

H. EARLY NEOCLASSICAL

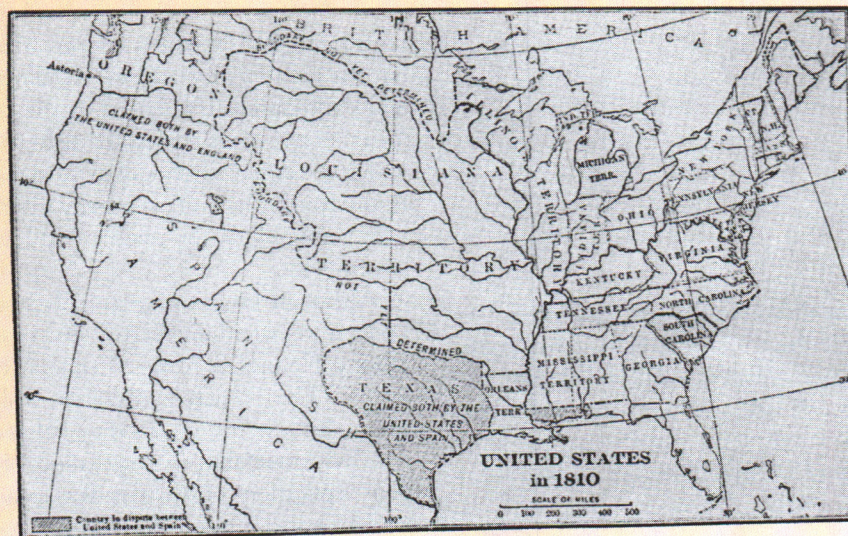
1740S–1790S

The Neoclassical Movement, beginning in Rome and France in the 1740s, initiates a renewed interest in classical antiquity that encompasses Europe, Russia, England, and the United States. An outgrowth of scholarship and archaeology and a reaction to the Rococo, this eclectic style seeks to imitate or evoke images of ancient Greece and Rome in art, architecture, interiors, furniture, decorative arts, landscapes, literature, dress, and behavior. Drawing on models from Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the Etruscans, the Early Neoclassical style can be plain, severe, and monumental or express the lightness, grace, and refinement of Rococo with classical forms and motifs.

Although drawing on earlier forms of classicism, the Neoclassical Movement regards antiquity differently from these previous movements. Earlier designers saw themselves as inheriting antiquity and continuing its traditions. They tried to design in the manner of the ancients. In contrast, Neoclassical designers divide antiquity into different periods and styles with differing visual characteristics. They create designs by removing individual traits from their historical context and using them to solve present design problems.

The main impetus for the Neoclassical movement are the discovery and excavations at Herculaneum (begun in 1738) and Pompeii (begun in 1748), two Greco-Roman towns near Naples, Italy, that were buried by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 B.C.E. This, the first great archaeological event of modern times, captures the imaginations of Europeans. Archaeology and the discoveries become fashionable topics for discussion and emulation. The excavations inspire numerous architects, artists, and designers. The discoveries also fill a gap in classical knowledge—that of domestic interiors. Previously there were few such examples to study so designers created what they believed were classical spaces.

Systematic scientific investigations by scholars, architects, and artists form a strong theoretical base for Neoclassicism. After studying ancient structures, many publish their analyses, theories, and drawings in architectural and art historical treatises. Designers now can more fully understand and choose from a broad spectrum of classical models. An important outgrowth of these investigations is the knowledge that Grecian art inspired the Romans. Admiration for Greece leads to the preference for Grecian models in the early 19th century.



attempt to disperse the assembly, while an indecisive Louis XVI delays action. On July 14, 1789, the Parisians take the *Bastille*, a royal fortress, forcing Louis to give in to their demands. The king and his family soon are imprisoned at the *Tuilleries* in Paris. In 1791, a new constitution forms a parliamentary government and limits the powers of the monarchy. Although Louis swears obedience to it, he continues to work against the revolution. To help restore the king's power, Austria and Prussia declare war on France. Nevertheless, on August 10, 1792, the monarchy is overthrown. In September, a National Convention declares France a republic. The king is convicted as a traitor and is executed in early 1793. The violent Reign of Terror ensues, and the queen, numerous aristocrats, priests, and even commoners are put to death.

CONCEPTS

As early as 1730, critics attack the artificiality and lack of classical order in Rococo as symptomatic of a depraved modern society. They call for a new classicism, one that is rational, truthful, and natural or derived from nature based upon ideas of the Enlightenment and contemporary architecture in Italy. They hope that association with ideal architecture of Antiquity will engender exemplary French citizens. Additionally, the unsettled times foster a desire for stability that manifests in renewed order, repose, and other attributes of classicism. By far, the greatest stimulus and influence are the archaeological excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum. These give renewed interest in the classical past and encourage more study of ancient buildings by architects and others who publish their ideas, which gives Neoclassicism a sound theoretical base.

CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIFS

General characteristics include light scale, rational planning, mathematical proportions, and an emphasis on straight lines and/or geometric forms. Classical forms and details dominate architecture, interiors, and furniture. Designers employ classical attributes, such as symmetry and repose, as well as classical forms and motifs. The French call the style *goût grec* or *goût arabe*.

