

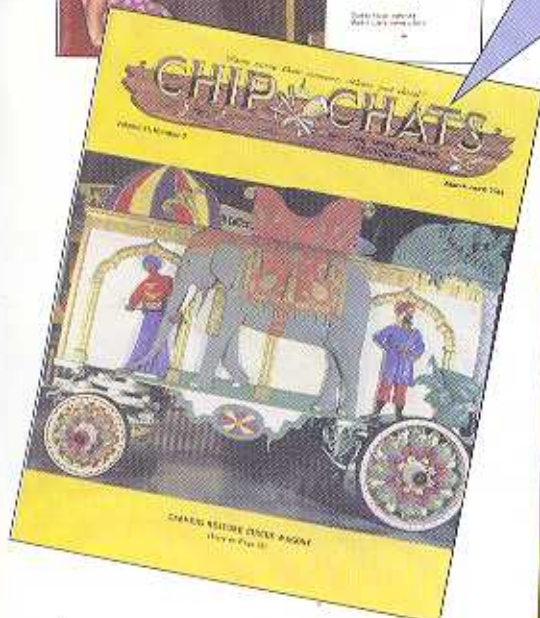
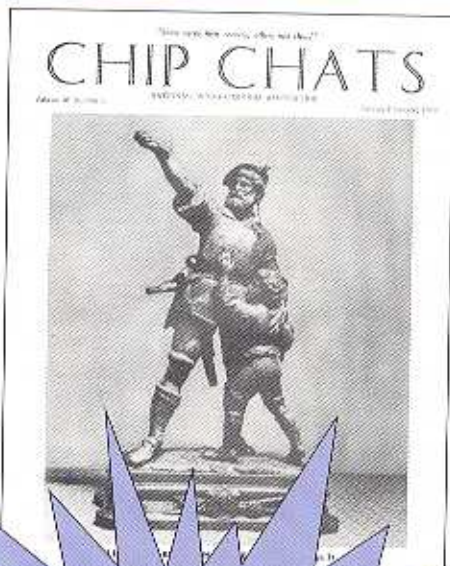
"Some carve their careers; others just chisel"

CHIP CHATS

NATIONAL WOOD CARVERS ASSOCIATION

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Celebrating
50
years of
publishing

Cheryl Dow (Continued)

Sit back once in a while to take stock of how you are doing. If you are making mistakes, stop and go back to your buddy board and practice. In fact, do it on your buddy (practice) board first! Be sure to also stand back and view your burning from a proper distance, rather than from just inches away from your face, to give you a proper perspective of your work. Most people will not get that close to view your work and neither should you!

Also, be sure to give your eyes a break every 15 to 20 minutes so you don't strain them.

Putting your board up at an angle instead of flat on a table will help, too. I sometimes use a 12"x12" denim bag with rice (not Minute) sewn in, filling a little less than 2/3 full; folding it in half makes a nice adjustable easel to work on. You carvers could use this bag, too, by picking it up by the corner and dropping it down on your table, pushing the same corner in and making a nest to hold small carvings while you carve on them. This way you can touch it with one hand instead of clutching it in your aching fingers.

Whatever your project is, finish it to the end — don't give up because of a mistake. I usually have three or four projects going at a time to give me variety to work on, but I keep working on them and get them done as soon as I can, considering my schedule.

To all of my students: I love working with you; there really are no stupid questions; you have and still continue to enrich my life. I have learned a lot from you and have enjoyed all of you so much. I hope to continue to teach for a long time. You are a great blessing and I appreciate your letting me share. ■

Cheryl Dow, PO Box 867, Union Lake, MI 48387; winter (863) 682-4316; spring-fall (248) 363-6454; Books I, II, III, IV \$14.95 each, including shipping/handling; 3/\$40 and 4/\$52, shipping/handling included.

New York man offers free wood

John Roccanova has "about 30 nice fitches of basswood" that he would like to give to an individual or club. He lives in New York, near the Connecticut and Massachusetts borders. Phone (518) 329-2021; e-mail <roccanova@taconic.net>.

Gothic credence table — an original design

By ERIC M. SAPERSTEIN

Last year *Chip Chats* featured Artisans of the Valley in a *Times of Trenton* reprint of "Carving a Niche" by Janet Purcell as an illustration of one of the last of the true transitions of carving and furniture making through generations of apprenticeships. My father, Stan Saperstein, and I have been challenged and intrigued by the eclectic variety of work we completed since I took control of Artisans in 2001. One project in particular provided the unique opportunity to create my first memorial piece.

