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REPORT  
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On December 20, 2021, Graham Arader asked me for my written opinion on the identification and authenticity of a cherry Chippendale side chair, furniture inventory number 29.

**Side chair**

Connecticut or possibly New York, 1765-90

“III” chiseled into the top of the front seat rail rabbet; slip seat is marked “IV”.

Cherry

38-1/2 x 23-3/8 x 21-7/8

Although this side chair has some features associated with Philadelphia regional chairs (notably the rounded rear legs), it was likely made in Connecticut, probably in one of several furniture making communities in the Connecticut River Valley. It is also possible that it was made in New York. As with many other American chair designs, this chair has close English counterparts (Victoria & Albert Museum acc. no. CIRC506-1921), although enlightening historical documentation does not accompany any of them. A pair of mahogany chairs of this design, now at Yale (acc. no. 1991.65), has been published as probably Portsmouth, N.H. (Myrna Kaye, "Marked Portsmouth Furniture," *Antiques* 113, no. 5 [May 1978]: 1098-99, figs. 2, 2a), based on a brand of “D. AUSTIN,” impressed into the outside rear stile and identified as a Portsmouth resident and merchant by the author. However, the rear legs of that chair have no Portsmouth counterpart and appear instead to be of likely New York origin, and the Austin name may refer to another person.

Key attributes of the Arader side chair that help identify it include use of cherry, the rounded, “stump,” rear legs, and features of the crest rail. Cherry was used commonly in Connecticut furniture and less so in New York furniture. Frequency of use diminished in Rhode Island and New Jersey and regions farther afield, such as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Stump rear legs were used universally in the greater Philadelphia region. Pockets of use occurred in New York City and elsewhere in New York among chairmakers with no obvious ties to Philadelphia (e.g., Gilbert Ash). Such legs were also favored in Connecticut, notably by the Chapin shops of East Windsor. Historians relate Eliphalet Chapin’s move to Philadelphia in 1767 for four years until his return at age 30, bringing with him Philadelphia furniture-making practices. However, a more widespread tradition of rounded rear legs and through tenons existed in the Wethersfield

area, evident in chairmaking many years before Chapin's move (Patricia E. Kane, *300 Years of American Seating Furniture*, cat. 58).

Regarding the crest rail, the cars have four rounded elements in contrast to Philadelphia cars that have three, the middle of which is substantially larger. The crest and knee shells are simple lobes, unlike Philadelphia renditions, which typically alternate convex with concave lobes. The design of the splat exhibits New England practices in having rounded straps that visually rest atop a pedestal, formed here by four linear straps. The side rail tenons do not extend through the rear stiles as is common in Philadelphia (although some Philadelphia regional chairs were made without through tenons).

A small detail common in New York seating occurs on the side rails of the seat frame. The back of the rail has a small, shaped "bracket respond" attached to the underside of the rail and tenoned into the rear stile along with the rail itself. Furniture historian John T. Kirk explained that this little decorative element responded to the larger shaped bracket applied under the rail at the front, where the leg produced a right-angled gap (*American Chairs*, 31-32, 44). Most Connecticut seating was made without this little element; Philadelphia regional seating typically had side rails undercut in the front and back producing similar shapes. The carved claw-and-ball feet resemble Philadelphia feet, but they are unreliable indicators of origin because of similar feet made in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and elsewhere.

Four large, shaped corner blocks made of ash now reinforce the seat frame. They likely replaced large blocks laid horizontally, but all evidence of any earlier corner blocks is now covered. The cherry slip seat appears to be original to this chair.