Davenport by JW & T Allen

J.W. Allen

Sold

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REF: 80985

Height: 83 cm (32.7")

Width: 55 cm (21.7")

Depth: 56 cm (22")

Description

On first appearances this oak Davenport does not look like a campaign piece but the maker's name is a strong indication to its portability. Whereas the original concept of the Davenport, made by Gillows for the Captain it was named after, was to combine a small set of drawers with a writing slope that was pared down to its most basic shape for transport, this Allen version has been made to be fashionable to the day.

The consequence of this is a move away from the early box shape and the addition of barley twist columns. So, in order to make it portable, Allen built it to dismantle. The top desk section lifts off the drawers and the columns. The columns and the drawers can then be lifted off the base section. All of the parts fit to each other by wooden lugs in much the same way that a campaign chest typically fits together.

It is very likely that this Davenport originally had a packing case, fitted to take and protect each of the desk's component parts. As can be seen, when the leather writing board is pulled forward on its tongue and groove joints, a stationery rack to the back of the desk will lift up. A pen tray and desk tidy section is pivoted to the front of the rack so that it will always remain horizontal. The desk has dummy drawers to one side with proper drawers to the other. They are locked by a clever locking system that only allows them to be opened once the main, front drawer is opened. This drawer has a Bramah Patent lock which is also stamped Allen, London. The brass handles are Gothic Revival and again, fashionable to the day.

The leather desk skiver has a worn gilt tooled border and Allen's name to the top. JW & T Allen, Manufacturer, 18 & 22 Strand, London are written within a belt topped by a crown. This is certainly an unusual and interesting piece of campaign furniture by one of the foremost makers. Allen's change of addresses dates the Davenport to between 1849 and 1861. The scroll under the maker's label notes Registered May 20. 1853.

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