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DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF UNUSUAL,
ATTRACTIVE AND USEFUL BOXES

By

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Degree in the College of Fine and
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February 1, 1968

Advisor: William Keyser

The writer wishes to thank Professor William Keyser for his continued interest, advice and support in the development and writing of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

In order that this project aid a larger number of future master degree candidates, its aim was two-fold. One goal was to investigate, at least superficially, the various approaches to marketing small handicraft. Secondly, and more important to the project, the paper presents in detail information on the market for unusual, attractive and useful wooden boxes and relates specific experiences in attempts at selling these items. Preparation of the thesis included research on antique boxes, examination of commercially available boxes, execution of various original boxes and marketing of the latter.

In choosing the subject for the thesis several factors had to be considered. This craftsman wished to create a new marketable item or add new designs or innovations to already existing categories. Several topics were considered; examples include knock-down furniture and free-form toys. However, both areas had previously been explored by students at Rochester and were eliminated. The idea of the boxes stemmed from a pre-existing interest in small objects well made and designed. This was an area where the individual's original design ideas could be well expressed due to the versatility of the boxes. It was also hoped that the boxes produced would not only compete with but also improve those already on the market.

CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN WOODEN BOXES

Early 16th and 17th Century Treen Boxes of Northwest Europe

The terminology for small objects made from wood in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the word "treen." The Oxford Dictionary of the English Language defines "treen" as "(1) made of tree, wooden; (2) of or belonging to, obtained or made from a tree or trees - 1670."¹ This term has a broad interpretation, but the word is used specifically in three different references as pertaining to small wooden-ware objects.

The peoples of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany and other European countries with an abundance of forests lived in an environment of wood craftsmanship. They made wooden boxes ("treen") of oak, sycamore, fruitwood, rosewood, birch, mahogany, ranged from the very simple to the very elaborate; many were artistic and beautifully finished.

The European housewife had wooden boxes for spices (Figures 1 and 2), salt (Figures 2, 3 and 4), cake (Figure 5), bread (Figure 4) and cheese in her kitchen. On her dressing table were found a powder box, a jewelry casket or box and a box to store fine lace. She might also have had a toilet box (Figures 6 and 7) and a fitted dressing case or box for travelling.²

The head of the home had snuff and tobacco boxes (Figures 8 and 9). He kept his boxes for pounce (powder to dry ink) (Figure 10), string (Figure 11) and pencils on his writing table.³

¹Edward H. Pinto, Treen or Small Woodware Throughout the Ages, p. 1.

²Ibid., pp. 30, 73, 76.

³Ibid., pp. 43-46, 52-54.

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8



FIGURE 9



FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11



The European traveller used a heavy wooden trunk filled with a large assortment of wooden boxes to hold bottles (Figure 12), glove-powder (Figure 12), candles (Figure 13), matches, soap, a mirror, sewing articles, food (Figure 14) and medicine. The apothecare had his own particular travelling case, and the farmer had his special boxes, for example, a double-bowl box to carry butter to market.⁴

In contrast, the modern traveller uses suitcases of plastic, leather or fabric. Toilet and sewing articles, medicine and jewelry are found in plastic containers or travelling kits also made of leather or fabric. Wooden travelling boxes have become outmoded since the introduction of more pliable material that will occupy less space and be less cumbersome.

The First American Boxes: Virginia and New England Colonies

The European settled in Jamestown in 1607 and in Plymouth in 1629 and brought his mannerisms, traits and living customs with him. The new American made crude, simple and sturdy wooden or "treen" ware from available trees (pine, oak, ash, hickory, maple, birch and beech). The pineapple pattern was prevalent among the "treen" of the New Englanders.⁵

Food boxes for spices (Figure 15), salt, sugar (Figure 16), butter (Figures 16 and 17), meat and cheese (Figure 17) were the most common. Figure 18 illustrates the techniques employed by the New Englanders to construct their butter and spice boxes. The Early American also made pill boxes (Figures 15 and 16).⁶

⁴Ibid., pp. 86-87.

⁵Mary Earle Gould, Early American Wooden Ware and Other Kitchen Utensils, pp. 7-8.

⁶Ibid., pp. 158-174.



