A rare, large 8-10 seater, gateleg with an elaborate, turned, oak base and mahogany top, circa 1700

Sold

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REF: 10907

Height: 76 cm (29.9")

Width: 133 cm (52.4")

Depth: 61 cm (24")

Description

The thick, oval top is in three sections. The top may have been lifted from the base at some point as it appears to have been re-pinned, most likely to tighten the base joints if they had become loose which is common in the gateleg form. The central section of the top is made from 2 planks, the leaf to the left of the drawer from 3 planks and the leaf to the right of the drawer one plank with a small tip at the edge which is an old, late-18th-early19thc replacement. The hinges are original. The original butterfly supports joining the planks on the left hand side leaf have been removed and replaced with wooden patches. The patina on the underside of the top is consistent and bears the original saw marks. The frieze is fitted with a single drawer with replaced but 18th century, brass lock, brass escutcheon and brass knob. The elaborate barley twist turned base with numerous stretchers is extremely rare and very striking.

There is wear to the right hand side gate turnings. The toes are 20th century replacements.

This a very, early example of mahogany being used in English furniture making. It is transitional piece as the elaborate, turned oak base follows the form of fine, late-17th century design, united with a top in newly, discovered mahogany. Research is currently underway

The authors of 'Timbers of the New World (1943) stated 'No-one knows when mahogany was first introduced into England, but it was probably used in shipbuilding long before it became fashionable for furniture, its identity concealed under the nondistinctive name of cedar.'

Bowett states ' There is no evidence to support this assertion. Although cedars of various types were employed for shipbuilding in the West Indies and the northern Colonies, especially Bermuda, it was not used in England for that purpose. And while early writers certainly used 'cedar' or 'cedrela' for both cedar and mahogany in a botanical sense, English woodworkers distinguished between cedars and other woods on the basis of their smell Since the distinguishing characteristic of all 'cedars' was their unmistakable scent, references to cedar in contemporary bills, letters or inventories should be accepted at face value. Thus the oft-cited cedar panelling at Nottingham Castle, which was destroyed by fire in 1680, was almost certainly one of the American cedars and not mahogany as is usually assumed. Of the many surviving examples of 17th century 'cedar' woodwork not one has so far proved to be mahogany.
However it is possible that mahogany was amongst the shipments of otherwise nondescript 'joiners wood' which were recorded among some cargoes, and one cannot exclude small, occasional shipments as specimens or curiosities. A table reputedly belonging to John Evelyn (d1705) with a top apparently made of mahogany was sold by Christies in 2000'.'

The first specific mention of mahogany in the English Customs returns occurs in 1700, when mahogany valued at £5 was imported. Thereafter small shipments were recorded in 1710, 1711 and 1713 and annually between 1716 and 1720. There was also the sale of prize goods, which included mahogany, when the cargoes of two captured Spanish vessels were sold by auction in London in 1702/3. It is therefo...

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