



Desk and Bookcase, ca. 1797, cat. no. 51

*John Shaw*

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Cabinetmaker of Annapolis

WILLIAM VOSS ELDER III AND LU BARTLETT

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

## John Shaw: Cabinetmaker of Annapolis

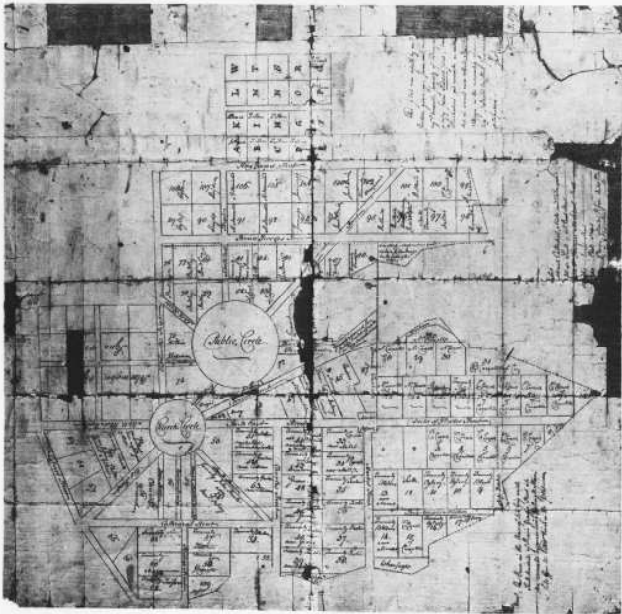


Fig. 1. James Stoddert's 1719 Plat of Annapolis, as redrawn by John Callahan in 1784, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis (MHR, 1213-147). The shop of Shaw and Chisholm as advertised in 1773 was on Church Street. Shaw later lived, from 1784 to 1830, on State Circle, identified on the map as the Public Circle.

For many years, the name of John Shaw has been synonymous with fine furniture of the Federal period in Maryland. Although recent research has identified a number of cabinetmakers working in the State, most of these have been associated with the city of Baltimore. John Shaw remains the foremost cabinetmaker known to have been working in Annapolis during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The output of his shop must have been prodigious to judge from the relatively large number of extant pieces of furniture connected with him. Nearly fifty examples bearing his printed paper label are known today and at least as many more firm attributions, based on style and construction techniques as well as documentary evidence, can be made. The survival of such a large body of work associated with one cabinetmaker is in itself unusual. That many of the pieces of furniture have remained in the families of prominent Marylanders has given an added cachet to Shaw's work. In addition, Shaw produced furniture for the State House in Annapolis and various other offices which led, in turn, to private commissions from State officials. The prosperity of the city and Shaw's own abilities as an entrepreneur enabled him to capitalize on the opportunities afforded him in Annapolis and to dominate the cabinet-making trade there.

Shaw's advent in Annapolis came during the Age of Affluence that characterized the city from around 1763 to 1774.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the termination of the French and Indian War and the concentration of political power there brought unprecedented prosperity to the city on the banks of the Severn. The British officials stationed in Annapolis enjoyed an elegant and luxurious style of living that was emulated by the wealthy planters who were drawn to the town as the social, cultural, and economic center of Maryland as well as its political hub.

The tobacco planters who flocked to the city built imposing town houses and furnished them primarily with imported goods and furniture, but patronized local merchants and craftsmen as well. Between 1764 and 1774, the construction of at least fourteen important town houses created employment for workmen in the building trades. Although Maryland's economy was dominated chiefly by London during the colonial period, Scottish factors invaded the market and controlled approximately one third of the tobacco trade by 1771.<sup>2</sup> The commerce between Glasgow and Annapolis encouraged the emigration

of craftsmen as well as those interested in taking advantage of the mercantile opportunities available in the New World. John Shaw was one such craftsman.

