

17th Century Bible Box

By STANLEY D. SAPERSTEIN

Throughout the history of woodcarving there has been considerable emphasis on religious furniture. Some of the finest carvings in the world are found in churches—altars, pews, choir stalls, priedieu, etc. And a treasured piece of religious furniture widely found in the home was the Bible Box.

The Bible Box, or as it became known in later times—the desk box—was a practical piece of furniture in use in early American homes. The Pilgrims are credited with introducing it to the new world.

Often ornately carved, it served not only as a safe dry place for the family Bible, but also important papers and records were stored there. The Pilgrims even kept seeds in them.

I chose the Bible Box for this issue's project because it is very simple to construct and is readily adaptable to almost any leaf or lettering motif. The example shown is typical of a 1620-1680 design and is made of red oak.

The boxes were usually oak or pine, so if you want to be authentic, use only these woods.

As far as the joinery is concerned, simple butt joints may be employed



Red oak was used to make this Bible Box in traditional style of 1600s.

but rabbet joints are preferred. You may use 5/16 dowels to hold the box together or wood screws and cap the screws. Hinges are cleat or snipe type.

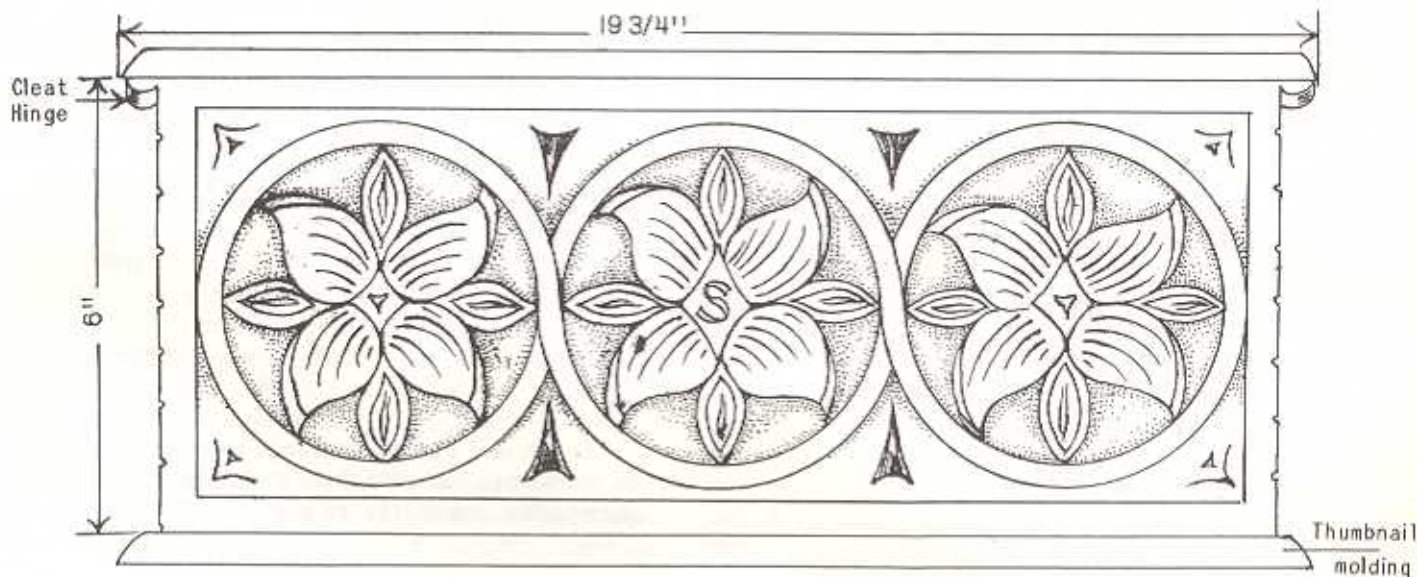
Follow the drawings and you should have no problem with the construction. If cleat hinges prove too difficult, reproduction butterfly hinges can be used.

Now for the carving—most Bible Boxes were carved on the front panel, but a few, such as the Worrell Boxes, had carved lids. Personally, I prefer to carve only the front and select a beautifully grained piece of wood for the lid to contrast with the carved front. However, this is a matter of individual taste. Most Bible Boxes usually incorporated the family initial in the carving motif.

- You will need the following tools:
- 1—A small parting tool for outlining.
 - 2—Skew chisel (1/4 or 3/8) for rounding over sharp edges.
 - 3—1/2-in. #3 gouge for removing background.
 - 4—1/8-in. or 1/16-in. veiner for putting in veins on leaves.
 - 5—1/2-in. #8 or 9 gouge for face cutting.
 - 6—Rifflers or sandpaper.
 - 7—Background stamp.

Layout your pattern on tracing paper and transfer to the front panel. Outline the leaves and circles with a parting tool to a depth of 1/8-inch and remove background. Round over edges and face cut leaves. Stamp the background and you are ready to apply finish of your choice.