■ **Motifs.** Motifs (Fig. 23-1, 23-2, 23-4, 23-5, 23-14) come from Greek, Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian sources. Common are garlands, swags, frets, *guilloches*, palmettes, classical figures, sphinxes, masks, flowers, bouquets, baskets of flowers, shepherds, shepherdesses, farm tools, and balloons after the first successful balloon flight in 1783. Although classical motifs dominate, some Rococo themes continue, such as flowers, shepherds, shepherdesses, bows, *Chinoiserie*, and *singerie* (Fig. 23-8).

ARCHITECTURE

France never completely rejects classical influence in architecture despite the dominance of the Rococo style in the first half of the 18th century. The Royal Academy of Architecture continues to emphasize classicism. French designers and architects, visiting the French Academy in Rome, observe the work of their colleagues, who adopt a severe, structurally honest style like the Italians. Architects collect the engravings of Piranesi, read the newest architectural theories, and visit ancient ruins. French Neoclassicism, therefore, draws on French 17th-century (Baroque) and Italian 16th-century classical traditions (Renaissance), the rationalist thought of the Enlightenment, and archaeology.

Architecture develops from the rationalist views of its designers, who strive for geometric volumes, structural honesty, and simplicity. Structures are blocklike with plain façades and minimal ornamentation. The scale of buildings varies from monumental to elegant and refined. Proportions often derive from antique sources. Designers strive for horizontality, clarity, stability, and repose, those classical attributes that give feelings of dignity and grandeur. Emphasis on scale and specific design details to proclaim status and rank lessens. Although designs often are assemblages of ancient motifs, the result is clearly modern.

Neoclassical is more archaeologically correct than previous classical developments. Through their own or others' investigations and the numerous pattern books and treatises, architects are well acquainted with antique design language, methods, and concepts. Using antique models that supply form and details, designers often exactly reproduce individual parts, such as columns, but rarely copy entire buildings. Late in the century, some begin designing visionary structures with fanciful details, an influence of the English Picturesque. Following the French and American



▲ 23-1. Motifs: Vase in *porcelaine dure de Sèvres*; decorated by Boizot and Thomire, and designs for marquetry panel vignettes, c. late 18th century; by Pierre-Gabriel Berthault.

Revolutions and new, more democratic forms of government, Neoclassicism becomes the preferred style for government buildings, which continues through much of the 20th and into the 21st centuries.

Older building types, such as churches (Fig. 23-2), palaces (Fig. 23-3), and *hôtels* continue. New types include markets, hospitals, theaters, and auditoriums.

Public and Private Buildings

- **Site Orientation.** Most structures face streets or squares. Some residences are set in gardens that are carefully planned to look unplanned. They often feature classical and/or Gothic “ruins” in the English manner as an influence of the Romantic Movement.
- **Floor Plans.** Architects occasionally attempt to adapt antique plans to modern needs while striving to apply logic and reason to the planning of space. Distribution of rooms in residences remains generally the same as previously, but designers pay more attention to function. Plans are generally rectangular or centralized.
- **Materials.** Brick, stone, and marble are the chief building materials (Fig. 23-2, 23-3). Some buildings have cast-iron details. Designers use both trabeated and arcuated construction. A few reach back to Gothic construction techniques, which they consider honest.
- **Façades.** Exteriors (Fig. 23-2, 23-3) are often composed of large geometric blocks and plain walls. Parts are clearly articulated, but ornamentation is minimal. Low-relief rustication highlights lower stories and some entrances. Upper walls are smooth and flat to emphasize volume. Pediments, columns, and porticoes accentuate entrances and ends. Columns are structural not decorative, while pilasters and engaged columns articulate façades and form bays. Civic façades are usually tripartite. Stringcourses rarely delineate stories, but most structures have a prominent cornice between wall and roof.
- **Windows and Doors.** Windows (Fig. 23-3) are large and rectangular with plain and relatively flat surrounds. Some have straight lintels or triangular pediments above them. Designers emphasize doorways through central placement and with columns, pilasters, pediments, and rustication.
- **Roofs.** Most roofs are flat with balustrades (Fig. 23-3).

INTERIORS

As in architecture, Louis XVI interiors return to classicism in attributes and decoration instead of changes in layout and modes of living. Aristocratic society has not changed; its members still seek luxury, comfort, and gaiety. However, some occasionally advocate the (perceived) simplicity of the ancient world as long as it does not intrude on their quest for pleasure. Interiors retain the human scale, light proportions, and charm of the Rococo. Designers now emphasize classical motifs, symmetry, straight lines, and geometric curves. As before, unity is important.

Because there were few known examples of Greek and Roman domestic architecture, previous classical interiors and furniture had been speculative at best. By this period, however, designers are able to visit archaeological discoveries to see homes in which the ancients lived. A few “Etruscan” rooms (*goût étrusque*) with decoration derived from Pompeian examples appear in the 1760s. Late in the period, designers and cabinetmakers begin to more closely copy ancient decoration and furniture.



▲ 23-2. S. Geneviève (*Panthéon*), and central crossing with dome, 1757–1790; Paris, France; Jacques-Germain Soufflot.

Public and Private Buildings

■ *Floor Plans.* The trend toward smaller, more intimate spaces in residences continues. The *salon* and *salle à manger* (dining room) become separate spaces. Dining rooms and *boudoirs* are more common.

■ *Color.* Colors become lighter and cooler, dominated by pale green, white, gray blue, and pearl gray. Black and red color schemes dominate Etruscan-style rooms.

■ *Floors.* Parquet remains in vogue for most residential spaces (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6). Black and white marble also is fashionable, especially in churches and for residential vestibules, stair halls, and *salons*. The factories of Savonnerie, Aubusson, and Beauvais produce rugs in Neoclassical patterns (Fig. 23-4, 23-6). Matting usually replaces rugs in summer.