Born in Scotland on April 25, 1745, John Shaw is listed in the Glasgow parish register as the "lawful" son of John and Mary Cassels Shaw.<sup>3</sup> Since no apprenticeship lists were published in Glasgow, it is difficult to document Shaw's early training, but it is probable that he was indentured as a carpenter or cabinetmaker. Port of entry records for Annapolis do not record his arrival there, but it is likely that this occurred around 1763.<sup>4</sup> He may have attached himself to one of the established cabinetmakers or joiners in Annapolis before venturing forth on his own. At the age of twenty-three, he was evidently working as a journeyman when he appears in 1768 in the ledger of James Brice, a wealthy planter who was building an imposing town house in Annapolis. Brice's accounts suggest that Shaw was engaged in a variety of construction activities and note that he was paid for labor and building materials (see fig. 2).<sup>5</sup>

The first notice of Shaw as a cabinetmaker is found in the records of a court case in 1770 involving Thomas Sparrow, a silversmith who later engraved Shaw's printed labels.<sup>6</sup> Shaw soon joined forces with a fellow Scot, Archibald Chisholm, who was already established by 1770 as a cabinetmaker in Annapolis.<sup>7</sup> Between 1772 and 1775 the firm of Shaw and Chisholm was engaged by James Brice for the following repairs:

To putting a new top rail on a Mahogany Chair	0 . . . 5 . . . 0
To a Birds Cage with 2 Apartments	0 . . . 15 . . . 0
To Mending the Claw of a Table	0 . . . 1 . . . 0
To new Stocking a Gun	1 . . . 0 . . . 0
To Mending a Tea Table 1/2 a new Ketch for Ditto 2/	0 . . . 3 . . . 6
To Mending a Mahogany Chair	0 . . . 1 . . . 6 <sup>8</sup>

Shaw and Chisholm advertised in the *Maryland Gazette*, May 27, 1773, as "Cabinet and Chairmakers, in Church Street, near the dock," an advantageous location in the center of mercantile activity. The importing firm of Charles Wallace, John Davidson, and Joshua Johnson, for example, was established at the foot of Church Street near the wharf, and other cabinetmakers also had shops nearby, facilitating easy interaction between craftsmen and the mercantile community (see fig. 1).<sup>9</sup>

The activities of the Shaw and Chisholm shop were diverse: cabinet and chairmaking, furniture repair, selling imported goods, including small specialized pieces of furniture such as tea caddies or backgammon boards, and even such goods as Jamaican brown sugar (*Maryland Gazette*, August 1, 1776). As leaders in the cabinetmaking community, they supplied other craftsmen with lumber and tools as an advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette* for May 6, 1773, indicated: "Just imported from London, and to be sold by SHAW and CHISHOLM, . . . a neat and general assortment of Joiners and Cabinetmakers tools. . . ." In addition to such tools, the partners had for sale "A QUANTITY of mahogany, in logs, plank, and boards, and a variety of looking-glasses in Mahogany frames. They likewise do various kinds of turner's work" (*Maryland Gazette*, April 13, 1775).

Other craftsmen appear to have been associated with the shop of Shaw and Chisholm at various times. Joshua Collins, a "Musical Instrument-maker and Turner from MANCHESTER" announced in the *Maryland Gazette* (February 25, 1773) that he had "commenced the said Branches of Business, at Messrs. Shaw and Chisholm's Cabinet Shop, where all Sorts of Turner's Work is executed in the compleatest Manner" and "all Sorts of Musical Instruments repaired. . . ." Isaac Harris, a journeyman and blacksmith, is also known to have been working in the shop.<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Middleton is thought to have been connected with Shaw and Chisholm at this time for they jointly advertised in the *Maryland Gazette* of June 20, 1776, for the return of three runaway apprentices.

By 1775 Shaw and Chisholm had received one of their first commissions for the State House. They made "a Pine Bookcase with 3 Drawers Pigeon Holes and Sliding Partitions" for the Loan Office.<sup>11</sup> The patronage Shaw received from the State, both during his partnerships with Chisholm and when he was working on his own, played a significant part in the development of his career as a cabinetmaker. Shaw made himself indispensable at the State House, eventually serving as a sort of general maintenance supervisor undertaking construction, repairs, and commissions of all sorts.

