

REPORT  
July 27, 2022

In June, 2022, Graham Arader asked me for my written opinion on the identity and authenticity of a Pennsylvania walnut tall chest-on-frame, furniture inventory number 320. This report summarizes my observations and opinions.

**Tall chest-on-frame**

Kennett Township-West Chester area, Pennsylvania, 1785-1795  
Walnut; tulip poplar, all secondary woods  
70-1/2 x 41-1/2 x 22-1/8

The figured-walnut tall chest-on-frame with five small drawers above four graduated drawers of full width sits within a separately framed base. The base has four short, but shapely cabriole legs that end in trifold feet with strongly modeled toes. Their paneled tops rise upward into the ankles. The scalloping across the front is also well-defined and executed. Comparison of these various design features with other Philadelphia-area furniture might suggest a date of manufacture in the 1750s, 60s, and 70s, but evidence indicates otherwise. This chest belongs to a small group of nearly identical examples, as published by Wendy A. Cooper and Lisa Minardi in *Paint, Pattern & People: Furniture of Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1725-1840* (2011), pp. 142-44, fn. 93. Three of the eight in the group bear dates of a manufacture inscribed on them—a very high incidence of such evidence—ranging from 1785 to 1793. Some of the chests replace the second tier of drawers with a single full-width drawer, which was a common substitution, but the scalloped bases and cabriole legs with trifold feet are consistent.

Within the group, chests-on-frame are signed by Samuel Morris (d. 1809) of Kennett Township and Virgil Eachus (d. 1839) of Goshen (near West Chester). The Morris chest is at Winterthur (acc. no. 2007.17), and the Eachus chest is figs. 37, 38 in Margaret Berwind Schiffer, *Furniture and Its Makers of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (1966). Yet another tall chest-on-frame is not part of the group but is closely related. It bears the name and date of its maker, John W. Thomas (dates unknown) and December 27, 1805. It also has the name George Gregg (1763-1833) in a different location (see Philip D. Zimmerman, “Early American Furniture Makers’ Marks,” *American Furniture 2007*, pp. 145-46). It is likely that Thomas made the chest upon completion of his apprenticeship with Gregg, who lived in Kennett Square.

The precise relationship of the Arader chest-on-frame to those in the group of eight is undetermined. Construction details of the Morris and Eachus chests and the other six have not

been explored to allow more individual identification. Moreover, detailed examinations, should that occur some day, may reveal no individual traits or shop practices sufficient to suggest specific attributions of the unsigned chests to particular makers. Construction of the Arader chest, for instance, lies within broadly practiced conventions yet seems to embody no distinctive features, aside from the possibility that a template was used for the scalloping of the base. The Thomas chest differs from the group of eight in the outline of the base scalloping. Its existence is a reminder of the complexity of furniture identification, even in rural areas, as well as the longevity of certain furniture designs.

The Arader tall chest-on-frame survives in good condition. The brasses appear to be original with a few replacement posts and nuts. All of the drawers have had new runners installed and glue blocks removed, but the drawer bottoms appear to be original. One second tier (side-by-side) drawer has had the top edge of drawer side planed down slightly, probably because the new runner raised it too high in the case. The other drawer in that tier has a repair along the top of the drawer front, and other drawers exhibit minor patches. The base has had new corner blocks installed. The left front leg has what appears to be a scorch mark on the front side of the knee