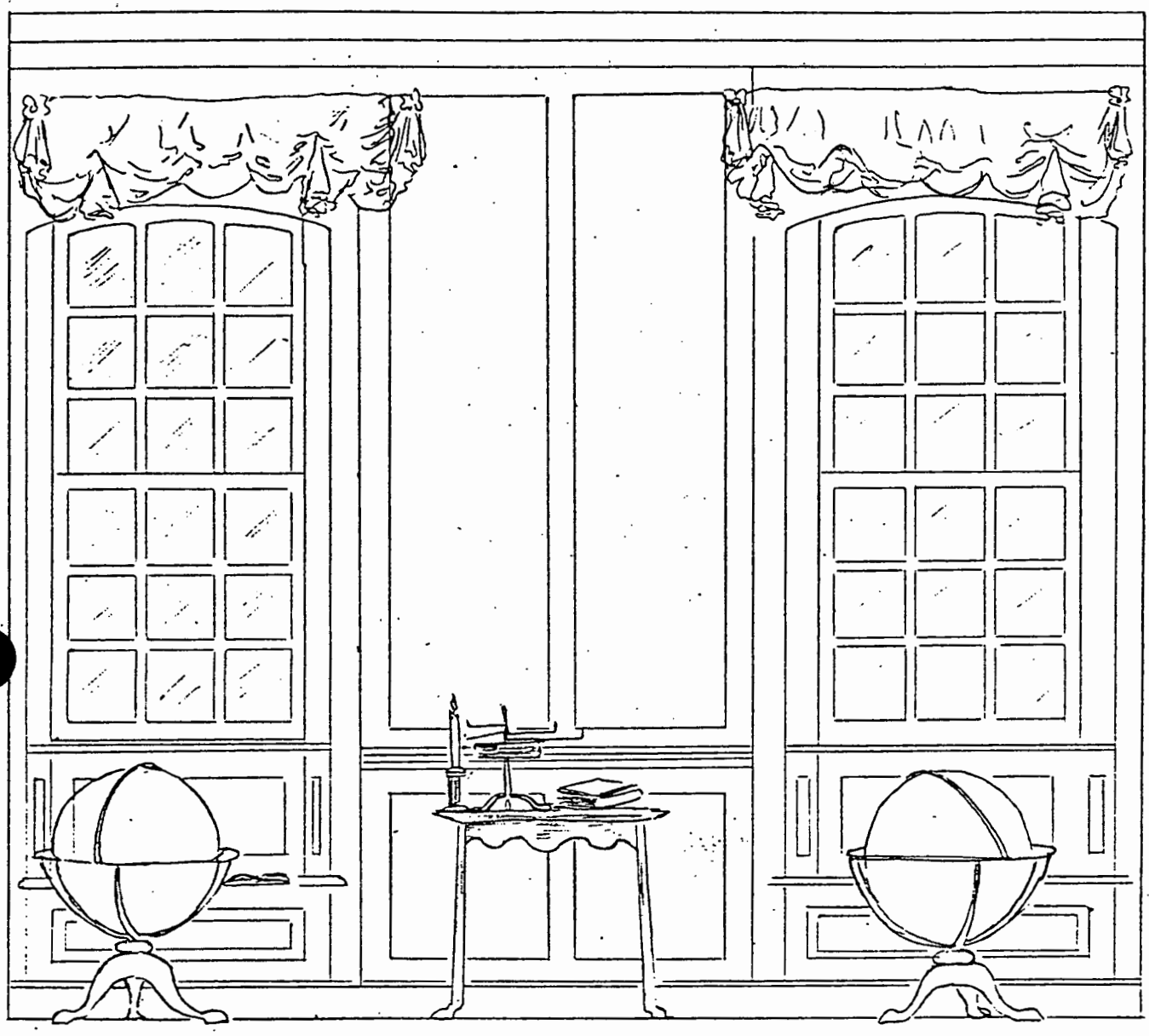
D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3



EAST

D. M. FELDMAN, INC. NF-3


EAST



NORTH

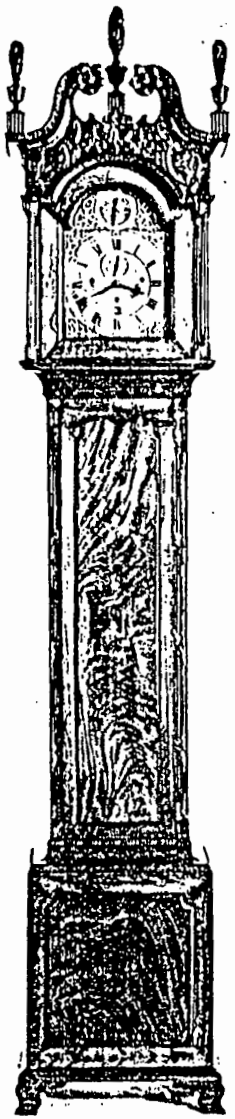


Fig. 221. Mahogany tall case clock. English works, 1770-80. h:118" w:23" d:12". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

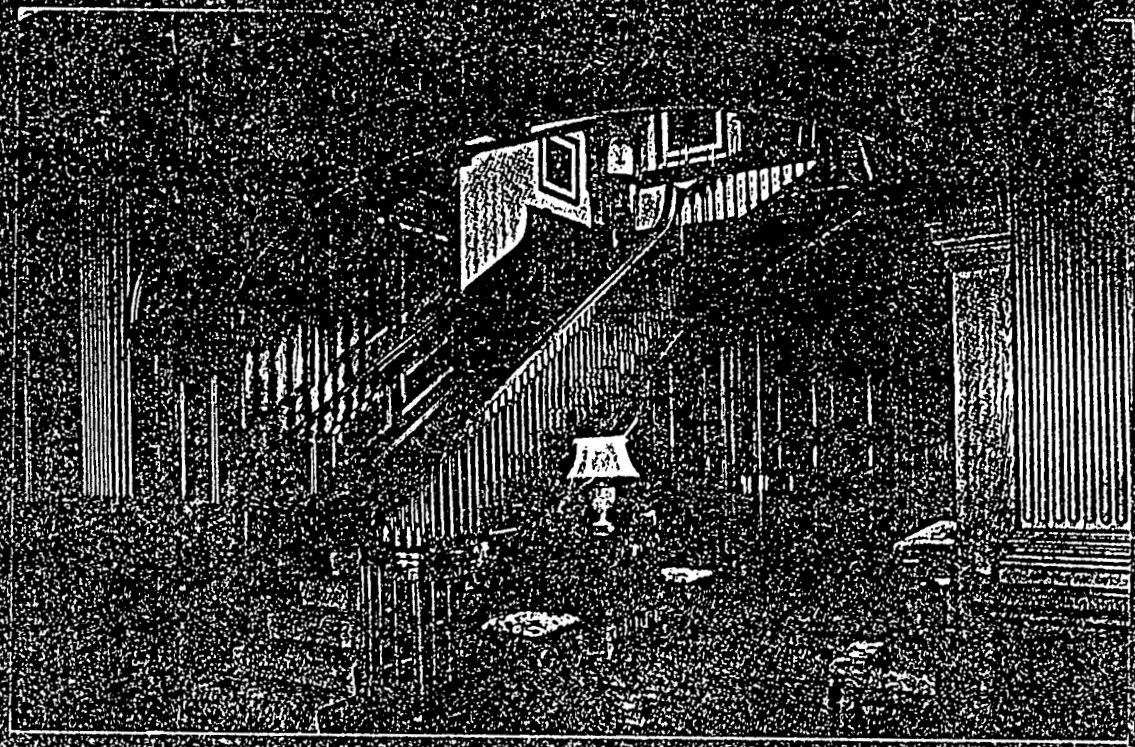


Fig. 222. The Great Hall, Carter's Grove, Williamsburg, Va.



Fig. 223. *December*, from Thomas Burford's glass transfer prints of the months. 1745-47. 14" x 9".

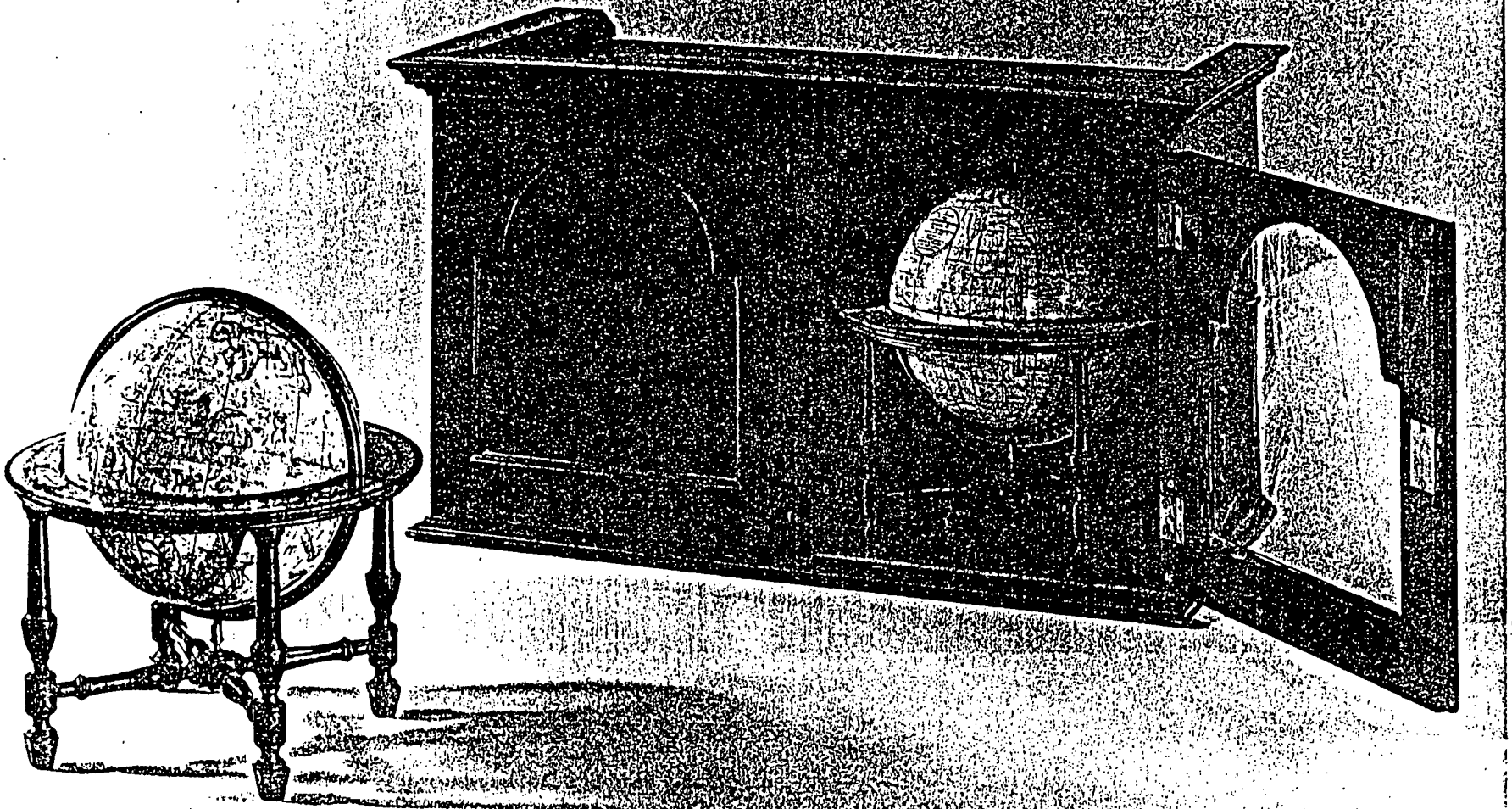


Fig. 224. Pair of globes by W.Bardin. England, 1782-85. Case: 18" x 30". Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

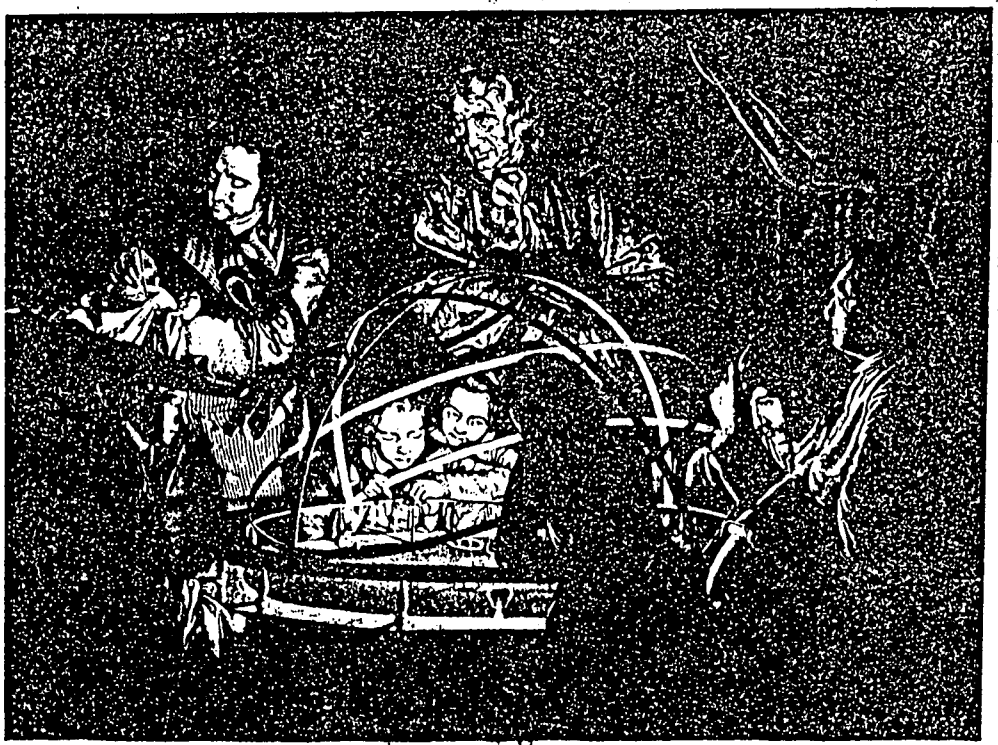



Fig. 225. Engraving by C. Grignon after S. Wale. Shows floor model of a celestial globe in a setting resembling Room 202.

Houghton Library. By permission of the Harvard College Library.



Fig. 226. View of the Library in the George Wythe House, Colonial Williamsburg, showing brass orrery (London, c. 1770, h.22") and other scientific instruments.



A PHILOSOPHER GIVING A [illegible] LECTURE ON THE ORRERY.

Fig. 227. A Philosopher giving a Lecture on the Orrery, mezzotint by William Pether after Joseph Wright.

Houghton Library. By permission of the Harvard College Library.

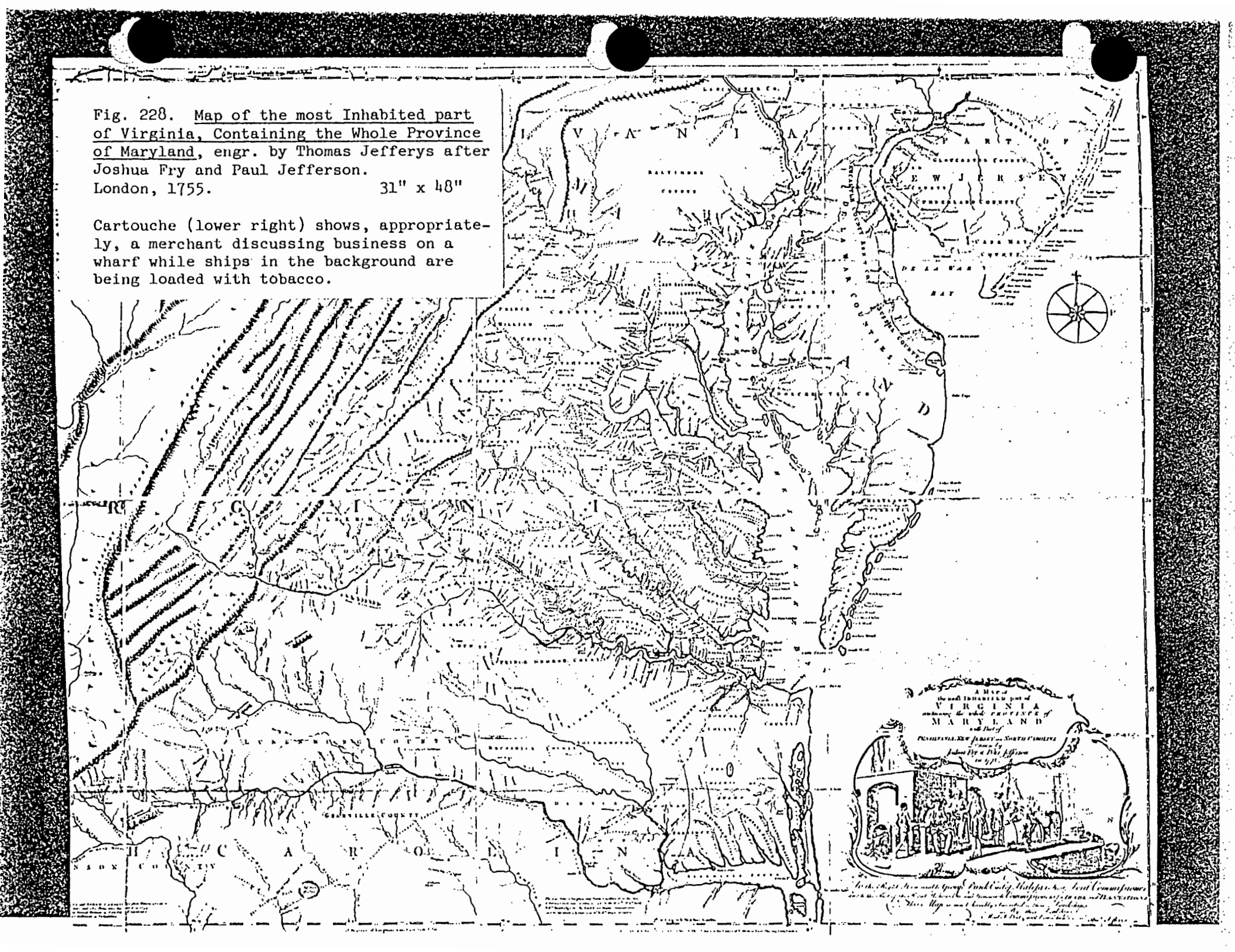
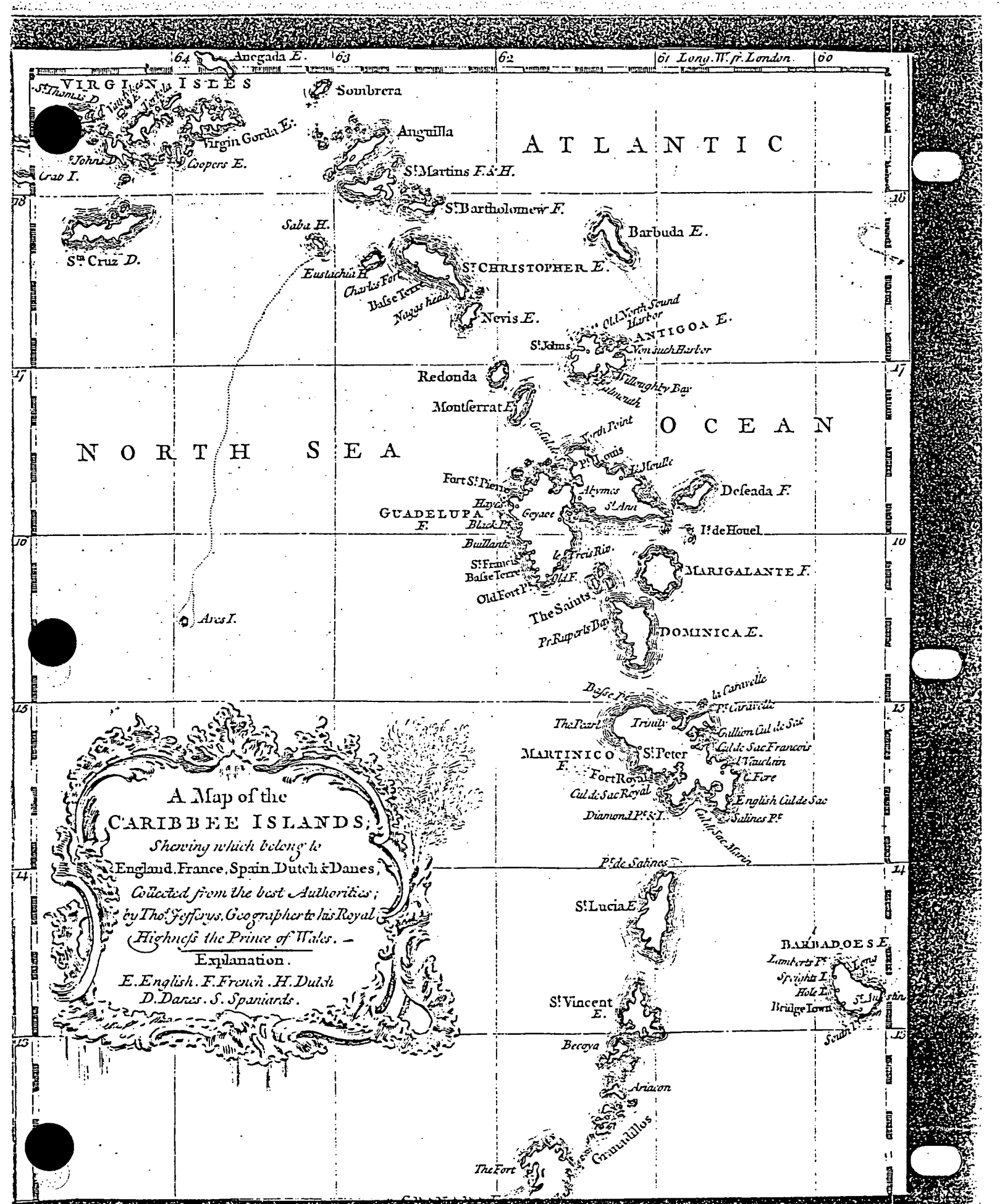


Fig. 228. Map of the most Inhabited part of Virginia, Containing the Whole Province of Maryland, engr. by Thomas Jefferys after Joshua Fry and Paul Jefferson. London, 1755. 31" x 48"

Cartouche (lower right) shows, appropriately, a merchant discussing business on a wharf while ships in the background are being loaded with tobacco.




A Map of the
CARIBBEE ISLANDS;
*Shewing which belong to*
England, France, Spain, Dutch & Danes;
*Collected from the best Authorities;*
*by Thos. Jefferys, Geographer to his Royal*
*Highness the Prince of Wales.*

Explanation.

*E. English. F. French. H. Dutch*
*D. Danes. S. Spaniards.*

Fig. 229. Map of the Caribee Islands — by Thomas Jefferys. London, 1756. — 7" x 13"

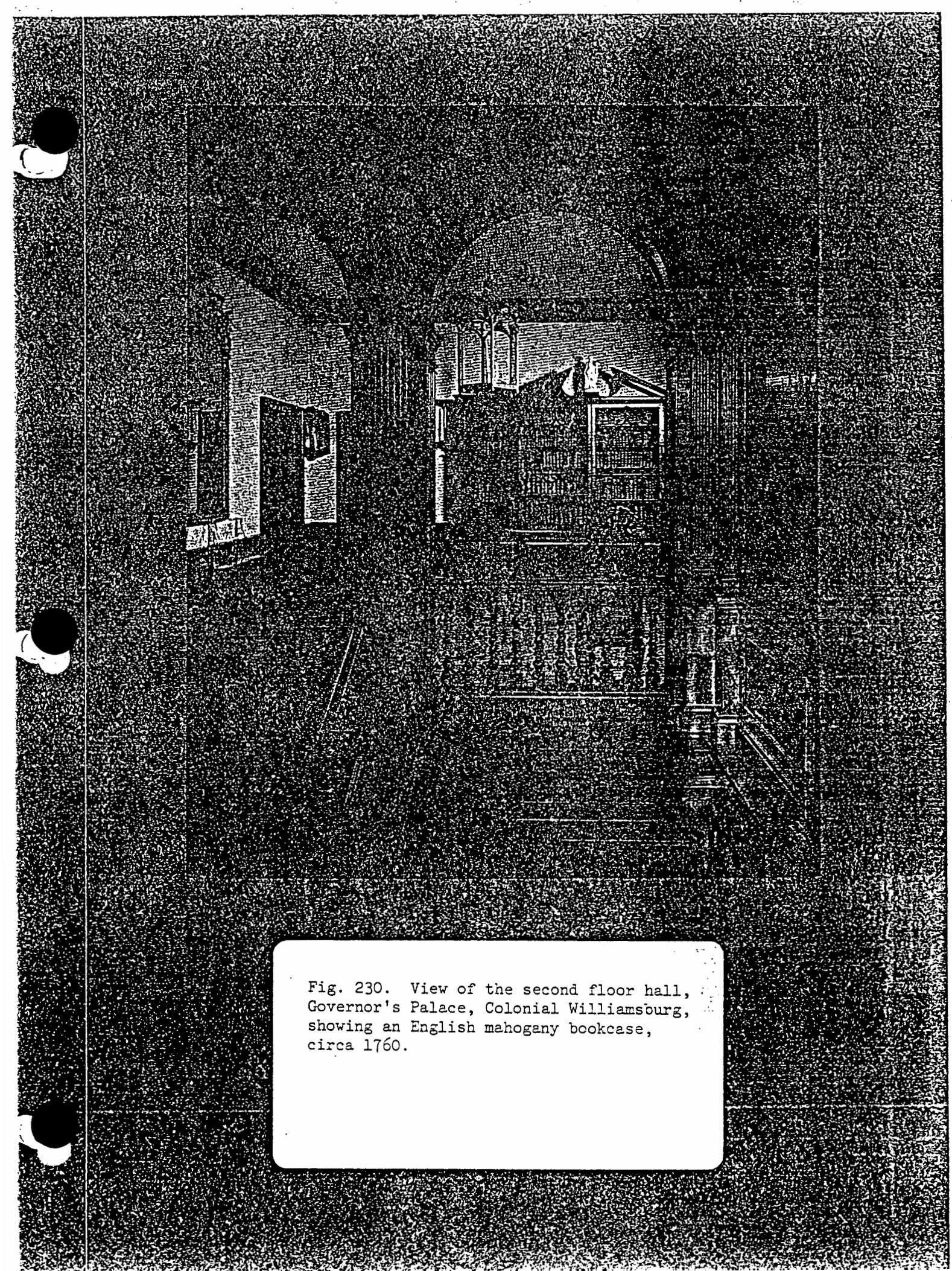


Fig. 230. View of the second floor hall, Governor's Palace, Colonial Williamsburg, showing an English mahogany bookcase, circa 1760.

