Soulfully Sold

Catalogue of genuine Antique Furniture from eminent families of South Carolina Published in 1894 by the Fifth Avenue Auction Rooms, New York City

Courtesy, Charleston Museum, S.C.

CATALOGUE

Genuine - Antique - Furniture

FROM

EMINENT FAMILIES OF SOUTH CAROLINA, INCLUDING MANY PIECES

Formerly the Property of General Thomas Francis Marion, OF BELLE ISLE PLANTATION.

ALSO.

A Large Collection of Choice Chippendale and Sheraton Furniture, Cut Glass, Fenders, Andirons, Etc.,

TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION BY THE

Fifth Ave. Auction Rooms.

238 Fifth Avenue,

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AFTERNOONS.

OCTOBER 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th, AT TWO O'CLOCK EACH DAY.

WM. B. NORMAN,

AUCTIONEER.

H. N. ATKINSON, Printer, 82 Wall Street, N. Y.

ith its silversmiths, jewelers, blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, and numerous other skilled craftsmen, Charleston, South Carolina, was the cosmopolitan nucleus for southern decorative arts during the Colonial, Federal, and Antebellum periods. However, as locals know, "The Holy City"—as it is oftentimes called because of its many churches—has not consistently enjoyed a position of affluence. Traditionally, the two wars fought on its turf and other misfortunes have been held responsible for the loss of much of Charleston's fine and decorative arts.

Following the British occupation of Charleston between 1780 and 1782, enemy soldiers evacuating the city made away with between three hundred and six hundred rice barrels filled with estate and ecclesiastical silver, and wantonly destroyed houses and furniture. The Union bombardment from 1863 to 1865 wrecked numerous valuable possessions and more residences. On losing her home to cannon shells, one lamenting woman described her smashed windows and shattered furniture as "diamonds and splinters" covering the street. At the war's end, according to one report, almost every church had lost its communion plate, "often a massive and venerable set [,] the donation of an English or colonial ancestor."

In addition, major fires (most erupting in kitchens) engulfed large sections of the city in 1740, 1778, 1796, 1838, and 1861. Adding to the city's miseries were countless epidemics and hurricanes throughout its history, and a calamitous earthquake in 1886.

Admittedly, it's easy to fully blame the Redcoats, Federal troops, improperly supervised cookfires, and weather for the disappearance of the countless thou-

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Title page, Catalogue of genuine Antique Furniture from eminent families of South Carolina, Fifth Avenue Auction Rooms in New York City, 1894. Courtesy, The Charleston Museum.

Page 36, Catalogue of genuine Antique Furniture from eminent families of South Carolina, Fifth Avenue Auction Rooms in New York City, 1894. Courtesy, The Charleston Museum.

36 Solid Mahogany Antique Chest of Drawers, old brass handles, from Georgetown, S. C. Colonial Solid Mahogany Carved Four-post Bedstead, belonged to Gen. Magwood, of S. C., of revolutionary fame, has deep brass cup rollers Old Chippendale Circular Card Table, nicely inlaid, from a Plantation on Cooper River, S. C. Lady's Quaint Old Work Table, in mahogany 461 and curly maple, has fluted legs, from Society Hill, S. C. 462 Pair Very Old Brass Andirons, from Dr. Ancrum's Sale, Charleston, S. C. .163 Colonial Heavy Brass Fender from Pocotaligo 464 Quaint Old Brass Tongs and Poker. Very Quaint and Fine Old Carved Mahogany Claw Foot Sideboard, imported from England over 100 years ago, from a plantation near Marion, S. C. 466 Colonial Swell Front Work Table, carved legs, from Col. Rhett's Plantation, Coopers River S. C. 467 Pair Small and Quaint Brass Andirons, from Summerville, S. C. 468 Pair Colonial Carved Leg Side Tables, from the McBurney Family, of Charleston, S. C. Colonial Carved Leg Mahogany Dining Table, from the same family. Old Colonial Mahogany Washstand from Summerville, S. C.

sands of locally made decorative arts that would have otherwise remained in the city. It's easy but actually inaccurate. A recent acquisition by the Charleston Museum—an auction catalogue dating from 1894—reveals a cash-strapped community more than willing to sell off its remnants of wealth.

The forty-two page Catalogue of genuine Antique Furniture from eminent families of South Carolina," printed in the autumn of 1894 by the Fifth Avenue Auction Rooms in New York City, lists 542 lots of furniture, silver, ceramics, and a host of other items from properties throughout Charleston, including estate pieces from such well-recognized Charleston families as the Marions, Aikens, Middletons, and Rhetts. Lot 249, for example, offers a "Very Quaint and Old Breakfast Table...from the (Charles) Pinckney Family."

This catalogue underscores the fact that the South's problems did not end with the Confederacy. Even though the state was readmitted to the Union in 1868, Federal troops remained in South Carolina until the late 1870s. And while paid workers kept cotton fields going with some success, without enslaved labor, vast rice plantations failed. Many a Charleston planter and merchant continued to suffer financially well into the twentieth century, causing family heirlooms to be put up for sale. In a depressed economy, cash was king.

Fortunately, since the mid-twentieth century there have been concerted efforts to preserve Charleston's historic merit, and recent decades have brought forth newfound study and education in southern decorative arts. Thanks to attentive dealers, curators, and collectors, many items have returned to Charleston, and this recently discovered auction catalogue, most likely one of many listing locally-made furnishings, reveals that more pieces are awaiting reclamation.

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