

Basic Detail Report

Title Desk and Bookcase

Date 1795-1800

Primary Maker Erastus Grant

Medium Cherry primary wood, eastern white pine and birch secondary wood,
brass hardware

Description Cherry desk and bookcase with a scrolled balls pediment in the Federal, or neoclassical, style, with local characteristics associated with the Chapin school. The desk and bookcase consists of a bookcase over an oxbow drawer in the upper case, over an oxbow desk with a secretary drawer with a fall front over drawers in the lower case. Each upper end of the pediment molding terminates in a rosette. The balls pediment consists of small, carved spheres integrated into carrot-shaped openings in the tympanum. The top of the desk and bookcase has three finials (replaced). The central finial is large and asymmetrical, and is shaped like a seahorse; it sits on a plinth over an abstract, ribbed ornament (replaced). Each side finial consists of a tapered column over an urn; each rests on a small, square plinth. The bookcase doors are glazed; each door has thirteen panels of glass, which are arranged in an octagonal pattern that encompasses both doors. Below the doors is a drawer with a curved, or oxbow, front. The bookcase and drawer fit inside the mid-molding at the top of the desk; they are not as deep as the desk, creating a flat surface at the top front of the desk, directly in front of the drawer. The drawer arrangement of the desk consists of four equal-height drawers. The top drawer

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is a secretary drawer; the front pivots forward to reveal the interior. The oxbow shape of the desk front extends through the base molding and feet. Each ogee bracket foot has a small spur. The interior bookcase arrangement consists of one vertical partition in the center and six adjustable shelves. The shelves fit into grooves in the sides of the case and the partition; the grooves are about one inch apart. The interior arrangement of the secretary drawer consists of three small drawers, each with a recessed central panel, flanked by three pigeonholes over a wide drawer. Hardware includes a lock escutcheon on the right bookcase door. Each exterior drawer has a brass lined keyhole flanked by a ring-and-bail pull. Each interior desk drawer has a small brass knob. The fall front is supported by a brass quadrant at each side and by two hinges on the lower edge. Condition: The finials and the ornament below the center plinth are replaced. Repaired hardware holes are visible on the drawer fronts. The lower half of each foot and the corner blocks are replaced. There may have been valances above the pigeonholes at one time. The hardware is replaced. Design and Construction Details: Case Construction. The pediment is nailed to the front of the bookcase top, with no supporting glue blocks. The rosettes and the ornament below the central plinth are applied. The top of the bookcase is dovetailed to the case sides. Each backboard is chamfered and fits into grooves in the case sides. The bookcase doors overlap with a miter joint. The bookcase rests on pieces of wood that are nailed to the top of the desk and that form the side mid-molding. The desk and bookcase rests on a three-sided frame that forms the base molding at the front and sides. Each ogee bracket foot are constructed of molded ogee

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facings that are supported by quadrant base construction. The quadrants are nailed to the three-sided frame, which in turn is nailed to the underside of the desk. Drawer Construction. The drawer below the bookcase, also known as a bosom drawer, has a rounded front, incised molding at each edge, and a flat interior front. It rests on the front mid-molding. The exterior desk drawers are outlined with cock beading that is carved into the drawer dividers and case sides. The drawer dividers are tenoned into the case sides, and the drawer runners are nailed to the case sides. Each of the bottom three drawers have oxbow fronts with large carved pockets on the interior surface, corresponding to the furthest projecting portions of the front of each drawer. The drawer sides have bead and fillet molding at the top. The bottoms of the exterior desk drawers fit into grooves in the front and sides of each drawer and are nailed at the back. The bottoms of the interior desk drawers are glued into a lap joint on the lower sides of the drawer. The dovetail pins are small and nearly triangular.

Dimensions Primary Dimensions (overall height x width x depth): 92 1/2 x 40 x 20 1/4in. (235 x 101.6 x 51.4cm)