



# Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture

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## FOUR CENTURIES OF MASSACHUSETTS FURNITURE OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES IN SEPTEMBER 2013

*A collaborative venture highlighting Massachusetts furniture-making through the centuries.*

**BOSTON – May 21, 2013** – September 17, 2013 marks the official launch of the statewide celebration, *Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture*. A first-time collaboration among eleven founding institutions and numerous other organizations throughout the state, *Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture* will highlight Massachusetts furniture-making, from the 1600s to the present day, through a series of exhibitions, symposia, public programs, and a dedicated website. Founding institutions consist of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts; Concord Museum; Fuller Craft Museum; Historic Deerfield; Historic New England; Massachusetts Historical Society; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; North Bennet Street School; Old Sturbridge Village; Peabody Essex Museum; and Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library.

Never before have so many renowned institutions in the Northeast joined forces to exhibit, study and promote a single topic in the field of American Decorative Art. *Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture* is an unprecedented celebration of the Bay State's remarkable furniture-making legacy. From the earliest products of newly arrived immigrants in the 1600s, to the outstanding work of present-day studio furniture-makers, Massachusetts holds one of the most prominent places in American furniture-making history.

*Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture* will include seven museum exhibitions, each focusing on a different aspect of Massachusetts furniture-making. The Massachusetts Historical Society will mount a display of documented Boston furniture from private collections, supplemented with rarely seen items in the Society's collection, including relevant paintings, prints, account books, and ledgers. The exhibition at Historic Deerfield will take a fresh look at two centuries of furniture-making in western Massachusetts, showcasing a wealth of objects, many of which are new acquisitions. The Concord Museum's exhibition will explore the remarkable life and career of William Munroe through the objects he made and a rare collection of shop records and Old Sturbridge Village will explore the career of prominent Federal-period artisan Nathan Lombard. The exhibition at the Fuller Craft Museum will feature contemporary studio furniture from the Bay State over the past half century and the final exhibition, slated to open at the Peabody Essex Museum in 2014, examines the career of eminent Salem cabinetmaker Nathaniel Gould. In addition, Winterthur Museum has installed fifty of its finest pieces of Boston furniture in an exhibition titled *Boston Furniture at Winterthur* and numerous other institutions throughout the state will highlight key pieces of Massachusetts furniture in their collections.

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Programs include a series of demonstrations and workshops on furniture and furniture-making at the North Bennet Street School and Historic New England as well as house tours of some of Historic New England's most prominent properties. In addition, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts will co-sponsor a conference for emerging scholars titled *New Thoughts on Old Things: Four Centuries of Furnishing the Northeast*. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston will also offer free public programs for a variety of audiences to highlight the extraordinary selection of Massachusetts furniture on view in the acclaimed Art of the Americas Wing; programs will include curator-led gallery talks, artist demonstrations, and the family-friendly Artist Toolbox Art Cart.

Tying together the exhibitions and programs taking place throughout the state is a project website, [fourcenturies.org](http://fourcenturies.org). Its core components include not only a calendar of activities and links to furniture databases but also several unique educational tools. One such device is a visual timeline from the 1620s to the present which will offer an interactive guide to Massachusetts furniture from the elegant to the everyday.

"In the field of American furniture history, arguably no state has left a more remarkable legacy than Massachusetts," said Brock Jobe, Professor of American Decorative Arts at the Winterthur Museum and one of the Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture founders. "During the past four hundred years, people working in wood have fashioned millions of pieces of furniture in the state, yet the account of this output has only been told in bits and pieces. No one has looked critically at the big picture. The combined efforts of these eleven institutions are sure to yield a richer and more meaningful record of Massachusetts furniture," said Jobe.

*Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture* is made possible through the generosity of many individuals, foundations, and institutions, with special support for exhibitions in Massachusetts by Skinner, Inc. For more information on *Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture* go to: [fourcenturies.org](http://fourcenturies.org).

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