



Naval Interest: Georgian Traveling Writing Box and Safe

Inventory Number :170-131

Size: 20 ins wide 11 ins deep (closed) 23 1/2 ins deep
(opened) 9 1/2 ins high

Exceptional is a description well overused by the antiques trade, but this piece is genuinely worthy of that description. It is a piece we have owned before which was placed in one of the great US collections of campaign and naval artifacts. When it once again became available we were proud to reacquire it.

A finely made piece of interesting design and very well chosen timbers clearly made by a very skilled craftsman. Although a relatively standard shape and design the traveling desk offers refinements that only the very wealthy could afford, and no expense was spared in its execution.

The carcass is solid mahogany of a thickness almost double the standard, indicating a requirement to be particularly secure.

The fall front, held with a four lever lock for added security, is hinged with a two fold action to extend the writing section and has the refinement of two recessed hinged supports to keep the surface horizontal. The writing surface is banded with satinwood and tulipwood and insert with a replacement green felt. Interestingly the section of the fall front touching the interior has small indentations to accommodate the original brass ax-head handles to the drawers ensuring a tight and seamless fit.

The whole of the interior surrounds and drawer facings is finished in satinwood with tulipwood molding and the eight interior drawers, some divided and one lined in red leather, each appears to have a specific function; maybe to store paper, ink and toiletries. One of the drawers has a spring loaded catch to deter entry, and the top two outer short drawers, when removed, reveal concealed bone slides to the top, which when repositioned allow the whole interior section to be removed.

On removal a "secret" vacant section can be accessed for the storage of valuables or important documents. Also, with the section removed, one can access, to the top of the box, an ingenious sliding mechanism that pushes out a dovetail section to both sides to reveal a bolting system running through the sides of the box to secure it to a wooden surface with the use of a unique triangular key.

It has been suggested that the purpose was to deter theft while traveling but it may well have had the added advantage of stabilizing the box in choppy seas on a voyage and could well have been commissioned for naval use.

When we first acquired this piece more than a decade ago in Scotland it was assumed to be a unique commission. However a second example with minor variations subsequently surfaced around 2010 at Christopher Clarke Antiques. No further examples are known as yet and it remains a rare and extraordinary

piece.

England or possibly Scotland, late 18th or Early 19th century, c. 1800

Provenance:

Private collection Scotland

With Michael Pashby Antiques by 2002

Howard Boote, Baltimore Maryland until 2017

For more information please contact us

Telephone [917 414 1827](tel:9174141827)

mpashby@michaelpashbyantiques.com

1235 Park Ave. New York, NY 10128

www.michaelpashbyantiques.com