The advent of the Revolution saw the dissolution of the first partnership between John Shaw and Archibald Chisholm who announced in the *Maryland Gazette* of November 14, 1776, that each "intends carrying on their business of cabinet and chair making as formerly." Shaw "at the house lately occupied by the company" and Chisholm "at the house lately possessed by Mr. Charles Peale, in Church-Street. . . ." Shaw continued to execute cabinetwork and also to sell a variety of dry goods.<sup>12</sup> He also received more commissions from the State. In 1778 he was paid in May for mahogany ballot boxes, and in September for twenty-one chests and rulers for the commissary of stores and a mahogany table for the Governor and Council.<sup>13</sup> The commissions continued: in 1779 he was paid £63 for three desks and nine stools for public offices, and in 1780 he earned almost a thousand pounds for two presses for the Council Room and a table with a range of pigeonholes for the Auditor's Office.<sup>14</sup>

Both Shaw and Chisholm appear separately in the account books of John Davidson, an Annapolis merchant, between 1780 and 1785. Shaw purchased black Barcelona silk handkerchiefs, cotton stockings, and furniture hardware including "4 pair Table Butts, 1 stock Lock, [and] 1 Brass Lock with 2 Keys."<sup>15</sup> Chisholm's transactions include shoes and hats while both Shaw and Chisholm have accounts for large quantities of sailcloth.<sup>16</sup> According to the 1783 tax list, all three men were of comparable economic standing.<sup>17</sup>

Although no account book or shop ledger has been discovered for either partnership or for Shaw's own shop, a hint of the extent of their activities can be seen through the ledgers of their patrons. Between 1781 and 1786 Shaw executed the following cabinetwork for James Brice: in 1782 he repaired an easy chair "new stuffing it Making a cover" and made a child's crib bedstead and a mahogany cradle with a round top; in 1784 he produced a large pine bookcase for the study, and in 1785 an oval breakfast table made of mahogany with a cut stretcher and an oval tea board with "silver'd" handles.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 2. The Brice House, Annapolis, built in 1767. The first record of John Shaw as a cabinetmaker appears in James Brice's ledger in 1771. [Photograph: M. E. Warren, Annapolis]

Another such client was Edward Lloyd IV who lived in Annapolis and at Wye House on the Eastern Shore. Shaw and Chisholm appear in his accounts for 1773 as joiners who were paid for various supplies, including foodstuffs and dry goods.<sup>18</sup> In 1780 Shaw provided a high bed and furniture, two window curtains, and six chairs at £60.0.0; one bottle stand at £4.0.0; one dressing table cover and glass at £3.0.0; one settee at £16.0.0; and one close stool at £4.0.0.<sup>20</sup>

After the death of Edward Lloyd IV in 1796, Shaw continued to work for his son. He made a desk-and-bookcase for Edward Lloyd V's plantation office at Wye House which is documented by a bill of sale dated 1797.<sup>21</sup> In 1799 Shaw's name appears again in Lloyd's accounts when he was paid for a picture frame and in 1801 when he signed a receipt noting that he "Received of Sir Aaron Anthony for Edward Lloyd Esquire the Sum of four hundred Dollars on Account this fourteenth day of August Eighteen hundred and one."<sup>22</sup>

The firm of Shaw and Chisholm also figures in the accounts of Edward Lloyd's brother-in-law, John Cadwalader, a wealthy Philadelphian described by John Adams in 1774 as "a Gentleman of large Fortune, [with] a grand and elegant House And Furniture."<sup>23</sup> In 1775 the partners rendered an account for a type of billiard table (also

described in their account as a "True Madam") or "Mahogany Missippy Table Cover'd with flannel & Green Cloth with a Sett of Ivory Balls for Ditto."<sup>24</sup> Shaw's name appears in the accounts also of various Annapolis merchants during the years 1776 to 1807. He was evidently prosperous enough and willing to offer security for other retailers in the capital.<sup>25</sup>

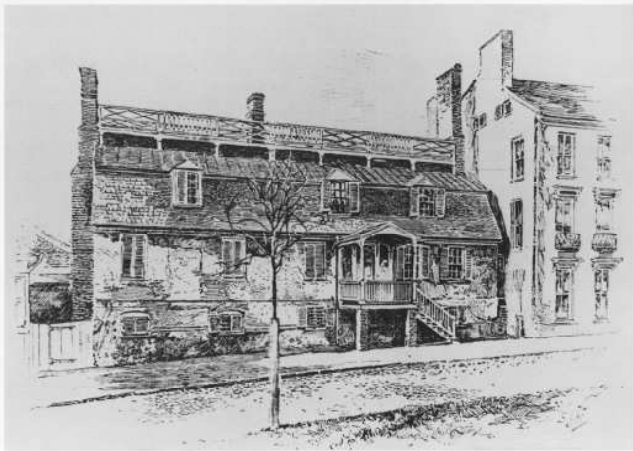
A zealous patriot, Shaw was appointed Armorer for the State of Maryland in 1777, in charge of stocking arms and ammunition for the use of the army. He also served during the Revolution in the Severn Battalion under General William Smallwood, being commissioned a second lieutenant in 1778 and rising to sergeant-major in April 1779.<sup>26</sup> As State Armorer, he purchased guns and gun barrels, and in an inventory taken in November 1778 he stated that he had 1,253 arms and 1,093 bayonets in stock.<sup>27</sup> The Council of Maryland paid him for his services as well as for the use of his tools and workmen.<sup>28</sup> He supervised the Armory itself, mending windows and putting up shelves, and was also paid for hardware and buttons.<sup>29</sup> Shaw served as State Armorer until 1819.

