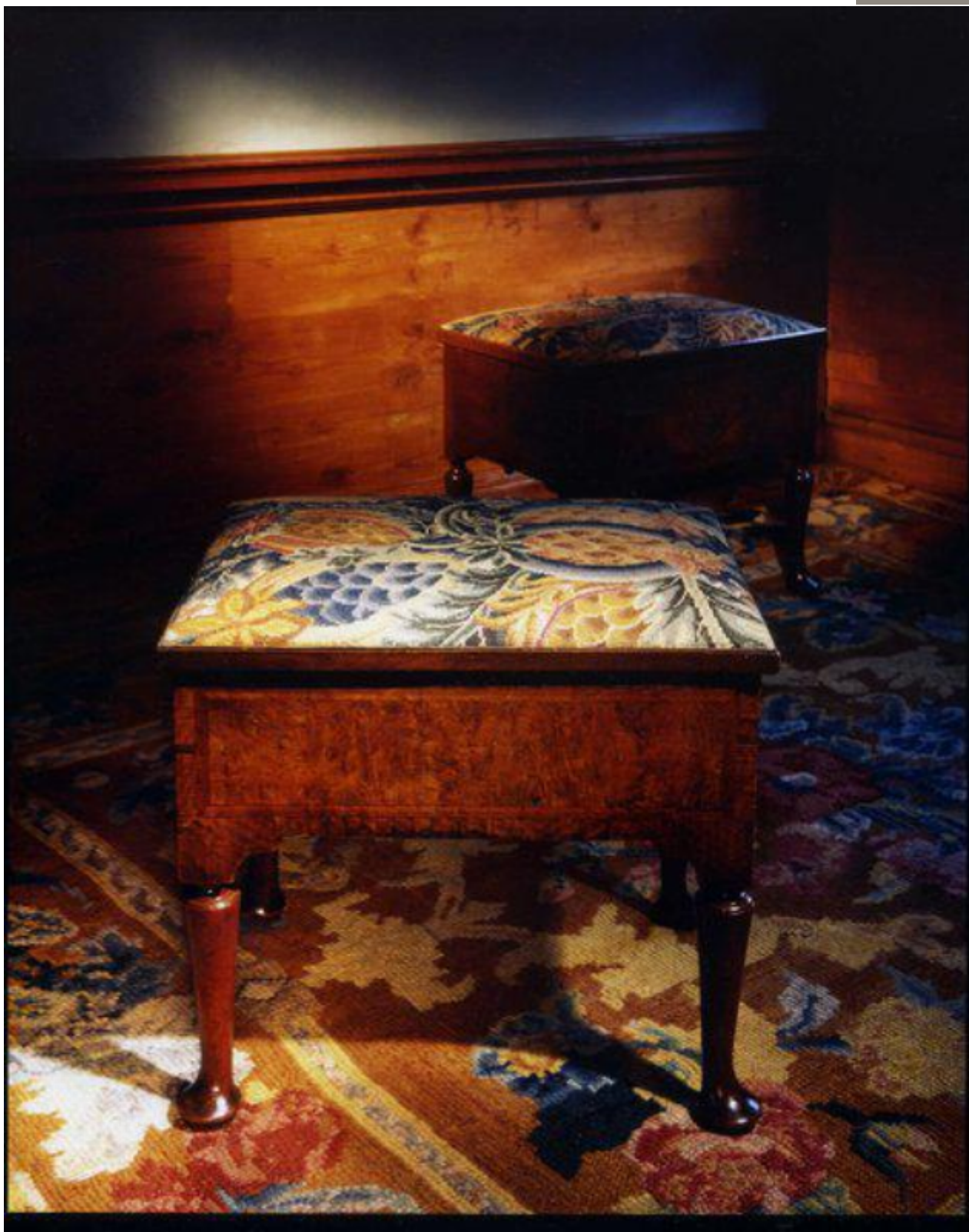


A rare, matched pair of early-18th century, upholstered, walnut close-stools

Sold



Description

The tops re-upholstered in a modern needlework with later side mouldings. The interior of one close stool with original hinges, the commode removed, and re-lined with marble paper. The other retaining its original hinges and oak commode. The front friezes with burr-walnut feather and cross-banded veneers. The sides, backs, turned legs, and pad feet in solid walnut. Minor repairs to veneer loss. Excellent configuration, original colour and patina. English, first quarter of the 18th century

It is extremely rare to find surviving close stools of this quality, largely due to their utilitarian nature, especially one retaining its original oak commode. Both pieces are in excellent condition, and the use of fine veneers and workmanship indicate that they were almost certainly made for a great household.

From the end of the 15th century movable close stools were used in palaces and great houses superseding the garde-robes or structural privies contrived within the walls which were the only convenience of this kind afforded by the primitive hygiene of medieval times. These close stools were among the varieties of furniture which at this time were provided by coffer-makers to the crown. They were probably of box form and the Royal Wardrobe accounts of the period show that they were covered with velvet or 'fustian of Naples', studded with gilt nails and elaborately trimmed.

When an inventory of the contents of Ham House was drawn up in 1679, there were two 'cedar close stoole boxes' in dressing rooms; another decorated with black and gold japan 'in ye wardrobe' is still preserved in the house. The box type remained in use, though no longer covered with fabric, into the early years of the 18th century, and a close stool from Dunham Massey dating from about 1710 is veneered with figured burr walnut, crossbanded and bordered with ebony. In the late-Stuart period another variety, joined and mounted on a turned stand, appears to have been employed although surviving examples are rare.