FIGURE 12

106 Travelling bottle and tumbler cases, glove powdering flasks and powder pots



FIGURE 13

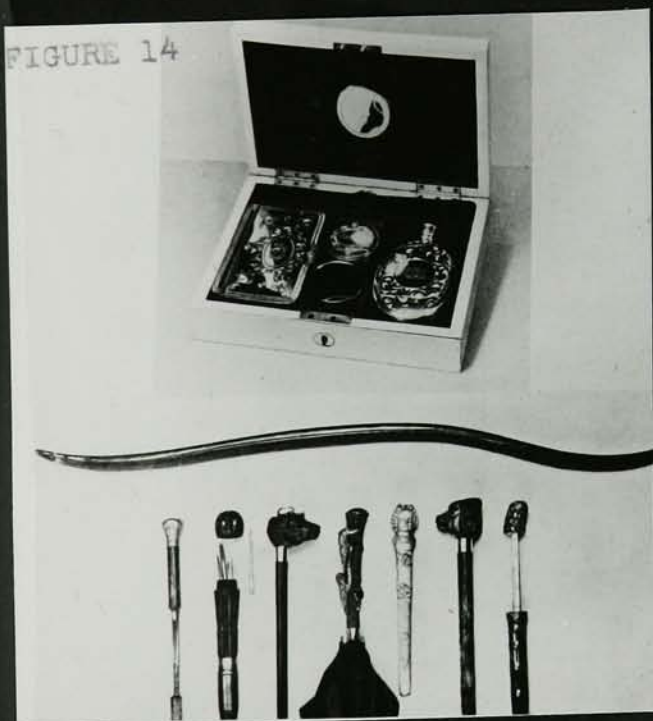


FIGURE 14

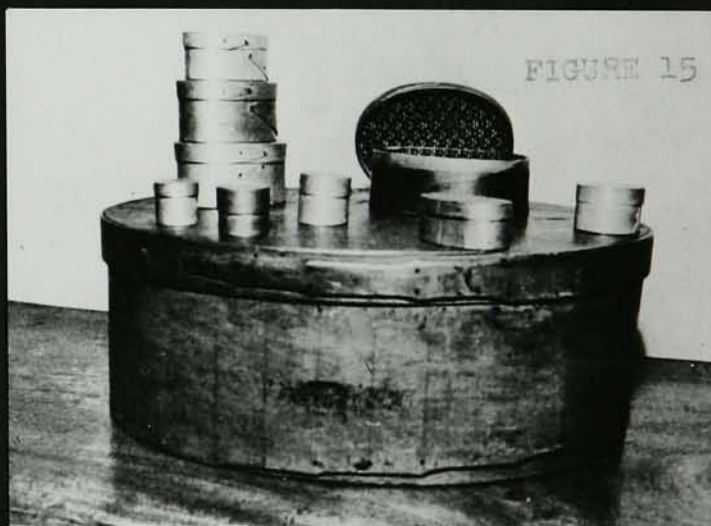


FIGURE 15



FIGURE 16



FIGURE 17



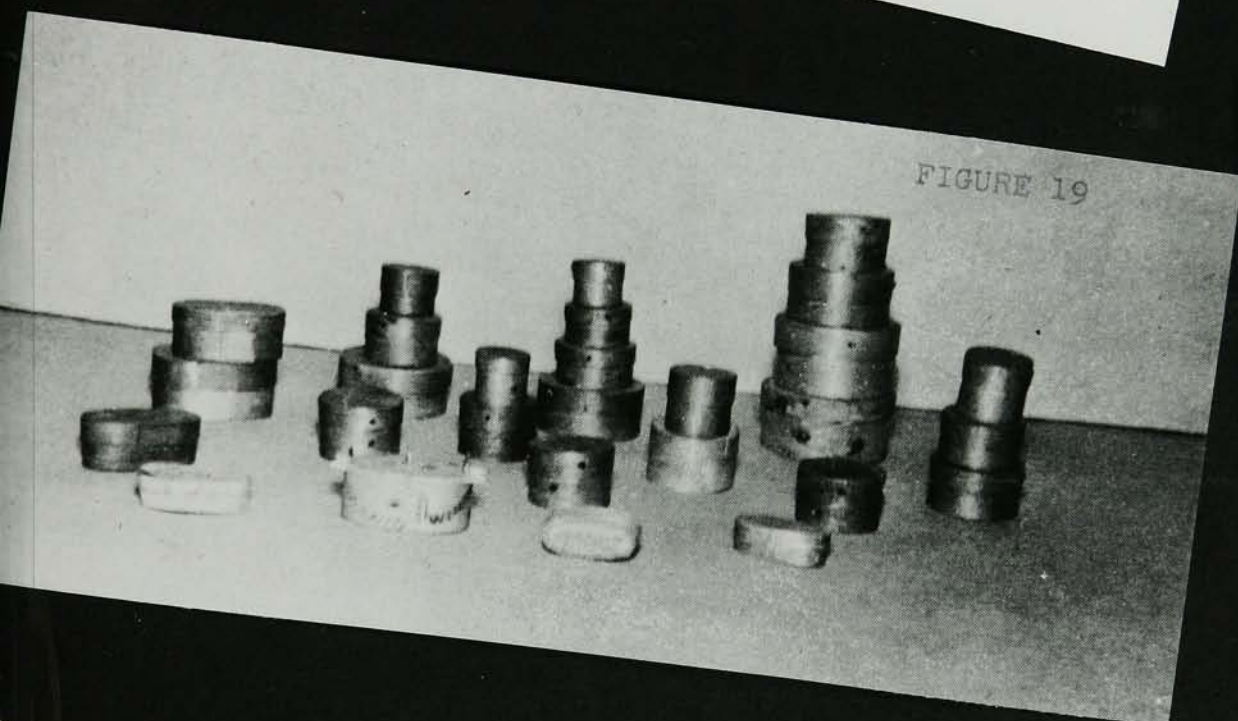
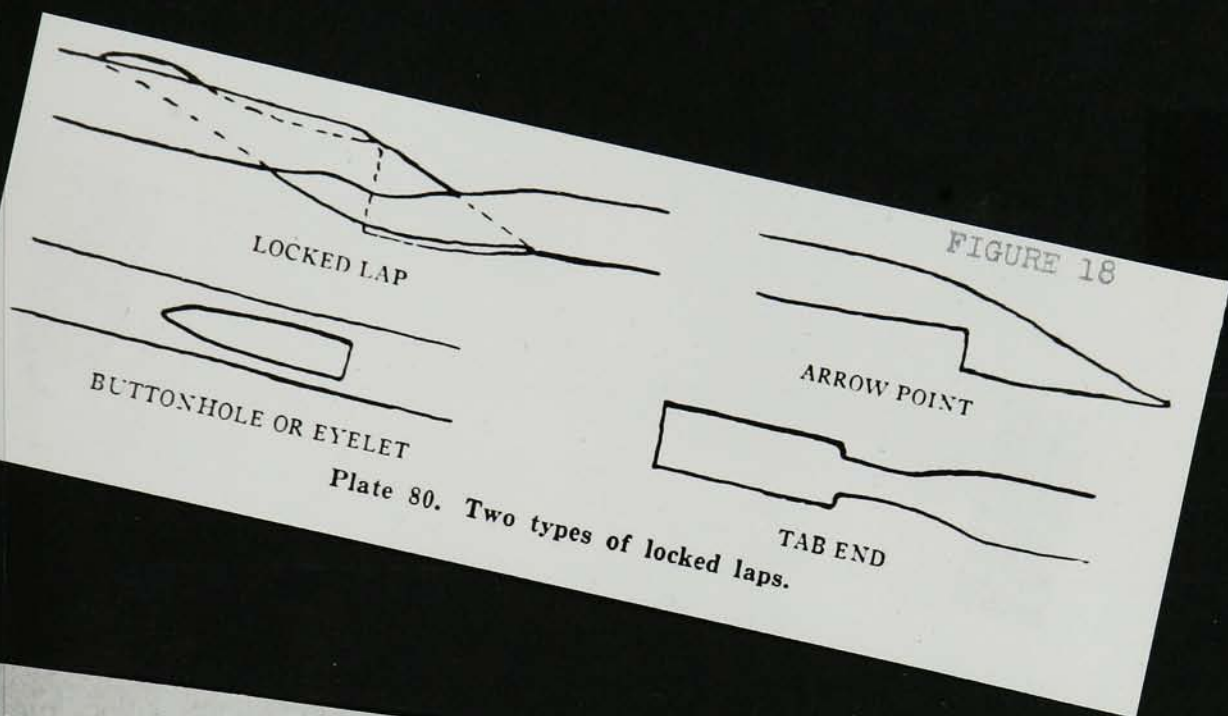




FIGURE
20

Later Development: The Pennsylvania Dutch

The Pennsylvania Dutch, who founded Philadelphia in 1683, also kept their European customs. Their "treen" was more decorative than the above Early Americans and often bore the traditional tulip pattern.⁷ While the Pennsylvania Dutch also made boxes for spices and salt, they had some distinctive boxes: for example, the bride's box (Figure 20) for the finer items of her trousseau, the housewife's dough box or stretcher dough table to mix dough, and the tiny "house" box or "trunk" box large enough to hold two packs of cigarettes or two decks of cards. Their ordinary boxes stored knives, candles, stationery and nails.⁸

Contemporary Wooden Boxes

While the European and Early American "treen" was found in the home, very few wooden boxes are found in the modern dwelling. Today, food is stored in plastic, glass, cardboard, paper or metal containers. However, wooden boxes for knives, stationery, pills, tobacco, jewelry and sewing articles are still made and sold, but in most cases they are designed for decorative rather than utilitarian purposes. They have characteristic clean lines and pleasing proportions geared to mass produced items. They are of contemporary design--simplicity is outstanding. Mahogany, cherry, rosewood, teak and walnut are the most commonly used woods. The less expensive boxes are made of stained woods: for example, maple stained black to resemble ebony.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸Earl F. Robacker, Pennsylvania Dutch Stuff, a Guide to Country Antiques, pp. 71-74, 124-125, 152.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH ON THE MARKET FOR WOODEN BOXES

Before attempting to sell a hand-made item, it is necessary and beneficial to investigate the various types of such products already commercially available. In the case of articles such as the wooden boxes for jewels, cigarettes, pills, etc., an assumption would be made that the market would be located in large sophisticated urban areas or their outskirts. It seems rather unlikely that rural families would have as much need for or create as much demand for specialized handicrafts limited in their use.

For this reason it was decided to investigate stores and craft shops in large cities. Geographically it was only possible to visit Rochester, New York, and New York City: therefore, conclusions were admittedly drawn from limited sources. As a result of these investigations, however, it was noted that the most popular wooden boxes available were those for jewelry, cigarettes and men's valets. The price range of the boxes was from five to one hundred dollars; average price for quality, well-made and well-designed items was from twenty to fifty dollars.

It was decided, therefore, that boxes designed for similar purposes and in approximate price ranges would be the most potentially marketable. In order to fulfill the desire to improve and to add to the available market, the craftsman also sought to produce several new boxes. Ideas for the banks, in particular, were executed carefully so that an original and potentially marketable contribution might be made.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND PRICES OF BOXES TO MARKET

The Philosophy of Design

Ideas for the designs and shapes of the boxes constructed were, for the most part, totally original. On several occasions an inspiration came from one of the many industrial design magazines consulted, but the great majority of work was done with a pre-sketched pencil drawing. Sometimes the craftsman would begin with a solid block of wood and a thin band saw; the block was moved in the saw several times in three different directions so that it resembled the parts of a jigsaw puzzle. Prior to beginning work, however, the use of the box (e.g., jewelry, cigarettes) was decided, and in some cases the function of the object determined its design (e.g., the handle on the bank).

