

ENTERTAINMENT

Award-Winning Exhibit About Thomas Day Closes Dec. 31

'Behind the Veneer: Thomas Day, Master Cabinet-maker'

Since it opened in 2010, the exhibit "Behind the Veneer: Thomas Day, Master Cabinetmaker" has received three national awards and been featured on PBS's "The Woodwright's Shop with Roy Underhill" and in The New York Times.

Only five weeks remain to see this acclaimed exhibit at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh. On view through Monday, Dec. 31, the exhibit features furniture made by Thomas Day, a free man of color who owned and operated one of North Carolina's largest cabinet shops prior to the Civil War. Admission is free.

In addition to showcasing approximately 60 pieces of furniture crafted by this accomplished artisan and entrepreneur from Milton, "Behind the Veneer" explores the extraordinary story of a man who succeeded and flourished despite shrinking freedoms for free people of color in antebellum North Carolina.

"Behind the Veneer" presents a remarkable range of items produced in Day's shop from 1830 to 1860. He created furniture in popular 19th-century styles - from the very "neat" and "plain" to the ornate Focolo Revival - and infused many of the styles with his exuberant motifs.

The exhibit is curated by Patricia Phillips Marshall, curator of the exhibit and co-author of the book "Thomas Day: Master Craftsman and Free Man of Color." Marshall said that Day can rightfully be called one of the fathers of the North Carolina furniture industry. She noted that his surviving furniture and architectural woodwork still represent the finest of 19th-century craftsmanship and aesthetics. Day's pieces are highly sought after today by collectors of antebellum furniture and African American material culture.

Exhibit pieces, such as a mahogany veneer sideboard, mahogany side chairs and a faux-painted wardrobe, reflect his creative genius. "Behind the Veneer" features furniture from the collections of the Museum of History, private and public lenders, and Thomas Day House Under Government Restoration Inc. in Milton.

Insightful and informative, the exhibit goes behind the veneer of antebellum North Carolina to reveal its complexities. Many restrictive laws applied to free people of color: the right to own property was an exception. By capitalizing on this freedom, Day built a life for himself and his family and ran a thriving business. The master craftsman gained the respect of white clients, the movers and shakers of the Dan River region in North Carolina and Virginia.

Day was one of a few cabinetmakers who could design the architectural elements for a room and then create the furniture to complement it. People of the Dan River area came to him because of his extraordinary skill.

Engaging interactive offerings enhance the visitor experience. Walk through a re-created workshop filled with hand tools from an early 19th-century cabinet shop. Turn the shop's great wheel lathe and pass a handle to run a jigsaw. Throughout "Behind the Veneer," video "portraits" come to life to highlight aspects of Day's life and the antebellum period.

Whatever frustrations Day endured as a free person of color, he found refuge in his Milton shop. There, he expressed freedom through his incredible designs and experienced a high degree of autonomy as master of his shop. His workforce included journeymen, apprentices, day laborers and enslaved workers, with a racial makeup of white, black and people of mixed races.

Visit "Behind the Veneer" to learn more about this artisan, entrepreneur, early industrialist, and devoted husband and father who left behind a tangible legacy. Discover how Day set a course for survival and success in the face of injustices, hardships and uncertainties in his life.

Progress Energy is title sponsor of the exhibit, with additional support from Raleigh's News and Observer, The Broyhill Family Foundation Inc. and Mr. and Mrs. H. Nelson Rich.

For more information about the N.C. Museum of History, call 919-807-7900 or access ncmuseumofhistory.org or Facebook.

The museum is located at 5 E. Edenton Street, across from the State Capitol. Parking is available in the lot across Wilmington Street. Hours are Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the N.C. Department of Cultural

Millennium Sounds, A Benefit Concert for Hayti Heritage Center Set for Nov. 30

Market Place opens 6 PM

Concert Begins 7:30 PM

All Donations Are Tax Deductible And Greatly Encouraged

The Hayti Heritage Center is a cultural centerpiece of the Arts community in Durham. Himidi Productions, LLC is requesting the Triangle Arts audiences to help us attain the ambitious goal of raising \$5,000. The funds would assist this prestigious institution with its on-going expenses for building and program operations for this 2012-2013 fiscal year. This is a community effort to preserve, promote and embrace the Hayti Heritage center. Local artist and vendors will participate in MILLENNIUM SOUNDS. The artist will consist of Members of the Award winning Bull City Slam Team: LuMi Naughty (Carolina Music Ward Winner For Hip Hop Female); CocoFilipina; Oace Al Mansur; Jazz artist Alan Thompson and band; MGL (a one man band); and culminating the evening with the Innovative Hip-Hop Artist Igwe Fogg. This evening of entertainment will be eclectic and promises to be a wonderful way for the community to support Hayti Heritage Center. Join us for fun, food and the musical Sounds of the Millennium.