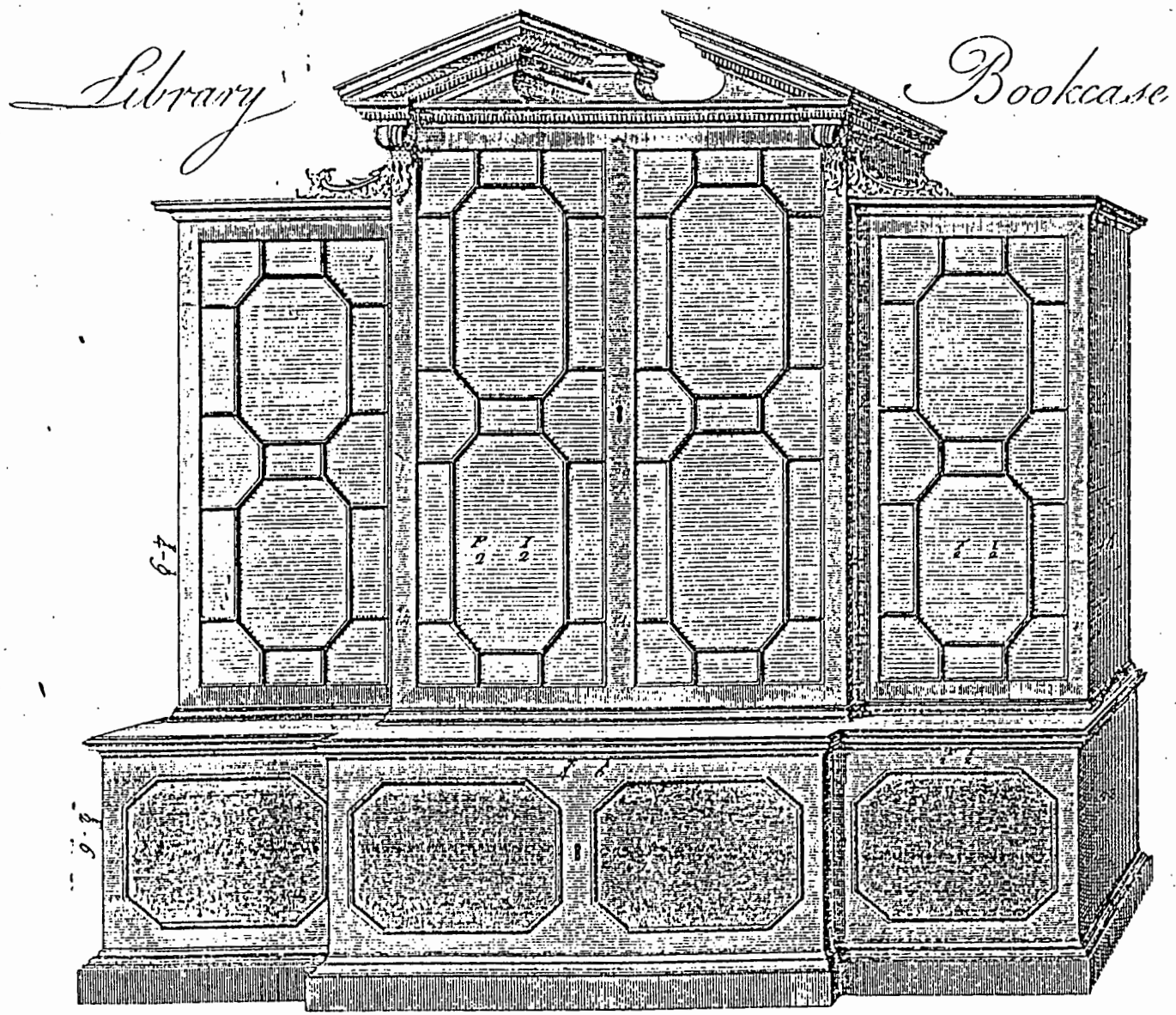



Fig. 231. Design for a bookcase, from Plate XCV of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

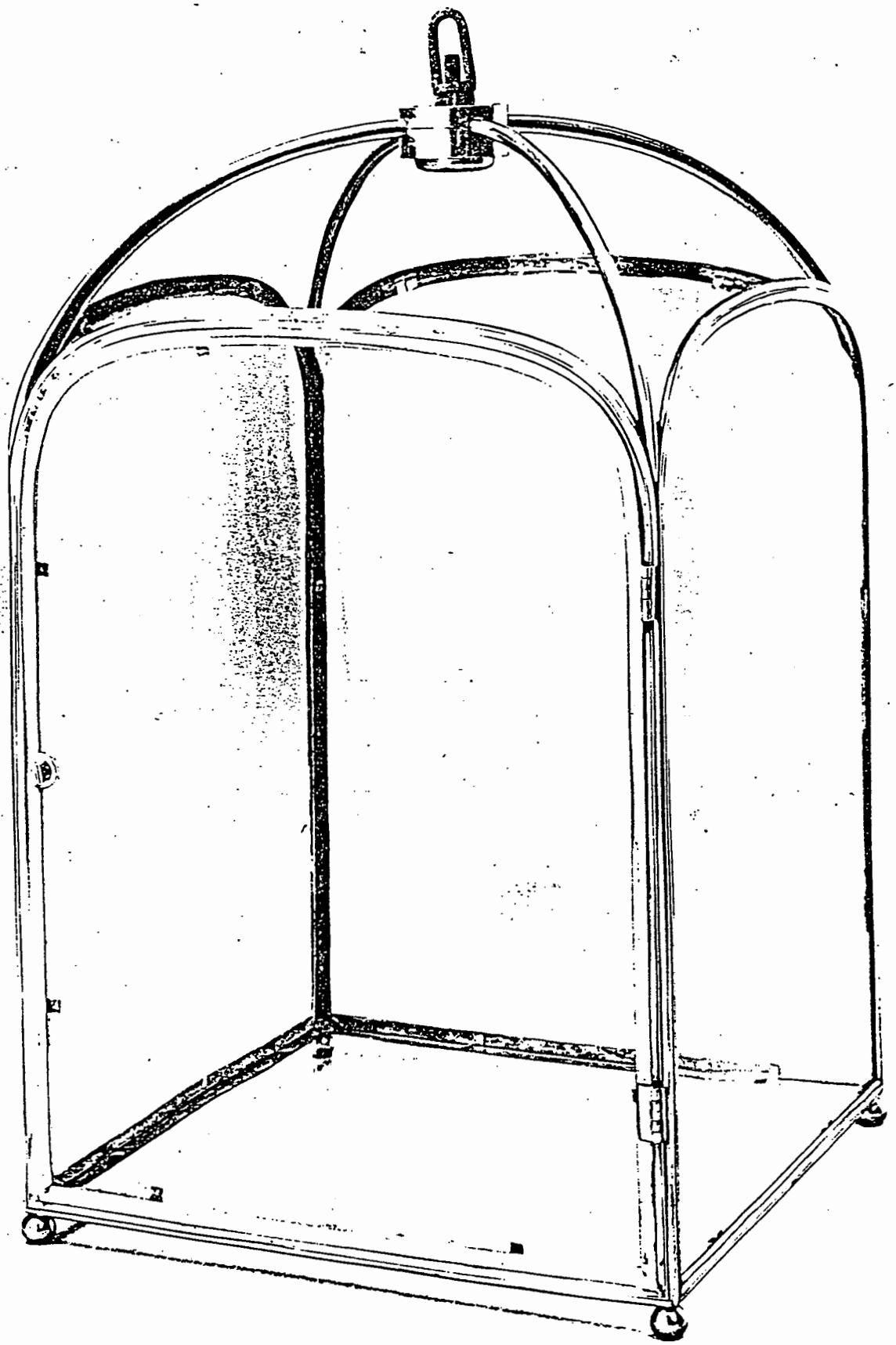


Fig. 232. Hall lantern. Brass and glass. England (?) 1750-80. 36" x 20". Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

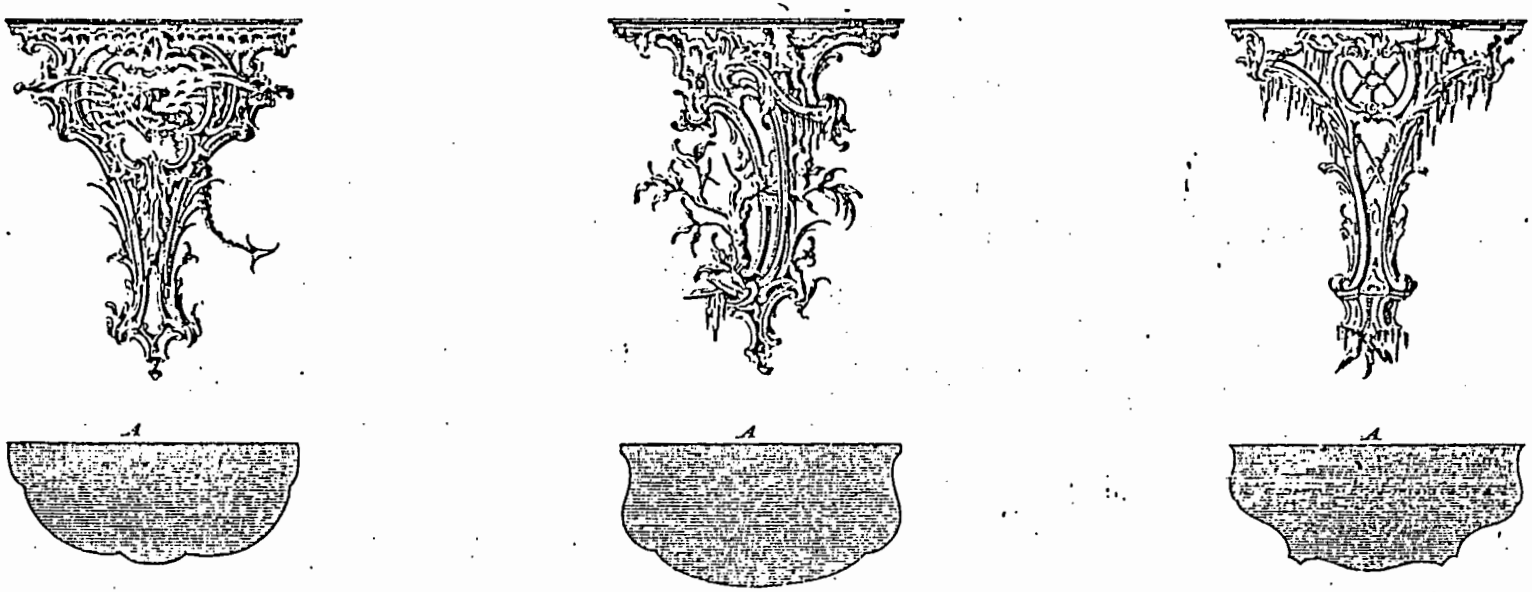



Fig. 233. Designs for wall brackets, from Plate CLX of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

Room 203: Room over the drawing room (Lucy Nelson's room)

Lucy Nelson seems to have had her own chamber, and Room 203 with one highly appraised bed, would appear most appropriate for her.

According to reminiscences by her daughter Suzanne Nelson Page and her niece Lucy Calthorpe Smith, Mrs. Nelson's children were brought "into her Chamber every morning while she was dressing, and said their prayers and a short catechism . . . and then read the Psalms and lessons for the day. . . After she was dressed, her children and Servants were sent out of the room, and she was 'Locked up', as was the term throughout the house for her being at prayers."[1]

The niece recounts having once disturbed Mrs. Nelson during her period of silent morning prayer:

> On going to her house one morning directly after breakfast, I went to her Chamber first, to speak to her, as was our custom. & on following a servant into the room I beheld her seated on a low stool, in front of the chair she usually sat in, with a large Bible open before her . . . I hesitated to disturb one so well employed, but thinking I ought not to go without speaking to her, I wished her a "Good Morning" and the servant instantly said, "Don't you know nobody comes in here 'till Mistriss is done reading?" But she spoke very kindly and affectionately to me, and told the servant gently "Don't send the child away -- she is always quiet and will make no noise.[2]

Mrs. Nelson's "usual" chair could have been an easy chair, or wing chair like the Virginia example illustrated in fig. 234. The legs of the chair should resemble as closely as possible those of the stool placed

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[1] Page, "Lucy Grymes Nelson", p. 6.

[2] Lucy Calthorpe Smith, in Page, ibid., p. 13.

before it (fig. 235). Needlework was the frequent upholstering for easy chairs and stools. A good alternative in an English chair would be an armchair and matching stool in the so called French manner of the period (fig. 236).

The "large Bible open before her" may have been the Nelson family bible now in the Virginia Historical Society, in which the birthdates of the Nelson children are recorded.[1]

Lucy Calthorpe Smith infers that Mrs. Nelson also kept the following religious books at hand: A New Manual of Devotions in Three Parts (probable edition: London, 1771); Richard Baxter's The Saints Everlasting Rest (London, 1688) and The Mourner Comforted; and Charles Drelincourt's The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death (probable edition: London, 1766). While not mentioned by Mrs. Nelson's niece, any of the fifty volumes which make up John Wesley's Christian Library (Bristol, 1749-55) would also be appropriate. These or similar volumes can be placed as accessories on chairs, window seats, or table to reflect Mrs. Nelson's strong religious character.

If Mrs. Nelson was able to read the bible while she sat on a low stool, then the table which held the bible was likely to have been a low joint stool type resembling fig. 237, but with an oblong rather than square top, as described below. Lucy C. Smith begins the tribute to her aunt, Lucy Nelson, by an imaginary conversation with the table

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[1] Because this bible was printed in London in 1762, the year Thomas and Lucy Nelson were married, it could have been a wedding present. The Comte de Grasse Chapter of the D.A.R. also possesses a Nelson family bible, which is on display at their headquarters, the Yorktown Customs House.

which had been in Mrs. Nelson's room:

My Table and Its History

> . . .I have looked with longing eyes . . . at a certain little old fashioned oblong black walnut table, with nearly the same feelings of the devoted Poet, when he wrote "Oh that those lips had language!" . . . I fancied myself sitting, gazing on the little plain depository for my valued little library, and wishing it could tell me all it had been witness to, of the good, and evil, of this transitory scene. When, on a sudden, someone seemed to whisper in my ear, as if speaking for the table "Why should you wish to know, where I first saw the light? plain and diminutive as I am, that must be of little consequence. . . It is true I felt the tears of your sainted Grandmother. . .once the gay & lighthearted Mary Calthorpe-- while lamenting her Father, and her dear sister Fanny . . . At her death, when all were scattered, I shared the fate of the Family, and having been bought for little or nothing, was proportionally neglected till many years after, I was found, recognized, and bought by your Father (i.e. Augustine Smith[1]).
>
> Go on, dear little table said I, and help me remember all you can of my early, happy days. I can remember some cold winter nights, when I was laid in my dear mother's warm bed, seeing you at her side, by the comfortable fire in that dear little room. And one or two of her young female friends sitting with her, while you held the candle, tea things, work or Book, whichever she required. I can also remember when it was considered a great treat to my brothers, Cousins, and myself, to be allowed to have a tea party, when our Mother spent the evening out. And on such occasions, you were --as is too often the case-- the most imposed on and the least benefitted of the party.
>
> "You also remember that I held the large Bible, and Prayer book, out of which your brothers, and yourself, read the Psalms and lessons for the day, every morning before your Mamma was dressed. And when your Mother was married, and left dear little York, I was left to the care of your kind Aunt (i.e. Lucy Nelson). . ."[2]

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[1]After the death of his father, Robert Smith and his mother Mary Calthorpe Smith, Augustine and his brother were more or less adopted by Thomas and Lucy Nelson. Nelson helped to send Augustine to Edinburgh to study medicine. In 1795 Dr. Augustine Smith married Alice Grymes Page (either Lucy Nelson's sister or cousin).

[2]Lucy Clathorpe Smith, "My Table and Its History", together with Page, "Lucy Grymes Nelson", Smith-Digges Papers, Ms. entry no. 52, Research Dept., Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va.

More than any other, Mrs. Nelson's room may have shown a greater contrast in furnishings --old with new and high style English with local crafted objects. In the inventory, for example, the bed is appraised as one of the most expensive in the house, whereas the two small carpets and fireplace equipment are valued far lower than similar objects in other rooms.

One explanation may lie in her piety and apparent modesty. From all accounts she enjoyed music and dancing and wore the jewelry and fine clothes that were expected of her position. Yet one has the impression that she would have enjoyed the small, old table for its familial associations, and that she would have happily sacrificed the finer objects to her husband's and boys' rooms and to guest accommodations. These are presumptions based on woman's role generally in colonial Virginia and on references made specifically to Lucy Nelson's character. Tradition tells us, for example, that one of Mrs. Nelson's last requests was that she be buried in an old gown, not her best one.

A second explanation may lie in room use. While intimate friends may have been welcomed for tea or conversation, Mrs. Nelson's room seems to have been used for private quarters most of the time. Evidence for entertainment and guest accommodations is to be seen in every other room but hers and Room 204.

The most important piece of furniture in the room should be a four post bed hung with blue "morrain" (moreen) curtains. The bed might resemble fig. 238 and can be placed in the northeast corner of the room facing the fireplace. A glazed linsey-woolsey quilt (fig. 239) might be spread over the bed. In addition to the usual bolster, a

total of seven pillows are counted in the inventory. Some of these were possibly gifts from her daughters, showing their embroidery handiwork. They might have been embroidered in silk or wool on linen (fig. 240).

The blue morrain of the bed hangings can be repeated in the Venetian window curtains and the blue picked up again in a silk damask (fig. 241) for the seats of two mahogany chairs described below.

In eighteenth century illustrations and written accounts, dressing tables and washstands frequently appear in the bed chambers themselves. After having described a large antechamber in a house she was visiting, an English woman described "in each bed chamber a dressing table . . . completely stored with all things necessary for the toilette."[1]

Mrs. Nelson's dressing table can be placed to the left of window 203-W1. This table could have been a simple rectangular, mid-eighteenth century English or American table with an English dressing glass in the center (fig. 242), or, it could have been a high style English dressing table resembling fig. 243. The inventory gives no clue, other than to list objects contrasting greatly in value, and hence stylishness, for Room 203. One fashion plate published in London about 1777-79 (fig. 244) shows the dressing table enhanced by a light material draped cape-like behind the looking glass. This may have been the custom in Virginia as well, for as early as 1728 a Surrey County, Va., inventory lists for two different rooms a "Dressing Table and Twilight"[2] --possibly meaning a piece of fabric, "toile", although more probably referring to the accessories needed in making up one's toilette.

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[1]Quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 81.

[2]Inventory of the estate of Nathaniel Harrison, deceased. July 15, 1728, Surrey County Records.

Mrs. Nelson is sure to have had a number of small toilet articles, including ivory and horn combs, ribbons and other hair ornaments, as well as various ointments and potions. Thomas Nelson ordered a large bottle of musk oil for his wife "who (was) forced to a liberal use of it for a disorder in her Nerves."[1] Archeologists have found a number of fragments of vials and small bottles in the Nelson lot. A small jewelry box might have been on her dressing table, or a silk bonnet, gloves, or a fan.

Beside the dressing table can be placed a relatively sophisticated English washstand, possibly dating to the 1740-50's, before Nelson and his wife Lucy moved into the house (fig. 245).

The use of Room 203A as a dressing area and closet can be suggested by a gown or cloak[2] hung from the door 203-D2. Equipping the dressing room should be secondary to obtaining complete furnishings for the bedroom.

Two mahogany and two Windsor chairs are called for in the inventory. Because side chairs in the French taste were often small in size, this type would be particularly suitable for a woman's use (fig. 246). Alternative designs are shown in fig. 247 and 248. These chairs can be upholstered in a blue silk (fig. 241) to complement other textiles in the room. One mahogany chair can be placed at the dressing table and another against the wall to the right of Window 203-W1.

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[1]Mason, John Norton & Sons, p. 158.

[2]The cloak might be red. According to the tutor Fithian, in Tidewater Virginia, "almost every Lady wears a red Cloak; and when they ride out they tye a white handkerchief over their Head and face, so that when I first came to Virginia, I was distressed whenever I saw a Lady, for I thought she had a tooth-ach!" Farish, Journal, p. 29.

One of the two Windsor chairs can be a high brace-back arm chair (fig. 249) placed by the head of the bed. Another can be a continuous bow Windsor side chair, by the east wall between doors 203-D1 and -D2. A standing embroidery frame can be placed near by, or possibly some hand-held needlework folded on the chair seat.

A small breakfast or tea table between windows 203-W1 and -W2 could hold other items associated with colonial women's activities: a tape-loom, watercolor materials with a pattern book for copying,[1] or a collection of dried flowers ready to be made into bouquets (fig. 250 and 251). It must be remembered, however, that Mrs. Nelson was better educated than many women of colonial Virginia, and was fond of reading. Several volumes, such as the religious works mentioned above and possibly a book like Hannah Glass' The Servants Directory (London, 1760) are strongly recommended.

The amount of light available would have regulated Mrs. Nelson's activities. An Englishwoman described her "candlelight work" as "finishing a carpet in double cross-stitch, on very coarse canvas, to go round my bed."[2] A decorative candlestick like the enamel and ceramic examples of fig. 252 and 253 can be placed on the tea table. Two silverplated or brass candlesticks can stand on a small chest set against the north wall to the left of window 203-W2 (see fig. 250). Over the fireplace can hang a chimney glass with brass sconces (fig 254);

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[1] Robert Sayer, for example, published a set of sixty plates of flowers in 1760, each with detailed instructions for coloring. In 1770 Sayer published Eight Beautiful Groups of Natural Flowers "in outlines by de la Cour proper to draw from or amuse those who choose to colour from nature, for which purpose they are immediately adapted."

[2] Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, edited by Lady Llanover (London, 1861-62) Series I, Vol. II, p. 176; quoted in Fowler and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 222.

the frame of an English glass of this type would be more flamboyant than the early American example illustrated.

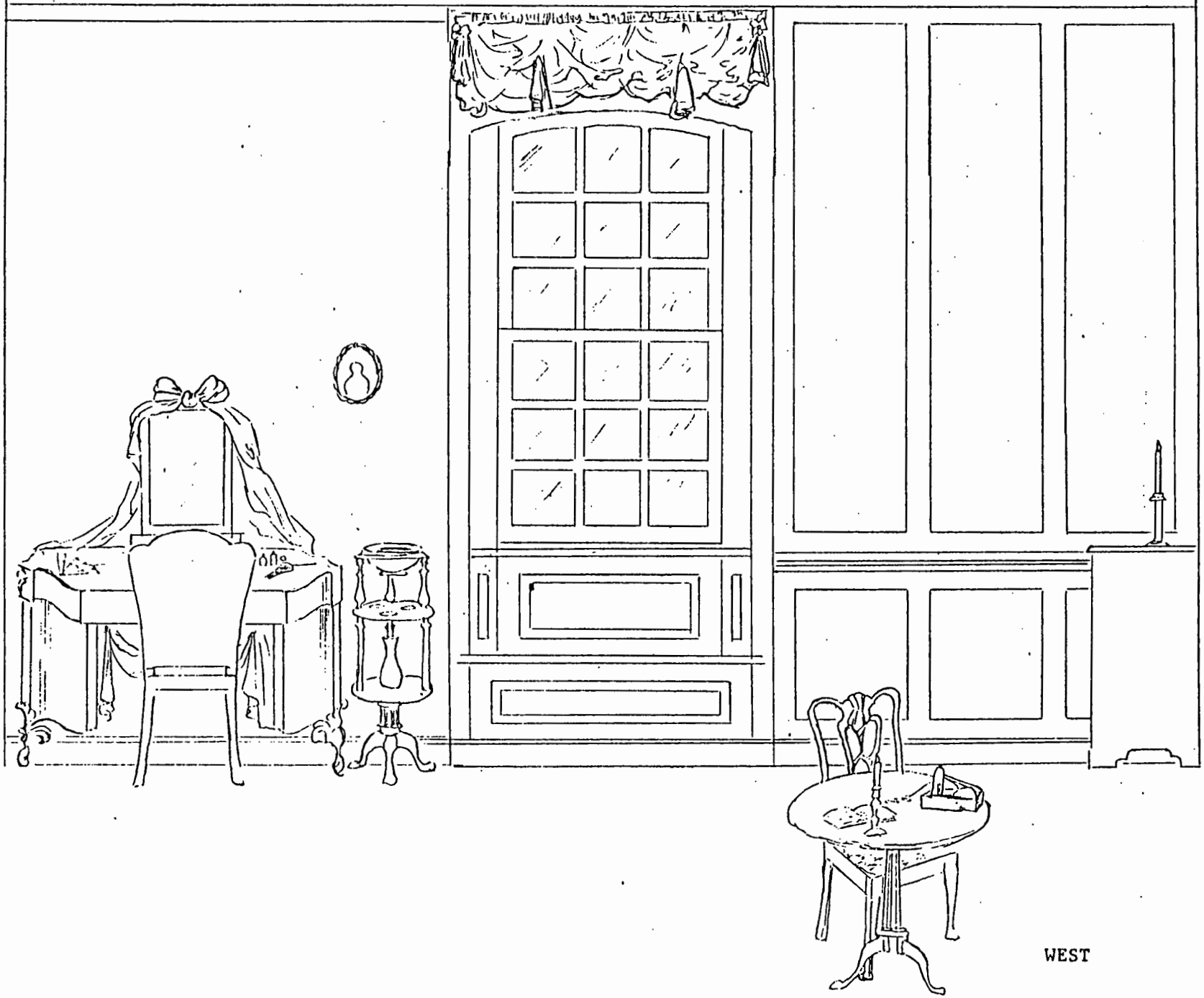
Today's visitor might be surprised at the number of looking glasses in the Nelson House. Looking glasses enhance and lighten a room. To the eighteenth century they were also a luxury which symbolized wealth. An article appearing in the Virginia Gazette February 20, 1772, parodies their excessive use. The article begins "Plato gives good advice to Drunkards and those addicted to anger when he bids them consult their Looking glass" and goes on to cite other ways in which the mirror can strengthen the morale if not used for painting cheeks, pencilling eyebrows, and other "abusive purposes of luxury." It is an argument that Mrs. Nelson might have pondered.

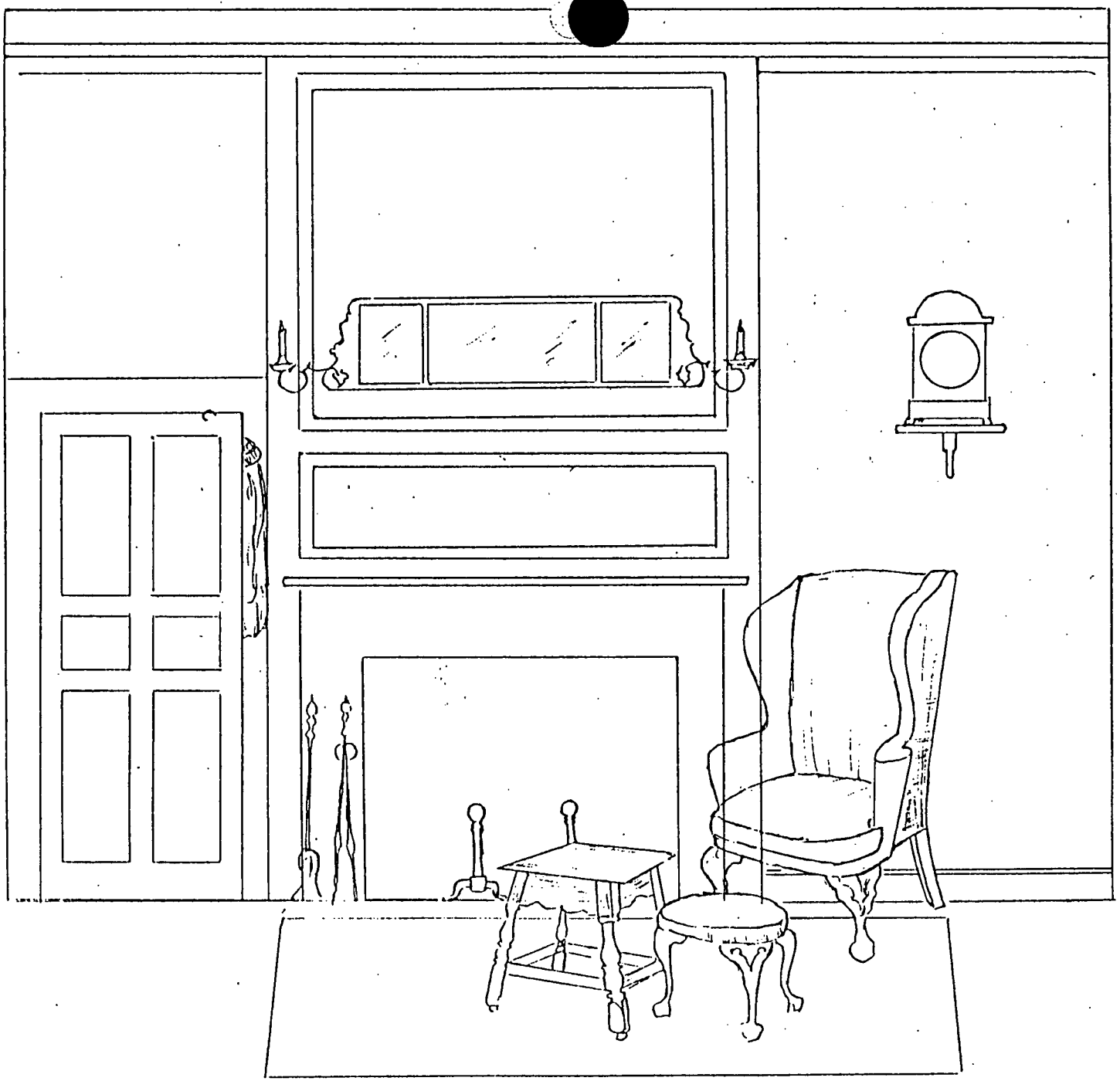
One can infer from its inventoried value that the fireplace equipment in Mrs. Nelson's room was fairly outmoded, probably English, dating to the early eighteenth century. Tongs and shovel should be present. Fig. 255 shows a simple American set made of bell metal, a popular substitute when good raw brass was not available.

The two carpets listed in Room 203 were also valued modestly. They may have been locally woven list carpets, made of cut or torn strips of cloth (fig. 256). It is known that Thomas Nelson had his own weavers, wagoners, and cabinetmakers to produce goods for his tobacco business and plantations. How much domestic ware they produced for Nelson's family use is difficult to determine. Very little research has been done in the area of plantation craftsmen.