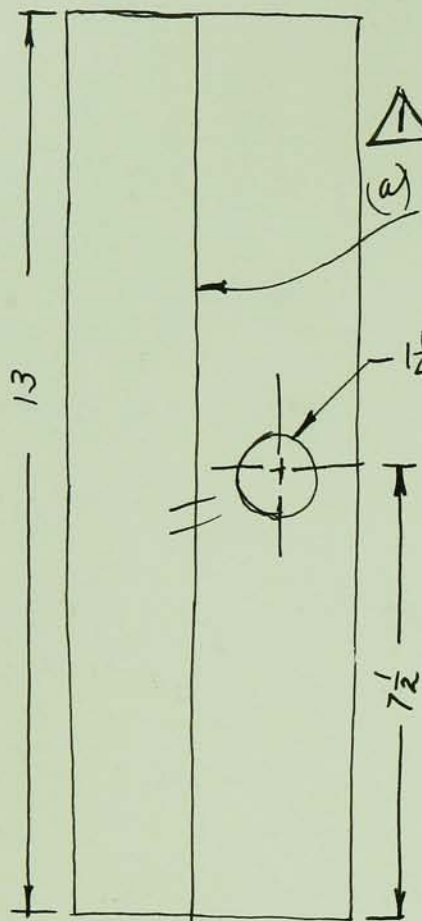
The basis for designs could be summarized then as spontaneous perception of simple, original and honest lines. Mainly straight lines and curves were used in an attempt to achieve sensitive, delicate, pleasing shapes. To further enhance the combination of unusual design and perfection of craftsmanship, grain patterns were finished in natural oil and only woods of rich, dark colors were used. Although metal was tried as adornment on several boxes, it was generally dissatisfying because it could not match the warmth and lustre of the woods.

It has been asked what makes a good box or what makes an excellent box? Any good piece of construction should be totally original, have a nearly universal appeal, draw people to it and concentrate on one focal point (e.g., the handle on the banks). Later research proved the banks to be most appealing, and it could perhaps be due to their quality as conversation pieces. They arouse the viewer's interest and curiosity and make one wish to investigate the product further. This is essential to marketability.

SKETCHES

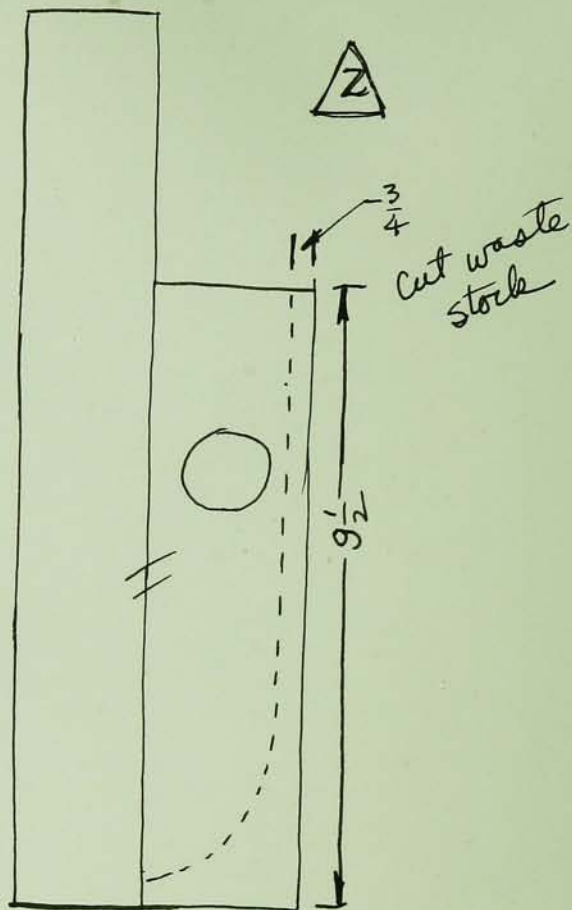
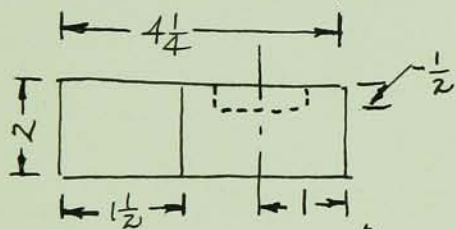
MASS PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES FOR
TEN MASS-PRODUCED WOODEN BANKS

TOTAL PRODUCTION TIME - 20 HOURS

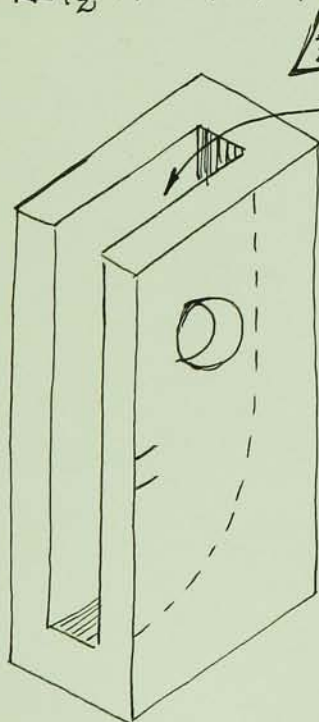


①
(a) cut with the grain of a solid block of walnut (Hollow ground blade)