■ *Walls.* In public buildings, architectural details that contrast slightly with the walls are common. Color comes from building materials or paint (Fig. 23-2).

DESIGN SPOTLIGHT



Classical balustrade at roof

Plain stone facade

Corinthian columns

Small-scaled, box-shaped house

French doors

Classical balustrade surrounds terrace

Symmetrical balance

Planned garden

Architecture, Louis XVI: Originally built for Louis XV as a place of escape for him and his mistress, the elegant *Petit Trianon* on the grounds of Versailles was finished after her death. Designed by architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel, the symmetrically balanced small building epitomizes architectural concepts of French Neoclassicism, including symmetry, straight lines, and geometric forms. The exterior is austere, restrained in articulation, and intimate in scale. All four façades are different but unified by common elements such as the windows and classical balustrade that hides the low-pitched roof. The southwest façade has four projecting Corinthian columns in the center with lintels above them. The large French doors allow access to the terrace and garden beyond. The other façades have Corinthian pilasters, Ionic columns, or no columns at all.

In keeping with a desire for simplicity thought inherent in the lives of people of antiquity, Marie Antoinette later has the surrounding gardens of the *Petit Trianon* transformed to an informal natural garden of winding paths and curving water features to enhance the visual setting. She also commissions

Richard Mique to build the nearby *Le Hameau* (the Queen's hamlet), a rustic farm complex of farmhouse, dairy, and mill. Standing on the far side of a landscaped pond, *Le Hameau* is intended to evoke the atmosphere of a peasant village in Normandy. Marie Antoinette reigned supreme in this retreat environment, in which the *Petit Trianon*, a beautifully proportioned classical building, is in close proximity to rustic farm buildings—both clear statements of the queen's desire for simplicity and naturalness. [World Heritage Site]



▲ 23-3. *Petit Trianon*, 1761–1764, and *Le Hameau*, c. 1774–1783; Versailles, France; *Petit Trianon* by Ange-Jacques Gabriel, and *Le Hameau* by Richard Mique.

In dwellings, symmetry continues to define wall paneling (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6) even to the point of a false door to balance a real one as in the previous period. As before, the common form is a large panel flanked by two smaller panels; opposite walls are similarly treated; and paneling and architectural details continue to form a continuous, relatively flat surface with little variation in projection. A low dado with a field above capped by a cornice emulates the orders. Panel moldings, smaller than previously, are gilded or painted in a color contrasting with the center. Decorative painting, wallpaper, or fabric adorns panel centers (Fig. 23-5). Similar to Pompeiian and Italian Renaissance walls, French designs frequently display arabesques, grotesques, and classical figures (Fig. 23-4). Wall paintings usually have large areas of flat color articulated with borders and unobtrusive repeating patterns and/or figures inside them. *Grisaille*, which imitates relief sculpture in monochromatic grays, is especially fashionable.

Carved stucco (Fig. 23-5) becomes an alternative to wood paneling in the 1750s, and it often imitates marble or stone or forms panels. Wallpaper increases in use. Common patterns include architectural papers, colorful arabesques in the Pompeiian manner,

replications of textiles, and Chinese patterns. Matching or contrasting borders outline cornices and other architectural details. Framed tapestries feature classical themes. Mirrors with classical shapes and decoration adorn fireplaces, furniture, walls, and/or piers between windows.

Protruding less into the room than before, chimneypieces (Fig. 23-5, 23-6) retain the vertically integrated mantel and overmantel of earlier. Mantels again become rectangular with a straight shelf usually supported by columns or brackets. Classical motifs, such as swags, urns, or masks, are carved on supports and beneath the shelf. Although some mantels have contrasting colors of marble, most are plain white.

■ *Windows and Doors.* French doors and windows have complete entablatures above them. Windows in important rooms (Fig. 23-4) have curtains, with festoons being the most common form. Draperies and curtains have elaborate trims and usually match upholstery fabrics.

As important components of circulation paths, doorways in important spaces in public buildings are surrounded by elaborate classical moldings. Often, their heights are greater than those in residences. Door panels (Fig. 23-5, 23-6) in palaces and *hôtels* re-



▲ 23-4. *Cabinet doré*, Royal Apartments, *Palais de Versailles*, c. 1770s–1780s; Versailles, France; Richard Mique.

semble wall paneling. They may be painted or stained. Panel moldings may be gilded, and panel centers may have painted arabesque decorations. As in the Rococo period, paintings over doors are still in vogue, but subjects are classical themes or landscapes.

■ **Ceilings.** Public spaces (Fig. 23-2) often have vaulted and coffered ceilings enhanced with classical moldings. Domes may highlight crossings in churches or define an important area in other buildings. Residential ceilings (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6) vary from plain to ornate. Most are flat and simply painted. Ceilings in important rooms may have relatively flat combinations of geometric shapes symmetrically arranged and accented with classical motifs and flowers. Other spaces feature decorative borders with elaborate corner motifs.

■ **Textiles.** Textiles are basically the same types as in the Louis XV period, and their uses do not change (Fig. 23-7). But motifs now are classical—urns, acanthus leaves, and classically draped figures. Colors are lighter and often duller than before, such as gray or lilac, with white and gold becoming the most fashionable (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6). Cottons and linens become more common. Tapestries adorn sets of furniture, and stripes are more fashionable than before (Fig. 23-10, 23-11, 23-12). Bed hangings remain opulent and are often festoons with undercurtains (Fig. 23-15). All textiles in a room often match (Fig. 23-15).