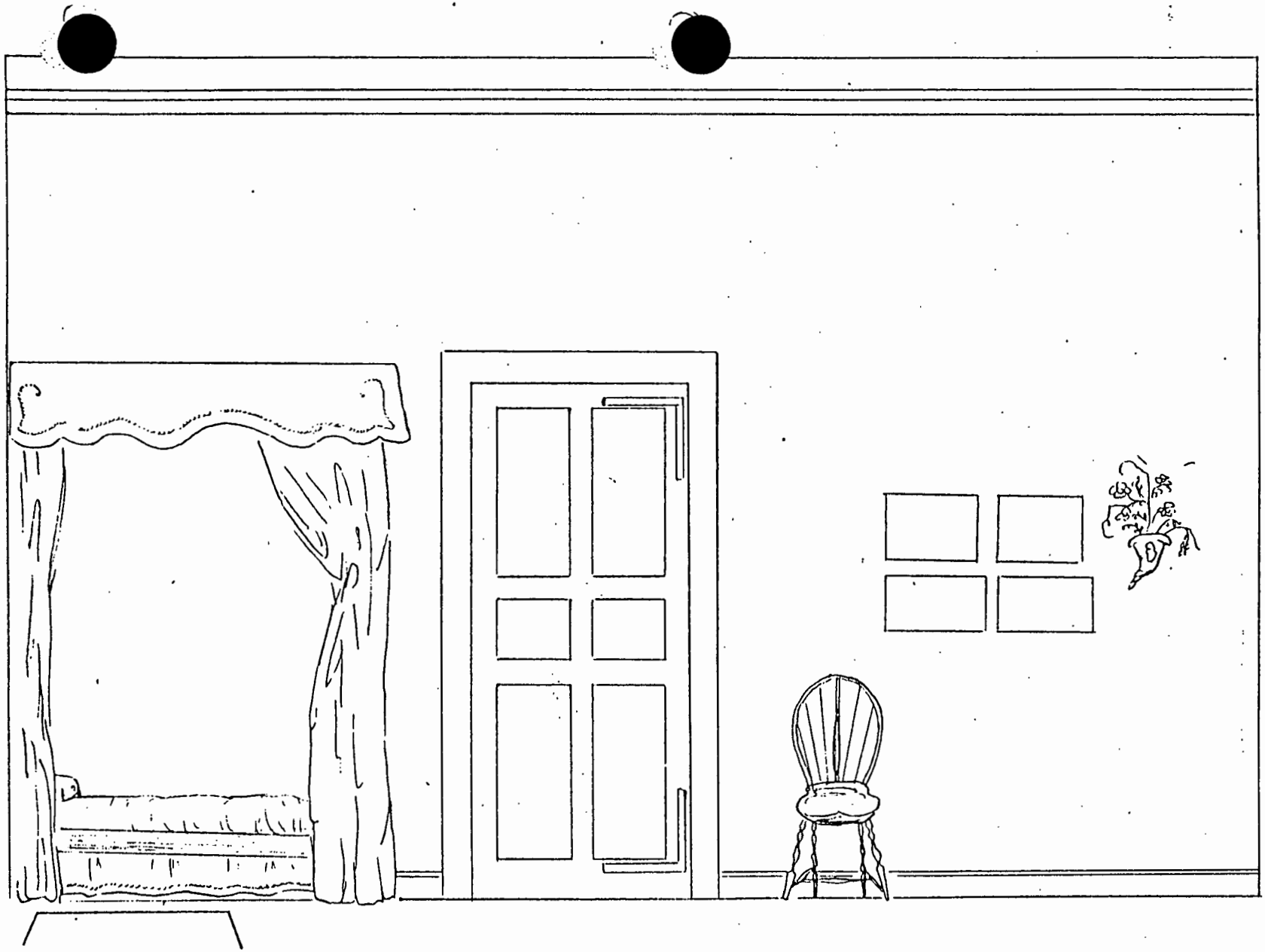
On the wall between doors 203-D1 and -D2 might hang a group of four flower prints and over the dresser to the left of window 203-W2,

an engraved portrait of an eighteenth century English clergyman such as the Bishop of London, titular head of the Church in America. Directly opposite, on the wall to the right of the fireplace, a small clock could be placed on a wall bracket (fig. 257 and 258). Failing acquisition of a clock, a ceramic wall flower holder filled with fresh or dried flowers might be substituted (fig. 259 a-c); the latter is available in reproduction from the Colonial Williamsburg Craft House.


WEST



SOUTH



EAST



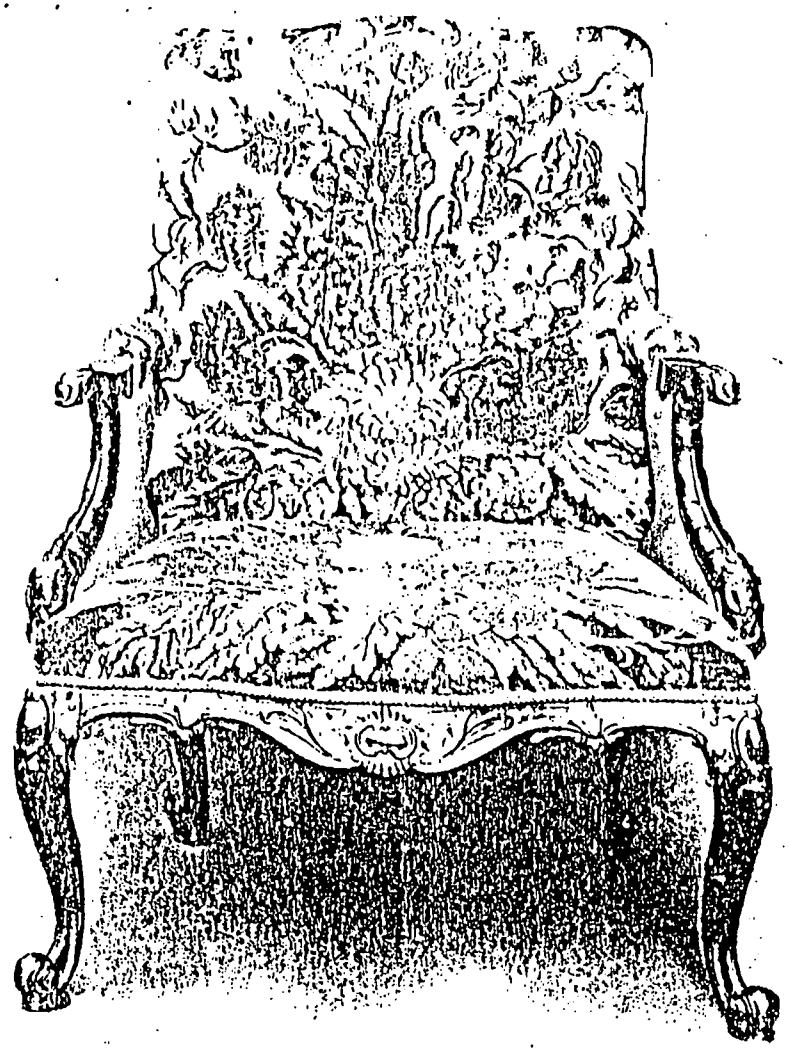
NORTH



Fig. 234. Walnut easy chair, probably Virginia, 1745-55. h:44" w:29" d:23" Courtesy, Winterhtur Museum



Fig. 235. Mahogany stool. Phila., 1755-65. h:17" w:2o" d:15" Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



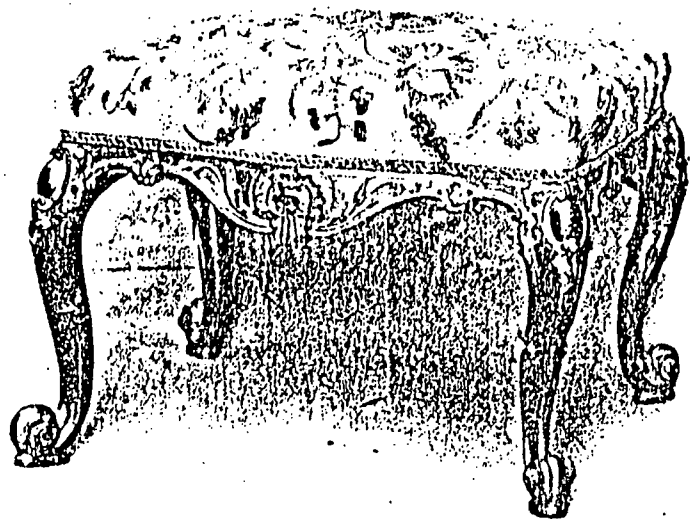


Fig. 236a,b. Mahogany arm chair and stool. England, c. 1780. (chair) h: 3'2" w: 2'2"

The chair is covered with original needlework of brilliantly colored flowers on a cream ground.

Property of W. James

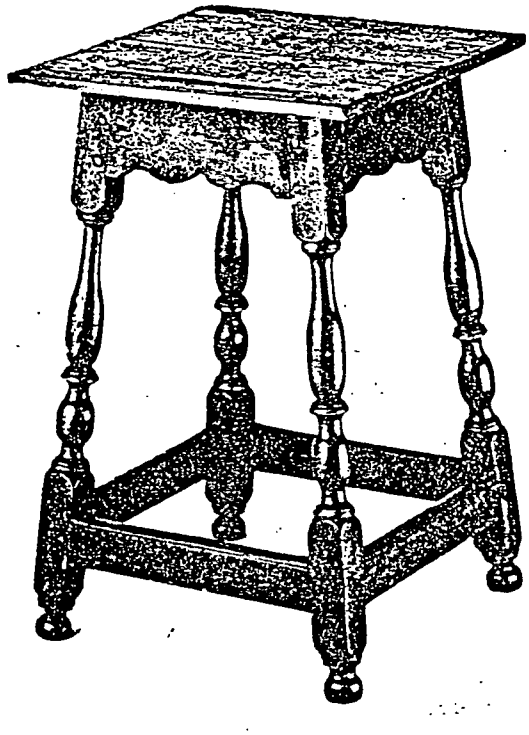


Fig. 237. Joint stool. Oak and pine.
American, 1700-35. h:25" w:17" d:17"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

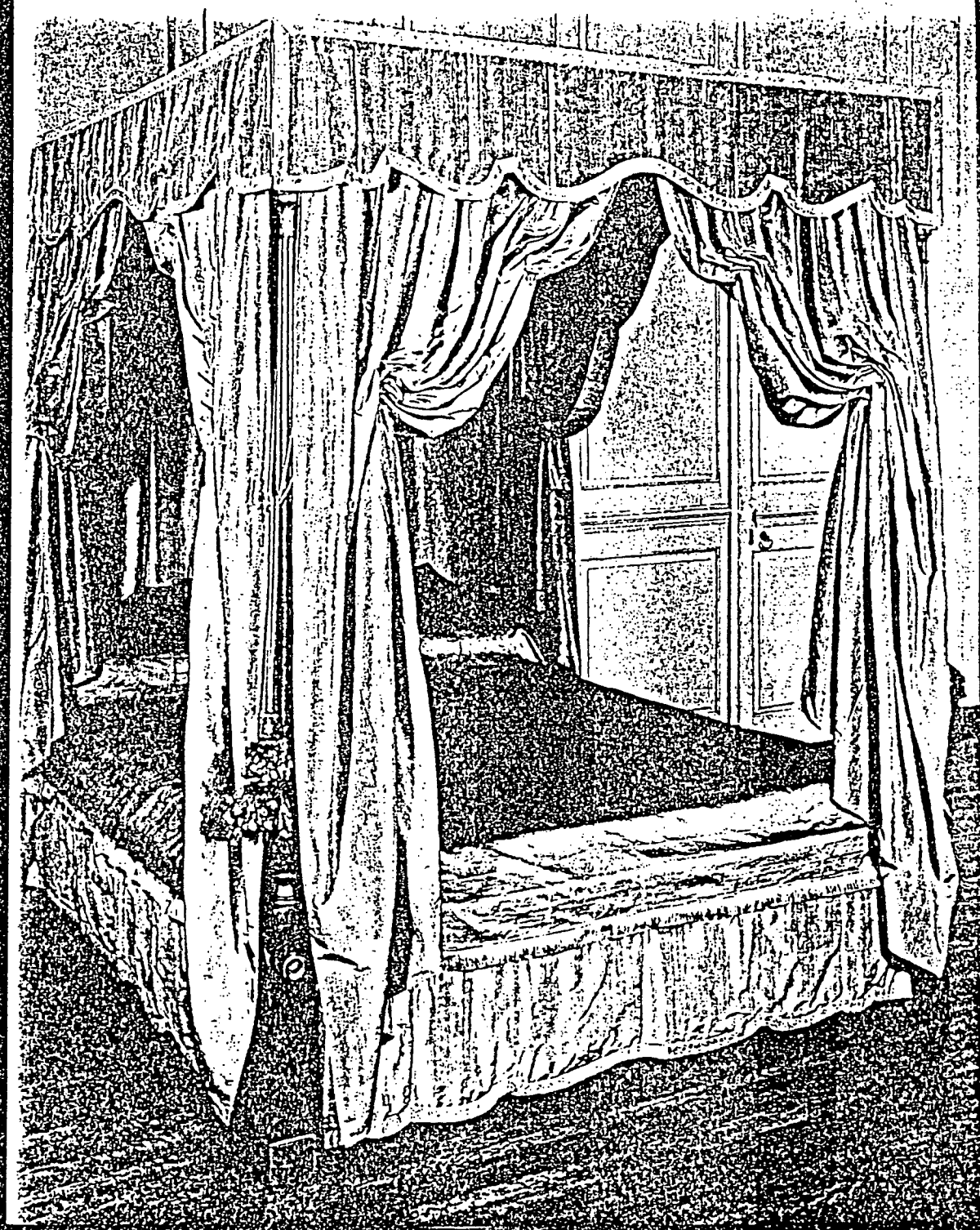


Fig. 238. Mahogany bed. Phila., 1780-90. h:8'2" w:6'3" l:7'6"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

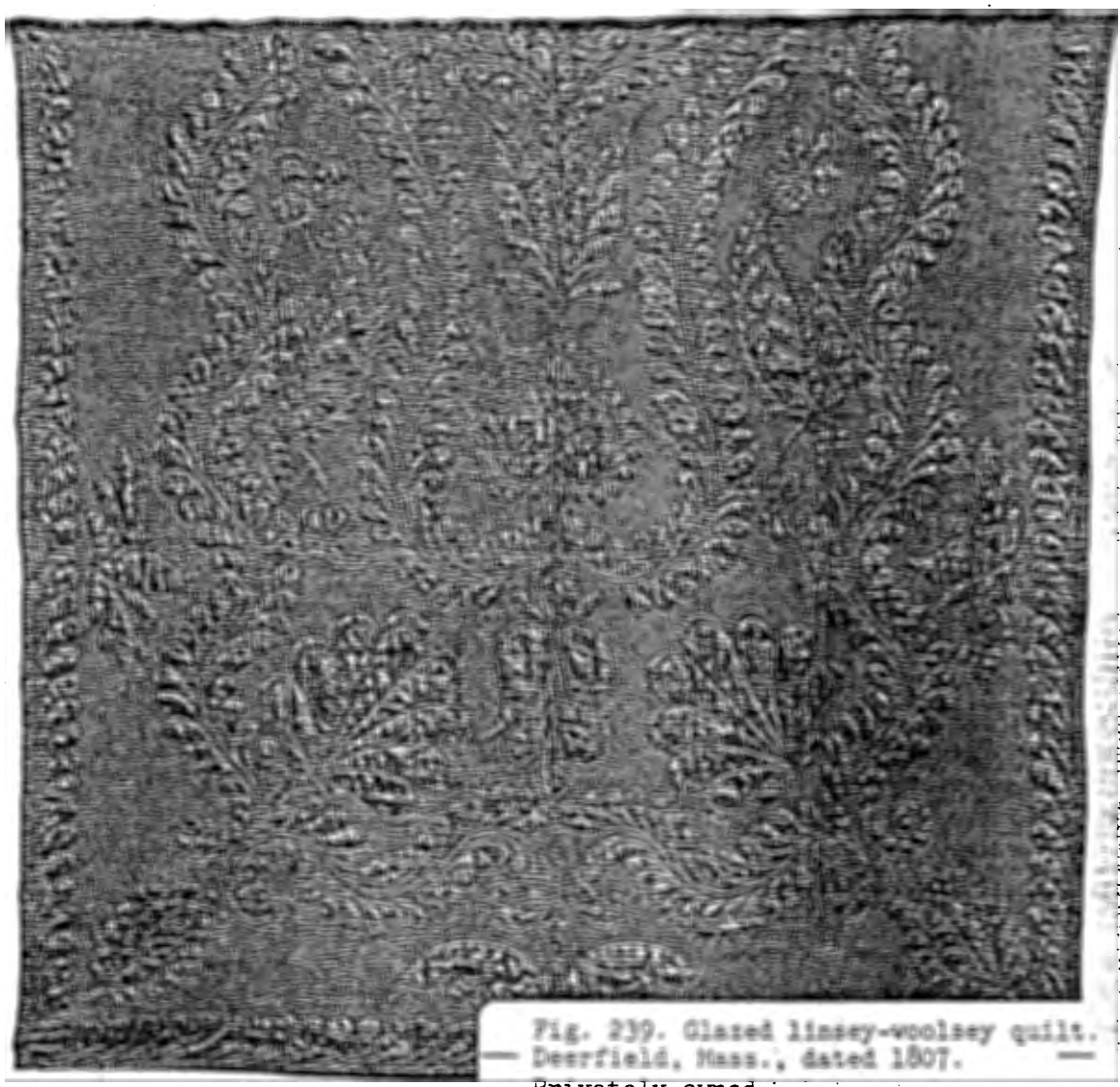


Fig. 239. Glazed linsey-woolsey quilt. Deerfield, Mass., dated 1807. Privately owned.

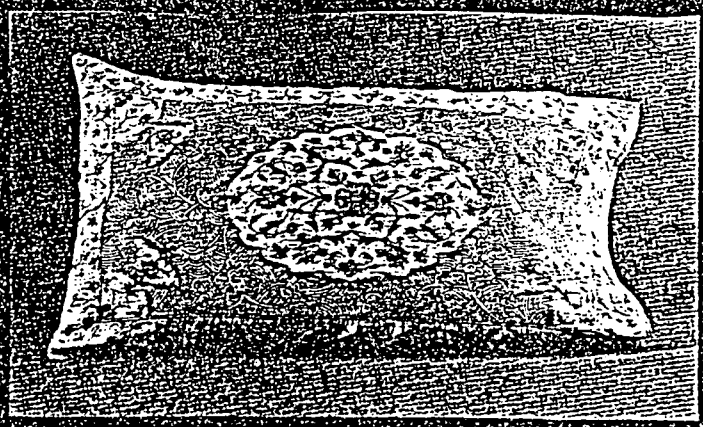


Fig. 240. Pillow, embroidered in silk on linen. England, mid-eighteenth century. Colonial Williamsburg

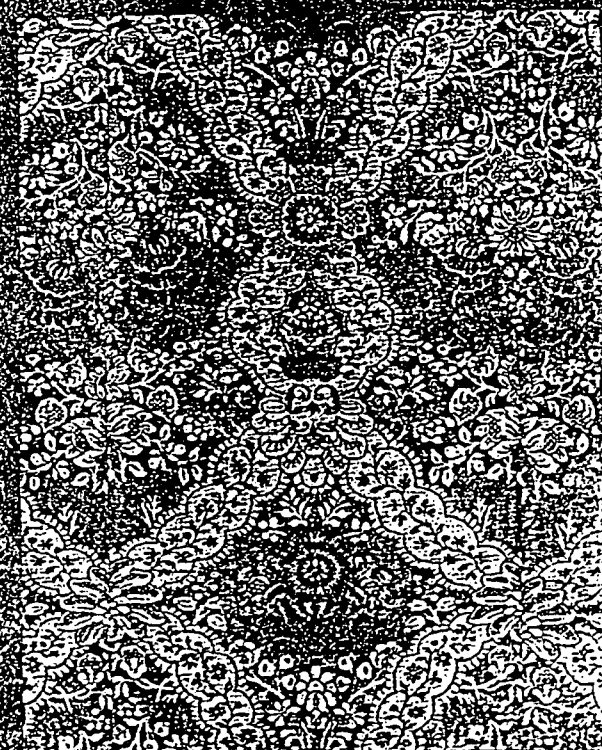
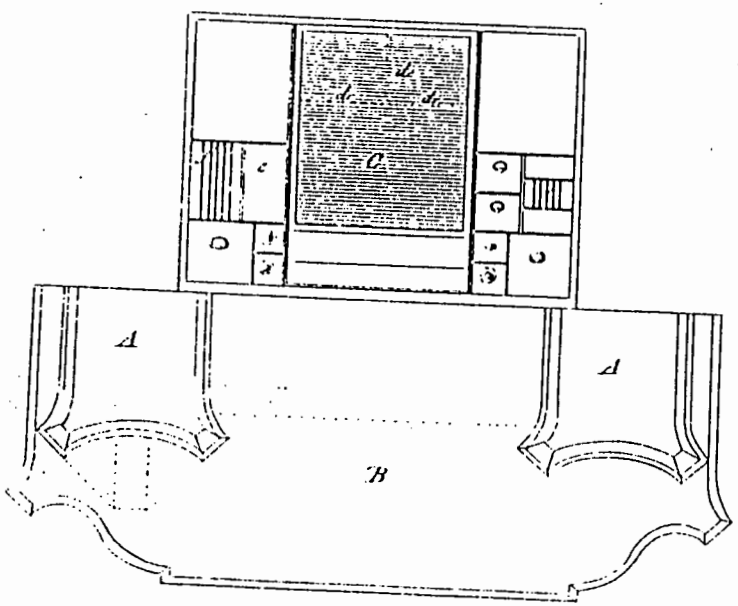


Fig. 241. Silk damask. French or Italian, c. 1760. Colonial Williamsburg



Fig. 242. Dressing glass and stand.
England, c. 1740.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

# A Lady's Dressing Table.



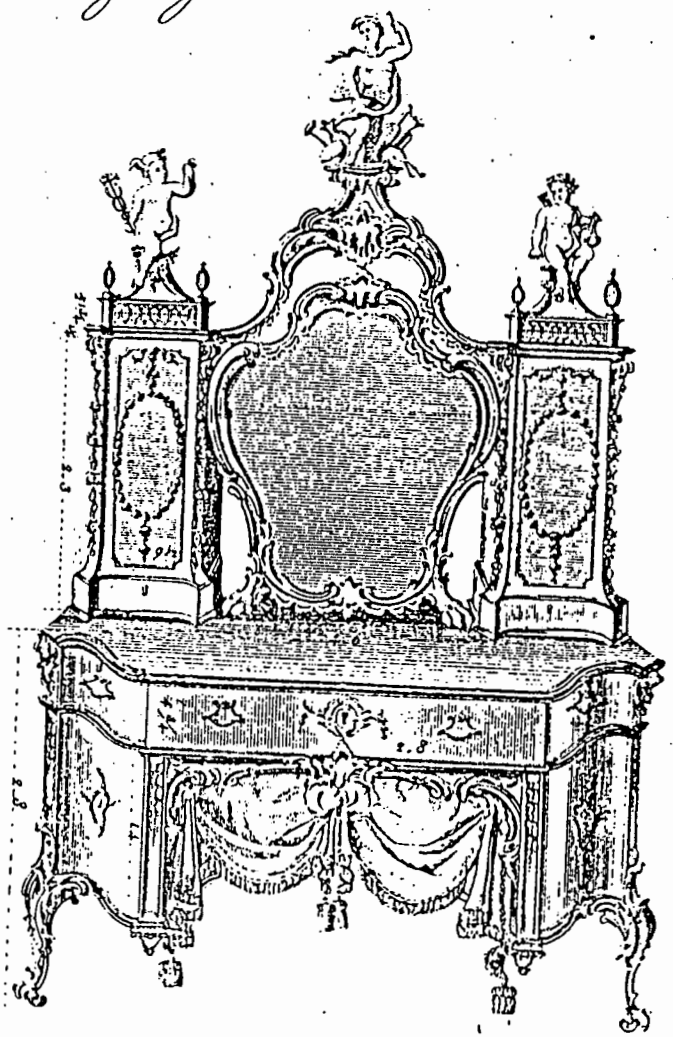



Fig. 243. Design for a dressing table, from Plate LII of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

Published according to Act of Parliament



Fig. 244. London fashion print, published about 1777-1779, reproduced from Florence Montgomery's Printed Textiles (New York, 1970), p. 57.

Shows dressing glass fashionably draped with fabric. Also note the Venetian curtains.

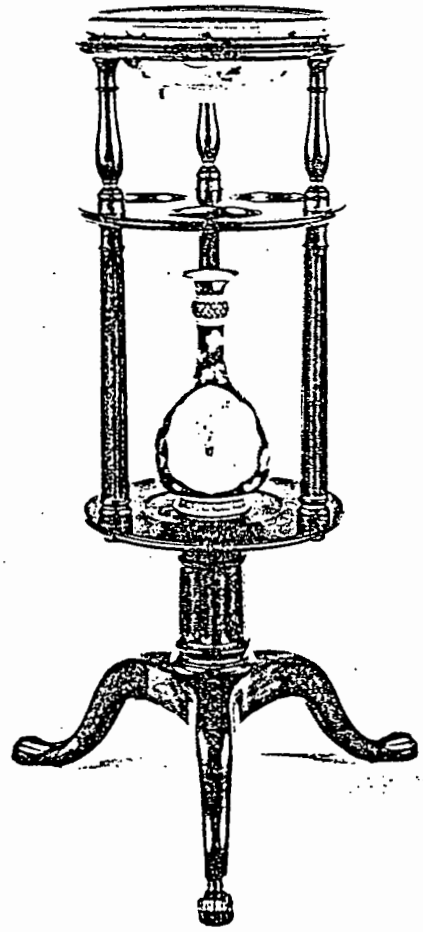
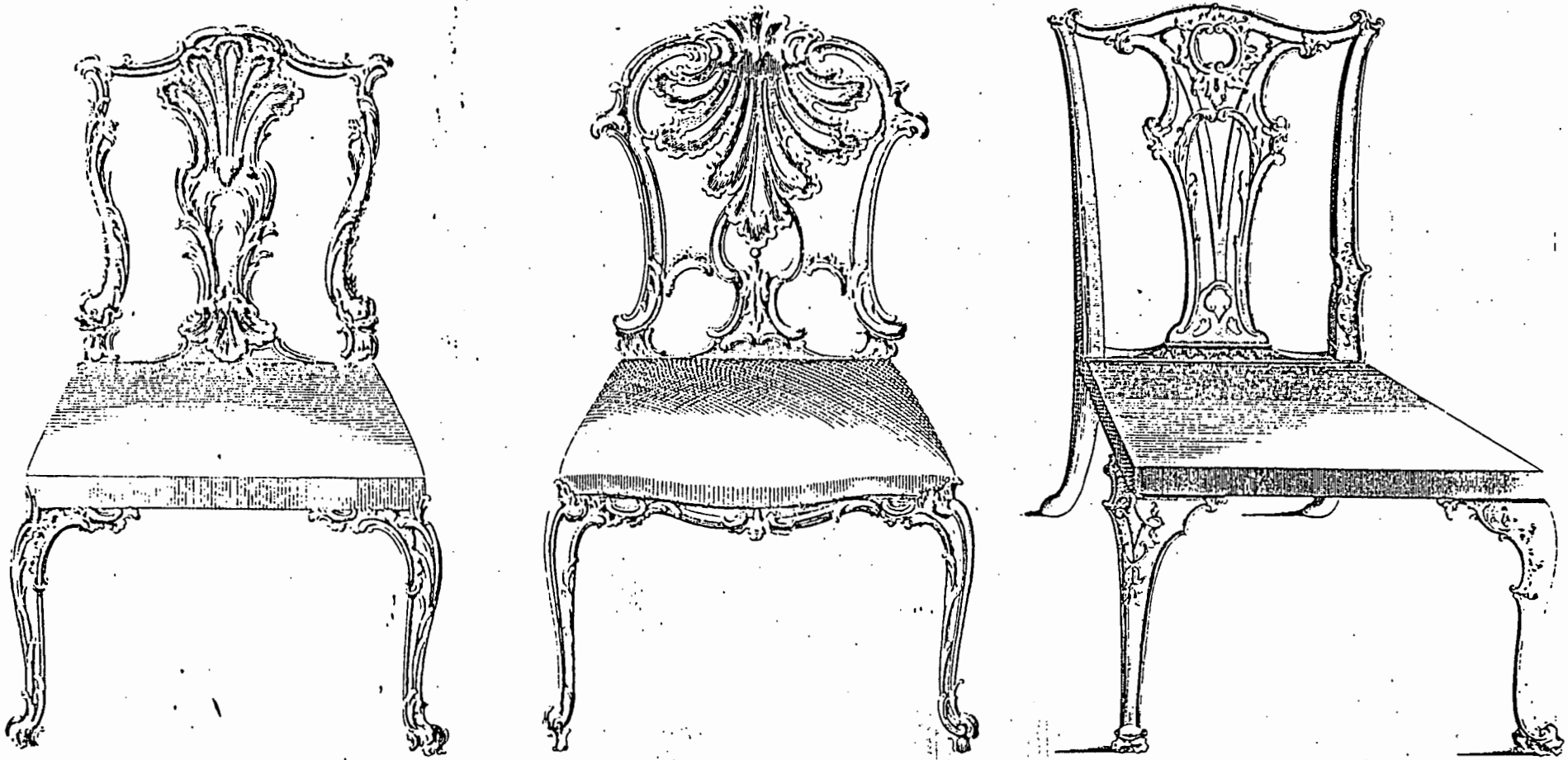


Fig. 245. Mahogany washstand.
Newport, R.I., 1760-75. h:32" d:11"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Chippendale inv'et del

J. Taylor Sculp.

Fig. 247. Designs for side chairs, from Plate XIII of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

