Finch & Co



AMERICAN SAILOR'S SCRIMSHAW OVAL PANBONE 'DITTY BOX'

AN AMERICAN SAILOR'S SCRIMSHAW OVAL PANBONE 'DITTY BOX' WITH AN EXOTIC WOOD TOP THE DECORATIVE FINGER JOINTS FASTENED WITH METAL PINS

MID 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 7.5CM HIGH, 12CM WIDE, 9CM DEEP - 3 INS HIGH, 4½ INS WIDE, 3½ INS DEEP

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LITERATURE

DITTY BOXES WERE USED FOR SEWING PARAPHERNALIA IN THE HOME OR FOR TOOLS FOR MENDING NETS ON BOARD SHIP. THEY ARE THE OLDEST FORM OF WHALE-MEN'S SCRIMSHAW BOXES, OVAL, BUT OCCASIONALLY ROUND, WITH PANBONE OR BALEEN SIDES AND WOODEN TOPS AND BOTTOMS. THEY ARE DESCENDANTS OF THE 17TH CENTURY DUTCH 'KAPDOOS' THAT ARE PART OF THE EARLIEST TRADITION OF OBJECTS MADE BY WHALE-MEN FROM THE BY PRODUCTS OF THEIR TRADE. BOTH THE DITTY BOX AND THE KAPDOOS ARE VERY SIMILAR IN CONSTRUCTION TO THE BENTWOOD AMERICAN SHAKER BOX: A PANEL OF PANBONE OR BALEEN IS STEAM BENT AROUND A WOODEN BASE AND FASTENED WITH METAL NAILS WHILST STILL SOFT, AN OVERLAP JOINT CARVED INTO ORNAMENTAL SHAPES SECURES THE TWO ENDS AND THE WOOD LID HAS A SKIRT TO MATCH THE SIDES.