



# French Period Furniture

**1300- 1810**

**14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

# Classic French Period Furniture

- The craftsmen of France were far more advanced than the English, therefore the English craftsmen took their furniture design inspiration from them.
- **French Period furniture follows the French Style periods.**

4<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries Early French

16<sup>th</sup> Century French Renaissance

1610 – 1643 Louis 13<sup>th</sup>

1643 – 1715 Louis 14<sup>th</sup>

1715 – 1774 Louis 15<sup>th</sup>

1774 – 1793 Louis 16<sup>th</sup>

1795 – 1804 Directoire and Consulate

1804 – 1815 Empire

- The major influences of **French Furniture** came within 1643 to 1793, the reigns of Louis 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>

# Louis 14th Furniture (1642 – 1715)

- The French Renaissance had lost most of its Italian origin and had developed a character of its own.
- Louis 14th came to reign; he was a man with extravagant tastes.
- France was at the time one of the wealthiest countries in Europe therefore he was able to indulge in his passion for arts and crafts.
- The country had fine skilled craftsmen of enormous talent in abundance and nothing was too good or too expensive to be made.
- The most outstanding of these craftsmen was **Andre Charles Boulle**, he experimented with the Italian art form of **Marquetry** in brass, copper, tortoise shell and ebony. This work is now commonly called “**Boulle work**“.

# Attributed to André-Charles Boulle



- French, Paris, 1675 - 1680  
Oak veneered with various stained and natural woods, brass, horn, and pewter stringing
- Height 406mm
- Width 660mm
- Depth 430mm

# Attributed to André-Charles Boulle

- French, Paris, about 1680 Table  
Oak veneered with ebony, tortoiseshell, pewter, brass, ivory, horn, various stained and natural woods; gilt bronze mounts



# Marquetry On The Four corners of the Table



# Louis 14th Furniture (1642 – 1715)

- The Main Features: wood carvings, marquetry, Boulle work and elaborate brass mounts.
- The surfaces of cabinets were generally flat. This is a considerable feature as the next period used curved surfaces everywhere.
- Curved and straight legs were used, with the curved dominating at the end moving to the more shapely next period.



- [https://www.marcmaison.com/architectural-antiques-resources/louis\\_xiv\\_style](https://www.marcmaison.com/architectural-antiques-resources/louis_xiv_style)

# Palace of Versailles

- The [Palace of Versailles](#) was commissioned by Louis 14th, it was furnished with the finest and richest work that could possibly be produced. Much was destroyed during the Revolution, but what remains today is still extravagant splendour. In major contrast, England at the time was producing simple walnut furniture. On Charles II return from years of exile in France, he introduced many of the French ideas and designs to England.



- <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover>

# Louis 15th Furniture (1715 – 1774)

- Louis 14th son was only five years old when his father died and too young to take the reign. The Duke on Orleans was appointed Regent and took control until his death in 1723.
- The country was not as wealthy and people lived a much quieter presence less visible grandeur.
- Changes in social standings were occurring, the aristocracy began to marry the more humble but now wealthy middle classes, bankers, merchants etc. The grand mansions that once were ostentatious and full of extravagance were replaced by smaller more intimate homes.
- This meant that the style of furniture had to change to meet the peoples new demands. It needed to be smaller, it stayed ornate but the once masculine forms were replaced by softer prettier feminine lines. Furniture became more elegant with more ornamental decoration.

# Louis 15th Furniture (1715 – 1774)

- The major feature of Louis 15th Furniture is the shaped work of the curves. This commenced in Louis 14th 's reign and was expanded upon to the extent that there was barely a straight line or, flat surface visible.

Louis XV (1730-1770)



*Marble-topped Marquetry and Gilded Bronze Louis XV Style Commode, 1800. €68,000 via [Tobogan Antiques](#).*

- Image obtained from [invaluable.com](https://www.invaluable.com)

# Louis 15th Furniture

- The Main Features: Fronts and sides of cabinets were curved in plan and elevation, which required a high level of skill for the craftsmen to apply the veneers, elaborate decoration usually inlaid. Gilded mounts in place of carving continued.
- The cabriole leg (French Version) was at it's most popular during this period. It was similar to the English, (high-pronounced knee adjoining a square at the top usually a club or claw and ball foot).
- The French had a more flowing shape, it did not have the square at the top, the shape flowed into the rails or had a concave curve upwards and the foot was usually scrolled.
- Timbers used were, boxwood, rosewood, mahogany, walnut, tulipwood, sycamore and ebony. Gilding and lacquering were also popular at this time.

# Louis 16th (1774-1793)

- The reaction against the work of the 18th century as well as the continued financial difficulties of his predecessor created a new style of furniture.
- The design became more refined, most of the shape work was removed and with the Queen's influence, (Marie Antoinette), who preferred the simpler forms a new style was developed.
- The major characteristics of Louis 16th furniture are the use of straight lines and flat surfaces with delicate, refined use of detail.
- Gilded mounts were still popular, small mouldings and light carvings were now seen.

# Louis 16th (1774-1793)

- The same timbers were used. With the the shaped work had gone, the cabriole leg was no longer as popular.
- It was used in a lighter form for small bureaux and console tables.
- Light turned legs or square tapered legs which often had recessed surfaces and gilded mount decoration were then introduced.



- Image obtained from [Patrick Moorehead](#)

# Recap

- The furniture of Louis 14th was heavy and excessive, and magnificent splendour.
- The furniture of Louis 15th was over ornamented, had flamboyant elegance with shapes and curves.
- The furniture of Louis 16th was delicate and refined and is considered as French design and workmanship at its best. This furniture was for the wealthy.
- **French Provincial**
- The furniture had a more subdued style of the reigning fashion. These were made by tradesmen of the provinces and created some lovely pieces of which we still see in use today.

# French Provincial



- French Provincial style wardrobe

# French Provincial



- French Provincial style [furniture on sale](#) today

