

EXPLANATION

This dictionary developed out of a research project into the emergence of the antiques and curiosity trade in the opening decades of the nineteenth century.' It was never intended to be an absolutely inclusive survey, however, the body of entries in this volume does represent almost all of the significant dealers who were active between 1800 and 1900. It is hoped that *the Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Antique and Curiosity Dealers* will provide essential and useful information for researchers, curators, historians, collectors and of course the trade itself.

The dealer entries range in length from a few lines to over 2,000 words. The text contains over 600 individual biographies and as the information indicates, the vast majority of tradesmen and women were based in London (400) with the trade across the rest of the United Kingdom (85 dealer entries) being significantly smaller, indicating its slower development during the course of the second half of the nineteenth century. The relationship between the British trade and that of the nearby Continent was a lively one throughout the whole of the period and the *Dictionary* includes the most important dealers operating in Europe (125 entries). The relationship between the trade in Britain and the USA in the nineteenth century is less apparent in the dictionary (6 entries) and there is certainly further research to be done here. But it is evident that the commerce between Britain and the USA in antiques and curiosities, whilst expanding rapidly from small beginnings during the last decade of the nineteenth century, was perhaps more properly a twentieth century phenomenon. The *Dictionary* concentrates on the British and European trade, but this does not imply a lack of activity in the former British Colonies. It is significant that research for the *Dictionary* has uncovered at least one 'curiosity dealer' in Australia trading during the second half of the nineteenth century and contemporary literature hints at a general business that was established soon after 1800. The presence of George Rice trading as a 'curiosity dealer' at 232 George Street, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, in 1867 offers a tantalising glimpse of an intercontinental trade that must indeed have included 'curious' objects.

By the last decades of the nineteenth century the trade included many hundreds of participants and only the most well known dealers or those operating from significant locations, or those involved in high-profile transactions during the period 1890–1900, are included in the *Dictionary*.

This *Dictionary* focuses on traders classified as 'Curiosity Dealer' and related occupations such as 'Ancient Furniture Dealer', 'Antique Furniture Dealer', 'Antique China Dealer', 'Antique Dealer' and other permutations. These descriptions are predominantly those found in Trade and Post Office Directories of the time. However, it is clear that the antiques and curiosity business included many other overlapping practices and participants. Indeed, entries in the *Dictionary* comprise some conjunctions peculiar to the modern eye, such as 'Tea Dealer and Curiosity Dealer' (Shankey), 'India Shawl Warehouse and Curiosity Dealer' (Owen), 'Mattress maker and Curiosity Dealer' (Fenteman), 'Straw hat maker and curiosity dealer' (Cuff), as well as less surprisingly related practices such as 'Clothes Dealer and Curiosity Dealer' (Abrahams), 'Bookseller, Picture Dealer and Curiosity Dealer' (Dear) and a host of outfits associated with furniture making and retailing.

Besides the directory sources, the *Dictionary* has relied on archive material, contemporary newspaper reports, journals and books, as well as more recently published information that has emerged from the work of scholars on the history of collecting such as Clive Wainwright, in order to expand the picture of the trade as it evolved across the era. Much of the information on dealers operating during the first half of the nineteenth century was gleaned from a large corpus of archive material relating to the antique and curiosity dealer John Coleman Isaac (c.1803–1887).² As his biographical entry indicates, Isaac was an influential and well-known dealer trading from various addresses in London during the period c.1823 until c.1868. The Isaac archive covers the period from c.1815 up to the mid 1860s and whilst it is not a complete record of a dealer's activities, it does consist of a substantial body of business and private correspondence, comprising some 500 letters, as well as other business ephemera.³ Part of the archive relates to the initial curiosity business operated by Gabriel Davies (c.1760–1838) and his son and daughter, Henry Abraham Davies (died 1822) and Sarah Davies (died 1875), who were trading between c.1810 and c.1823. The substantial portion of the archive relates to the business as it was continued by John Coleman Isaac after his marriage to Sarah, (née Davies), whom he married in late 1824 or early 1825 and up to the retirement of Isaac from the trade in 1868. The archive is rich in material concerning the operation of an antique and curiosity business during the first half of the nineteenth century and includes correspondence with other dealers as well as a number of letters from many well known nineteenth-century collectors. The documents include a photographed copy of a 'waste book'⁴ detailing the transactions of the Davies and Isaac family businesses and together with the corpus of letters provides a unique insight into the life and work of a significant early nineteenth-century antique and curiosity dealer. Other archive material containing information on dealers is dispersed amongst muniments throughout the UK and the USA and provided further evidence of and information on dealer activities and practices.

The dictionary entries themselves conform to a fairly consistent format:

1. Information on dealer trade classifications and addresses.
2. Information on dealer relationships with significant collectors and with other dealers, including information on any significant objects that the dealer sold and their present location (if known).
3. Information on dealer activities at some of the most significant auction sales of the nineteenth century, including Strawberry Hill (1842); Stowe (1848); the Bernal Collection (1855); Hamilton Palace (1882); and the Fountaine Collection (1884).
4. Information on dealer activities at some of the most significant exhibitions of the nineteenth century, including those at Marlborough House (1852) and Gore House (1853); Manchester (1857); South Kensington (1862); and at Leeds (1868).
5. Information on dealer family history and supplementary information.