Walnut Secretaire Campaign Chest

£7,850



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REF: 83984

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Height: 145.99 cm (57.5")

Width: 100.29 cm (39.5")

Depth: 48.88 cm (19.2")

Description

An extraordinary walnut veneered Packing Case Secretaire Campaign Chest.

To understand quickly how this low packing case turns into a military chest, it is best to watch the video to the left. Essentially, the outer packing case is made of boards that are hinged to the main body of the chest or each other so that they can turn into the cupboard section. A much fuller description of how this is done is below.

The chest has a hinged board that pulls out to become a writing area with a replaced green leather skiver. To the back of it is a low, tip up pen tray with a well below and a compartment to put an inkwell. The top half of the chest has ten short drawers with a small cupboard. Below the desk board is a single long drawer. The top of the chest is finished with a hinged cresting rail that lifts up.

The chest can be used with the desk both folded or unfolded. If folded, the unsightly gap below the two halves of the desk is fitted with a moulded bar that runs the width of the chest. Aside from the conception of this incredible design, the construction and detail is also worth noting. As there will naturally be a size difference to overcome with the packing boards being larger than the main body, hinged bars are used to adjust the size when converting to the chest. Chamfered edges are used to allow boards to fold at right angles against each other. Bolts are used to both secure the packing boards in place during travel and to fix the built piece of furniture. The small cupboard doors are panelled. It is not unusual for campaign chests to have an incised line cut to their edges to give a cockbeading; the drawers on this chest also have their edges rounded off to further lift the cockbeading. The workshop has gone the extra distance to make a stand out piece of furniture.

The chest was either made in England or an English workshop in a country such as Malta. It is such an unusual campaign chest, we have little to compare it to. The construction of the drawers point to an English hand and this is backed up by hinges by both Kenrick and John Sadler and a Secure Patent lock stamped VR with a crown being used. Either very few of this design were made or they didn't survive, as we have never seen another. The engineering of the design of this chest, that allows a secretaire with superstructure to all be packed within it, must have taken many hours at the drawing board and it would be surprising if only one was made. There are no features to the chest that we can tie to a specific maker and equally we do not know the owner. We have replaced the removable top board which was missing and, if owned by a soldier, its likely his name and regiment would have been painted on it.

This is an exceptional chest of a design we have never seen before and we would be surprised if we ever seen another. Circa 1880.

The packed size is Height 22 1/2 inches (57cm), W 41 1/4 inches (105cm) and Depth 20 inches (51cm).

Detailed Description of the Setup

To turn the black painted pine packing case into a walnut secretaire with cupboard below and banks of drawers above, the replaced cover board must first be removed. To do this, it is unlocked to the front, lifted up and then moved two inches to one sid...

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