When the Revolution transformed Annapolis from a town of wealthy consumers and merchants into a military and naval center, cabinetmakers like Shaw and Chisholm assumed public positions, devoting their cabinetmaking skills to the war effort rather than to private commissions. Shaw, for example, found himself making cartridge boxes and packing cases for guns rather than furniture during 1779 and 1780. While many Annapolis merchants suffered reverses from the loss of a wealthy loyalist clientele and from the difficulty in procuring and selling imported goods because of shipping embargoes, Shaw profited from his association with the State, which favored him with contracts. Like other cabinetmakers, Shaw was also employed as an undertaker and arranged a number of funerals, both military and civilian, for which he provided coffins. In addition, he also made camp furniture and bedsteads for the use of the troops.<sup>30</sup>

Shaw probably maintained a large warehouse stocked with lumber for cabinetmaking and carpentry repairs. We know that he provided wood for scantling, poplar and pine planking, for a pump he made to facilitate the action of the public well, and for the offices of the Assembly in 1785.<sup>31</sup> Other odd jobs Shaw performed for the State included making flags and procuring and installing halyards for the flagstaff, making doors and window seats, taking down pictures and window curtains in the State House, and supplying files and drums.

When in 1783 George Washington resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in Annapolis, the celebration lasted for several days. Shaw was in charge of a public dinner, ball, and illumination of the State House where the ceremony took place on December 23. State records show his purchase of planks and nails for the platform, glazing for the windows, and candles for the illumination.<sup>32</sup> Shaw had been responsible for a similar illumination as part of the celebration when peace was declared in August 1783.<sup>33</sup>

When a fire destroyed Shaw's place of business in 1783, causing the loss of all his tools and "every other thing in his shop," he rejoined Chisholm for about a year [*Maryland Gazette*, February 6, 1783]. On December 11, 1783, they advertised in the *Maryland Gazette*:



JUST IMPORTED. In the ship NONSUCH, from London, and to be sold by SHAW & CHISHOLM, at the house of John Shaw, near the Stadt-house. A NEAT assortment of mahogany framed looking-glasses, backgammon tables, draught-boards, tea-chests, tea-boxes, cribbage boards and boxes, decanter stands, knife-boxes, spare sets of backgammon-boxes and men, prints framed and glazed, and a variety of walking sticks, &c.

N. B. Imported in same ship, a neat fine toned piano forte, and to be sold at A. Chisholm's.

Fig. 3. Brookby-Shaw House, Annapolis, built in the 1720's. John Shaw owned and occupied this house from 1784 until his death in 1829.

In 1784 (*Maryland Gazette*, November 11) this advertisement had been expanded to include "maps of North-America, divided according to the preliminary articles, signed at Versailles [and a] general Atlas, describing the whole universe. . . ." The imported goods that supplemented their cabinetmaking had been advertised as early as 1773, and each man continued in retail trade until the end of the century.

