

REPORT  
December 20, 2022

On December 5, 2022, Graham Arader asked me for my written opinion on the identity and authenticity of a Delaware Valley walnut drop-leaf table, furniture inventory number 355. This report summarizes my observations and opinions. It is not intended to be a thorough evaluation of condition.

**Drop-leaf or dining table**

Delaware Valley, 1760-90

Walnut; tulip poplar inner fixed frame rails, oak outer swing rails

28-5/8 x 48-1/4 x 18-1/4 (open, 52-1/8)

This walnut drop-leaf table, also called a dining table by the end of the eighteenth century, exhibits features of manufacture in the Delaware Valley. Foremost in this regard is the undercutting of the end rails and their slight recess from the leg stiles into which they are tenoned. As was typical throughout the region, the undercut profile is a high arch composed of a half-round with flanking ogee curves. Also characteristic of the region, the interior fixed frame is made of tulip poplar and the swing rails are made of oak. Two diametrically opposed legs swing out to support the respective single-board leaves, each of which is attached to the fixed center board with three original iron hinges. Wood adjacent to the hinges has worn in each hinge location—a normal instance of wear and tear over generations of use. One end of the rule joint (the curved contour where the drop leaf meets the fixed center board) shows a carefully repaired split without loss of wood. One of the two knee brackets flanking each of the four legs is a well-executed replacement, visible only as slight color differences in finish and in unfinished back surfaces when compared to the original brackets. The only other repair of note concerns the feet. All four feet have been raised about one-half inch on pieces of walnut that continue the talons of the claw feet as well as the ball that they grasp. Dining table feet typically did not wear, although they occasionally showed deterioration from dampness on the floor. It is also possible that a former owner simply wanted the table to stand slightly higher. Regardless, if these feet are studied closely, the added height of the ball will recall some Rhode Island ball-and-claw feet, but otherwise the addition is not very noticeable.

The dining table was owned by Francis Biddle (1886-1968) and poet Katherine Garrison Chapin (1890-1977) until it passed to their son Edmund Randolph (1921-2000) and his wife, Frances Disner Biddle (1921-2022). Biddle was Attorney General under Franklin D. Roosevelt and a Nuremberg Trial judge.