

THOMAS DAY EXHIBIT AT BLANDWOOD

Conversations

Sponsorship Request

APRIL 1, 2022 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

PRESENTED BY

PRESERVATION

GREENSBORO

INCORPORATED

BLANDWOOD MUSEUM



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The Conversations

Since 1966, Blandwood Museum has interpreted historical narratives of NC Governor John Motley Morehead and his family in their Italianate-style home. With a new temporary exhibit in 2022, Blandwood seeks to expand its traditional narratives around race, gender, and class in mid-nineteenth century North Carolina and be more socially equitable and inclusive.

The temporary exhibition of twelve pieces of Thomas Day furniture at Blandwood will enliven these narratives and prompt a dialogue about this eminent free Black woodworker known for his distinctive furniture and architectural woodwork. Displayed alongside contemporary Morehead family furniture, this exhibition will contextualize Day's furniture in eight rooms and introduce new approaches to understanding the work of this master craftsman--a successful Black entrepreneur operating within elite white social circles.

Please join us to broaden our understanding of Thomas Day and this compelling period in North Carolina History.



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Preservation Greensboro Incorporated (PGI) is a 55- year old nonprofit advocacy and cultural organization that owns and operates Blandwood as a National Historic Landmark Museum. To address changing roles and programming of historic house museums, PGI is excited to develop a temporary exhibit at Blandwood that aims to cultivate social equity by engaging a broader cross-section of community members through discussions of history, sociology, design, and craft. The exhibit, entitled *Conversations*, intends to introduce a selection of exceptional furniture made by the prominent North Carolinian and African American craftsman Thomas Day to Blandwood for comparisons and contrasts with pieces once owned by Blandwood's patron John Motley Morehead, today known as the Morehead Collection of decorative arts.

The Thomas Day Furniture Exhibit will commence at the same time as two major organizations meet in our region – in Greensboro, the Universities Studying Slavery Conference and in High Point, the semiannual international High Point Market for furniture. Both associations have direct ties to our exhibit: the USS Conference centers on the lives of enslaved people and their contributions to the building of America and the High Point Market specifically examines the craftsmanship of furniture-making of which Thomas Day, a free man of color, excelled. Day owned enslaved people who worked in his furniture factory in Milton, NC, people who contributed to the making of his quality crafted pieces and escaped chattel slavery.

The **High Point Market** is a high-impact event in the Piedmont region with furniture manufacturers, retailers, and designers in attendance from around the world. The **Universities Studying Slavery Conference** will be co-hosted by Guilford College and Wake Forest University in the Triad March 30 - April 1. Over 80 institutions from the United States, as well as universities in Canada and the UK, are members of the USS organization (see <https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/>). In addition to the co-hosts, the conference is in collaboration with NC A&T, Old Salem, and Salem College and Academy and holding events at the International Civil Rights Museum and Reynolda House as well as Blandwood.



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Significance of Thomas Day (1801-1861)

The son of an artisan craftsman from Virginia, Thomas Day became one of the finest furniture and architectural designers in the South during the antebellum period of American history. Day was of mixed-race heritage and lived within social circles that included politicians, academics, and planters. He owned one of the largest furniture businesses in the state, located close to the border with Virginia in Milton, NC, where both his furniture and architectural genius is on display at the Union Tavern (now a museum) and nearby Milton Presbyterian church, along with many houses in the region.

The Blandwood Museum exhibit will display a carefully curated collection of Day's pieces that have been selected from both private collectors and museums. Day's trademark furniture included bold and fluid lines, undulating shapes, and unique motifs with unusual architectural shapes. Those shapes can also be seen in the form of several staircases in Caswell County residences.

Past exhibits have included "Thomas Day, Cabinetmaker - An Exhibition" at the North Carolina Museum of History (1975), "Behind the Veneer: Thomas Day, Master Cabinetmaker" at the North Carolina Museum of History (2010), and "Thomas Day: Master Craftsman and Free Man of Color" at the Renwick Gallery (2013). Considering the proximity of Milton to Greensboro of 45 miles, and the period interiors of Blandwood that well-represent Day's clientele, this exhibit will have a much different perspective than previous exhibits.

Day's history and his inspiring collection of furniture will expand an important narrative of historical equity and inclusion to Greensboro and North Carolina.



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Significance of Blandwood Mansion

Blandwood was commissioned by John Motley Morehead, designed by New York architect Alexander Jackson Davis, and erected by Philadelphia-trained builder Joseph Conrad. Considered to be the earliest standing example of Italianate (Tuscan Villa) architecture in the United States, the house was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1988.

Davis designed several significant houses and buildings, scattered from the Hudson Valley (Montgomery Place and Lyndhurst) to the State House in Raleigh and Playmaker's Theatre at UNC-Chapel Hill. His contributions to American architecture were significant, and his legacy remains influential.

As a contemporary of Davis' classical architectural style, craftsman Thomas Day was a tastemaker and entrepreneur who operated within influential circles in North Carolina. Day's American Classic and Empire furniture design demonstrate significant parallels to Davis' classical themes. Day's pieces sit comfortably within the walls of Blandwood's architecture.

There are intriguing conversations to be heard over the six-month exhibit timeline: conversations among fine arts collectors, professional historians, preservationists, artists, architects, furniture designers, interior designers, and those with a passion for understanding North Carolina history.

