

Louis Philippe-style cherry dining table

Circa 1875-1900

Museum Quality value, \$2,250

Current Condition, \$600

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Construction Clues

1. Solid Cherry

- High-quality hardwood choice. Solid cherry was common in finer 19th-century American furniture, particularly mid-to-late 1800s.
- The patina suggests an older piece. Cherry darkens with age. The dark color of this table is patina, not stain.

2. Joinery & Screws

- The joinery where the rails/aprons meet the corner blocks shows older, slotted screws with slightly irregular slots — these look machine-made rather than hand-forged, which likely puts them **after ~1846** (when fully machine-cut screws became common).
- No Phillips heads — that helps confirm **pre-1930s**.
- Corner blocks with screws rather than nails are consistent with **mid-to-late 19th century** manufacturing.

3. Table Extension Mechanism

- The crank-operated center leaf mechanism (square drive shaft visible through the skirt) is a telltale of **late 19th century to early 20th century**. These geared or screw-driven slides started appearing in the **1870s–1890s** for higher-end extending tables.

4. Tool Marks

- The underside wood surfaces show circular-saw marks — not hand-sawn. That points to **post-1840s production**, but still early enough to have some irregularities in machining.

5. Design Details

- Turned legs on casters: Common in Victorian-era (mid-to-late 1800s) dining tables. Brass or iron cup casters on slender turned legs were a fashionable feature from ~1860 through ~1900.
- The casters are brass with iron wheels and hand-riveted spindles, they're likely original and 19th century. Stamped steel casters often indicate 20th-century replacements.

Checklist

Here's a practical, field-use checklist you can run through in order. Each step tells you **what to look for** and **what it suggests** about age. Use several clues together before concluding.

Step-by-step dating checklist for a dining table

1. Dovetails on drawers (if present)
 - Look for: Irregular pins/tails, varied spacing, visible scribe lines or chisel baselines, tiny gaps, pins often narrower than tails.
 - Suggests: **Hand-cut (typically pre-1860s)**. Early factory dovetails (1860s–1890s) look rough but more regular. **Crisp, perfectly uniform** = 20th-century machine cut.
2. Drawer construction details
 - Look for: Half-blind dovetails at the front and through-dovetails at the back (common earlier). Drawer bottoms **grain front-to-back**, chamfered on three edges and **slid into grooves**; nailed from below is later.
 - Suggests: Grooved bottoms with chamfers = **earlier**; stapled/ply bottoms = **mid-20th century+**.
3. Saw marks on hidden surfaces (underside of top, drawer sides)
 - Look for: **Straight, irregular** pit-saw or hand-saw marks (pre-1840s). **Curved circular-saw arcs** (c. **1840s+**). Uniform straight **band-saw** marks (c. **1880s+**).
 - Suggests: Places the piece in a broad era of mechanization.
4. Primary joinery of the base (aprons to legs)
 - Look for: **Mortise-and-tenon joints**, often **draw-bored/pegged** = earlier craftsmanship. Metal brackets, knock-down connectors, or pocket screws as primary joinery = later/repair.
 - Suggests: Pegged M&T leans **18th–early 19th c.**

5. Corner/angle blocks under the top (inside the apron)

- Look for: Hand-shaped triangular glue blocks, sometimes with **hand-cut nails** or screws; consistent oxidation.
- Suggests: **Older construction** if blocks are original and oxidized like surrounding wood. Bright new blocks = repairs.

6. Fasteners (nails & screws)

- Look for: **Hand-wrought nails** with irregular heads/shanks (18th–early 19th c.); **cut nails** with rectangular shanks (early–mid 19th c.); **wire nails** round shank (late 19th c.+).
- Screws: Off-center hand-filed slots and tapered, uneven threads = **early**; machine-cut, uniform threads = **mid-19th c.+**; Phillips head = **1930s+**.
- Suggests: Terminus post quem (earliest possible date).

7. Secondary woods (drawer sides, bottoms, interior)

- Look for: **Poplar, pine, chestnut** as secondary wood in American pieces; **deal/softwood** in British. Plywood or MDF = modern.
- Suggests: Secondary wood choice can indicate **region** and help confirm era.

