



Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates

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Virginia Decorative Arts Seminars

2015: *Decorative Embellishments: Cultural Expressions of the Shenandoah Valley*

As in previous years, our fifth annual one-day colloquium was held in our facility on Saturday, June 13, 2015.

Our event was a study of embellishments and decorations found in the Shenandoah Valley featuring scholars and craftsmen lecturing and demonstrating furniture carving and inlay, pottery decoration, folk art painting, and metalwork. Our guest speakers were Daniel Ackerman, Jeffrey S. Evans, David Ray Pine, Kurt C. Russ, Jim Sheppard and Mark Thomas.



A rendition of a surveying compass owned by the Augusta County Historical Society. Image courtesy of craftsman/silversmith Mark Thomas.

Program Agenda

9:15 AM	Greetings / Introductions
9:30 AM	Daniel Ackermann: <i>"Brimstone Hearts and Wooden Flowers: The Inlaid and Carved Furniture of the Shenandoah Valley"</i>
10:15 AM	Mark Thomas: <i>"Embellishment of wood, metal and other materials"</i>
11:00 AM	~~~ BREAK ~~~
11:15 AM	David Ray Pine: <i>"Carving in the Shenandoah Valley: Joined Trades, Shared Designs, Blended Techniques"</i>
12:00 PM	~~~ LUNCH ~~~
1:00 PM	Jim Sheppard: <i>"Introduction to the Craft of Punched Tin"</i>
1:30 PM	Jeff Evans: <i>"Painted and Drawn Folk Art: An Examination of boxes, chairs, chests, and fraktur"</i>
2:15 PM	~~~ BREAK ~~~



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2:30 PM	Kurt Russ: <i>"Exploring Thematic Cultural Expressions in Shared Decorative Motifs on Punched-Tin Paneled Food Safes and Stoneware Pottery From Virginia"</i>
3:30 PM	Closing Comments / Questions
4:00 PM	End of Program

Speaker Bios

Daniel Ackermann

Daniel Kurt Ackermann is associate curator at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts at Old Salem Museums & Gardens. Prior to joining the staff at MESDA he was the Tiffany & Co. Foundation Curatorial Intern in American Decorative Arts in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He is the American secretary for the Regional Furniture Society of Great Britain. Daniel has written often for *The Magazine ANTIQUES* and *Antiques and Fine Arts* and curated a wide range of exhibits at MESDA including *"Black and White all Mix'd Together": The Hidden Legacy of Enslaved Craftsmen and Our Spirited Ancestors: The Decorative Art of Drink*.

Daniel holds degrees from the College of William and Mary, the University of Virginia, and is a PhD Candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jeffrey S. Evans

President of Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates, Inc. (2009 to present) and former president of Green Valley Auctions, Inc. (1979-2008)

Jeff Evans is a respected expert and collector of early American glass and Shenandoah Valley decorative arts who has lectured and written extensively within the fields. He has acted as appraiser and consultant for multiple institutions and museums including the Corning Museum of Glass and MESDA and has served as guest curator on several museum exhibits. In November 2004 Jeff had the unique privilege of selling the now famous Johannes Spittler decorated hanging cupboard at public auction. An extraordinary example of Shenandoah Valley of Virginia folk art, the piece achieved \$962,500, still the world record auction price for a piece of American folk art painted furniture.

Museum exhibits for which Jeff has served as guest curator include a collaboration with Dr. Scott Suter on Rockingham County, Virginia folk pottery (2004; HRHS), a display of 18th to 20th century Shenandoah Valley vernacular chairs that was the culmination of thirty years of personal research (2010; Museum of the Shenandoah Valley/MSV) and a partnership with wife Beverley on Shenandoah Valley counterpanes and white work textiles (2012; Virginia Quilt Museum/VGM). The related catalogues that Jeff authored (Valley chairs, textiles) and co-wrote (folk pottery) include analytic essays and are considered authoritative references on the respective subjects. For Jeff's most recent multi-year research project (2010-2014) he teamed with Kurt C. Russ to document Shenandoah Valley punched tin pie/food safes; their findings culminated in an MSV exhibition that opened on May 11, 2014 and runs through March 29, 2015. A fully-illustrated, comprehensive companion publication is currently in the works and will be released later this year.



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David Ray Pine

I worked in three different shops before establishing my own business in 1976. From this background I learned the basic skills involved in making repairs to broken furniture, joinery techniques, and also carving, inlay, and veneer work. All my training has been “on the job”, and ranged from furniture restoration, to building one of a kind pieces, to architectural millwork, to limited production. By being exposed to varied shop practices, I’ve learned that there is often more than one “right” way to solve a given construction problem.

