

The Development and Effects of the Twentieth-Century Wicker Revival

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Fascinated by the elaborately scrolling wicker of the late nineteenth century, I originally sought to research the role of wicker in turn-of-the-century life. Through Brock Jobe, Frank McNamee, and Richard Saunders, I learned of the widespread return of wicker to porches and home interiors alike in the 1970s and 1980s. Eager to know more about the development of the twentieth-century wicker revival, I researched the interplay of wicker and American culture in the second half of the twentieth century to compose this thesis. I owe the utmost gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Oscar P. Fitzgerald, for his willingness to support my ideas. His calm demeanor and consistent belief in my abilities have always been heartening. I also thank Dr. Dorothea Dietrich, Thesis Writing Workshop Advisor, for challenging my perspective.

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Introduction

Woven furniture forms from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, and Asian hourglass rattan, all referred to as “wicker” in decorating books and journal articles, experienced a revival in the second half of the twentieth century. Wicker appeared ubiquitously in American life at the turn of the twentieth century, in locations as varied as parlors, porches, and railway cars. After the Great Depression, wicker of all forms fell from fashion among many suburbanites, only to appear in luxury vacation areas. The use and creation of wicker in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been the focus of furniture historians and material culture scholars. However, the Wicker Revival, which developed between the 1950s and the 1980s, played a significant role in the history of the second half of the twentieth century.

Efforts to revive turn-of-the-century woven forms were made by decorators of the 1950s and early 1960s. Mainstream America did not consider decorating with antique wicker and Asian rattan until the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that time, the antiestablishment youth movement popularized the image of turn-of-the-century and Asian forms. Suddenly, old and imported wicker seemed youthful and new to a larger audience. By the 1970s and 1980s, it reappeared on porches and in advertisements for mainstream suburbanites, as it had at the turn of the century. The Wicker Revival took decades to achieve, but it created lasting effects on the use and perceptions of woven furniture in American décor. Decorating books, interior design journals, shelter magazines, films, and television shows help determine the perceptions and desirability of wicker in American visual culture.

In order to better understand the development of the Wicker Revival, its decline from turn-of-the-century glory must also be studied. Wicker fell from favor in mainstream America sometime after the Great Depression, due to changes in production techniques and materials. Woven furniture made from kraft paper wound around wire replaced natural wicker. As a result, the term wicker connoted the cheap designs which many Americans substituted for wooden furniture during the economic downturn. Antique hand-made forms no longer appeared in the public eye during the 1930s. Such archaic woven furniture recalled the old-fashioned style of the late nineteenth century. Only Asian rattan continued to interest the mainstream, as the fad for all things Polynesian absorbed the nation from roughly the 1920s to the 1960s.

Due to the obscurity of antique wicker, when designers did feature collections of it, along with Asian rattan, in mid-century interiors, the pieces seemed daring. The trend began in the 1950s, when interior designers and decorators on the cutting edge of fashion used wicker from the nineteenth century to the 1920s, as well as traditionally Asian forms of woven furniture. Fashion-conscious homes in California and New York used wicker as a foil to the predominant Modernist and Colonial Revival designs of the mid-twentieth century.

The English photographer and decorator Cecil Beaton played a significant role in Americans' exposure to antique forms of wicker. His work imitated his personal style, and he photographed many celebrities seated on a variety of his own antique wicker chairs during the 1950s. His wicker collection appeared in newspaper articles and design magazines throughout 1956, when it debuted at New York's Annual Home Furnishings Show.

California, a key importer of goods from Asia, saw the establishment of rattan import stores and furniture designers in the 1950s. Interior design magazines like *Interiors* displayed the mixture of both reproduction antique forms in the Rococo Revival style, and Asian rattan forms available on the West Coast. Both economically-priced import stores, such as Cost Plus Imports in San Francisco, and high-end rattan designers, like Tropi-Cal in Los Angeles, opened in the 1950s. Decorators could purchase both traditional Asian forms of rattan, as well as emulations of antique Rococo Revival forms at a variety of prices in the Golden State.

In the 1960s, the literature of the decorating world announced the renewed national interest in the collection of woven willow and rattan furniture, after years of obscurity in storage rooms and rubbish piles. In 1961, *Life* magazine reported the “Return of Curly, Curvy Wickerwork” to the American home. In the same vein, in the 1966 *Antique Furniture Handbook*, James Lazear, editor at the Decorative Arts Library of the American Life Foundation in Watkins Glen, New York, touted the phenomenon that he termed the Wicker Revival. The visual appeal of antique wicker, according to the 1965 *American Life Collectors Annual*, provided “an amusing look when mixed with more austere furnishings,” and gave “a mix and match look to the modern apartment.”¹

The style advocated by avant-garde interior designers and decorators contrasted with the furniture preferred by mainstream Americans. Views of wicker as either quaintly old-fashioned or strictly utilitarian persisted into the 1960s among most mainstream Americans, who generally preferred indoor furniture in the Colonial Revival style.² However, mainstream perceptions of antique wicker forms would change by the end of the 1960s.

In addition to interior designers of the 1960s, another audience incorporated antique forms of wicker and Asian rattan to their décor. This group of wicker enthusiasts encompassed members of the youth movement based in San Francisco, who rebelled against bourgeois American values and the Vietnam War and highlighted civil rights issues. Stylistically, the aesthetic of the youth movement differed from the Modernism and Colonial Revivalism of mainstream tastes, as well.

The Victorian architecture of the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, the center of the youth movement, influenced the style of the anti-establishment youth. The second-hand stores of Haight-Ashbury provided turn-of-the-century antiques, which matched the style of apartments in the district. Cost Plus offered East Asian and Indian decorative arts, along with Rococo Revival-influenced rattan imports and traditional Asian forms of rattan.

The art, music, politics, and unorthodox culture of the youth movement drew mainstream media attention in the late 1960s. Even more than furnishing shows and decorating books, the publicized style of the San Francisco youth movement affected American visual culture. Wicker and rattan furniture played a large part in defining the youth movement's style. Antique forms of wicker, as well as Asian rattan peacock chairs, appeared on rock album record covers. Products that catered to youth demographics began to pick up on the trend by the end of the 1960s.

Asian rattan forms also achieved publicity due to the subversive Black Panther party, which fought for the rights of the working-class black community in Southern California in a visually menacing way. The Black Panthers included a rattan peacock chair, zebra rug, and African masks in a widely distributed photograph of leader, Huey

Newton. While the chair may have represented radical beliefs, it also achieved greater publicity and the attention of mainstream America through Newton's portrait. More album covers and advertisements that targeted the youth demographic featured the peacock chair to lend a hip vibe to products.

Both Asian rattan and antique wicker forms continued to appear in American visual culture into the 1970s, as fashionable furniture that symbolized both hip youth and leisure. The presence of wicker and rattan on rock album covers and in advertisements geared to a youthful audience in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated a paradigm shift in popular American décor. Rather than the futurism of mid-century Modernism and the synthetic materials of the Space Age, the new fashion for antique and imported woven furniture symbolized an appreciation of archaic forms. As the image of the youth movement of the 1960s made Victorian architecture hip, it likewise bestowed connotations to furniture previously dismissed as old-fashioned.

By the mid-1970s, wicker grew more accepted in mainstream homes, and middle class domestic magazines like *Better Homes and Gardens* recommended "nostalgic" additions of antique wicker and "exotic" accents of Asian rattan. Due to the effect of the Wicker Revival, antique wicker stores opened throughout the East Coast in the 1970s, and the renewed interest in wicker of the pre-1930s era especially grew in New England, where the major wicker manufacturers operated in the nineteenth century.

The 1980s saw an even greater breakthrough in the acceptance of antique wicker in both domestic settings and as historically significant furniture. Antique wicker's renewed status led to its placement in museum collections. Sedate as well as Rococo Revival forms of antique wicker appealed to suburbanites. Uses of wicker as decorative,

functional, and stylish furniture for Americans of many tastes revealed the successful effects of the Wicker Revival.

Into the twenty-first century, Asian rattan peacock chairs continued to appear as backdrops for fashion and celebrity photography. The legacy of Huey Newton's portrait continued to influence African American artists, who used the peacock chair as homage to Huey Newton and a symbol of black culture. Celebrity photographers also continued to use the peacock chair as a means to provide a face-framing background, as a nod to the publicity photographs of the twentieth century. Rococo Revival rattan also continued to fascinate photographers, who used it as accent pieces. Antique wicker dealers maintained success after the second millennium, and wicker remained a cherished form of casual and summer furniture. In the words of Pamela Scurry, wicker collector and owner of the Wicker Garden in New York City, woven furniture after the Wicker Revival could still be "fresh, young, and stylish."³

Chapter I

Wicker in the Western World: from Ancient Thrones to the Ultimate Vacation Furniture

For over the past century, wicker constituted the most common name for woven furniture in the United States, in all its various stylistic and material variations. Scholars assert that the term wicker derived from two possible meanings: old Swedish “vikker,” which meant willow, and the Swedish verb “wicka,” the verb “to bend.”⁴ A general term, by the nineteenth century it began to refer to the material components of objects, practical or decorative, fabricated from woven plant or fiber materials. In the twentieth century, wicker referred to the technique of weaving rather than the material itself, but willow and rattan comprised the two most commonly used materials for wicker during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and composed the ideal material for wicker collected during the Wicker Revival.

The act of weaving objects from pliable materials, however, predated the nineteenth century by over a thousand years. From the earliest times, humans wove plant fibers into functional crafts. When weavers utilized such techniques to form furniture, the resulting breathable softness made for more comfortable seating than wood or stone. Wild grasses that grew along the fertile crescent of present-day Iraq and surrounded the Nile River in Egypt provided choice materials for weaving. Basket weaving existed since Neolithic times.⁵ Biblical *Old Testament* recordings mentioned the use of baskets, most likely produced from woven grass or reed.⁶ Notably, the book of *Exodus* referred to the woven reed basket that held the infant prophet Moses as he floated down the Nile to avoid Egyptian persecution.⁷

As ancient peoples learned, the desirable qualities of woven materials made superior furniture. The first craftsmen of woven chairs drew from the same technique as basket weavers to create pliant, soft, and ventilated seats that offered more comfort than stone seating. Evidence from antiquity demonstrated that high officials and important societal figures exercised authority from luxurious woven chairs and stools. While no remnants of woven furniture made prior to 1,000 C.E. remain, extant artwork featured furniture composed of woven reed and grass in early Indian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean civilizations. A relief carving on the tomb of Egyptian priest Menka-Hequet displayed a likeness of the entombed on a yellow reed seat, considered the earliest known wicker chair in existence.⁸ (Fig. 1)

On the European continent, craftsmen procured the limbs of willow trees, then removed the bark, to fashion flexible furniture and utensils, since the time of the Roman Empire.⁹ Extant writings from Roman antiquity reveal that woven willow was made into a number of products. Roman naturalist, philosopher, and official Pliny the Elder alluded to the many amenable uses of woven willow in his circa 77-79 C.E. account *Natural History*.¹⁰ Within that encyclopedia, he stated that willow, more pliable than leather, allowed for the creation of luxurious reclining chairs and other exclusive goods.¹¹

The method of forming practical yet comfortable items from willow limbs spread within areas that succumbed to Roman conquest. Northern Europeans also wove willow limbs into functional objects. Cathedra chairs, some of the earliest official seating furniture of the Holy Roman Empire, held the weight of significant persons in society.

Cathedra chairs boasted high backs, which added to the appearance of the sitter's grandeur. The *Concise Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* described the chairs

as armless with curved or hollow backs.¹² A 235 C.E. relief scene sculpted on a gravestone from Neumagen an der Mosel, in present-day Germany, depicted a figure of high status seated on a wicker cathedra, surrounded by attendants for the toiletry ritual. (Fig. 2)

Members of the early church favored the stately appearance of high-backed woven willow cathedra chairs, as ecclesiastical illuminations and sculptural representations demonstrated. A Romanesque illumination of the twelfth century depicted the evangelist John seated on a tall, woven fiber cathedra.¹³ Along with other traditions of the pre-Gothic era such a chair likely derived from earlier prototypes of the Roman Empire. Even as societal structures changed from feudal to mercantile in the sixteenth century, Europeans continued to craft high-backed woven chair forms from straw and willow material.

In the Flanders region that encompassed parts of present-day Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, willow furniture appeared prominently in seventeenth-century Baroque paintings.¹⁴ While such work often depicted biblical or historical figures, artists rendered them in contemporary dress. Accordingly, current Flemish furniture supplied the seating, most conspicuously high-backed wicker chairs.¹⁵

Cathedra chairs remained a symbol of high status in the paintings of Flemish artist Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678),¹⁶ discernible in *The Holy Family with Saint Anne and the Young Baptist and His Parents*. In respect to her age and position as a holy figure, Saint Anne sat on the high-backed chair, formed of woven willow. (Fig. 3) In another Jordaens biblical scene, *Madonna with Child*, the Holy Mother sat in a similar chair form.

Such chairs represented authority in antiquity, and in the seventeenth century, still suggested high rank in the contemporary atmosphere of Flanders.

The European tradition of woven fiber furnishings endured into the nineteenth century. However, it developed as a folk tradition rather than one reserved for clergy and aristocracy. High-backed wicker chairs carried an antiquated and rustic stateliness. Woven European furniture lost exclusivity as exotic woods from distant lands succeeded local materials as fashionable furnishings. The increase of international trade in the seventeenth century brought wealth to merchants of Portugal, the Netherlands, and later England. On sight of the goods attained by such conquests, newly wealthy consumers' eyes opened to a world of fascinating novel decorative forms.¹⁷

Seventeenth-century Portuguese comprised the first Europeans to apply Southeast Asian rattan cane to the backs and seats of furniture. Caning grew fashionable in England, as well, through the 1662 marriage of Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza to Charles II. The use of cane as an openwork accent to furniture differed greatly from the woven furniture known as rattan that would grow fashionable in the nineteenth century. For most Europeans, woven furniture remained a tradition of rural areas, but it did not gain acclaim until the nineteenth century.

Willow and other European plant fibers, unlike rattan cane, did not carry the caché of the exotic. By the nineteenth century, however, furniture woven by hand emanated a different kind of charm: a pastoral allure ideal for country houses and casual settings.¹⁸ Centuries-old woven forms which displayed intricately patterned furniture crafted from willow limbs, particularly appealed to bourgeois Europeans for their decorative qualities.

