

Basic Detail Report

Title Side Chairs

Date 1795-1810

Primary Maker Unknown

Medium Mahogany, maple, horsehair, and brass nails

Description One of a pair of mahogany side chairs, each with an arched crest rail, pierced urn-back splat, tapered front legs, and over-the-rails horsehair upholstery in the Federal, or early neoclassical, style. The back of the chairs are formed by an arched crest rail, with squared sides, atop two stiles. Centered below the arch of the crest rail is a pierced splat with an urn in the top center; the front of the urn is carved with double layers of vertical flutes, with a sharp recess in the center of each flute. The urn rests atop a curved ribbon of wood that crosses through the middle of the splat. The urn is surrounded by a pointed arch and by curved ribs. Each rib has a carved volute on top and a raised bead along the outer edge; the ribs form the outside edges of the splat. The pointed arch and the curved ribs continue below the curved ribbon of wood to the bottom of the splat. The splat is joined at the bottom to a tapered splat shoe just above the back seat rail. Above the seat, each stile curves slightly to conform to the shape of the upper splat, and is slanted back. Below the seat each stile forms a back leg which is slanted back and also slanted toward the center back of the chair. Each seat is trapezoidal with a serpentine front seat rail and straight side rails. The seats are upholstered with black over-the-rails horsehair (original) that is held in place with a swaged line of brass nails over a straight line of brass nails

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on the front and side seat rails. The front legs are tapered and extend from the height of the seat down to the foot; the front of each front leg has four raised ribs, or flutes. Each side and the back of the chairs have a plain rectangular stretcher connecting the legs. A medial stretcher joins the two side stretchers.

Condition: The upholstery is original. Side Chair .1: The horsehair is split on the left and right sides. The upholstery is worn on both front corners, revealing the top of the front left leg. The webbing is torn or missing from five areas, and

portions of the sackcloth have been repaired. The finish is flaking on the lower

splat and the stiles to either side. Design and Construction Details: Design. The

outer front edge of the stiles above the seat, and the front top and sides of the

crest rail, have a thin line of incised bead molding. The top front and sides edges

of the splat shoe have molding consisting of an ovolo over a fillet. Chair Frame.

The crest rail is supported on a tenon at the top of each stile. Above the seat, the

back of the stiles are rounded; the back of the crest rail is rounded as well. The

splat is tenoned into the crest rail above and into the back seat rail below. The

splat shoe is nailed down on top of the back seat rail, and has a cut-out at the

back to accommodate the bottom of the splat. The back seat rail is tenoned into

the stiles. Each side seat rail is tenoned into the stile in the back. The side and

front seat rails are probably tenoned into the top of the front legs. The swell of

the front seat rail is formed by an extra block of wood glued or nailed to the

front of a plain inner seat rail. Each interior corner of the seat frame has a

diagonal brace that is possibly dovetailed into the seat rails. The interior corners

of the back legs are canted. The back and side stretchers are tenoned into the

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lower legs. The medial stretcher dovetailed to the side stretchers. Upholstery (original). Each side chair is upholstered with over-the-rails black horsehair that is held in place with a row of swaged brass nails over a row of straight brass nails along the front and side seat rails. The nails are each applied separately. Below the horsehair is a linen or canvas cover, tow stuffing, sackcloth, and canvas webbing that is tacked to the top of the seat rails (significant portions of the webbing are missing from .2, portions of the sackcloth have been replaced on both chairs). The bottom edges of the horsehair are also nailed to the underside of the seat rails.

Dimensions Primary Dimensions (overall height x width x depth): 37 1/2 x 22 1/2 x 19 1/2in. (95.3 x 57.2 x 49.5cm)