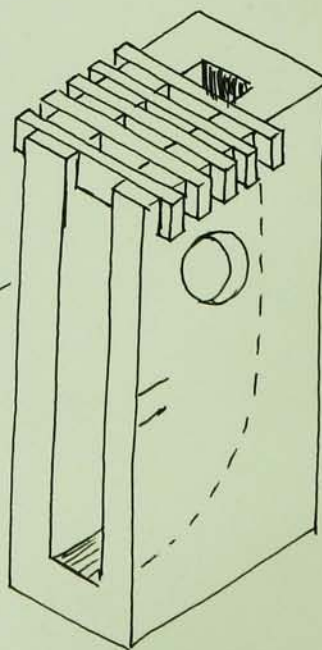
(B) drill hole $\frac{1}{2}$ deep



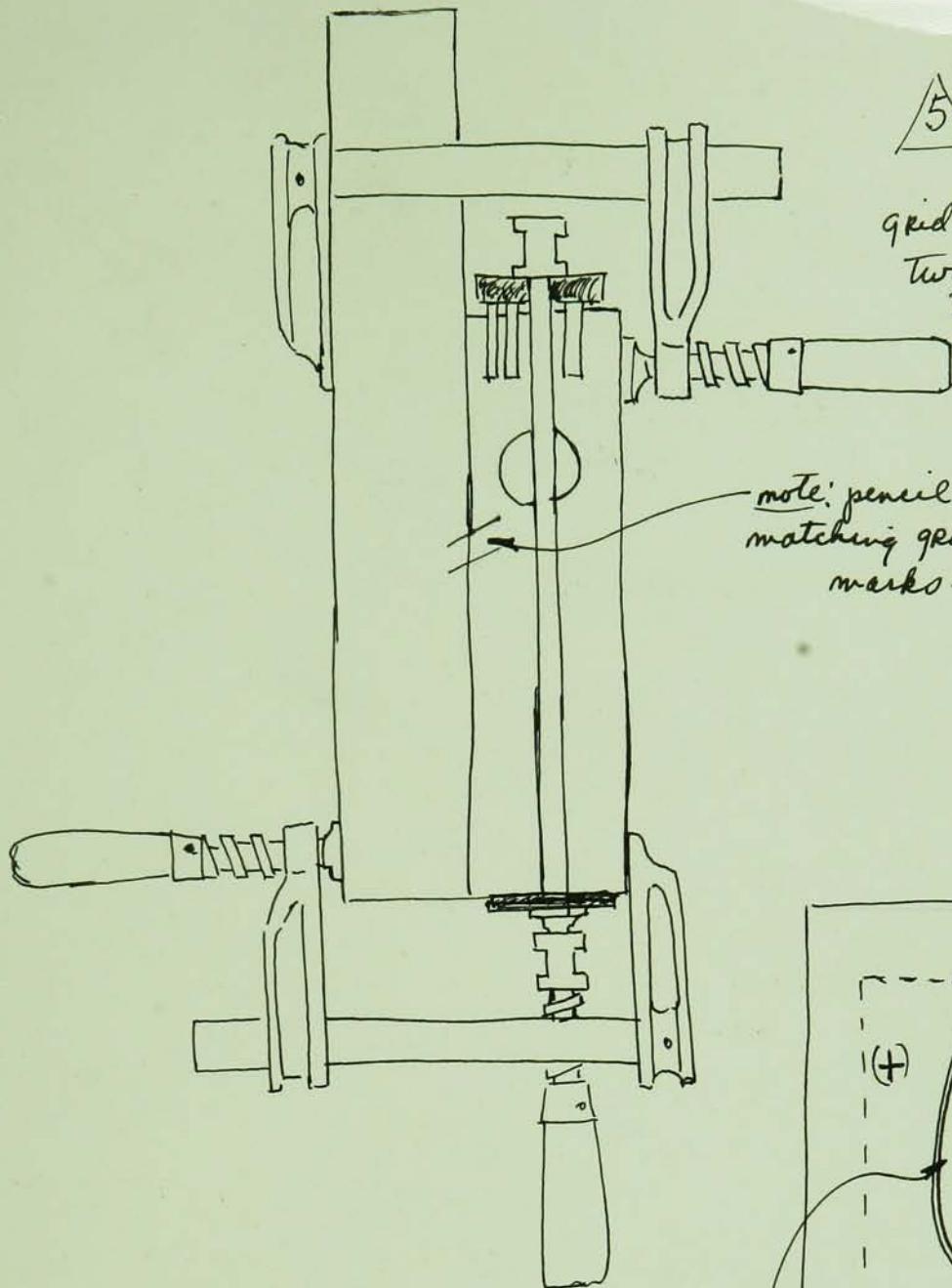
②
cut waste stock



③
plow-out with dado set
Have a stop on ripping fence of circular saw



④
cut dado joints for grid effect



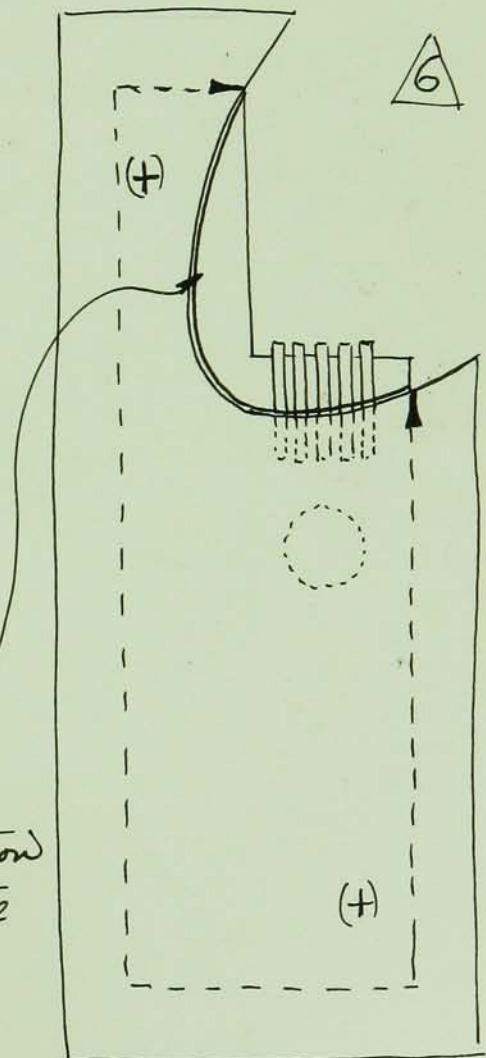
5
grid sections and
two halves glued
together with one
clamping operations
as shown

note: pencil
matching grain
marks.

Make up aluminum
Template of desired curve

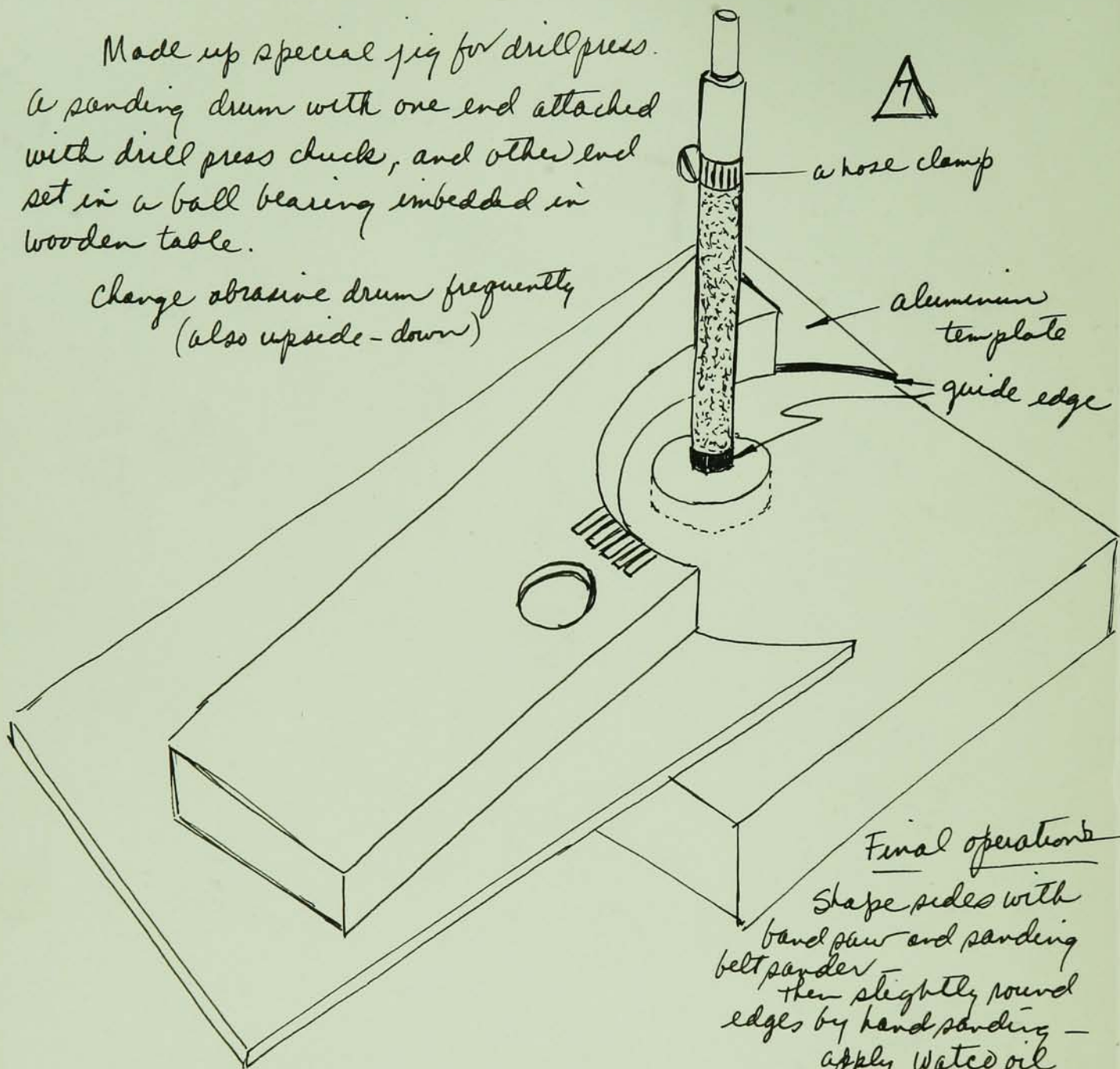
Cut on outside of line
with band saw

Note: (+) mark for position
and arrows on template



Made up special jig for drill press.
 A sanding drum with one end attached
 with drill press chuck, and other end
 set in a ball bearing embedded in
 wooden table.

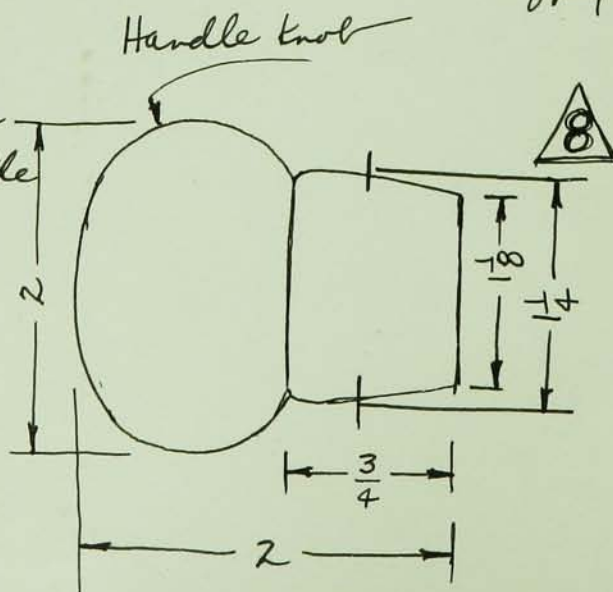
Change abrasive drum frequently
 (also upside-down)



Final operations

Shape sides with
 band saw and sanding
 belt sander -
 then slightly round
 edges by hand sanding -
 apply Watco oil
 finish

tapes on handle knob are
 turned on ^(metal) machine lathe
 Five at a time



Pricing Structure of the Boxes

According to experts in the marketing field, handicrafts can never compete price-wise with manufactured goods and neither is there any need for them to do so with other handicrafts. Instead of cutting prices, the craftsman who wishes to market his wares should approach the competitor's prices as nearly as possible, and the greatest emphasis should be on offering his own individual quality and value.