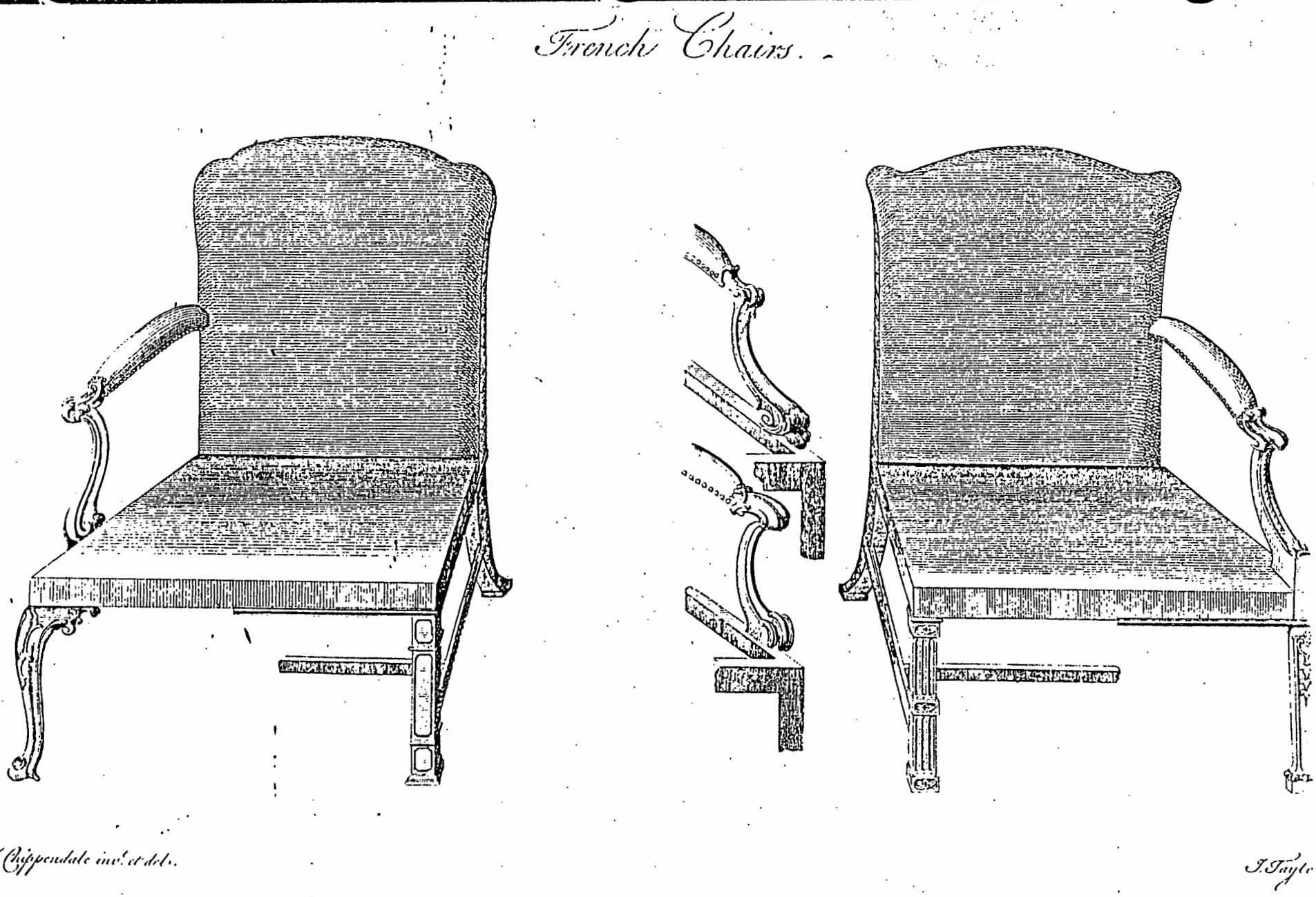
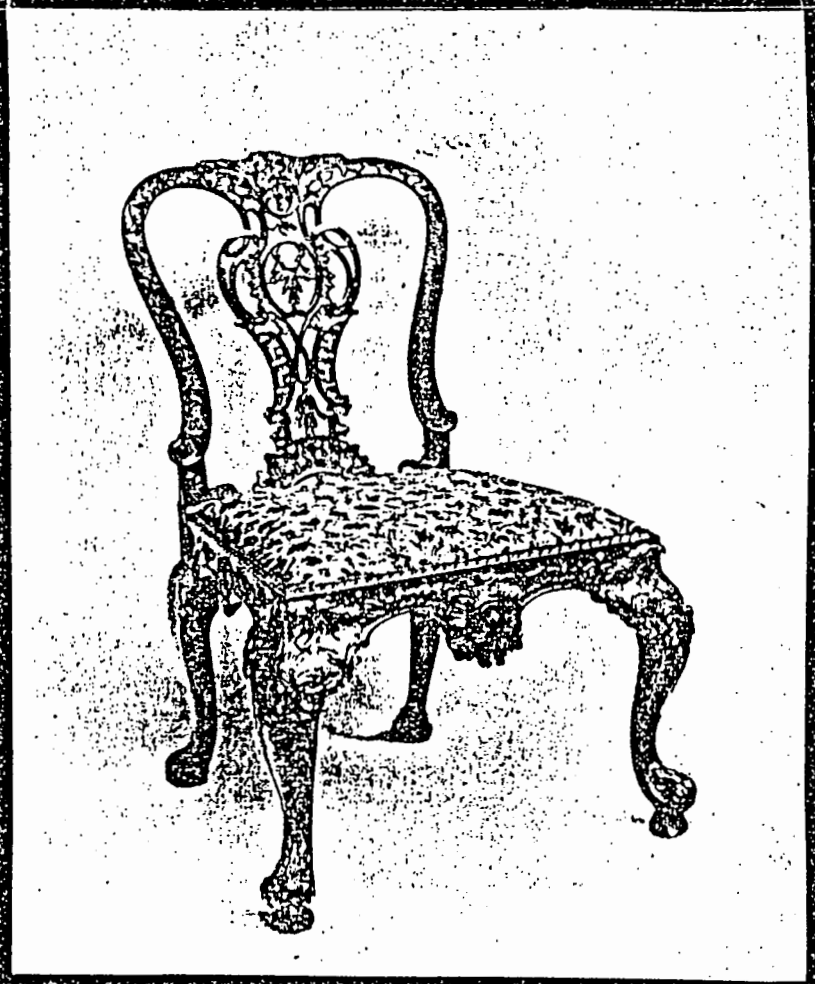
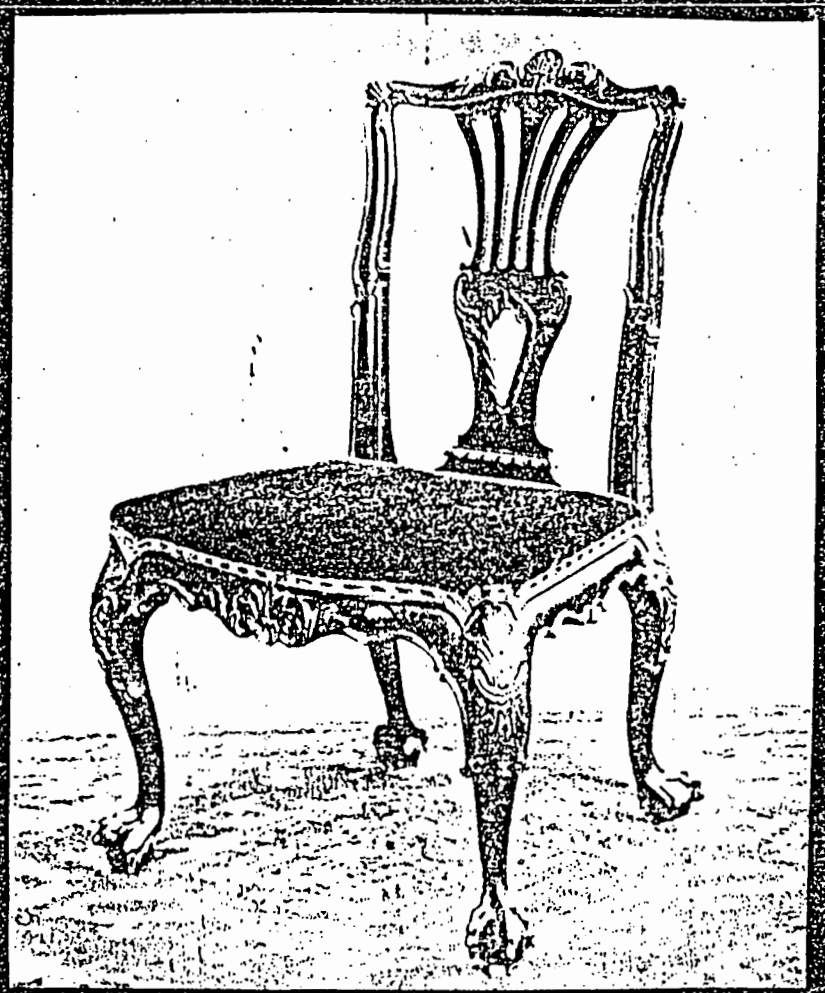



Fig. 246. Designs for French chairs, with and without arms, from Plate XIX of Chippendale's Director, 1762.



a) h: 3'2" w: 1'10"
Property of R. W. Partridge



b) h: 3'4" w: 1'10"
Property of Lord St. Oswald

Fig. 248a,b. Mahogany chairs, England, c. 1765. Reproduced from Percy Macquoid, English Furniture, III, 196.

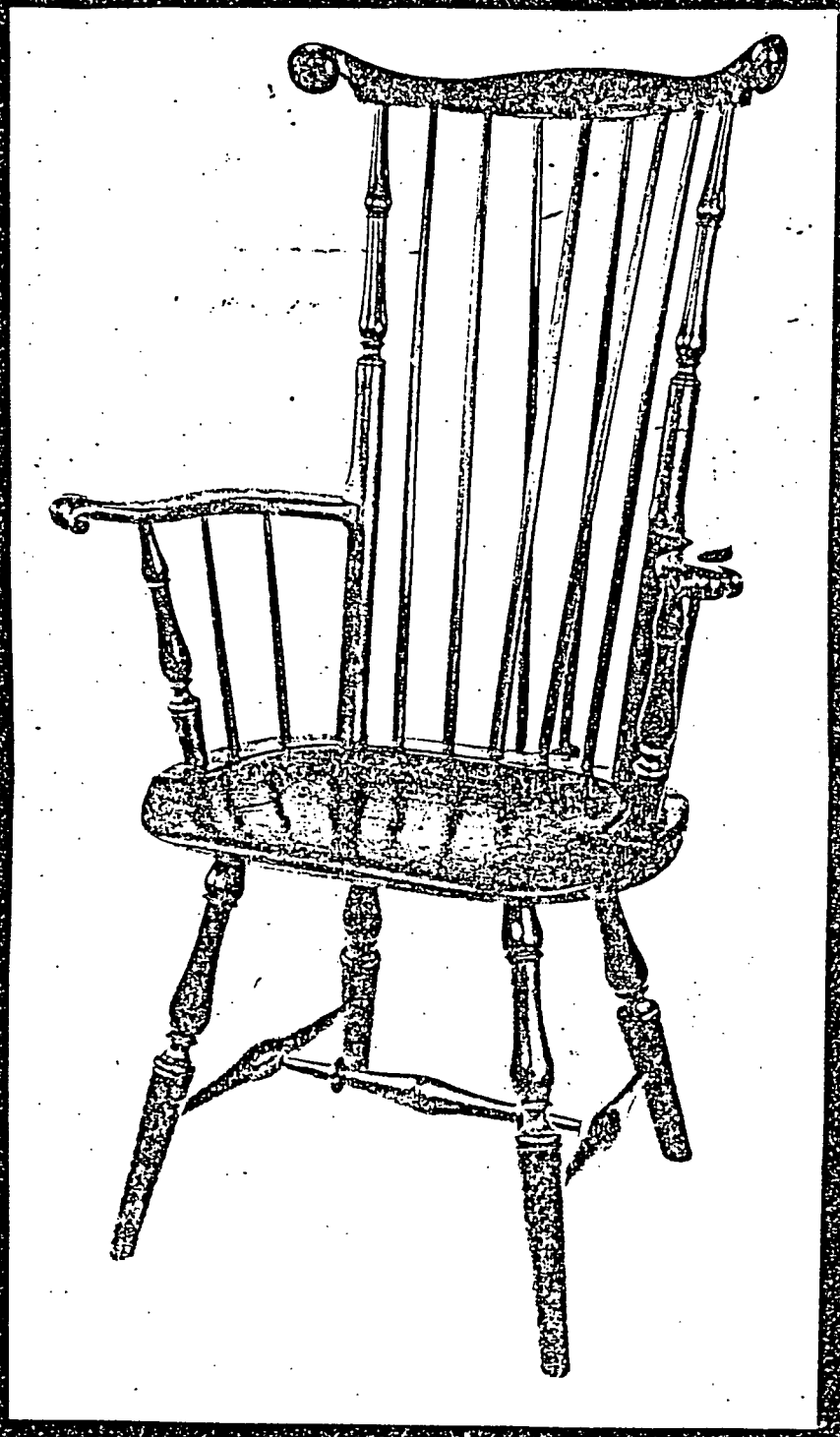


Fig. 249. Windsor arm chair.
New England (?) 1750-1810.
Yale University Art Gallery.

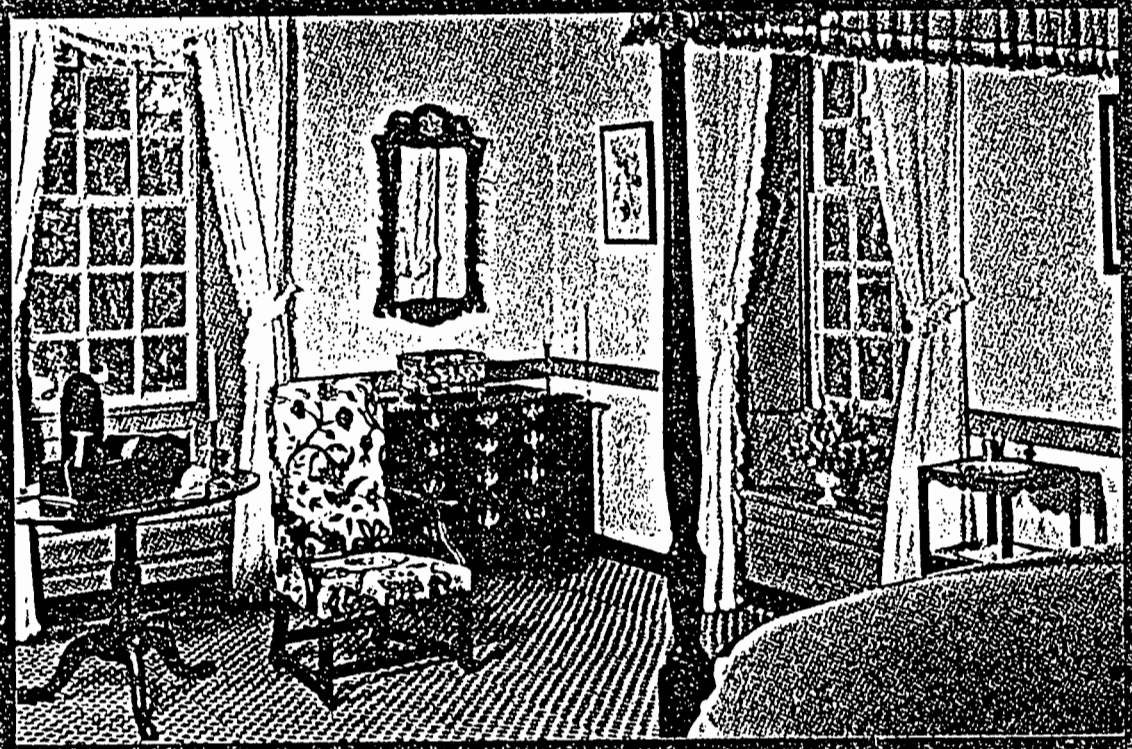


Fig. 250. View of the Southeast Bedroom of the George Wythe House, Colonial Williamsburg, showing items associated with colonial women's activities, as a tapeloom, crewel work, and freshly cut flowers. Also note the Scotch carpet.

Fig. 251. Oil painting of unknown subject, by Arthur Devis, circa 1750.

Shows an eighteenth century woman at work with water colors, in a setting similar to Room 203.

Colonial Williamsburg



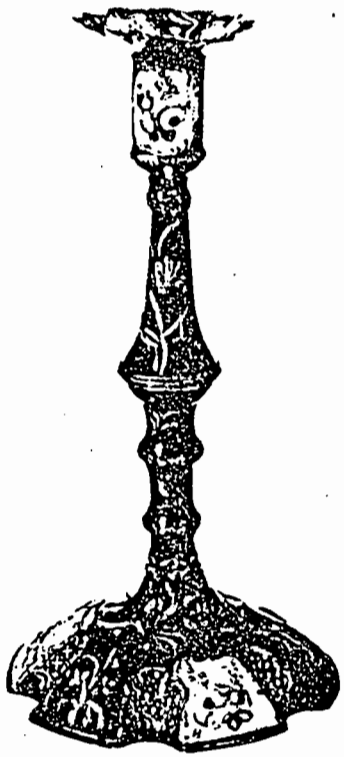
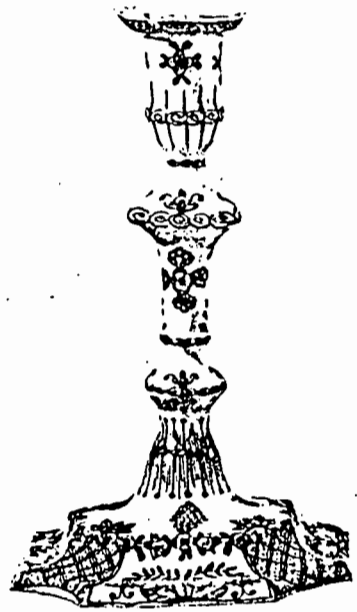


Fig. 252. Candlestick. Enamel on copper. England, c. 1760. Courtesy, the Henry Ford Museum



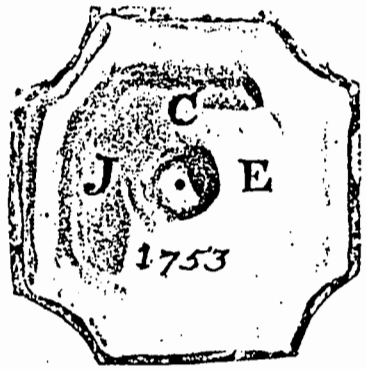



Fig. 253. Candlestick. Blue and white tin-glazed earthenware. England, 1753. The Henry Ford Museum.

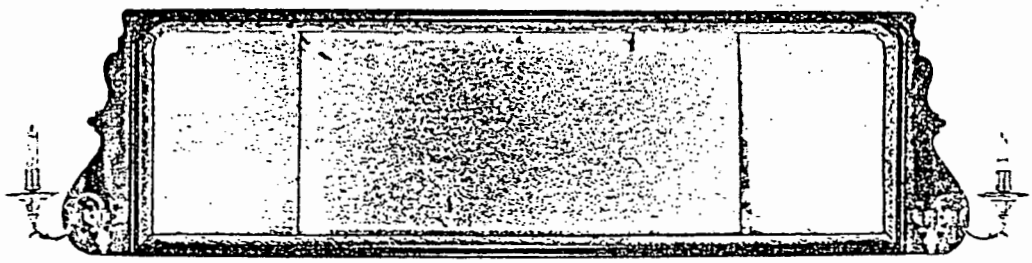


Fig. 254. Overmantel looking glass. Black walnut and gilt with brass sconces. New York (?), 1720-30.

h.: 16" w.: 59".
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

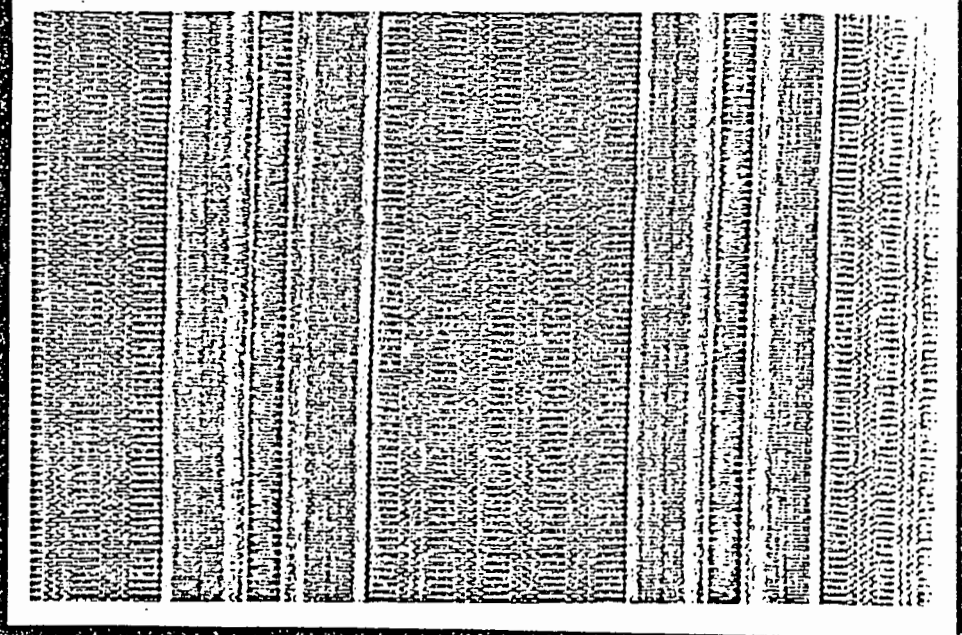


Fig. 256. Detail of list, or Venetian carpeting, where the multicolored warp stripes predominate.

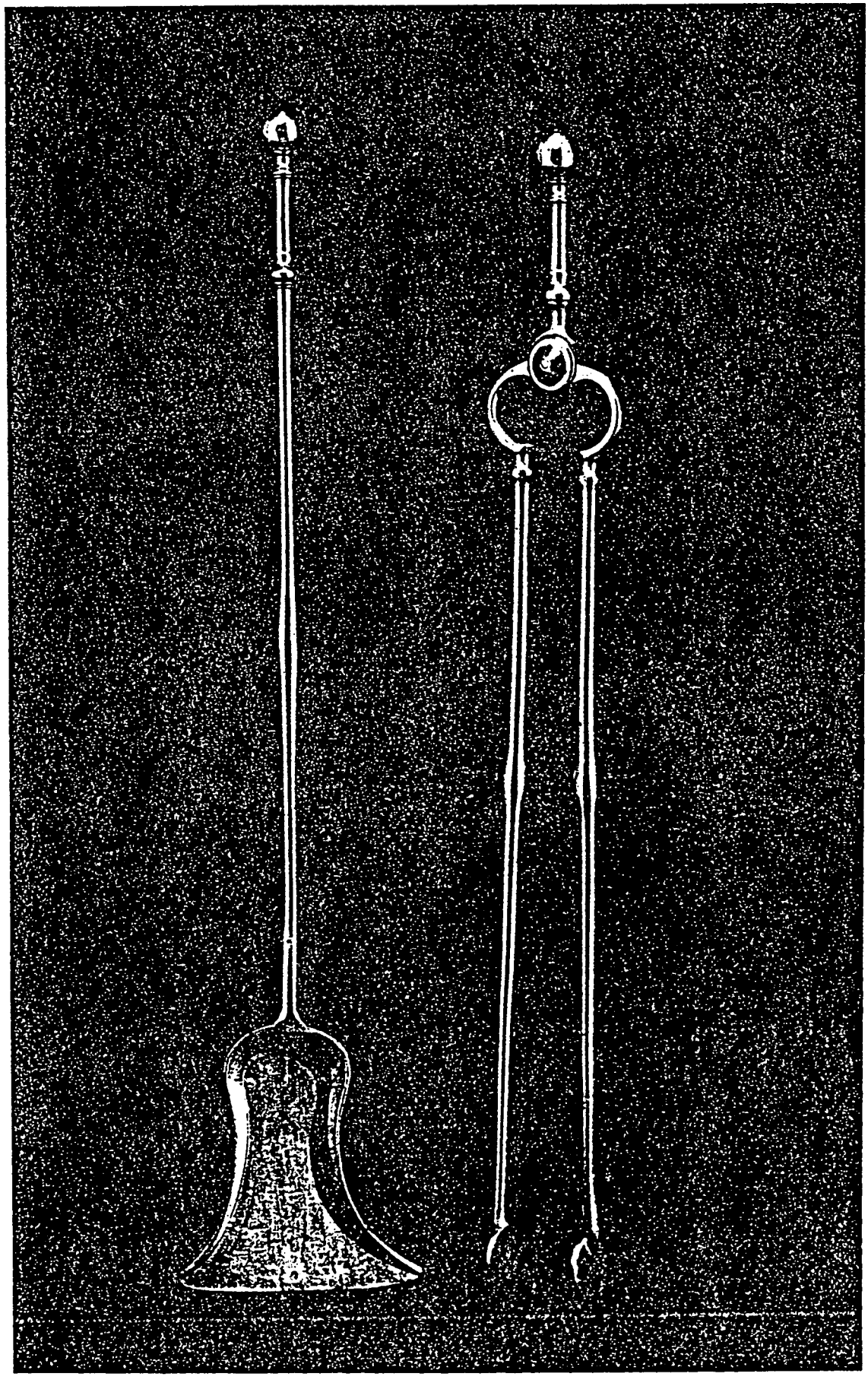


Fig. 255. Bell metal tongs and shovel.
New England (?), 1760-90. h: 27" ÷
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg

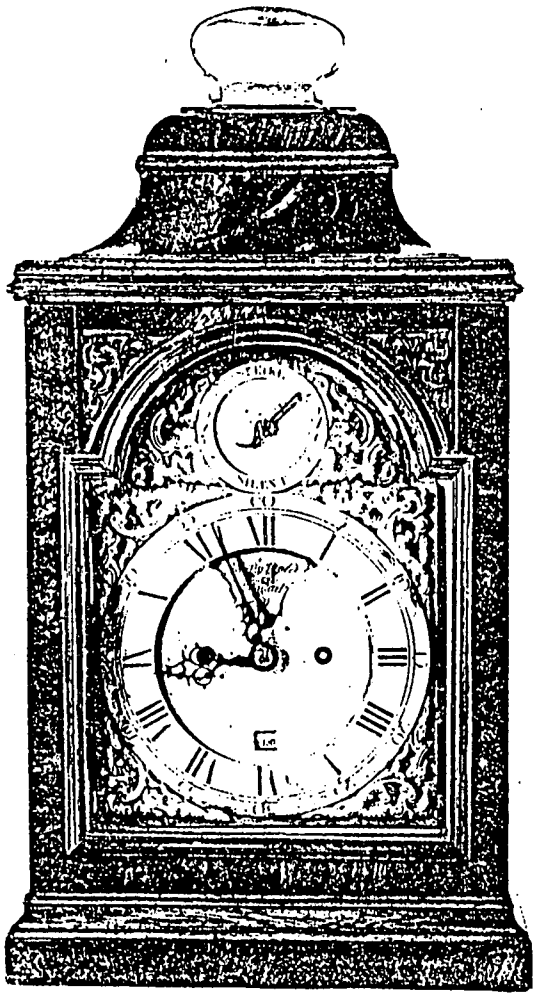
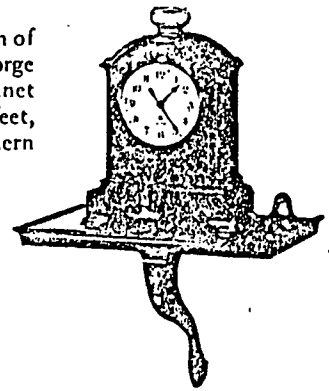


Fig. 257. Walnut bracket clock.
— England, 1760-70. h:18" w:10" d:6" —
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

## *Wythe House Clock*

The Wythe House Clock is an authentic reproduction of a late eighteenth-century English clock in the George Wythe House. Its hand-rubbed solid mahogany cabinet is enriched with an inlaid design of holly wood. The feet, face-frame, and top handle are of solid brass. Modern mechanisms are of the finest quality.
Height (with handle extended) 10½"; width 7½"; depth 4"; diameter of dial 3⅛".

