

Jean-Henri Riesener

Born 1734, Died 1806

Ebéniste

French, German

Jean-Henri Riesener's marriage to the widow of his former master, Jean-François Oeben, helped this poor German immigrant become one of the most celebrated *ébénistes* of late eighteenth-century Paris. French guild regulations were carefully arranged to prevent foreign competition; thus, marriage into established families was an important way for foreigners to be accepted into the furniture-making community. Through his wife, Riesener became related to other prominent *ébénistes* such as Martin Carlin.

In 1769 Riesener began to supply the *Garde-Meuble de la Couronne* (the Furniture Warehouse of the Crown); five years later he received the official title of *ébéniste du roi* (Cabinetmaker to the King). Almost immediately, he began supplying richly decorated pieces covered with mahogany veneers, floral marquetry, and gilt bronze [mounts](#). Riesener was also known for his ingenious mechanical fittings, which allowed desk- and tabletops to be raised or lowered by a singled button. Commissions from Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and many noble families made him a wealthy man.

Riesener survived the French Revolution by removing royal emblems from furniture for the new régime. He always believed, however, that the monarchy would be reinstated at some point and used much of his remaining fortune to buy back his own masterpieces. He died in obscurity, political events having proved him wrong.

Reference: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a977-1.html>