The result is our 2002 portfolio piece, a Gothic credence table for Trinity Church of Princeton, N.J., housed in an 1860s Gothic Revival cathedral. My father's original design represents an early Gothic era reproduction in solid oak with a wide range of hand carving. Accents include dogwood in guilloche, acanthus leaves, scrollwork, rope carving, an inscription, and an Episcopal shield.

Religious and fraternal furniture always take on a special meaning; these pieces accept the persona of ceremony and participate in religious occasions from regular services to weddings, funerals, and holidays. A craftsman's portfolio piece is an heirloom, lasting for generations. Thus, it's logical that we tend to embed more of ourselves as the artists into these works than our day-to-day projects.

The implementation of my father's design serves as a major step in proving the level of my skills as a craftsman, and following through with the apprenticeship featured in "Carving a Niche." *The Times* told the story of this memorial through a November 18, 2002, article (see page 12). My personal research is in "Creating a Priceless Heirloom," a 24-page photo-illustrated documentary featured on our Web site.

As with most carvers and craftsmen, we see our works as our legacy, and pieces with an exceptional meaning, such as this table, are the basis for future generations to judge our craft. We appreciate the opportunity



— Photo by Thomas H. Clark, Jr.

Credence table commissioned to honor the late Edward States (story on page 12).

to share this piece, and details of the dedication ceremony, with fellow carvers and furniture makers through *Chip Chats*.

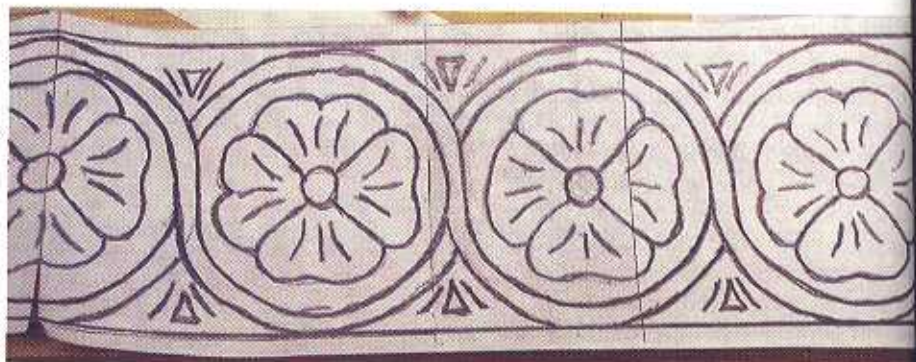
Designing and building period furniture is an artistic process, a scope carrying beyond the considerations of functionality where the beauty of the form, materials, sculpture, and finishing all prevail, yet blend simultaneously. Towards this end, Dad and I employed 18th century carving techniques and tools to complete the embellishment of this piece. This article focuses on a brief outline of the patterns selected, and provides simple example drawings.

Careful selection of carving patterns is critical to both period accuracy and blending a piece into existing décor. Towards the end of the High Gothic period carvings, relief began to drop in depth, turning towards a more subtle decoration compared to the ornate deep relief nature at peak of the Gothic timeline. Trinity's existing woodworking is reflective of Gothic Revival, blending medium depth with piercing and fretwork. Our choice was to unify, and not overpower, so our depth remained at approximately 3/8".

The first obvious pallet was the table apron; for this we chose the dogwood in guilloche for it's religious ties to the Legend of the Dogwood. The guilloche is common across almost all great periods in varying forms of complexity and depth. The interlacing of lines provides a perfect surround for the dogwood in bloom. The exact roots of the guilloche appear lost in antiquity, our research into the history of our design turned up examples throughout Roman times, Egypt, Asia, and Russia.

The guilloche layout we chose is designed using a compass; simply create a series of circles overlapping approximately 3/8". Then create a second inner circle centered on the same point as the first, 3/4 of an inch smaller than the first. At the overlapping point, erase the top line of the circle to the right, and the bottom of the circle to the left. This should create a channel effect and interlock the circles. Create the circles approximately one inch smaller than your target workspace, or the width of your stock. This leaves space to outline the pattern with a straight line box and perhaps a few geometric accents. The dogwood is a simple four-petal flower; the pattern can be traced from the example in this article.