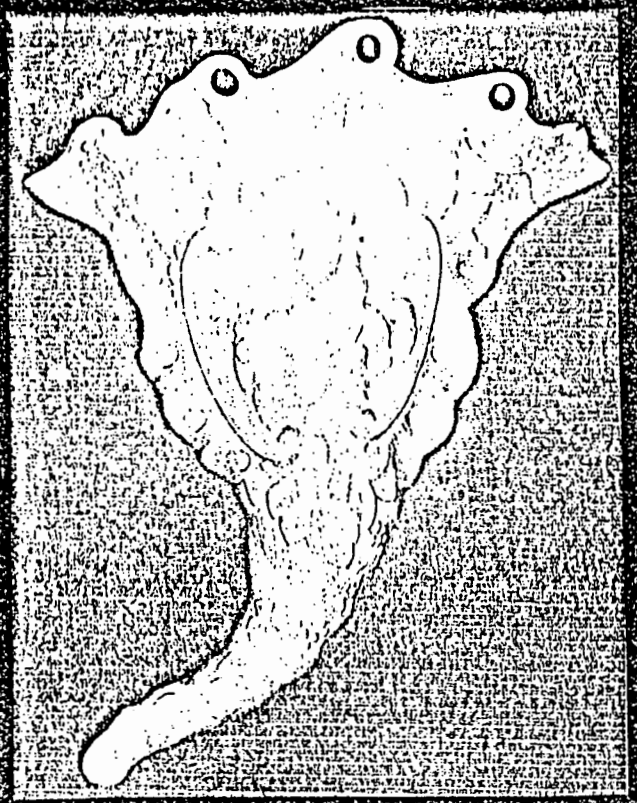
8-Day Nonstriking
8-Day Striking



A Wythe House Clock
on an
AP 109 Wall Bracket (page 167).

Fig. 258. Mahogany reproduction of a 1760 wall bracket. Colonial Williamsburg Craft House Cat. no. AP 109 ($58.75).

Shown here with reproduction of an eighteenth century clock.



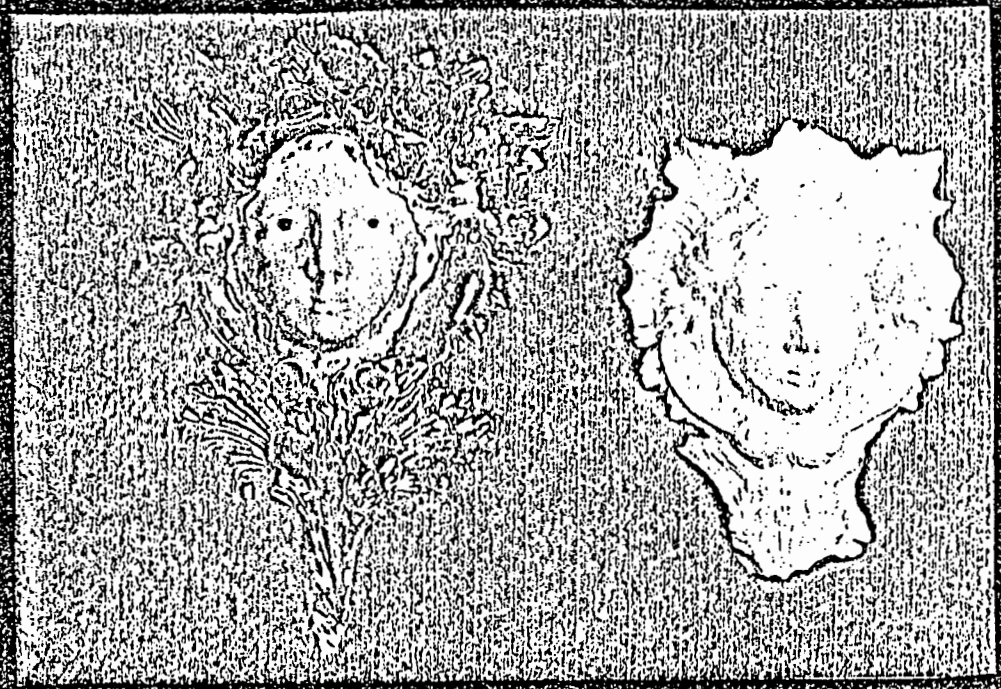


Fig. 259 a-c. Wall flower holder. Staffordshire, salt- and lead-glaze stoneware, 1760-70. Figure 259a is available through the Colonial Williamsburg Craft House (cat. no. C22, $40.95), height: 10"

Room 204: Room above the Chamber (Nursery)

As all eleven of Nelson's children were born in Yorktown, a nursery would seem to be in order for most of the period we are concerned with. As mentioned above, Nelson paid to have a nursery in the house whitewashed in 1784. Having large areas of white wall and little distinctive furniture inventoried other than three beds of moderate value, Room 204 was very probably the nursery.

In the year 1784 Nelson's five young girls, ages two to fourteen years, may have slept in this room with a governess or colored maid servant. The room should be of a light and gay character befitting young girls. In contrast to the previous rooms, Room 204 could be decorated with summer furnishings. Textiles, for example, could be of light weight cotton or linen. In place of damask, the straight hanging window curtains could be an embroidered white French voile, a white holland printed with floral design, or seersucker. Bed hangings made of similar material could be limited to top valances (fig. 202 and 260) instead of the full complement of head and foot curtains. The inactive fireplace could be closed off by a fireboard. If the number surviving is any indication, fireboards appear to have been more common in America than in England. Extant examples are frequently painted with flowers or a landscape; the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts, has an elaborate, fan-like fireboard painted with the portrait of a dog. A grass mat, recommended for its coolness, could take the place of a carpet in the center of the floor. These seasonal adaptations should be

emphasized by the guide to help the visitor imagine the extremes of heat and cold which confronted colonial Virginians. Fithian's diary shows how unpredictable these changes could be. In July, 1774, he complained of the cold:

> Monday 11. Indeed says Mrs. Carter at Breakfast, a Fire this morning would be very pleasant --Yes says I, for I have had the look & feeling of November all the morning; My Room shut up, My Coat buttoned, & yet my Body cold Besides!

Then in September of the same year he wrote of excessive heat:

> Thursday 1. The Colonel (i.e. Robert Carter) says it is the hottest Day we have had --I keep myself caged up in my Room, & cannot venture out on my usual walk or Ride for exercise.[1]

To establish a young and gay mood, the vestibule, Room 206, might be furnished with some fanciful object like the unusual tin lantern molded in the form of a seated Chinese man of fig. 261. This is a novelty piece not likely to be duplicated, of course, but it typifies a genre of objects whose wit and liveliness would be appreciated by young and old, colonial and modern.

Two or three slat back chairs with rush seats (fig. 265) might also be found in the vestibule. These chairs were imported from England in quantity during the first half of the eighteenth century and many were produced in the northern colonies. Often they were painted red or green and fitted with a loose cushion. Charles Willson Peale painted a portrait of young Miss Ann Proctor of Baltimore sitting in such a chair with her pet parrot, indicating that for children, at least,

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[1]Farish, Journal, p. 137 and 182.

this type of chair was still fashionably acceptable.[1]

Five leather bottomed chairs are called for in the inventory, appraised at one fifth the value of the leather bottomed chairs in the drawing room. The chairs relegated to this room may have been of unsophisticated colonial workmanship like the transitional chair shown in fig. 262, or, more probably, they may have been early eighteenth century English chairs of oak or walnut. A set of five would be difficult to obtain today. Generally, Room 204 should exhibit the earliest chairs in the house, although child-sized chairs of any style should be given priority. If three slat backed chairs were placed in the vestibule, two chairs would suffice for the main room. These two chairs could be pulled up to a simple, locally made pine table placed to the right of window 204-W2 (fig. 263). Pine furniture was frequently painted with designs, graining, or solid colors of red, yellow, black, or green.

Of the three beds listed in the inventory, at least one must have been child-sized to fit comfortably in the room. However, diminutive sized beds and chests are even more difficult to find today than small chairs. A cradle and a full sized bed with trundle might be a realistic compromise. A simply turned four post bed with trundle can stand in the southeast corner, and the cradle can sit between the fireplace and window 204-W1. The bed textiles are described above. A simple cot with mattress and homespun blanket for the servant can be set up in the dressing room, Room 204A. An unpretentious washstand (fig. 264), a painted pine blanket chest, possibly a trunk, and various children's garments and playthings

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[1]This portrait now hangs in the Harwood-Hammond House, Annapolis, Md.

might also have been found in 204A.

The bedroom itself can be enlivened by a variety of children's painted toys, doll house, doll cradle (fig. 265), toy drum, squirrel or bird cage, and ceramic animals, such as press-moulded cats and horses made in the Staffordshire area. A salt-glazed stoneware chamberpot should be placed under one of the beds to exemplify one type of ware produced by the Yorktown pottery factory. Operating from about 1720 to 1745, the Yorktown factory is one of, if not the one earliest kiln site to produce stonewares in North America. For the historical significance of this kiln site --located only several hundred yards from Nelson's property--one or two earthenware or stoneware objects resembling the Yorktown potter's ware[1] should be represented, even though the kiln's operation predates the period we are primarily concerned with, and its products were not as refined as those generally found in the Nelson House.

Suitable wall decorations include a painting of a child or any youthful subject matter to hang over the fireplace, or a set of moralizing prints, such as engravings after Jean Baptiste Oudry's illustrations to La Fontaine's Fables (Paris, 1755-59). An eighteenth century chap book or primer (somberly teaching the alphabet: "In Adam's fall we sinnèd all" or "Xerxes did die and so must I") might lie on one of the beds.

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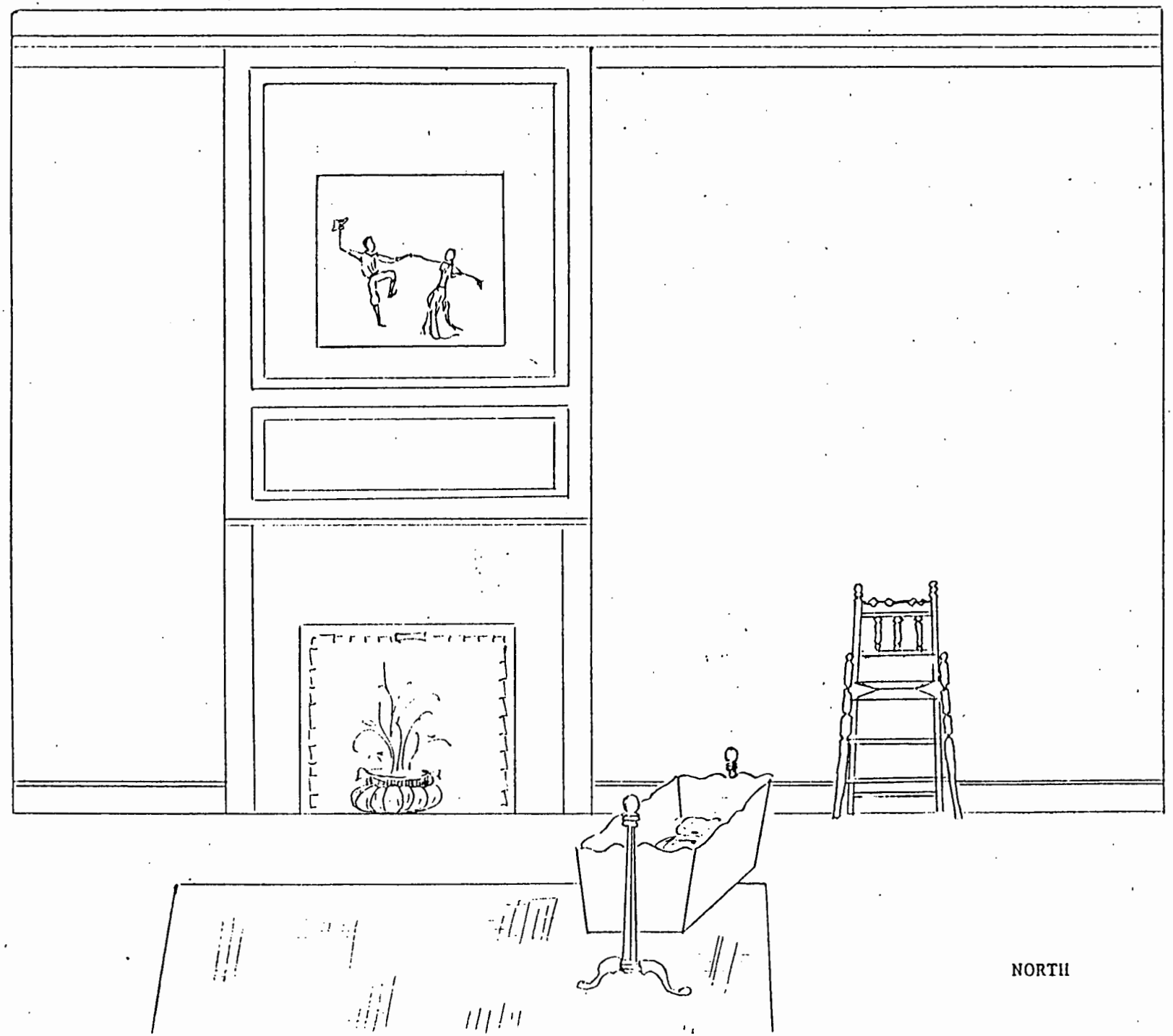
[1] For a description of these wares see Norman F. Barka's "The Kiln and Ceramics of the 'Poor Potter' of Yorktown: A Preliminary Report," Ceramics in America, edited by Ian M.G. Quimby (Charlottesville, Va., 1973), p. 291-318.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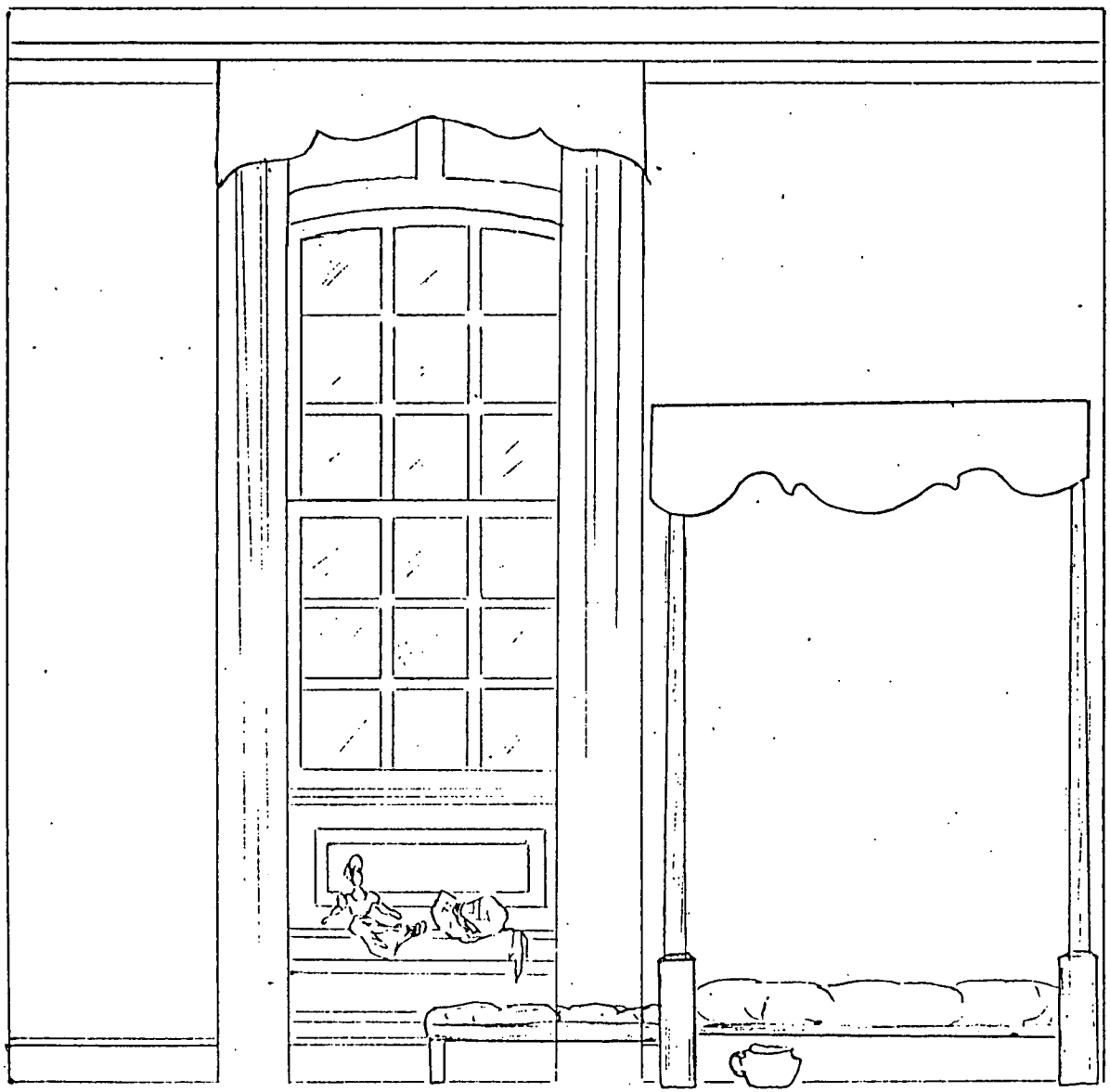

EAST

SOUTH



WEST

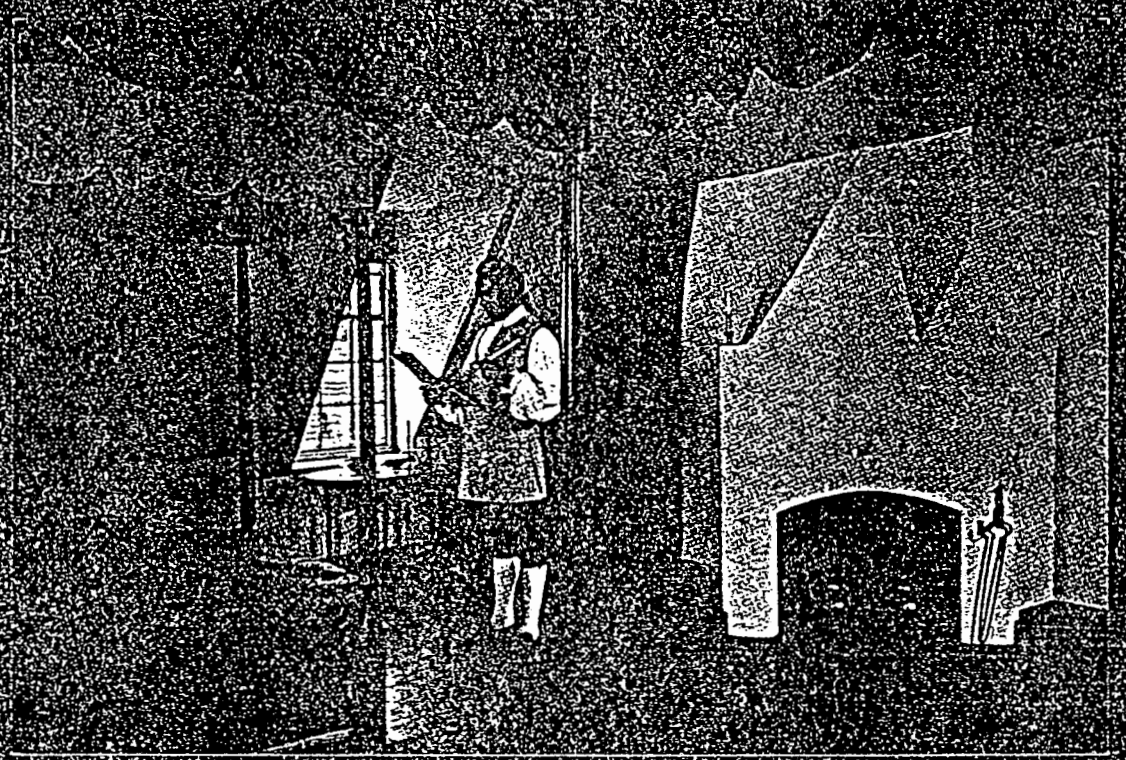

Fig. 260. View of the East Bedroom, Wetherburn's Tavern, Colonial Williamsburg, showing simple bed valances, without their full complement of head and foot curtains.

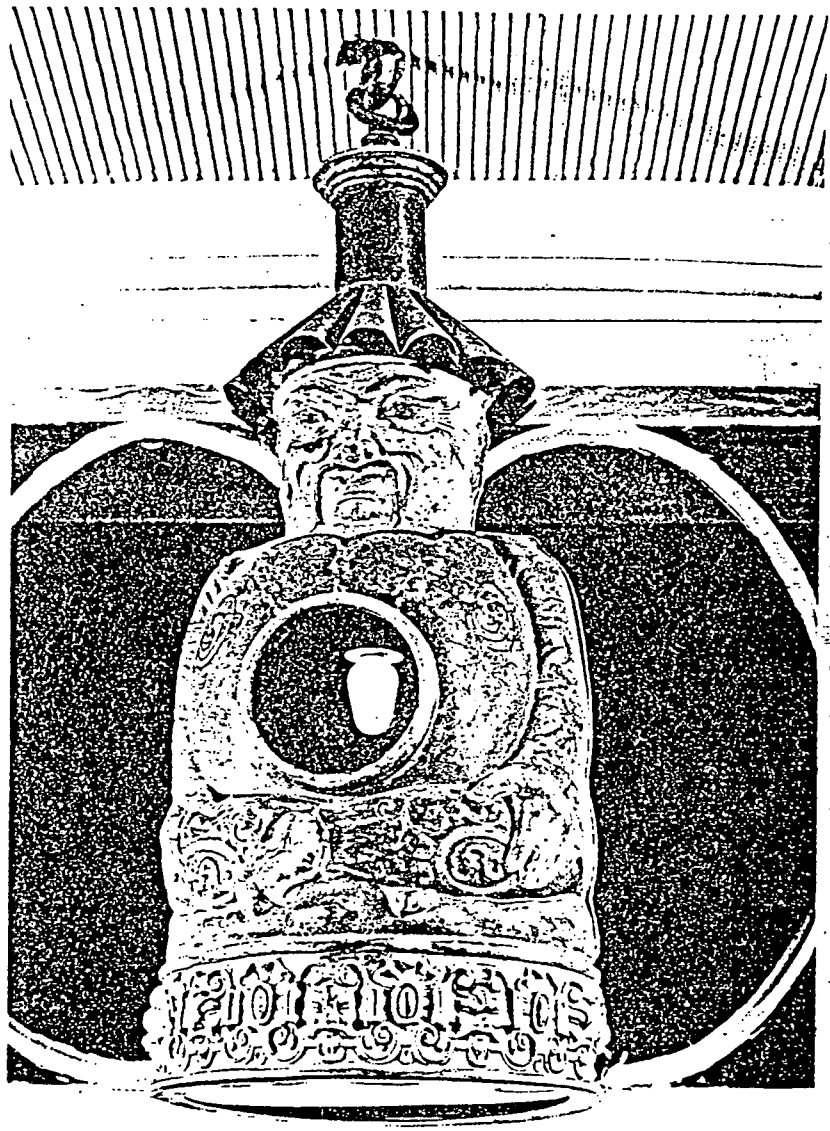

Fig. 261. Molded tin lantern, in the form of a seated Chinese man. Circular glass door in side and bottom. French (?) 1770-1825. h: 19" diam: 8".

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

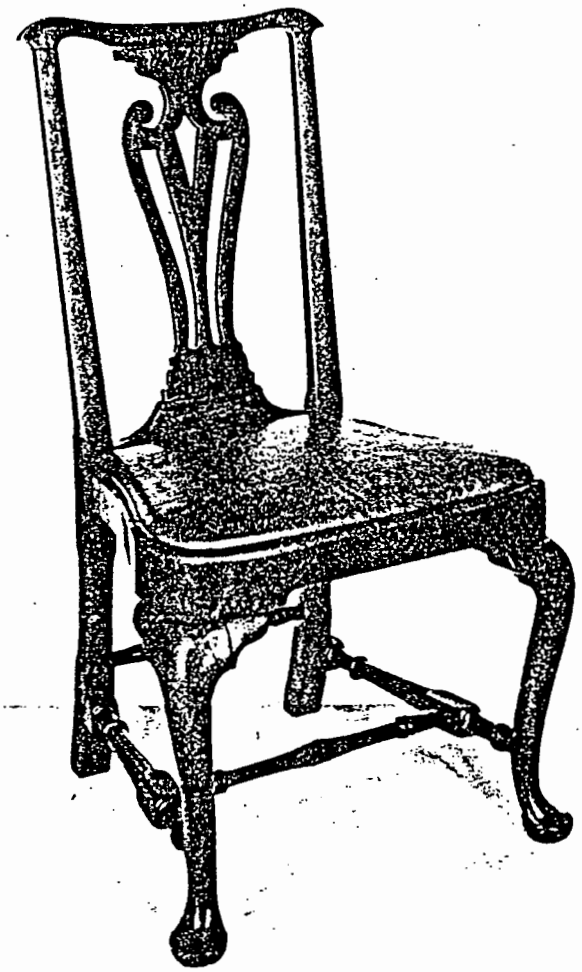

Fig. 262. Walnut side chair. R.I., 1745-55. h:39" w:22" d:20". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

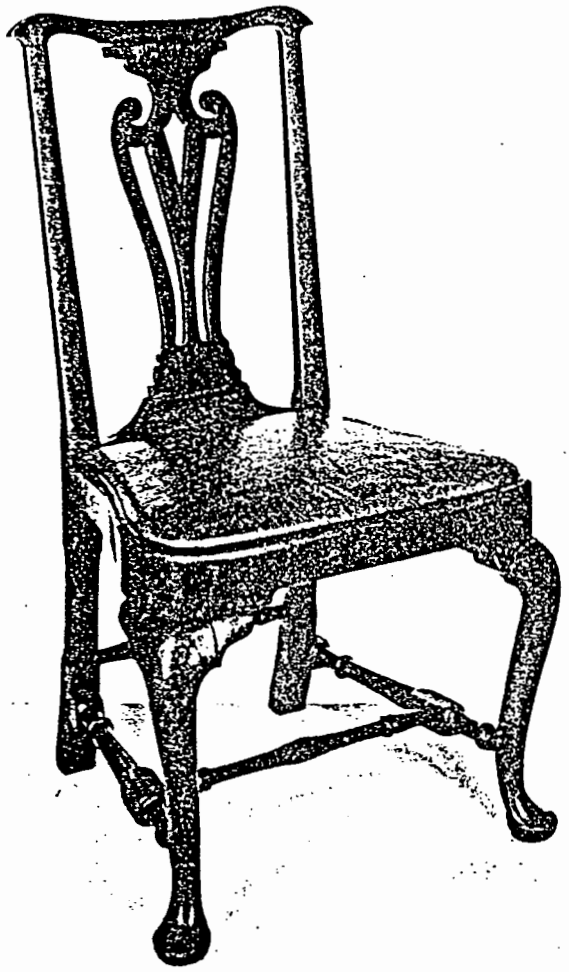

Fig. 262. Walnut side chair. R.I., 1745-55. h:39" w:22" d:20". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

Fig. 263. Walnut and cedar table. New England (?) 1735-65. h:26" w:35" d:24". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



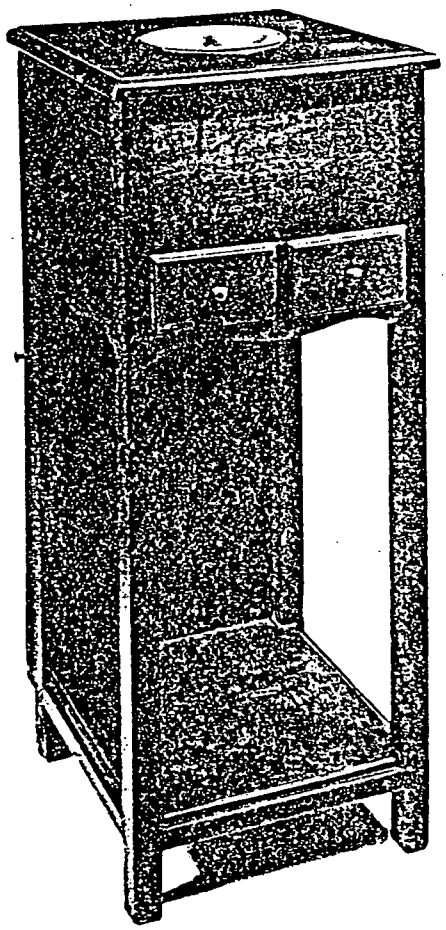

Fig. 264. Washstand. American, mid-eighteenth century.
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 265. View of the Southwest Bedroom, the Brush-Everard House, Colonial Williamsburg, showing slat back, rush seat chair, low post bed, simple washstand and clothes press, and various children's playthings.

Room 205: The Chintz Room (Guest room and room for entertaining)

Room 205 was called the Chintz Room in the 1789 inventory presumably after the material of the room's window curtains and bed hangings. In the eighteenth century, chintz referred to a printed or painted and usually glazed cotton, originally imported from Calcutta, or Calicut, India, hence our term "calico". As the appeal of the gay and exotic chintz grew, the English textile industry began imitating the Eastern material. There was no distinction made in colonial import records and newspaper advertisements between chintz made in England or chintz imported via England from the East.

Unlike the copperplate-printed fabric recommended for the back parlor, the woodblocked chintz offered large, colorful floral designs. While copperplate printing revolutionized textile designs in permitting detail and fine linear effects, its designs were limited to one color. Chintz, on the other hand, was often printed with up to five colors against a white ground. Because each color printed required a separate block (each block being about 12" square) the cost increased according to the number of colors in the design. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a five-colored chintz cost about the same as a single-colored plate-printed fabric.