DESIGN SPOTLIGHT

Interiors, Louis XVI: The *boudoir* of Marie Antoinette, a small room located between the bedchambers of the king and queen epitomizes the Neoclassical interior style in France. The room retains the charm and scale of the previous Rococo style but lines become straight and classical motifs replace naturalistic ones. Gold and silver paneling features symmetrical paintings of classical motifs in the Pompeiian manner. The light scale paintings in gold, pinks, and blues are composed of sphinxes, vases from which naturalistic flowers arise, classically draped figures, swags, and cameos. Bouquets of flowers decorate the

dado panels. Classical moldings surround the panels and the doorway. Sculpture replaces paintings over doors in this period and is often elaborate, as here in the stucco Muses by Philippe Laurent Roland. Symmetrical mirrors with arched tops enhance the light and visually increase the size of the space. In the center of the floor is the Queen's monogram, and the ceiling is adorned with a painting of Aurora, goddess of the dawn. The furniture is by Jean-Henri Riesener, one of the Queen's favorite *ébénistes*, and it continues the gold and silver classical theme.



▲ 23-5. *Boudoir* of Marie Antoinette, Royal Apartments, *Palais de Fontainebleau*, c. 1787; Fontainebleau, France; architecture by Pierre Rousseau.



▲ 23-6. The Tessé Room, 1768–1772; Paris; France. [Gift of Mrs. Herbert N. Straus, 1942 (42.203.1). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY]

■ **Lighting.** As before, the large windows provide bright light to rooms during the day, but the rooms are dark at night by today's standards. The use of oil lamps increases during the period, but they do not replace candles as the main artificial light source. The designs of ceiling lanterns, *lustres à cristeaux*, *flambeaux*, *candelabra*, *appliques*, and *guéridons* reflect the new taste by displaying classical elements, such as columns, urns, and lyres (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6, 23-8). *Girandoles* often feature classical figures. Ceiling fixtures hang from silk cords with tassels.



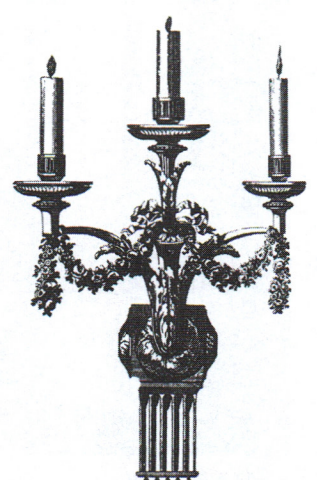
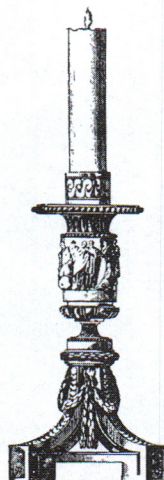
▲ 23-7. Textile: Brocade; France.

■ **Later Interpretations.** In the late 19th century, designers begin to revive Louis XVI interiors and furniture. American interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe helps reestablish a taste for French designs, starting with the renovation of her own home (Fig. 23-9). Louis XVI designs are still widely imitated today, but less so than Rococo designs.

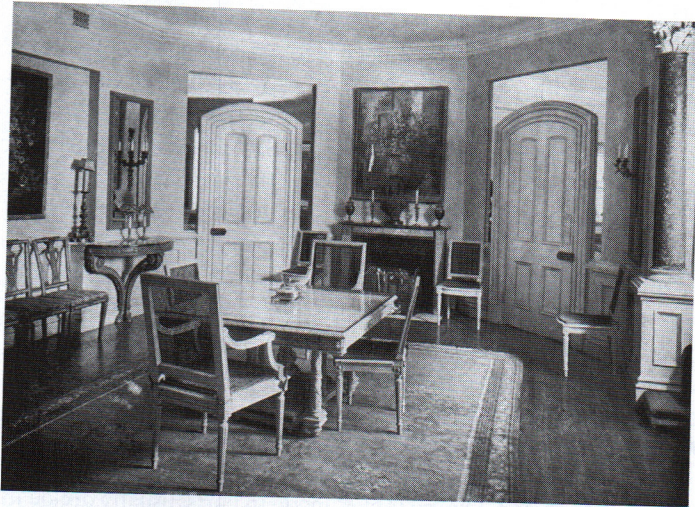
FURNISHINGS AND DECORATIVE ARTS

Louis XVI furniture maintains Rococo's light proportions, slender forms, human scale, and emphasis on comfort as well as some motifs, such as flowers, symbols of love, hunting, and musical instruments. Straight lines, geometric curves, and classical motifs distinguish Louis XVI furniture from Rococo. Pieces are simple rectangles with outlines softened by ornament. Columns, moldings, and other details carefully articulate parts in the classical manner. Circles, ovals, and ellipses replace Rococo's asymmetrical, complex curves. Legs become straight, tapered, and/or fluted. The quiver leg, shaped like a quiver of arrows, is new. Spirals, which are extremely difficult to carve, are reserved for the legs on the finest pieces. A characteristic feature is a re-entrant corner formed by part of a square or circle with a rosette in the center; it is usually found on *commodes* and on chair frames and legs. Oval backs are new. Late in the period, pieces often have large areas of plain mahogany, a reflection of a new emphasis on simplicity. As the height of French cabinetmaking, the style's construction, excellent proportions, and harmonious ornament are rarely surpassed. Although named for him, the style appears before Louis XVI takes the throne and continues after his death. Classical influence first appears as ornamentation between 1760 and 1770, a transitional period. By 1775, the style has fully taken hold.