In Austria, the revitalization of the wicker industry grew as a method of survival in a difficult economy. The government, and later the Imperial School of Vienna, championed the craft of basket and furniture weaving as a means for unemployed farmers to survive starvation in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ The program proved successful, and the Austrian weaving industry continued to prosper decades after the famine.²⁰

German craftsmen produced woven willow for centuries, but renewed interest in woven crafts by the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie spurred production. The German weavers created designs with complex patterns. Some of the weavers worked in guilds, as they had since the Middle Ages, rather than for large manufacturers. However, the influx of German immigrants to America profoundly influenced the work produced by large nineteenth-century companies, like the Colt Willow Ware Manufactory.²¹

In the 1850s, Hartford, Connecticut arms manufacturer Samuel Colt planted a Western European species of willow trees around the dike by his factory to control ground erosion.²² When he learned of willow's potential for furniture making, he developed a willow-weaving factory as well. Colt originally employed German weavers, who first arrived at the factory in 1859, for their skilled craftsmanship and cheap labor.²³ As a result, Colt designs reflected German weaving traditions, albeit created through an industrial division of labor and contemporary machinery. (Fig. 4)

Bourgeois American consumers appreciated old styles of wicker for the same reasons that their European counterparts enjoyed traditional woven crafts, although Colt furniture used contemporary mechanical techniques. Like wicker and cane of earlier centuries, the airiness of willow wicker provided another draw for bourgeois vacationers.

Colt Willow Ware furniture graced the parlors of summer cottages as breezy and pastoral alternatives to solid wood pieces.²⁴

Woven rattan acted as the greatest rival to willow in the nineteenth century, and it remained in demand after willow wicker reached near-obsolence in the late 1800s. Southeast Asian craftsmen developed the first woven rattan furniture.²⁵ Westerners witnessed such furniture through travels to colonized lands in Indonesia, Canton, and the Philippines. The forms varied from Western woven furniture, and chairs and tables often displayed hourglass-shaped bases. (Fig.5)

The durability and comfort of rattan furniture made it ideal for both outdoor and indoor use. Well-to-do British travelers, who toured on the Pacific and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P. and O.) cruise ships that sailed from Britain to Egypt, Malta, and Constantinople, and later Ceylon and Hong Kong, lounged in rattan chairs on deck.²⁶ The leisurely nature of the chairs, and the extra compartments within the armrests to store drinks and newspapers, also made them popular items for gentlemen's smoking rooms in London.²⁷

Lady Mary Anne Barker, extensive traveler and journalist, described the use of an Asian rattan lounge chair on P. and O. ships and in smoking rooms in her 1878 decorating guidebook, *The Bedroom and the Boudoir*. A sketch of the chair in her book portrayed a large chair with a reclining back, a supportive headrest in the shape of a half cylinder, and generously proportioned flat-surfaced armrests. (Fig.6) She advocated the use of such chairs in domestic settings as well, and informed the reader that, with side-wings removed, the chair could function as a superior lounge for a lady to take her rest on a verandah.²⁸

The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London helped introduce the pliable material to a wider audience. Although origins of the first American-made rattan furniture remain debatable, Michael Topf of New York featured his early innovations in rattan furniture at the exhibition. His garden chair displayed the ornate aesthetic popular for solid furniture of the 1850s. (Fig. 7) The back, arm supports, and knee joints of the chair all exhibited C-scrolled embellishments typical of furniture in the Rococo Revival mode, a nineteenth-century version of the French court style popularized by Madame Pompadour and other tastemakers during the reign of Louis XV. The Rococo Revival style flourished as a favorite for wicker furniture for the duration of the nineteenth century, even after the scrolling forms grew passé in solid furniture.

The year 1851 marked the time when Colt's competitor, the Wakefield Rattan Company, opened in South Reading, Massachusetts, (later renamed Wakefield).²⁹ Cyrus Wakefield, the founder, caught his first glimpse of rattan imports as packaging material for cargo at his family-owned grocery.³⁰ When he set up his own rattan business, he initially imported the material through his brother-in-law employed at Russell and Company in Canton, China.³¹

By the 1870s, when the Colt Willow Ware Works burned down, and rattan companies gained new workers from Colt, the Wakefield Rattan Company established itself as a leader in rattan furniture production.³² The 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition featured Wakefield's wares.³³ The earlier Wakefield products displayed simplified Rococo Revival and diamond-patterned weaving, with characteristic rolled arms.

Wakefield offered furniture in both sedate and ornate Rococo Revival patterns for decades. However, by the 1890s, when the company merged with former rival Heywood Brothers and Company of Gardner, Massachusetts, Wakefield mainly produced the characteristic patterns of the Rococo Revival style. Such ornate wicker furniture won the appreciation of middle class Americans, although by the 1890s, decorators deemed Rococo Revival solid furniture passé. A variety of wicker featured the intricate patterns of the Rococo Revival, including display cabinets known as etageres, as well as fire screens, settees, tables, and chairs. (Fig. 8 a,b,c)

The Rococo Revival style for wicker fared well on an international level, and a late nineteenth-century trade catalog from the Hong Kong rattan company Sang Mow displayed plates that featured Rococo Revival and European folk designs fashioned from local rattan and seagrass.³⁴ Victorian tête-à-tête models, which connected two chairs to form one, appeared in the catalogue, as well as an updated example of a beehive chair form, with the characteristic enveloping back. (Fig. 9 a,b)

Portrait photographers in studios during the 1890s favored the picturesque scrolling patterns offered by Rococo Revival wicker chairs, where they placed sitters in front of painted backdrops of medieval castles, peaceful romantic meadows, or rolling seas.³⁵ Wicker manufacturers produced Rococo Revival “posing chairs,” lighter and smaller than ordinary versions, specifically for studio use.³⁶ Photographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also favored wicker for practical reasons, as well. Wicker posing chairs not only provided an appropriate setting for studio photography, but also their breathable wicker material proved an asset in the years before air conditioning. Photography magazines of the time stressed the importance of ventilation in the studio,

regardless of season, to provide the most comfortable and aesthetically pleasing photographs.³⁷

Although Rococo Revival wicker remained a fixture of photography studios and many American parlors, smoking rooms, and bedrooms, by the early 1900s, the taste for more sedate, rectilinear forms dominated the casual interiors and verandas of Americans who followed new trends. Joseph Patrick McHugh, a decorator and stylistic innovator of New York City, decided to produce a new style of wicker that eschewed the ornate scrolls of the popular Rococo Revival.³⁸ To distinguish his wicker from that of his competitors, he chose willow, an outdated material by the 1890s, for his designs, defined by straight lines, rounded feet, and diamond-patterned latticework.³⁹ In 1893, under the name McHughwillow, he established his new lines.⁴⁰

In order to connote casual leisure in his wares and appeal to a fashionable New York clientele, McHugh named his designs after popular resort areas such as Cape Cod, Bar Harbor, Newport, and Southampton.⁴¹ Bar Harbor seating furniture, characterized by a sloping, round back and wide open latticework, gained national acclaim.⁴² The wide latticework required less effort to produce, and therefore proved more economical than tightly woven furniture. As a result, many manufacturers imitated the Bar Harbor style.⁴³ (Fig. 10) The Belknap, another popular McHugh design, although perhaps less ubiquitous than the Bar Harbor, echoed the new fashion for the Colonial Revival with its distinctive ears, reminiscent of an eighteenth-century easy chair. (Fig.11)

McHugh's simplified wicker stayed in demand until the onslaught of World War I, and grew synonymous with American vacation spots. Among his designs, he included Sun Chairs, with tall backs and hoods to protect sitters from the sun at the beach. (Fig.12)

He also produced many designs that mimicked Asian rattan forms, and bestowed them with exotic (although non-Asian) names such as the Porto Rico Chair and the Panama Chair.⁴⁴ They featured hourglass-shaped bases and generous armrests, reminiscent of the chair illustrated in Lady Barker's book.

Asian rattan itself remained desirable as exotic additions to indoor and outdoor spaces, and it competed against McHugh's pared-down American wicker. One of the main suppliers of imported rattan furniture, A. A. Vantine & Company, also known as Vantine's, the Oriental Store, was opened by Ashely A. Vantine in New York City in 1896. Vantine's claimed to sell items from "the Empires of Japan, China, India, Turkey, Persia, and the East."⁴⁵ When Vantine added Asian rattan furniture to his merchandise, it achieved great success, and Vantine's rattan furniture advertisements appeared in a number of popular early twentieth-century publications.

"If you don't know Vantine's, you don't know America, much less China, Japan, or India," asserted Elbert Hubbard, founder of the Roycrofters' Arts and Crafts community and press in East Aurora, New York.⁴⁶ Hubbard's promotional essay *Journey to Vantine's* appeared in the July 1911 *Theatre Magazine Advertiser*.⁴⁷ The variety of non-Western goods offered by Vantine's fit the eclectic aesthetic of verandas and smoking rooms that many Americans of the time favored. In rooms such as the smoking room mentioned by Barker, woven lounge furniture reflected the comfort of the leisurely environment. According to Vantine's, the Canton "hour glass chair," represented "the Oriental conception of chair luxury."⁴⁸

While hourglass chairs, both imported or made domestically, added South Asian flair to a casual veranda or sun room, Americans of the early twentieth century who newly witnessed the peacock chair recognized it as exceedingly regal and exotic. Like its Asian relatives, the peacock chair featured an hourglass base, but its form cut an even more grand appearance due to its large, circular back, reminiscent of a throne. (Fig. 13)

“Impressive indeed! Like a throne chair, one imagines a chieftain sitting here in all his regal splendor of painted skin and beads under palm trees,” enthused an article in the June, 1914 issue of *American Homes and Gardens*.⁴⁹ While few sources tracked the accurate origins of the peacock chair, also known as the “Manila” or “Philippine,”⁵⁰ American critics wove fantastical tales that involved Southeast Asian royalty and lush surroundings.

The more likely story for the chair’s origins stemmed from a less romanticized account in a 1913 *California Outlook* article.⁵¹ According to the source, the peacock chair originated in the less-than-regal surroundings of the Bilibid Prison in Manila, the largest in the Philippines, where prison routine called for inmates to bide time through the creation of furniture, silverware, and baskets woven from “reed, willow, grass and wood.”⁵² Reed, often referred to rattan, was called *buri* in the Philippines.⁵³ The article held that while “many people think it is East Indian,” a German prisoner at Bilibid created the “Manila Chair” which remained, at least until 1913, on display at the prison’s model room.⁵⁴

Regardless of the peacock chair’s initial source, its debut at the Philippine Building of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition met the praises of an

enthusiastic American audience. Reviewer Frank Morton Todd described the forms on display as “chairs for princesses, chairs whose flaring backs made frames for those who sat in them.”⁵⁵ The throne-like chairs, which drew attention to the sitter’s visage and added tropical grandeur to a scene, earned them the attention of daring decorators and portrait photographers. If Rococo Revival posing chairs played the most favorable props for studio photography in the late nineteenth century, peacock chairs developed as the ultimate seats for celebrities who posed for publicity photographs throughout the twentieth century.

Also due to the availability of import stores in California such as Gump’s, a store similar to Vantine’s and established in 1861, and many others, imported peacock chairs proved desirable for portraits of actors in the early film industry. A 1922 portrait of silent film star Norma Talmadge displayed the actress in a leisurely pose on a peacock chair with an unusually large back, draped with red fabric. The traditional use of peacock chairs for celebrity photography lasted for the rest of the century. A 1934 publicity photograph of the actress Katherine Hepburn, taken by Baron George Hoyningen-Huene, accentuated the tropical effect of the chair through the placement of abundant palms in the background, seen through the woven rattan (Fig. 14 a, b.)

An American-made form that reflected the peacock appeared in Stick Wicker chairs during the late 1920s. (Fig. 15) “Stick wicker” comprised the only non-woven forms referred to as “wicker.” Decorators hailed the vertical, parallel open reeds made of willow or rattan as “modernistic.”⁵⁶ Heywood-Wakefield and other leading wicker manufacturers adopted the style to enhance the demand for their wares.⁵⁷

In addition to stick wicker, Art Deco wicker was also prevalent in the 1920s. Inspired by African art and palm motifs, designs for this style of wicker exhibited extravagant shapes, such as a sofa with a palm-frond back (Fig. 16), or very plain forms, like the sofas so often exhibited in furniture catalogs of the time. The main adornment of the latter constituted a small diamond pattern highlighted by a different colored dye. (Fig. 17) Common colors for Art Deco wicker included white, natural, bittersweet, and turquoise. Sometimes, in keeping with the spirit of Art Deco flamboyance, wicker was painted combinations of colors like gold, red, and black.⁵⁸ Fabric combinations for the cushions of 1920s wicker also assumed bold colors.⁵⁹ The widespread introduction of electrical lighting also spurred the production of many wicker lamps, with characteristic Art Deco fringe.

Although forms of wicker changed in fashion from the turn of the century to the 1920s, Americans created parlors in the style of conservatories, indoor garden rooms which remained popular for interiors until roughly the 1930s. Wicker continued to decorate such garden rooms into the time of the second Roosevelt presidency.⁶⁰ The most drastic change in American wicker, however, arrived after many manufacturers employed the Lloyd Loom to weave their products.

The Lloyd Manufacturing Company of Menominee, Michigan, introduced this new method of production.⁶¹ In 1913, Marshall Burns Lloyd created a new method for weaving, originally intended for the production of wicker baby carriages.⁶² Lloyd fashioned woven products from two types of fiber: brown kraft paper as the weft (horizontal strands), and paper-covered metal as the tough warp (vertical strands). Lloyd developed The Lloyd Loom, a circular loom designed to weave the materials in an over-

and-under manner.⁶³ The process enabled the production of wicker baby carriages at a cheaper and faster rate than earlier methods, and it reduced the need for many workers.⁶⁴

In 1921, Heywood-Wakefield merged with the Lloyd Manufacturing Company, and produced the first line of Lloyd Loom furniture the following year.⁶⁵ The phenomena of the fiber loom made wicker furniture available to people of all income levels, and customers could buy whole parlor or dining table sets composed of metal-wrapped fiber wicker. The method proved especially useful during the austere years of the Great Depression, when many Americans could not afford solid wooden furnishings.⁶⁶ Wicker that grew more accessible with the advent of the Lloyd Loom process appeared overly manufactured and lacked the creative quality of the willow and rattan furniture from earlier years. Although the company attracted a wider clientele during the 1930s, the new method played a role in the perception of wicker as functional, but no longer fashionable.

Wicker collector and dealer Donna Keller, owner of Wicker Place Antiques in Manassas, Virginia, described the negative sentiment of her older family members toward their wicker furniture. Keller inherited some of her first wicker pieces from her grandmother. She explained that her grandfather purchased the 1920 wicker living room set that included a sofa, side table, chair, rocker, and desk with a corresponding desk chair.⁶⁷ When Keller's grandparents bought a house during the Great Depression, they chose a 1920 wicker set due to its economical price. From the time of their purchase, the objects carried memories of hard times, and Keller's grandmother preferred to have solid wooden living room furniture rather than cheap wicker substitutes.⁶⁸ For the Kellers and other consumers in the 1930s, the machine-made woven pieces did not bring to mind the

tropical, colonialist exoticism of a conservatory in the living room. Rather, the furniture represented the compromise of unglamorous necessity.

