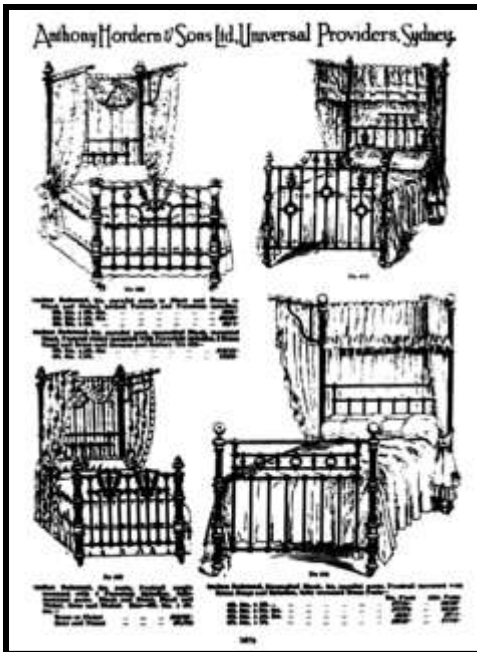


SHARING TIMELESS SECRETS: How do we know what we know?

After 30 years of antique brass bed restorations we are still thrilled to return a brass bed to its original design and all its intricate detail and shining glory. Sometimes we have commenced with a client's tangled mess of iron posts, brass pipe and a box of over 60 assorted brass pieces. Many times intricate pieces are missing and those feature porcelains, brass plaques and brass casting moulds have been lost or utilised for some other decorative purposes. Each bed is a challenge somewhat like putting together a jigsaw puzzle and we are proud to ultimately return the jumble back into a family heirloom for our clients.

Our research on how the bed would have looked brand new includes two principle sources. First we consult the range of original mail order catalogues from which we are able to identify the client's surviving pieces and match them to the original bed design. These original mail order catalogues are valued reference books as they contain a wealth of information, especially in the intricate illustrations of brass beds.



Each item had a detailed description, an elaborate illustration, colour and size and of course the price, as in the following extract from 'Anthony Horden & Sons Pty Ltd, Universal Providers, Sydney.'

Italian Bedstead, 2 in. parallel post, enamelled Black, mounted Head, Foot rail richly mounted with Porcelain spindles, 3 Brass Rings and Brass cast Mounts and Gallery (DX612) 6ft 5in x 4ft 6in£12/15/- 6ft 6in x 5ft£13/5/-

These early catalogues are a useful and precise visual reference for all manner of items, including jewellery to fashion, books to toys and hardware to farm equipment. Catalogues still serve as a time capsule of daily life in the early 1900s so sourcing these catalogues will guide you in the authentic decorating trends of that time.

Another important source of information on the original bed design and period display is the furnishings of historic homesteads and National Trust properties. We encourage collectors to visit historic properties to see the different styles of beds and how they have been displayed in these homes for genuine period decorating ideas that are rarely displayed elsewhere in Australia. You will also learn how to dress a bed suitably for its particular period from the carefully researched displays. Every visitor is also assisting in retaining our heritage

when paying a modest entry fee to each historic property. Many of the early beds did not have a full tester as shown in the Italian Bedstead catalogue illustration. Instead they had 'swing arms' which allowed the drapes to be hung alongside the bed, an ingenious option that stopped draughts across their faces whilst they slept. Australia's flying insects and creeping reptiles encouraged the bed-makers to create both square and round testers to which long mosquito nets could be fitted, which certainly would have improved the quality of sleep. From the original catalogues we have disproved a common misconception that the queen size is a new bed size of recent years. The original catalogues include bed designs that are now known as queen size (catalogue size 6ft 6 in long by 5 ft wide). Catalogues also offered King and up to Emperor sized beds (8 ft long by 8 ft 6 in wide). The majority of people still purchased double beds regardless of the temptations of the catalogues. Our own catalogue offers people a range from which to identify what they are visualising for their bed. Magazine clippings kept for years by customers on their 'wish list' are also helpful design starting points. Each old bed has its unique history.

Clients have shared with us the individual histories of beds, and how they have acquired their particular brass bed. This history gives us a greater appreciation for our pioneers who purchased a stylish bed from a catalogue that was probably dispatched on a train and possibly delivered by a horse drawn vehicle to their home, and the subsequent owners (and neglect) in the decades since. Personal details like these should be passed on to ensure the unique history of each brass bed is not lost. Finally, there is no doubt in our mind that there is a bed style for everyone. We continue to

discover beds which we have never seen before. One of our personal favourites is the serpentine or double bow front that is sometimes known as the wedding bed. This bed was extended to queen size and has been displayed at the Brisbane Home and Design Show.

Over the many years of our family business we would like to thank people for their warm comments and encouraging words from the many people who have visited us, from readers of Antiques and Art in Queensland (no longer in publication) and our customers for supporting the goals of our small business.

Our aim is to continue 'taking care of furniture for generations of tomorrow'

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