By consulting a marketing guide for the small businessman, it was noted that the craftsman should be in keeping with general business practices and follow certain rules when arriving at wholesale or retail prices for his product. It is important to remember that nearly every craftsman makes a concession to get his item on the market. In estimating cost, say the experts, the seller must figure both the maximum and minimum expenses: then these must be compared to market prices and, allowing for at least a penny profit, the wholesale price can be figured for each item.

What should be included when arriving at cost? According to business experts the following considerations must be made:

- a) Cost of Materials--Estimate for everything used except machinery and equipment.
- b) Cost of Labor --The worker should pay himself the Federal minimum wage for manufactured products sold in interstate commerce and even go above this if possible. Profit should not be included here.
- c) Cost of Design --This should be included only if the design will affect the price to the customer. If this cannot be included, say the experts, the seller can write off part or all the expense as a business loss when he files his income tax.
- d) Overhead Expense --This should include basic costs only in production of the product and should be figured by the hour if possible. It should not exceed ten to fifteen per cent of wholesale prices.

- e) Cost of Selling --Estimate a fifteen per cent commission (the average) if someone is employed in selling for you.

Another good business practice is giving trade discounts of one to two per cent on quantity orders if your product lends itself to such. This encourages business and lends a professional touch to the dealer in small handicrafts.

These concepts are general criteria, but each craftsman must adapt the rules and decide on his own pricing structure. The cost of the boxes was estimated using some of these techniques: actual cost of the material was added to a figure of five dollars an hour for every hour of work on a given box. The five dollars included a very small profit, but the cost of time for design was not estimated. Reference may be made to the following charts which demonstrate pricing of the various boxes. Costs are estimated on a single production, but a "hand-mass-produced" item (e.g., ten of one kind made at one time) would decrease working time and thus affect prices as is explained in the following.

Figure 26 was selected as the item on which to test the results of "mass produced" handicraft. Ten of these boxes were made in twenty hours at a cost of twenty dollars for the material. Since each product took two hours to make at a cost of ten dollars for labor and two for wood, the "new" price is twelve dollars per box wholesale as compared with the previous sixteen dollars and fifty cents. Converted into retail price terms, this means a difference of nine dollars on each item offered for sale.

Thus, more of a bargaining power was gained by the seller because a reduction in cost could be anticipated. The leeway in price created by this "mass production" method would only be offered to those buyers who agreed to contract for boxes in multiples of ten.

<u>Figure Number</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Manufac- turing Price</u>	<u>Estimated Retail Price</u>	<u>Construc- tion Time in Hours</u>	<u>Wood and Metal Used and Cost</u>
21	Men's Jewelry, Cigarettes	\$15.00	\$ 30.00	2 3/4	Walnut--\$.70
22	Women's Jewelry	62.00	125.00	10	Rosewood--\$12.00
23	Bank	23.00	45.00	4 1/2	Paduk--\$4.00, Rosewood--\$1.00
24	Sewing Articles, Buttons, Cigars, Games, Stationery	42.00	80.00	7	Mahogany--\$3.50, Cherry--\$.15, Walnut--\$.20
25	Women's Jewelry	19.50	39.00	3 1/2	Rosewood--\$2.00
26	Bank	16.50	33.00	3	Walnut--\$1.00, Rosewood--\$.50
27	Men and Women's Jewelry, Ciga- rettes	22.00	45.00	4	Walnut--\$1.50
28	Women's Jewelry, Cigarettes, Religi- ous Articles	21.00	42.00	3 1/2	Rosewood--\$3.00
29	Men and Women's Jewelry, Cigars	16.50	33.00	2 1/2	Walnut--\$1.00, Rosewood--\$1.50
30	Religious Articles, Women's Jewelry	22.00	45.00	4	Rosewood--\$1.50
31	Bank	13.50	27.00	2	Walnut--\$2.00, Rosewood--\$1.50
32	Religious Articles, Women's Jewelry	37.00	75.00	6	Rosewood--\$6.00 Aluminum--\$1.00
33	Men's Jewelry, Games	17.00	35.00	3	Walnut--\$1.00 Aluminum--\$.20
34	Men's Jewelry, Games	23.00	45.00	4	Walnut--\$2.50 Aluminum--\$.50
35	Men's Jewelry, Cigarettes	12.00	25.00	2	Walnut--\$.70 Aluminum--\$.20
36	Cigars, Sewing Articles	58.00	115.00	10	Walnut--\$6.80, Aluminum--\$1.20
37	Men's Jewelry, Games	18.00	35.00	3 1/2	Walnut--\$1.20, Aluminum--\$.80

<u>Figure Number</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Manufac- turing Price</u>	<u>Estimated Retail Price</u>	<u>Construc- tion Time in Hours</u>	<u>Wood and Metal Used and Cost</u>
38	Men's Jewelry, Cigarettes, Cigars	\$18.00	\$35.00	3 1/2	Mahogany--\$.70, Aluminum--\$.40
39	Women's Jewelry, Religious Articles	16.00	32.00	3 1/2	Walnut--\$.70 Aluminum--\$.30
40	Women's Jewelry	38.00	75.00	7	Oak--\$3.00
41	Games	22.00	45.00	4	Walnut--\$2.00
42	Women's Jewelry, Religious Articles	16.00	32.00	3 1/2	Walnut--\$1.00
43	Men's Jewelry, Cigarettes, Games	16.50	33.00	3	Cherry--\$1.50
44	Bank	23.00	45.00	4	Oak--\$2.00, Walnut--\$1.00
45	Cardex	21.00	42.00	3 1/2	Walnut--\$2.00 Rosewood--\$1.00
46	Men's Jewelry, Games	16.00	32.00	3	Walnut--\$1.00
47	Men and Women's Jewelry	37.00	75.00	6	Rosewood--\$5.00, Walnut--\$2.00
48	Stamps, Pills	5.50	10.00	1	Walnut--\$.40
49	Toothpicks	5.50	10.00	1	Walnut--\$.40
50	Men's Jewelry, Games	16.00	32.00	3	Walnut--\$.80
51	Men and Women's Jewelry	21.50	43.00	4	Walnut--\$1.20 Tulip--\$.40
52	Men's Jewelry, Cigarettes	18.00	35.00	3 1/2	Mahogany--\$.70 Rosewood--\$.30
53	Men's Jewelry	21.00	42.00	4	Walnut--\$1.00
54	Sewing Articles, Buttons	18.00	35.00	3	Walnut--\$2.30, Rosewood--\$.70

<u>Figure Number</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Manufac- turing Price</u>	<u>Estimated Retail Price</u>	<u>Construc- tion Time in Hours</u>	<u>Wood and Metal Used and Cost</u>
55	Games	\$22.00	\$45.00	4	Walnut--\$2.00
56	Cigarettes	28.00	55.00	5	Walnut--\$3.00
57	Women's Jewelry	39.00	78.00	7	Cherry--\$3.80

Examination of the above chart indicates that twenty-seven of the thirty-seven boxes made have an estimated retail price of from \$15 to \$45. This is the price range for which they were originally intended to be designed.



