

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**Attributed to THOMAS & GEORGE SEDDON**

## **A Fine George IV Amboyna Centre Table**

Circa: Circa 1830

72 x 0 cm (28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 0 inches)

Amboyna

England

1830

A Very Fine George IV Parcel-Gilt Amboyna Centre Table Attributed to *Thomas & George Seddon*.

The table is of finely figured Amboyna with a circular tilt-top above a triform column with parcel-gilt scrolled supports. It is raised on a conforming plinth base with foliate carved feet and concealed castors.

### **Artist description:**

In 1753 George Seddon I, founder of the business, purchased a London house and two acres of land in Aldersgate Street where the family firm remained until the 1830s. The enterprise expanded rapidly, for by 1768 he was employing under licence 100 tradesmen who were non-freemen. A fire in that year destroyed upwards of 80 chests of tools' and over £20,000 worth of stock. By 1783, when there was another fire, Seddon employed nearly 300 'of the most capital hands' in London, while Sophie Von La Roche, a German lady who visited the premises in 1786, wrote that he was 'foster-father to 400 employees'. Her description of the establishment provides easily our best contemporary portrait of a comprehensive late 18th-century cabinet manufactory: We drove first to Mr Seddon's ...He employs four hundred apprentices (and Journeymen) on any work connected with the making of household furniture - joiners, carvers, gilders, mirror-workers, upholsterers, girdlers -who mould the bronze into graceful patterns -and locksmiths. All these are housed in a building with six wings. In the basement, mirrors are cast and cut. Some other department contains nothing but chairs, sofas, stools of every description, some quite simple, others exquisitely carved and made of all varieties of wood, and one large room is full up with all the finished articles in this line, while others are occupied by writing-tables, cupboards, chests of drawers, charmingly fashioned desks, chests both large and small, work- and toilet-tables of all manner of wood and patterns, from the simplest and cheapest to the most elegant and expensive.

The entire story of the wood, as used for both inexpensive and costly furniture and the method of treating it, can be traced in this establishment. Seddon, foster father to 400 employees, seemed to be a respectable man, a man of genius, too, with an understanding for the needs of the needy and the luxurious, a man who has become intimate with the quality of woods from all parts of the earth, with the chemical knowledge of how to colour them or combine their own tints with taste, has appreciated the value of all his own people's labour and toil, and is for ever creating new forms. George Seddon I trained his sons Thomas I (bound as a cabinet-maker 1775-82) and George II (bound as an upholsterer 1777-84) in the trade; both were taken into partnership about 1785. During the years c. 1788-98 his son-in-law, Thomas Shackleton, joined the firm, which became known as 'Seddon, Sons & Shackleton'. They made for Charles IV of Spain a spectacular painted satinwood combination bureau, dressing table and jewel case housing an organ which not only carried their name plate but was also signed by a workman 'R Newham 28 June 1793'. Thomas I, the ambitious eldest son, started an independent offshoot of the business at 10 Charterhouse Street (1790-97) and 24 Dover Street (1793-1800), while continuing his involvement in the family firm. When George Seddon I died in 1801, the firm passed directly to his sons, Thomas I and George II, who almost at once encountered financial problems; by 1804 they faced bankruptcy. After the death of Thomas in that year, George II started to pay off creditors and by the time of his own death in 1815 had done enough to ensure the firm's survival. The business was inherited by his nephew, Thomas Seddon II (1792-1864), who was joined about 1817 by his younger brother, George Seddon III (1796-1856). The partners continued to trade at London House but in 1826 launched out with a West End showroom at 16 Lower Grosvenor Street. Following yet another fire at the work-shop the firm moved in 1831 to Gray's Inn Road, finally giving up the Aldersgate premises in 1837. It was not until 1853-54 that they moved to 67 New Bond Street. Before Thomas II and George III started, on a fairly regular basis, to use the familiar 'T & G SEDDON' printed label (either with the Aldersgate Street or Gray's Inn Road address) the firm only routinely marked patent furniture. In 1827 Seddon's entered into a temporary partnership with Nicholas Morel for the purpose of handling a major commission to refurnish Windsor Castle; the arrangement lasted for four years -and resulted in T. & G. Seddon being awarded a Royal Warrant in 1832. Thereafter, they included 'Manufacturers / To Her Majesty' at the head of their label and added a crown to their name stamp.