New Views on Thomas Day’s Furniture

Displaying Thomas Day furniture alongside pieces owned by Governor John Motley Morehead provides a unique opportunity to experience Day’s furniture in a period setting. In the public and private rooms of Blandwood—its parlors, dining room, bedrooms, and law office—the furniture and its placement likely mirror the domestic interiors of Day’s wealthy clients. Several pieces made by Day resemble those purchased for Blandwood, reflecting the styles and values espoused by Morehead and other elite homeowners in the Carolina Piedmont.

These eleven furniture pairings allow a fresh look at the intersections of gender, race, and class, and how each affected life at Blandwood and shaped similar settings in mid-nineteenth century residences.

The Morehead family, like others who aspired to a genteel lifestyle, relied on the exploitation of enslaved people in nearly every facet of their lives. Specific furniture in the formal rooms used for entertaining and in the personal spaces suggests details about the experiences of those enslaved at Blandwood.

Detail of “Perspective painting of Blandwood and plan” by Alexander Jackson Davis, ca. 1850.

Original in the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Several pieces of the original mid-nineteenth century furniture in Blandwood’s west parlor resemble the style of furniture Thomas Day made for his clients.