Such a change of national opinion for wicker, which once represented individual craftsmanship, innovative design, exoticism and fashionable vacations affected the country as a whole. However, as the preservation of antique wicker and the collection of more contemporary, machine-made varieties remained strong in resort locales such as Palm Beach, Florida, which continued to display wicker in the lobbies of hotels since the turn of the century. The world of resorts that appeared in society photographs did not reflect the furnishings of most middle class Americans during the 1940s and 1950s, and nineteenth and early twentieth-century wicker did not appear in the middle class decorating books of that period. Instead, middle class Americans favored solid rattan furniture which fit the Polynesian aesthetic. Like Bar Harbor chairs, Asian peacock chairs did not often appear as suggested middle class décor after the 1920s. Decorating guides did not feature the forms until the official announcement of the 1960s Wicker Revival.

Nevertheless, vacationers and eclectic decorators continued to preserve and collect outdated wicker. Celebrity photographers shot their subjects seated on a variety of woven furnishings. The peacock chair remained a favored prop for publicity photographs for the duration of the century. Antique wicker did not fit the Modern aesthetic or mid-century Colonial Revival styles, (most Americans seemingly forgot about McHugh's Belknap wicker easy chairs). However, when decorators re-introduced it to a widespread audience in the mid-1950s, the old-fashioned shapes of the wicker

seemed novel and daring during a period when Modernism and Colonial Revivalism dominated.

Chapter II

Where Wicker Appeared Before the Wicker Revival: Vacation Homes, the Hospitality Industry, and Film

By the time of the Great Depression, perceptions of woven furniture changed significantly among mainstream Americans. The term wicker once conjured images of vacation homes, hotel lobbies, and breezy verandas, but by mid-century, it no longer held the same status as leisure furniture in suburban life. It settled into the place of uninteresting, second-class furniture. When wicker appeared on film, it often appeared as either outmoded⁶⁹ or merely utilitarian.⁷⁰ However, antique wicker of McHugh's sedate Bar Harbor and Newport forms, Asian rattan peacock chairs, continued to grace the lawns, decks, and hotels of affluent vacationers in warm climates. If wicker and rattan left the suburban sphere, it found refuge in areas that encouraged a leisurely way of life.

Since the late nineteenth century, wicker not only provided the ideal furniture for parlors, small apartments, and porches, but it also offered the most desirable furniture for resorts and hotels. Whether in mountain lodges or seaside retreats, wicker held sway over solid furniture due to its lightness and breathable woven material which decorators deemed healthier than wood.⁷¹ The tradition endured throughout the twentieth century.

The Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach, Florida, founded in 1894 by oil magnate Henry Morrison Flagler, featured white wicker in the sedate, McHugh-inspired style, and potted palms adorned many of its first-floor public interiors. (Fig.18) Hotel workers carted guests around the premises of Palm Beach resorts in Rococo Revival wicker rickshaw chairs, fastened to bicycles, a tradition that continued into the mid-twentieth century. Wicker furniture continued to grace the indoor and outdoor areas of

hotels and vacation homes in resort areas, regardless of the decorating fashion adopted by most Americans.

Even when wicker no longer appealed to suburban homemakers during the 1940s and early 1950s, vacationers continued to enjoy obsolete wicker furniture, which photographers captured throughout the twentieth century. A 1949 photograph from the *Associated Press* revealed a press conference hosted by President Harry Truman at his Little White House in Key West, Florida.⁷² Guests sat on white wicker chairs in McHugh forms for the conference on the lawn. (Fig. 19)

A significant figure in the portrayal of vacation wicker arose during the 1950s. Slim Aarons, an official army photographer during World War II, claimed that “the only beach I was interested in landing on was one decorated with beautiful girls tanning in a tranquil sun.”⁷³ He fulfilled his goal, and captured the leisurely world of socialites and celebrities who continued to frequent areas where antique wicker remained in vogue. One Aarons photograph in Palm Beach, shot in 1955, featured socialite C.Z. Guest, seated on a white McHugh-style wicker lounge by her swimming pool. (Fig. 20) His other work showed Rococo Revival wicker in Monte Carlo (Fig. 21), and traditional Asian rattan forms in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Mexico. (Fig.22) Resort decorators in tropical regions adopted hourglass tables and peacock chairs to create an exotic ambiance which provided the backdrop for many of Aarons’ photographs.

As at the turn of the century, Americans in the 1950s associated traditionally Asian rattan furniture designs with warm climates and exotic settings. However, the locations from which they drew inspiration changed. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century tastemakers touted rattan and decorative arts from India, China, Japan,

Africa, and the West Indies, and favored eclectic combinations of goods from each area. Along with rattan furniture, hammocks that originated among the indigenous people of the Caribbean also achieved the approval of turn-of-the-century tastemakers.⁷⁴ The January 1895 *Decorator and Furnisher* advised the use of a wicker couch, tea table, and hammock in the corner for a young woman's college sitting room, as decorators of the time championed fanciful décor.⁷⁵

A circa 1890 photograph of the smoking room in a middle class Boston home, featured Rococo Revival wicker chairs that sat in front of the fireplace.⁷⁶ The chairs' vegetal ornamentation suited the exoticism of the room. The exotic décor included boldly patterned wallpapers reminiscent of African tribal rugs, a lion firescreen, plaster monkey sculpture, and Japanese-inspired floor screen. (Fig. 23)

Resort areas and lounges from the 1930s to the early 1960s revealed that mid-century Americans also enjoyed the aesthetics of locales deemed exotic and tropical. However, the new decorative and cultural focus turned to Polynesia more than other lands. Hawaii grew increasingly fashionable with the opening of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki, Honolulu, in 1927.⁷⁷ The opulent new hotel attracted high-profile Hollywood figures like Charlie Chaplin, Shirley Temple, and Clark Gable.⁷⁸ In keeping with the Pacific theme, guests' rooms provided Asian rattan furniture. (Fig. 24)

The Polynesian trend outlasted the Great Depression, and reached its halcyon days in the late 1950s. The tropical fad placed rattan in the limelight. Although peacock chairs originated in the Philippines, rather than Polynesia, and often reached Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States via Hong Kong, the throne-like form appeared in

Hawaiian, and later in mainland American resort interiors, tiki bars, and film sets that popularized them as the ultimate South Pacific accessory.

As the Western fantasy for all things Polynesian took flight, Americans experienced the newly popular music of the ukulele and the introduction of mixed rum drinks served at newly established tropical-themed cocktail bars, known by mid-century as “tiki bars.”⁷⁹ The birth of such establishments cemented for mid-century Americans the idea of peacock chairs, and Asian rattan in general, as the furniture of the imagined tropics.

The first known Polynesian drinking establishments in the United States began in Southern California, the gateway to the Pacific world. Rattan furniture, imported from Hong Kong and the Philippines, along with totemic tiki mugs, fishing rope, and hula motifs, fit the decorative and functional vocabulary of the American fantasy of Polynesia. The thatch-roofed Western conceptions of Polynesian-themed bars allowed suburban dwellers in proverbial grey flannel suits the chance to figuratively transform themselves into lords of the South Pacific while they sipped rum cocktails on throne-like peacock chairs.

Don Beach, who opened Don’s Beachcomber in 1933 in Hollywood, California, revealed such use of Asian rattan in faux-Polynesian bars.⁸⁰ Beach’s affordable tropical décor included rattan hourglass and peacock furniture. His use of the most economical liquor, rum, proved successful for a watering hole of the Great Depression.⁸¹ The onslaught of World War II and his enlistment shortened his career as the Hollywood Don’s owner, a position fulfilled by ex-wife Cora “Sunny” Sund.⁸² Beach opened Don the Beachcomber in Hawaii upon his return from the war. At Beach’s establishments, the

peacock chair held significance as a place of honor for musical guests like ukulele player, Alfred Apaka.⁸³ Beach himself often sat in peacock chairs for publicity photos, particularly at his bars and at resort areas he helped develop.⁸⁴ (Fig. 25)

In film of the 1950s and early 1960s, as in tiki bars, Asian rattan created an ambiance of Pacific Rim leisure. The lively, tropical-themed club, filled with the trappings of Pacific trade, presented a mid-century version of the tropical turn-of-the-century smoking room. *From Here to Eternity*, a 1953 film that depicted life on a Hawaiian army base before the attack on Pearl Harbor, prominently displayed Asian rattan on set, in which the main characters sat during face-framing conversational scenes.⁸⁵ (Fig. 26) Such scenes occurred at the fictional New Congress Club, a recreational bar and lounge that exhibited the tropical aesthetic of a tiki bar for the soldiers. Along with the peacock chairs, the club also featured a solid rattan settee upholstered, appropriately, with palm-tree-printed fabric.

The films that highlighted Asian rattan often took place in tropical locales. Polynesian-themed films continued into the early 1960s, as the tiki bar craze still intoxicated the nation. In the 1961 film musical *Blue Hawaii*, a variety of rattan furniture appeared on the set, such as a peacock chair used as a throne at a luau (Fig. 27), as well as a Rococo Revival style wicker bed, which provided an example of the antique reproduction furniture made in Southeast Asia.⁸⁶ (Fig. 28) In *Blue Hawaii*, the rattan furniture symbolized Hawaiian tropical décor. However, when non-Asian forms of wicker appeared in films of the 1940s and 1950s that represented life in mainland America, the portrayal cast the furniture in an outdated light.

The depictions of wicker in films set in mainland United States revealed the predominant cultural sentiments towards various forms of woven furniture. In the 1940s and early 1950s, films showed Americans who placed wicker furniture in rooms not often accessed by the public. The 1950 drama *All About Eve* demonstrated an instance where characters used wicker as a form of second-class, strictly utilitarian furniture.⁸⁷ In the film, wicker chairs appeared in private, informal spaces, but never in public. Instead, the most public rooms featured Colonial Revival furniture.

The dressing room of Margo Channing, the established stage actress, revealed the perception of wicker as strictly utilitarian furniture.⁸⁸ (Fig. 29) Margo sat on an old, worn stick wicker chair, as did the other characters in the room. Other wicker furniture on the set included chairs and a chaise lounge in early twentieth-century McHugh forms. Such furniture echoed the forms popular at resorts. However, in the dressing room, away from the general public, the characters disregarded the furniture as decorative accents, and used the chaise lounge as a place to pile overcoats rather than lounge.

Another view of wicker, mainly of the Rococo Revival variety, that manifested itself in films of the 1950s emphasized it as quaintly outdated Victorian furniture fit for the porches of old stately homes, but it did not represent the current fashions. Richard Brooks' 1958 film version of the Tennessee Williams play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* revealed the popular portrayal of antique wicker as representative of furniture that could not fit with the current styles.⁸⁹ Set in the 1950s, the major scenes took place at a Southern plantation home in the Neoclassical style, filled with wicker and Victorian furniture indoors and out. (Fig. 30) White-painted Rococo Revival wicker furniture spanned the length of the porch. Since the owners of the home represented an older

generation, their unfashionable yet picturesque Rococo Revival wicker presented the audience with the designs of an earlier time. In the case of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, wicker represented the furniture of an obsolete era.

If the antique wicker that adorned the resort areas of the well-heeled in the 1940s and 1950s kept its status as leisure furniture meant for poolside lounging or garden parties, wicker in the film industry assumed a vastly different characterization. The films of the years before the 1960s revealed that furniture composed of rattan and willow did not represent the desired aesthetic and ideology of conventional wartime and postwar design. Likewise, the same decades-old forms that typified the Palm Beach vacation furniture did not reflect the popular opinion of decorating referred to in *Ladies Home Journal* decorating books of the 1950s.

Conversely, Asian rattan that appeared in films of the 1940s and 1950s set in Hawaii echoed the American Polynesian theme popular in many aspects of leisure at the time. While peacock chairs did not figure prominently in shelter magazines and decorating books of the time, mainstream Americans witnessed them at the tiki bars and luaus that exemplified much of mid-century middle class leisure and entertainment. Nevertheless, by the start of the 1960s, wicker furniture once deemed outdated and insignificant began to appear in mainstream magazines such as *Life* as fashionable and edgy, in comparison to more traditional, and often more formal, Colonial Revival style furnishings.

Outside of resorts and vacation homes, however, a little-publicized group of decorators and interior designers frequented the second-hand and import stores in the 1950s.⁹⁰ Although those avant-garde collectors of the nostalgic did not often receive

great publicity in mainstream publications, they would have a profound effect on the development of the Wicker Revival. The import store and flea-market aficionados who quietly sought peacock chairs and wicker in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century forms helped bring the same antique wicker furniture that languished in obscurity back into mainstream American life.

Chapter III

Footholds in the 1950s, Antique Wicker Reintroduced to the American Public

“White wicker chairs, fern stands, stained glass, fancy ironwork...pink rayon draperies, and a black and white rug” appeared in the 1912 Room, created by Cecil Beaton for the 1956 National Home Furnishings Show at the Coliseum, the new convention center in New York City.⁹¹ The show, which lasted from August to September, exposed innovative designs to a wide audience of “Mr. and Mrs. America,” and offered decorating ideas to the public. The year 1956 proved important for both Beaton and wicker in America.

Although decorators did not mention the Wicker Revival by name until the 1960s, designers and decorators of the 1950s reintroduced American audiences to the possibility of wicker and rattan as ornamental furniture for the home. Tastemakers on both coasts imparted their own versions of decorating with woven furniture and turn-of-the-century elements. In New York, Beaton’s designs for Broadway sets, the Home Furnishings Exhibit, and his own home décor gained visibility in 1956 and the following years.

The October, 1956 *Interiors* magazine, which summarized the Home Furnishings show, offered an accurate glimpse into the future of American interior decorating with the statement,

With all of its lightheartedness, Cecil Beaton’s room is indicative of an Edwardian revival that seems to be creeping into the home as well as the fashion picture, and the culprit is apparently the Broadway heroine, *My Fair Lady*.⁹²

Antique wicker’s “creep into the home” did not occur as a sudden phenomenon in 1956. Rather, it gained momentum at an inconsistent pace that moved as leisurely as a palm frond on a light breeze. Nevertheless, Beaton played a significant role in the

reintroduction of antique forms of wicker in American homes, and paved the way for the Wicker Revival of the 1960s and its mainstream acceptance in the 1970s.

The Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*, set in 1912, for which Beaton designed the sets and costumes, debuted in March, 1956. Such a clear allusion to Beaton's set decoration for the musical led some critics to judge the arrangement as "more of a stage setting than a room intended seriously for contemporary living."⁹³ On the other hand, an article in the September, 1956 issue of the magazine *Interiors* saw the turn-of-the-century style of the room, punctuated by lacy Rococo Revival wicker chairs and a 1920s stick wicker table, as part of a growing "Edwardian Revival" for home interiors.⁹⁴

Beaton's 1912 décor offered one foothold for the development of the American wicker revival, but the wicker-accented rooms created by interior designers and featured in magazines presented a more realistic possibility of antique wicker as livable domestic furniture. Nationally known interior design magazines and style sections of newspapers reviewed the public decorating shows staged to showcase new interior styles with wicker furniture to a large audience. Such publications also featured the kitchens and living rooms of inventive decorators who used antique wicker forms in mid-century homes.