8. Table-top edge & leaf mechanisms

- Look for: **Rule joints** on drop leaves (rounded mating profiles) with offset hinges = 18th/early 19th c. **Breadboard ends** with visible pegs can be older but also revived later—check tool marks.
- Suggests: Early mechanics (rule joint, gate-leg knuckle joints) = **older traditions**.

9. Surface prep & tool marks

- Look for: **Plane and scraper** tracks (subtle scallops), minimal sanding = earlier. Uniform machine sanding swirls = later.
- Suggests: Hand finishing leans **pre-1900** (but beware restorations).

10. Finish & oxidation

- Look for: **Shellac/French polish** (warm, dissolves with alcohol) common pre-1920; **oil varnish** 19th c.; **lacquer** widely 1920s+; **polyurethane** modern. Oxidation darkening inside corners, under hardware, and consistent grime where hands touched.

- Suggests: Finish type/timeframe; **even, fresh finish** may indicate refinishing—check hidden areas.

11. Hardware (pulls, hinges)

- Look for: Hand-filed, slightly irregular hardware and square nuts = earlier. Perfectly stamped/brass-plated zinc = later. Screw hole shadows (ghost marks) revealing **replaced** hardware.
- Suggests: Hardware often swapped—treat as **supporting**, not sole evidence.

12. Proportions & style (use cautiously)

- Look for: Period styles (Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Empire, Victorian, Arts & Crafts) in **concert with construction**.
- Suggests: Style can be revived; verify with joinery/fasteners before dating.

13. Wear patterns & shrinkage

- Look for: **Honest wear** on high-touch edges, drawer runners, and floor-contact points; seasonal gaps from **long-term shrinkage**; oxidation inside, dust lines under original hardware.
- Suggests: Natural, uneven wear = age; perfectly uniform “patina” = artificial aging.

14. Underside and back inspection

- Look for: Consistency—same wood species, oxidation, and tool marks as visible parts. Mixed modern plywood patches = repairs.
- Suggests: Originality vs. later modifications.

15. Provenance & coherence check

- Do: Cross-check all clues. One modern screw doesn’t make it new—might be a repair. Likewise, a hand-cut dovetail grafted into an otherwise modern carcass is a red flag.
- Result: Build a **converging timeline** (e.g., pit-saw marks + hand-cut dovetails + shellac = likely early 19th c.).

Quick field cues (cheat sheet)

- **Hand-cut dovetails + pit-saw marks + pegged mortise-tenon** → often **pre-1840**.

- **Rough machine dovetails + circular-saw marks + cut nails** → often **1840s–1890s**.
- **Uniform machine dovetails + band-saw marks + lacquer/Phillips screws** → **1900s–mid-20th c.**
- **Plywood/MDF, staples, confirm modern finishes** → **late 20th c.+**

Likely Date Range and Value

Combining all of the above:

- Solid cherry + circular saw marks + slotted machine screws + corner blocks + crank-driven leaf extension + turned legs with casters strongly suggest **circa 1875–1900**.
- The style, materials, and mechanism all fit within the **late Victorian era**, possibly into the Edwardian period (very early 1900s).

Here are some comparable listings and prices for cherry antique dining tables from the late 19th century:

- A **Cherry drop-leaf table with turned legs on casters**, listed on a consignment site, is priced around **\$630**, with scheduled markdowns to about **\$490–\$560** over time ([eBay](#), [Furniture Consignment Gallery](#)).
 - On *Chairish*, a **Louis Philippe-style cherry dining table** from the late 19th century is listed at approximately **\$2,520** ([Chairish](#)).
 - On Etsy, **19th-century American Sheraton cherry drop-leaf tables** range between **\$965 and \$1,750**, depending on style and condition ([etsy.com](#)).
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Estimated Value Range for Your Table (circa 1875–1900)

Based on these comparables, an antique solid cherry dining table with a crank-operated center leaf mechanism, turned legs, and casters could fetch anywhere from **\$600** (modest consignment-level pricing) up to **\$2,500** (higher-end retail listings for similar aged, well-preserved pieces).

Your table's unique features—particularly the crank leaf mechanism and turn-of-century Victorian styling—could place it in the **\$1,000–\$2,000** range if the workmanship, patina, and condition are good. Exceptional condition or provenance could push it toward the upper end of that range.
