MACKINNON
FINE FURNITURE

The Campsea Ashe Parcel Gilt Secretaire Cabinet

England, *circa* 1720

The Form & Decoration:

This exceptional cabinet bears close resemblance to the work of Samuel Bennet (c.1700-1741) in its form and decorative features. A cabinet by Bennet at the Victoria & Albert Museum features elaborate gilt decoration and a finial with a broken swan neck pediment to the top, similar to the cpresemt example. The Victoria & Albert example also features fluted pilasters in the Doric order, while the present cabinet features gilded Corinthian tops.

A second cabinet illustrated in R. Edwards, *The Dictionary of English Furniture* similarly features the bombé form of this cabinet (vol. I, p. 136, fig. 30). A further cabinet is illustrated in H. Cescinsky and E. Gribble, *Early English furniture and Woodwork* (London, 1992, vol. II, pp. 284-285, figs. 387 and 388).

Campsea Ashe High House

The Hon. William Lowther (1821-1912) acquired Campsea Ashe High House, Suffolk in the 1880s for the impressive sum of £105,000. After a fire in 1865, the house had been n re-built after a fire by the architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881), who sought to retain the original Georgian features of the house.

Lowther's son, James William Lowther, 1st Viscount Ullswater (1855-1949), inherited Campsea Ashe and revived the interiors and the garden. He took a keen interest in art and served as a Trustee of the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. The contents of the house were sold after his death in 1949.

Sir James Horlick

The cabinet was presumably purchased by Sir James Horlick, 4th Baronet (1866-1972) in the 1949 sale of the contents of Campsea Ashe High House. Horlick was a renowned collector and noted connoisseur who acquired a number of exceptional pieces for his home Achamore House on the Isle of Gigha in the Scottish Western Isles, including wonderful Chinese reverse painted mirror pictures and the superlative lacquer commode supplied to Harewood House by Thomas Chippendale. Horlick's collection of English japanned furniture from the eighteenth century was particularly notable and became the subject of an article in the *Connoisseur* entitled, 'Chinoiserie in the Western Isles, the Collection of Sir James and Lady Horlick' (June 1958). In addition to the chinoiserie collection, Horlick also amassed an impressive collection of eighteenth century walnut furniture, including this wonderful secretaire cabinet.

A very fine George I ormolu-mounted parcel-gilt walnut secretaire-cabinet in the manner of Samuel Bennet. The upper section with a giltwood swan-neck cresting centred with a foliate carved giltwood cartouche above a mirrored door flanked by fluted pilasters, one of which conceals the keyhole, the door opening to reveal two adjustable bookshelves above three short drawers, the lower bombé section fitted with a pull-out secretaire-drawer above three graduated drawers, standing on bracket feet. Each drawer fitted with its original finely chased elaborate gilt-brass escutcheons and handles.

Literature:

L. G. G. Ramsay, 'Chinoiserie in the Western Isles, The Collection of Sir James and Lady Horlick,' *Connoisseur*, June 1958, p, 4, fig. 6 (illustrated)

Country Life Annual, 1950, p. 154 (illustrated, with Mallett & Son)

Comparative Literature:

R. Edwards, *The Dictionary of English Furniture*, vol. I, 1986, p. 136, fig. 30.

Victoria & Albert Museum: *Fifty Masterpieces of Woodwork*, London, 1955, no. 36.

Height: 96.06 in (244 cm)
Width: 39.96 in (101.5 cm)
Depth: 20.08 in (51 cm)

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