While Beaton's interiors publicized the use of Rococo Revival and stick wicker furniture, such furniture garnered more attention in publications that catered to design professionals rather than those geared to suburban homemakers. *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies Home Journal* magazines and decorating books demonstrated few interior settings with antique wicker and hourglass rattan until the 1970s, when wicker and rattan finally gained the acceptance of the mainstream. On the other hand, cutting-edge professional journals like *Interiors* introduced readers to antique and reproduction

wicker in the Rococo Revival style, as well as traditional Asian rattan forms, before the term Wicker Revival appeared in furniture books.

The novelty of the antique wicker in Beaton's Edwardian Living Room, also cited as the 1912 Room, generated a stir among interior designers and decorators nationwide. Beaton's room for the Home Furnishings Show did not solely portray the style of the 1956 set of *My Fair Lady*. It also reflected his personal penchants. An avid collector of antique wicker, Beaton's homes both in England and New York displayed Rococo Revival, early twentieth-century, and Stick varieties. His interest in antique wicker, the ultimate furniture of leisure at the turn of the century, reflected a larger proclivity for the time period between 1901 and 1910. The years known in Great Britain as the Edwardian Era encompassed the reign of King Edward VII. The era symbolized an idealized time for the English middle and upper classes, often referred to as the "golden afternoon" when the British Empire attained peace and prosperity before World War I.⁹⁵ Beaton, born in 1904, recalled the era of his childhood as ideal. As a photographer, he also admired the photography of the Edwardian era, when wicker posing chairs acted as favored portrait props.⁹⁶

Beaton's tastes and work aligned him with England, where traditional circles still regarded turn-of-the-century architecture and decorative arts with appreciation into the mid-twentieth century. As the ultimate nostalgic escapist furniture, collections of wicker continued to grace the conservatories and gardens of stately country homes. Beaton's own country home, Reddish House, built in 1599 in Wiltshire, England, bore testament to his personal style. Appropriately, the house boasted a conservatory, which Beaton called

his “winter garden.”⁹⁷ He filled it with Rococo Revival and stick wicker furniture similar to the examples on display at the Home Furnishings showed. (Fig 31)

Beaton’s appreciation of things antique contrasted with the fast-paced, modern world in which he lived.⁹⁸ He asserted that the “highly polished...eggshell smoothness” of Fifth Avenue “has no real character.”⁹⁹ His New York City apartment, which accommodated him while he worked there, acted as a shelter from the Modernism of the city streets. Filled with antique wicker furniture of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, the apartment set the scene for some of his most renowned celebrity photographs. If Beaton’s portraits, and stage and interior decoration captured images of Edwardian England in 1950s America, then his apartment in the Ambassador Hotel on Park Avenue provided an escape into a wicker-filled environment reminiscent of a turn-of-the-century conservatory.

A 1956 Associated Press portrait of Beaton in his apartment depicted him seated upon an ornate lacquered white wicker lounge. The hand-tooled side panels of the lounge formed a small repetitive snowflake pattern, similar to nineteenth-century American examples. He acquired the piece and its mate from the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the wicker, the flourishing palm and paneled screen in the background of the photograph carried further associations with early twentieth-century style and revealed Beaton’s interest in the leisurely aesthetic of that era.

Besides *My Fair Lady* and the Home Furnishings show, Beaton stayed occupied in New York in 1956 through his photographs of celebrities at his apartment, where he shot his most famous portraits of the actress Marilyn Monroe. The wicker furniture and

palms provided the backdrop for some of the portraits, in which Monroe posed in a 1920s stick wicker peacock chair for one photograph and a Rococo Revival rolled-arm chair for another. (Fig 32 a,b,c).

Beaton's publicity shots of high-profile celebrities generated more exposure of his antique wicker. When author Eudora Welty posed for a portrait in his apartment, she described it as "very decorative and summery," and stated that Beaton "gave me a wicker armchair to stand behind."¹⁰¹ Welty described the wicker and "tropical" trees as "Cecil-Beatonish," with palms and a mimosa tree that flowered even "in the winter time, a cold grey day."¹⁰² Beaton's work in photography, set design, and interior decorating helped render him synonymous with not only the 1956 introduction of the Edwardian to American audiences, but with antique wicker as a whole.

Beaton may have influenced the tastes of acquaintance and fellow pre-1960s wicker collector, American author Truman Capote. At the Guild Hall of East Hampton, Long Island, the community cultural center where a 1956 furniture auction occurred, author Enez Whipple recalled him "bidding frantically" for a "fan-backed wicker chair in which he looked positively diminutive."¹⁰³ Capote's pursuit of the chair during the same year that Beaton's wicker-filled Edwardian Room opened to the public indicated the author's inclusion among the early wicker collectors at a time when elaborate woven furniture made its first debuts to a mainstream audience.

Beaton gained influence as a decorator in America in 1956, and in 1957, he even re-decorated a room with wicker and Japanese bamboo furnishings in cosmetics business founder Helena Rubinstein's apartment.¹⁰⁴ He proved that, while some decorators deemed his room for the Furnishings Show too frivolous and theatrical for everyday life,

his taste for wicker began to gain a following among affluent New Yorkers and those interested in the most current trends, even though such trends incorporated forms from a half century earlier.

As Beaton made early strides to foster a wicker revival via England and New York, other influences contributed to the collection of wicker and rattan in California. California maintained close ties with Asia since the beginning of its statehood, and therefore had advantageous access to rattan imports. Although West Coast stores continued the rattan trade with Asia throughout the twentieth century, the East Coast did not, at least until the mid-1960s. The Northeast, a wellspring of willow and rattan wicker products during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ceased the production of woven furniture when demand fell in the late 1930s.

Midwestern manufacturers also turned out a profusion of rattan and prairie grass wicker at the turn of the century, such as Cincinnati-based Fick's Reed, a main producer of wicker baby carriages founded in 1885 as National Carriage and Reed Company.¹⁰⁵ By the 1940s, the rattan furniture produced by Fick's Reed appeared very different from its early woven wares. Instead, Fick's Reed grew synonymous with the solid rattan "bamboo style" desirable among the middle class when the demand for all things Polynesian struck the nation. Solid rattan dining and living room sets from Fick's Reed assumed Asian forms, with such collections named "Far Horizons" to connote the exotic. (Fig. 33)

Asian woven rattan remained popular as outdoor and casual furniture during the 1950s, but mainstream shelter magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* considered woven furniture "not suitable for any but the most informal indoor rooms."¹⁰⁶ According

to the mainstream magazines and catalogues of the time, however, suburban Americans of the 1950s recognized and accepted sedate forms of Asian solid and woven rattan as casual outdoor and sun room furniture (although not peacock chairs, which did not appear in mainstream decorating books until the 1960s). The Tropi-Cal Company, which opened in 1953 in Los Angeles, met the demand for fashionable outdoor and casual rattan furniture. Tropi-Cal provided high-end designs of Asian rattan furniture to Californians who shopped at Bullocks, a regional department store.¹⁰⁷ It produced both woven and solid rattan furniture made in Hong Kong. However, along with other California rattan companies, Tropi-Cal mainly served customers on the West Coast during the 1950s.

Danny Hong, Tropi-Cal's founder, moved to Los Angeles from Hong Kong, where he designed updated versions of traditional rattan forms, such as peacock chairs with novel details. By the mid 1950s, Tropi-Cal also produced reproduction Rococo Revival wicker, such as the Sweetheart chair with its heart-shaped back, to keep up with the latest trends.¹⁰⁸ (Fig. 34) Such reproductions demonstrated that, by the 1960s, the Rococo Revival style achieved popularity on the West Coast, as well. In fact, the appreciation of Rococo Revival wicker in California predated the 1960s, and forms in that style appeared in rooms created by West Coast-based interior designers at the same time that Beaton displayed his Edwardian Living Room to the New York public.

An article in the September, 1956 *Interiors* issue that focused on kitchen design further demonstrated the renewed appreciation of antique wicker among avant-garde California decorators and designers. Among other examples, "Concepts of the Kitchen" featured the kitchen interior designer A. Dudley Kelly.¹⁰⁹ A set of Rococo Revival-style wicker chairs, which appear in the Sweetheart design, painted with a pink finish, circled

Kelly's kitchen table. (Fig. 35) Such chairs showed the early appreciation among California designers for forms of wicker derived from nineteenth-century style sources.

Another source from which Californians attained their rattan furniture arrived with the establishment of Cost Plus Imports, in San Francisco. While Los Angeles-based Tropi-Cal offered new, high-end designs for an upscale clientele, Cost Plus Imports supplied cheaper, less innovative imports but achieved great success in San Francisco. (Fig. 36) William Amthor opened Cost Plus Imports in 1958 in a warehouse on San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf.¹¹⁰ Amthor first sold imported rattan furniture at Cost Plus which he had available from his pre-existing store, Amthor and Company.¹¹¹ According to the *International Directory of Company Histories*, "he discovered that San Franciscans had a penchant for just that sort of merchandise."¹¹² Besides cheap imports of Asian rattan in both traditional hourglass forms and Rococo Revival reproductions, Cost Plus gained fame among San Francisco's bohemians and cutting-edge trendsetters for the eclectic collection of home items from Third World countries.

Californians enjoyed a variety of rattan furniture of different styles and price ranges, including Rococo Revival and McHugh style pieces, along with peacock chairs. One designer in particular helped bring California decorating to the rest of the country. A 1955 *Life* magazine article described San Francisco interior designer Everitt Brown as one who carried "Oriental style" to "dramatic lengths."¹¹³

Throughout the 1950s, Brown's image, adjacent to a white peacock chair, appeared in the corners of printed advertisements for products he endorsed. (Fig. 37) Instances of Brown's eclectic style often combined disparate elements. Japanese-inspired trellised screens and open floor plans met peacock accent chairs and nineteenth-century

Thonet bentwood furniture. From the 1950s onward, Brown also introduced Chicago and other cities to his minimal version of an eclectic interior, which included nineteenth-century forms as well as Asian rattan, against bold colors.

Brown's combination of Japanese openness and minimalism, with Victorian elements and Asian rattan, bore some similarities to the style of Beaton's apartment. Beaton also included white woven furniture (albeit late nineteenth and early twentieth-century in form rather than Asian rattan), bright colors, potted plants, and a minimum of clutter. Although Beaton and Brown gained recognition for their interiors on opposite sides of the country, they both played a role in the development of the Wicker Revival officially mentioned in decorating books and periodicals in the 1960s.

Cost-efficient California-based import stores, as well as new designers of rattan such as Tropi-Cal, which featured traditional as well as more modern forms, spread to a wider audience in the 1960s. The California indoor-outdoor lifestyle spread to the East Coast, marketed by department stores which began to carry California-made rattan. The truly ambitious collector, however, influenced by Beaton's collection of wicker, sought out old attics, flea markets, and garage sales before dealers in antique wicker made it more available on the East Coast. In the 1950s, antique wicker reemerged in the mind of the American designers and decorators as novel furniture. While wicker gained a foothold of visibility among cutting-edge tastemakers during the 1950s, the 1960s marked a decade when more mainstream designers began to take wicker seriously.

Chapter IV

Recognition of “The Wicker Revival” in the 1960s

“Where has all that old wicker porch furniture of the 1910’s and 20’s gone and why are reed and rattan chairs back once more in popular taste, and decorator demand?” *The American Life: A Collectors Annual* posed the question in 1965, and further illustrated the emergent craze with the observation “whatever the cause, antique and used-furniture stores are under pressure to find usable examples that have escaped the village dump and trash fire.”¹⁴

Antique forms of wicker and Asian rattan reappeared on both coasts during the 1950s, but the 1960s constituted the decade when a wider number of mainstream journalists and decorators took note of the growing trend. Wicker made a significant appearance in films. Early twentieth-century themes grew more popular for period films, and brought wicker and the turn-of-the-century aesthetic to a larger audience.

Also, during the 1960s, interior designers and decorators enlisted a combination of both Asian rattan (in the form of peacock chairs and hourglass tables), as well as Rococo Revival and stick wicker forms, to break up a strictly Modern interior and to give a hint of turn-of-the-century style without the bric-a-brac of the Victorian aesthetic.

While many Americans associated peacock chairs with the aesthetic of the tiki bar, the overall style associated with the 1960s Wicker Revival did not rehash the Polynesian trend. Instead, the look touted by decorators at the time featured wicker furniture combined with a few other turn-of-the-century elements, such as fur rugs and palms, some eclectic Asian pieces like paper lanterns or screens, and bright colors.

Like Beaton, who collected wicker from flea markets and defunct historic hotels, California decorators also adopted the antique wicker trend earlier than the rest of the

country. The impact made by Beaton, in New York, and the Californians, like Brown, who advocated wicker, caught the attention of mainstream and professional interior design periodicals alike, to the extent that a 1961 *Life Magazine* announced the “Airy Return of Curvy Curly Wickerwork” to the “U.S. hearth and porch, lacier and lighter than ever.”¹¹⁵

The article showed a variety of woven furniture forms, which included Rococo Revival, organic shapes, and an early-twentieth-century beach chair. According to the caption in the article, the pieces featured came “mostly from Hong Kong.”¹¹⁶ They bore similarities to the rattan furniture seen in 1950s advertisements for California companies in *Interiors* magazine. The “lacy” items included a Rococo Revival headboard, replete with a heart-shaped design and s-scrolls.¹¹⁷

“Hong Kong chests,” which resembled antique steamer trunks, constituted some of the more traditional Asian forms of rattan. A rattan plant stand in the form of an elephant, similar to a version that appeared in an October, 1956 article in *Interiors*, also made an appearance in the collection.¹¹⁸ Examples of such furniture played a prominent role in the rooms featured by *Interiors* throughout the 1950s, but the “return of wickerwork,” coined in 1965 as the Wicker Revival,¹¹⁹ related to the renewed mainstream media’s interest in wicker that emerged in the 1960s.

Interior decorator Betty Pepis, who wrote and edited for such mainstream publications as *McClure*, *Look*, *House and Garden*, and *The New York Times*, attempted to bring the style and wicker furniture championed by Beaton and Brown, seen in the pages of *Interiors* a decade previously, to middle class audiences. In *Be Your Own Decorator*, a 1961 guidebook, Pepis illustrated that while some items of furniture should

remain in the past, others, which achieved popularity at the turn of the century, constituted fashionable furniture in the 1960s. She asserted her views on items of furniture “considered chic in their time” that no longer reflected current tastes.¹²⁰ She claimed that for “fat sofas, free form tables, and floating sculpture [...] time is up,” while “in other cases-the fur rug and the fan shaped [peacock] wicker chair-time has not yet run out.”¹²¹

In another of her decorating books, *Interior Decoration from A to Z*, of 1965, she presented styles of decorating, including Rococo Revival and Asian rattan furniture, which California decorators already familiarized themselves with a decade previously.¹²² For example, she decorated a combined living room and dining area with rosy tones and arranged a set of white Sweetheart wicker chair forms with heart-shaped backs around a small table, in an echo of designer A. Dudley Kelly’s aforementioned San Francisco kitchen from 1956.¹²³ (Fig. 38) Like most decorators who followed the California and “Cecil Beaton-ish” style, she also placed white peacock chairs in her interiors (Fig. 39)

Such efforts to promote wicker did not entirely alter suburban interiors across the country, since the Colonial Revival style achieved even greater popularity among middle class homeowners during the 1960s.¹²⁴ However, the novelty of antique wicker in the Modern age continued to fascinate the press, and renowned designers adorned refurbished rooms in public buildings with peacock chairs and wicker furniture.¹²⁵

Everitt Brown, the San Francisco interior designer who created rooms that combined organic Asian and nineteenth-century influences, received the commission to re-design a penthouse solarium in Chicago’s historic Sherman Hotel.¹²⁶ Featured in the catalogue *Hotels and Motor Hotels*, published in 1963 by interior designer Henry End,

the room combined Brown's signature elements of peacock chairs, mid and late-nineteenth-century forms, and Japanese accents.