For more information call: 919-358-5254 (Himidi Productions) or 919-683-1709 (Hayti Heritage Center)

<<http://www.nea.gov/>>

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<<http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/>>

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Register To Vote

Bull Durham Blues Festival Rain Date Announced

If you were one of the hundreds of people who rain kept away from the Annual Bull Durham Blues Festival in September, the St. Joseph's Historic Foundation, Inc. is presenting the Blues Festival Redo on Dec. 7, at 7 p.m.

"We're excited to be able to offer this FREE Blues Festival Redo or makeup performance to our loyal patrons and festival lovers who've come to count on us for a great Blues show," said Interim Director Janella Sellars. "We were so disappointed that the weather prevented three fantastic groups and performers from entertaining those who showed up for a good time, as well as those who couldn't make it out that Saturday due to the massive storm. But now is our chance to make it up to everyone, and let them know how much we appreciate their continued support."

Artists who were unable to go on stage due to the weather during the September festival are scheduled to perform at the December show. They are:

7 p.m. - Bullfrog Willard McGhee, 2011 Triangle Blues Society Blues Challenge winner (solo artist) "McGhee is one of the great characters of modern-day North Carolina Piedmont blues" - Dave Menconi. Our State Magazine

8:15 p.m. - E-train and the Rusted Rails. The Rusted Rails ignite local audiences with a captivating mix of familiar and original rock-a-billy, swing, and blues. They were voted best band by the Triangle Blues Society in 2011 and the Cape Fear Blues Society in 2010.

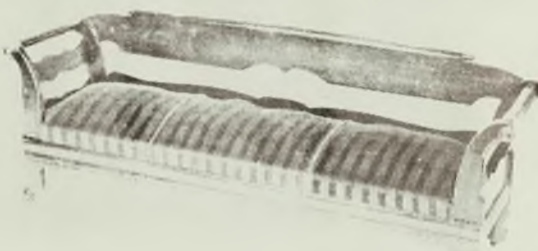
9:30 p.m. - Stanley Baird. Acclaimed jazz musician, composer and entertainer. He's has shared the concert stage with his mentor Donald Byrd, Najee, Alex Bugnon, Regina Belle, Richard Elliot, Brian McKnight, Kirk Whalum, Kim Waters, The O'Jays and the late George Howard.

Doors open at 6 p.m. at the Hayti Heritage Center, and vendors will also be on hand. The Hayti Heritage Center is located at 804 Old Fayetteville St. Seating is limited, so get there early. For more information about the performances, contact Janella Sellars at jsellars@hayti.org, or call 919-683-1709.

www.hayti.org



Day side chair, mahogany, mahogany veneer, rosewood veneer, and poplar (upholstery not original), made by Thomas Day for the James Poteat family, Yanceyville, Caswell County, 1855-1860.



Lounge, walnut (upholstery not original), made by Thomas Day for Gov. David S. Reid, Rockingham County, 1858.

Before Columbus: Black Explorers Of the New World

By Legrand H Clegg II

Every October Americans pause to celebrate Columbus Day. Children are taught that the Italian navigator discovered America. Parades are held in his honour and tributes tell of his skill, courage and perseverance.

Historians, archeologists, anthropologists and other scientists and scholars now know that Columbus did not discover America.

Not only were native Americans present when he reached the New World, but also Africans, Asians and Europeans, among others, had been sailing to the Americas thousands of years before Columbus ventured across the Atlantic.

Of the various people who reached America before Columbus, black Africans appear to have made the most contacts and to have had the greatest impact.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, several scholars wrote books and articles about this subject and urged the academic establishment to change primary and secondary curricula across the country to reflect the great contributions of African people to early America. Unfortunately, such pleas fell on deaf ears so ... our children are being taught the myth that Columbus discovered America.

