

Furniture Making by the Slaugh Family of Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Albert Fletcher Seitz

The purpose of this study was to determine the conception of Slaugh furniture making in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and to discover the unique implication of both the Slaugh family and their furniture. The methods employed in this research were personal interviews with Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr., and searching biographical materials to obtain the data necessary to fulfill this report. In order to record for posterity the era of fine hand craftsmanship in cabinetmaking, photographs were taken of some of the furniture which best exemplified the custom work produced by these artisans.

A limited biographical study of the family was made as needed to clarify what brought about the initiation of the business. The writer refrained from including outside opinions to provide his readers the full opportunity to discover how the Slaugh creations came into existence.

The body of this report contains three chapters. Chapter II relates the history of Mr. John Schlaugh, grandfather of Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr., and father of the business founder, Mr. Henry Slaugh. Chapter III deals with the establishment of the business by Mr. Henry Slaugh. Chapter IV records business management until the sale of the shop

I wish to thank my advisor, Mr. Paul W. Eshelman, for his guidance and patience during the writing of this report. My appreciation is extended to Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr., for his courtesy and time given for personal interviews and photographs; to Mr. John Roth for information relating to the research and a photograph; also to Mrs. H. W. Prentis and Dr. John D. Ringwalt for granting permission to photograph exemplary pieces of Slaugh furniture; and to Mr. Reaves Goehring for assistance with photographic work.

CHAPTER II

JOHN SCHLAUGH

Slaugh furniture making in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, probably had its real beginning in 1847 when a German immigrant, John Schlaugh settled in Philadelphia. To escape the Prussian military pressures in Baden-Baden and to take advantage of flowery steamship advertisements, he decided to leave his home country. John was twenty years old and had undergone an apprenticeship as a cabinet-maker. With this experience he was ready to settle and to provide for a family.

It was in Philadelphia that he met his wife, Fredericka, also from Baden-Baden, Germany. They had never met in Germany. After marriage John became a partner of Charles Ringeisen in a small woodworking shop on Spring Garden [Street]. In their shop they made small household items and some plain furniture. The business prospered, and John and Fredericka reared their six children, John, Henry, George, Lewis, William, and Emmie, in the manner and tradition of the German Lutheran religion.

Shortly after the Civil War between the States, a depression caused the business to go into bankruptcy. In a quest for livelihood, the family moved to Lancaster partially because there were relatives in the vicinity, but mainly because the depression was not so severely felt in the less populated area. (Details of the move to Lancaster and the settlement there are vague.)

John went to work in George Schaum's furniture factory on South Queen Street at the present site of the Heinitsh Furniture Company. His job consisted mainly of making low post beds and plank bottom chairs. It was there that his son Henry served his apprenticeship in cabinetmaking.

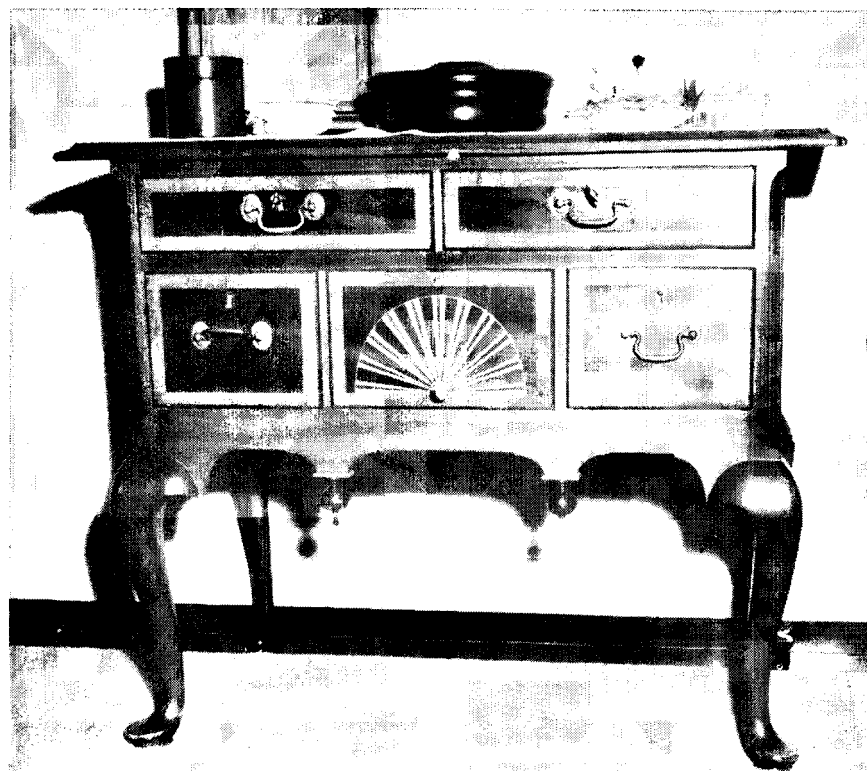
CHAPTER III

HENRY SCHLAUGH

Because the apprentice training was not so rigid as in the old country, Henry, the second son, became restless and decided to find a job in Philadelphia. Later he moved to Lancaster and went to work in the Excelsior Watch Factory, now known as the Hamilton

Watch Company. There Henry worked making wooden models and parts trays. The trays which Henry built were so designed that the entire watch parts could be carried and inventoried on the tray. In the event that one part was missing from the tray, a vacant slot could be seen.

Henry, at age eighteen, was full of drive and had a natural love for woodworking. Since his life was centered around cabinetmaking, his work at the watch company did not satisfy his desire to build furniture. To compensate for this, Henry would work at night.



Queen Anne Lowboy. The mahogany lowboy has satinwood banding and inlay to add to its design. Photograph—Courtesy of Mrs. H. W. Prentis.