Chintz reflects the fashion consciousness of the Nelsons. Hangings before 1750 were usually wool, some very few were silk; therafter washable linens and cottons are mentioned in contemporary accounts much more frequently. Mary Hill Lamar wrote from London to her brother in Philadelphia after the Revolution: "The Indian counter-

panes make very pretty curtains for a back room or best room . . . They make beautiful beds lined with white, and white cloths and testers."[1]

Earlier in the century, Swift satirized the taste for Oriental things, describing how a country squire "from being a foul feeder grew dainty: how he longed for Mangos, Spices and Indian Birds' Nests, etc., and could not sleep but in a chintz Bed."[2] The rooms used most, especially for entertainment, were most subject to changes in fashion. From the following reference, one might infer that room furnishings like the chintz hangings might have been brought up to date about every ten years:

> But then you may grow tired of a fancy furnishing; so be very sure you will like it for ten or 15 years at least, for by that time it will be dirty and old-fashioned.[3]

Room 205 might have been used as a guest room or as a bedroom for Lucy Nelson's sisters when they came to live in the house during the 1770's; as the Nelson daughters grew older, one or several of them may have moved into the room. The character of the room should be feminine and elegant. Quantities of table glass and ceramics were in the room when the inventory was taken, indicating that this particular bedroom probably doubled as an intimate room for entertaining, as for festive tea parties called routs.

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[1]Montgomery, Printed Textiles, p. 107, n. 6.

[2]Quoted by Percy Macquoid in his History of English Furniture, II, 178.

[3]Lady Sarah Bunbury to her sister, Duchess of Leinster, quoted in Fowlwer and Cornforth, English Decoration, p. 46.

One bed can be placed along the east wall, the other along the southwest wall, far enough away from the wall to clear the floor registers. These were probably four post beds (fig. 266 and 267), but simpler than the beds in Rooms 104 and 203. The bed hangings of at least one of the beds should be of the same chintz material as the straight hanging window curtains. The second bed can be spread with a summery white material, with a delicate and colorful embroidered coverlet folded at the foot (fig. 268).

To show the fireplace as it might have looked in the summer months, a large Chinese export or English vase (fig. 269) can stand in place of the usual andirons and logs. The vase can stand alone or be filled with fresh flowers or greens.

European travellers in the colonial era made special note of the lavishness of Southern entertainment. The quantity and particular forms of glass and ceramics inventoried for the Chintz Room would tend to support this observation. While the dining room can serve as a display area for silver and a dinner service, the Chintz Room will primarily show glass ware and a dessert setting. It does not appear to have been unusual to retire to other quarters for dessert after the main dinner.

The dessert table offered the hostess her greatest opportunity to "dress out" a table with ingenuity. Unlike the dinner table, the dessert setting emphasized a central display. A glass épergne, forerunner of the nineteenth century compote with raised pedestal, was a luxury; the Nelsons had both a glass and a silver épergne.

The glass épergne should be placed in the center of the table. In her book on household management, Hannah Glass recommended that the épergne hold "wet and dry sweetmeats[1] in glass baskets or little plates, colour'd jellies, creams, &c., biscuits, crisp'd almonds and little knicknacks, and bottles of flowers prettily intermix'd." Today the épergne could be filled with nuts and dried or fresh fruits, sprinkled with sugared flower petals.

Small glasses resembling modern parfait glasses can be placed at four individual settings around the table. Such glasses were filled with, in John Adams' words, "everything which could delight the eye or allure the taste; curds and creams, jellies, Sweetmeats of various sorts, twenty sorts of tarts, fools, trifles, floating islands, whipped sillibub, etc."[2] The decorative effect of this setting can be seen in fig. 270, showing the Charleston Dining Room at the Winterthur Museum.

Thirteen wine glasses are inventoried in the Chintz Room. By the mid 1700's the stems of wine glasses were straight and no longer globular. Their stems could be cut (fig. 271), enamel twist (fig. 47), or hollow; their bowls could be cut, engraved, or plain, usually with deeper, straighter sides than the earlier glasses. A wine glass, dessert knife, and fork should be at each place setting. One hostess' manual suggests that dessert spoons (fig. 272) be set out in the form of a crescent on a side table.

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[1]Fruits in heavy syrup, or sugared fruits (called sucket in the seventeenth century).

[2]Quoted from John Adams' diary, 1776, by Louise Beldon, "The Colonial Dessert Table," The Magazine Antiques (Dec. 1975), CVIII, no. 6, p. 1157.

A side table or shelf space is necessary to hold the quantity of tableware listed in the inventory. The dressing room 205A could very well have been used for this purpose. It is well lit by a window and today would provide an excellent, protected exhibition area for a collection of glass or ceramics. Items inventoried which could be displayed here on shelves include a glass funnel, two large decanters (fig. 273), five quart decanters, a beer glass, a glass tumbler with top (glasses with covers were very rare, even in England) a glass mustard pot, glass cruet (fig. 47b) and tea service. Since complete Chinese export and English enamel earthenware tea services are exhibited in Rooms 103 and 105, the Chintz room closet might simply show one or two articles of Staffordshire red stoneware (fig. 274 and 275) dating between 1750-1780.

The 1810 sales record of Thomas Nelson's personal property augments the number of wine glasses and decanters Nelson evidently had and adds sweetmeat glasses, jelly glasses and "2 glass cans" (probably opaque glass (fig. 276) in the shape of a silver can (fig. 277)).

The dessert plates could be Chinese export or English "in the Chinese manner" to complement the room's Eastern chintz motif (fig. 278, 279, and 280). Blue and white porcelain like the first example illustrated above, was most common in the Chinese export trade because it was technically the easiest to produce. The cobalt blue oxide could be painted directly on the unglazed ware and fused to it in one firing. The main alternative, an iron-oxide called rouge de fer, was more expensive because it required several operations: the iron-oxide red enamel was painted on a previously glazed and fired ware, and fused in

a second firing. A fragment dating to the Chien Lung period (1736-95) has been uncovered in the Nelson lot, showing a circle of bats exquisitely painted in rouge de fer (fig. 281). This more exclusive rouge de fer technique opened the way to developing the ploychrome overglaze enamel painting that characterizes the better quality export porcelains (fig. 282, 283, and 284). These three illustrations show European forms -- candlesticks, sauceboat, salt, dish with drainer, and shell (probably similar to the "5 china scallop shells" mentioned in Hugh Nelson's inventory) to which the Chinese catered for the western market at Canton. The guide could point out that a client frequently had to wait up to two years for an order to arrive; she should also mention that this export ware was likely to have been carried on an English vessel. Although the first American ship reached Canton in 1784, American trade did not surpass the British in that area until the nineteenth century.

The table on which the dessert service is displayed can be placed between window 205-W2 and the fireplace. In style it could resemble the outmoded dining table of Room 105. There is precedent both for covering the table with white damask or for leaving it uncovered; the quality of the table acquired could determine the preferable choice.

The "China bason and bottle" inventoried in the room indicate that a washstand probably stood close by. It might have resembled one of those designs of fig. 285 and stand between the table and window 205-W2.

Five black walnut chairs are specified in the inventory. For their location and appraised value, these should be well executed, sophisticated chairs, but out of fashion, possibly Queen Anne design (fig. 286).

A looking glass (fig. 287) can hang to the right of window 205-W2 or above the fireplace in the event that no painting is acquired. A portrait by Charles Willson Peale of Elizabeth Page[1] (fig. 288) is appropriate to the grace, elegance, and light atmosphere that should characterize the Chintz Room. As for Room 103 and 104, reproduction of a family portrait would seem justifiable if it could be arranged. In 1771, Peale painted a similar portrait of Nelson's sister-in-law, Judith Page.[2]

For lighting, a porcelain candlestick (fig. 253, 283) can be placed on the window seat of 205-W1, and wall sconces (fig. 60) can be placed on the east and north walls. A simple glass chandelier (fig. 270) would be appropriate in view of the quantity of glassware already in the room and would add to the feminine quality of the room.

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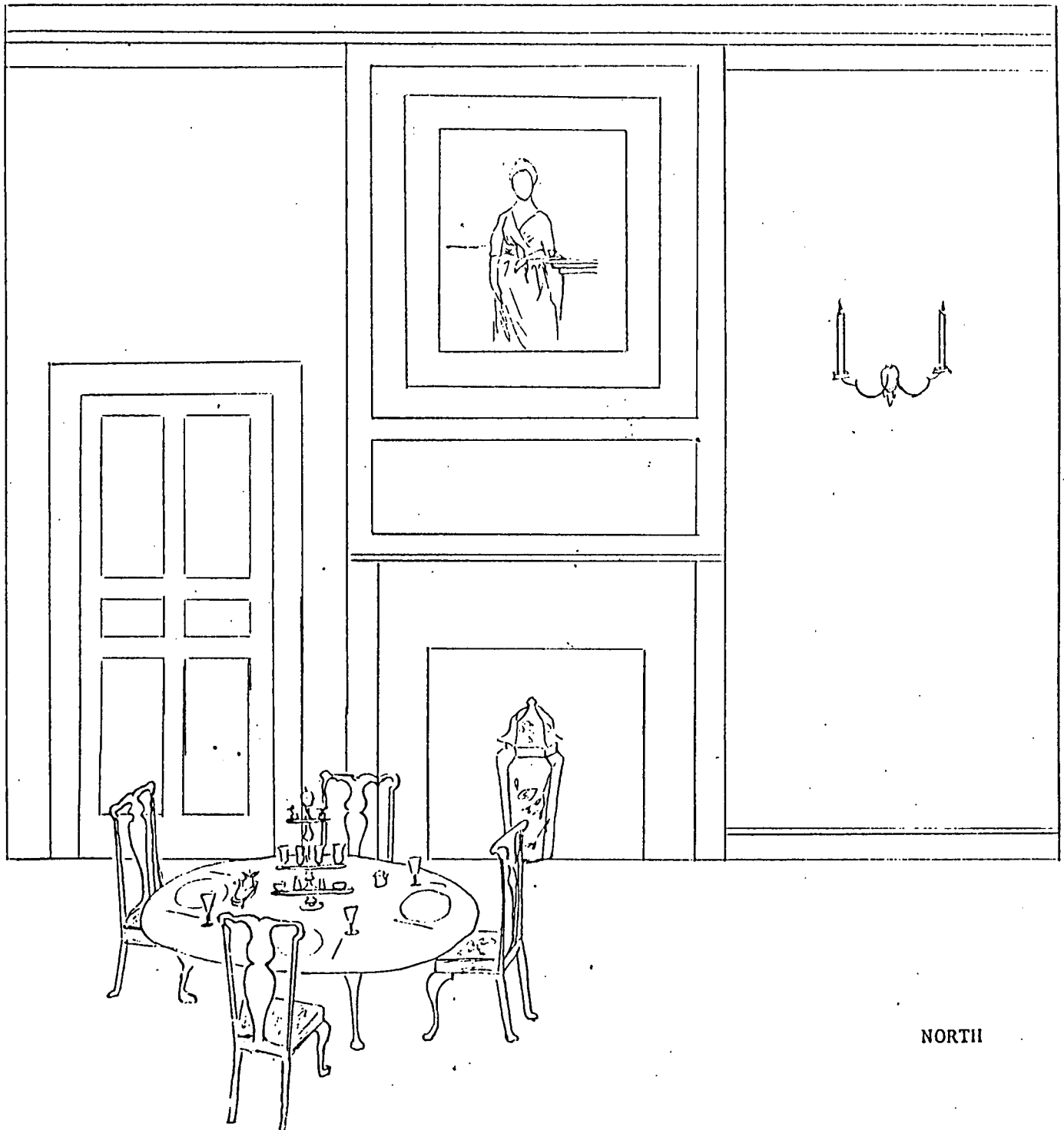
[1]The subject of this painting is possibly Nelson's daughter; the identifying brass plate on the frame seems contradictory to the probable date of the 1770's.

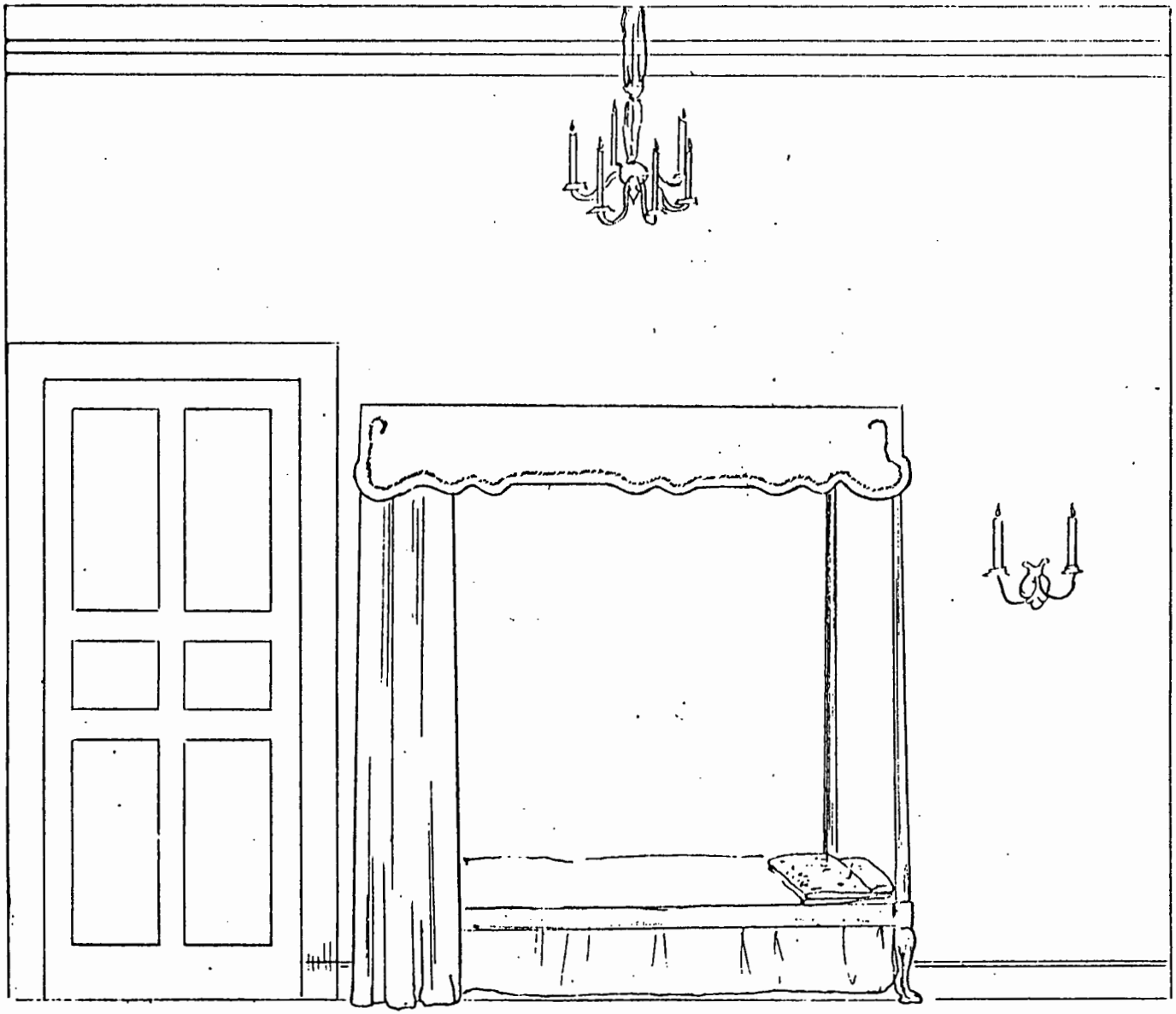
[2]Owned by Mrs. Rosewell Page, Oakland, Hanover Co., Va., and reproduced in Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, v. 59, part 3 (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 115.



WEST



NORTH



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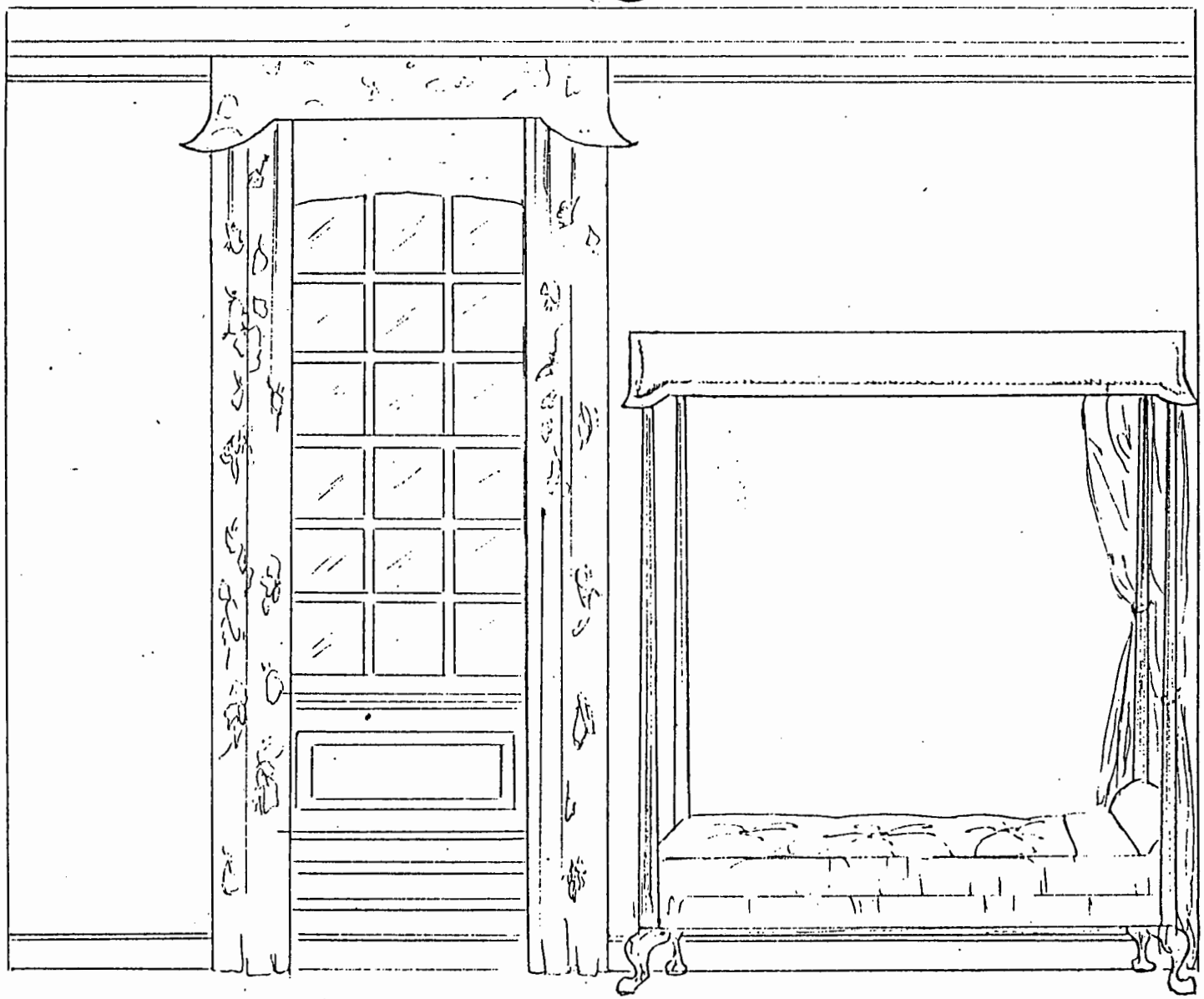

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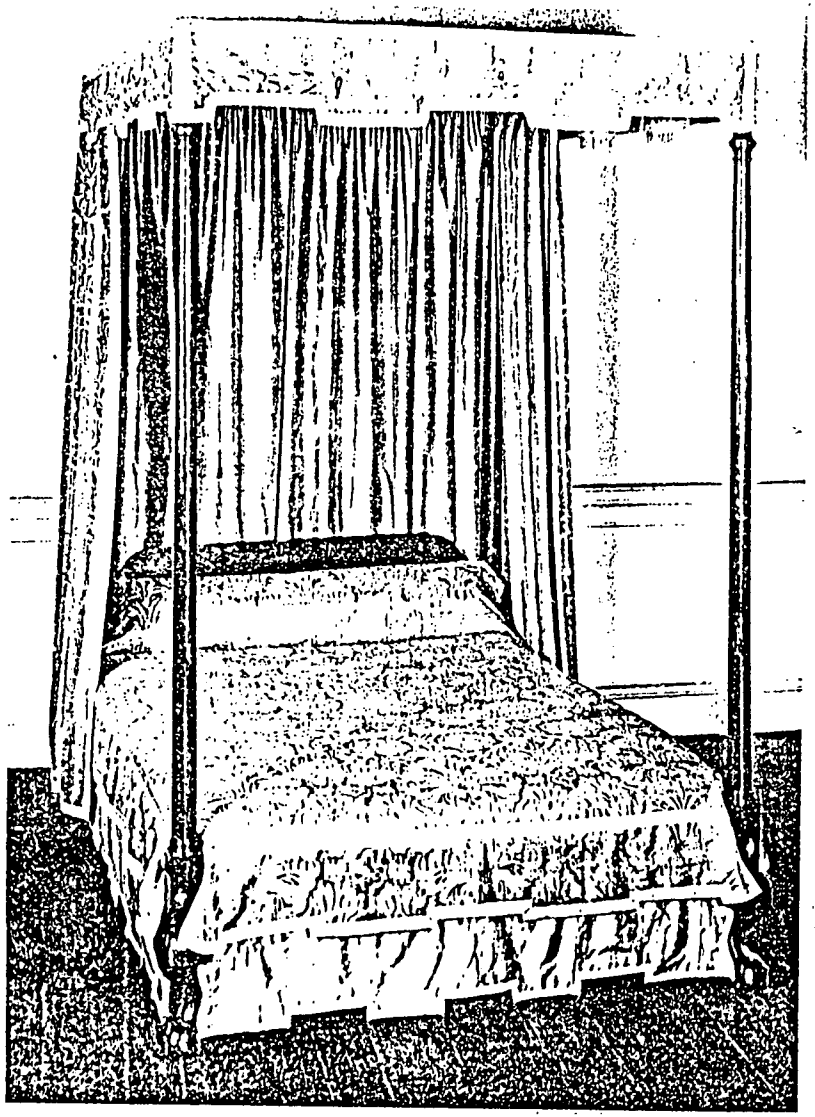


Fig. 266. Walnut bed. American (?) 1750-60. h: 93" w: 58" l: 79". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum.



Fig. 267. Maple bed. R. I., 1735-50. h: 8'. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

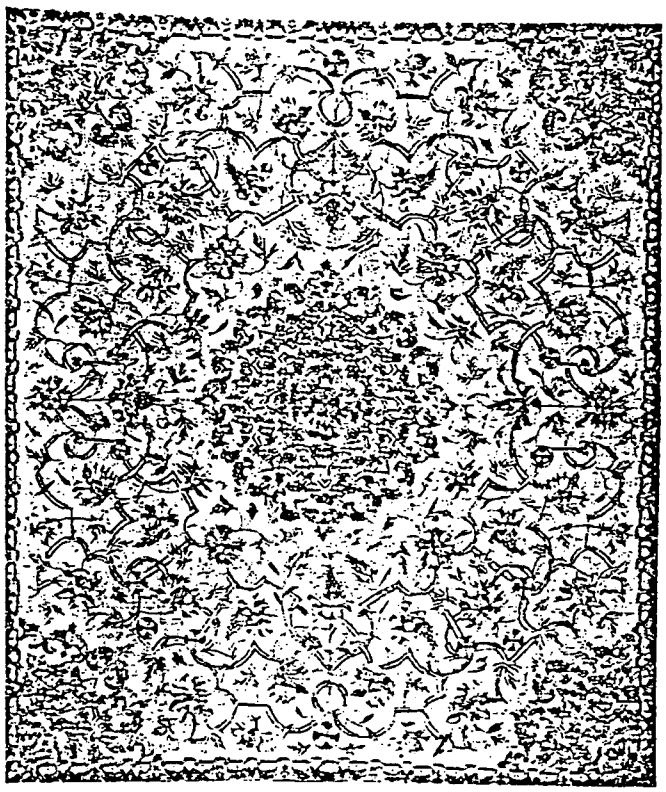


Fig. 268. Bedspread. England, 1700-25. White cotton embroidered and quilted with yellow silk thread.



Fig. 269. Hexagonal vase and cover. Staffordshire, 1760-68. h.: 12"



Fig. 271. Creamware dessert service and wine glasses with cut-glass stems. Colonial Williamsburg

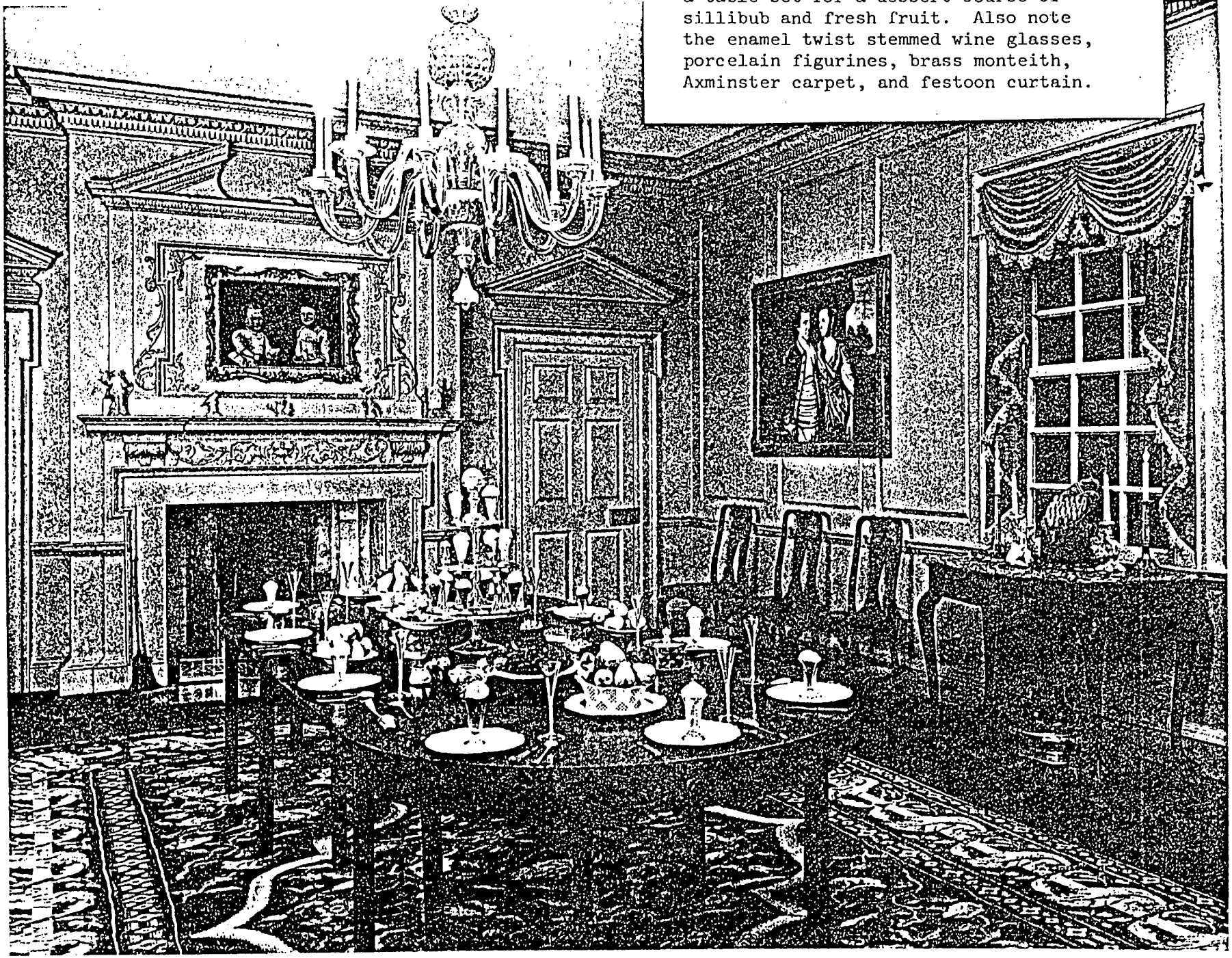


Fig. 270. View of the Charleston Dining Room, Winterthur Museum, showing a table set for a dessert course of sillibub and fresh fruit. Also note the enamel twist stemmed wine glasses, porcelain figurines, brass monteith, Axminster carpet, and festoon curtain.