The choice of Brown as designer not only guaranteed an interior on the cutting edge of 1960s fashion, but it also reflected the Sherman's history as one of the nation's leading luxury hotels of the early twentieth century. Rebuilt after the Chicago Fire of 1871, the hotel gained prestige after a change of ownership in 1911, when the fashionable College Inn restaurant opened on the premises.¹²⁷ By the 1920s, the hotel established itself as a luxurious and stylish venue for the fêtes of prominent Chicagoans.¹²⁸

Suitably, Brown designed the solarium as a 1960s take on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century resorts through his use of palms and rattan furnishing.¹²⁹ He arranged rows of alternating white-painted peacock chairs, which End referred to as "Edwardian," against the solarium's windows.¹³⁰ Willowy palms and Rococo Revival wrought iron chairs, also painted white, flanked the peacock chairs, and yellow Japanese paper lanterns lined the ceiling. (Fig. 40) Brown likely purchased the chairs and lanterns from a California import store, and he thereby helped promote West Coast style in the Midwest.

Although the style of the solarium related to room designs seen in *Interiors*, it also presented an updated version of a turn-of-the-century solarium. The room achieved the essential spirit of an early twentieth-century resort, yet its minimalist aesthetic, with a minimum of clutter, translated well in a public space of the 1960s. End described the solarium as "one of the truly luxurious penthouses in the world of hotel life."¹³¹ The room confirmed that the style associated with the Wicker Revival gained appreciation for public spaces during the 1960s.

Films and television continued to play a significant role in the presentation and promotion of wicker to the nation. One example included the film version of the musical *My Fair Lady*, for which Cecil Beaton worked as art director. The film offered an even more widely distributed example of wicker and early twentieth-century aesthetics than the stage production or the 1912 Room.

Unlike the Broadway musical, which did not include wicker, the film featured woven furniture of a variety of types. In one scene, the leading male character, upper-middle-class phonetics professor Henry Higgins, sat in his mother's conservatory on a white peacock chair.¹³² (Fig. 41) The plant-filled room included 1920s varieties of wicker formed of kraft paper and wire, as well. The scene constituted a turning point in the musical, when Eliza Doolittle, working-class flower vendor whom Henry Higgins attempted to transform into an upper-class "lady" through elocution and etiquette practices, asserted her independence from Higgins.¹³³ The pivotal scene and the song sung drew even more attention to the wicker furniture, and presented to the public the peacock chair as a 1960s interpretation of early twentieth-century style.

The wicker and rattan in the scene did not entirely represent that used in the early twentieth century. However, since Warner Brothers Studios produced the film in Burbank, California, the import stores available provided Asian-made peacock chairs. Furthermore, the mixture of wicker of varied time periods and styles echoed the conservatory of the film's artistic director Cecil Beaton, whose own variety of wicker forms included Rococo Revival, stick wicker, and less ornate early twentieth-century forms.

The peacock chair appeared frequently in period films of the time due to its accessibility in California. The mixture of peacock chairs and Rococo Revival wicker, as demonstrated by Beaton, also typified the set of a popular television series of the 1960s, *The Addams Family*. The sitcom aired from 1964 to 1966, and portrayed a brood of ghouls made endearing by their humor.¹³⁴ They challenged the status quo of the stereotypical suburban family through both their décor and mannerisms.

The scenes mainly occurred in the family's Second Empire style mansion, an architectural fashion introduced from mid nineteenth-century France at the time of Napoleon III, often seen as "the iconic haunted house" style of twentieth-century popular culture.¹³⁵ Although set in the 1960s, the characters bore more similarities to turn-of-the-century Americans than their present-day counterparts. Like many families of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, the Addams enjoyed their porch and conservatory, where they displayed the majority of their wicker and rattan furniture.

On the porch, the Addams kept Rococo Revival wicker furniture, including settees, an étagère, and pieces reminiscent of posing chairs.¹³⁶ Several peacock chairs graced the interior of the home, in both the conservatory and the main parlor. In fact, when the characters stood for the opening credits, the matriarch, Morticia, appeared seated in the chair. (42 a, b) The furniture in the show would have more of an effect on popular culture than the interiors in decorators' and designers' guidebooks, and a few adventurous amateur decorators began to purchase "Morticia chairs" as novelties for the home.¹³⁷

When juxtaposed with the idealized American family on another popular sitcom, *Leave it to Beaver*, which aired from 1957 to 1962, the differences in style were blatantly

apparent. The Cleaver family, who lived in a colonial house on Colonial Street, reflected the mainstream suburban style of the 1950s and 1960s. Colonial Revival furniture increased in popularity in the 1960s,¹³⁸ and Colonial styles remained most favored suburban architectural style from the 1930s onward.¹³⁹

On the other hand, the wicker furniture of the darkly humorous *Addams Family*, intended to represent the style of the late nineteenth century, matched those promulgated by cutting-edge decorators and designers. While both Colonial Revival and antique forms of wicker furniture combated Modernism, in the 1960s, they still received devotees on opposite ends of the design spectrum, and wicker still did not achieve the widespread appeal that it would in the 1970s.

Collectors such as Capote, an acquaintance of Beaton, remained among the avid few who actually represented the effect of the Wicker Revival on home interiors. Capote, however, already expressed an interest in old decorative objects. “I like to collect things, Victorian things, and mix everything together. I enjoy looking for and at them,” the author and owner of a considerable wicker collection stated in a 1977 interview.¹⁴⁰ At his weathered home-away-from-home on the isolated South Fork of the Hamptons, New York, Capote wrote many manuscripts at a large, round wicker-based table painted in blue and aqua tones.

The author purchased the house in 1962, as a place to leave his active New York social life and devote himself to his work.¹⁴¹ Since then, he filled it with wicker from inexpensive import stores as well as antiques dealers.¹⁴² Among his collection, he included wicker chairs painted royal blue, and a blue and green peacock chair. The chairs flanked the aquatic-toned wicker table purchased at an antiques store.¹⁴³ In the loft

over the living room, he placed Rococo Revival wicker chairs, similar in style to Victorian posing chairs. They accompanied a rattan sofa, lounge, and Hong Kong chest, and added to the airiness of the open space and large windows. (Fig 43, a, b)

Capote, however, did not reflect the typical suburban consumer, and more Americans of the 1960s continued to view wicker on film than in home interiors. As films and television series in both the United Kingdom and the United States revealed a growing interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, set decorators continued to give prominent onscreen roles to wicker furniture. The 1920s, another period known for an abundance of wicker furniture in décor, also attracted the attention of directors, writers, and decorators during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and sometimes, decorators included nineteenth-century elements on sets meant to portray the Flapper Era.¹⁴⁴

Although Rococo Revival wicker reached its heyday in the late nineteenth century, it still appeared in 1960s period portrayals of the 1920s. The mixed style occurred in media of the United Kingdom as well as the United States. The 1969 English film *Women in Love* was an example.¹⁴⁵ In the scenes shot at an English country home, elaborate Rococo Revival wicker as well as stick wicker surrounded the characters. The young characters of the film laid by the pool in awning-covered stick wicker lounges fashionable during the 1920s. In another scene, they sat for lunch al-fresco in scrolling white Rococo Revival chairs at a long banquet table. (Fig 44 a, b) While based on the eponymous D.H. Lawrence novel published in 1920, the 2003 MGM Home Entertainment summary of *Women in Love* stated that the main female characters grew up “in the sheltered society of the 1920s.”¹⁴⁶ Although the film portrayed the 1920s, it

presented a mixture of wicker furniture, as well as fashion, from throughout the early twentieth century.

Although set in the 1920s, the wicker furniture featured in the film demonstrated the fashionable style that grew more popular among collectors in California, and a few on the East Coast. The elaborate wicker enjoyed by the characters in the film also reflected a style similar to that created by new youth subcultures in the 1960s, who sought to produce their own California and Victorian-influenced style that bore little resemblance to suburban Colonial Revivalism or streamlined Modernism, but looked to the past for refreshed inspiration.

Chapter V

Asian Rattan and Rococo Revival Wicker as Newly Hip Furniture Adopted by the Youth

In 1956, when Beaton presented antique wicker to a widespread American audience, critics deemed it more suitable for the stage than the living room. In the early 1960s, decorators featured antique and reproduction wicker and Asian rattan as fashionable additions to Modern interiors, but few mainstream Americans showcased Rococo Revival or hourglass-based forms in their homes. The penchant for Colonial Revivalism remained steady among professionals and homemakers of late 1960s suburban America.¹⁴⁷ Among white middle class Americans, the enthusiasm for antique wicker and Asian rattan skipped a generation, and played a role in the definition of a separate style for those in their teens and twenties.

The embrace of the Wicker Revival by American youth in the late 1960s presented the sharpest contrast between the Wicker Revival and its decorative rivals, Modernism and Colonial Revivalism. It also helped the spread of wicker among mainstream audiences even more than the Home Furnishings Show and the work of interior decorators and designers. When the first antiestablishment young Americans adopted wicker, rattan, and a turn-of-the-century aesthetic, they championed it as part of the aesthetic of the youth movement. The drive to achieve a separate decorative style from that of one's parents reflected the generation gap that widened during the political and social conflicts of the 1960s. The youth movement sought to raise consciousness of Vietnam War protests and civil rights conflicts and adopted aspects of the non-materialistic beat culture that challenged the consumerism and planned obsolescence of the 1950s.¹⁴⁸

The high school and college-aged Americans who rejected mainstream culture may not have read Betty Pepis' decorating guides of the 1960s, or viewed wicker at the 1956 Home Furnishings Show in New York. However, they did take heed to the styles that derived from the centers of countercultural life. San Francisco, a city known for its mixture of non-Western and turn-of-the-century styles, achieved through trips to Cost Plus imports or second-hand-stores, attracted the interest of the anti-Establishment youth. In the 1950s, the Beat Generation of writers, musicians, and artists claimed it as a town where non-mainstream cultural circles flourished. San Francisco attained the allure of "hipness," and the term "hip" referred to someone in-the-know about non-mainstream culture.¹⁴⁹ The subsequent countercultural youth group of the 1960s, often referred to as "hippies," also made San Francisco their central location. The aging, low-priced Victorian homes of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district provided cheap yet picturesque shelters for new residents in the vicinity of San Francisco University.¹⁵⁰

The second-hand stores of the Haight-Ashbury district carried turn-of-the-century items that fit the Victorian and Edwardian architecture of the area,¹⁵¹ along with the Rococo Revival reproduction wicker of Cost Plus. The adoption of the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth-century style clothing and home interiors by hip rock bands such as The Charlatans garnered antique forms of wicker greater appeal among San Francisco's youth.¹⁵² .

Asian and Indian decorative tropes also characterized Haight-Ashbury style. San Francisco provided a key location in the trans-Pacific rattan trade since the nineteenth century, and the hip youth, as well as professional San Francisco decorators, appreciated the cheap rattan imports from Southeast Asia that arrived in the forms of

hourglass furniture. Some of San Francisco's hippies admired the philosophies of non-Western cultures, and the decorative wares sold at import stores from China, India, Thailand, Indonesia satisfied cultural and spiritual penchants as well as aesthetic ones. Aspects of Indian religion, often versions of Hinduism, gained a following among the youth, and Cost Plus reportedly sold out its miniature images of Lord Jagganath, a Hindu god, which hippies made into pendants as necklaces.¹⁵³

More import stores similar to Cost Plus opened in the 1960s. In 1962, Texas businessman Charles Tandy received a franchise to open a Cost Plus in San Mateo, California, in exchange for a loan to the San Francisco Cost Plus.¹⁵⁴ Hurricane International, in Oakland, also catered to the countercultural lifestyle, and shipped mainly "sporting goods and rattan furniture."¹⁵⁵ Many peacock chairs and hourglass tables that graced dorm rooms and first apartments derived from these establishments, which shipped rattan from Hong Kong.

Tandy's San Mateo Cost Plus was renamed Pier 1 Imports in 1966. He moved the store to Texas and began to sell franchises, and Pier 1 stores continued the eclectic tradition, offering hip style to young enthusiasts in other parts of the United States who desired an eclectic Haight-Ashbury aesthetic.¹⁵⁶ "Young people looking to the East for spiritual sustenance looked to Pier 1 Imports for exotic crash pad furnishings at Third World prices," claimed one journalist who researched Pier 1.¹⁵⁷ Such a quote proved an accurate summation of not only Pier 1's wares, but of 1960s import stores as a whole, where other items included "beaded curtains, bedspreads, and peacock feathers."¹⁵⁸

The Asian and Indian stylistic influences won the favor of the countercultural youth due to spiritual and cultural interests. The use of Asian rattan to create an eclectic

setting manifested on psychedelic rock band The Strawberry Alarm Clock's cover of their 1967 album *Incense and Peppermints*. (Fig. 45) The Indian philosophies and religion that attracted countercultural youth gained followers beyond San Francisco, and in 1966, the store Designs Because of Sat Purush opened in Los Angeles and provided a place to buy Indian-influenced decorative items and discuss Indian spirituality.¹⁵⁹ The band's photographer captured the image at Sat Purush, where the peacock chair contributed to the ambiance, surrounded by Indian garments and pillows.¹⁶⁰ Although a Philippine or Hong Kong manufacturer most likely produced the chair, its placement among Indian décor added to the exoticism of the Sat Purush style.

The two divergent types of wicker associated with hippie décor in the 1960s, Rococo Revival wicker and Asian hourglass rattan, gained the appreciation of countercultural youth for different reasons. While both may have reached California from Southeast Asia, the Rococo Revival wicker symbolized the turn-of-the-century style associated with Haight-Ashbury architecture and the revivalism of bands such as The Charlatans.¹⁶¹ The Asian rattan, on the other hand, represented the San Francisco youth movement's fascination with other cultures and perspectives and accentuated the eclecticism of interiors filled with imported goods from Asia.

The iconic peacock chair, however, would develop even greater cultural symbolism in 1967. The form attained a more political tone as a symbol of California's dissident Black Panther Party.¹⁶² The Black Panthers formed in Oakland as a means to fight police brutality against the working-class black community. Members of the party toted rifles and patrolled the streets of predominantly black neighborhoods as a demonstration of defense against the police. The Black Panthers gained a menacing

reputation, but also the admiration of some of the anti-Establishment white youth of the time.

