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*Thomas Day: Master Craftsman and Free Man of Color* by Patricia Phillips Marshall and Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll

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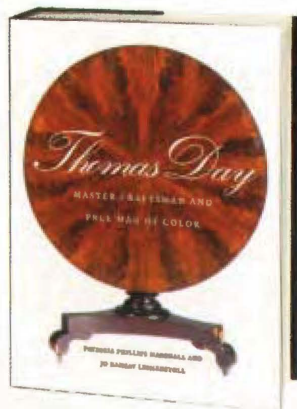
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## Books *Man of Quality*

### 1 Thomas Day: Master Craftsman and Free Man of Color

By Patricia Phillips Marshall and Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll  
University of North Carolina Press  
Chapel Hill, NC  
\$40  
[uncpress.unc.edu](http://uncpress.unc.edu)

Thomas Day (1801–1861) was a fine-furniture maker whom some have called the father of North Carolina's furniture industry. Day was skilled in all aspects of woodworking, producing beautiful case furniture such as secretaries, bureaus and sideboards. His interior architectural woodwork reflected his artistic creativity; each interior was uniquely designed for its owner.

In North Carolina, and particularly in Caswell County, Day's importance as a furniture maker never diminished. His clients kept their unique furniture—such as this 1855–60 side chair owned by Captain James Poteat 2—for generations, as they considered it both beautiful and valuable. Day's significance as a successful craftsman, particularly a free person of color working in antebellum

North Carolina, did not receive much attention in the academic world until John Hope Franklin included Day in his 1943 work, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790–1860*, and he was the subject of a 1928 article in *Antiquarian* magazine. In 1974 the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh acquired 19 pieces of Day's furniture and placed his work on exhibit until 1993.

Patricia Phillips Marshall, curator of decorative arts at that museum, and Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll, professor of interior architecture at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, have written an excellent book about the craftsman's remarkable life. Building upon decades of research, the authors have produced the most comprehensive publication on this figure to date, providing sound biographical information within the social and political framework of the antebellum period. The authors detail how Day became a well-respected artist/craftsman and “good citizen” of North Carolina's upper class and built the largest furniture and woodworking business in the state.

Chapter one introduces Day, his family background and how he came to live and work



in Milton, NC. Chapter two, “A Good and Valuable Citizen,” explores the complex politics of property and slaveholding, race and identity, and Day's business interactions with members of North Carolina's elite, including Governor David Settle Reid, and his long-term relationships with them based upon mutual respect. The authors convey Day's personal philosophies, which he expressed in letters to his children and through his business transactions. In the last two chapters, the authors examine the furniture and interior woodwork with regard to the client, artistry and design, construction and manufacturing technology.

The photographs of the furniture and architectural woodwork are abundant and of high quality. The authors' detailed descriptions of Day's works, such as the distinctions between open pillar bureaus and pedestal bureaus from the same period, are best understood alongside the images. Advertisements and other paper documents successfully provide a comparison of Day's work with that of the larger urban factories and the sources for Day's fashionable furniture. While the authors compare Day's work to that of his contemporaries, it would have been beneficial for the reader to see photographs of furniture made by these other men working in the Dan River region.

This informative book, in conjunction with a yearlong exhibition at the North Carolina Museum of History, should bring the story of a significant regional master craftsman to a larger national and international audience. —JILL BEUTE KOVERMAN  
*Jill Beute Koverman is the curator of collections at the McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, Columbia.*



CA / San Jose  
2 San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles  
*International TECHstyle Ari Biennial*

to Oct. 31  
[sjquiltmuseum.org](http://sjquiltmuseum.org)  
An introduction to the work of artists such as Janice Lessman Moss, creator of #384, *Summer Matrix II*, who exploit how fiber intersects with technology.

CT / New Haven  
Creative Arts Workshop  
*Celebration of American Crafts*  
Oct. 30–Dec. 24  
[creativeartsworkshop.org](http://creativeartsworkshop.org)  
This annual juried show and sale offers some of the finest 3-D work by American artists.

DC / Washington  
Renwick Gallery  
*A Revolution in Wood: The Bresler Collection*  
to Jan. 30  
[renwickgallery.com](http://renwickgallery.com)  
Turned wood objects from Fleur and Charles Bresler integrate sculptural qualities and decorative motifs.

KY / Louisville  
21c Museum Hotel  
*Anne Peabody: Wheel of Fortune*  
to Oct. 31  
[21cmuseum.org](http://21cmuseum.org)  
Peabody mingles thousands of glass slivers with wooden objects to form a massive, swirling tornado installation.