



Family Treasures

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lifestyle

Nearly half a century has passed since Clarence L. Prickett drove by a handsome 1800 stone farmhouse for sale in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and got out to take a look. A peek through the dining-room window revealed handsome

beamed ceilings; then and there he realized it was the house for which he had been looking. In short order he moved his wife and three young children into the house of his dreams.

The large barn on the property provided ample space for his burgeoning antiques

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Clarence L. Prickett moved his family to this 1800 Pennsylvania stone house in 1962. Now surrounded by fragrant period gardens, and overseen by Laura Prickett, the house originally stood on 550 acres granted by William Penn in 1689. By 1807 the property had dwindled to half that figure; today it is slightly over twenty-three acres.

A New Jersey tall clock with quarter columns and a dial engraved "Wood & Hudson, Mount Holly," circa 1785, stands in the front hall. Its pediment is carved with generous rosettes suggestive of the flowering dogwood outside the front door. The grouping consists of a Pennsylvania Queen Anne dish-top candlestand with a turned birdcage, a Pennsylvania Chippendale side chair carved with three shells, and a mahogany Federal mirror.





business. Soon he was spending time in New York at Christie's and Sotheby's auction houses, often on the floor studying the furniture from the bottom up. He has fond memories of the heady sixties and seventies, buying and selling with Harold and Albert Sack, John Walton, and Bob Skinner, among other leading lights of the trade.

In the course of building one of the foremost American antiques galleries, Prickett began assembling a family collection. At first, he filled his house with country bureaus, high chests, and other informal objects, then began to shift to more high style examples. Prickett says the collection was largely complete about fifteen years ago, due mainly to

space constraints. "But," he says with the smile of the inveterate collector, "you can always upgrade." He adds, "Originality is paramount, as are form and craftsmanship."

Semi-retired for the past five years, Prickett is far from idle. When not at antiques shows or auction previews, he and his wife, Laura, remain active, playing tennis and traveling as their schedules permit. On a recent morning he had won three sets of tennis by 10:00 am.

Reducing his time in the antiques shop, Prickett now leaves the business side of things to his sons: Craig, who entered the business in 1970, and Todd, who joined in 1978. Their sister Sandra Lee runs a successful gift

ABOVE:

In the front half of the double parlor, referred to as the living room, a shell-carved side chair is pulled up to a secretary bookcase, both are Philadelphia, circa 1760–1770. Dating from the same period is a Pennsylvania bracket clock by Charles Young of Chambersburg. The 1836 portrait is of *Mrs. Bowie and Her Son*, by Pennsylvania artist Robert Street (1796–1865). Also pictured is a Newport, Rhode Island, slipper-foot tea table, circa 1760, a Queen Anne drop-leaf table, and a Federal Pembroke table.

FACING PAGE:

A Philadelphia Chippendale one-drawer card table and a Massachusetts Federal lolling chair fill a corner of the front living room. The painting, *Unexpected Visitors*, is by one of Todd Prickett's favorite artists, Edward Lamson Henry (1841–1919).





shop in a neighboring town.

Growing up, the three children lived with fine antiques. Neither brother feels they were coerced into the business. As Craig puts it, they each came to respect the aesthetic of antiques and a well-made object. Like their father, each has a well-defined natural aptitude for the business, though neither admits to a particular favorite with respect to form or furniture making center; their focus, instead, is on the sheer merit of a particular object.

Now that his sons are in charge, Prickett has taken up painting and has turned out some remarkable Pennsylvania landscapes. His eye for color is exceptional, although

one particularly fine example is a grisaille moonlit snow scene. Careful color selections permeate the collection as well, with tones of ivory, blue, and red complementing the furniture and paintings and lending a feeling of serenity.

In the dining room, ten early sack-back Windsor chairs are spaced comfortably around a turned-leg tavern table or along the edges of the room. The collection includes nearly two dozen period Windsor chairs, which the family uses on a daily basis, like most everything else in the collection. Clarence's favorite Windsor is illustrated in volume one of Charles Santore's *The Windsor Style in America* (1981). The author describes

ABOVE:

The three major furniture forms in this view are from Massachusetts. The Queen Anne walnut dressing table flanking the fireplace is described by Prickett as "one of the best ever." It has compass inlay on the top, dart inlay on the knees, and an inlaid fan on the concave central drawer. The Windsor armchair is an exceptional example. The Queen Anne easy chair with pad feet balances the vignette, in the center of which hangs an American oil on canvas portrait of the Salem clipper ship *Highlander*.