A dark stain is best with three

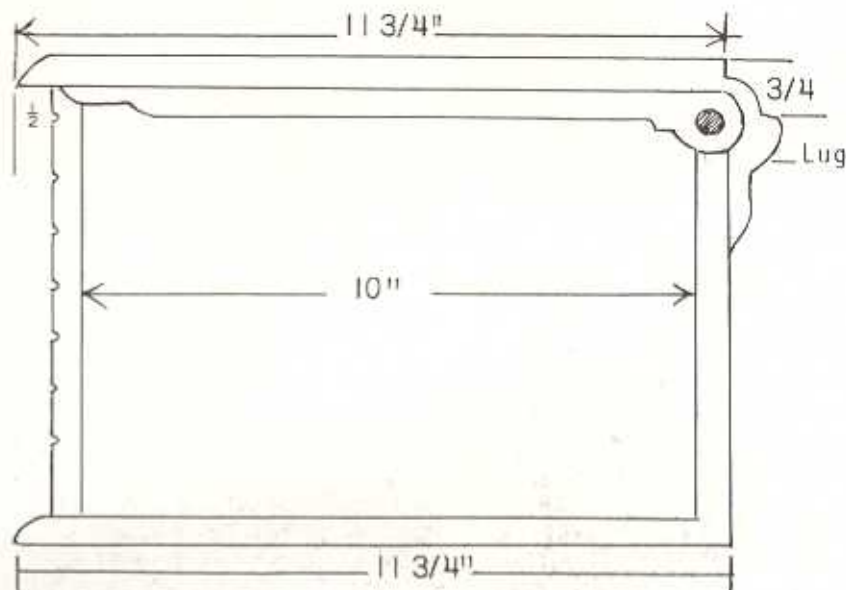


or four coats of orange shellac thinned with 50% alcohol. Wax when shellac is dry with three or four coats of a good paste wax.

Photo by Jack Trafford; Drawings by the author.

Bill of Materials

Item	Pieces	L	W	T	Material
Bottom.....	1	19 1/2	11 3/4	3/4	Oak
Lid.....	1	19 1/2	11 3/4	3/4	"
Ends.....	2	10 5/8	6	3/4	"
Front.....	1	18 1/2	6	3/4	"
Back.....	1	18 1/2	6	3/4	"
Cleat Hinge..	2	12 1/4	1 1/2	5/8	"
Lugs.....	2	3 5/8	1	3/4	"
Dowels.....	2	1 1/2	3/8 Dia.		Beech



Special Book Offer

Wood Carvers Supply Co. has a special offer on Freda Skinner's book, *Wood Carving*. For a limited time the 164-page book may be purchased for \$3, postpaid, and as a bonus, the firm's 40-page catalog will be sent free with each order. The address: 3112 W. 28th St., Minneapolis, Minn. 55416.

Minister Teaches Carving In Florida

Dr. Franklin Carwithen, assistant minister at Lakeside United Methodist Church, Lake Worth, Fla., is teaching a class in wood carving. Reverend Carwithen is an accomplished carver and has made some exceptional plaques. We will share pictures of his work with you in the near future.

Letters to the Editor (Continued from Page 37)

keep the association and magazine alive.

I have always worked with wood, and loved it, but never as an artform. Now that retirement is here, the association and magazine has opened a whole new way and field of interest for me.

Again let me say "thanks" to you and to all who contribute to *Chip Chats*.

-Raymond L. LaCroix, Easthampton, Mass.

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Dear Editor-

How I did enjoy that article in the November-December *Chip Chats* on reproduction of antique furniture. I now know where I fit in. I hope there will be more such articles.

-Mrs. R. V. Evans, Decatur, Ill.

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Dear Editor-

I'm enclosing my check for another year's membership and subscription to *Chip Chats*. It is one magazine that really gives me my money's worth.

I have tried a couple of the patterns that have ap-

peared on the back page of the magazine with considerable success, especially the German Sea Captain. The photographs were a real great help.

I hope that one day there will be a pattern for a cigar store Indian. I have a big poplar log that is just waiting for that kind of a project.

-Virgil R. Ayer, Philadelphia, Pa.

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Dear Editor-

I received and enjoyed my first copy of *Chip Chats*. I was surprised and, I guess, somewhat disappointed to find no ads in the publication. I thought there would be ads for tools, woods, art supplies, etc., and that this might have been helpful. It is very difficult in this area to find wood other than straight construction lumber.

-Robert Rennie, New York

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Dear Editor-

My entire family enjoys *Chip Chats*, and there are plenty of fresh ideas for any carver. My carvings have won blue ribbons twice at the Kenosha County Fair. Again, thank you for a wonderful magazine; best wishes for the New Year to you and all the members.

-Joseph F. Folwarski, Trevor, Wisc.

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Dear Editor-

I would like to enroll a friend of mine who is retiring this month. I thought a membership in NWCA would be as nice a retirement gift as I could give. I enjoy *Chip Chats* very much and use it when counseling young boys working on scouting woodcarving merit badges. I also share copies with friends. Keep up the good work.

One other thing-I purchased the book by Bruce Burk (*Game Bird Carving*) advertised in *Chip Chats* and I'd like to say "thanks" . . . what a great book!

-Charles H. Bloom, Ronks, Penn.