MACKINNON
FINE FURNITURE



A SET OF EIGHT WALNUT SIDE CHAIRS

England Or Ireland, *circa* 1720

This set of chairs and the settee ensuite were formerly in the collection of Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss. They purchased their home Dumbarton Oaks (then called The Oaks) in 1920 at which time they embarked on a full renovation between 1921 and 1923. The suite of seat furniture appears in photographs of the First Floor Gallery taken by the photography studio of Lewis P. Woltz of Washington D.C. sometime between 1933 and 1939. Certainly the suite had entered the collection prior to 1938, as it is included in an inventory of that date.

Robert Bliss served in the Diplomatic Corps, receiving posts in Europe and South America, and it was mainly on these diplomatic postings that they acquired much of their collection. In 1940, Dumbarton Oaks, its collections and gardens were gifted by the Blisses to Harvard University at which time much of the household furnishings were sold, and many pieces were consigned to French & Company of New York. The suite was acquired by the Davises from French & Company in 1968.

The general form of the back with its foliate scrolls and horizontal joints feature on a chair illustrated on a 1740s trade-card of Landall and Gordon (ref: A. Heal, The London Furniture Makers, p. 93). T his type of splat was found on chairs that Cescinsky referred to as 'Hogarth'. A chair with a similar splat from the collection of Sir John Ramsden is illustrated in R. Edwards, ed., The Shorter Dictionary of English Furniture, London, 1974, p.137, fig.80. Another is illustrated in H. Cescinsky, English Furniture from Gothic to Sheraton, New York, 1937, p.164.

These distinctive chairs exhibit an unusual combination of features which do not appear to be clearly identifiable with the work of a particular maker or region. Whilst the idiosyncratic paw feet have affinities with those on a documented group of Irish tables and chairs (The Knight of Glin and James Peill , Irish Furniture, 2007, pp. 106-119), the scrolls to the inside of the paws are without parallel in this most

recent survey of Irish Furniture. Furthermore the turned and square H-shaped stretchers contrast with the more prevalent flat H-shaped stretchers found on Irish chairs of the second quarter of the 18th century. Other atypical details include the herringbone bandings on the splats, the finely carved foliate mouldings surrounding the backs and the gadrooned splat shoes.

SOLD

A highly important set of eight George I walnut side chairs. Each shaped rectangular back with slender foliate carved surround and surmounted by a floral and foliate carved terminal, each herringbone banded vase splat above a drop-in seat covered with 18th century floral needlework panel, on acanthus carved cabriole legs joined by stretchers and terminating in carved lion paw feet.

Exhibitions

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 15 May 1963 – 2 August 1963

Maison Blanche 12 September 1963 – 2 October 1963

The Centre for Outer American Relations 11 September 1967 – 4 October 1967

Literature:

Vernay Catalogue, 1922, item no. 19 - described as 'museum specimens of the very highest possible merit'.

French & Company stock book ref: E-534/51228-X, held by the Getty Institute Research Library, Los Angeles, California

L. Synge, *Chairs in Colour*, 1978, pl. 23

L. Synge, *Great English Furniture*, 1991, p.48 pl. 39 and p. 51, pl. 46

F.L. Hinckley, *Masterpieces of Queen Anne and Georgian Furniture*, New York, 1991, pl.2, fig.5

Christie's, *Reviewof the Season*, 1987, p. 213 (illustrated)

Apollo Magazine, Sept 1970 (illustrated - Mallett advertisement

Connoisseur, June 1971 - Grosvenor House Antiques Fair Preview (illustrated - Mallett advertisement)

Mallett Catalogue, 1987, pp. 14-15 9 9 (n/i)

Height: 3' 4¹/▮" in (103 cm)
Width: 2 ' 0" in (61 cm)
Depth: 1' 10⁷/▮" in (58 cm)

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R09.152

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