

A LABELLED SIDE TABLE OR WASHSTAND FROM NORWICH

This small table, measuring 36" x 18" and 28" high is primarily made from solid mahogany except for the sides and front apron which are constructed of soft wood veneered with mahogany. Below and above the drawers at the front, the softwood is faced with 3/8" thick strips of mahogany. The top, but not the drawers, has a curved front and the finish appears to be original. The label (fig.14) is pasted under the drawer and reads;

From
M.A. Norris
Upholsterer & Cabinet Maker
30
Charing Cross
Norwich

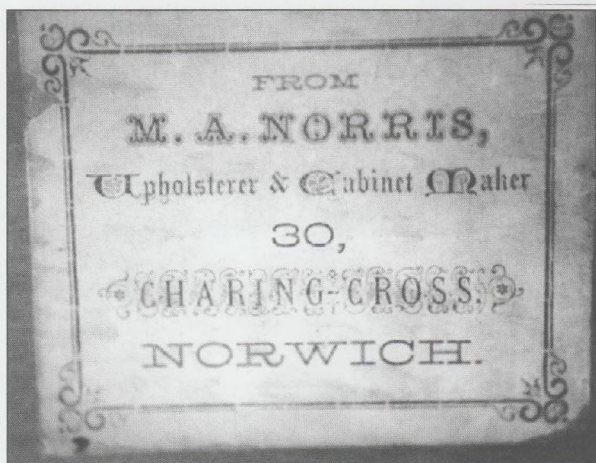


Fig.14 Label from underneath the drawer

The label refers to Mary Ann Norris who advertised as a cabinet maker of Charing Cross, Norwich, in a trade directory dated 1863. It is likely she was advertising as a widow. Her husband, James Norris, is recorded in Blyth's Directory of 1842 as a Cabinet Maker, who also worked as an upholsterer at 18, Charing Cross, Norwich. In Hunt's Directory of 1850, James is shown as a Cabinet Maker at 30 Charing Cross, with the extra information that he did upholstery, paper hanging and was a furniture broker.

This earlier reference suggests that the firm run by James' widow (M.A. Norris) continued as furniture brokers rather than makers in this latter period.

The 1850 reference also gives an additional address for James at Elm Hill that could link him with others of his surname who are recorded as working there and who may have been relatives. It is likely that he is the James Norris referred to in Gilbert & Beard's Dictionary of English Furniture Makers under the listing of his father John Norris Snr, who worked at Elm Hill Norwich, after 1830. This James is recorded in the D.E.F.M. as one of four sons of John Snr who became cabinet makers in Norwich. He became free of appren-

ticeship in 1826. The Dictionary records James as the grandson of Thomas Norris, cabinet maker of Norwich and great grandson of John Norris, a joiner. James has a directory listing at Charing Cross in 1854 and it is likely that he died between 1854 and 1863, assuming the dates are accurate.

Producing pedigrees without consulting parish registers is a speculative matter but it does look as though James' forebears had been in the furniture-making and woodwork trade in Norfolk for a considerable time.

James & Mary Ann Norris' family group is recorded in the 1851 census of Norwich when they were 45 and 40 years old respectively. They were not living above the shop; rather in some prosperity at Westwick Street. Their household consisted of 12 with 4 sons, 3 daughters, and a governess for the 4 youngest children and 2 servants. The parents' and children's birthplaces are all listed as Norwich.

By 1881, when another census was taken, Mary Ann had retired and is described as a widow and pensioner, living at 16, Newmarket Road, where her son Samuel, aged 39, was also residing on census night, and was recorded as a cabinet-maker. It would be interesting to discover whether Samuel was a 4th generation cabinet-maker and what happened to the business after Mary Ann retired?

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Phil Holland



Fig.15 Labelled side-table or washstand