

FRANK PARTRIDGE

A Pair of George II Burr Walnut Side Chairs

Circa 1720

22 x 23 x 39 in high (56 x 59 x 99 cm)

Each chair has a gently curving top rail carved with a central shell and foliage; the tops of the sinuous side rails curve round to join the top of the wide inverted baluster splat. The front rail of the seat is carved with a shell, as are the knees, which are also carved with scrolls and husks. The cabriole front legs terminate in ball and claw feet; the splayed back legs have pad feet. With drop-in seats, upholstered in floral needlework. The restrained carving of these chairs dates them to about 1720. Details such as the shells, husks and scrolls to the knees can be seen on other chairs of the period but the quality and colour of the veneers and the highly refined carving make them exceptional examples of the period. One of the chairs carved with the initials IB on the back of the seat rail.

Provenance:

George D. Widener Jr. (1889-1971), Erdenheim Farm, Pennsylvania

The American financier was the son of George Dunton Widener and Eleanor Elkins who married in 1883. Their marriage united two of Philadelphia's wealthiest families and they made their home at Lynewood, the estate created by Widener's grandfather Peter. The family shared a passion for collecting all kinds of objects. Harry Elkins Widener (Widener's elder brother) remarked, "My grandfather collects paintings, my mother collects silver and porcelains, Uncle Joe collects everything and I collect books".

George Widener Snr, his wife and son Harry were returning from Europe on the ill-fated Titanic and both father and son were killed in the disaster. Mrs Widener provided Harvard with a new library in her son's memory. George Widener Jnr had a passion for breeding and racing horses. His collection contained examples of highly important English furniture.