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The Farmington Observer/JULY 18, 1996

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INTERIOR MOTIVES

Furniture fits in many categories



NAOMI
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The simple word "furniture" elicits a multiple group of things, and we are hard-pressed to define what that encompasses.

Webster defines furniture as "equipment that is necessary, useful or desirable"; also as "movable items used in readying an area for occupancy or

use." Not very clear!

Personally, I would describe furniture as "an item that adds comfort to everyday living." It falls into many categories. It could be called a "decorative art" that includes seating furniture, storage and cabinetry furniture, and tabletop furniture.

Seating pieces have an incredible range. Just the word "chair" conjures a dozen images. It can be upholstered and overstuffed, affording luxurious comfort for lounging. In another venue it might be all wood, with no comfort at all. A dining chair is often produced with a saddle seat, hard as nails, of wood, preformed metal or plastic. It also is known to have upholstery or a cushion to lend some degree of softness.

Seating is the core of comfort in any room. A luxurious sofa is pragmatic and will withstand an awesome amount of use. A pair of wonderful sofas makes your room inordinate. That is my idea of what furniture should be, even if it avoids definition.

The storage or cabinetry classification is so essential to everyday living that we cannot imagine our existence without said pieces. We need to be able to put our possessions away. Life would be very complicated without dressers, armoires, nightstands, dining room sideboards, hutches, cabinets, china cabinets, ad infinitum.

Tabletop furniture varies from extra large dining room tables (even

extendible) to very small end tables. Each of these types is diverse and has its own speciality. They also have "periods" and countries of origin.

I haven't delved into styles of furniture. There are periods that are dated, and there are countries and their origins. As an example, English furniture of the 16th century is totally different from that of the 19th or 20th century. The former is ponderous and heavy, while the latter periods are light and delicate. The woods used differ just as much, and the embellishments range equally widely.

Reproduction furniture now found in stores is mostly derived from the 16th century, perhaps because it is middle of the road. There were many designers, names out of the past to be reckoned with. Perhaps "Thomas Chippendale" is the most familiar, but we also recognize "Hepplewhite" and "Sheraton." A little later in period is "Duncan Phyfe." If you are predisposed to French or Spanish or Scandinavian designs, a vastly different image comes to mind and view.

As we approach the 21st century the "new" is less defined. Chairs may just be an inflated bubble that you can crash into, making a dent to conform to your own body. The cost is negligible, and young people love them. If they need to move, packing presents no problems: Just stuff it into a van and off you go. College students call this furniture.

"Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" says it all. Our admiration for lovely furniture can range from an awesome antique to an unparalleled handcrafted original, in any of the three aforementioned categories.

Naomi Stone Levy, a Franklin resident, is an interior designer and a former secretary of the American Society of Interior Designers. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1897. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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