

## Thomas Chippendale

Thomas Chippendale was born in Otley, Yorkshire, in 1718, the son of a carpenter. The exact date of his birth is a mystery, but we do know that he was baptised on June 5.

Like his birth, Chippendale's early life is lost to us. We do know that he married Catherine Redshaw in 1748 in London, and five years later he moved his furniture showrooms and workshop to St. Martin's Lane, where he lived and worked for the rest of his life.

In 1754 Chippendale published his masterful collection, *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*, a compilation of fashionable English furniture design. This work is Chippendale's enduring legacy, and shows his gift in adapting existing design styles to the fashion of the mid 18th century. So pervasive was the influence of the book that the name of Chippendale is often indiscriminately applied to mid-18th century furniture as a whole.

Chippendale partnered with upholsterer James Rannie, and when Rannie died his former clerk, Thomas Haig, became Chippendale's business partner. Catherine Chippendale died in 1772, and Thomas remarried in 1775, to Elizabeth Davis.

Chippendale's designs covered a wide range of styles, from Rococo to Gothic and chinoiserie ( oriental style ). From the 1760's Chippendale was influenced heavily by the Neoclassical work of architect Robert Adam, with whom he worked on several large projects, notably at Harewood House and Nostell Priory.

Many fine pieces of furniture have been attributed to Thomas Chippendale, but verifiable pieces are rare. His designs were widely copied, and his *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* was used heavily by other makers in both England and North America.

Even when a piece can be attributed with certainty to Chippendale's workshop, it is impossible to say for certain that he worked on the furniture himself. As the Chippendale firm became successful, more and more work was carried out by trained workmen rather than Chippendale himself.

Thomas Chippendale died in 1779 and his business was carried on by his son, also named Thomas.\*

\* Britain Express Web Site

### Web Resources:

Thomas Chippendale

Thomas Chippendale- Master furniture maker

### To see in Britain:

Victoria and Albert Museum, London- contains a complete bedroom suite originally designed for Badminton House

Harewood House, Yorkshire- houses the finest collection of Chippendale furniture in Britain.