

REPORT  
April 14, 2022

In March 2022, Graham Arader asked me for my written opinion on the identity and authenticity of a New York mahogany bureau table, furniture inventory number 300. This report summarizes my observations and opinions.

**Bureau table**

New York, 1775-90

Mahogany; tulip poplar (backboards, drawer sides and bottoms), white pine (dust boards, case bottom)

32-3/4 x 35-7/8 x 19-7/8

“No 2 E. 34<sup>th</sup> St.” is inscribed in pencil on the underside of the small center drawer.

The bureau table, popularly called a knee-hole bureau or desk today, has a full-width drawer at the top and stacks of narrow drawers flanking a recessed cupboard, generally called a “prospect” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most examples of this furniture form also have a shallow drawer above the recess. American bureau tables were made throughout the Colonies, notably in Boston, Newport, and New York.

In addition to the choice of secondary woods, this example displays several classic New York regional characteristics. Foremost, New York bureau tables generally stand on claw-and-ball feet, rather than the ubiquitous ogee- or straight-bracket feet of New England and Philadelphia examples. This table combines carved feet in front with ogee bracket feet in the rear, a widespread practice visible in New York cabinetry, although also evident in a few Boston-made pieces of furniture and in the Colchester, Connecticut, desk signed in 1769 by Benjamin Burnham at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Further substantiating New York manufacture, the front feet have acanthus leaves carved in a distinctly New York manner. A small New-York construction detail of the feet, not often observed among furniture historians, is the two-part knee bracket, the inner part of which is tenoned into the leg. (For more on this detail, see Philip D. Zimmerman, “Boston or New York? Revisiting the Apthorp-Family and Related Sets of Queen Anne Chairs,” in *Boston Furniture, 1700-1900* (2016), pp. 94-95, examples are listed in fn. 25.)

Brightly figured mahogany veneers cover mahogany drawer fronts to enrich the front façade. Cock-beads protect the edges. The brasses appear to be original. The shallow drawer above the prospect door has a

prominent carved ruffled mantle around and above the C scroll centered along the scalloped bottom edge. Inset cross-banding borders the prospect door, creating a subtle decorative detail. A small piece of the prospect door banding has been repaired above the upper H hinge. The figured mahogany top board has a finely detailed molded edge, being an ogee curve with a fillet at the top. The right front corner of the top has a small sliver repair that is hard to see. Overall, this bureau table survives in excellent condition.

The address inscribed on the small center drawer probably dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and records the address of a former owner, whose identity remains unknown.