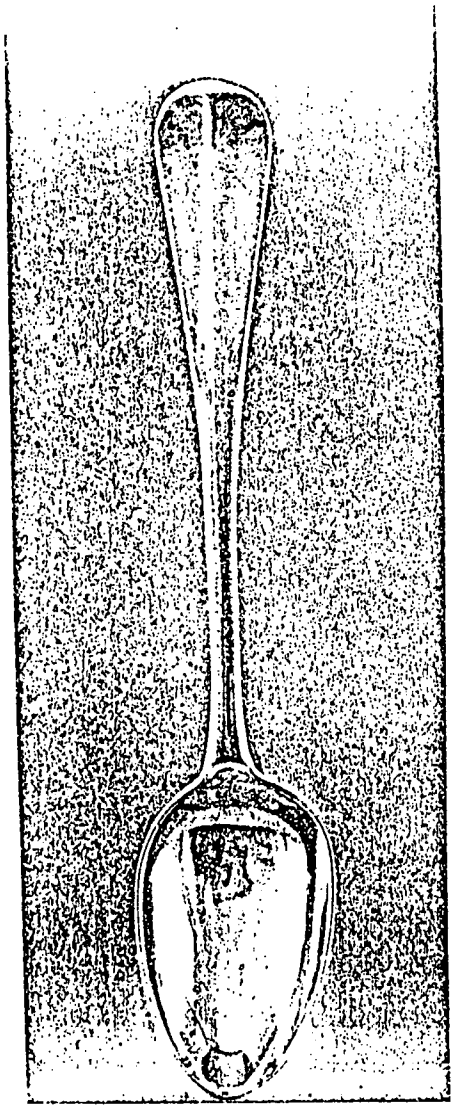


Fig. 272. Silver dessert spoon.
England, c. 1750. approx. 6"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

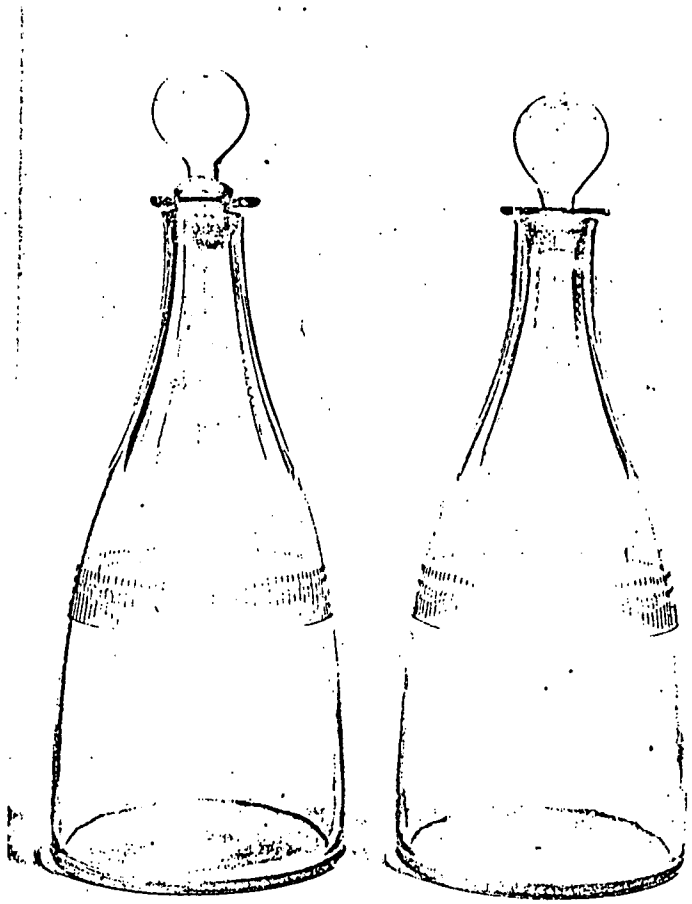


Fig. 273. Pair of free-blown decanters
England (?)1780-1810. h: 11"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 274. Stoneware teapot with molded relief showing Georgian house and garden. Wedgwood, mid-18c. 5"x8"



Fig. 275. Stoneware coffeepot with molded relief. Staffordshire (?) mid-18c. Colonial Williamsburg



Fig. 276. Opaque white glass bowl with enamel design. Bohemia or Silesia. 18th c. Winterthur Museum

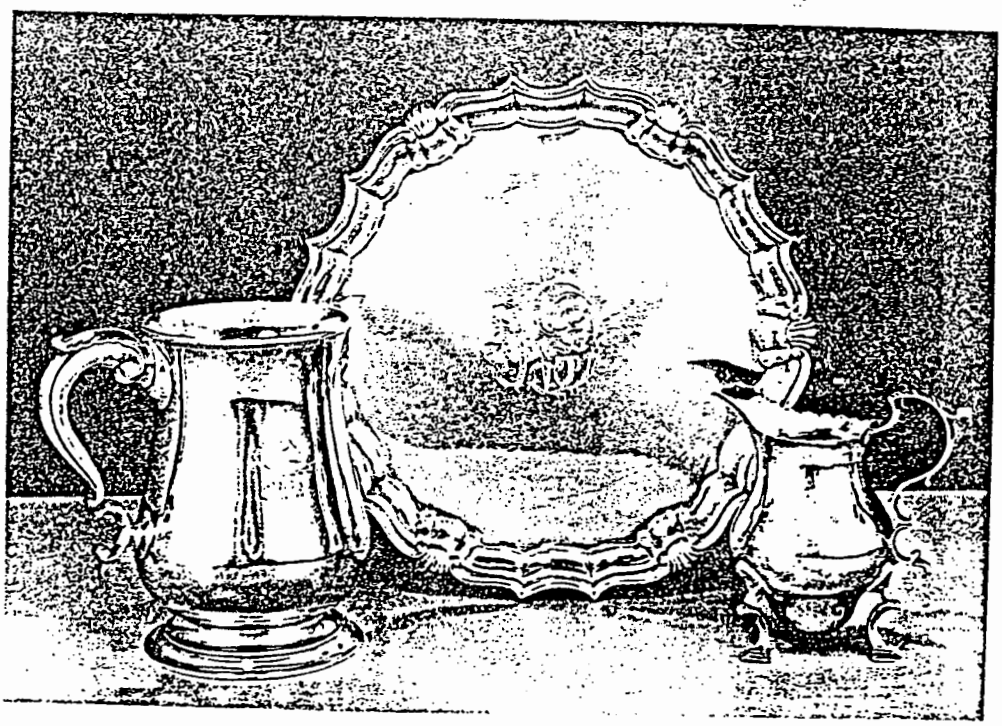


Fig. 277. Silver cann, salver, and creamer. American, 1754-75. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

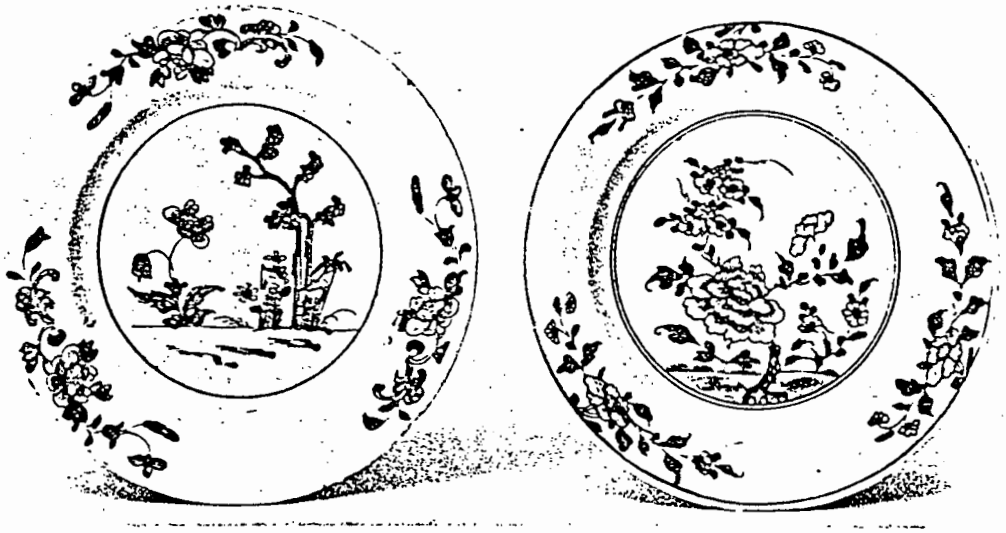
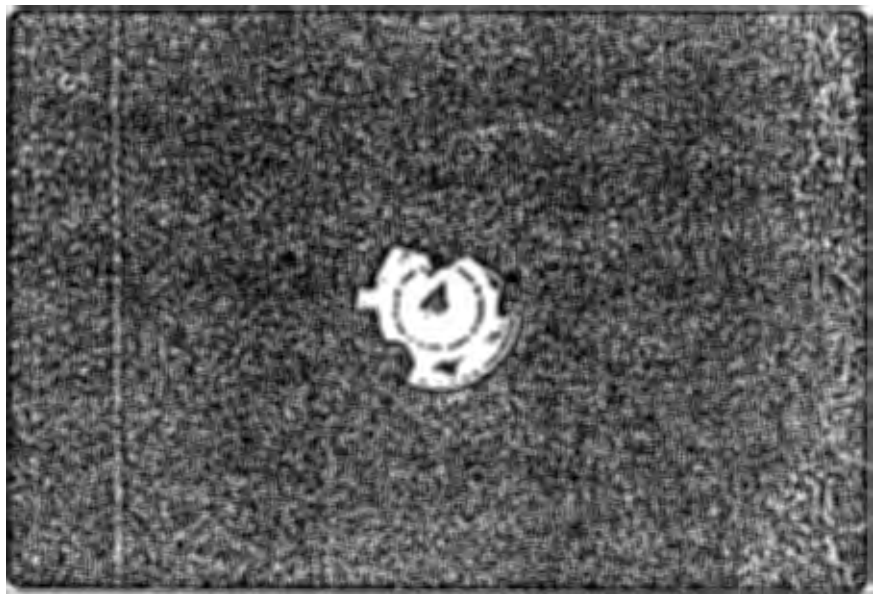


Fig. 278. Chinese export blue and white dish. 1750-80. 1" x 9". Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 279. English porcelain bowl, blue decoration on white ground. Caughley (?) 1757-1802. 2" x 5".



Fragments unearthed in Nelson lot. Southside Historical Sites Foundation.

Fig. 280. Chinese export blue and white saucer (?) 1750-80.

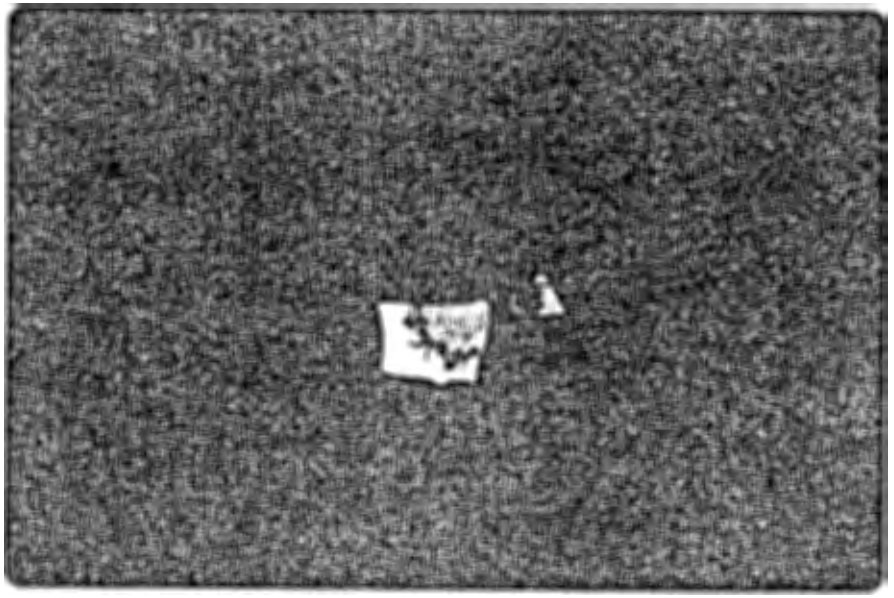


Fig. 281. Chinese export fragment (bottom of a bowl?) showing a ring of bats painted in rouge de fer.

For remarks on this unusual bat motif, see R.L. Hobson, Later Ceramic Wares of China.

Disregard smaller fragment in photograph.

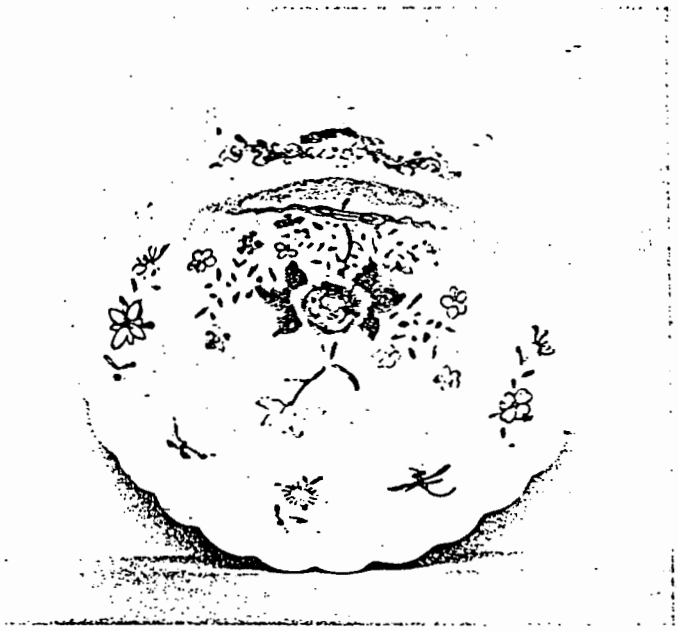
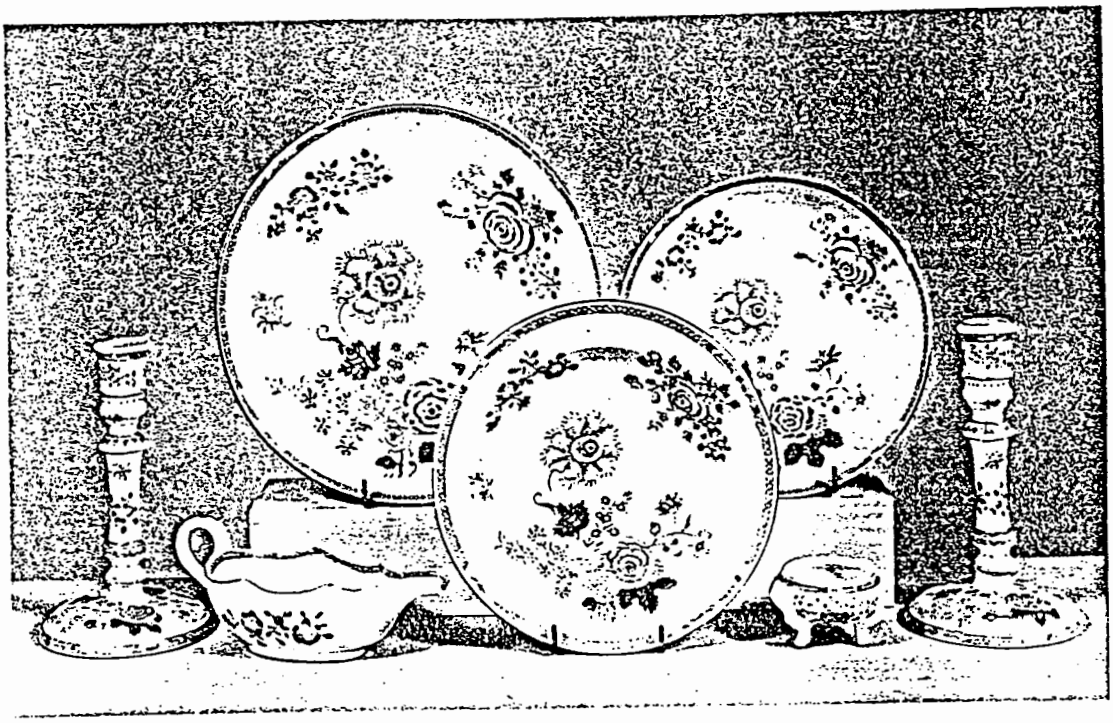
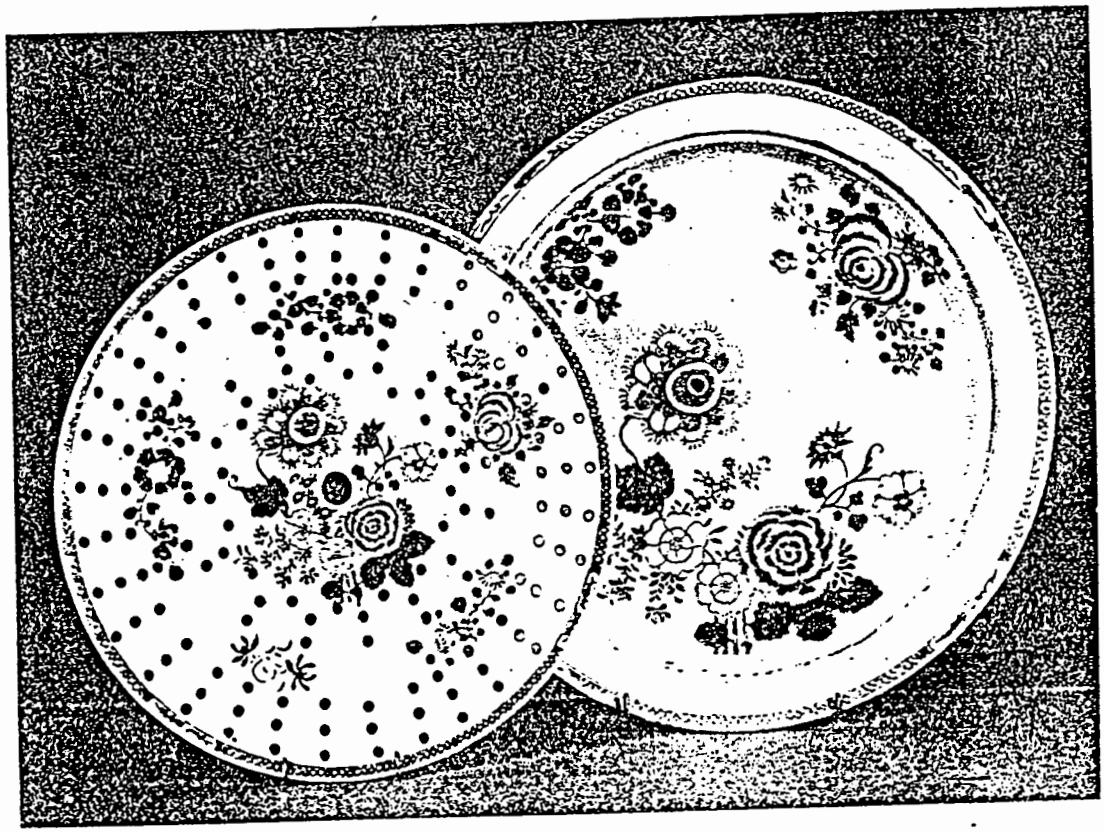


Fig. 282-284. Chinese export (1740-60) in European forms to satisfy the western market: sweetmeat dish in shell form, candlesticks, sauceboat, salt, platter with drainer.



283



284

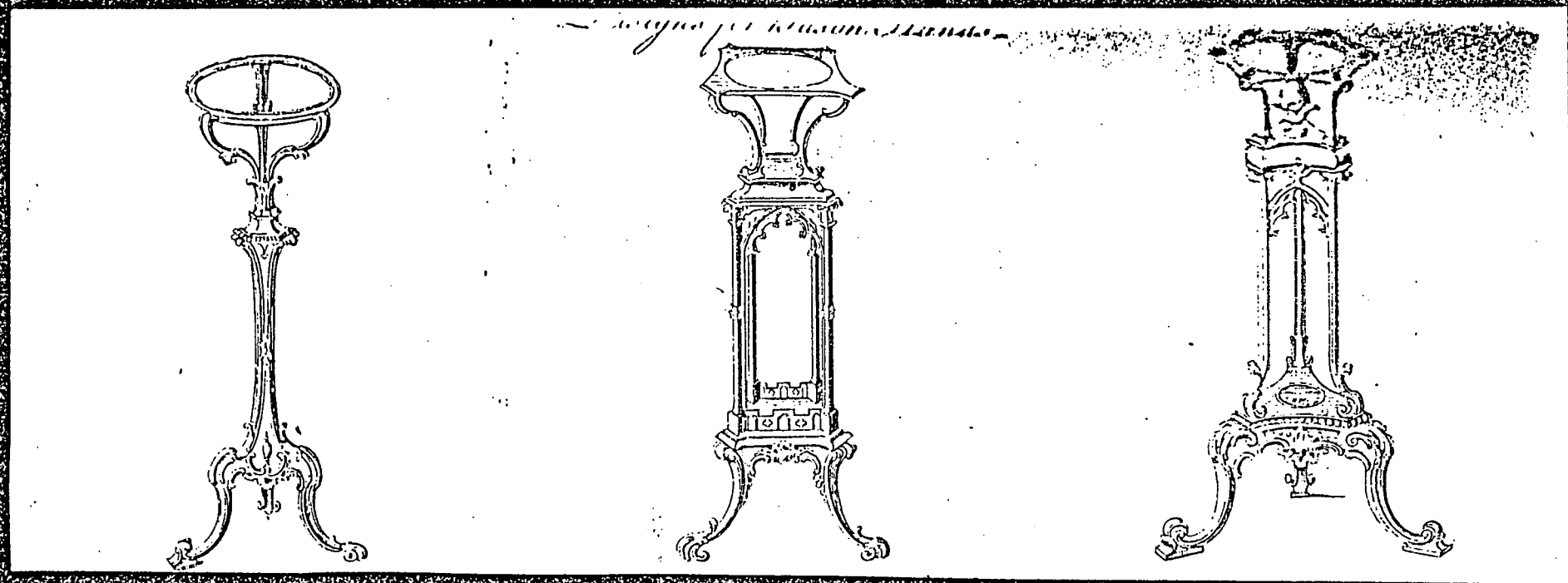


Fig. 285. Designs for washstands, from Plate LV of Chippendale's Director, 1762.

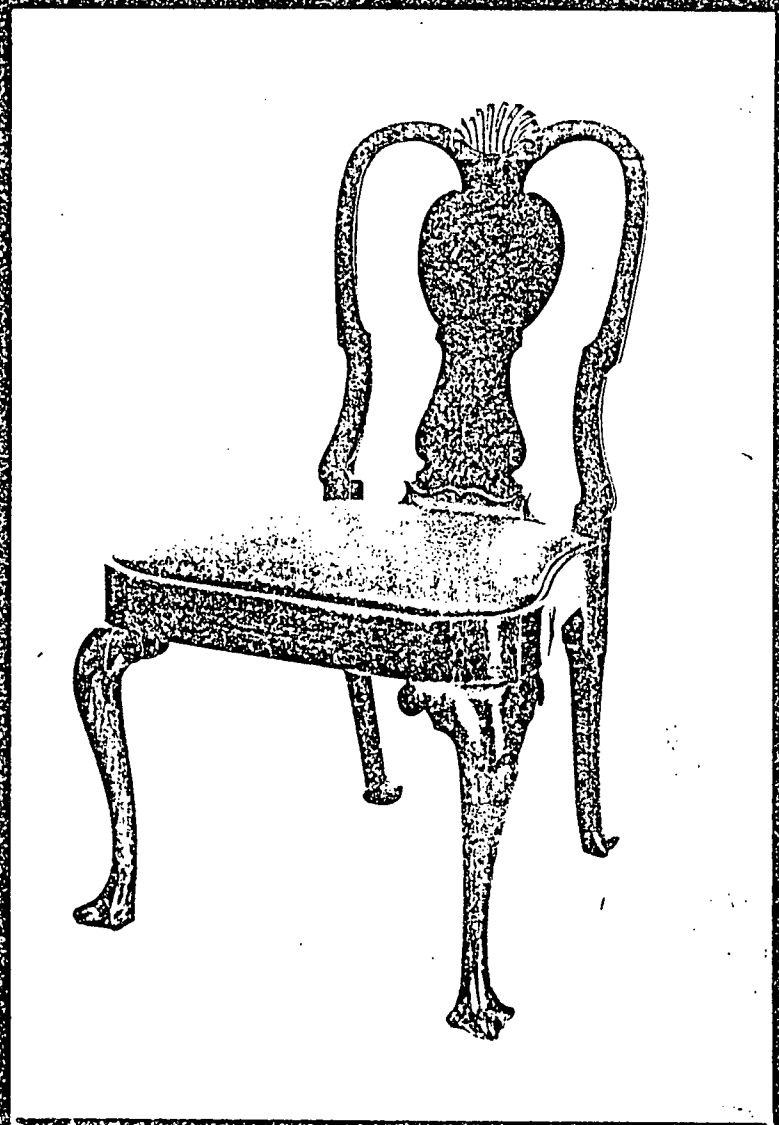


Fig. 286. Walnut side chair. New York (?), 1740-60. h:38" w:22" d:22"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

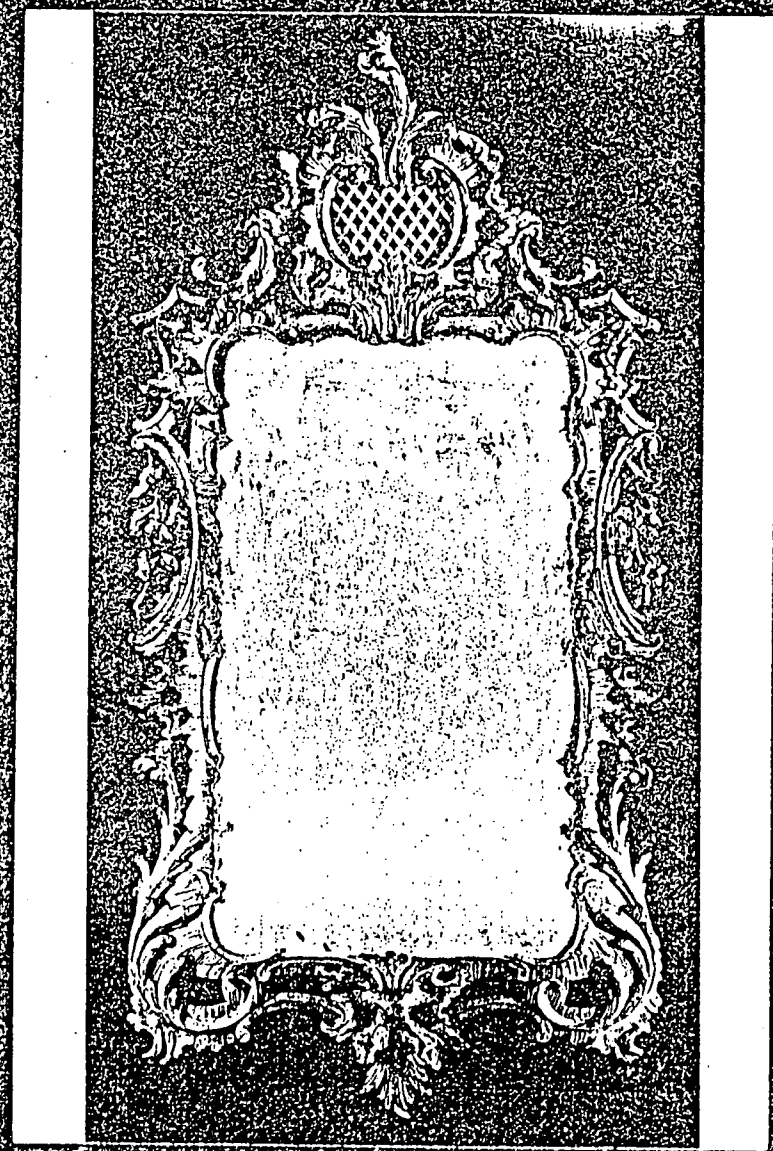


Fig. 287. Looking glass. England (?) 1760-90. approximately 54" x 25"
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum



Fig. 288. Elizabeth Page (possibly Thomas Nelson's daughter, b. 1770, who married Mann Page in 1788) by Charles Willson Peale.

Courtesy of Mrs. Douglas Crocker, Fitchburg, Massachusetts

## Conclusion

We have considered the Nelson House room by room, discussing the furnishings in terms of room use. The overall character of the decorations is one of high style and elegance. Another quality which should become evident by the end of the tour is the relative spareness of the furnishings. Only in the nineteenth century did taste, comfort and availability (largely through mechanical production) combine to make household commodities abundant. Chairs, candlesticks, and other items were commonly taken from room to room as needed. The unseen energy performing these and countless other tasks was a legion of house servants, without whom the house could not have functioned as it is presented in this plan.

Thus the Nelson House is more than a background for Thomas Nelson and his family alone. While the associations of particular paintings, desk accessories, books, etc. are personalized as much as possible, the house cannot help but represent the life style of a class particular to the Tidewater area. Standing within sight of one of the rivers which made Virginia's trade and wealth possible, and enduring the battle in which the Revolutionary War for independence culminated, the Nelson House offers a singularly dramatic setting for this segment of eighteenth century American culture.

It is impossible to be authentic to the last detail, because sufficient evidence does not exist. The recommendations for furnishings are based on documentary sources, comparable houses and life styles, and knowledge of the qualities and characteristics of the furnishings. The intent has been to restore rather than to redecorate. For this

reason some suggestions may not suit modern tastes of balance, color, or use. In considering authenticity, one must also weigh the practicality of acquiring certain pieces. It may be difficult to buy or even locate many objects of the quality recommended. It is hoped that the text and illustrations will be a valuable guide both for the acquisition and interpretation of the Nelson House furnishings.