Self taught to a great extent, Henry felt the confidence needed to approach Mr. Spencer, the general manager of the Farnum Cotton Mills about making him some office furniture. Mr. Spencer, interested in the business proposition, asked Henry where his shop was located. Henry said that he had no shop at this time, but if he could have the job of making the furniture, he would rent a shop. Mr. Spencer, impressed with Henry's youthful ambitions, agreed to al-

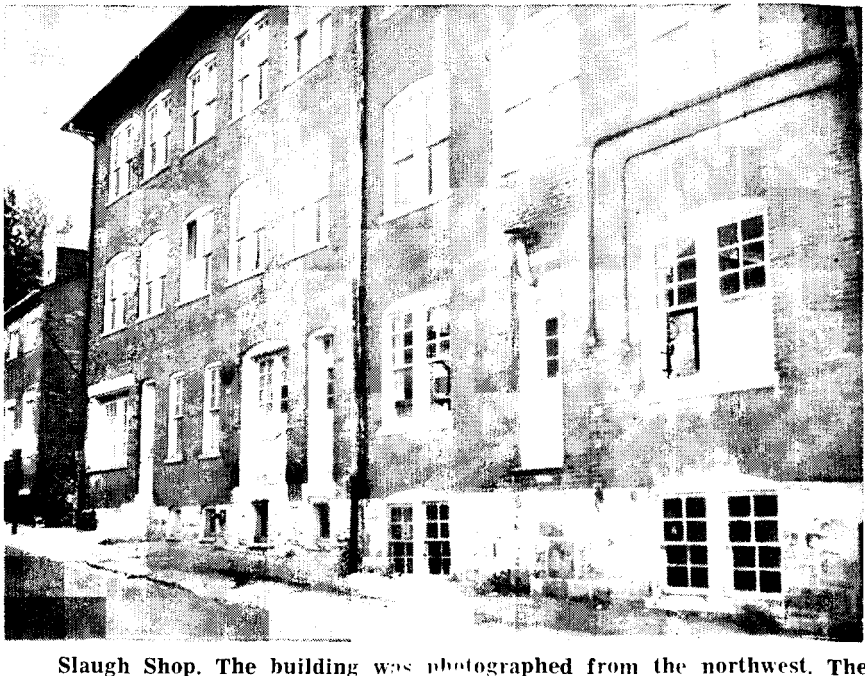
low him to build one set for inspection. If satisfied, Mr. Spencer would ask for several office sets to be constructed.

Henry found a building owned by Attorney Baker at 125 East King Street in the alley of what is the present location of Westenberg, Maley and Myers furniture store. He built the office set as he had agreed to do, and Mr. Spencer's coachman transported him to the shop so that he could examine it. Pleased with what he saw, Mr. Spencer gave him an order for all the furniture for a new office at the Cotton Mills.

At this time, Henry's father, John, stopped working for George Schaum and joined him. Henry was young, unmarried, and decided he needed the name of John Slaugh and Son (the "ch" was dropped from the name at this time) to ensure stability to the newly established business. After having served a man of such prominence as Mr. Spencer, Henry found many new business ventures awaiting the establishment of John Slaugh and Son. During the period between the initiation of the business and the success which later followed, there were struggles to make ends meet. These years to Henry were the happiest years of his life.

Henry, at the age of twenty-one, married Clara Blaul. They reared a family of seven children, two of whom are living at the time of this writing—Henry, Jr., and Florence. Henry employed his brothers, John and Lewis, who were also cabinetmakers. They, with their father, hoped to set up a production line in the wood shop; however, the trade called for custom work with individual style and periods, and mass production would not serve. The first machines he owned consisted of wooden frames and steel axles. Before using steam as a source of power for these machines, he designed and built an apparatus which employed a huge flywheel to power a table saw. He believed that the flywheel when turned by a hand crank could build up enough momentum in the saw to cut through a board. The flywheel was to be turned by Lewis in the basement while Henry pushed the board through the saw located upstairs. The day came to test the saw, and Lewis went to the basement and started the big flywheel in motion while Henry waited for maximum speed to be accomplished. At that point he pushed the board into the saw and was startled to see the saw stop.

As his business increased, Henry found that he needed a larger shop. He then hired an architect named Daniel Rothenberger to erect a building on the corner of Christian and Washington Streets in Lancaster. There were four log cabins on the site at that time. Two were razed to accommodate this building with an option to raze the other two for the purpose of expansion if the need arose. The need for increased space came earlier than anticipated. Nine years later, in 1909, an addition much larger than the original with matching architecture was abutted at a cost of nearly five thousand dollars. The three-story brick building with basement was enclosed with a



Slaugh Shop. The building was photographed from the northwest. The front faces Washington Street. The office windows and main entrance are located on the first floor at the extreme left corner of the building.

steel roof. The floors were unobstructed with the exception of supporting wooden timbers. A sprinkling system for fire protection was installed later. The structure is still standing today even though many windows have been broken by vandals. It is being used as a warehouse for piano storage by the Reifsnnyder piano business.

The machines in the new shop were arranged so they were accessible to a main power shaft which ran through the building, and they were driven by belts running from this shaft. The shaft was turned by a Best Steam Engine fired by coal. The steam not only produced the power that ran the shop, but it also served for heat and lumber curing. It kept the hide gluepots hot and steamed the lumber for bending. Later, electricity became the source of power, and direct current motors were used. These were then replaced with alternating current motors when the power companies made the change. The steam boiler was retained to serve in the capacities other than power. Henry made the change to electricity somewhat reluctantly.

