



Victorian Furniture

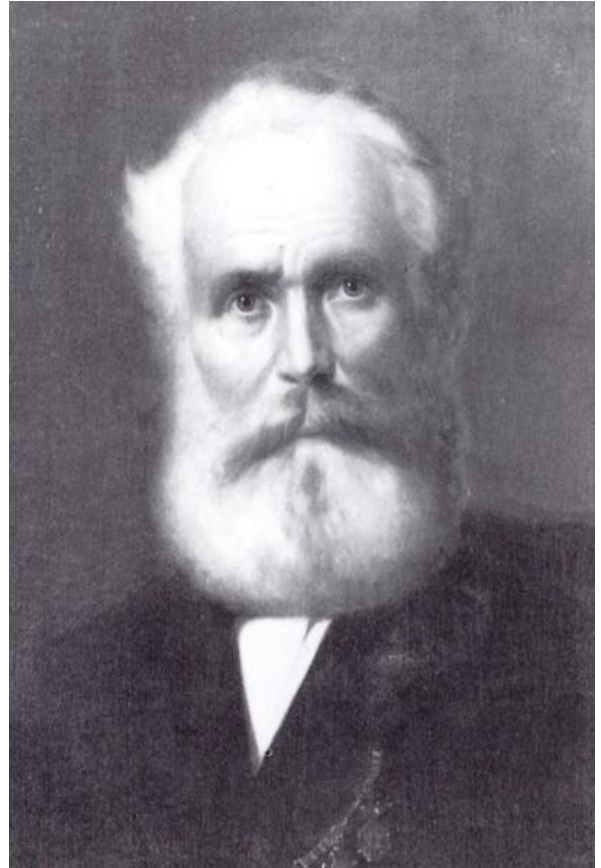
1830-1901

19th Century

Michael Thonet
(1796-1871)

Michael Thonet (1796 - 1871)

- Michael Thonet was born in 1796 in a town called Boppard, in Germany. He was the son of a master tanner, Franz Thonet.
- Thonet did not follow his father's business instead he decided to become a furniture maker.
- He got an apprenticeship in cabinet making and in 1819 he set up his own premises and established himself as an independent cabinet maker.



The Early Years

- Initially he specialised in creating geometric mosaic patterns in wood, also known as parquetry.
- It wasn't until the 1930's that he decided to start experimenting with bentwood furniture.
- His first success was in 1836 with the Bopparder Schichtholzstuhl (The Boppard Layerwood chair).
- This chair was created by gluing strips of veneer into position using formers.
- He bought the factory that produced the glue.
- He tried and failed to patent his technology in Germany, France, Russia and Britain.



Bentwood Furniture

- Thonet tried something different. He used strong lightweight timber and hot steam he was able to form curved furniture.
- This furniture was very different to the heavy carved furniture that was around at the time.
- He developed a technique by which solid lengths of beech could be softened by boiling or steaming & bent into frames.
- Thonet patented his process (13 years) in 1841 and set up business in Vienna in 1842.
- In 1850 he designed and made his famous “Nr 1 chair” which he showcased along with his “Vienna chairs” at the London fair in 1851 and received a bronze medal.



Bentwood Furniture

- He developed his designs until they could be mass produced.
- The Vienna Chair No. 14 comprises only six parts.
- After he exhibited his chairs at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 and was so successful that he opened a London Factory.



Chair No 14 packed ready for shipping

Bentwood Furniture

- In 1870 he was turning out 1,200 daily.
- By 1871 his company Gebruder Thonet was the largest furniture-maker in the world.
- They were producing in excess of 400,000 pieces of furniture annually. This was unheard of anywhere at this time.
- Rocker chair No. 64, moulded Chair made from one continuous piece of Plywood.

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/94974>



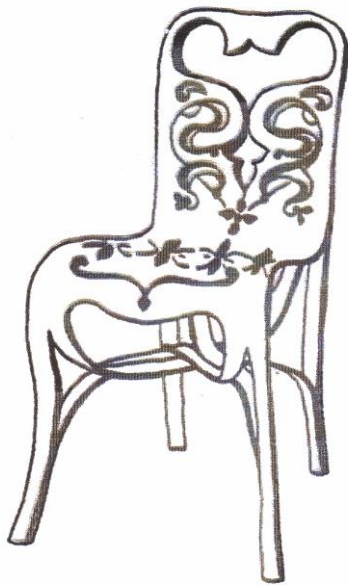
Thonet Chairs



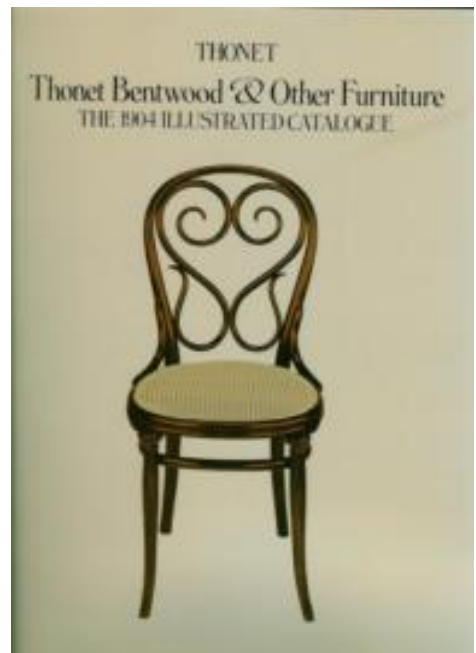
Chair No. 14



Rocker No. 64



Moulded Chair



Thonet's Book

Thonet furniture on Display



No.14 chair exhibited at MOMA of New York and at Vitra Museum in Germany_
Photo:www.didatticarte.it

Image showing Thonet's chairs on display in

MOMA of New York