FIGURE 21



FIGURE 22A



FIGURE 22



FIGURE 23



FIGURE 24



FIGURE 25



FIGURE 26



FIGURE 27



FIGURE 28



FIGURE 29

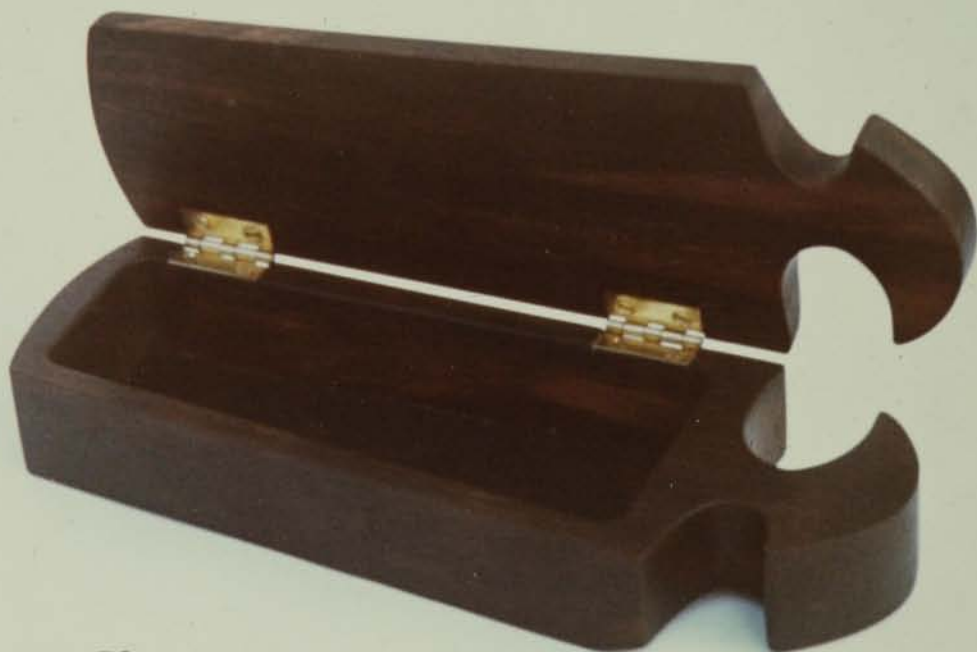


FIGURE 30

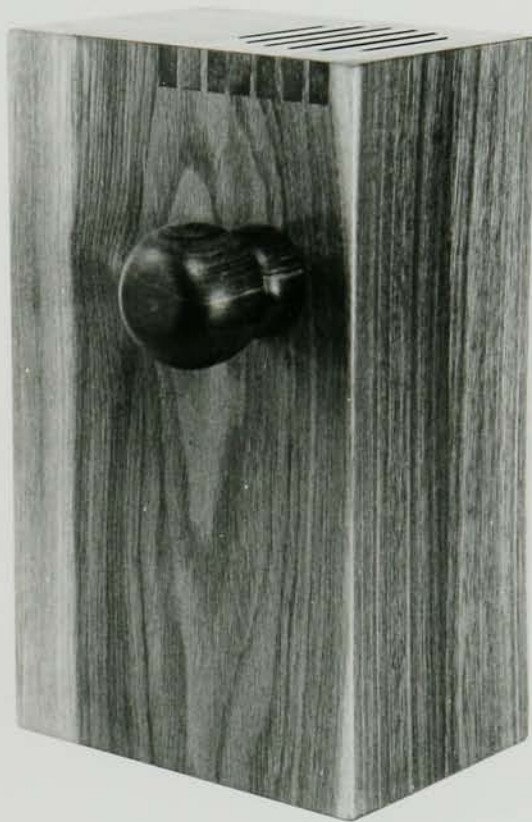


FIGURE 31



FIGURE 32



FIGURE 33



FIGURE 34



FIGURE 35



FIGURE #36



FIGURE 36A



FIGURE 37

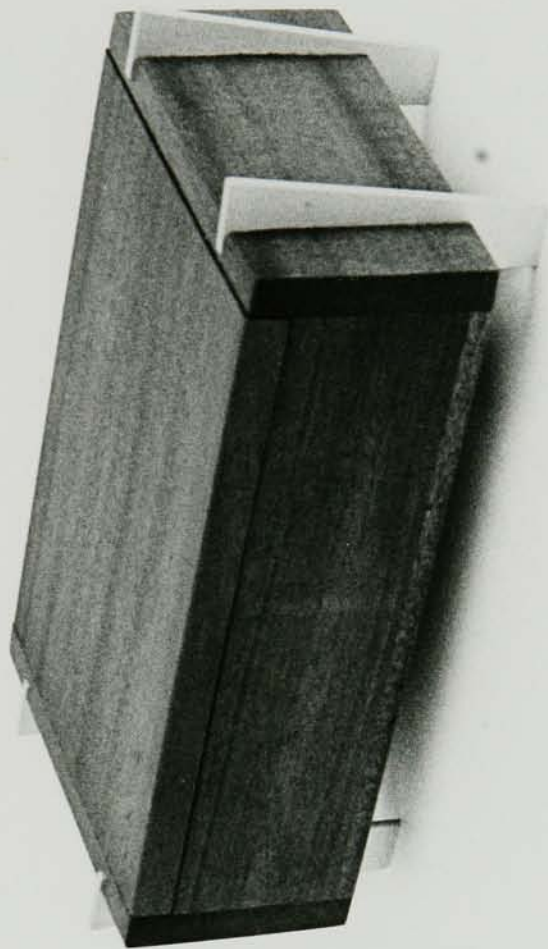


FIGURE 38



FIGURE 39



FIGURE 40



FIGURE 41



FIGURE 42



FIGURE 43



FIGURE 44



FIGURE 45



FIGURE 46

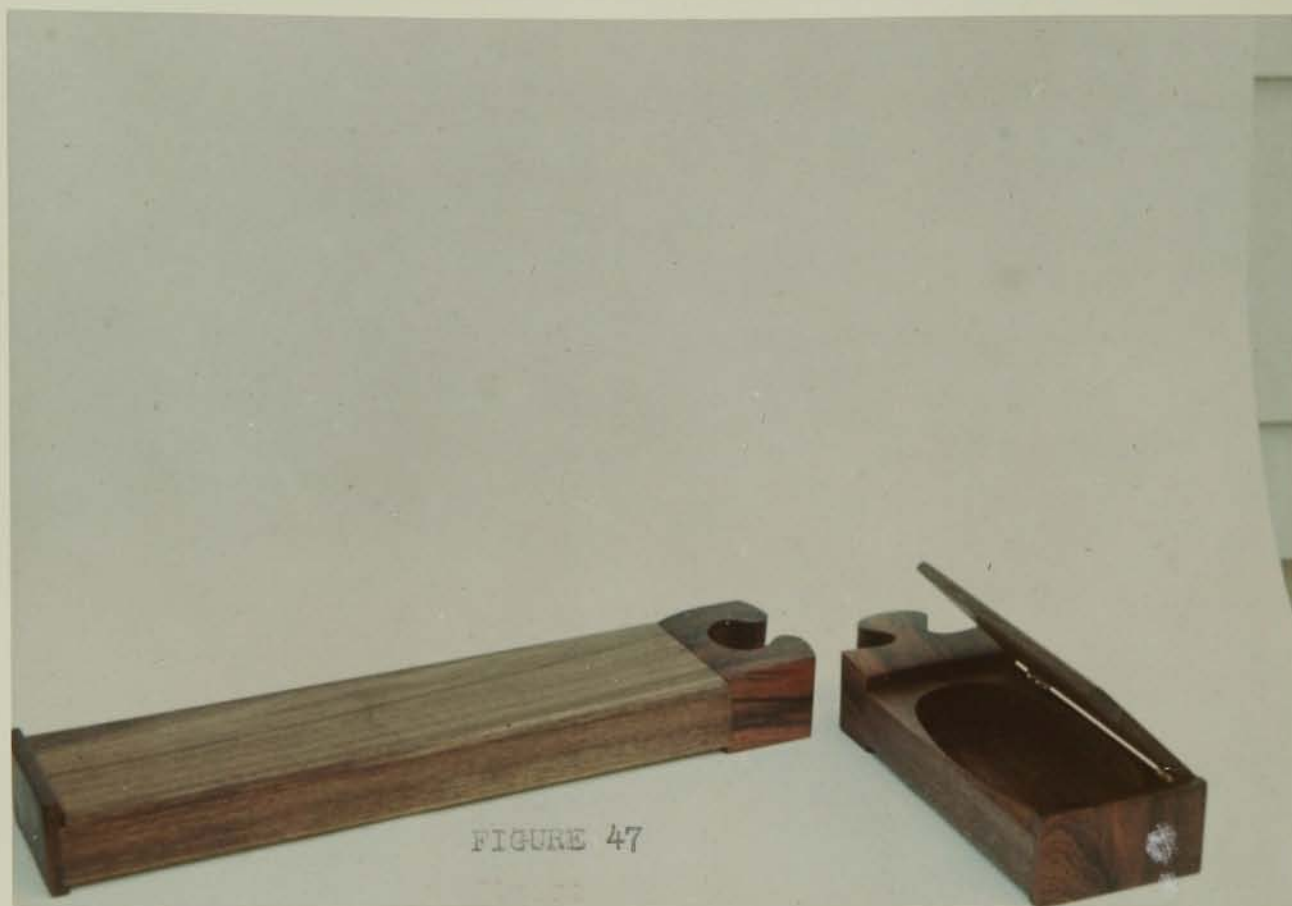


FIGURE 47



FIGURE 40



FIGURE 49



FIGURE 50



FIGURE 51



FIGURE 52



FIGURE 53



FIGURE 54



FIGURE 55 .



