

Family Lines

An icon in the antiques world celebrates classic American design and craftsmanship with a new collection of fine furniture.



Federal-style pieces designed by Albert Sacks with Hickory Chair include the Maryland high chest with figured mahogany details and the upholstered Boston armchair, inspired by a rare 18th-century design.

For more than 100 years, the Sack family name has been synonymous with fine American antique furniture. In 1905, Lithuanian immigrant Israel Sack opened his first antiques shop in Boston, concentrating on pieces designed and made by American craftspeople, when much of the antiques world cared only about European furnishings. Through the 20th century, the family business grew to international prominence, acquiring and appraising collections for automobile manufacturer Henry Ford and renowned collector Henry F. Du Pont, and even consulting with White House personnel on appropriate furnishings for diplomatic reception rooms.

Now, Israel's son Albert Sack—considered by many to be the dean of American antiques—is bringing the family legacy into the 21st century with a new collection of classically inspired furniture designs. Collaborating with designers at Hickory Chair for more than a year, Sack based his collection on vintage pieces by outstanding 18th-century craftspeople. Elegantly simple and surprisingly modern, the collection adheres to Sack's oft-quoted mantra that fine American furniture is "rich but without show, plain but with a glow."

Although he's acquired, collected, and studied antiques for more than 70 years, Sack has always evolved with the times and remained a major player in the inner sanctums of fine antiques. Last year he set the auction world ablaze by purchasing an 18th-century mahogany John Goddard tea table at a Sotheby's auction for \$8.4 million, the second-highest price ever paid for a piece of American furniture. His best-selling books *Fine Points of Furniture* (Crown Publishers, 1950) and *The New Fine Points of Furniture* (1993) introduced generations of new collectors to the rarefied world of antiques auctions, and his good/better/best rankings remain a definitive way to appraise fine furniture. Sack is currently working on another volume in the series.

Although the family business closed its New York City showroom in January 2002, Sack has continued to demystify outstanding American furniture design by, for example, talking about patina with Martha Stewart and appearing as an appraiser on *Antiques Roadshow*. "This new collection demonstrates how timeless America's great creations are, how they transcend the centuries," Sack says. "More than just glorifying the past, we are applying the creativity, adaptability, and individuality of these items to enrich people's lives." □