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92 Fulham Road, London, SW3 6HR, United Kingdom - Tel: +44 (20) 7584 2200 - Web: www.godsonandcoles.co.uk



A George III period mahogany serpentine commode Attributed to Henry Hill of Marlborough

REF784

English

Height: 33 in (85cm)

Width: 50 in (128cm)

Depth: 25 in (65cm)

PROVENANCE

A gift to Murray Edwards College from Dame Rosemary Murray, one of the founders and first President of New Hall, Cambridge, known today as Murray Edwards College. Noted in the College's list of donations as "Chippendale serpentine chest of drawers (Mrs C Dodgson)".

£ 75000

DESCRIPTION

The serpentine top veneered in well figured mahogany and cross banded in padouk; the three graduated drawers veneered in flame mahogany, again cross banded in padouk and retaining the original patinated bronze handles and escutcheons; the top drawer fully fitted with lidded compartments and a mirror; the serpentine corners with bronze mounts; the shaped apron terminating in splay feet with bronze cast sabots .

Frances Catherine Spooner Dodgson (1883 - 1954) was Dame Rosemary's aunt and daughter of William Archibald Spooner, Warden of New College Oxford, best known for the 'Spoonerism'. She was an artist and married Campbell Dodgson, a distant cousin of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, author of Alice in Wonderland. Campbell Dodgson was Keeper of Prints at the British Museum from 1912 -1932 and at his death in 1949 bequeathed over 5,000 prints to the museum.

Henry Hill of Marlborough was active from 1740 until his death in 1778 and was based in the town of Marlborough in Wilshire, conveniently situated between London and Bath, which was very fashionable at the time. Here Henry Hill established himself not only as a cabinetmaker, but also a coach-maker, an auctioneer, an estate agent and an insurance company representative. His clients were predominately Wiltshire landowners including the 9th Duke of Somerset at Maiden Bradley, Paul Methuen at Corsham Court, Henry Hoare at Stourhead, and the Earl Bathurst at Cirencester Park.

The French Commodes were sometimes fitted with dressing slides (see Duke of Somerset commode reference below) whilst this commode has the top drawer designed with a series of boxes and compartments for brushes, powder boxes, etc. The closest example to this present commode with serpentine front and straight sides sold at Christies November 28, 2002, Lot 120 (provenance the Duke of Somerset). In contrast to this commode with its dressing slide see George III gilt brass mounted mahogany and gonçalo alves Commode with top drawer originally fitted for dressing with divisions (Sothebys, April 21 2009, Lot 84). See The Lady Lever Art Gallery, Catalogue of Commodes, 1994, Lucy Wood for further discussion on characteristics of Henry Hill commodes.