About 1784 Shaw purchased a house on State Circle, a location apparently advantageous for craftsmen (see fig. 3).<sup>34</sup> William Whetcroft, a silversmith who also sold furniture, and Thomas Pryce, carpenter and upholsterer, had their houses and shops in the surrounding area (*Maryland Gazette*, March 7, 1782). The site directly across from the State House would have been most convenient for Shaw in carrying out his many commissions for the government. For example, when in

1784 the Continental Congress convened in the State House in Annapolis, Shaw sold to Thomas Jefferson cabinetwork in the amount of £4,226.<sup>35</sup>

The artist Charles Willson Peale, who had moved to Philadelphia from Annapolis in 1775, asked the partners to hang his portrait of Washington at Yorktown which had been commissioned by the State of Maryland. As Peale wrote to Governor William Paca on November 15, 1784:

I have the Frame ready for the portrait of his Excellency Genl. Washington. The charge is \$28. It is substantial & I think sufficiently animated for the purpose of being placed in a public Building. I can pack up the picture & Frame in two packing cases not very large, & send such directions as Mess.<sup>rs</sup> Shaw & Chisholm may put them together, and place the picture were you wish to have it, without my being at the expense of a journey to your city.<sup>36</sup>

Peale, who had worked as a watchmaker in Annapolis in 1764, was well known to Shaw and Chisholm. He conceived the idea of composing a panoramic view of the city by drawing each aspect from the octagonal State House tower, and then making a larger print of the whole (see figs. 5 & 6). In his diary, Peale notes that he was making a machine for taking perspective views at "Mr. Shaw's Shop" for five days whereupon he abandoned the project for a fresh start which he soon completed.<sup>37</sup> The result was a round print with the elevation of the State House in the center. In the notice of the dissolution of their firm



Fig. 4. Reynolds Tavern, Annapolis, ca. 1747. In the early nineteenth century, the entrance porch was added. John Shaw was the carpenter "undertaker." It is remarkably similar in design to the original porch of the Brookby-Shaw House shown in fig. 3. (Photograph © M. E. Warren, Annapolis)

in the *Maryland Gazette* of November 14, 1776, Chisholm stated that his business would be carried on in the Church Street house lately occupied by Peale.

In 1784 John Shaw had been commissioned by his former commanding officer, General William Smallwood, to make a table, for which he was paid £9.19.3.<sup>38</sup> Smallwood, upon finishing his term as governor, had returned to his home in Charles County. Shaw later wrote to Smallwood, describing the progress of additional cabinetwork he ordered for his plantation:

The Chairs you Sent to be repair<sup>d</sup> has been done Ever Since the Second week after they came here. I Saw Lazar the packet man Some time ago who promised to call for them the first time he was going to Potowmack but has not don[e] it yet—your Sideboard table is done all but the top, for which I have Sent to Philadelphia for the Best peice of mahogany that can be got to make it of. I Shall be glad you would Send to the glass man about the bottles as I Expect to finish the table very Soon. I Shall Esteem it as a particular favour if will be So kind as to Send up the ballance of your Account....<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting to note that Shaw had to send to Philadelphia for an especially fine piece of wood, and that completion of the sideboard may have depended on learning the size of the glass decanter from a supplier.

Documentary evidence indicates the volume of work Shaw continued to do for the State in the last two decades of the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century. In 1785 he supplied a table with drawer and lock while at the same time Chisholm made a "Book Case & Desk" for the Intendant's Office.<sup>40</sup> Shaw also produced two tables and a press for the House of Delegates in 1785, and in 1786 two pine tables for the committee rooms and a number of mahogany rulers.<sup>41</sup> In 1788 he was paid for "putting up Seats" in the House of Delegates Chamber.<sup>42</sup> Evidently Shaw also rented temporary furnishings for this room when they were needed. In 1791, for example, the Council directed Shaw "to make such repairs to the windows and fire places in the house of Delegates as are necessary and to procure tables, benches, curtains to two windows, coverings for the tables, and one and a half doz tin Sconces, and to take the same into his possession at the end of the Session."<sup>43</sup>

Notices in the *Maryland Gazette* for May 3, 1792, invited bids on contracts for the completion of State House construction. The contract for carpentry was awarded to William Gilmor and John Shaw, and the plasterwork to Thomas Dance.<sup>44</sup> When Dance was killed shortly after receiving the contract, Shaw apparently took over both phases of construction under the supervision of one Joseph Clarke. The specifications for the carpentry that seem to be in Shaw's hand suggest his range of skills and a thorough knowledge of architecture. Shaw employed a number of men to carry out the work and charged a ten percent commission for his management.<sup>45</sup>

In 1794 Shaw submitted a careful estimate of the repairs needed inside the State House, which included constructing a circular balustrade behind the seats in the Senate Chamber, "New Covering the presidants Chair & 18 arm Do" and "A Crimson Curtain for the Pres<sup>d</sup>