Rope carving plays perfectly into the table's edge and around the shelves and caps above the feet. Simplistic, delicate, and subtle to the eyes, it transitions each level of the piece. The roots of rope carving trace back through Egyptian times in stone, passing again through every



Dogwood pattern, above; dogwood motif carving in progress, below.

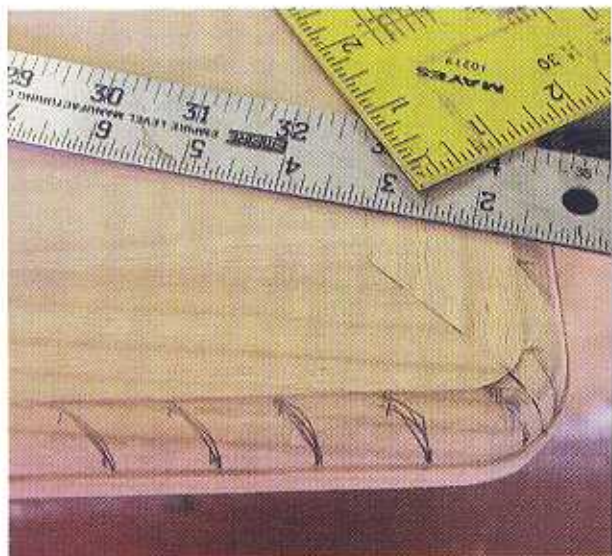


Patterns and design by master carver Stanley D. Saperstein



major furniture style.

Layout for this simple style rope is easy. Start with a simple routed edge, any simple edge will work. Find the center of your span, and place a teardrop. From the center mark measure an evenly-spaced interval equal to the thickness of your stock along the top edge. For the bot-



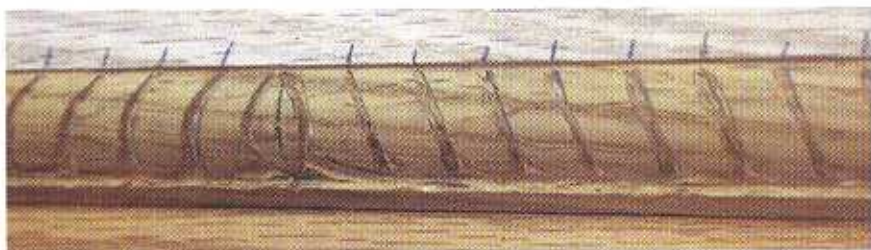
Rope carving traced on.

tom, measure the first mark one and a half times the distance of the top mark, then measure the same interval using this mark as your starting point. Connect the lines using a pencil, rounding carefully along the curve of your router bead.

The scroll is both a transitional and stand-alone concept, common again as a corbel, a foot, or a relief pattern. The employment of scrollwork on this piece consists of four appliques positioned aside each foot flowing the form of the table into the floor. Scrollwork template layout is done using a conveniently-sized bottle cap for the round section of the scroll and the remainder was freehand drawn. The template is easily reversed for the mirror effect.

The acanthus leaf is a proud pattern, originating in Greece and loosely based on the plant that is its namesake. Varying forms include relief and dimensional carvings taking a rolling position on feet and knees of legs or as corbels supporting a mantle or atop a column.

The incised inscription "In Loving Memory of Captain Edward A. States AA Flight 587 August 22, 1959 - November 12, 2001" serves as a lasting memorial to a man dedicated to his church and family. We hope our part in the many remembrances of Captain



Rope-carved feet cap.



Finished scrollwork and feet.

Right: Finished acanthus carving.



Left: Scrollwork blanks and pattern. Above: Acanthus pattern.

Pilot's spirit lives on in wood

By ANDREW MICHAEL ROMANO

Princeton Trinity Church's new credence table is more than a place for the bread and wine of communion, it is a memorial to Ed States, captain of ill-fated American Airlines Flight 587, and a testament to the strength and love of a community.

"He was loved by many and respected by all," said his widow, Mary Alden, at yesterday's dedication ceremony for the table. "The credence table is a perfect example of what Ed was all about," Alden said.

The table is a fitting tribute to the longtime Plainsboro resident and loyal member of Trinity.

