Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

Georgian Travelling Box

Sold

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REF: 7804

Height: 26.5 cm (10.4")

Width: 58.5 cm (23")

Depth: 30 cm (11.8")

Description

This mahogany box is outstanding in almost every way.

The design, the choice of woods and the cabinet making are all very strong. When closed it looks like a simple Georgian box with a fall front and brass carrying handles to the sides. The fall is hinged with a two fold action to double its depth and so the writing surface. This is decorated with a banding of satinwood sandwiched between two bands of tulipwood. The interior is a bank of eight drawers all numbered in pencil to their underside by the cabinet maker. They are faced with satinwood with an edge of boxwood and double lined in mahogany. The top of the inner lining is finished with a rounded tulipwood mould and the knobs are turned ivory. The left hand drawer of the middle row is the only one with a lock which is a sprung catch operated by moving the knob downwards. The drawer dividing boards are also faced with a rounded moulding of tulipwood. The two shorter drawers to the top row and the left hand drawer to the bottom row are all plain. The other five are all fitted to a greater or lesser degree. The right hand drawer to the bottom row is fitted to the front to take two inkwells, which sit on leather pads, with a pen tray in between. The short drawer above has three removable dividers to give four compartments. The middle drawer to this middle row is lined in red leather and was presumably for toiletries. The lockable drawer to its left has a thin inner tray for papers with different sized divided compartments below. The middle drawer to the top row looks like it also originally had a removable tray which would have sat above the lidded compartment to the front and plain back section.

This box would have been very attractive to a potential thief and so has a bolt on either side to screw it to the floor of an inn or ship etc. whilst travelling. The lock to the fall has four levers for strength but even if the thief managed to force it open he wouldn't easily discover the bolts to allow him to steal the whole box. They are reached only by removing the bank of drawers which also have two simple, hidden locks which need to be found before it can be pulled out. When the two short drawers to the sides of the top row are opened a locking slide bar can be felt to the underside of the bank's carcass. These lock the bank of drawers to the box case. With the bank of drawers removed a well, for storing valuables or secret papers can be seen to the bottom of the box. Added to this the inside of the back of the box has a net of ribbons to hold papers. With the bank removed the underside of the top of the box can be accessed. To each side there is a lockable sliding mechanism to push out a section of the moulded outside edge of the box. When these are pushed out they reveal the triangular top of the screw bolts which can then be screwed in or out to fix or remove the box.

We have seen one other box similar to this, eight years ago. It had a few small differences but must have come out of the same workshop. We believe both to be rare and exceptional boxes of fine quality. Early 19th century.

Size closed is given.

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