

Paper-Lined Drawers

Recently I have come across two examples of an early wood-block printed wall-paper used to line furniture drawers. Although I cannot illustrate it here, it is very easily identified; it consists of pieces about 18" by 12" with an oval or round space in the middle, which varies; my best example contains three crowns and a Lion and Unicorn. The three corners of the panels outside the central design contain scenes representing the four seasons, which is common to the different patterns.

The Victoria and Albert Museum have dated the paper from 1689 to 1702, and they have an example with the Arms of the Haberdashers Company in the centre. They also mention another "Three Crowns" example at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

The furniture it is used to line is:-

- 1) A chest of four drawers, walnut on oak, early 18th century. It can be fairly surely provenanced to South Wales because of the pattern of past ownership, the extremely coarse and heavy construction (indicating that it would not have been brought in from elsewhere?) and its pattern of veneers on the top which contain arabesque lines of holly in the walnut. All the drawers are lined with the "Three Crowns" paper, some of it well preserved.
- 2) A good quality knee-hole desk of the same period, walnut on oak; unprovenanced, but having holly lines around the drawers, etc., is reminiscent of this area. Only fragments of the paper remain, mostly on the drawer sides.

It would be very interesting to know more about the use of this paper to line furniture. It is possible that if more examples can be identified and more is known about the production and distribution of these papers, some Regional patterns might emerge.

So I appeal to readers to keep a look-out for it, and to provide details of any examples they may see, both of the paper designs and the furniture involved.

I will of course supply the results of my compilations, if any, to our Archives. I can also supply a photocopied picture of the "Three Crowns" paper to anyone interested.

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