In order to have “a centralized symbol of the leadership of black people in the black community,” Panther leaders hired a white radical photographer to depict Huey Newton, cofounder of the party, in a representative image.¹⁶³ The photograph, taken at a house south of Haight-Ashbury, portrayed an intentionally Africanized scene with decorative elements reminiscent of turn-of-the-century interiors. It presented Newton seated on a peacock chair, with a stern expression and warlike posture. His left hand clutched a spear, his right, a rifle. A zebra rug lay beneath his feet, and African masks adorned the wall in the background. (Fig. 46)

While made of Southeast Asian rattan and formed into a design of Philippine origin, the peacock chair in the photograph assumed the role of the throne of an African warrior. The rattan bore a resemblance to woven raffia, a traditional material in sub-Saharan African basketry. The zebra rug bore similarities to the animal skin rugs fashionable among edgy decorators of the 1960s such as Pepis, but in the case of Newton’s photograph, it also acted as a symbol of African heritage, as did the masks and the spear. The peacock chair, however, played the most prominent role in the image. After the image gained recognition as a party icon, Panther Prime Minister Stokely Carmichael, placed an empty peacock chair onstage during rallies to represent Newton in his absence.¹⁶⁴ The photograph, featured in the Black Panthers’ newspaper, appeared in the national news, as well. The leader of a 1967 Kansas University student group that focused on civil rights issues stated,

To continue to get more awareness and involvement in this community, we’ve got to downplay Huey Newton, the guns,

and the wicker chairs. We have to mainstream this a little more.¹⁶⁵

The inclusion of “the wicker chairs” in the description revealed that, even in predominantly white Kansas communities, peacock chairs in the late 1960s could symbolize the Black Panther party. Newton’s image added a political slant to the form which resonated among black artists as an emblem of black power and expression into the twenty-first century.

The peacock chair signified cutting-edge furniture embraced by the youth before the Panther’s adoption of it. However, its symbolism in the mainstream public as an anti-Establishment form garnered it more attention by young style setters of the late 1960s and 1970s. The new symbolism acquired by the form through Newton’s image also did not deter professional decorators from the using the form as an accent. Conversely, it appeared in decorating magazines and advertisements as fashionable furniture for white and black youth alike after 1967 and into the 1970s. In fact, the publicity gained by the chair after wide distribution of the photograph resulted in its increased popularity in 1970s mainstream décor.

Although the peacock chair received much publicity in the late 1960s, Rococo Revival forms of wicker did not lose status as hip furniture for the youth. Singer “Mama” Cass Elliot, of the rock group The Mamas and the Papas, appeared on the cover of her 1969 solo album in a white Rococo Revival wicker platform rocking chair, which remained reminiscent of the hip style of the time. (Fig. 47) The title of the album, *Bubblegum, Lemonade, and Something for Mama*, displayed the lighter side of hippie culture. If the peacock chair acted as the more dominant, aggressive form of the countercultural Wicker Revival, Rococo Revival furniture represented the softer side.

Rococo Revival wicker commonly appeared in advertisements, particularly those geared toward young female audiences, when the style of the counterculture developed into the fashionable aesthetic of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶⁶

Advertising agencies that promoted products to young Americans recognized the youth market as a distinct demographic in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. By that time, admen realized that wicker furniture and a general turn-of-the-century style defined the popular youth aesthetic.¹⁶⁷ Rococo Revival wicker furniture appeared in the products that targeted white middle class female teenagers and college students. Bedding marketed to those of college age featured bedding on white Rococo Revival wicker beds, often with other forms of wicker furniture in the background.¹⁶⁸ (Fig. 48) A skin cream advertisement featured a young woman on a wicker chair, and several feminine hygiene products displayed antique wicker in advertisements, as well.¹⁶⁹ (Fig. 49) The publicity that nineteenth-century forms of wicker received brought them to the attention of a mainstream American audience.

Asian rattan continued to represent hip furniture for both genders, and such portrayals continued into the 1970s.¹⁷⁰ (Fig. 50) Essentially, despite the advertised gender differences, both Rococo Revival wicker and peacock chairs appeared as fashionable furniture for hip youth in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Both defined the furniture of the Wicker Revival and provided alternatives to conventional Modernism and Colonial Revivalism.

The adoption of wicker and peacock chairs by the youth and Black Panther party caught the attention of the media and advertising companies, which sought to gain the interest of the hip demographic. The youth movement's preference for wicker, therefore,

led to a change in the movement of fashion trends, in which stylistic tropes moved upward from a younger, more marginal demographic to the mainstream. Although the Wicker Revival already gained national recognition as an official development among decorators, the presence of wicker as hip furniture for album covers, and the controversial symbolism that the peacock chair acquired, helped move wicker further into the spotlight.

Chapter VI

Beyond the Wicker Revival

The appearance of antique wicker and Asian rattan did not wane in decorative and popular cultural sources in the 1970s. On the contrary, images of woven furniture increased in mainstream life and media in the 1970s and into the 1980s. Woven furniture of the early twentieth century, Rococo Revival, and traditional Asian forms grew as popular accents for a variety of interiors, seen in middle class decorating magazines that catered to suburbanites. Such furniture also continued to appear in popular culture of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. By the 1980s, Rococo Revival wicker gained the respect of well-established art institutions, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which featured antique pieces in exhibits.¹⁷¹ In short, wicker furniture attained recognition as an art form and achieved cultural relevancy after decades of dismissal.

Peacock chairs remained a favored seat for the covers of many musicians' albums of 1970s. After Huey Newton's iconic image emerged in the late 1960s, the peacock chair developed more of a following in black communities, and many African American artists appeared on such chairs throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Fur rugs and decorative plants also appeared in the compositions of the record sleeves, after the revival of the turn-of-the-century style that returned in the 1960s.

Such popular black soul musicians as Al Green and Dorothy Moore were two of the many artists who appeared seated on peacock chairs, with other Edwardian accoutrements, on their album covers of the 1970s. The cover of Green's 1972 album, *I'm Still in Love with You*, portrayed the singer in a white suit, seated on a white peacock chair adjacent to a white hourglass table, on a white fur rug, with hanging potted plants in

the background.¹⁷² (Fig. 51) The white and green of the composition bore similarities to the interiors of early twentieth-century hotel lobbies, and the white summer suit Green wore recalled those seen at tropical resorts. Dorothy Moore's 1976 album, *Misty Blue*, featured the singer seated on a peacock chair of unpainted rattan behind an hourglass table on which rested a vase filled with pampas grass, a popular decorative fauna in the late nineteenth century.¹⁷³ While neither album expressed overt political views, the peacock chairs and overall turn-of-the-century style featured on such cover art reflected the aesthetic espoused by the Black Panthers.

When companies marketed to the hip, young, and more often racially diverse audience of the mid-to-late 1970s, they often followed the format set by Newton and the album covers. Peacock chairs, palms, and fur rugs appeared in mainstream culture, which continued to adopt youth styles.¹⁷⁴ Los Angeles women's fashion house, Funky, displayed its 1974 advertisement in *Cosmopolitan* magazine with the tropes of the period. A peacock chair and two large potted palms adorned the scene, which displayed one black and two white models.¹⁷⁵

In general, the fashionable décor of the youth revealed a change from the exotic decor and psychedelic Victoriana of 1960s hippie bands like The Strawberry Alarm Clock. Instead, as in the case of Green's and Moore's covers, the aesthetic bore more affinities to Beaton's apartment and conservatory than to the Haight-Ashbury style. The minimal aesthetic, which featured wicker accompanied by palms and light colors, typified the resort style of the early twentieth century, immortalized by the resorts that Slim Aarons captured in his photographs from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

As in the case of the variety of wicker forms on the 1968 set of *Women in Love*, decorators of the 1970s did not often distinguish 1920s style from that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The 1970s modes of dress displayed the influence of 1920s prototypes, and when photographers and decorators desired to capture the era of flappers and bathtub gin, they often employed wicker or peacock chairs. Part of the 1920s craze among mainstream Americans developed after the successful film *The Great Gatsby*, which aired in 1974. The album cover of British jazz hall ensemble Joe Loss and his Orchestra demonstrated the use of peacock chairs to channel the style of the 1920s, as Loss marketed his album, titled *Ain't We Got Fun*, to “Remember the Gatsby Era.”¹⁷⁶

Despite the fact that mainstream homemakers began to warm to the idea of wicker in rooms other than the porch or garden, woven furniture remained favored among the young demographic that continued to frequent import and second-hand stores for inexpensive yet “cool” furnishings. The set of the sitcom *Three's Company*, which aired from 1976 to 1984, demonstrated the variety of wicker still popular among young apartment dwellers on the West Coast.¹⁷⁷

The characters Jack, Chrissy, and Janet rented an apartment in Santa Monica, a beach community near Los Angeles.¹⁷⁸ On the living room set, a rattan hourglass table starred as the centerpiece of the room in front of the sofa. Late nineteenth-century forms also appeared in the room for an eclectic mixture of woven furniture.¹⁷⁹ (Fig. 52) Such décor fit the beach culture of Santa Monica. The imported rattan in both Rococo Revival and traditional Asian styles continued to signify youthful and inexpensive casual furniture, compared to the Colonial Revival pieces of the characters' older landlord.

The collection of both Victorian styles of wicker and Southeast Asian rattan did not solely occur in sitcoms or album covers, and by the mid-1970s, domestic life magazines marketed woven furniture to a mainstream audience. The *Better Homes and Gardens Decorating Book* of 1975 displayed both Rococo Revival wicker and Southeast Asian rattan. The editor advised the reader on how to create a feminine, exotic, or traditional atmosphere based on the form of wicker used.

For example, one photograph displayed a Rococo Revival bedstead in white scrolling wicker with a matching chair and series of shelves to create a “feminine bedroom” with “all the charm of a sentimental valentine.”¹⁸⁰ (Fig. 53) In the chapter titled “Artful Accessories,” the editor, Don Dooley, claimed that “wicker furniture, a classic choice for outdoor areas, is available in a wide variety of styles.” In acknowledgement of its antique status, Dooley claimed, “to renew old wicker, simply spray-paint it.”¹⁸¹ The same chapter claimed that “peacock chairs and lanterns lend an exotic aura,”¹⁸² while wicker rockers in the more subdued McHugh style brought “timeless” appeal to a “traditional garden room.”¹⁸³ The appearance of antique wicker in *Better Homes and Gardens* as standard bourgeois furniture showed that, by the mid-1970s, it had gained the acceptance of the mainstream.

While the style promoted by Beaton and California decorators appeared novel and daring in the 1950s, by the 1970s, it was ubiquitous. Young people of the 1970s also continued to show the influence of the eclectic mixture of turn-of-the-century and Asian style defined by the Haight-Ashbury aesthetic. The fictional apartment dwellers of *Three’s Company*, for example, also decorated with a variety of wicker forms, revealed

that the penchant for such eclectic wicker continued in the 1970s and was considered, by then, mainstream.

Antique wicker gained further attention among a mainstream demographic on the East Coast in the late 1970s, when, in 1977, The Wicker Garden opened in Manhattan, which offered antique wicker to an urban clientele.¹⁸⁴ Pamela Scurry, the founder, deemed antique wicker “fresh, young, and stylish,” although a considerable demand for antique wicker in New York did not widely exist at the time.¹⁸⁵ The store sold wicker made from 1850 to 1930, and fared well among New Yorkers.¹⁸⁶ In the 1980s, readers frequently witnessed Wicker Garden advertisements between articles of *New York* magazine.¹⁸⁷

Businesses such as The Wicker Garden, in New York, and Wicker Place Antiques in Manassas, Virginia, which catered to the Washington, D.C. area, symbolized the acceptance of antique wicker as mainstream furniture for East Coast collectors. In the 1980s and 1990s, sedate Mission-influenced wicker comprised the most popular antique wicker for home décor, but the peacock chair remained an “exotic” choice for an eclectic interior.

All about Wicker, written by wicker historian Patricia Corbin and published in 1978, provided a catalogue of the wide variety of woven furniture available during the late 1970s. It included photographs and information on wicker of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1920s, and the organic varieties, as well as updated forms of Southeast Asian rattan from Tropi-Cal. Corbin cited the Empress Chair, based on the peacock form, as “a continual best-seller,” and that chair appeared on the cover of the book.¹⁸⁸ (Fig. 54)

All About Wicker offered readers a catalogue of wicker furniture from a diverse range of time periods, designs, and origins. It revealed that, by the late 1970s, “wicker” referred to a varied range of woven furniture, and illustrated the possibilities of wicker’s use to create a multitude of interior styles. The many wicker dealers that established stores in the late 1970s, such as Wicker Place Antiques, offered a wide array of woven furniture. Personal tastes grew more individualistic even among mainstream demographics during the 1970s, and with many forms of wicker to choose from, some new wicker stores gave customers the opportunity to choose furniture tailored to their penchants.

According to Keller, at Wicker Place Antiques, peacock chairs attracted customers whose homes featured the decorative arts of many nations and cultures.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, she claimed that more sedate forms, such as 1920s Lloyd Loom Art Deco furniture, or McHugh styles like the ever-popular Bar Harbor, appealed to customers with more conservative tastes.¹⁹⁰

The effect of the Wicker Revival carried into the 1980s, as addressed by the magazines that discussed antique wicker in that decade. One article in the spring, 1987 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* featured three different rooms with Bar Harbor wicker.¹⁹¹ Another article in the same issue displayed unpainted antique Rococo Revival wicker.¹⁹² Although wicker received more acknowledgement as mainstream furniture at the time, antique wicker in the late 1970s and early 1980s more often connoted turn-of-the-century nostalgia to Americans rather than the avant-garde or rebellious, as it did in the 1960s. *Better Homes and Gardens* described the Bar Harbor wicker in a sunroom as

“undeniably nostalgic, wicker furniture conjures up images of lazy summer days, slowly turning ceiling fans, and lemonade out on the front porch swing.”¹⁹³ It also claimed that

few things are more nostalgic than a sun-splashed screened porch with wicker furniture. Stirring fond remembrances of Grandmother’s day, it’s a place sure to soothe you in body and spirit.”¹⁹⁴

Although the nostalgia connoted by antique wicker was mentioned in journals of the 1980s, the furniture also gained recognition as an important American art form during that decade. The *Better Homes and Gardens* article on natural (unpainted) Rococo Revival wicker claimed,

No longer known as the poor country cousin, antique wicker is now being evaluated like any other form of fine 19th-century furniture [...] in fact, many museums are purchasing natural wicker for their collections.¹⁹⁵

The American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City added Heywood Brothers and Wakefield Rococo Revival furniture to its collection, and featured it in its 1985 catalogue.¹⁹⁶ (Fig. 55) The editor described the chair, on display to viewers in 1985, as “a fashion whose popularity endures to this day in modern reproductions of all kinds.”¹⁹⁷ The acceptance of antique wicker as historically and culturally significant American furniture demonstrated the height of its acceptance in the mainstream. The placement of a Heywood Brothers and Wakefield chair at the Metropolitan Museum of Art indicated that attitudes toward wicker shifted from one of derisiveness to one of admiration. The effects of the Wicker Revival, which began with the Home Furnishings Show of 1956, fully came to fruition in 1985.