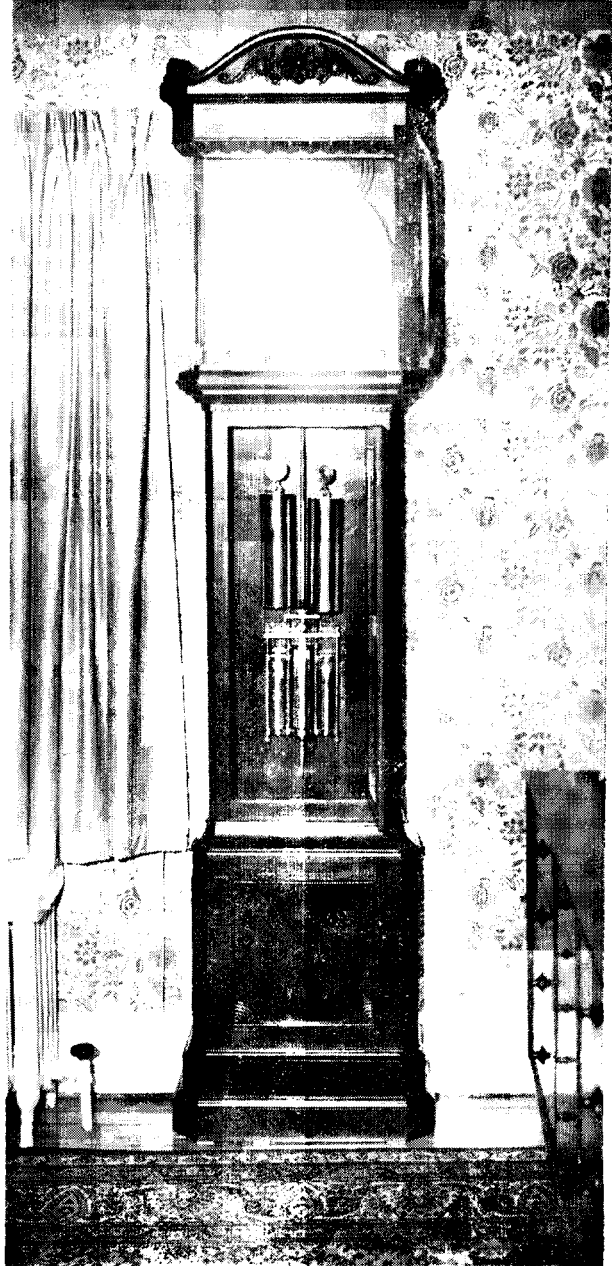
Henry's business prospered without the aid of any commercial advertisement. His work centered around making furniture, but he would verbally contract to make any product that could feasibly be made from wood. In addition to the construction of new pieces, old items were repaired, refinished, and re-upholstered. Most of

the work included copies of Period furniture and were built of such woods as mahogany, walnut, cherry, maple, and satinwood. The wood was selected and carved by hand with the greatest of care to create masterpieces in their own right. Inlaying and banding as well as matched grain veneering added to the beauty of the ornate cabinet-work. Aspen, olivewood, sandalwood, satinwood, and holly were used for the purpose of inlaying and banding. Some lumber was supplied locally, but the more rare wood was purchased from lumber suppliers in Philadelphia and New York.

The wood was fastened by the accepted and proven joints which were cut by machine wherever possible. Hide glue was commonly used to secure the joints. Finishes varied, but shellac, varnish, lacquer, and paint were most often used.

The shop was arranged so that incoming lumber could be placed in the shop kiln at the south end of the building or stored in the basement. The first floor of the building was primarily used for planning and cutting the stock to be fitted by the cabinetmakers. On the second floor the stock was fitted, and the piece was assembled and elevated to the third floor for finishing. There the work was also prepared for shipping either locally or over long distances. The office to the shop was located on the first floor in the older part of the building. Records were kept by Henry's oldest daughter, Clara, who was also an artist and did the decorative painting in the earlier years of Slauch's manufacturing. There were times when lay people did the art work, but later a Mr. Raymond Schnader, an artist from Ephrata, Pennsylvania, was employed.

An example of Slauch craftsmanship is found in a piece built for Mr. Ezra Bowman of Lancaster. This was a shroud for a grandfather's clock built in the late nineteenth century. The piece was planned in a manner so that the clock works could be viewed and still present a pleasing overall design. In the base of the clock case is a secret compartment used for storing silverware or other valuables. This was the only grandfather's clock shroud built by the late Mr. Slauch.



Grandfather's Clock. The shroud of this clock was built for Mr. Ezra Bowman by the late Mr. Henry S'laugh in the late nineteenth century. Photograph—Courtesy of Mr. John Roth.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY SLAUGH, JR.

On April 29, 1893, Henry Slauch, Jr. was born. As a child he was not encouraged to play in the shop because his father did not have time for entertaining his young son there. He entered primary school on North Ann Street in Lancaster and completed his formal education when he graduated from the Lancaster Boys' High School in the class of 1909. After high school graduation, young Henry served a three year apprenticeship in his father's shop.

Just before the United States became involved in World War I the family was struck by tragedy. A fire burned the home, and Henry, Jr. lost a sister in the blaze. Encouraged by his mother, the young Mr. Slauch went to Philadelphia in 1916 to work for the government in the war effort as a skilled mechanic. He consented to work in the Philadelphia Navy Yard under one condition that he would not claim exemption from military service. There he was assigned the job of reading blueprints and making the necessary wooden parts for boat construction.

Mr. Slauch returned to Lancaster in 1919 after news that his father's health was broken. He worked with his father until 1920 when the elder Mr. Slauch suffered a severe stroke. At this time young Henry assumed complete responsibility of the business at age twenty-seven. Wondering how he would survive the task of keeping the family business intact, he took charge with approximately twenty employees on the payroll.

The reputation of the Slauch business was well-established, and under new management, continued growth was apparent. Henry's father would visit and work at the shop in a limited capacity until his death in May of 1929. Orders were filled, and whenever new work orders diminished, there was always refinishing of furniture to be done. This activity was considered to be "bread and butter" as they termed it. New machinery was added whenever necessary, and new processes and their applications were introduced.

During the period of the late 1930's, Henry was introduced to a new product, **Duco** lacquer. This finish required a new process, spraying. Mr. Slauch also used spraying to apply varnish. This method provided for a uniform spread, and the air pressure cleared any dust remaining on the item being finished. Along with this process came new facility requirements as well as the need for new personnel—spray painters. An exhaust system was now essential also.

