

The Chipstone Foundation

Polly and Stanley Stone, collectors of American furniture, early English pottery and American prints, formed the Chipstone Foundation in the 1965. The Director, Jon Prown, and two curators, Sarah Carter and Claudia Arzano Mooney, welcomed us. Amongst many outstanding pieces, we saw two Massachusetts chests; one by Dennis Searle, c. 1680, carved with floral motifs, the other a Hadley chest, c. 1710, the front carved with distinctive abstract forms. There was also a painted chest, dated 1749, in the Pennsylvanian German form and an impressive mahogany high chest on chest from Philadelphia, c. 1755. There were numerous chairs, ranging from colonial period turned chairs with ladder-backs to the finest examples of



Fig. 8 Ishbel Barnes, under the guidance of Jonathan Prown, wielding a froe to split timber for use in shingles or for turning, carving etc.



Fig. 9 David Dewing trying his hand on a pole lathe in the Chipstone Foundation workshops

Fig. 10 A very fine turned armchair with a Heart and Crown crest rail, c. 1735. The chair is from Norwalk, Connecticut, and is made from maple, the fretted-out crest rail was a popular motif for the period. Photograph courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation



18th-century parlour chairs from Boston, Newport, New York and Philadelphia. Illustrated on page 31 is a turned great chair from Norwalk, Connecticut, c. 1735. As a snapshot of American period furniture of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Chipstone collection is outstanding. It is also online at: <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/DLDecArts>. The Foundation publishes annually the very impressive *American Furniture*.

Jon Prown's research interests extend beyond the traditional historical and decorative arts approaches. Studying the social context of furniture is a familiar concept to most of us, but he and his team at Chipstone are seeking hidden meanings as well. An example was a mahogany folding card table, Boston, c. 1770. This was interpreted not simply as a fine piece of furniture of its period, but as a meeting point during social gatherings in a tightly controlled society; playing cards gave men and women opportunities for conversation, flirting and courting, with hands meeting across the table and feet and knees brushing against one another beneath the surface! The stories furniture could tell!

David Dewing