(A few years ago), a group of 13 African Americans participated in a study-tour of numerous Mexican archeological sites.

Led by the renowned black historian and architect, Mathu Odir, and two Mexican guides, we visited numerous museums, temples, pyramids and cities, most of which reflected the genius of the native American Mayas and Aztecs.

Toward the end of the tour, in southern Mexico, we began to see the remains of an ancient black presence.

Evidence of the early Africans is widespread and varied. Dozens of majestic stone heads have been found at ancient sacred sites, such as La Venta and Tres Zapotes in southern Mexico.

Ranging up to nine feet and four inches in height, with a circumference of 22 feet, and weighing 30 to 40 tonnes, these colossal statues depict helmeted black men with large eyes, broad fleshy noses and full lips. They appear to represent priest-kings who ruled vast territories in the ancient New World from provinces near the Gulf of Mexico.

In the holy city of La Venta, dating back to at least 1500BC, four of these large stone heads were discovered on a ceremonial platform featuring a miniature step pyramid and a conical pyramid - the earliest of such monuments to appear in the Americas.

Other artwork also serves as evidence of Africans in America before Columbus.

For years the late art historian, Alexander Von Wuthenau, collected ancient clay figurines that provide clues regarding the diversity of America's pre-Columbian population.

His remarkable African collection depicts priests, chiefs, dancers, wrestlers, drummers, beautiful women and stately men - a collage of Black people who occupied every stratum of society from Mexico to South America.

Negroid skulls and skeletons have also been found throughout the New World.

Polish professor Andrzej Wiercinski has revealed the discovery of African skulls at Olmec sites in Tlatilco, Cerro de las Mesas and Monte Alban. Furthermore, very ancient African skeletons have been unearthed in California, Mexico, Central and South America.

The best evidence of the black presence in America before Columbus comes from the pen of the "great discoverer" himself. In his Journal of the Second Voyage, Columbus reported that when



African features on statue in New World

he reached Haiti the native Americans told him that black-skinned people had come from the south and southeast in boats, trading in gold-tipped spearheads.

At least a dozen other European explorers, including Vasco Nunez de Balboa, also reported seeing or hearing of "Negroes" when they reached the New World.

Nicholas Leon, an eminent Mexican authority, recorded the oral traditions of his people. Some of them reported that "the oldest inhabitants of Mexico were blacks ... The existence of blacks and giants is commonly believed by nearly all the races of our soil and in their various language they had words to designate them."

Early Mexican scholars were convinced that the impact of the black explorers on the New World was profound and enduring.

One author, JA Villacorta, has written: "Any way you view it, Mexican civilisation had its origin in Africa." Modern excavations throughout Latin America appear to confirm Villacorta's conclusions.

The Olmec civilisation, which appears to have been of African origin or to have been dominated by Africans, was the Mother Culture of Mexico.

Of this, Michael Coe, the leading American historian on Mexico, has written that, "there is not the slightest doubt that all later civilisations in (Mexico and Central America), rest ultimately on an Olmec base."

Ivan Van Sertima, the foremost authority on the African presence in ancient America, has built a strong case demonstrating that many Olmec cultural traits were of African origin: "A study of the Olmec civilisation reveals elements that so closely parallel ritual traits and techniques in the Egypto-Nubian world of the same period that it is difficult to maintain (that) all these are due to mere coincidence."

Other scholars believe that Africans introduced a calendar, writing, pyramid and tomb construction, mummification, as well as certain political systems and religious traditions to the native Americans.

Who were the Africans who sailed to America before Columbus? Indian scholar RA Jairazbhoy states that the earliest settlers were Ancient Egyptians led by King Ramesis III, during the 19th dynasty.

Van Sertima also believes that most of the explorers sailed from Egypt, but during the much later 25th dynasty. Many other scholars insist that the navigators came from West African nations, such as Ghana, Mali and Songhay.

Whoever these black people were, they most certainly sailed to America in ancient and medieval times and left a profound imprint on New World soil.

As Jairazbhoy notes: "The black began his career in America not as slave but as master."

Our Mexican guides agree.

As we ended our tour and prepared to return to the US, one of them proclaimed: "I would like to thank the African people for bringing civilisation to the New World." It is high time for the American media and academic establishment to admit the same. - Rense.com