

Regional Furniture

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION A Norfolk chest, mid-eighteenth century, with a Napkin Press made according to the specification on fols 1-3 of the Norwich Price Book. *Courtesy of Duke's Fine Art Auctioneers; photo, Jonathan Gooding*

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Contents

An Introduction to the 1801 *Cabinet & Chair Makers'*
Norwich Book of Prices

ROBERT WILLIAMS 1

The Cabinet & Chair Makers' Norwich Book of Prices 15

Cabinets 21–253

Chairs 257–349

Editorial

Regional Furniture 2016 is a photographic reprint of the second edition of *The Cabinet & Chair Makers' Norwich Book of Prices*, published in Norwich in 1801. This is one of the earliest and most comprehensive of the regional price books, but it is also one of the rarest. Only two copies are known to survive; one in the Norfolk Heritage Centre (Norwich City Library) and another in the library of Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, Delaware, USA. Our reprint is taken almost entirely from the Norwich copy which, as the photographs reveal, is a well-used volume with many blemishes and hand-written annotations. It is in a modern cloth binding, and lacks fourteen pages. The missing pages were supplied by the Winterthur Library, whose copy is in better condition. The Regional Furniture Society is grateful to both libraries for allowing access to the books and for giving permission for them to be reproduced.

Robert Williams' introductory essay for this reprint is a huge step forward in our understanding of the context and origins, not only of the Norwich Price Book, but of regional price books in general. It is but a small part of a more extensive study of regional price books, furniture-makers' working practises and labour relations in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which we hope to publish in a future edition of *Regional Furniture*. Once again I would like to acknowledge the key role played by individual members of the Society who undertake research and writing in their own time and at their own expense, and in doing so expand the boundaries of our knowledge of all aspects of British regional furniture.

No first edition of the Norwich Price Book is known to survive, nor is it known when it was published. This second edition was printed by J. Payne, whose address is given as No. 53, Market Place. Little is known about this man, but in Thomas Peck's *Norwich Directory* (1802), also printed by J. Payne, he was listed as 'Printer, Bookseller and Stationer' at 22 Market Place. The title page of the Price Book tells us it could be bought from Payne, or from Robert Rider and Richard Bexfield. According to the *Directory*, the first was a billiard-table maker and the second a cabinet-maker. Further information about Bexfield can be found in John Stabler's *Dictionary of Norfolk Furniture Makers*, published as *Regional Furniture* (2006).

The Norwich library copy of the Price Book belonged to John Poole. This man cannot be found in the Norwich trades directories of 1783 and 1802, nor in the list of Norwich freemen (1752–1981), but Stabler (2006) notes that he was living in Norwich in 1817, and furthermore had a freehold in Diss. The connection with Diss is significant, because Poole's name on the flyleaf is followed by the signature of Thomas Barkham and the inscription, 'Bot [Bought] of J. Poole'. Barkham (1803–1844) is listed by Stabler, as a cabinet-maker, upholsterer, appraiser and brush-maker of the town of Diss in Norfolk.

The Winterthur copy has the name Flaxman written several times inside the front cover and three times inside the back cover. From the late eighteenth century until probably the middle of the nineteenth century there was a family of carpenters and builders named Flaxman in Woodbridge in Suffolk, so this family may have been the owners of the book. The *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* (1986) records a

mahogany writing box with inlaid decoration with a hand-written label stating 'William Flaxman made this box in June 1828 Aged 16 years and 8 Months. Woodbridge Suffolk'.

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