

AN UNUSUAL 19TH CENTURY SWIVEL DESK CHAIR FROM DUBLIN

Attached us a photograph of a late Victorian mahogany swivel desk chair; on the back of the seat is a brass nameplate with the words:

ARNOTT & CO LTD
HOME FURNISHERS
DUBLIN

The chair is ornate and has some fine features, such as the saddle seat, the partly protruding arm supports set in the thickest section of the seat, the finely curved backsplat deco-



Fig. 11 19th century swivel desk chair

rated with burr veneer and ebony stringing, the sheppard's crook arm rests with fluting and a finely carved in the round decoration on the top.

The company Arnotts plc is still in existence in Dublin and nowadays a major Department store. Their managing director gave me some background information. *"Arnott & Co Ltd. suffered a disastrous fire in 1894 which destroyed virtually all records which predated it. There exists an insurance company plan of the buildings in which the company is described amongst other things as a cabinet makers and upholsterers. A cabinet workshop and wood store is shown on this plan. Some photographs still exist of the interiors of the original as well as the rebuilt premises, showing a large variety of late Victorian furniture - all domestic."*

"The customers would have been largely drawn from the professional middle classes and it would not be surprising if elaborate office furniture was supplied to furnish studies and other domestic places of work."

This would however have been exceptional and the chair is the first one of its type that has been seen. A desk with an attached label stating that it was "made for" Arnott & Co. has been seen before and exists. This might indicate that this chair was actually made in Arnott's own workshop but the fact that the furniture trade was organised, like the gun and clock makers,

into a series of specialised sub-trades, could mean that Arnott's workshop did no more than polish and brand the article".

The company Arnotts plc is celebrating its 150th anniversary during 1993. For this reason this armchair has gone "back home" to be reinstated as part of the heritage of the firm.

Willem Irik