



Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850 (The History of Retailing and Consumption)

Margaret Ponsonby

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Most homes in the past were not elite, wealthy interiors complete with high fashion furnishings, designed by well-known architects and designers, as many domestic histories often seem to have assumed. As this book makes clear, there were in fact an enormous variety of house interiors in England during the period 1750-1850, reflecting the location, status and gender of particular householders, as well as their changing attitudes, tastes and aspirations. By focusing on non-metropolitan homes, which represented the majority of households in England, this study highlights the need for historians to look beyond prevailing attitudes that often reduce interiors to generic descriptions based on high fashions of the decorative arts. Instead it shows how numerous social and cultural influences affected the manner in which homes were furnished and decorated. Issues such as the availability of goods, gender, regional taste, income, the second-hand market, changing notions of privacy and household hierarchies and print culture, could all have a significant impact on domestic furnishing. The study ends with a discussion of how domestic interiors of historic properties have been presented and displayed in modern times, highlighting how competing notions of the past can cloud as well as illuminate the issue. Combining cultural history and qualitative analysis of evidence, this book presents a new way of looking at 'ordinary' and 'provincial' homes that enriches our understanding of English domestic life of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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