Early Mahogany Chest with Boards

Sold

Christopher Clarke Antiques
The Fosseway, Stow on the Wold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1JS
clarkeltd@btconnect.com • 01451 830 476 • www.campaignfurniture.com

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Height: 110.45 cm (43.5")

Width: 82.53 cm (32.5")

Depth: 48.25 cm (19")

Description

A mahogany Campaign Chest interesting for its part in the early development of the Packing Case Chest.

The chest is all made of mahogany including the secondary and unseen timber. On a later Packing Case Chest the show wood of mahogany or teak would normally only be used on the drawers and front of the chest, which is the area most seen. The carcass would be oak or painted pine dependent on its period.

The top and bottom boards of each section of this chest are set further forward than the drawers to overhang and allow for a mahogany board to be fitted. These two boards are cleated and have a pair of steel lugs to the bottom, to fit to corresponding holes to the chest, and a central lock to the top to fix them in place during transport.

The chest design has progressed from transitional campaign chests with the regular box shape of the two sections. This illustrates the understanding that overhanging mouldings, whilst fashionable, were not ideal when packing a wagon or ship and were more susceptible to damage. Some concession to decoration is given though with a deep, double cock bead cut to the top and bottom sides of each section and a single cock bead to the front edges. Likewise, the drawer edges are cut with a cock beading.

The drawers have brass skeletal campaign handles fixed with steel screws. A feature easily missed to the handles, shows the attention to detail that the cabinet maker put into this chest. The handles used to the top section have a fingernail cut out below the bail to make them easier to use. The handles to the drawers on the bottom section have fingernail cutouts to the top as you will be reaching down to use them. This is not something we have seen before and says a lot about the workshop this chest was made in.

The chest has been made with strength in mind. The cleats to the cover boards are fixed by three wide through tenons; the top and sides are rebated to each other with the join disguised by the cock beads, the secondary timber is mahogany rather than oak, ash or pine.

The two sections of the chest join together on four lugs to the bottom section. The chest has turned feet which would originally have been removable but are now fixed. All the drawers and the cover boards have keys.

It is not yet known how early campaign chests were packed; if the drawers were simple locked, if they were wrapped in an oilcloth or if they had packing cases etc. This chest shows the progression of the thought process by cabinet makers to secure and protect a chest during travel. It is very well made and gives another part of the jigsaw of the development of the domestic chest to what most people would recognise as a military chest today. Circa 1825.

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