

THE AMOS POULSUM BUREAU - SOME WORDS OF CAUTION

Members will probably remember a mahogany bureau (fig. 15) signed and dated by Amos Poulsum, which was published in the summer 1991 edition of this Newsletter. The bureau was entirely conventional - bracket feet, cockbeaded drawers, fluted quarter columns and original swan's neck handles - except for the remarkable early date, 14th January 1727. However, the discrepancy between the advanced style of the bureau and the early date are more apparent than real, for the figure 2 is actually a figure 8, written thus:

8

The first time I saw the figure 8 written this way I was puzzled, but I have since seen it scores of times on contemporary documents, and it was clearly a widely accepted style of script. Indeed, with a quill pen it is actually much easier to write than a properly rounded 8. I hope members will forgive this lapse into pedantry. I would not have raised the point were it not that the bureau is cited in David Knell's new book (footnote 52). Once a small, honest error enters the published literature of the subject it rapidly acquires the status of a 'fact', and if this occurs it will be-devil furniture scholars ever after.

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Fig 15. The Amos Poulsum bureau



Fig 16.