

REPORT
September 7, 2022

In March 2022, Graham Arader asked me for my written opinion on the identity and authenticity of a walnut card table, furniture inventory number 301. This report summarizes my observations and opinions.

Card table

Philadelphia, 1740-70

Walnut; oak (rear swing rail), tulip poplar (drawer sides), white cedar (drawer bottom), hard pine (back fixed rail, drawer runners)

28-5/8 x 32-1/8 x 15-3/8

This walnut card table, featuring a full-width drawer below rectangular hinged leaves with rounded front corners, and standing on four cabriole legs ending in trifid feet, is one of the few surviving examples made in Philadelphia in the Queen Anne style. A very similar example was at Winterthur (see Joseph Downs, *American Furniture: Queen Anne and Chippendale* [1952], no. 335) until it was removed to Henry Francis du Pont's residence in Boca Raton in 1961. The mix of secondary woods points to manufacture in Philadelphia, rather than in one of the surrounding towns and communities. The hinged rear rail that swings outward to support the top leaf is made of oak, and the drawer combines tulip poplar sides with white cedar bottom boards, placed side-by-side with the grain running front-to-back. Modeling of the trifid feet is not specific to any particular area. Moreover, trifid feet continued to be used on furniture from the time of their introduction in the 1730s through the end of the century.

Dating this card table is a challenge. Authors of many publications have based the dating of American Queen Anne-style card tables on style analysis, yielding dates as early as 1730, yet supportive evidence for such early dates is rare or non-existent. In Philadelphia, for example, the earliest mention of the form appears to be a 1736 reference associated with Patrick Gordon, Deputy Governor of Pennsylvania from 1726 until his death in 1736 (see William Macpherson Hornor, Jr., *Blue Book, Philadelphia Furniture* [1935], p. 64). Complicating documentation of early Philadelphia manufacture of the form, the reference may have denoted an English-made card table.

Two decorative details provide modest support of a generally early date for the card table. The seam joining the rear legs and stile above to the table frame and knee bracket below in a thumbnail molding. This feature was widespread in early drop-leaf tables from the region where it was used on all four legs. In time, it disappeared. Other instances of use in a card table are not known to the writer. Similarly, the front and side frames are undercut—with a straight line ending in quarter-round profiles at each end in front and with opposed ogee curves on the sides. Interestingly, this combination of undercutting profiles occurs on rush-seat chairs by Philadelphia furniture maker William Savery, although he did not make this table. The contribution to the table-dating question comes with the observation that Savery ceased using the combination by the late 1760s, as determined by his use of different maker labels (see Philip D. Zimmerman, “Dating William Savery’s Furniture Labels and Implications for Furniture History,” *American Furniture 2018*, and “The Documented Chairs of William Savery,” *American Furniture 2021*, both *in passim*).

The card table survives in a very old finish. The drawer brasses are replacements. The original post holes are slightly wider, and ghosts are visible of Chippendale-style backplates and escutcheon. The green baize inside the folding tabletop is a replacement. The rear knee bracket on the swing leg is replaced as is the side knee bracket on the right rear leg. The fixed tabletop leaf has a 1-1/2 inch patch on the back edge. A wide split in the drawer bottom, caused by wood shrinkage, was sealed over with pale blue paper that appears to be of 19th century origin. A black-colored material was used on the outside bottom.

The card table was part of the William K. du Pont collection.