The young Mr. Slaugh was challenged to design and create furniture to meet his customers' wishes. He relied heavily on the styles of Sheraton, Hepplewhite, Duncan Phyfe, Chippendale, and Adam. Productions characteristic of the Empire, Mission, Georgian, Roman, Egyptian, Federal, Queen Anne, and Victorian periods were also in great demand. He had to design and build fixtures, patterns, and clamps in order to render the works that were created.

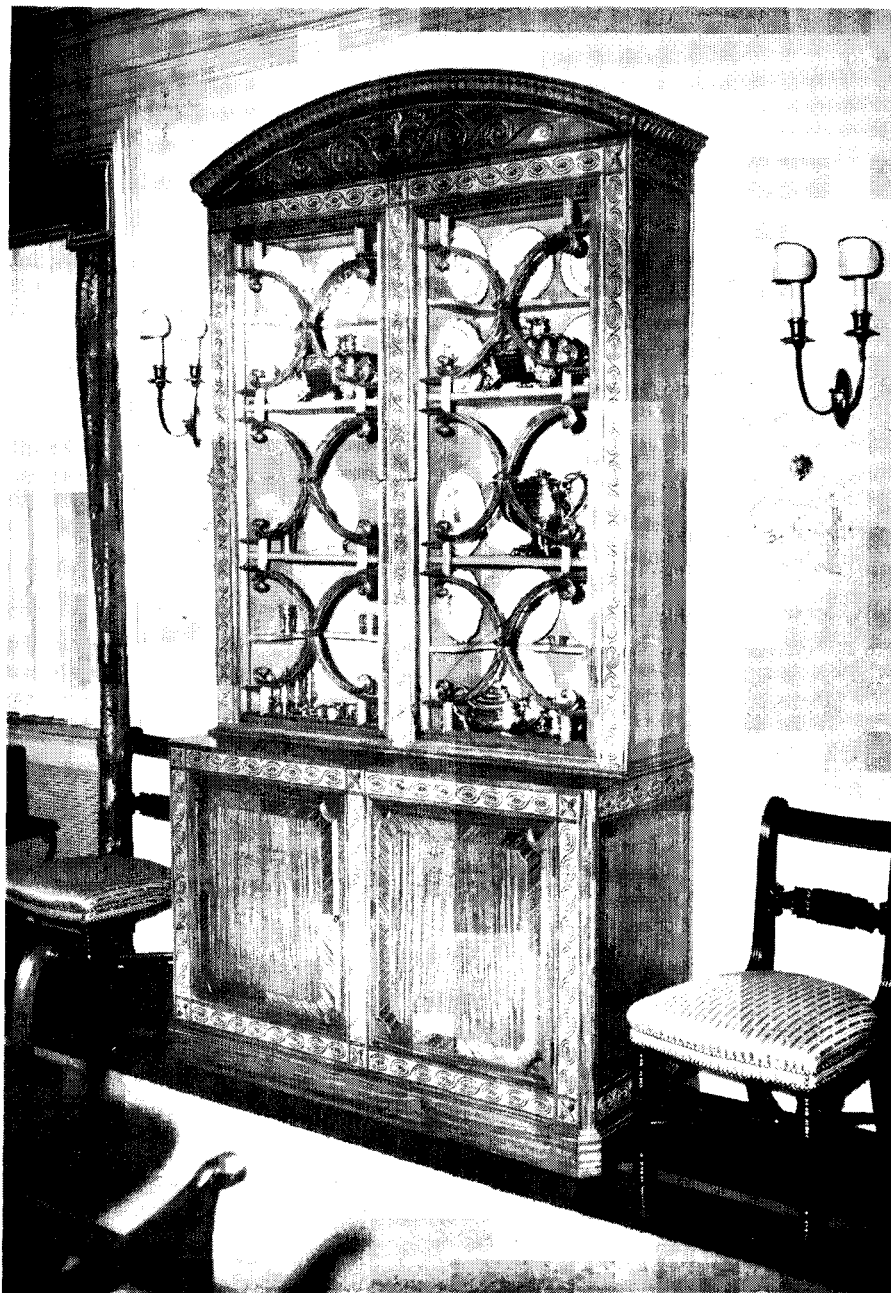
He worked mainly for the elite or upper class, but he also served anyone with a specific need in woodworking. His products ranged from extremely fine antique reproductions to crutches and peg legs, and from the heavy Chippendale highboys to the more delicately styled fragile French furniture. His only advertisement was by word of mouth among his satisfied clientele.

Even during the height of the depression in the earlier part of the 1930's, Mr. Slaugh was commissioned to furnish five of the executive suites for the Armstrong Cork Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was entrusted with the design of each period style — Pennsylvania Dutch, Spanish, Adam, Empire, and Sheraton. It was during this time that Mr. Slaugh was given the opportunity to build the breakfront for Mr. H. W. Prentis, the president of Armstrong Cork Company. The cost of this piece was approximately fifteen hundred dollars as Mr. Slaugh recalls. He estimates that the cost of this same piece today would be forty-five hundred dollars.