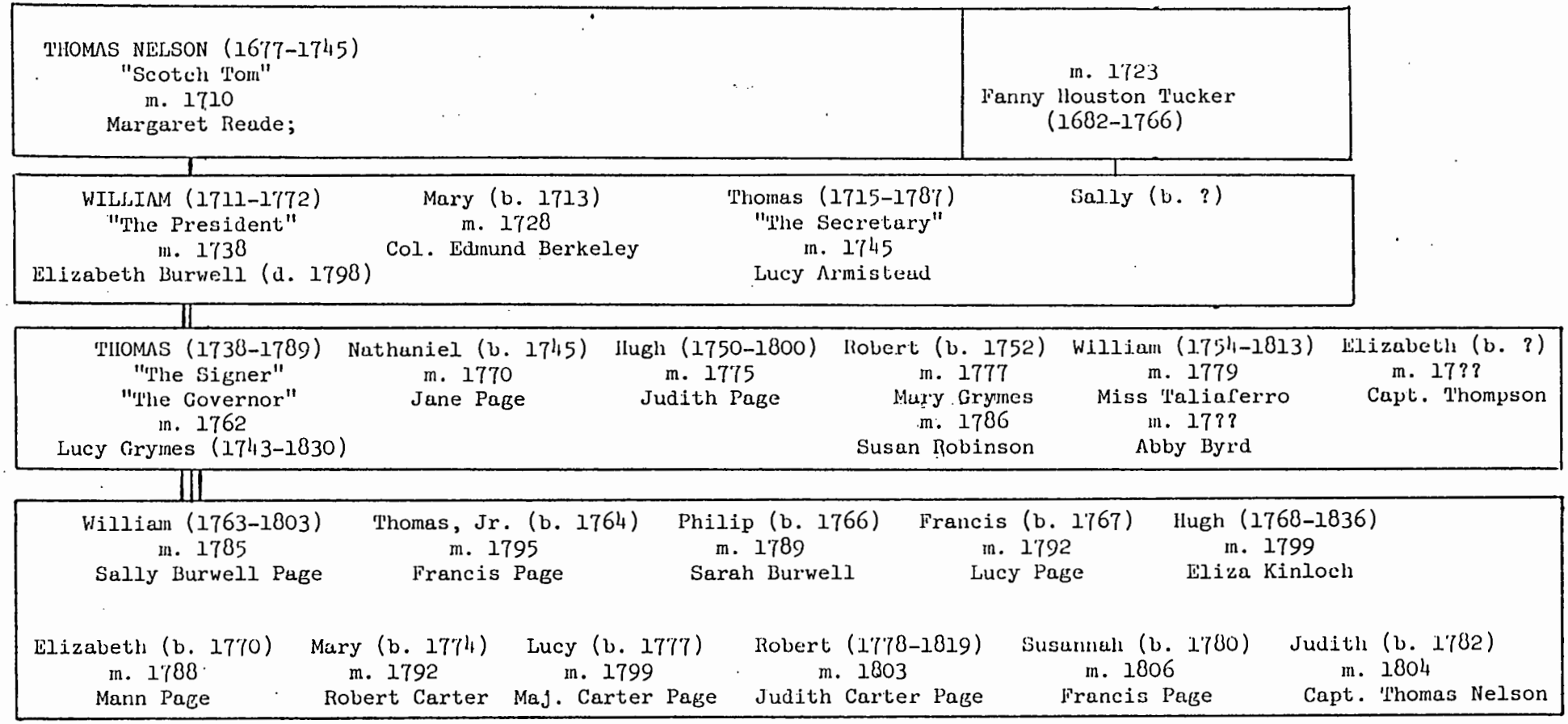
Appendix A: Four generations of the Nelson family of Yorktown, Virginia

Appendix B: Thomas Nelson's inventory, dated July 20, 1789, taken from the York County Records, Wills and Inventories, vol. 23, 1783-1811, p. 181-183. Missing 2/8/89

Appendix C: "The Arrangement of a Dinner or Supper Table, Consisting of Nine Dishes" including "Bills of Fare" from The Frugal Housewife: or, Complete Woman Cook. . . by Susannah Carter (London and Philadelphia, 1796), p. 128-132.

Figures 289-291, showing partial dinner services in Chinese export porcelain and English creamware.

Appendix D: Books which Thomas Nelson is known to or is likely to have owned.




Appendix A

The Nelsons of Yorktown, Virginia,
showing Thomas Nelson's grandfather (1st generation), father, aunt and uncle
(2nd generation), brothers and sister (3rd generation), and children (4th generation)



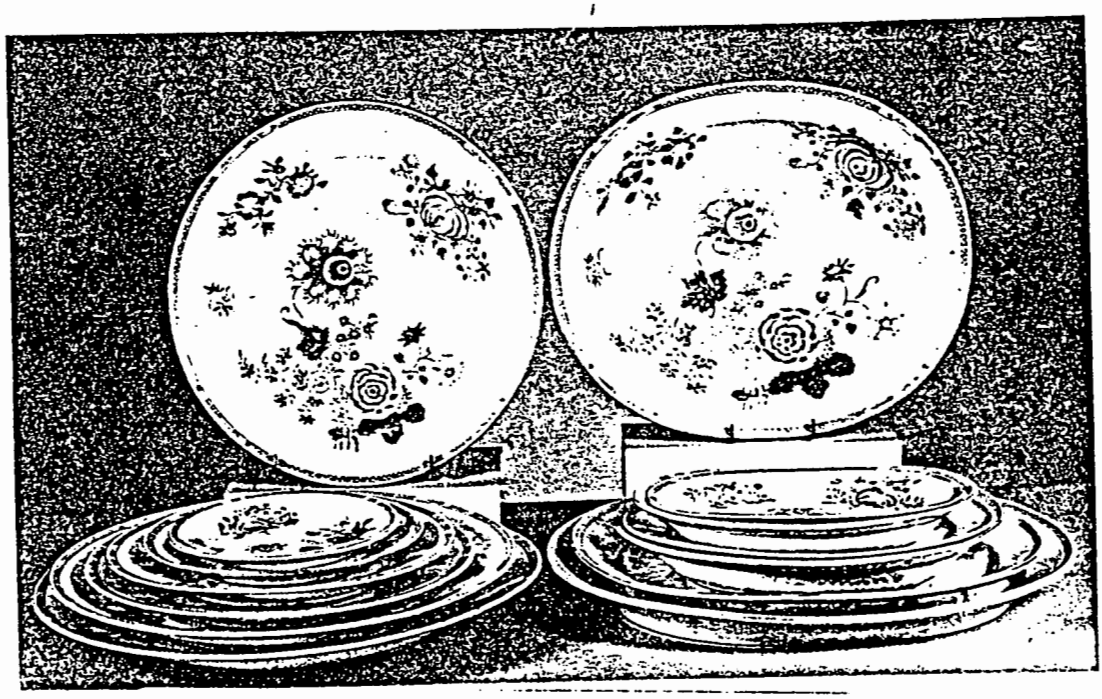
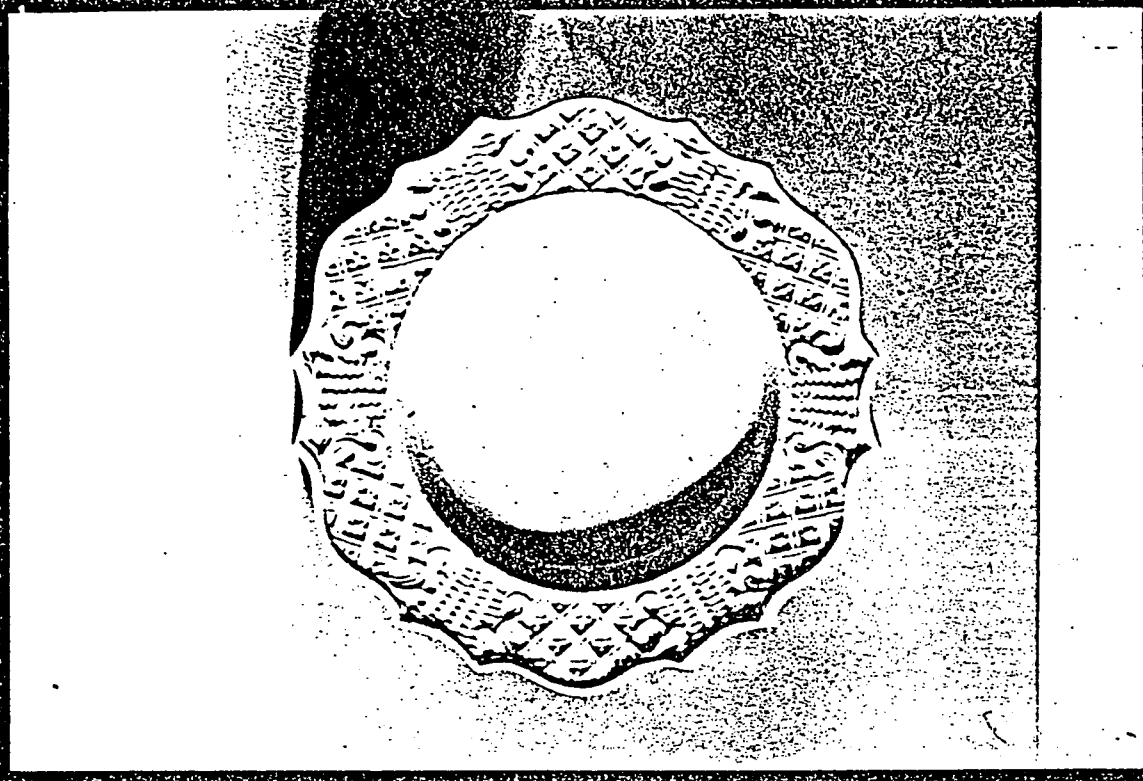


Fig. 289 a,b. Soup tureens, platters, and dishes. Chinese export porcelain, "famille rose" pattern in polychrome enamel. 1740-60.

See also figures 282-284.

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum





Fign 290 a. Cup plate. England, 1750-60. Salt-glazed earthenware, white body. Molded basket-weave and diaper pattern rim. Serpentine, Queen's ware edge. diam: 3 3/4"

Fig. 290 b. Plate. ENgland, 1760-80. Salt-glazed stoneware, gray body. Molded diaper pattern rim with overglaze of green. Serpentine, Queen's ware edge. With overglaze pink enamel in center. diam: 9"



Fig. 291a. Feather edged creamware plate with transfer print design. Derbyshire (?) England. 1770-85.

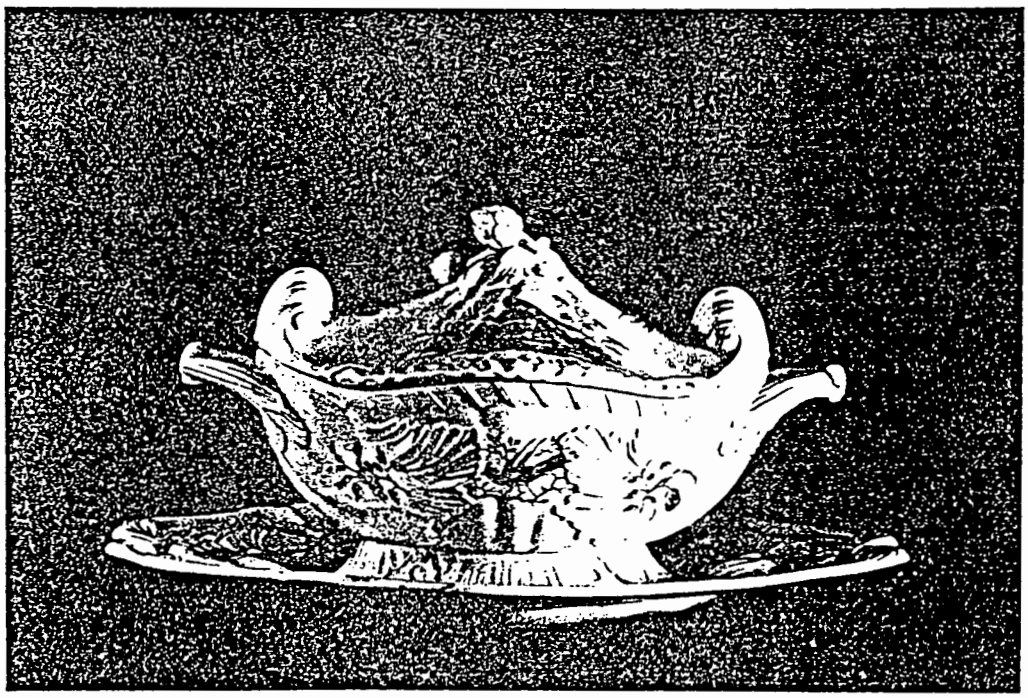


Fig. 291b. Covered tureen and stand. Wedgwood, 1770-80. Creamware with black transfer printed decoration

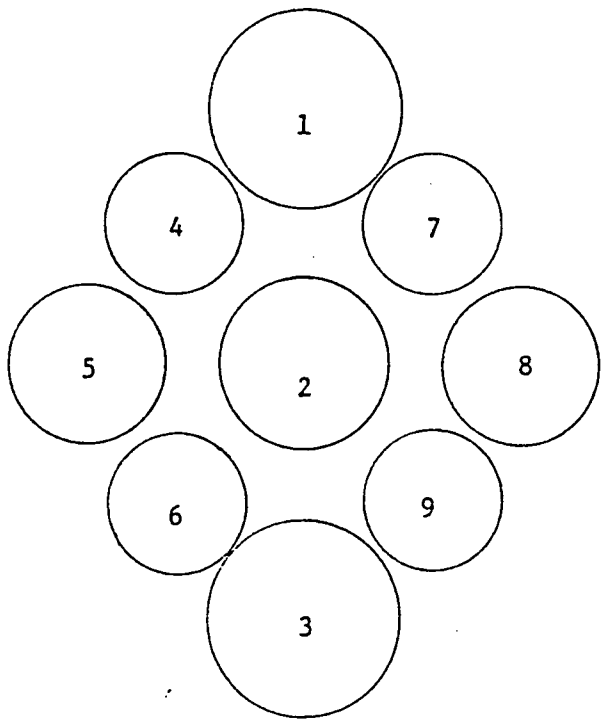
Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

APPENDIX C

ARRANGEMENT

OF A DINNER OR SUPPER TABLE

CONSISTING OF NINE DISHES




From The Frugal Housewife: or, Complete Woman Cook . . . by Susannah Carter (London and Philadelphia, 1796), p. 128-132.

## Bills of Fare

Disposed in the Order the Dishes are to stand upon the Table.

### BILL OF FARE FOR JANUARY.

First Course.

1 Cod's Head
2 Soup Sante
3 Roast Beef
4 Scotch Collops
5 Leg of Lamb
6 Plumb Pudding
7 Petit Patties
8 Boiled Chickens
9 Tongue

Second Course.

1 Roast Turkey
2 Jellies
3 Woodcocks
4 Marinated Sme
5 Leg of Lamb
6 Almond Cheesecakes
7 Minced Pies
8 Larks
9 Lobsters

### BILL OF FARE FOR FEBRUARY.

First Course.

1 Dish of Fish
2 Pease Soup
3 Fillet of Veal
4 Chickens
5 French Pie
6 Beef Collops
7 Ham
8 Rump of Beef à la Daube
9 Marrow Pudding

Second Course

1 Wild Fowls
2 Epergne
3 Hare
4 Cardoons
5 Scolloped Oysters
6 Tartlets
7 Stewed Pippins
8 Ragout Melle
9 Artichoke Bottoms

BILL OF FARE FOR APRIL.

First Course

1 Crimp Cod and Smelts
2 Spring Soup
3 Loin of Veal
4 Boiled Chickens
5 Pigeon Pie
6 Small Puddings
7 Cutlets à la Maintenon
8 Beef Trembling
9 Tongue

Second Course

1 Ducklings
2 Jellies and Syllabubs
3 Ribs of Lamb
4 Asparagus
5 Roast Sweetbreads
6 Tansy
7 Black Caps
8 Oyster Loaves
9 Mushrooms

BILL OF FARE FOR MAY.

First Course

1 Calvert's Salmon broiled
2 Vermicelli Soup
3 Chine of Lamb
4 Rabbits with Onions
5 Pigeon Pie raised
6 Ox Palates
7 Collared Mutton
8 Breast of Veal ragou'd
9 Pudding

Second Course

1 Green Goose
2 Epergne
3 Roast Chickens
4 Asparagus
5 Green Gooseberry Tarts
6 Lamb Cutlets
7 Cocks Combs
8 Custards
9 Stewed Celery

BILL OF FARE FOR JULY

First Course

1 Mackarel, &c.
2 Herb Soup
3 Boiled Goose and stewed red Cabbage
4 Breast of Veal à la Braise
5 Venison Pastry
6 Chickens
7 Lemon Pudding
8 Neck of Venison
9 Mutton Cutlets

Second Course

1 Roast Turkey
2 Fruit
3 Roast Pigeons
4 Stewed Peas
5 Sweetbreads
6 Custards
7 Apricot Tart
8 Fricasee of Rabbits
9 Cucumbers

BILL OF FARE FOR AUGUST

First Course

1 Stewed Soals
2 Craw-fish Soup
3 Fillet of Veal
4 Chickens
5 French Patty
6 Scotch Collops
7 Turkey à la Daube
8 Marrow Pudding
9 Tongue

Second Course

1 Toast Ducks
2 Jellies
3 Leveret
4 Macaroni
5 Cheesecakes
6 Matelot of Eels
7 Fillets of Soals
8 Apple Pie
9 Fricasee of Sweetbreads

BILL OF FARE FOR OCTOBER.

First Course

1 Cod and Oyster Sauce
2 Almond Soup
3 Tongue and Udder
4 Jugged Hares
5 French Patty
6 Chickens
7 Small Puddings
8 Pork Chops roasted
9 Torrent de Veau

Second Course

1 Pheasants
2 Jellies
3 Turkey
4 Stewed Pears
5 Roast Lobsters
6 White Fricasee
7 Mushrooms
8 Oyster Loaves
9 Pippins

BILL OF FARE FOR NOVEMBER.

First Course

1 A dish of Fish
2 Vermicelli Soup
3 Chine of Pork
4 Veal Cutlets
5 Boiled Turkey and Oyster Sauce
6 Beef Collops
7 Ox Palates
8 Leg of Lamb and Spinach
9 Harrico

Second Course

1 Woodcocks
2 Fruit
3 Hare
4 Sheep's Rumps
5 Oyster Patty
6 Blanchmange
7 Crocant
8 Ragou'd Lobsters
9 Lambs ears

## APPENDIX D

Book bought by Thomas Nelson from the Virginia Gazette Printing Office[1] in Williamsburg between 1750 and 1752:

Montaigne, Michel de. Essays of Michael Signeur de Montaigne ... with marginal notes ... and an Account of the Author's Life. (probable edition: London, 1738)

Books bought from the same office by Thomas Nelson's father, William, between 1750 and 1766:

Haemmerlein, Thomas a Kempis. Opera omnia ad autographa eiusdem emendata ... Editio novissima ... Coloniae Agrippinae, 1728.

Sherlock, Richard. Practical Meditations upon the Four Last Things. London, 1771.

Hutchinson, Thomas. Xenophon (Greek and Latin text). London, 1748.

Schrevelius, Cornelius. Corn. Schrevelii Lexicon manuale graeco-latinum et latino-graecum. London, 1725.

A selection of books appropriate to Nelson's personal and business interests:

Science:

Costard, G. History of Astronomy exemplified by the Globes. London, 1767.

Moore, E. Supplement to all Treatises on the Use of Globes, London, 1751.

Ferguson, James. The Use of a New Orrery. London, 1746.

Law and politics:

Cockings, George. The Paoliad, or Corsican Memoirs: a Poem. London, 1769.

Boswell, James. Account of Corsica. London, 1746.

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[1] I am grateful to Mrs. Gregory Stiverson, of the Research Department of Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., for her generosity in sharing this information from notes to her forthcoming publication on books sold by the Virginia Gazette Printing Office.

Books appropriate to Nelson's personal and business interests, cont.

Law and politics

Jacob, Giles. A new Law-Dictionary: containing the Interpretation and Definition of Words and Terms used in the Law, etc. London, 1772.

Jacob, Giles. Every man his own Lawyer: or, a Summary of the Laws of England, etc. London, 1772.

Dickinson, John. Letters from a farmer in Philadelphia. 1768. Expresses colonial viewpoint toward unjust taxation.

Military ~~texts and drill manuals~~

Bland, Humphrey. A Treatise of Military Discipline. London, 1740

Windham, William. A Plan of Discipline Composed for the Use of the Militia of the County of Norfolk. London, 1759.

Bland and Windham were two of the most widely used sources on military strategy in the years before the Revolution.

Pickering, Timothy. An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia. Salem, Massachusetts, 1775.

Lambert, Richard. A New System of Military Discipline, Founded on Principle. Philadelphia, 1776.

Steuben, Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand, Baron von. Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States. 1778, 1779.

History and geography

Maitland, William. A History of London. London, 1775.

Stith, William. The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia. Williamsburg, 1747.

Kitchin, Thomas. A General Atlas, Descriptive of the Whole Universe. London, 1773.

Books appropriate to Nelson's personal and business interests, cont.

Agriculture:

Miller, Philip. Gardener's Dictionary. London, 1731.

Lancake, E. and R. and John Miller. Figures of the most beautiful, useful and uncommon Plants described in the Gardener's Dictionary. London, 1760.

Gooch, William. A Dialogue Between Thomas Sweet-Scented and William Oronoco, Planters ... and Justice Love-Country, who can speak for himself. 1730 (?).

Bradly, Richard. The Compleat Seedsman's Monthly Calendar. Shewing the Best and most Easy Method for Raising and Cultivating Every Sort of Seed belonging to a Kitchen and Flower Garden. London, 1738.

Sauvages, Pierre Augustin Boissier de. Directions for the Breeding and Management of Silk-worms ... With a preface giving some Account of the Rise and Progress of the Scheme for encouraging the Culture of Silk, in Pennsylvania, and the adjacent Colonies. Philadelphia, 1770.

Religion:

A New Manual of Devotions in Three Parts. London, 1771.

Baxter, Richard. The Saints Everlasting Rest. London, 1688.

Drelincourt, Charles. The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death. London, 1766.

Wesley, John. Christian Library. Bristol, 1749-55.

Books belonging to Thomas Nelson's eldest son, William Nelson, Jr. (1763-1803).[1] Because none of the books listed has a publication date later than 1788, it is possible that many of these books were collected by Thomas Nelson and passed on to William, who inherited most of Nelson's estate and moved into the Yorktown house following his father's death.

The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events, from 1775 to 1784, [ed. John Almon]. 17 vols. London, 1775-1784.

A Collection of Interesting, Authentic Papers, Relative to the Dispute between Great Britain and America . . . Causes and Progress of that Misunderstanding, from 1764 to 1775, [ed. John Almon]. London, 1777, and Journal of the Proceedings of the Congress, Held at Philadelphia, May 10, 1775, [ed. John Almon]. London, 1776 or 1778.

The General History of Polybius . . . Translated. . . by Mr. [James] Hampton. 3rd ed. London, 1772-1773.

Augustinus Smith. Dissertatio medica inauguralis de morbillis. Edinburgh, [1787].

William Robertson. The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V, with a View of the Progress of Society in Europe, from the Subversion of the Roman Empire to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century. 1st ed., London, 1769.

Paul Henry Mallett. Northern Antiquities: or, a Description of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Laws of the Ancient Danes, and other Northern Nations. . . London, 1770.

The Orations of [Marcus Tullius] Cicero, Translated with Notes Historical and Critical, and Arguments to Each, by William Guthrie. London, 1778.

The Letters of Pliny the Consul [Plinius Caecilius Secundus]: with Occasional Remarks by William Melmoth. London, 1770.

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[1] This collection of books is now owned by the Comte de Grasse Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and left on deposit at the Library of the College of William and Mary. A thorough checklist of the books has been compiled, with an introduction by Emory G. Evans, and published in the Botetourt Publications, Number 3, issued by the Botetourt Bibliographical Society, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1972.

[Giovanni Paolo Marana]. Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, Who Lived Five and Forty Years Undiscovered at Patis. . . Written originally in Arabic, Translated into Italian from thence into English. London, 1770.

David Hume. The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688. Edinburgh, 1754.

John Gillies. The History of Ancient Greece, Its Colonies and Conquests; from the Earliest Accounts, till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East, including the History of Literature, Philosophy, and the Fine Arts. London, 1786.

Hugh Blair. Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. London, 1785.

William Guthrie. A New Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar; and Present State of the Several Kingdoms of the World . . . London, 1771.

William Robertson. The History of America. London, 1783.

Cesare Beccaria Bonesand, Marquis di. An Essay on Crimes and Punishments, Translated from the Italian; with a Commentary, Attributed to. . . Voltaire, Translated from the French. London, 1767.

The Complete Works of Monsieur de Montesquieu Translated from the French. London, 1777.

Edward Gibbon. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. London, 1788.

Memoirs of Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sully, Prime Minister to Henry the Great. Containing the History of the Life and Reign of that Monarch, and his Own Administration under Him. . . London, 1778.

David Hume. Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects. Edinburgh, 1753.

Homer. The Iliad. . . Translated by Alexander Pope. London, 1781.

Homer. The Odyssey. . . Translated by Alexander Pope. London, 1771.

[Robert Dodsley, ed.]. A Collection of Poems by Several Hands. London, 1782.

Samuel Foote. The Dramatic Works. . .London, 1778-1782.

The Works of Virgil in Latin and English. The Original Text Correctly Printed from the Most Authentic Editions, Collated for this Purpose. The Aeneid Translated by the Rev. Mr. Christopher Pitt, the Eclogues and Georgics, with Notes on the Whole, by the Rev. Mr. Joseph Warton. . . . London, 1753.

Thomas Sherlock. Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church. Oxford, 1754.

Samuel Johnson. The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia. A Tale. London, 1759.

Jean François Marmontel. Moral Tales. London, 1764-1766.

David Garrick. The Poetical Works . . . London, 1785.

Vicesimus Knox. Essays, Moral and Literary. London, 1785.

William Hayley. Poems and Plays. London, 1785.

James Thomson. The Seasons. London, 1778.

John Milton. Paradise Lost. A Poem. London, 1778.

The Works of [Publius Cornelius] Tacitus. With Political Discourses upon that Author by THomas Gordon. London, 1770.

Samuel Johnson. A Dictionary of the English Language. . . London, 1755.

Vincent Claude Chalons. THe History of France: from the Establishment of that Monarchy under Pharamond, to the Death of Lewis XIII. London, 1752.

[Filippo Mazzei]. Recherches historiques et politiques sur les Etats-Unis de L'Amerique Septentrionale, ou l'on traite des etablissemens des treize colonies, de leurs rapports & de leurs dissentions avec la Grande-Bretagne, de leurs gouvernemens avant & apres la revolution . . . Par un citoyen de Virginie . . . Paris, 1778.

Jacques Benigne Bossuet. Discours sur l'Histoire universelle. . . pour expliquer la suite de la religion et les changemens des empires. . . Paris, 1681.

James Beattie. An essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth; in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism. Edinburgh, 1770.

Humphrey Prideaux. THe Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations. London, 1749.

L[aurence] Howell. A Compleat History of the Holy Bible . . . London, 1716.

Hugh Blair. Sermons. London, 1785.

Robert Nelson. A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England: with Collects and Prayers for Each Solemnity. London, 1704.

Alexander Dalrymple. A Collection of Charts and Memoirs. London, 1772.

Nathan Bailey. An Universal Etymological English Dictionary. London, 1721.

William Robertson. The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of James VI till His Accession to the Crown of England; with a Review of the Scotch History Previous to that Period. London, 1759.

Abel Boyer. The Royal Dictionary. London. 1771.

Nathaniel Bacon. An Historical and Political Discourse of the Laws and Government of England. . . London, 1689.

Reverend Griffith Hughes. The Natural History of Barbadoes. London. 1750.

Paul de Rapin Thoyras. The History of England. London, 1732-37.

(The above list was compiled from abbreviated titles; the complete title and imprint have been supplied.)

## Selected Bibliography


Evans, Emory G., Thomas Nelson of Yorktown, Revolutionary Virginian. Williamsburg, 1975.

Farish, Hunter D., ed., The Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion. Williamsburg, 1965.

Fowler, John, and John Cornforth, English Decoration in the 18th Century. Princeton, 1974.

Hatch, Charles E., Jr., The Nelson House and the Nelsons, General Study. Washington, 1969.

Mason, Francis Norton, ed., John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia. Richmond, 1937.

Meade, William, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia. Philadelphia, 1857.

Middleton, Arthur Pierce, Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era. Newport News, Va., 1953.

Montgomery, Florence, Printed Textiles, English and American Cottons and Linens, 1700-1850. New York, 1970.

Page, Susannah Nelson, "Lucy Grymes Nelson," Ms, April 10, 1835, Smith-Digges Papers, 1789-1843. Colonial Williamsburg.

Rice, Howard C., Jr., Marquis de Chastellux' Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782. Chapel Hill, 1963.