

Don Michael's Federal Secretary Table

Featured Piece of the Month – May 2021

Ken Zoller

Don Michael, the Guild's "Perpetual Novice" among many other titles, always joked that many of his projects were "a pile of parts." After his recent passing, a few of us decided to complete some of those projects as a tribute to Don and present them to his wife Cathy.

Don was in the North Bennet Street School Three Month Intensive furniture program many years ago and the final project of that class was Federal style secretary or desk with a cubby-hole gallery on top. Six years ago, I was also in the three month NBSS program (though with a very different final project), so my job became completing his secretary. Don had built the base and two of the three drawers and had rough cut some stock for putting cockbeading around the drawer fronts.



The top had a dark water stain on one end.



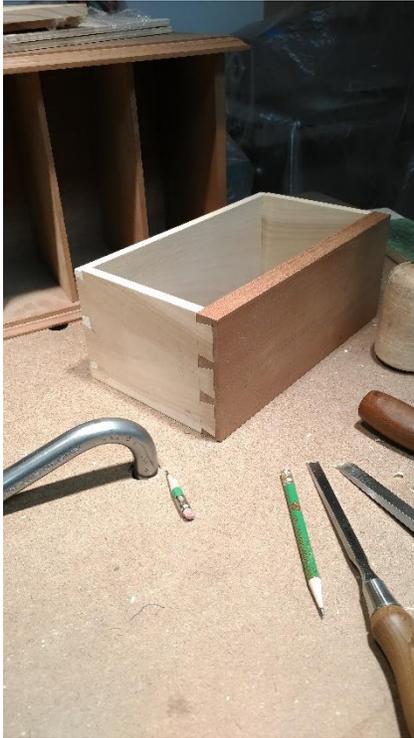
Oxalic acid is a wood bleach used for this purpose and is a main ingredient in Bar Keeper's Friend, a household cleaning product. I made a paste with water, applied it to the stain, let it dry, repeated a couple of times and it pretty much disappeared.



With several coats of shellac, it blended into other patterns in the wood. Several chips, scratches and area of tear-out were also repaired.

The center drawer construction was straightforward with half blind front dovetails and through back dovetails. Birdseye maple veneer was applied to the mahogany drawer front.

Space for the cockbeading around the drawer front was cut on the table saw. The bullnose profile was made with a scratch stock and fitted by hand.



Multiple coats of shellac and a final layer of wax were applied.



Jeff Clunie had small brass plaques made for us and in the center drawer this one read: "Handcrafted by Don R. Michael and friends – 2020"