FIGURE 56



FIGURE 57

Grouping of Boxes

Upon examination and re-appraisal from the standpoints of design, proportion and general attractiveness, the craftsman could classify the wooden boxes into three major categories. The most obvious division is those adjudged successes, i.e. pleasing in design to an individual who can appreciate sensitivity of shape. Included in this grouping are figures 21 through 31, 33 through 36 and figure 39. The latter numbers cited have not only the aforementioned qualities of design but also successfully combine the warmth and beauty of wood with the cold, silvery sheen of aluminum.

The second category to be considered are those boxes which must be evaluated as failures from the creator's point of view. These are the last five, namely 53 through 57. The first, a man's jewelry box, lacks any esthetic beauty and is totally distracting in design. Boxes 54 and 55 fail because the craftsman incorporated two or more distinctive designs which neither blend nor compliment each other. Figures 56 and 57, cigarette and jewelry boxes, respectively, have no graceful lines and lack proportion; they are awkward in appearance and disturbing to the eye.

The third basic grouping falls midway between the first two in that these boxes, while not total failures, need revision in order to be successful. Figures 40 through 47 manifest appealing design but do not show proper proportion.

Following are pictures of ten boxes which are considered the most successful based on the above mentioned criteria. Specific reasons for so deciding are indicated beneath each picture.

N.B. A discussion of the most successful boxes economically and marketably will be found in the concluding chapter.



FIGURE A

- (A) This is a multi-purpose box which can be used as a decoration, a piece of sculpture or a bank. It is a curiosity item with interest added by the unique construction and matching of grains.



FIGURE B

(B) This is a small storage chest with a pleasing shape. It is a delicate box with a special stop hinge that allows the lid to stand at a forty-five degree angle.



FIGURE C

(C) Although this is a miscellaneous box, its prime function is to store jewelry. The grain of wood selected emphasizes the top and curved bottom.

FIGURE D



(D) This item is similar to Figure A in that it has many purposes. The brilliance of paduk wood and the suggestion of motion in design combine to make this a most attractive box. It would be impossible to "mass produce" because of the complexity of design.

FIGURE E



- (E) This was specifically designed to store a double stack of index cards for use in the home or office. Two-tone wood(rosewood on top, walnut on bottom), a hinge top, and a self-contained handle highlight this item.

FIGURE F



(F) A particular favorite, this box was designed for pearls; the very shape suggests femininity. It boasts a two-pin lid which automatically sets perfectly.

FIGURE G



- (G) This bank is easy to make and lends itself well to mass production and profit. Features include the simplicity of a third dimensional rectangular object and the unique circular grating system as well as matched grains.

FIGURE H



- (H) A box of many purposes this adds a touch of aluminum, but a complimentary wood should have been used. The front of the box is particularly graceful due to the long and thin lines. If the hinge were eliminated, labor hours could be reduced.

FIGURE I



(I) This is a lovely pearl or cuff link case with a simple hinge lid.

FIGURE J



(J) Again a box with several uses, predominantly men's jewelry or cigarettes. Contrasting wood legs were used as decoration to enhance a clean rectangular shape.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DATA ON THE METHOD OF MARKETING SMALL HANDICRAFTS

According to business experts, there are five generally acceptable ways for the craftsman to put his wares on the market. The five are jobbers, consignment, mail order, wholesale to buyers or a retail store of his own. In reverse order, each is briefly explained and various pros and/or cons are given.

Businessmen believe that a retail shop of their own is best for the small craftsman if at all financially possible. Reasons for this opinion include the personal contact with customers so important to any business, the corresponding knowledge of peoples' likes and dislikes and the practical criticism garnered from first-hand dealings with prospective buyers. Very often the small businessman will begin selling at home; if, however, an actual store is within the budget, the location should be chosen carefully so as to attract the most customers: the rent paid should not exceed twelve per cent of his estimated gross business.

A disadvantage to a retail store is the outlay of capital for such necessary items as upkeep, insurance and advertising. Even if the store is located within the seller's home, at least three types of insurance policies are needed. These include customer liability, fire insurance and compensation. In order to create customers' interest, the independent businessman must advertise in as many ways as possible. Suggested for the owner of a small retail store are press releases with pertinent information sent to local newspapers, radio and television stations, or brochures about the shop and products which might be distributed free-of-charge by the Chamber of Commerce, hotels, tourist agencies, etc. All of this requires careful budgeting and bookkeeping, and often it is wise to consult profes-

sional business advisors whose fees might be considerable. It must also be remembered that results cannot be expected immediately when the seller is seeking the buyer, and the seller must be economically prepared to wait.

A second method of marketing small handicrafts is to sell wholesale. There are definite advantages to this method in that you deal directly with a small number of professional buyers; this means less bookkeeping and correspondence than with a retail store. By selling wholesale, the craftsman also eliminates the problems of advertising his wares, budgeting a whole business enterprise and keeping filing systems. Experts advise the craftsman that the best wholesale markets are small gift shops and specialty shops rather than large department stores which necessarily prefer to deal with manufactured goods available in large quantities.

If an individual is interested in selling wholesale, there are several trade publications consulted by buyers in which the seller might place an advertisement. These include Gift and Art Buyer, Picture and Gift Review, Home Furnishing and Fashion, Calendar, and Women's Wear Daily. The craftsman should also be aware of the Buyer's Lounge, 225 Fifth Avenue, New York City, which exhibits handicrafts for buyers of wholesale merchandise. Buyers look for products which will add distinction to their store and make them more outstanding than their competition. Advisors say that the seller should limit himself to a few stores at first and approach these buyers by trying to persuade them that the merchandise was created especially for their type of clientele.

In locating stores and potential buyers the seller should look particularly in large cities which tend to attract the market for hand made items. The craftsman could easily obtain and use the classified telephone directories from such cities or peruse magazines and local newspapers for

shops advertising merchandise comparable to his own. He might also consult Sheldon's Retail Trade Publication, 32 Union Square, New York City. This is a fairly complete listing of names and addresses of buyers and buying offices of moderate to large-size retail stores throughout the country.

Perhaps the biggest disadvantage of selling wholesale to a buyer is the expense involved in shipping. Since this adds cost to the invoice and increases the wholesale price, the retail price is also affected. The seller should seek the least expensive but most durable materials to protect his product while still trying to follow the shipping requests of the store or buyer involved. Of course all personal contact with customers is lost in this method of selling, and this, too, is a disadvantage.

A third possible means of marketing hand made products is through mail order business. In this method mailing lists and advertising are all-important. Business experts have formulated a rule to follow when starting in the mail order line; simply stated the rule is to protect the investment made. For every dollar he spends on an individual advertisement or mailing, the craftsman should have enough finished products on hand to bring in an equal profit. For example, if one-hundred-seventy-five dollars is spent and the profit on each item to be sold is two dollars, the seller should have ninety products on hand so that one-hundred-eighty dollars in total profit might be realized.

Surveys have shown that gift items, decorating accessories and fashion ideas do best in this type of market, and a price range of two to fifteen dollars (including postage and a money-back guarantee) seem most successful. It is also advised that the seller discuss his project with a lawyer, post office authorities and a reliable printer to determine costs, local restrictions and regulations for selling products by mail.