Likewise, in 1980s interior design, the bright colors and Asian influences of the 1960s and 1970s no longer represented the general current fashion, but decorators

deemed Rococo Revival and McHugh forms of willow as timeless. Since by the 1980s such forms did not symbolize countercultural style of the 1960s, and enjoyed popularity on a national level, they appeared in a variety of media and advertisements no longer geared solely to the youth or edgy interior designers.

Rococo Revival wicker also appeared prominently in pop cultural sources of the 1980s, such as commercials that advertised the soft drink, 7-Up.¹⁹⁸ The commercials carried the decades-old view of woven furniture as representative of tropical locales. Set in the Caribbean, they featured Geoffrey Holder, a Trinidadian actor, director, and writer who appeared in white suits and sat on a variety of antique wicker forms. (Fig. 56)

The 1990s saw the advent of even more interest in wicker, as the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. showcased wicker in an exhibit, and the groundbreaking scholarly study, *American Wicker*, was published in 1993.¹⁹⁹ A catalogue of wicker from the earliest times to the 1930s, *American Wicker* opened the field for serious research on woven furniture in the United States. As more museums featured antique wicker as important decorative arts and aspects of American culture, the book confirmed the role of wicker as worthy of serious academic study.

While the fashionable status of peacock chairs faded during the 1980s and 1990s, they experienced a resurgence as stylish accent pieces and photographer's props in the twenty-first century. When peacock chairs appeared in twenty-first century publicity and art photography, however, they often borrowed elements of the past since the peacock chair, by then, referred to a classic theme. A 2009 cover of British *GQ* magazine, which won the Maggie Award for Best Cover of the Year, featured actress Sienna Miller seated

in a peacock chair, in the manner of 1970s celebrities who echoed Katherine Hepburn's 1934 publicity photograph.²⁰⁰

In the early twenty-first century, wicker, and peacock chairs in particular, connoted the 1960s and 1970s, as they received much publicity at that time due to the Wicker Revival. Certain tropes that surrounded peacock chairs, such as their use as symbols of Black Pride, remained significant, as they continued to provide favored chairs for the album covers of black musicians into the twenty-first century. The Corcoran Gallery of Art's 30 Americans exhibition, on display from October, 2011 to February, 2012, featured the work of contemporary African American artists. The photograph *One Day and Back Again (Seated)*, by Xaviera Simmons, revealed the relevancy of the peacock chair in representations of African Americans by twenty-first century artists.²⁰¹ (Fig. 57) Although they did not appear as often in decorating magazines, they achieve popularity as accent pieces, sold by both rattan designers and at specialty stores.

Suburbanites of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, favored the subdued styles of McHugh and kraft paper Art Deco, with some Rococo Revival wicker furnishings used as accents, as well.²⁰² (Fig. 58 a,b,c) Such collectors continued the trend that began in the 1970s. Most Americans, therefore, no longer viewed antique wicker as either outdated or novel, but rather, as widely accepted casual domestic furniture and collectible antiques.

Conclusion

Although the Wicker Revival referred to the 1960s, antique wicker did not gain the widespread acceptance of a mainstream American audience until the late 1970s, when wicker stores opened throughout the country. The first stages of the Wicker Revival began in the 1950s, when Cecil Beaton's 1912 Room appeared to the New York public and offered "Mr. and Mrs. America" the idea of decorating with Rococo Revival and stick wicker forms.

The display caught the attention of journalists nationwide, but apart from the most cutting-edge designers and decorators in New York and California, Beaton's rendition of the "Edwardian" style did not immediately change the nation's preference for Colonial Revival and mid-century Modern furniture. Instead, it provided an example of a type of furniture that took two decades to fully appeal to the mainstream consumer.

Similarly, the style of California interior designers who incorporated wicker into home interiors as early as the 1950s gained the approval of *Interiors* magazine. Nevertheless, even well-known decorators did not greatly influence tastes for wicker in most home interiors of the 1950s and 1960s. Such decorators included Everett Brown, who received commissions outside of California to decorate interiors with peacock chairs and turn-of-the-century decorative elements.

Decorators like Betty Pepis, who tried to reach mainstream middle class audiences of the 1960s with her guidebooks, did not largely affect the growth in popularity of wicker throughout the country. Although suburban Americans of the 1950s

and 1960s often placed sedate forms of Asian rattan and Modern designs of wicker on porches or in casual rooms of the house, most did not begin to feature antique wicker forms indoors until the 1970s.

The countercultural youth movements of the 1960s played the most visible role in the presentation of wicker to the public. Rather than follow the guidelines of decorators who advocated wicker with a few minimal accessories from the turn of the century, the hippie aesthetic did not conform to a specified look, but often featured Indian or Asian influences as well. Both peacock chairs and Rococo Revival reproductions, purchased at San Francisco import stores like Cost Plus, allowed for the creation of eclectic looks for the Victorian homes of the Haight-Ashbury district.

Wicker used by a radical segment of San Francisco's largely young expatriates of suburbia showed the stylistic rebellion against the preferences of mainstream Modernism and Colonial Revivalism. The peacock chair as promoted by the Black Panthers connoted militancy of the black working class in the late 1960s. Both antiestablishment groups distinguished themselves culturally and stylistically from the mainstream. However, the publicity they received ironically placed wicker furniture and hourglass forms of rattan in the spotlight, and the woven furniture gained recognition throughout the United States.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, advertisers that catered to youth markets used the Rococo Revival wicker furniture favored by hip youth to sell home products from bedclothes to cosmetics. Marketing for mainstream products spread Rococo Revival and Asian rattan to a larger audience. Due to the recognition of the San Francisco youth style as a growing marketable style, furniture that once represented rebellion from the

dominant American culture and the style of the 1950s and early 1960s developed into a mainstream fashion trend.

The peacock chair acquired new meaning, and publicity, when the Black Panther Party adopted it as a symbol of black leadership in 1967. The image of Huey Newton seated on the chair appeared throughout the United States, and some Americans began to associate the form with political radicalism. Used also as a favored chair of celebrity portrait photographers, the chair gained African connotations through the use of accessories such as a zebra rug, spear, and wooden masks.

Also, in the early 1970s, peacock chairs appeared even more commonly as fashionable and hip furniture, featured in advertisements and on record album covers alike. Although the Black Panthers received negative publicity during the late 1960s, the widely distributed image of Newton brought the chair to national attention. The peacock chair then symbolized an icon of black youth culture, but later attracted mainstream decorators who sought to appear hip. The adoption of the peacock chair as a stylish decorative accent gained more adherents during the 1970s than it had in previous decades. The 1970s craze for the form revealed that the focus placed on peacock chairs at the end of the 1960s, regardless of its negative nature, helped it gain the attention of the mainstream.

Stores that sold antique wicker opened throughout the Eastern seaboard in the late 1970s, and the same suburban demographic that the youth movement of the 1960s rebelled against began to collect wicker for porches, sunrooms, and living rooms. Suburbanites on the East Coast particularly preferred Rococo Revival and McHugh forms of wicker.²⁰³ The newfound suburban appreciation of antique wicker, witnessed in

shelter magazines, newspapers, and advertisements during the 1970s and into the 1980s, gained the attention of the mainstream art establishment, as well. By the 1980s, Rococo Revival wicker appeared in the collections of renowned museums as significant and innovative American furniture. Wicker by that time transcended post-Depression-era notions of woven furniture's inferiority to wooden forms.

The decorating world felt the first developments of the Wicker Revival during the 1950s, and acknowledged the growing trend by the 1960s. When antique wicker forms gained the approval of the youth movement, the furniture received greater publicity and acquired an air of hipness. The 1970s, however, represented the decade when antique wicker won the appreciation of many levels of American society.

No longer solely the preserve of cutting-edge California interior designers or luxury vacation zones, wicker finally achieved the acceptance of mainstream homemakers and museums for the first time since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The renewed appreciation of wicker in the late 1970s did not present a sudden fashion trend, but rather a development that grew over the course of decades. The final breakthrough of antique wicker into mainstream museums in the 1980s symbolized the change in American perceptions of the furniture. The public recognized wicker as a significant art form, as well as a nostalgic yet “fresh, young, and stylish” addition to the home.

Notes:

¹ R. Sunderland, *The American Life Collectors Annual*, ed. John Crosby (Watkins Glen, NY: The American Life Foundation, 1965), 61.

² *Furniture Style Survey-35 Years Based on International Furniture Markets Compiled by American Walnut Manufacturers' Association, Chicago Illinois*, provided by Karla Webb, Curator, the Bernice Bienenstock Furniture Library, High Point, NC, email message to author, November 30, 2011. Many thanks to fellow Smithsonian-Corcoran History of Decorative Arts student Monika Schiavo for sharing this source.

³ Pamela Scurry, "A Passion for Wicker, Old and New," in *Where to Find It: The Indispensable Sourcebook for Custom Repairs, Master Craftsmen, and Hard-to-Locate Specialties and Suppliers*, ed. Darlyn Brewer, (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1990), 145.

⁴ Richard Saunders, "The Wicker Revival," in *Collector's Guide to American Wicker Furniture* (New York: Hearst Books, 1983), 5.

⁵ Saunders, 12.

⁶ Eva B. Ottlinger, *Korbmöbel*, (Salzburg und Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1990), 13.

⁷ Exodus 2:3-10, in Ottlinger, 13.

⁸ Saunders, 10.

⁹ Saunders, 11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² William Smith and Francis Warre Cornish, *A Concise Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London: Murray, 1898), 149.

¹³ Ottlinger, 46.

¹⁴ Jeremy Adamson, "Wicker in History," in *American Wicker: Woven Furniture from 1850 to 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 12.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/110001243> accessed 2/20/12

¹⁷ Adamson, 14. Seventeenth-century Portuguese comprised the first Europeans to apply Southeast Asian rattan cane to the backs and seats of seating furniture. Caning grew fashionable in England, as well, introduced after the 1662 marriage of Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza to Charles II. The use of cane as an openwork accent to furniture differed greatly from the woven furniture known as rattan that would grow fashionable in the nineteenth century. For most Europeans, woven furniture remained a tradition of rural areas, but it did gain acclaim until the nineteenth century.

¹⁸ Thomas Webster, *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), 276.

¹⁹ Frances Thompson, "Wicker Saved a Nation," in *The Complete Wicker Book*, (Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1978), 27.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Adamson, 29.

²² Adamson, 28.

²³ Adamson, 29.

²⁴ Adamson, 28.

²⁵ Adamson, 15.

²⁶ Mary Anne Broome, "Odds and Ends of Decoration," in *The Bedroom and the Boudoir*, (London, Macmillan and Co., 1878), 80.

²⁷ Broome, 81.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Adamson, 34.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Adamson, 35.

³² Adamson, 32.

³³ Adamson, 38.

³⁴ Sang Mow, *Rattan & Seagrass Furnitures: Bamboo, Blinds, and Matting of All Colours*, (Hong Kong: Queen's Road Central, n.d.) n.p.

³⁵ James Masters, "Some Notes on Home Portraiture," *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*, 43, no. 589 (January, 1906):75. (75-76)

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Adamson, 106. McHugh also coined the stylistic term "Mission," and produced solid oak furniture based on simplified shapes. His pared-down wicker designs also echoed the simplified structure of the Mission style, and such wicker is often referred to as Mission wicker.

- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Adamson, 107.
- ⁴¹ Saunders, 67.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ James Lazear, "McHugh Wicker Furniture," in *The Wicker Revival: Antique Furniture Handbook # 6* (Watkins Glen, NY: Century House, 1966), n.p.
- ⁴⁵ A. A. Vantine and Company, *Illustrated Catalogue of A.A. Vantine & Co., Importers from the Empires of Japan, China, India, Turkey, Persia and the East*, (New York: Terwilliger and Company, 189?).
- ⁴⁶ Oscar Fitzgerald, "The American Mission: 1900-1915," in *Four Centuries of American Furniture* (Radnor, PA: Wallace-Homestead, 1995), 272.
- ⁴⁷ Elbert Hubbard, "Journey to Vantine's," *The Theatre: The Magazine for Playgoers* XIII, no. 125. (July, 1911), xvii.
- ⁴⁸ Advertisement, "Comfortable Summer Furniture," *Vantine's The Oriental Store*, in *The FRA: for Phillistines and Roycrafters* xi, no. 4 (July, 1913): i- xlvii.
- ⁴⁹ Ida Burgess, "Furniture of Reed and Willow," *American Homes and Gardens* XI, no. 6 (June, 1914): 190.
- ⁵⁰ Walter A. Dyer, "A Justification of Wicker," in *The Art World*, 2, no. 1 (Apr., 1917), 83.
- ⁵¹ Mrs. Fred W. Wood, "Sunset Parade at Bilibid Prison," in *The California Outlook* 15, no. (Saturday, December 27, 1913): 11.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid. "the inmates come from all over the archipelago, [...] and are Hill tribesmen, Filipinos, blacks, and a few white men."
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Frank Morton Todd, "Progress of the Philippines," in *The Story of the Exposition: Being the Official History of the International Celebration Held at San Francisco in 1915 to Commemorate the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the Construction of the Panama Canal*, (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), 377.
- ⁵⁶ Adamson, 155.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Adamson, 145
- ⁵⁹ Adamson, 146.
- ⁶⁰ Eleanor Roosevelt, "This I Remember," in *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1992), 164. Roosevelt inherited the West Hall décor from the Hoover Administration, which Roosevelt stated "Mrs. Hoover furnished... as a solarium" with white wicker and palms. The décor remained in the room during the Roosevelt Administration of the 1930s. That wicker remained popular as White House décor revealed its survival in American interiors of the 1930s.
- ⁶¹ Adamson, 140.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Saunders, 81.
- ⁶⁴ Adamson, 142.
- ⁶⁵ Adamson, 147.
- ⁶⁶ Donna Keller, owner of Wicker Place Antiques, conversation with author at Wicker Place Antiques, September 17th, 2011.
- ⁶⁷ Donna Keller, email message to author, November 6, 2011.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Richard Brooks, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, 1958.
- ⁷⁰ Joseph L. Mankiewicz, *All About Eve*, 1950.
- ⁷¹ Adamson, 76.
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- ⁹¹ Lois Hagen, "Dramatic and Extensive Home Furnishings Show," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 27, 1956, 6.
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- ⁹⁷ Cecil Beaton, "Thursday, 28 January, 1971," in *The Unexpurgated Beaton*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 164.
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- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
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- ¹³⁵ S. T. Joshi, "The Iconic Haunted House," in *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 272.
- ¹³⁶ David Levy, "Fester Goes on a Diet," *The Addams Family* Episode 18, Filmways, 14 January, 1966.
- ¹³⁷ Julia, "The Addams Family House, Where Every Night is Halloween," Hookedonhouses, October 31, 2010<http://hookedonhouses.net/2010/10/31/the-addams-family-house-where-every-night-is-halloween/> Julia, author and blogger of Hookedonhouses.net, referred to "those wicker chairs with the wide, rounded backs, became popular for awhile and were often referred to as 'The Morticia Chair.' "
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- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*
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Charts:

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Figure 1

Relief Carving, Tombstone of Menka-Hequet
Egypt
Circa 2,800 B.C.E.



