

MARY COOKE ANTIQUES LTD  
Fine Antique Silver

An important & extremely rare George III Tea Caddy, modelled as a Tea Chest, made in London in 1780 by Charles Aldridge & Henry Green.

£9,950



## Description

The Tea Caddy, which is cube shaped in form, is modelled to simulate the chests in which tea was imported from China and is one of the rarest designs of English Tea Caddy to be found. As you will see from the images, the sides are engraved with vertical lines to simulate the planks of the chest and outer bands of trailing foliate scrolls on a scratch engraved ground. Each side is also engraved with a Chinese character and the key hole is surrounded by tied ribbons above a shield shaped cartouche, containing a contemporary Crest. The Crest is that of an elephant's head coupled, ducally crowned. The Crest is as used by the Huyshe family, most probably for James Huyshe 1712-1784. The hinged cover displays a cast floral and foliate finial, modelled as a sprig from a tea plant. The tea caddy also possesses its original lock. These chests were used on the trade cards of Eighteenth century Grocers such as Chandler and Newsom, tea dealers and grocers. The tea caddy is in excellent condition and is fully marked on the base and with the sterling mark and maker's mark on the underside of the cover. Up until 1678, the Dutch dominated the tea trade before the British began importing tea on a commercial scale. Dried tea leaves were imported from China in large wooden chests or crates, on which this tea caddy is modelled - complete with decorative symbols intended to emulate the Chinese characters on the sides of the wooden import tea crates. An image of a tea warehouse in Canton circa 1770 is attached. A "square" form tea caddy such as this is the culmination of many different processes and specialist skills. The flat rolled silver sheet would be cut and soldered to form the shape, then another silversmith would provide the "sprig" finial attaching it to the cover with a silver nut. Thereafter a lock would be fitted and the interior lined before the ornamentation of the engraved characters, scrolling and patterning were added. Aldridge and Green were specialist pierced workers, however they did make a number of very unusual tea caddies in their workshops. Length: 3.5 inches. Width: 3.5 inches. Height: 3.5 inches. Weight: 16oz.