NEXT PAGE:

The beautifully proportioned Chippendale four-drawer chest in the rear living room has a molded top and reeded quarter-columns. It came from the same house as the New Jersey family record above it, embroidered in 1821 by Bathsheba Deacon and incorporating a woman in a blue dress standing beside a three-story brick house.



the chair as part of a group that is “among the most graceful and successful of all Philadelphia comb-back Windsors.”

The furniture in the collection is primarily from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but does include a number of important pieces from Massachusetts. These include an outstanding Queen Anne walnut Boston dressing table with compass star inlay, and a Boston Queen Anne side chair with a shell-carved crest flanked by flowers on a scrolling vine. The chair is one of four from a larger set; other examples are at Winterthur, the Brooklyn Museum, and one is pictured in John T. Kirk’s *American Furniture* (1974). Three particularly fine Pennsylvania

Chippendale side chairs feature a multitude of carved shells.

Included in the collection are some very special timepieces, among them an imposing Philadelphia Chippendale walnut tall clock on the stair landing that was made by John Wood Jr. (1736–1793), circa 1775. The case is carved with three flame finials, rosettes, quarter columns, and a porringer style base. A New Jersey tall clock with face signed by Wood & Hudson of Mount Holly stands in the front hall. A third tall clock is a rare Philadelphia quarter-striker by Joseph Wills (1700–1759), circa 1745.

Over the years the house and the barn have been restored and expanded, although

OVERLEAF:

A tall clock in the dining room by Joseph Wills (1700–1759), circa 1745, is a rare Philadelphia quarter-striker with three weights, detailed phases of the moon, robust finials, and original feet. The Philadelphia comb-back Windsor armchair with original paint is illustrated in volume two, page 45 of Charles Santore’s, *The Windsor Style in America* (1987). A decorated toleware coffeepot rests on a splay-leg stand. A set of scales are visually echoed in a rare Philadelphia silhouette of two men engaged in discussion over produce. The scene is inscribed on the back, “Peter Conrad and Farmer. Cut by Wm. Henry Brown, son-in-law of Peter Conrad, clerk of Philadelphia Markets.”





THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT:

The four-drawer Pennsylvania Chippendale chest, circa 1780–1790, has a molded top and an ogee bracket base. The late eighteenth-century Philadelphia comb-back armchair retains its original paint. It is an exceptionally fine example and is illustrated in volume one, on page 68 of Charles Santore's *The Windsor Style in America* (1981). The painting of three Windsor chairs is by contemporary Bucks County folk artist Katharine Steele Renninger.

Three decoys from the family's extensive collection rest above a door. The built-in cupboard contains some fine examples of redware and an array of stoneware lard buckets. The Connecticut Queen Anne candlestand is paired with one of the ten Windsor sack-back chairs used in this room.

The large open fireplace is fitted with the Pricketts' collection of hand-forged cooking utensils. The built-in cupboard houses a nineteenth-century glass bottle collection, a portion of which came with the house.



the original structures are intact; photographs from the 1930s in an upper hallway attest to that. It wasn't just the beams that attracted Prickett to the house; it was the careful detail throughout. For example, the main staircase is beautifully carved, with fanciful skirt boards and turned finials. Fireplaces were given fine mantels, while the thick walls of the house allow for deep windowsills and built-in storage. The stone floors of the kitchen integrate with the exterior stone facade and walkways, which lead to the elegantly designed gardens, the purview of Laura Prickett. Living in this remarkable house, the Pricketts view themselves as the conscientious stewards of the residence and collections within. @

PREVIOUS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT:

Pride of place in this bedroom goes to a late eighteenth-century Delaware Valley Chippendale linen press with tombstone doors. Adjacent to it is a Sheraton tester bed with fine reeded posts, and a Pennsylvania comb-back Windsor armchair, over which hangs *The Evening Star*, 1891, by W. S. Reynolds.

A pristine Federal mahogany tall clock by Matthew Egerton Jr. (1769–1836), New Brunswick, New Jersey, circa 1800, with an inlaid liberty cap on a pole and punch-work scroll boards, stands in the front room of the C. L. Prickett gallery, located in the converted barn on the property.

In an upstairs chamber, a Sheraton tester bed with delicate turnings, and a rare Seth Thomas Connecticut off-center pendulum shelf clock with original églomisé garden pagoda scene, are joined by a Pennsylvania walnut child's chest.

THIS PAGE:

An eighteenth-century New Jersey painted cupboard with reeded door panels provides storage for coverlets in an upstairs hallway.