All types of Louis XV furniture continue. Some new table forms based on Pompeiian designs appear, especially late in the period. Dining tables are more common. The Baroque and Rococo practice of designing furniture to suit the design and colors



▲ 23-8. Lighting: *Flambeau*, *candelabra*, and *appliqué*, France.



▲ 23-9. Later Interpretation: Dining room, Irving House (home of Elsie de Wolfe), c. 1898–1909; New York City; Elsie de Wolfe. Neoclassical Revival.

of the room persists. Form and proportions often determine the placement of a piece. Seating, beds, or storage pieces often sit in specially designed niches. Furniture is still arranged around the perimeter of the room when not in use.

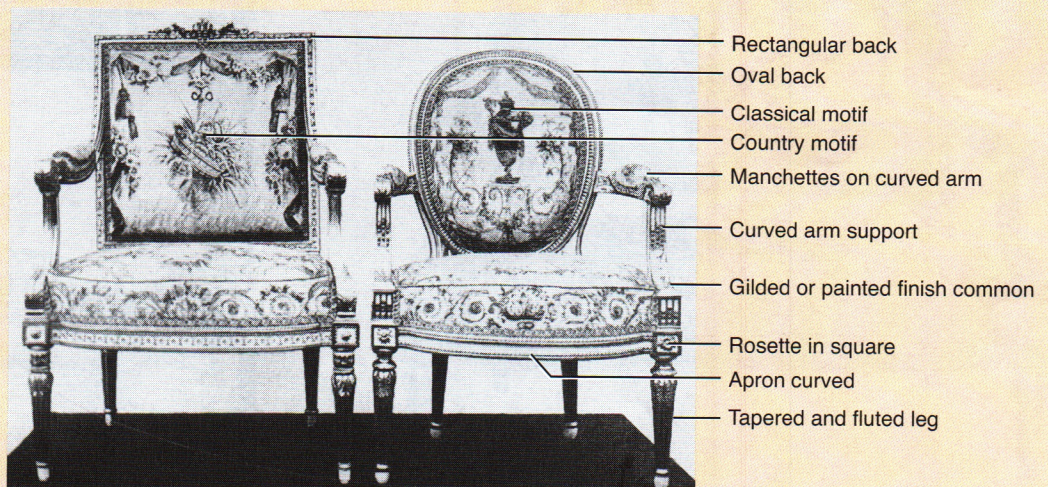
Private Buildings

■ **Materials.** Mahogany and ebony are the most common furniture woods. Wood frames of seating may be left natural, partially or entirely painted, or gilded. Especially fashionable is two-tone gilding composed of shiny and flat areas. Marquetry of flowers, landscapes, and/or classical scenes and geometric marquetry in lozenges and trellis patterns are universal. Boullework is revived. Both Oriental and French lacquerwork remain in vogue but Japanese lacquer in gold and black is preferred. Dominant colors for French lacquer are red, bright blue, and green. Gilt bronze mounts of classical motifs are unsurpassed in their excellence. Also common are metal inlays, toe caps, and casters. Porcelain plaques often decorate pieces, particularly writing furniture for women. Louis XVI's love of mechanical devices assures their incorporation into many pieces of furniture. At the end of the period, plain and undecorated mahogany surfaces and metal furniture, especially for tables, become fashionable.

DESIGN SPOTLIGHT

Furniture, Louis XVI: Similar in scale and configuration to Louis XV versions, *fauteuils* appear formally or informally grouped within interiors. Retaining the wood frames, composed of straight or geometric lines, joints are now articulated in the classical manner. Backs may be rectangular and oval. Legs are straight, tapered, and/or fluted; some are spirals. Classical repeating moldings, columns, gilding, and/or painting frequently accent the frame. Arms still have *manchettes*, which now rest

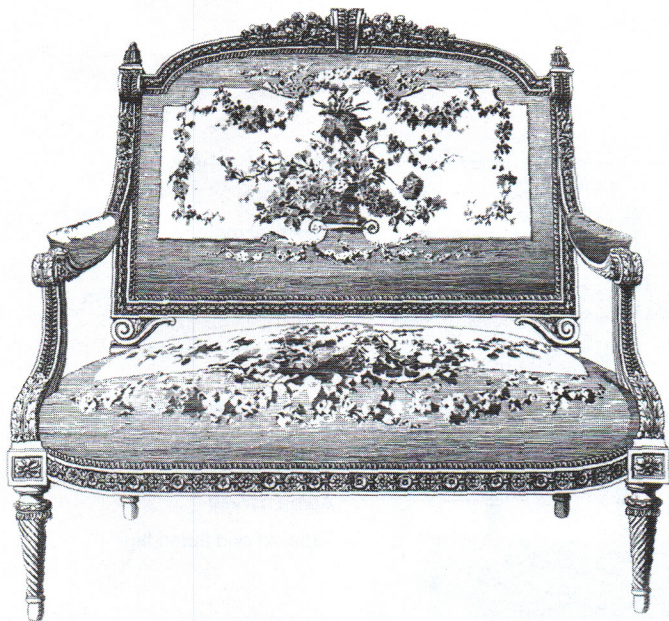
directly over the front legs or set back on curving supports. Upholstery may be of silk, cotton, linen, or tapestry. Patterns and motifs include swags, vases, flowers, rinceaus, urns, acanthus leaves, classical figures, and stripes; some examples feature farm motifs such as straw hats, shovels, and corn. Popular colors include gray, green, yellow, and pink on cream or white backgrounds.