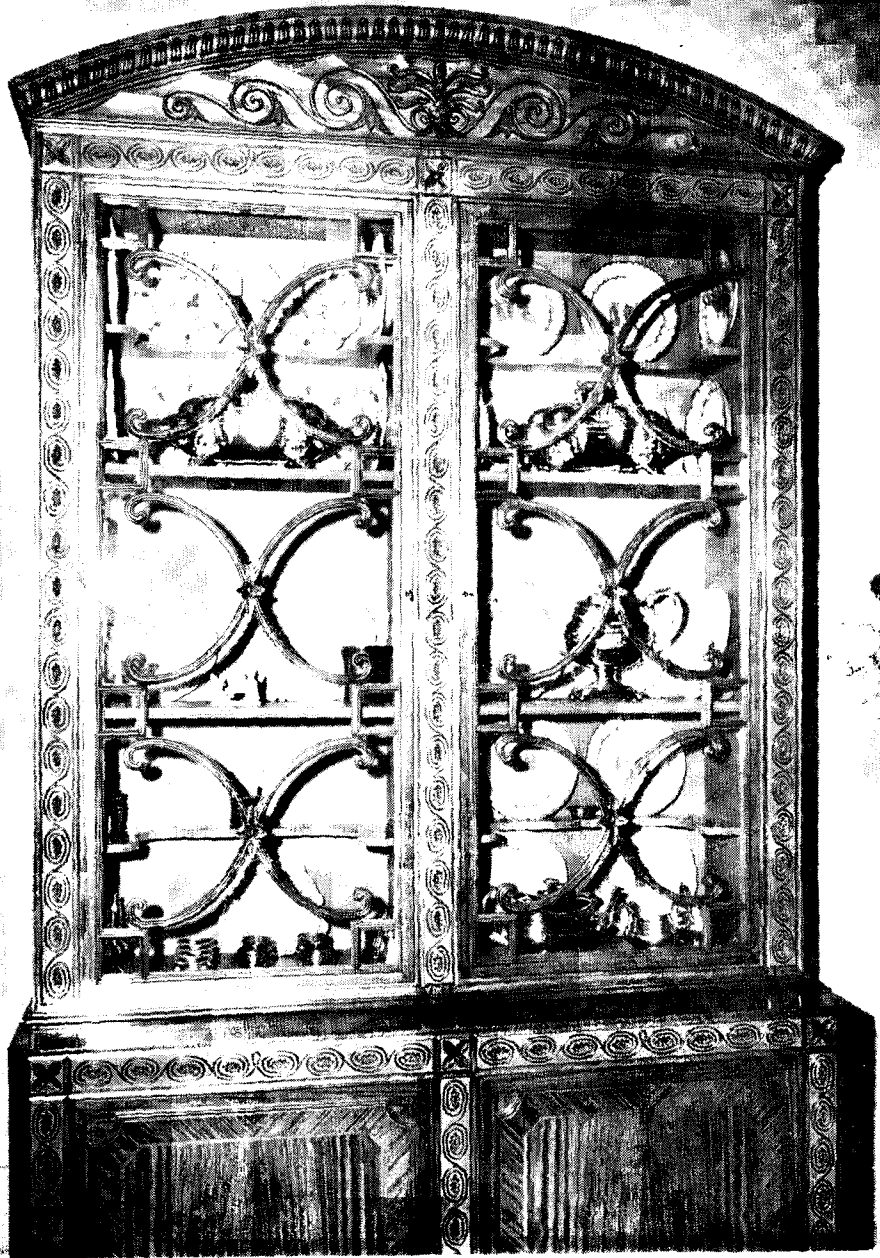
The Bell Telephone Company commissioned him to match telephone booth finishes to those already existing in railroad stations, hotel lobbies or wherever new matching booths were to be installed. He also contracted to construct the furniture for the main office of the Lancaster Branch of the Bell Telephone Company. Such contracts as well as bids on pine benches and plank seats kept his business intact and his employees assembled during the depression years.

In 1930 Henry married Helena Louise Brown from Columbia, Pennsylvania; and in 1931, he built their home at 514 North School Lane in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where they now reside. During those years when most people who were dealing in stock lost all their money, Mr. Slaugh wisely invested what he had into his business and building his home. The business survived the depression years and continued until sold in 1962.

Prior to the time that Mr. Slaugh began using **Duco** lacquer, he finished furniture by hand brushing **Murphy's** varnish. If possible, he would obtain all the wood necessary for one production from the same tree so that color tones matched. When this was impossible, he would fill the pores in carefully selected wood and do tone staining to produce a uniform hue. Sometimes it was necessary to cut shellac to a very thin state in order to seal some woods in prepara-



English Breakfront. Mr. Slaugh considers this satinwood breakfront his finest piece of craftsmanship in the Lancaster area. Photograph—Courtesy of Mrs. H. W. Prentis.



Close up view of English Breakfront. Each carved design on the door

tion for staining. Mr. Slauch found that, for all practical purposes, water stain produced better results in color and durability than did oil stain. Preparing a good base for his finish, spraying on varnish or lacquer, and careful rubbing by hand between coats gave a satin luster to his pieces. He was consulted to help refinish pieces of furniture when Wheatland, the home of former president James Buchanan, was restored.

He purchased a copy lathe to turn parts such as legs with ball and claw design to prepare them for the fine hand carving. The lathe required a cast iron pattern for the leg being duplicated. The machine was not utilized as he had anticipated and was sold shortly after purchase.

For most of his carvings he made a standard wooden pattern. With this and a machine called a Carvit-router, he was able to "rough out" his carving so he was spared many man hours of menial labor. Mr. Slauch stated that he used the router only when duplicated carvings were necessary. He preferred English carving tools such as Butcher or Addis Steel for his work. After sharpening his tools by grinding, he would carefully use an oil stone to enhance the sharpness. Then he would finish the sharpening process by rubbing them over a piece of leather mounted on a wooden block. On this leather was a fine coat of rouge. With this perfectly sharp tool and a square wooden mallet he was ready to begin his carving. He made what he considered a great saving of time by using one particular tool to its fullest before putting it down. He thought many people made the mistake of picking up a tool and laying it down before completing all the cuts possible. He spoke of having had only one fine carver in his employment during the years of his business career. This was Joseph Molz, Jr., of Lancaster.

Most of the hand tools that belonged to the Slauch family during the years in business were lost. There are a few small portable power tools that were not sold at the sale, and Mr. Slauch has kept these for his own personal use. He also kept his own set of wood carving chisels and a few patterns of carvings that he used on his pieces. Among some of his small power tools is a small antique drill press (Champion Blower Forge). Manufactured in Lancaster, this sold for the sum of twenty-two dollars.

