

RENAISSANCE REVIVAL: HUNTING STYLES

As the middle class rose in status and wealth with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, more people were able to afford furniture. This flattening of society in combination with technological advancements created a surge of furniture production. Improved transportation meant a greater variety of wood was available at lower costs. For the first time, furniture became accessible and affordable to the common man. From the 1830s to the end of the 19th century, furniture makers reached back to earlier historical styles, and reinterpreted them with a great deal of creativity and experimentation. Although machines were used to increase speed and productivity, most of the carvings were still done by hand. Consumers were hungry for large, ornate and heavily carved furniture that would impress their friends and family and show off their newly found wealth. The Renaissance Revival style is marked by massive proportions and heavy, ornate carvings. Most furniture was produced in dark oak and walnut. There are actually several sub-styles that fall under the broader Renaissance Revival style and include the Henry II (Henri II) style, Hunting style, Mechels style, and Louis XIII style

The Hunting style developed as an exotic way to decorate the royal and aristocratic hunting lodges (the chateaux of the Loire Valley). Furniture makers specialized in detailed carvings of winged griffins, lion's heads, and trophies of the hunt, including deer, fish, eels, rabbits, birds, and dogs. Lush foliage in the form of leaves and berries were often carved along edges of buffets and on the backs of chairs, while the bases of tables were often carved to represent the beasts of the hunt: dogs, boars, deer, and foxes. 19th century consumers of the Renaissance Revival style were crazy for the massive, heavily carved and ornate Hunting style and many pieces also included intricate stained glass doors in the upper cabinets.