

## Mahogany Dressing Table a.k.a. Lowboy

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Like most of my work, this piece is a composite of design ideas and elements from various sources. The basic lowboy design is fairly common. The scalloped top idea



came from a book called American Furniture of the 18th Century by Jeffrey P. Greene. The book claims the original piece is from the Connecticut River Valley between 1760 and 1785. The shell carving is from a highboy in the Peabody Essex museum. The ball-and-claw feet are from video lessons taught by Mary May. The overall dimensions are slightly larger than a typical lowboy



to suit our purposes. The bottom is one large drawer with three false fronts as three drawers would have been too small to use for anything. The wood is South American mahogany and native white pine for the back and drawer bottoms. Finish is shellac. Hardware is from Horton Brass.

The project brought together a number of skills I have picked up from teachers over the years; several of them are EMGW members. John George taught me how to make cabriole legs. Jim Russell got me to start using hot hide glue and taught me the trick to turn Home Depot 2X6's into quality quarter sawn stock. Phil Lowe and Mary May were wonderful carving teachers. Loren Manbek convinced me I could hand cut dovetails and showed me how. At our Saturday meetings many other EMGW members gave tips and techniques for sharpening, design, stock selection, finishing, fixing mistakes, and a hundred other skills that come together to produce a finished piece. All the books and videos helped too, but there is nothing like having a teacher at your elbow.

The scalloped top presented an interesting problem. I found a router bit to make the profile but no power tool could make the sharp corners that are critical to the design. Careful carving and a little sanding were required for those.

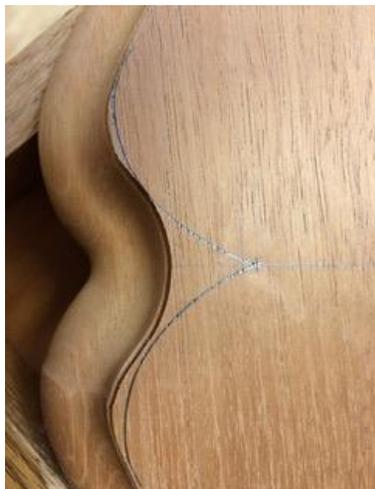


Figure 3. Stage 1



Figure 2. Stage 2



Figure 1. Stage 3

Attaching the sides in a way that they wouldn't split with seasonal wood movement was another challenge. The grain in the sides runs horizontally and connects to the vertical legs with 3 spaced mortise and tenons. If I glued them all the sides could split so I only glued the bottom one, left the other two dry, and dovetailed a support piece between the front and back legs to hold the top of the legs in place. With some space left under the top, the sides have room to move. Because I have a lot of it, and it is "period correct", I wanted to use native white pine for the secondary wood. Plain sawn was fine for the back but quarter sawn is better for the drawer bottom. My stock was all plain sawn but by taking a 2 inch thick board, ripping it into strips then turning the strips 1/4 turn and gluing them up, I made a handsome quarter sawn drawer bottom. I prefer to finish before assembly whenever possible so that was the final step for this project.