States was a pilot by trade but a carpenter by hobby. An American Airlines pilot for 16 years and captain for a decade, States spent his time between flights designing and building furniture for his family and church.

"He loved working with wood," said Alden, "and I am so happy he took on the challenge of making some of our furniture as a learning and growing experience for himself. I know he would have been proud if he had been able to see such a beautiful piece of work."

Credit for the woodwork goes to Stan and Eric Saperstein, father-and-son craftsmen from Pennington. The hand-carved credence table, which faithfully reflects Trinity's Gothic architecture in an original design, received special attention from the two "Artisans of the Valley."

"As soon as it becomes a memorial it's something different," said Eric Saperstein. "And when we found out Captain States was a woodworker, we knew we were working in the name of a fellow craftsman. What is delivered, then, is what we call a portfolio piece — it's of the best quality we can produce. It goes beyond what we are paid to do, and it becomes a work of art."

A little bit of serendipity brought the Sapersteins and Trinity together. On the same day in early January 2002 that *The Times of Trenton* featured Stan and Eric in an article headlined "Carving a Niche," Trinity congregation member Grant Fraser was thinking of ways the church could memorialize his old friend, Ed States.

"I had been thinking about Ed for a while," said Fraser. "He was an amateur carpenter and he built two pieces of furniture for the church. We had actually been debating over how we were going to give him credit for the nametag boards he had built. But before we decided, the plane crashed."

That day, Fraser also happened to read a church newsletter announcing projects for the new year. High on the list: a new credence table.

"We knew we had to replace the existing credence table — it was too big and heavy and out of character," he said. "I thought: We could get Stan and Eric to do the engraving for the nametag board, and then

they could build the new table. It would be a great memorial to Ed, who was a carpenter by hobby, and a perfect way to express our feelings for the States family — to memorialize him in the church on the anniversary of the crash, with a little carpentry."

In his online documentary of the building process, Eric Saperstein reminds churchgoers that the credence table was made in States' memory, and urges them to remember his life each time they see it.

"Please remember, this table is a memorial," he writes on *Artisans of the Valley.com*.

"We hope each of you that knew Captain States remembers him when you take communion, enabling his name and dedication to his family and church to live on in this work of art for many generations to come."

The future is also on Mary Alden's mind. It's a future her sons, Bradley, 11, and Daniel, 9, will have to live without their father — Cub Scout leader, Little League coach, and Sunday school teacher. But it's a future full of hope.

"I know that now one year has passed and it will still be a challenge," she said yesterday, her voice steady and resolute. "But I hope this year will bring us a little more peace and joy than the one before."

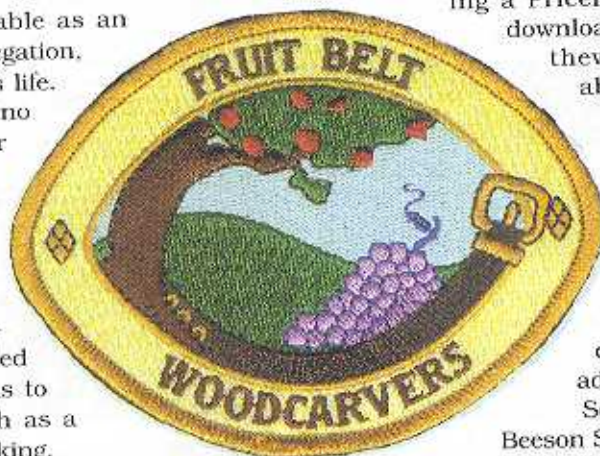
"I am glad this credence table will be here always for our boys to remember," she continued, "and I hope one day they will bring their children here, too."

The Times, Trenton, N.J., 2002. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Gothic Table (Continued from preceding page)

States, creating this credence table as an heirloom possession of this congregation, has proven sufficient to honor his life. The layout of incised carving is no secret, we used over-the-counter stencils first traced on paper, then applied to the stock by tracing through carbon paper.

This piece, a proud addition to our portfolio, is finished in classic Jacobean, garnet shellac, and tung oil varnish. Created with the look of age, our goal was to match the appeal of this church as a work of art in stone and woodworking.



Note: A complete photo documentary ("Creating a Priceless Heirloom") is available for download on Web site <www.artisansofthevalley.com>. More information about Trinity Episcopal Church can be found at <www.trinityprinceton.org>. ■

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