Figure 2

Relief Carving, Tombstone
Neumagen an der Mosel, Present-Day Germany
Circa 2,800 B.C.E.



Figure 3

Jacob Jordaens

The Holy Family with Saint Anne and the Young Baptist and His Parents

Flemish

Seventeenth Century



Figure 4

Willow Settee
Colt Willow-Ware Manufactory
Hartford, Connecticut
Ca, 1860-73



Figure 5

Rattan and cane chair with hourglass base



Figure 6

Sketch of a rattan arm chair, featured in *The Bedroom and the Boudoir* by Mary Anne Broome



Figure 7

Michael Topf's Rattan Design, 1851



a. Étagère

Figure 8



b. Table and Chairs



c. Settee



a. Tete-a-tete



b. Beehive Form

Figure 9



Figure 10

Bar Harbor Chair

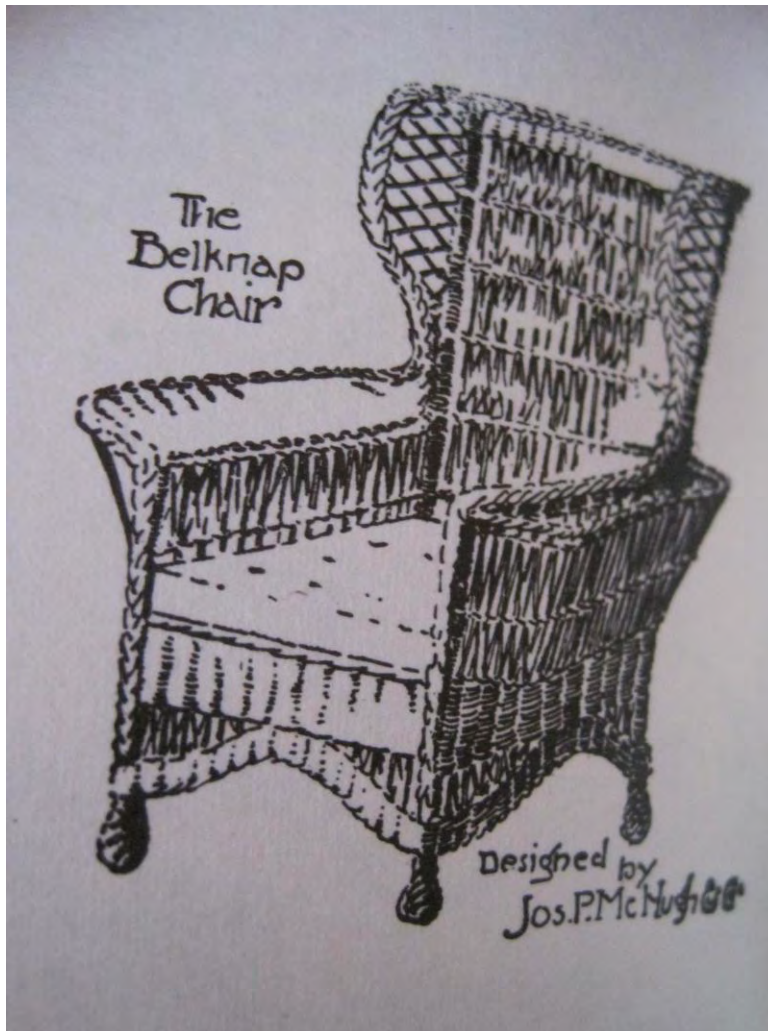


Figure 11

The Belknap Chair



Figure 12

Sun Chair, The Breakers, Newport, Rhode Island, 2011



Figure 13

Peacock Chair, advertised as "Manila" Chair,
Circa 1913



a. Norma Talmadge, 1922



b. Katharine Hepburn, 1934

Figure 14



Figure 15

Stick Wicker Chair, Peacock Form



Figure 16

Art Deco "Palm Frond" Wicker Seating



Figure 17

Art Deco Wicker Chair with Colored Accents



Figure 18

Wicker in the Royal Poinciana Hotel
Early Twentieth Century



Figure 19

McHugh Style Wicker Chairs
Press Conference, Little White House
Key West, Florida
March 18, 1949



Figure 20

C.Z. Guest photographed by Slim Aarons on a McHugh-Style Wicker Lounge



Figure 21

Rococo Revival Wicker at a Hotel in Monte Carlo, Photographed by Slim Aarons



Figure 22

Asian Rattan in The Bahamas, Photographed by Slim Aarons



Figure 23

Rococo Revival Wicker and Eclectic Decorative Arts in Smoking Room, Boston, 1890s.



Figure 24

Rattan Furniture in an original room of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu



Figure 25

Don Beach in Peacock Chair in Front of Don's Beachcomber Bar and Restaurant



Figure 26

Peacock chair on the set of the New Congress Club, in the film *From Here to Eternity*, 1953



Figure 27

Peacock chair on the set of *Blue Hawaii*, 1961



Figure 28

Rococo Revival-Style Wicker Bed on the set of *Blue Hawaii*, 1961



Figure 29

Note the wicker chair in background covered by coats, in the dressing room of Margo Channing, in *All About Eve*, 1950



Figure 30

Nineteenth-century forms of wicker represent the style of a bygone era on the set of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, 1958



Figure 31

Cecil Beaton at his Conservatory at Reddish House, 1956



32a
Beaton's lounge chairs from the Grand Union Hotel



32c
Beaton's Rococo Revival Chair



32b
Beaton's stick wicker peacock chair

Figure 32

Portraits with Wicker in Cecil Beaton's New York City apartment, 1956

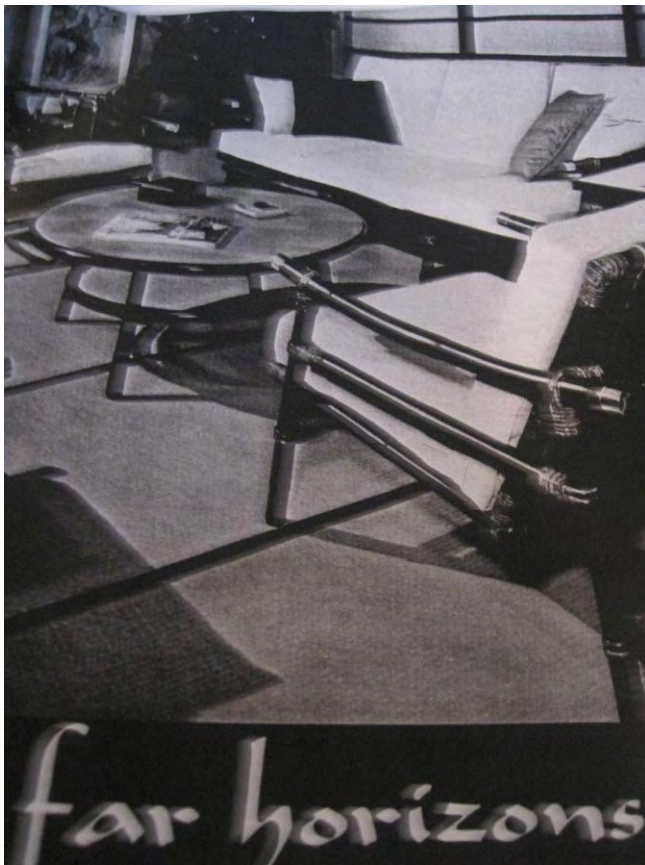


Figure 33

Fick's Reed Co. advertisement, featuring solid rattan furniture, 1956



Figure 34

Sweetheart Chair designed by Tropi-Cal, 1960s



Figure 35

Sweetheart chair forms in interior designer A. Dudley Kelly's kitchen, 1956



Figure 36

Rattan wicker wares in a variety of forms at Cost Plus Imports



Figure 37

Interior designer Everitt Brown's image for Pittsburgh Paints advertisement, circa 1957



Figure 38

Sweetheart chair forms in a Betty Pepis interior, 1965



Figure 39

Peacock chair in a Betty Pepis interior, 1965



Figure 40

Peacock chairs, plants, and Japanese paper lanterns (top right) in Chicago's Sherman Hotel, Everett Brown Associates interior, ca. 1963



Figure 41

Professor Henry Higgins seated on peacock chair in on-set conservatory, *My Fair Lady*, 1964



42a

Rococo Revival wicker étagère and table on porch

Figure 42



42b

Morticia's peacock chair, opening credits of *The Addams Famil*



43a

Blue and turquoise-painted peacock chair and wicker table



43b

Unpainted Rococo Revival chair in wicker-filled loft

Figure 43

Truman Capote's Woven Furniture



44a Stick wicker lounge



44b Rococo Revival wicker chairs al-fresco

Figure 44
Wicker in *Women in Love*, 1969



Figure 45

Peacock Chair added to the eclectic aura of Sat Purush fabrics, 1967



Figure 46

Peacock chair as a symbol of the Black Panther Party, 1967



Figure 47

Rococo Revival wicker rocker on the cover of *Bubblegum, Lemonade, and Something for Mama*, 1969

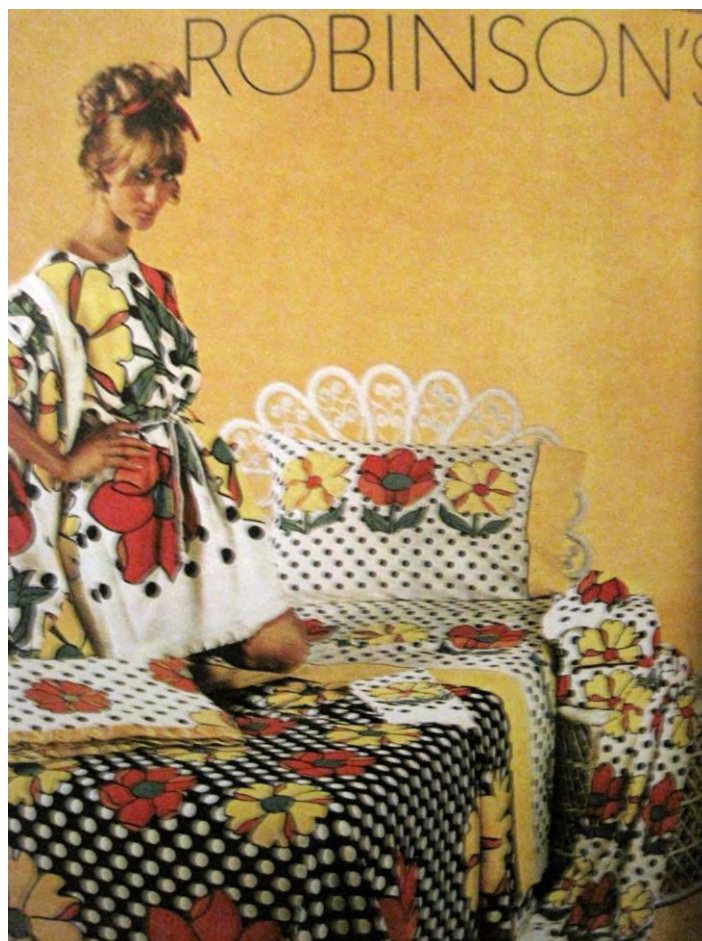


Figure 48

Products that targeted younger demographics often featured wicker in their advertisements of the late 1960s and early 1970s



Figure 49

Rococo Revival chairs appeared often in advertisements geared toward young women, such as this one from 1969



Figure 50

Hourglass rattan remained a hip decorative accent in the early 1970s, as featured in the December, 1970 issue of *Mademoiselle*



Figure 51

Al Green's 1974 album cover showed the continued perception of stylish hipness purveyed by the peacock chair



Figure 52

Woven furniture on the set of *Three's Company*



Figure 53

Rococo Revival forms add to the “valentine” atmosphere of the colorful room, 1975

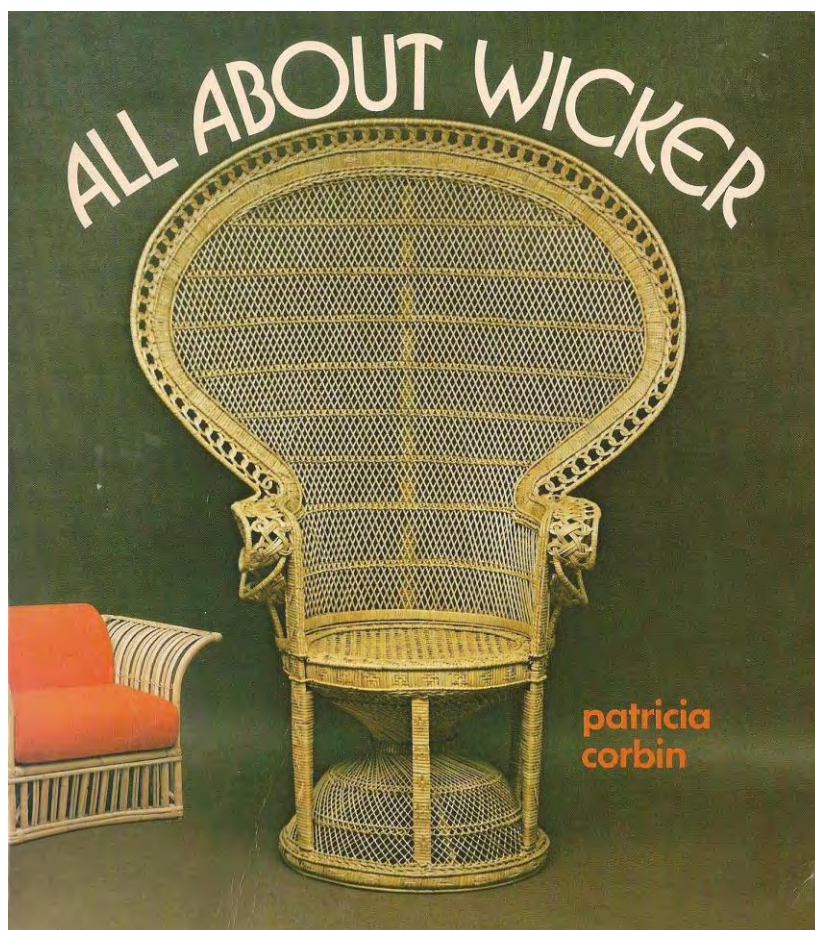


Figure 54

Tropi-Cal's classic Empress Chair featured on the cover of *All About Wicker*, 1978



Figure 55

Heywood Brothers and Wakefield
Rattan Wicker Chair in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985



Figure 56

McHugh, Rococo Revival, and stick wicker forms all appeared in 7-Up's television advertisements of the 1970s and early 1980s



Figure 57

Xaviera Simmons
One Day and Back Then (Seated)
Chromira C-print photograph
American
2007



58a



58b

Figure 58

Various forms of wicker in twentieth-century Northern Virginia suburbs reveal that wicker of late nineteenth, early twentieth-century, and Art Deco forms all remain popular choices



58c