

**16**

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# CHIPPENDALE MIRROR

*Cherry, Walnut*



## MAKING THE CHIPPENDALE MIRROR

Although not a reproduction of any specific eighteenth-century original, this mirror does evoke a number of Chippendale designs.

Begin construction with the scrollwork background. After the pieces have been band sawn and sanded, assemble them with butt joints and hold in place with a pair of cleats which are glued and screwed across the back of the scrollwork. At that time, take measurements for the large moulding which lifts and presents the glass.



This close-up shows how the scrollwork, tack strip and cleat are assembled.

## CHIPPENDALE

What are the characteristics of Chippendale furniture?

In the strictest sense, the only furniture that can be identified as Chippendale is that to which Thomas Chippendale, the English carver and designer actually applied his tools. But there are few such pieces and many that are commonly (and usefully) referred to as Chippendale.

Another approach reserves the Chippendale name for those pieces that are exact representations of his published drawings. But this, too, is very limiting, particularly when discussing furniture made in North America. While there are a handful of American-made pieces which accurately represent specific Chippendale designs, the overwhelming majority of American-made Chippendale furniture does not—for some very good reasons.

Thomas Chippendale, George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton—the English designers whose seminal books inspired much American period furniture—all designed for a different market than that served by most

Working with these measurements and the available shaper cutters and router bits, you can determine the moulding's profile. After the stock has been run, miter the four pieces of the moulded frame to length and screw into place. Complete finishing before installing the mirror to avoid sullyng its surface. Tack four wood strips to the back, inside face of the moulding, to hold it in place.

### MATERIALS LIST

A	Vertical scrollwork	2 pcs.	$\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4} \times 24\frac{1}{4}$
B	Top scrollwork	1 pc.	$\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{8}$
C	Bottom scrollwork	1 pc.	$\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{8}$
D	Horizontal moulding	2 pcs.	$1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{7}{8}$
E	Vertical moulding	2 pcs.	$1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$
F	Cleat	2 pcs.	$\frac{3}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$
G	Vertical tack strip	2 pcs.	$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{16}$
H	Horizontal tack strip	2 pcs.	$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{7}{8}$
I	Mirror back	1 pc.	$\frac{1}{8} \times 12\frac{7}{8} \times 17\frac{1}{16}$
J	Mirror	1 pc.	Exact measurements should be taken after the frame has been constructed.

American craftsmen of the day. Many of the English designs were intended for placement in grand English homes and included, therefore, elaborate ornamentation that was inappropriate for less palatial American settings (and perhaps for less effete American sensibilities).

This doesn't mean that discriminating American buyers weren't concerned about the appearance of their furniture. Clearly they were, but what those buyers wanted was furniture that not only looked good but was also, and most importantly, useful. They wanted storage, serving surfaces, beds. In short, they wanted furniture in which function and form were more fully integrated.

To address this desire on the part of their customers, American designers/craftsmen reinterpreted the forms presented in the books of the English designers, restraining the decorative excesses of the originals, focusing on the usefulness of their furniture in the homes of their customers.



This makes stylistic attribution a slippery business. Even though almost all high-style American furniture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries exhibits characteristics of Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton designs, very little actually represents any specific published drawings. Further complicating the business of stylistic attribution is the fact that many pieces exhibit characteristics of more than one style. A sideboard might have a spade foot (a Hepplewhite signature) and a gallery of turned spindles (associated with Sheraton's designs). A chair might have a balloon back

and solid splat (Queen Anne) and ball-and-claw feet (Chippendale).

In the hands of a skilled craftsman, such blending is unimportant. A well-designed chair is a well-designed chair whatever the origins of its iconography.

But for the student of furniture, it can be useful to look at this matter of stylistic attribution—not to fasten a particular label on a particular piece but in order to reflect on the American designer/craftsman's handling of the forms and motifs with which he worked.

With that in mind, I put together the following chart:

STYLE CHARACTERISTICS				
This chart is not intended to list all the elements of any of these styles. It is meant only to illustrate ways in which one style might be differentiated from another.				
	CHIPPENDALE	HEPPLEWHITE	SHERATON	EMPIRE
form	syma curve	geometrical curvilinear	geometrical rectilinear delicate	massive
ornament	carving scrollwork	stringing veneering inlay	turning bandings carving reeding	carving veneering ormolu
motif	cabriole leg ball-and-claw foot	spade foot tapered legs	turned and tapered legs	animal feet animal heads