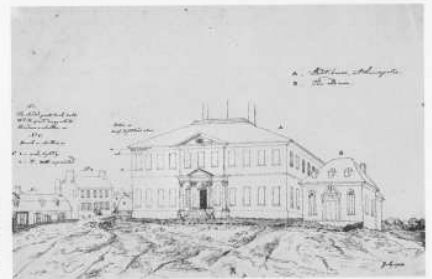


Fig. 5. Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827). Perspective Drawing of the State House, 1788. Pen and ink, 7 1/4 x 11 1/2 in. Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis. Gift of William Voss Elder III (MdHR G1051). The houses on the left face State Circle. John Shaw's house appears on the far left (N. 1).



Fig. 6. Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827). Perspective Drawing of the State House Dome, 1788. Pen and ink, 7 1/4 x 12 1/2 in. Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis. Gift of William Voss Elder III (MdHR G1051).

Desk," repairing chairs, and providing benches on one side of the room, in the House of Delegates, "new Covering the Speakers Chair with Crimson moreen & Brass nails," a curtain for the Speaker's desk, "Taking down the Desks taking up the Carpet," and "repairing the Desks & fixing them up again."<sup>46</sup> The terms of his estimate suggest that there was old furniture in both chambers at the time which Shaw was to rejuvenate.

Then on May 20, 1796, Shaw was commissioned "to make for the use of the Executive in the Council Room Six arm Chairs of Mahogany with stuffed Bottoms covered with crimson Moriens," and again in December of that year "twenty four handsome commodious chairs to



Fig. 7. Detail from the Dennis Griffith Map of the State of Maryland, 1794. Maryland State Law Library. John Shaw advertised the sale of these maps in 1796.



Fig. 8. Copy of bill from John Shaw to the State of Maryland, dated August 1, 1796. Maryland State Papers, Series Z, Scharf Papers, Box No. 80, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, Item No. 27.

be made for the accomodation of the Senate, amongst which shall be a presidential chair. . . .<sup>187</sup> Subsequently, he received payment of £34.10.0 for "6 mahogany Chairs with arms the feet Inlaid the backs Ornamented & the bottoms Covered with Crimson Moreen & 2 rows of Brass nails"<sup>188</sup> in February 1797 (see fig. 8), and in November of the same year he was paid for "24 Mahogany arm chairs, 10 Mahogany Desks for the use of the Senate & 1 neat Mahogany d<sup>r</sup> for the president. . . ."<sup>189</sup> Shaw's work for the State House in 1796 also included repairs to the Chancery Office, including new feet for the chairs, hinges, banisters, glass, scantling and planks, as well as new blinds and carpet in the Senate Chamber.<sup>190</sup>

In 1798 the Governor and Council employed Shaw to produce a plan for the accomodation of the representatives to the House of Delegates, but members felt the room was too small to warrant an elaborate plan. Another plan, submitted by the Council in June 1798, called for furnishing the room with circular tables and as many Windsor chairs as needed to seat the members of the House, to be arranged as in the United States House of Representatives.<sup>191</sup> However, it was not until 1807 that the room received permanent furniture.<sup>192</sup>

Shaw again repaired seats in the House of Delegates in 1803 and was in charge of "fitting up" the room in which the Court of Appeals held its sessions in 1808.<sup>193</sup> He was paid for repairs and sundries supplied to the Land Office in August 1811, including a press with three doors, and was still working for the State in 1816 when he made a bookcase for the Orphans Court.<sup>194</sup>

Shaw remained active as a retailer of items other than furniture, advertising in addition to sundry dry goods and foodstuffs "a few LOOKING GLASSES, in gilt and mahogany frames, TEA CADDIES, MAHOGANY KNIFE CASES, BACK-GAMMON TABLES, and a well toned PIANO-FORTE" (*Maryland Gazette*, January 2, 1794). In March of 1798 (*Maryland Gazette*, March 31) he had for sale Griffith's map of Maryland (see fig. 7) and later that year had "A PRINT OF LIBERTY" on display at his cabinetmaking shop (*Maryland Gazette*, November 24, 1796). In the August 7, 1800 edition of the *Maryland Gazette* he was selling such various items as:

A FEW elegant prints of THOMAS JEFFERSON, Esq, vice-president of the United States, in handsome gilt frames, ditto the WASHINGTON FAMILY, dressing glasses, tea caddies, portable writing desks, gentlemen's chests of tools, plate baskets lined with tin, house bells, chamber lamps, with wicks for burning in the night, gilt oval frames for pictures, boxes of paints for drawing, black lead and camel hair pencils, files, billiard tacks, wood saws, wire fenders, maps of Maryland, and a variety of house hold furniture.

