These books (a two volume set) deal with furniture acquired by the Hongs with the assistance of Robert H. Ellsworth. Mr. Ellsworth is one of the world's foremost non-Chinese experts in Ming and early Qing furniture. These books contain examples of virtually all the forms of classical Chinese furniture. The photographs are superb, and convey each object's beauty; the text specifies the technical details of construction and carved symbolism. The text and photographs are on facing pages which makes it easier for the reader than if they had to flip pages to put text and photograph together.

This set of books can be helpful to the collector of country (vernacular) furniture in two ways: First it shows the furniture forms (styles) antecedent to country furniture. For example, if you had a 19th century country desk made with northern elm wood, you might be able to find a close match in style with a desk made 300 years earlier. The second way the books can be helpful is that they enable you to compare the construction techniques used in country furniture with that used centuries before.

Very few of us would have the financial resources to acquire masterpieces as have the Hongs. As time goes by, fewer and fewer of these masterpieces are available at any price. The photographs are so well done that one just revels in the beauty of their collection. Therefore, in addition to providing an historical frame of reference for 19th and early 20th century country furniture, the photographs show the beauty of early "Classical" furniture. In this regard, these volumes are wonderful "coffee table" material to pick up and thumb through again and again.

The Hongs truly do have a "museum quality" collection. They were gracious to enable us to see and appreciate the furniture as art, and construction quality.

These books are available as a two volume boxed set from Paragon Books in Chicago.