Although advertising in popular newspapers and magazines is expensive, they are considered the best mediums since they give the seller the greatest contact with the largest number of people who would possibly be interested in his product. The advertisement should invite the reader to write for a brochure even if he is not interested in an immediate purchase; this builds the seller's mailing list. It is also best to ask the buyer to send payment as C.O.D. orders are more complicated.

While mailing lists can be bought from other businessmen or firms, the craftsman himself can easily build a list by checking wedding, engagements and birth announcements in local papers. The letters or ads should be sent with postage guaranteed so that those names which cannot be located can be eliminated from the list and save future expense.

The last two methods to be considered are consignment buying and selling to jobbers. According to business advisors the first is "risky business" with no assurance. The seller should not leave his product on consignment for longer than a month, and agreement should be made on immediate store payment for purchased goods and damages for shopworn items. A jobber is contacted through decorators, furniture salesmen or department stores. Since they primarily deal in large quantities, jobbers are usually too preoccupied and/or uninterested in small, hand made items of limited production.

CHAPTER V

EXPERIENCES IN MARKETING BOXES

Before deciding which method of marketing this craftsman was to use in selling his handicrafts, many factors had to be considered. According to businessmen, eighty-five per cent of all handicraft sales failures are due to a poor choice of markets. Thus was reinforced the necessity of investigating and estimating which sales method would be best for the boxes. The decision hinged closely on the rate of production possible; this would necessarily be limited since the time allowed for construction was secondary to full-time professional commitments. It was estimated that fifty boxes per month would be maximum; therefore, the craftsman eliminated the possibility of jobbers because their large orders could not be fulfilled. Due to the risk of consignment sales, the expense of mail order sales and the unfeasibility of setting up an independent retail store, it was decided that wholesaling to buyers would best suit this individual's needs.

Since preliminary investigations of the market for unusual, attractive and useful wooden boxes revealed that best potential markets would be gift shops in larger cities, and in order to sample the national "tastes," letters were sent to the buyers of thirty-four shops throughout the country specializing in handicraft items. Names were gathered from a brochure called Craft Shops, U.S.A., a publication of the American Craftsmen's Council, 29 West 53 Street, New York City. The pamphlet is a guide for craftsmen and collectors of crafts, listing approximately five hundred craft shops, galleries and workshop-showrooms in the United States. Each listing in the booklet includes full addresses, store hours, brief characterizations and names of owner/manager. Of particular note for the craftsman is the asterisk denoting a shop which is interested in being contacted by individual sellers.

Included in the correspondence was a business letter, order form, ten pictures (Figures A through J, Chapter III), and a stamped, self-addressed envelope (see attached forms). Of the thirty-four sent, replies were received from eighteen sources. The information garnered and criticism noted did much to enable this craftsman to evaluate the successes and failures of his boxes and to draw several conclusions about their marketability.

The banks by far were the best received; six of the eighteen stores specifically mentioned their uniqueness and buyer appeal. One store buyer pointed out that instructions for opening the banks should have been sent along with the merchandise as his staff found it to be a problem. Fifty per cent of stores contacted commented on the handsomeness of design which the craftsman had tried so hard to attain: two buyers said, however, that the items were not interesting in design or function and therefore not suitable for their market. Still another owner suggested decorating the boxes with a panel or insignia of metal or fused glass, but with the few exceptions noted in Chapter III this had generally been found to be esthetically unsuccessful.

While two stores offered to take several models (particularly the banks) on a consignment basis, two others stated that there was not enough call for handicraft and that the public pays grudgingly, especially for woodcraft. A particular buyer stated that he would not purchase in this manner; he said he would have to see the work of new craftsmen and that he would never buy from pictures. Other comments included a suggestion that personal selling was more in line with handicraft production and that a mimeographed letter was a very poor approach to selling of any kind.

The most numerous remarks, however, concerned the prices of the boxes. They were, of course, wholesale prices, but this apparently was

not stated clearly enough since six stores asked for a clarification of prices. Another six stores stated outrightly that, if the costs were wholesale and had to be doubled to achieve retail prices, the craftsman's estimates were too high. This would indicate that increased production in the form of "mass production" (see Chapter III) would be necessary to reduce labor hours and in turn reduce cost.

Prior to canvassing by mail, the writer attempted personal promotion of his creations on a more limited scale. The results were not as helpful or as definitive as were those previously mentioned, but they do aid somewhat in forming conclusions about the marketability of the boxes.

Fifteen boxes for storage of jewelry, cigarettes, cigars, pills, tooth picks and religious articles were presented to various jewelry stores, gift, novelty and home-furnishing shops. Several stores, for example, Georg Jensen, demonstrated interest in them, particularly the banks. One firm, J. Mele Company, gave the seller an order for nineteen boxes because he believed the items offered more unusual qualities than those he had previously stocked. Despite knowledge that jobbers are not especially interested in handicrafts, it was decided to contact several to at least determine their evaluation of the boxes as marketable products. One jobber was very enthusiastic and, although he thought the prices a little high, believed that the attractiveness, uniqueness and craftsmanship of the boxes compensated for the expense.

November 1, 1967

Gentlemen:

My research thesis as a Master's Degree candidate in the School of American Craftsmen at the Rochester Institute of Technology is concerned with the original design and construction of wooden boxes and banks. I am very much interested in the marketability of these multi-purpose boxes.

Your listing in the publication, CRAFT SHOPS USA, indicates your interest in the works of craftsmen. Enclosed you will find photographs and descriptions of my boxes and banks. For your convenience in answering, I have also enclosed an order form and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

In order to complete my thesis, I shall appreciate receiving the completed order form before December 1. If you are not interested in ordering any of the boxes at the present time, please return the order form with your comments and suggestions. Thank you in advance for your interest and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Frank A. Mango

Enclosures

FRANK A. MANGO
Craftsman in Wood

Customer's Name: _____

Date _____

Item No.	Quantity	Description	Unit Price	Amount
1		Solid walnut bank with rose wood handle and grating 2 x 4 1/2 x 13	\$16.50	
2		Small, solid walnut jewelry box 2 x 3 1/2 x 9	21.00	
3		Small, solid walnut box for jewelry or cigarettes with unhinged lid 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 9	15.00	
4		Solid walnut bank with movable rosewood handle 6 x 5 x 7	25.00	

5	Solid walnut double cardex file with hinged rosewood lid 3 1/2 x 4 x 11	21.00
6	Solid walnut or rosewood jewelry box with pinned lid 2 x 5 x 12	22.00
6A	Rosewood only 2 x 5 x 12	25.00
7	Solid walnut bank with rosewood handle 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 9	13.50
8	Solid walnut jewelry box with or without aluminum trim and with unhinged lid 2 x 5 x 16	17.00
9	Solid walnut or rosewood jewelry box with hinged lid 1 3/4 x 4 x 9	19.50
9A	Rosewood only 1 3/4 x 4 x 9	22.50
10	Solid mahogany, walnut or cherry box with walnut or rosewood legs and unhinged lid 3 x 4 1/2 x 9	18.00

Comments:

Suggestions:

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS ON THE MARKETABILITY OF UNUSUAL WOODEN BOXES

It is said that the positive should always precede the negative. In evaluating the results of this thesis, the positive aspects could be summarized as follows. The satisfaction gained from creating numerous functional, original items is worth a great deal personally. Economically it was found that the market for this work is very restricted, but for the amount of production desired the boxes could be a profitable sideline on a limited basis once connections were established. Specialized stores such as Georg Jensen (New York City) did express interest because they recognize unusual and well-made products; financial arrangements are presently being made with the aforementioned to carry a line of banks in stock.

In general, however, it must be admitted that the boxes are not marketable because they can not compete with the current market prices. This is the irony of quality products not being able to sell due to the necessarily high prices for workmanship. The only possible way to achieve market success, based on the information gained through the project, would be to adapt, modify and simplify the designs of the boxes towards the "hand-mass-produced" method discussed in Chapter III. Of course only the boxes of more elementary design might be converted to such a method: thus, the craftsman would sacrifice the number of possible marketable items in return for a lower price and possible success with those he would offer for commercial sale.

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