Undertaking had long been a traditional sideline of cabinetmakers, and Shaw continued to serve the community in this capacity after the Revolution, providing coffins and the appropriate accoutrements for mourning. For one bereaved family, he furnished a coffin lined with black cloth and shrouded, a case for it, the use of a pall and hearse, a shroud, black hatbands, the fee for the sexton, and the funeral itself.<sup>195</sup> One Annapolitan, Benjamin Ogle, in a letter to his son in December 1807, made his last request for "Shaw to put me in the ground in the most private manner. . . ."<sup>196</sup>

In addition to his post as Armorer, Shaw had held many other public offices, including that of official fire engine keeper of Annapolis. He served as a city councilman from 1801 to 1812, as a city commissioner in 1803, and was elected to the legislature in 1806.<sup>56</sup> He was often called upon to serve as juror in the years between 1787 and 1805. He was also a member of the vestry of St. Anne's Church as well as church warden, an elective post, in 1797, 1804, and again from 1811 to 1814.<sup>57</sup> In the introduction to his son John's book of poetry, the elder Shaw is characterized as "a respectable gentleman."<sup>58</sup> Certainly he was an important member of the community, as his obituary in the *Maryland Gazette* of March 5, 1829, made clear, calling him

one of the oldest and most respectable inhabitants of this city, but, until disqualified for active life by age, and its concomitant infirmities, was one of the most useful of them. In the gallant and arduous struggle for our independence, he espoused the cause of freedom, and filled the then truly responsible and difficult station of armorer to the state. In that office he acquitted himself completely to the satisfaction of the public, as was shewn by his having been continued in it many years after that struggle had successfully terminated. He was gifted by nature with strength, as well as fortitude of mind, and possessed a degree of self-control which rarely permitted the calmness of temper, for which he was remarkable, to be disturbed. Thus happily constituted, he pursued his way, content in the conscious rectitude of his heart, and the just aim of his actions. Notwithstanding his earthly existence had been protracted, by Divine Providence, to a term beyond that allotted to most men, his whole conduct remained free from reproach, and he descended into the grave, survived by a fair and unblemished reputation, and in peace with the human family. He was not afraid to die!—A life characterised by industry, temperance, strict integrity, and punctual attention to religious duty, had stripped death of its terrors, and prepared him for that awful event. To conclude—he was a good man, who lived sincerely beloved by his family, and deservedly esteemed by his fellow-citizens; and has, we trust, passed from this world of care, to partake of the joys promised to the righteous.

Shaw was married to Elizabeth Wellstead Pratt on July 20, 1777.<sup>59</sup> Four of their five sons attended St. John's College in Annapolis.<sup>60</sup> The eldest, John, studied medicine and became a surgeon at the Medical College in Baltimore. He died while on a voyage to the Bahamas in 1809.<sup>61</sup> After college, Thomas, one of Shaw's most enterprising and successful children, became a retail merchant on Church Street where he stocked a great variety of goods and, as had his father before him, supplied sundry items to the State, before moving to Frederick County. Little is known of James, who died in 1830, other than that his father left him property on Doctor Street. Another son, William, died as a child.

The youngest son, George, carried on the Shaw cabinet shop. He worked with his father until venturing into the bookbinding trade for a period between 1814 and 1817. After that he worked with William Worthington as a cabinetmaker until 1829 when he briefly assumed control of his father's shop and Worthington moved to Georgetown. Shaw bequeathed to George the family house, providing he paid his siblings a "reasonable" annual rent, and the "use of the Store House he now Occupies together with the warehouse and book binders room"

November 14 1776  
 THESE partnerships of SHAW and CLIBBON, cabinet-makers in Annapolis, being now dissolved, those persons who are indebted to them in company are requested to settle the same, in full as aforesaid, with JOHN SHAW, at the house lately occupied by the company, or with ARMSFIELD CLIBBON, at the house lately occupied by Mr. Charles Price, in Church-street, where each of our justly carrying on their business at cabinet and shoe making as formerly.

