Allen's Patent Despatch-Box Desk

J.W. Allen

Sold



REF: 83146

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Height: 16.5 cm (6.5")

Width: 39.35 cm (15.5")

Depth: 27.93 cm (11")

Description

A red Russia leather on softwood portable desk by Allen.

To use Allen's description 'This is the most complete and convenient article of the kind yet produced. It contains Stationery and writing requisites, with spaces for papers, and is so arranged that any article is instantly accessible, without disarranging the remainder.' They sold it in six sizes from 13 to 18 inches in length and ranging from £ 6 6s to £ 9 9s in price and available in brown, red or green Russia leather or dark blue, green or maroon Morocco leather. They also noted that the desk had a Bramah lock, was fitted with 'articles of best quality' and had an 'Outside Leather Case'.

We would describe the slope today as a Three-Fold Desk as two sections fold out from the central well of the box. The top section opens through 180 degrees to rest on an angel for writing. The surface is dark blue leather and has J.W. Allen's logo to the top with address of 18 - 22 Strand, London with 'Registered No. 3027'. Underneath the writing surface is a compartment for papers with crossed ribbons to the back of the board.

The middle section has two porcelain panels for notes that can be used when it is closed. It opens to stand vertically on corner hinges with quadrant supports and has dividers to take different size papers and belts to hold the articles or tools that would be useful for writing etc. The top of this section is elegantly shaped to its sides to allow easy access to the stationery it holds and fit neatly against the middle section. The middle section has a removable desk tidy section with a Berry's Patent Inkwell and a Light Box separated by pen tray with dividers below.

The box shows lots of signs of use with a shrinkage split to the leather and dark water marks to the top. The leather has some scars and the odd missing patch. At some point the Bramah lock has been altered to work with a simpler key. Their design number 3027 for the box was registered on November 25th 1851 and described as Allen's Registered Dispatch Box in adverts of the date. Illustrations of the box continued to appear regularly in their promotional material with the descriptive name evolving. Their 1878 catalogue gave it a fuller title of 'New Despatch Box, or Travelling Writing Desk' despite the fact that they had been manufacturing it for 27 years. The design was obviously popular. Circa 1875.

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