▲ 23-10. *Fauteuils* showing various tapestry designs; c. late 18th century; France.



▲ 23-11. *Bergère*, from the *Salon de Jeux* of Louis XVI, *Château de Compiègne*, 1790; France; Jean-Baptiste Sene.



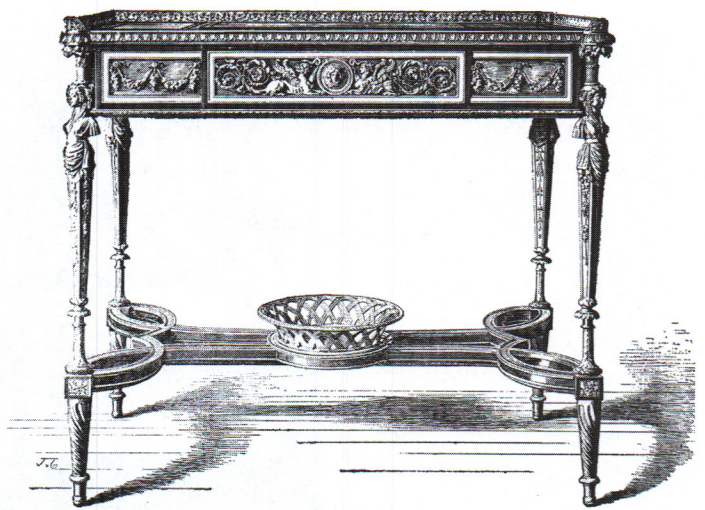
▲ 23-12. *Canapé* with tapestry designs; France.

■ *Seating*. All Louis XV types of *chaises*, *fauteuils*, *bergères*, and *canapés* remain in use, but reflect Neoclassical design principles (Fig. 23-4, 23-5, 23-6, 23-10, 23-11, 23-12). Pieces retain the wooden frames around backs and seats of the Rococo style, but now have straight lines that are carved with classical running patterns, such as the bead. Continuity of parts disappears in response to classicism's demand that points of junction be delineated. Chair backs may be rectangular or oval; some have balloon shapes or splats following the first balloon flight in 1783. Back uprights may be classical columns. Arms are directly over front legs and have *manchettes*, and supports are often urn shaped. About 1785, the saber leg replaces straight back legs, and arms begin to curve back from the front of the seat.

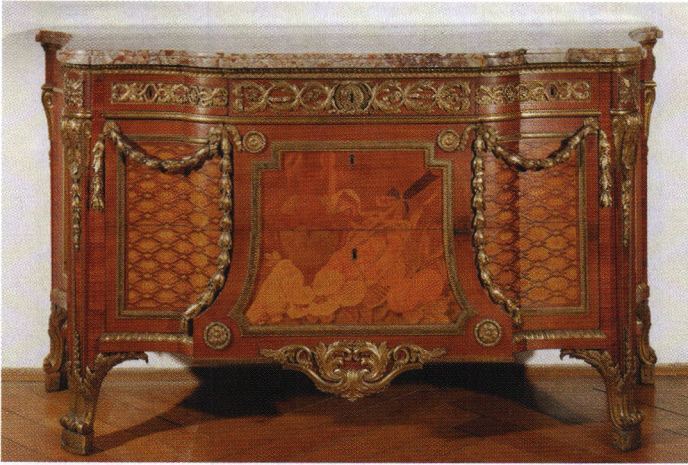
■ *Tables*. Tables (Fig. 23-4, 23-6, 23-13), small and large, remain as numerous as before. A new form based on a Pompeiian tripod table is introduced. Dining tables, made in parts, usually divide in the center. Each portion has drop leaves. Some have casters and/or extra leaves. *Consoles* with Neoclassical designs are in vogue for drawing rooms and *salons*.

■ *Storage*. *Commodes* (Fig. 23-4, 23-14) remain fashionable, and their shapes and decoration reflect the new style as do other case pieces. Rectangles or semicircles (*demi-lune*) replace the undulating surfaces of Rococo pieces. The straight legs are tapered and fluted or vase-shaped. Small classical moldings, key patterns, Vitruvian scrolls, palmettes, *guilloches*, and garlands highlight façades. Marquetry of flowers, trophies, landscapes, architecture, or classical figures embellishes doors or drawers. Tops are of marble. Later pieces have columns or caryatids on corners. The *secrétaire à abattant* (Fig. 23-6) becomes more architectural with columns, pilasters, and pediments. Some have matching bookcases.

■ *Beds*. All types of Louis XV *lits* continue in use (Fig. 23-15). As before, they have canopies and hangings that match other fabrics in the room. Beds in alcoves are common.



▲ 23-13. Table in bronze given by Marie Antoinette to Madame de Polignac.



▲ 23-14. Commode with marquetry and ormolu, 1778; France; Jean Henri Riesener.



▲ 23-15. Bed, Louis XVI bedchamber, *Petit Trianon* (after restoration in 1985); France.

