

An important & extremely rare early George III Tea Caddy modelled as a Tea Chest. Made in London in 1767 by Augustin Le Sage.

Sold



Description

The Tea Caddy, which is cube shaped in form, is modelled to simulate the chests in which tea was imported from China and is one of the rarest designs of English Tea Caddy to be found. As you will see from the images, the sides are engraved with vertical lines to simulate the planks of the chest and outer bands of attractive pluming scrolls on a scratch engraved ground. Each side is also engraved with a Chinese character and the key hole is surrounded by foliate sprays and shell details. The hinged cover displays a cast floral and foliate finial, modelled as a sprig from the tea plant. The tea caddy also possesses its original lock. These chests were featured on the trade cards of Eighteenth century Grocers such as Chandler and Newsom, tea dealers and grocers. The tea caddy is in excellent condition and is fully marked on the base and with the sterling mark and maker's mark on the underside of the cover.

Up until 1678, the Dutch dominated the tea trade before the British began importing tea on a commercial scale. Dried tea leaves were imported from China in large wooden chests or crates, on which this tea caddy is modelled - complete with decorative symbols intended to emulate the Chinese characters on the sides of the wooden import tea crates. An image of a tea warehouse in Canton circa 1770 is attached.

A "square" form tea caddy such as this is the culmination of many different processes and specialist skills. The flat rolled silver sheet would have been cut and soldered to form the shape, then another silversmith would provide the "sprig" finial attaching it to the cover with a silver nut. Thereafter a lock would be fitted and the interior lined before the ornamentation of the engraved characters, scrolling and patterning were added. Augustin Le Sage was of Huguenot descent and produced outstanding pieces, as seen with this Tea Caddy. He had workshops in Cockspur Street, when this piece was made.

Length: 3.7 inches, 9.25 cm.

Width: 3.7 inches, 9.25 cm.

Height: 3.7 inches, 9.25 cm.

Weight: 16 oz.