The metal escutcheons and hardware used for the furniture were not supplied locally; they were bought from several supply houses in the Eastern United States. Skinner-Hill in New York were suppliers of English hardware. Ball Hardware in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Israel Sack of Boston supplied antique hardware. Glass reproductions came from David Missemer of Manheim, Pennsylvania. During the World War II years when brass was scarce because of its importance in the war, Mr. Slauch had some brass hardware cast locally from reclaimed brass. When doing a repair job he



Federal Breakfast Set. Painted lacquer finish. Photograph—Courtesy of Mrs. H. W. Prentis.

would duplicate missing hardware either from sheet brass or from castings made from the original hardware. The J. Walter Miller Foundry did some of his casting work.

There were no marks of identification placed on a piece of Slauch furniture. The furniture was sold when finished, and the only record of the piece was placed in the business ledger in the year it was completed. The ledgers were kept until the sale of the business when most of them were destroyed. One from the year 1878 written in his father's handwriting was kept and has been promised to Mrs. H. W. Prentis. Most of his patterns were burned when the business was sold, although Mr. Gordon Gochenauer still has some of them. Mr. Slauch is able to authenticate his furniture on the basis of craftsmanship and carving.

As mentioned earlier, lumber was purchased from suppliers in Philadelphia and New York. Occasionally Mr. Slauch would personally visit a supplier to select a particular piece of lumber or a log for a specific job. He recalled going to buy lumber for an order from the president of Baldwin Locomotive. This trip was made to New York to a Mr. Ichabod Williams to purchase a mahogany veneer log of exceptional grain and exceptional length. The dealer asked whether he would be willing to pay for it. Mr. Slauch said that he had orders to get it, and he wanted to know what the price was. He recalled that it was a curly grained log, eighteen feet in length and twenty-eight inches in diameter. The dealer quoted a price to Mr.

Slaugh, and they drove to Carteret, New Jersey, to see the log swimming in the veneer pond. Upon seeing the log and hearing the price, Mr. Slaugh decided that he should phone his customer. He explained the situation to him and asked what he should do about it. The only reply he received was a question asking what he had been sent to do. So he purchased the log for a price of eighteen hundred dollars in 1930.

Mr. Slaugh also dealt with the Thompson Mahogany Company in Philadelphia. It was from this supplier that he purchased figured mahogany veneer and the planks remaining when veneer is cut from a log. The figured veneer was sliced lengthwise on the log with sixteen cuts to an inch. These slices were then numbered and packaged in a bundle called a "flicht." Mr. Slaugh recalled making a Hepplewhite sideboard from veneer for Mr. John Eshelman, a sportsman. He said that when the veneer was laid out, the design on the veneer



Sheraton Roll-top Desk. Crotched veneered mahogany and aspen wood were used to create this unique piece. Photograph—Courtesy of Mrs. H. W. Prentis.



Hepplewhite Sideboard. This piece is inlaid with satinwood, sandalwood, olivewood and holly. Photograph—Courtesy of Dr. John D. Ringwalt.

made a most beautiful fox head clearly showing the ears and eyes. As he recalled, Mr. Eshelman was not a very enthusiastic man; but when Mr. Slaugh called him to come to look at the design, he remembers that Mr. Eshelman was very much pleased. Many people were under the impression that veneer was cheap, but when matched, it cost more than solid wood.

Mr. Slaugh had an apprentice program in his shop with as many as five men working at one time. There was no written contract or binding agreement. It was generally accepted in the Slaugh shop that a term of three years was needed to complete a cabinetmaker's apprenticeship.

Whenever it was necessary to completely disassemble a piece to repair or to refinish, Mr. Slaugh used a tank constructed of plate steel into which he could dip the pieces. He used "Oakite Stripper" in the tank to dissolve the finish and glue on the piece being dipped. This process required that the solvent be heated. This was accomplished by bubbling steam into the tank. The dipping took only a

few seconds and was usually timed by counting. When working with a veneered piece, an improper count could cause real trouble. The veneer would be loosened from the core wood and ruined. After the piece was removed from the tank, it was washed down by water under pressure.

In recalling some of the more unique pieces, Mr. Slaugh remembers building a bedroom suite for the president of Hires Root Beer Company. This man wanted his entire suite constructed from applewood. The challenge to Mr. Slaugh was not building the suite, but finding the piece of applewood long enough to make the side-rails for the bed. It took more than a year to collect the lumber required to construct the suite.

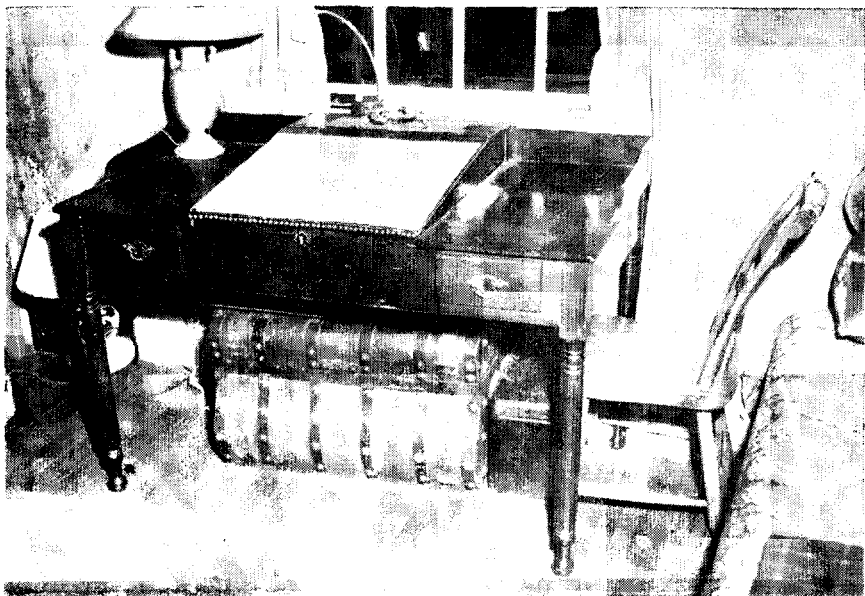


Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr., and a Queen Anne Desk. This walnut piece was one of the last built for himself before the sale of the business.

