

A photograph of a traditional Irish cottage with a thatched roof and a green bench in front. The cottage has white walls and a thatched roof made of straw. A green bench with yellow decorative patterns is in the foreground. A window with a yellow frame and a flower box is visible on the right. The background shows a lush green hillside.

IRISH COUNTRY FURNITURE 1700–1950

Claudia Kinmonth

NEW FROM YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

IRISH COUNTRY FURNITURE 1700-1950

CLAUDIA KINMONTH

This book—the first study of vernacular furniture in Ireland—investigates the origins and distribution of the common furniture of the Irish people. A fascinating exploration of a material culture that is fast disappearing, the book makes a significant contribution not only to the history of furniture but also to Ireland's cultural history.

Claudia Kinmonth deals with each type of furniture individually, describing how chairs, settles, dressers, presses, beds and cradles evolved and varied regionally according to local needs. She explains how factors such as the type of housing, shortage of timber, and varying specialisms of woodworkers combined to influence the design of furniture. Kinmonth notes that the many built-in and dual-purpose designs reveal both the resourcefulness and ingenuity of their makers and their way of life. In addition, furniture made of straw, wicker, driftwood, and even turf is evidence of a scarcity of materials that resulted in imaginative recycling. Kinmonth discusses the transition from traditional grained paintwork to the use of boldly contrasting two-tone gloss. She looks at the hearth and at small furnishings made by wood turners, coopers, tinsmiths, and basketmakers. The book concludes with a glossary of terms and a gazetteer that lists the museums that display this type of furniture.

The book is lavishly illustrated with Kinmonth's own photographs and line drawings, as well as with paintings, most of which have never been published before. Many of the pieces of furniture are photographed exactly as Kinmonth found them in the private homes for which they were originally built, and they provide a unique insight into traditional rural interiors.

Claudia Kinmonth is a freelance furniture historian and lecturer, specializing in the influence of materials and techniques on design.

*Publication date: October 1993 256pp. 220 black-and-white illus. + 100 colour plates
265 x 210mm. ISBN 0 300 05574 9 £29.95*

Illustration: Open frame settle from Crosshaven, County Cork, c. 1800 (Courtesy of The Pine Hive)