■ *Decorative Arts.* Accessories and decorative arts reflect the classical in form and designs, particularly vases and clocks (Fig. 23-4, 23-6). Figures in classical dress are common motifs. Design and workmanship are unsurpassed. Although shapes for porcelains become severe and lines simple, decoration is sumptuous with classical landscapes and/or figures and heavy gilding. Straight sides and rectangular handles distinguish Neoclassical porcelains. Pieces are heavier and more solemn in feeling than Rococo pieces.

FRENCH PROVINCIAL

Provincial, *rustique*, or *régional* refers to houses, interiors, and furniture of the peasants and *bourgeoisie* in the rural areas of France from the reign of Louis XIII through the French Empire. Although inspired and influenced by court or high styles, provincial is simpler and less refined in design, construction, and decoration. Unlike high styles, provincial examples are less dependent upon display and rank, maintain traditional elements, and exhibit regional varieties based on climate, geography, economy, and available materials. Provincial types also are common in France's New World colonies.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL

By the beginning of the 17th century, relative peace and prosperity in France spread to the peasants and the *bourgeoisie*. Increased wealth fosters the adoption of more and fashionable furniture by the middle and lower classes. Traditional manners of living and furnishing remain strong. Although many continue to live simply with only a few possessions, interest in fashionable court styles of furnishing increases. Regional cabinetmakers look to Paris for inspiration; those closer to Paris show more high-style influence, and those farther away demonstrate less. Some areas, such as Alsace, exhibit influences from bordering countries.

MOTIFS

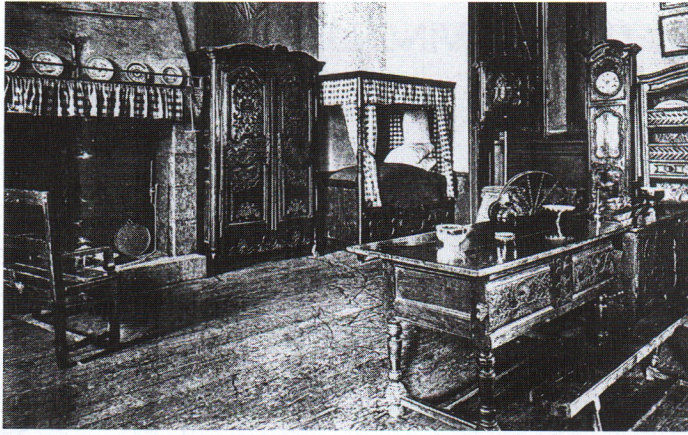
■ *Motifs.* Typical motifs borrow and adapt from high styles and include lozenges, stars, circles, fruit, flowers, foliage, shells, C and S scrolls, columns, colonnettes, fluting, urns, and lyres (Fig. 23-17, 23-20).

ARCHITECTURE

Homes of the *bourgeoisie* and peasants range from medium-sized mansions to simple, plain one-room cottages. Function and tradition are more important than style or design principles such as symmetry. Dwellings are built of local stone, brick, or wood and plaster. Roofs may be of thatch, tile, or shingles. Grander homes may be more likely to follow prevailing architectural styles and planning than peasant dwellings.

INTERIORS

Wealthier *bourgeoisie* can more readily follow prevailing decorating trends. Nevertheless, most interiors are simply treated (Fig. 23-16, 23-17, 23-21). Floors may be dirt, stone, brick, or wood. Common treatments include paneling on at least one wall, textile hangings, wallpaper, and painted decorations (Fig. 23-17). Rugs and curtains are rare.



▲ 23-16. *Salle de Ferme*; d'Ille-et-Vilaine; France.



▲ 23-17. Bedroom of Eléonore de Warns, Le Charmettes, Savoie; furniture from Louis XIII, Louis XV, and Louis XVI periods and early 19th century; France.

■ **Textiles.** Textiles range from silks, cottons, woolens, linens, and homespun. In the second half of the 18th century, rooms become more colorful with *toiles* and painted or printed *chintzes* (Fig. 23-16, 23-17). The housewife sometimes embroiders seat covers. Few pieces are completely upholstered. Window curtains are rare.

DESIGN SPOTLIGHT

Furniture, French Provincial: These *chaises*, part of a set of ten, show common characteristics of *régional* furniture, including rush seats, curved back slats, and quadrangular legs with turned stretchers. Simple and uncomplicated outlines reveal a greater concern for economy and practicality than for fashion. Scale relates to human proportions and suits smaller houses. Although the

majority of *régional* furniture follows the 18th century Rococo style in curvilinear forms and naturalistic ornament, some adopt all or portions of Neoclassicism. These chairs, for example, have the straight legs of Neoclassical and the curving slats of Rococo. Variations of this form may be found in Canada and the United States with the immigration of French settlers from the provinces.



- Curved yoke and splats
- Simple, unornamented overall design
- Curved arm
- Rush seat
- Regional wood used for construction
- Legs joined by stretchers

▲ 23-18. Louis XVI-style *chaise à capucines*.

FURNITURE

Provincial furniture adapts the forms, contours, and some of the ornamentation of court styles to regional needs and preferences. Local cabinetmakers are able to follow high styles, particularly in the 18th century, with help from numerous pattern books. However, clients often regard comfort, convenience, and economy as more important than fashion. Scale relates to human proportions and suits smaller rooms in smaller houses. Ornamentation is less profuse and often naive. Carving is the main form of decoration. Construction, usually simple, varies with the skill of the cabinetmaker and the region. Areas closer to style centers often see more finely constructed and ornamented examples.