In the words of curator and preservationist Robert Leath, "Blandwood is amazing and one of the best-preserved historic house museums in the nation." This exhibit allows Blandwood Museum to expand its traditional narrative to embrace an important historical example of equity, inclusion, and individual empowerment.



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A Selection of Exhibit Team Members

Scott Coley owns D. Scott Coley-Designs in Burke County, NC, where he resides and is the owner of an extensive private collection of furniture attributed to Day. A professionally trained furniture designer, Coley has spent much of his career collecting and researching Thomas Day's work. This has been a painstaking task as few of Day's furniture were ever signed and are challenging to identify. Coley is a past president of the Historic Burke Foundation Inc, which owns the historic Charles McDowell house at Quaker Meadows.

Jon B. Zachman is Curator of the Greensboro History Museum, a position he has held since 2000. He earned a B.A. from the University of Virginia and an M.A. from George Mason University and has served as a Lecturer at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His professional work includes North Carolina and Southern History, Material Culture and Museum Studies, Popular Culture and Contemporary History, and Historic Preservation. His exhibit **Cambodia to Greensboro** earned multiple awards.

Judith Cushman Hammer is one of the co-authors of a recent book on Blandwood which features some of the unique furniture and interior designs contemporaneous of Day's period furniture. Hammer holds a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago and has volunteered as a curator, researcher, and writer for Preservation Greensboro for over a decade. She won the volunteer of the year award for PGI last year.

Jo Ramsey Leimenstoll is a Professor Emerita of the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and past president of Preservation Greensboro. She holds a Master of Architecture from North Carolina State University School of Design, and a BFA in Studio Art from UNC. Her book, **Thomas Day: Master Craftsman and Free Man of Color** (2010), co-authored by the late Patricia Phillips Marshall, is considered by scholars as to the current definitive work on Day's career.



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Schedule of Events

Opening Celebration on Friday, April 1

This gala event will be held as a preview of the Exhibit the night before the formal open of the three-month Exhibit. This event will be reserved for donors, sponsors, and PGI members. This event at Blandwood will host a spirited evening of sweet and savory victuals, libations via cash bar, live music, and an inspirational guest speaker that celebrate the unveiling of the Thomas Day Exhibit in the Mansion.

Ribbon Cutting on Saturday, April 2

Join us for the official public opening of "Conversations," an exhibit that brings the works of Black craftsman Thomas Day with the Morehead Collection of decorative arts at Blandwood.

Day Trip to Caswell County on Friday, July 29

Enjoy a "Day Trip" to Caswell County to explore the village of Milton and explore sites and landmarks familiar to craftsman Thomas Day. Transportation, admission, and lunch included in tour pricing.

Thomas Day Symposium on Saturday, July 30

This series of presentations will include discussions and presentations on various facets of Thomas Day, including social history, architecture, identification techniques, and additional observations that will bring this cabinet-maker to life! Symposium fees include snacks, but with so many restaurants in downtown Greensboro, a list will be provided for lunch on your own.

Exhibition Closes on Saturday, September 30, 2022



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WEB SITE LINK: www.preservationgreensboro.org/thomasday

Target Audiences: Visitors and tourists to North Carolina, individuals exploring Black cultural attractions, community, and school groups, universities and colleges, HBCU institutions, High Point Market, Universities Studying Slavery Conference, design-related professionals, clients, and patrons of architecture, and cultural tourists.

Cultural travelers visit attractions in a destination such as historic sites, buildings, archaeological areas, state, local, and national parks, art galleries, and museums. They search out the local cuisine, visit local bars and restaurants, shop for local crafts, and buy from local artists. Cities are beginning to realize that cultural tourists generate a far greater share of local income than their numbers would indicate.

Benefits associated with sponsorship of this exhibit include tickets to the Opening Gala, advertising space in our event publication, placement on social media and our website, and gratitude for your support of this benchmark exhibit in Greensboro's National Historic Landmark Blandwood.

Charitable License: NC Charitable License Number SL004482

Preservation Greensboro Incorporated is recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a charitable organization under ID Number 56-6086217.

Contact Us

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Sponsorship Opportunities

Empire Sponsor Level

\$25,000

Ten tickets to Gala and 25 tickets to Exhibit. Full-page back cover advertisement in the event program. Acknowledgment panel. Five guided tours of Blandwood by the Executive Director, with wine!

Classical Sponsor Level

\$10,000

Six tickets to Gala and 10 tickets to Exhibit. Inside cover full-page advertisement in the event program. Acknowledgment panel. Two guided tours of Blandwood by Executive Director, with wine!.

Napoleon Sponsor Level

\$5,000

Four tickets to Gala and four tickets to Exhibit. Acknowledgment panel. One full-page advertisement in the event program. One guided tour.

Lyre Sponsor Level

\$2,500

Four tickets to Gala and four tickets to Exhibit. Acknowledgment panel. One half-page advertisement in event program

Acanthus Sponsor Level

\$1,000

Four tickets to Gala and four tickets to Exhibit. Acknowledgment panel. One half-page advertisement in event program

Gothic Sponsor Level

\$750

For tickets to Gala and four tickets to Exhibit. Acknowledgment panel.

Pillar and Scroll Sponsor Level

\$500

Two tickets to Gala and two tickets to Exhibit. Acknowledgment panel.

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Deadline for Commitment: January 7, 2022

Questions?

Contact: Louis Gallien

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