In his later years in business, Mr. Slaugh built some chairs for Mr. Samuel Hinkle, president of the Hershey Chocolate Company in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Mr. Hinkle came to Mr. Slaugh with a rough drawing of what he wanted. There was enough identifiable line work to enable Mr. Slaugh to recognize the style and to resketch it for the customer. It was this ability to identify and plan a piece with proper proportion that Mr. Slaugh possessed. Mr. Slaugh attributes his knowledge of materials and processes only to his vast experience in his area of work. He feels that experience is the necessary key to success and believes that one should never dictate to a mechanic or craftsman.

There is one piece which Mr. Slaugh has in his possession which was built by his grandfather, John Schlaugh, in Philadelphia in the mid 1800's. It is a modification of the schoolmaster's desk and was discovered in a friend's home in Philadelphia. It was constructed for a baker and was made entirely out of packing lumber. The friend who gave the desk to Mr. Slaugh was the granddaughter of the baker and knew the related history of the piece. Mr. Slaugh completely disassembled the desk and shipped it to Lancaster where he restored it. He is now using it in his own home.

What made Slaugh furniture unusual was that every style, every finish, and every period had to be made in an acceptable form the first time. There was no second chance to build the piece. There was



Pine Desk built by John Schlaugh. The desk was built in Philadelphia in the mid 1800's from pine packing lumber. Photograph—Courtesy of Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr.



Sheraton Single Bed. The Chippendale chair and the night stand were also built by the Slaugh family. Photograph—Courtesy of Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr.

no written agreement between Mr. Slaugh and his customer. The piece was built, and the customer purchased it. Mr. Slaugh remembers only two instances when finished pieces were rejected because of a dissatisfied customer. These were sold immediately to other eager customers, and in the one case, the original buyer wished he would have accepted it as it was when finished.

The value of Slaugh furniture is increasing as is evidenced if one follows public sale articles. At a sale on April 5, 1967, six early Slaugh Chippendale dining room chairs sold for seven hundred twenty dollars. Mr. Slaugh states that there is an attorney in Lancaster who is buying Slaugh furniture for the purpose of investment. He is buying items that people do not realize are Slaugh pieces. After obtaining them at bargain prices, he has Mr. Slaugh authenticate them. Then he holds them for future sale.

Mr. Slaugh states that he believes their furniture can be found in almost every state in the United States. The main sales centered around Lancaster and the surrounding areas.

He states the reasons for selling the business were many. He felt that the present economy is such that hand labor could not compete with machine production, and that the era for custom-made furniture has passed. He believes that people are being influenced by modern designers to accept the simple and straight line work. These reasons plus the fact that Mr. Slaugh was well past the age of retirement brought to a close, in January of 1962, another era in history.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Although he is not credited with the establishment of the business, Mr. John Schlaugh was instrumental in its beginning. His background as a cabinetmaker influenced his son into seeking a similar occupation, and his name was a stabilizing force in the newly formed union. The talent displayed by the Slaugh family gave impetus to the furniture making business.

From Henry's first commission to build office furniture for the Farnum Cotton Mills to his son's sale of the business in January of 1962, many pieces were built and sold to prominent people throughout the United States. The majority of furniture sales were to local patrons with a considerable number of pieces sold to customers in the Philadelphia area.

The uniqueness of the furniture was not the periods or styles they duplicated, but the quality of reproduction. Quality materials plus expert workmanship in the carving and fitting of stock were some of the keys to success. The ability to repair and refinish furniture enabled the Slaugh business to be sustained in times when new work decreased.

In addition to the excellent craftsmanship exemplified in Slaugh furniture, the details of the reproduction were so carefully considered that it is difficult to determine whether or not the piece is an original. The same workmanship is displayed on the pieces that were refinished. Whether it was construction of a new piece or the restoration of old ones, it was Mr. Slaugh's policy to be exact and thorough.

Today one must view the furniture critically because of its contrast to contemporary design. The trends have changed so that one might not choose the periods or styles which Slaugh built, but an appreciation can be gained by examining the qualities of the craftsmanship and the beauty of the restored pieces.

Even though the era of Slaugh furniture making is past, the memories live on for Mr. Henry Slaugh. These memories plus the fine furniture remain to tell the story of what was once a very prosperous business.

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OBITUARY.¹

HENRY SLAUGH WIDELY KNOWN.

Gained National Reputation as Reproducer of Period Furniture.

Henry Slaugh, who died Thursday morning at his home, South Ann Street, was nationally known as a cabinet maker and a reproducer of Period furniture. His death was caused by a stroke sustained Wednesday night after a weakened heart condition following an illness of several months.

Mr. Slaugh became interested in furniture at the age of sixteen years when he worked for the late George Schaum, this city. He spent several years in Philadelphia and then returned to the city to continue his profession.

His keen sense of design, and his knowledge of woods of various kinds made him a past master in his art and gained for him the reputation he had as a producer of Period furniture. He was also an adept at recognizing Period furniture and his keenest delight was in restoring time-worn pieces to their original beauty.

He was affiliated with the Lutheran church his entire life and was a member of "Old Trinity" for thirty years. He was also a member of the order of Artisans.

Services will be held Saturday morning at 11 o'clock in the home and interment will be in Greenwood.

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LANCASTER FURNITURE CRAFTSMAN MAY SOMEDAY ATTAIN HIGH FAME.²

Cabinet Maker Became Important Specialist and Produced Types Which Already Have Been Recognized by Connoisseurs.

