



Valuables Cabinet, 1679
John Symonds (1633-1714)

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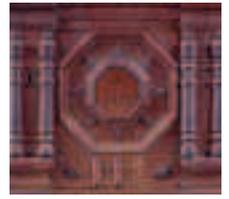
John Symonds (1633-1714)

Salem, MA

Oak, maple iron paint

Museum Purchase

138011



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first Quaker missionaries arrived in 1656 in Boston, where Puritan authorities had them seized and their books burned. (In contrast, Quakers were welcomed in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, which were founded with religious tolerance.) Persecution of Quakers in Massachusetts could be severe. Friends, as Quakers called themselves, were whipped, branded with “H” for heretic, physically mutilated, and simply banished. If banished Quakers returned, they were hung.

ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chest was originally owned by Joseph and Bathsheba Pope of Salem Village (now Danvers). The initials and date carved into the cabinet celebrate the marriage of Joseph and Bathsheba who were prominent members of the local Quaker community. The Pops were among the first generation of settlers in Puritan Massachusetts, and they converted to the Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers. They were persecuted for their beliefs. They also became involved in the Salem witchcraft trials as accusers. Their valuables chest would have held the family’s marriage certificate, birth certificates, and other important documents. The chest was made by John Symonds, an accomplished Salem joiner and carver. He decorated the piece with a sunburst pattern, volutes, applied spindles and bosses, and paint. It is one of the finest examples from this time period, and would have been an expensive item for the Pops to purchase.

SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Examine this small chest that held important family papers. Do you think a wealthy family or a poor family owned this object? Why?
- The family that owned this chest were members of the Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers. How would this have affected their lives in colonial Massachusetts?
- Why do you think some Quakers chose to live in Salem Village rather than move to a colony that was more tolerant of religious beliefs?

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create a “valuables chest” for the classroom. Ask students to write down on a small piece of paper what they would consider most valuable to take with them, should there be a fire, or should they need to move. Create a list of their responses, and have a class discussion about what they most value. (You might consider a class project regarding the creation of the “valuables chest.”)
- As a class discussion, create a list of reasons why some people are persecuted today. Engage the class with a discussion about why some groups feel the need to persecute others. Are there any measures that could possibly help persecutors overcome their antipathy for those they affect?

2003 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks 3.3, 3.4, 3.12, 5.7, 5.10