Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

Portable Drawers To Form A Sideboard

Sold

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REF: 83409

Height: 126.95 cm (50")

Width: 202.49 cm (79.7")

Depth: 54.59 cm (21.5")

Description

A walnut Secretaire Campaign Chest with packing cases to form a Sideboard.

When used at its full length, this is an impressive piece of campaign furniture at over 6 1/2 foot. It can also be used as three separate pieces: a chest of drawers and two pedestal cupboards. The two pedestals are the packing cases for the chest during travel but at camp would be bolted to either side of the chest. As they are deeper than the chest (to allow it to be packed inside), the chest and cupboards are lined up to the front which leaves a space to the back of the chest. A hinged board, with slide bolts that lock to the cupboard sides and lugs that locate to the back of the chest, fills this space. A shaped cresting rail, hinged to three places, is fixed to the back to unite the three parts.

This Sideboard Campaign Chest stands out for two reasons: it has figured walnut to the front and straight grain walnut to the chest sides and it has a short secretaire drawer. Normally these Sideboard Chests are mahogany, and the drawers are plain. Figured walnut with a secretaire would have been, and still is, the smartest version you could buy. The secretaire has one long and two short drawers with a pair of pigeonholes. At some stage, two tin drawers have been made to fit these pigeon holes. The secretaire drawer still has its retainer board to prevent the internal drawers moving during transport and has a Bramah lock with key. All the other drawers have ash linings with quadrants and locks that work with the same key. The cupboards also have their own key. The straight grain walnut between the drawers, and other places, have original paint work to simulate the figured walnut.

The chest and cupboards all have removable feet on wooden threads and the knob handles to the cupboards also unscrew. The cupboards only have show wood to their doors with the rest painted pine or deal. Originally, they would each have had two linen slide drawers, long since gone. They would also have had painted pine or deal boards that would bolt onto the front of the doors to protect them. The tin strips that would also protect the cupboard edges have, at some point, been removed.

A few different makers offered this version of the Campaign Chest. J.W. & T. Allen offered a Portable Mahogany Drawers to form a Sideboard at £ 14 in their January 1855 catalogue. They noted that the packing case cupboards could also be used to form a separate sideboard with a Dressing Table or washstand to the centre. In 1883, the Army & Navy CSL's catalogue described it as a 'Portable Mahogany Sideboard Drawers … forming a complete wardrobe' and priced it at £ 13 10s. More money could be spent to supply screw in legs on castors to turn one of the protective cupboard boards into a table. Both cupboard boards could also be united to form the top of a large table with a mahogany pillar and claw tripod base.

It's not known if the father James or the son Elliot bought this Sideboard Chest. Its date could fit in with either of them and it's entirely possible that James bought it for his army service and then Elliot later used it in South Africa although unlikely that he used it in the Great War. More often than not these chests are separated from...

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