Fig. 9. Advertisement, *Maryland Gazette*, November 14, 1776. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore

with the proviso "that he pay a rent of one hundred Dollars annually to my other children for the Same." George was also to receive, in addition to his one-fifth share of the estate, "my mahogany book case which was made many years ago by myself provided he gives in exchange to my Son in law Thomas Franklin the Book case now used by the Said George and now in his possession."<sup>62</sup> With George's death just two months after his father's, control of the family business passed to Franklin.

Shaw's daughter Elizabeth had married Thomas Franklin in 1818.<sup>63</sup> After his father-in-law's death, he bought out the interest of the remaining sons in the estate. Elizabeth inherited a Negro woman and one-fifth interest in the property. To his older daughter, Mary, who had never married and apparently resided with her father until his death, Shaw had inscribed the family Bible: *John Shaw to his affectionate daughter Mary Shaw August 2<sup>d</sup> 1827*. She in turn bequeathed it to her Franklin nephews.<sup>64</sup> She was also left one-fifth of the estate, two Negro servants, and "the Bedstead and bedding complete and all the furniture generally used in her room."<sup>65</sup> After the courts declared her mentally incompetent in 1831, Thomas Franklin became guardian of her person and property.<sup>66</sup> A mahogany Pembroke table bearing the inscription *Mary Shaw's Table* is the only surviving piece of furniture from the Shaw household discovered to date.

By his second wife, Margaret Stuart, whom he married in 1798 after the death of Elizabeth Pratt Shaw in 1793, Shaw had a daughter, Jane. Margaret Shaw died on July 5, 1806, and Shaw died on February 26, 1829, at eighty-four, an esteemed and highly respectable gentleman and one of the finest American cabinetmakers of his day.<sup>67</sup>

LU BARTLETT

- Edward C. Papenfuss, *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1801* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 16.
- Papenfuss, p. 35.
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60. St. John's Matriculation Book, 1789-1860, Hall of Records, Annapolis. This book is on microfilm, M 128-133, at St. John's College, Annapolis.
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62. See John Shaw's Will in the Appendix of this catalogue.
63. Shaw Family Bible.
64. Shaw Family Bible.
65. See John Shaw's Will.
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67. Shaw Family Bible.

## Cabinetmaking in Shaw's Annapolis

In Annapolis as elsewhere in America during the eighteenth century, the apprenticeship system served as the major vehicle for the transmission of technical skills among craftsmen with the result that regional designs and forms were perpetuated and construction techniques shared.

The Orphans Court in Annapolis was in charge of all indentures in Maryland before 1786 when an "Act Respecting Apprentices," passed by the General Assembly, empowered the county courts to administer the apprenticeship of orphans as a means for their support and education. According to the same act, a parent could bind out his own child on reasonable terms, for any time not longer than his minority.<sup>1</sup> In Maryland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more apprentices were bound out to craftsmen than to any other occupation.

Apprenticeship entailed a formal contract to exchange work for education, goods, and clothing. A master taught the apprentice a trade such as cabinetmaking, and while providing him with lodging, sustenance, and basic education, expected that he would reciprocate by preserving the master's trade secrets, safeguarding his property, and by leading a moral life. However, as the many complaints filed with the courts regarding runaways testify, apprentices were not always reliable. For example, John Shaw, Archibald Chisholm, and Gilbert Middleton advertised in the *Maryland Gazette* on June 20, 1776, for three runaway apprentices: Richard Carrington, John Ferguson, and Henry Pratt (see fig. 10).

In addition to advertisements, court records provide what other little information we have on the apprentices of John Shaw. Alexander Ramsburg was bound February 11, 1778, as an apprentice to Shaw "to be brought up to the business and to be taught the Trade of Cabinet making also to cause him to be taught to read and write, and to learn to Cypher as far as the Rule of three, and also to pay him Six pounds Currency at the Expiration of his time of Servitude. . . ." When she was a child of nine, Jane Lewis was bound to Shaw as a seamstress for a period of sixteen years. Others known to have been in his service include William Thomas Ross, apprenticed in 1784, who later became a chair and cabinetmaker in his own shop on Church Street.<sup>2</sup>

Washington Tuck was bound to Shaw in 1798 "to be taught the Trade of a Cabinet Maker and Joiner," Shaw agreeing "to find him in