The direction my business has taken has been determined partly by my personal inclinations and partly by the needs of my clientele. I enjoy the variety offered by custom work. This week, I’m carving; next week, dovetailing drawers. This client needs chairs; that one, conservation of a corner cabinet. By deliberately not gearing the shop toward any one product or series of operations, it is just as feasible to make the next piece different as to make it the same as the last one. After twenty-some years, though, the pattern wall is getting a little crowded!

Over the years, my work has been featured in many different publications, including Money Magazine (March 1983), Colonial Homes (December 1966), Rural Living (March /April 1998), and Fine Woodworking, to which I contributed several articles (Issues #59, 64, 77, 80), one of them (Issue #67) featured as the cover story. The “Home” section of the December 14, 2000 Washington Post has a photo of a few of the chairs I made for the VA Governor’s mansion.

As time has passed, the challenges for me have, interestingly, remained fairly constant: to continue to refine my skills, striving to make my furniture ever more accurately reflect period aesthetics and construction methods as revealed by modern scholarship, and to give my client something of lasting value.

Kurt C. Russ

Kurt C. Russ is currently the Executive Director of the Mountain Valley Preservation Alliance, Inc. having formerly served as director of Washington and Lee University’s Laboratory of Anthropology. After graduation from Washington and Lee University, Russ was awarded the year-long Liberty Hall Scholar fellowship. He subsequently completed his graduate work at the University of Tennessee where he received the prestigious Hilton A. Smith University fellowship. Russ, a historical archaeologist, has more than 30 years of experience in archeology, material culture/decorative arts research and historic preservation. He has directed excavations of historical potteries in Virginia as well as investigations of domestic farmsteads, early educational institutions, and iron mining and manufacturing sites. Under the auspices of his consulting firm, Virginia Heritage Resources Group, he has completed research and investigations for a variety of local, state and federal agencies. Bringing an anthropological perspective to his collecting interests in 19th-century Virginia decorative arts, Russ has served as guest curator for exhibits at the Virginia Historical Society, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts and the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. In addition to a prolific list of archaeologically-related publications, two of his most recent publications focus on Virginia ceramics and furniture. Published in **Ceramics in America**, “The Remarkable 19th-Century Stoneware of Virginia’s Lower James River Valley,” and coauthored with several colleagues, takes his research interest in Shenandoah Valley pottery to the James River Valley; while, an article in **American Furniture** with Jeffrey S. Evans details the identification of one of the earliest and most significant schools of safe furniture production in the Shenandoah Valley entitled, “The Kahle-Henson School of Punched-Tin Paneled Furniture from Lexington, Virginia, ca. 1819-1831.” Finally a book co-authored with Jeffrey S. Evans (Russ’s partner in The Virginia Safe Project) and growing out of the 2014-2015 *Safes of the Shenandoah Valley* exhibition at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley is to be published later this year.



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Jim Sheppard

Jim Sheppard lives in Weston, West Virginia with his wife Katy. Jim writes: "We have always been interested in history and old things. When we moved to Green Bank, West Virginia back in 1982 we purchased a pre-Civil War timber frame house that needed work. We soon became serious students of early houses and the items that filled them. We had an antiques shop for many years and in that time, I studied and pursued the early trades. I have dismantled and reassembled a number of log and timber frame houses and developed the skills of a country cabinet maker."

"The pie safe has always been my favorite piece of furniture. Many of the safes we purchased would need tins and therefore I developed a method of reproducing them. With faith in God and the help, support and sacrifice of my wife I have been able to arise many mornings declaring that I am going to work at what gives me the most pleasure today. Not many men can say that. I am truly blessed."

Mark Thomas

Mark Thomas is a resident of the Dayton, Va. area. A diverse artisan of 18th/19th c. objects made from wood, metals and assorted other materials. He has been a full time artisan for over 20 years with most of his focus in 18th c. colonial American arts. The stocking of a flintlock rifle in 1978 began his love for the time period in our country. Flintlock rifles spurred him to learn about the embellishments used on these weapons as well as other objects.. Continued research and the desire to excel in the manner of decorating objects led him to carve wood and hand- engrave metals. His yearning to learn has expanded his skill set to incorporate other materials, such as cow horn, bone, ivory, and even coconut shell.

Mark will demonstrate some of the ways to embellish objects, such as hand engraving, chase/repousse', scrimshaw, etc. There will be visual aids to help illustrate these skills with either antique or contemporary items.