



***Object Name***

[chest on chest](#)

***Description***

Rococo maple chest on chest with nine drawers, brass hardware and bracket feet. Possibly made in New England or New York. The upper case has five full-length graduated drawers each featuring two rococo bail and back plate brasses and one central brass

escutcheon. Each drawer is outlined with single scratch beads. The cornice molding extends around the front and sides, and comprises a double bead, cove, and reverse ogee. The waist molding is composed of a double bead and ogee. The lower case possesses four full-length graduated drawers decorated in a similar manner as above. The ogee base molding sits above a straight vertical element. The case is supported on bracket feet featuring a cove and pronounced lobe.

All elements are maple except where noted. Each side of the upper chest is comprised of two horizontally joined boards that are through dovetailed to the white pine top and bottom. The top rail is dovetailed to the sides and is secured to the bottom edge of the top with square-head nails through the upper surface and along the front edge just behind the cornice. The cornice comprises two parts: a lower cove with bead molding is secured with square nails to the top rail and sides; and an ogee upper molding is secured to the top rail and sides. These are supported at the back with three full-length vertical white pine strips that are secured with sprig nails along the top and sides. Each bottom rail and drawer blade is through dovetailed at the front edge of each side. The drawer supports (white pine) are tenoned into the drawer blades and rear rails (white pine). The rear rails are also dovetailed into the sides or possibly set in a groove. White pine drawer stops are nailed into each drawer cavity. The bottom drawer supports (white pine) are nailed to the case sides. The waist molding is nailed to the bottom rail and sides. The back comprises three lap joined white pine boards set in rabbets and secured with a combination of square-head and rose-head nails. Two dadoes, parallel with the sides, are cut into the underside of the bottom to receive corresponding positioning strips of the lower case.

Lower case: The white pine top and bottom are through dovetailed to the sides. Each side comprises two horizontally joined boards. The front edge of the top is veneered with a maple strip. The bottom rail is set into a dado at the sides and is secured with square head nails up through the bottom. Each drawer blade is through dovetailed to sides. The interior construction is the same as described above. The bracket feet of the sides and front are shaped from the same board as the base molding and are through dovetailed together. The base is secured to the bottom and sides with square-head nails through the front surface. The base molding is reinforced from behind by thin white pine glue blocks. Each bracket foot is supported by one vertical block with two horizontal flanking white pine glue blocks. The rear triangular element is dovetailed to each rear foot and is secured to the bottom with one square-head nail. The back comprises two white pine boards that are lap joined together and set into rabbets and secured with square-head and rose-head nails.

Drawers: Each front (maple, 3/4" wide), side (1/2" wide), and back

(3/4" wide) is dovetailed together. The top edge of each side is half-round in profile. The outer edges of the bottoms are beveled, slid into grooves at the sides and front, and secured at the rear with square-head nails. The bottoms are reinforced along each side with glue blocks (two per side). Some bottoms comprise three to four joined boards.

It is difficult to determine the exact origins of this chest-on-chest. Tall, unpedimented chests-on-chests were often made in rural areas of New England and New York. Particular construction techniques indicating a rural origin are the base moldings and feet cut from one board, and the exposed dovetails at the bracket foot joints. Drawer supports tenoned into both the front drawer blades and rear rails represents an unusual construction technique. This technique contrasts with most New England construction, that had supports nailed in place and sometimes in grooves. The tenoning of supports is sometimes associated with New York construction, where paneled dust boards were used more frequently. Thus the presence of tenoned supports may indicate a New York origin. However, the use of paneled dust boards in New York fell from favor during the last decade of the 18th century as furniture construction became more generic and less identifiable by regional preferences.

Maple, available throughout New England and New York, was easily worked and resistant to scarring. In addition, maple was an economical alternative to expensive imported mahogany and was often stained to resemble exotic woods. Though this chest-on-chest was stripped, sanded, and refinished early in this century, there is evidence (especially around the beading and inner edge of two drawers) that it was originally stained a darker color.

***Artist/Maker***

***Date Made***

1790-1800

***Provenance Narrative***

***Dim-Eng***

[H]39" [W]40"

***Dims-Other***

length of base: 40

***Signat/Marks***