Simpler lifestyles in the provinces require less furniture and fewer types of furnishings. Early pieces include chairs, beds, chests, and tables. During the 18th century, tall case clocks, writing furniture, *canapés*, and wall shelves become more universal. More practical and utilitarian, provincial furniture rarely demonstrates rank or precedence. However, people do highly prize certain pieces, such as the *armoire* (Fig. 23-20), and proudly display them in public rooms of their homes.

Regional character is stronger in provincial furniture than in high style. Although furniture types are similar throughout France because they support the similar lifestyles of provincial peoples, some regions prefer and/or more highly develop certain types. Some pieces are unique to a particular region. An example is the *panetière* (Fig. 23-21) of Provence and Normandy. Styles often last longer in the provinces and/or may mix characteristics of several high styles.

Louis XIII (reigned 1610–1643) is first of the court styles to exhibit regional or provincial character in the early 1700s; it lasts about a century in most areas. People in the Gascogne region prefer its spiral turning and geometric ornamentation much longer. Although the Louis XIV style (reigned 1643–1715) generally is too grand and opulent for provincial tastes, its influence appears



▲ 23-20. Louis XVI *armoire*, with Rococo influences, Caen Region; France.

most often in the panels of *armoires* and other case pieces. In contrast, much *régional* furniture follows the 18th-century Rococo style in curvilinear form and ornamentation. Rococo or the Louis XV style easily adapts to the needs of all. Its scale, charm, grace, and comfort have universal appeal, so the style dominates provincial furnishings even throughout the periods of Louis XVI, Directoire, and French Empire. Louis XVI style appears most often in classical ornamentation and mixes in shape and ornament with Rococo. Directoire and Empire have little effect in the provinces.

■ **Materials.** Most pieces are of solid wood. Wood varies by region, but oak and fruitwoods are common. Cherry defines better pieces. Imported mahogany is limited to very fine pieces for the *bourgeoisie* after the mid-18th century.

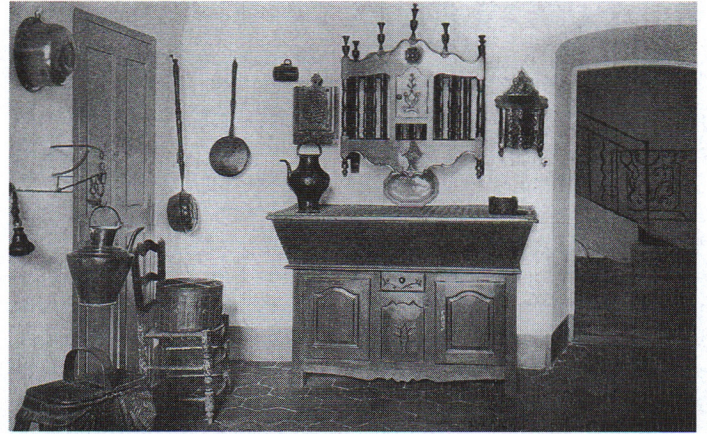
■ **Seating.** Seating (Fig. 23-16, 23-17, 23-18) includes turned and ladder-back *chaises*, *fauteuils*, stools, benches, and *canapés*. All regions share a preference for turning. Legs may be turned or cabriole; stretchers are characteristic. Seats in all periods are wood or rush. Backs may have spindles, slats, lattice, or splats. Contours and back shapes depend on style; Rococo slats curve, while Louis XVI types are straight. Upholstery is rare; cushions are used for comfort. Common in all regions is the *chaise à capucine* (Fig. 23-18, 23-21), a turned arm- or armless chair with rush seat and legs joined by stretchers.



▲ 23-19. Louis XV *commode*, c. 1780; France.

■ *Tables*. Provincial homes usually do not have the card, tea, and toilet tables of grand ones. However, dining tables, small occasional tables, and work tables are common (Fig. 23-16, 23-17). Shapes and ornament follow prevailing styles.

■ *Storage*. Typical case pieces are *commodes* (Fig. 23-19), *buffets* (Fig. 23-21), wall and standing cupboards (Fig. 23-21), *armoires* (Fig. 23-16, 23-20), and chests. Outlines usually are uncomplicated, but some pieces are *bombé* and/or serpentine in form. Similarly, paneling on case pieces follows the style in shape and decoration, although asymmetrical, Rococo curves most often define panels. Aprons, cornices, and stiles often feature carved or applied decoration. Metal hinges in brass or steel often run the entire length of panels. Escutcheons are prominent. Chests are common storage pieces throughout the periods. As in high-style interiors, *commodes* (Fig. 23-19), with three drawers and brass bail handles, become common in provincial public rooms in the 18th century. Those following the Rococo style may be *bombé* or serpentine, while semicircular contours define Louis XVI examples. *Armoires* (Fig. 23-16, 23-20) are highly prized pieces. Most have two long paneled doors and a straight or arched cornice. Those influenced by Rococo designs stand on short cabriole legs and feature curvilinear panels and tops and naturalistic decoration. *Buffets* also are characteristic in provincial dining rooms or kitchens (Fig. 23-21). Variations and names differ by region.



▲ 23-21. Louis XV chair, buffet, panetière, and various utensils; France.

■ *Beds*. Four-poster beds (Fig. 23-16) are common, but some are built into wall alcoves, particularly in colder regions. Poster and other beds have hangings for warmth and privacy (Fig. 23-16, 23-17). The *lit clos*, typical of Brittany and colder regions, resembles a cupboard with its paneled sides and doors or curtains.