

# Basic Detail Report



## Title Portable Desk

Date 1869

Primary Maker Tiffany & Company

Medium Desk (.a): Walnut veneer and various woods, bronze, leather, and blue silk. Inkwells (.b-.c and .d-.e): Blown and cut glass with a metal lid. Writing slate (.f-.g): White stone, possibly marble, with black leather. Padded panel (.h): Leather. Ledger (.i): Leather, paper, and ribbon. Day and date cards (.j-.ccc): Paper and watercolor.

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Description Walnut veneered portable writing desk (.a) containing writing

utensils, paper, photographs, and other items. When closed, the desk consists of a curved, semi-circular top, over a pair of slanted doors, over a drawer. The desk has cast brass ornaments nailed onto the top, the doors, the drawer, and onto each side. The semi-circular top has the brass intertwined initials "HAW" in the center. The front of each door has triangular brass ornaments at each corner and a diamond-shaped ornament in the center. The front of the drawer has a small brass escutcheon with a scalloped pull; the escutcheon is engraved "28th January 1869". Each side of the writing desk has a large brass pull with elaborate escutcheons. The semi-circular top pivots back on brass hinges; the interior of the top is lined in watered light blue silk. Opening the top reveals a tall, shallow, rectangular compartment that lifts completely out of the back of the desk. Each side of the compartment has a brass latch that corresponds to a latch on the interior sides of the writing desk; the compartment can be propped open on these latches. The compartment consists of a rectangular section across the top, over three pigeonholes; each pigeonhole has an arched valance. The top section is subdivided into five subsections by four thin pieces of wood. The subsections on each end are slightly larger than those in the center. The front of the entire top section is pierced with three openings; the center opening is circular, and each side opening is roughly diamond shaped, with tapered sides and a pinched top and bottom. The pierced openings display the contents of the three central subsections: cards that have the day of the week (.j-.p), the month (.q-.rr), or the day of the month (.ss-.ccc). These cards are hand-painted in red and green, red,

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and red and light blue watercolor, respectively. They can be rotated to maintain an accurate calendar; at present, they are set to read, "SUNDAY 8 APRIL". The interior of each desk door has a narrow, rectangular slot bordered on three sides with walnut veneer. In the left door, this slot contains a padded black leather panel (.h) embossed with a border consisting of a single line with a small decorative element at each corner. The panel has a leather band across the front that is sewn down at varying points to create loops to hold long, slender implements, including writing utensils and scissors. The slot in the right door contains a writing slate (.f), consisting of white stone, possibly marble, that is edged with black leather. (A leather pulltab, .g, is separated from the leather edging; this would allow one to remove the slate.) The center interior of the desk consists of seven shallow, wooden compartments stepped one over the next. Each compartment except the top and bottom ones are divided by thin wooden panels into subsections of varying widths. The compartment second from bottom has a narrow subsection at the far left and far right, each containing a blown and cut glass inkwell with a metal lid (.b-.c and .d-.e). Each lid is engraved with the initials "HAW", the same monogram as is found on the exterior of the semi-circular top of the desk. The desk drawer consists of writing surface built into a hinged lid that encloses a shallow compartment. The lid pivots open on a pair of brass hinges at the front of the compartment (a leather loop that would pull the top open is missing). The writing surface is black leather, embossed with two rectangular borders. The interior border is a double line, with a fleur-de-lis at each corner. The exterior border is a single line, with a small decorative

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element at each corner; this is the same border as is on the padded panel in the left desk door. Below the hinged lid is a leather-lined compartment, embossed with the same border as on the panel in the left desk door. The compartment contains a black leather ledger (.i), again embossed with the same border as the padded panel in the left desk door. The front and back covers of the ledger are lined with pink paper printed with small gold stars. The ledger contains a folded sheet of thick paper, held in place by a thin strip of purple ribbon. The desk has one working key (1980.48.33). Condition: The veneer on all the exterior surfaces of the desk (.a) has minor splits along the grain of the wood. Some veneer has broken off of the top left corner of the drawer front. The interior of the left door has several small ink stains above the leather panel. The section that holds inkwell .b-.c has many ink stains. There are spots of discoloration on both lids (.c and .e) of the inkwells (.b and .d). The writing slate (.f) has multiple illegible remnants of hand-written ink and pencil notes. The leather pulltab (.g) is separated from the top of the writing slate. The leather panel in the left door (.h) has reddish colored ink spots in the upper right corner. It has a few small, scattered gashes in the leather. The day of the month cards (.q-.rr) are missing "6" and "20". The name of the month cards (.ss-.ccc) are missing "January".

Dimensions Primary Dimensions (overall height x width x depth when closed): 18 x 16 1/8 x 13 9/16in. (45.7 x 41 x 34.4cm) Primary Dimensions (width of desk when open): 29 3/4in. (75.6cm) Component (height x width x depth of inkwells): 1 1/4 x 2 x 2in. (3.2 x 5.1 x 5.1cm) Component (height x width of ledger): 8 1/2 x 11 3/4in. (21.6 x 29.8cm)