Lancaster county has had its Tanneberg, who set a standard for organ building, its Stiegel who gave to the world an individual type of glass and in some future era, possibly it will offer the work of Henry Slaugh to the world to bid for a place with Chippendale,

¹ Obituary, *Lancaster [Pennsylvania] New Era*, May 24, 1929.

² News item in the *Lancaster [Pennsylvania] Intelligencer Journal*, May 26, 1929.

Duncan Phyfe and the rest of the great and small creators of furniture.

Mr. Slaugh who resided at 52 South Ann Street, passed on the other day after more than half a century of reproducing and creating furniture.

The craftsman began as a cabinet maker, following the trade of his father and while working at that trade developed a forte for building furnishings. It was not long until his wares found a market and his services came into demand.

One of his earliest commissions was the building of a special suite to furnish the offices of the manager of the Farnum Cotton Mills, then in their heyday. It was his first really big-assignment and he began it on his twenty-first birthday in a little two-story building on Grant street in which he had gone into business for himself.

Immediately his productions found a wide market orders seemed to come in from everywhere in never ending streams. Gradually he developed from the ordinary tradesman into a skillful craftsman and then took his first really important step that was to lift him out of the general class of wood workers. He began specializing on types of furniture built to order.

He followed special designs, created types of his own and reproduced antiques. These reproductions were so faithful that it was difficult to distinguish the difference between them and the originals. His reproductions and designs are to be found in homes where furniture is an important part of the general decorative scheme and where tastes are sharply defined.

After nearly a half century Mr. Slaugh gave his business an opportunity to expand by moving into larger quarters. He purchased a much larger building at 50 Washington street and built an addition to it. Here he carried on his work for 15 years.

Since moving to that location he did a great deal of work for architects who required special types of furniture to harmonize with particular effects they had in mind.

In many instances he has built every piece of furniture for new homes according to specifications.

Mr. Slaugh was born in Philadelphia and came to Lancaster at the age of six. His father was a cabinet maker employed by a George Schaum who had a furniture store where the Heinitsh furniture store is located on South Queen Street. When Henry Slaugh left school he entered the Schaum establishment to follow his father's trade. After completing his trade he went to Philadelphia and afterward returned to Lancaster where until he began business for himself he was employed as a cabinet maker at the Hamilton watch plant.

OLD SLAUGH CABINETMAKING

SHOP SOLD, BUSINESS ENDS.³

One of the oldest makers of fine furniture in Lancaster is out of business. The Slauch plant at 34 Washington St. has been sold.

Henry Slauch, whose grandfather John Slauch founded the business more than 85 years ago, has given the old hand-tools to the Pennsylvania Farm Museum at Landis Valley, and has sold the machinery and stocks of lumber.

The Slauch shop was purchased by Phares K. and Arden T. Reifsnyder, trading as Reifsnyder & Son, for further expansion, storage and warehousing. The Reifsnyder piano business, founded in 1904, has been at 31 S. Queen St. since 1940, and will continue to operate there.

Slauch furnishings are among the treasured possessions of many Lancaster families. Although never signed with the Slauch name, heirloom pieces are handed down to new generations with the tradition of the maker carefully preserved.

HAS OLD LEDGERS

Henry Slauch has ledgers of the firm dating back to 1878. John Slauch, he says, started business in Philadelphia before the Civil War, went broke in the post-war depression, and came to Lancaster to work for a local furniture store. He set up in the cabinetmaking business with his son Henry on East King St. where the Westenberg store now stands.

The founder's grandson says he believes the day of handmade furniture is nearly past. Not enough people are willing to pay \$200 for a chair, a price necessitated by the wages of hand-craftsmen.

Henry Slauch recently gave the Lancaster County Historical Society two Windsor chairs which had been around the plant for as long as he could remember. Tradition says they came from the old Lancaster court house in Penn Square. Some experts believe they may have been originally from Independence Hall in Philadelphia; considerable furniture came to Lancaster in 1812 when the hall was sold, it is believed.

WIDELY KNOWN

The Slauch reputation is nationwide, although the majority of the pieces made here remain in Lancaster. A number of the executive offices at Armstrong Cork Co. were furnished in specially de-

³ News item in the *Lancaster [Pennsylvania] Intelligencer Journal*, January 7, 1962.



Empire Chair. Curly maple was used in the chair construction. Photograph—Courtesy of Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr.

signed Slaugh desks, chairs, etc. The late Henning W. Prentis, Jr., whose home is almost entirely furnished in Slaugh pieces, brought many visitors to the local shop.

Henry Slaugh, whose home is 514 School Lane, remembers from his boyhood such notables as the railroad magnates, William Vanderbilt and Jay Gould, visiting the shop. He recalls that one prominent Lancastrian made a cabinet to be presented to his friend Vanderbilt, but brought it to Slaugh's because he felt it wasn't finished quite well enough. Henry's father turned the job over to him, telling him to make it presentable but not too good so the original maker's painstaking handiwork would not be obscured. The bill was \$40, which the Slaughs never could collect. The high-wide-and-handsome Lancastrian who could give presents to a Vanderbilt couldn't pay his bills.

SOAPBOX DESK

One of Henry Slaugh's most treasured mementos is not a magnificent walnut highboy or a cherry piecrust table from the family

shop; it's a small desk made from a soapbox. He ran across it some years ago in Philadelphia. The owner, a woman, told him it had been made by his grandfather in the 1830's, for her grandfather; she had been about to throw it out, and was glad to give it to Slaugh.

Henry began as a boy apprentice. He had a brother, Herbert, who left the business to join the antique furnishings department of the Wanamaker store in New York. Henry's father and namesake, son of the founder of the business, died in 1929.

Now the shop is closed, and the latter-day Chippendale of Lancaster will produce no more hand-crafted furniture masterpieces.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

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Chippendale Highboy. The mahogany highboy was built by the late Henry Slaugh in 1890. Photograph—Courtesy of Mr. Henry Slaugh, Jr.