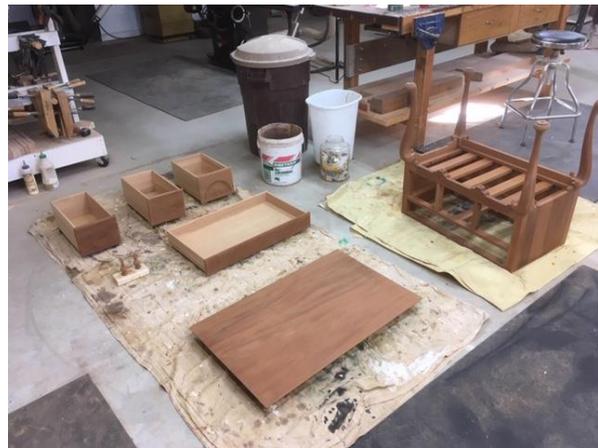


Don Michael's Low Boy Table

Featured Piece of the Month – May 2021

Jeff Clunie

My understanding is that Don had begun the assembly of the table about 20 years ago, or more. Most of the pieces had been assembled with the exception of the top. The table is made from mahogany and the top measures approximately 23" x 35". The piece had been sitting in Don's basement for a number of years and as a result, the bottom of the legs had been badly water-stained and the insides of the drawers were quite moldy. Don had replaced the top, but the top had not been applied to the bottom part of the table. This is what the lowboy looked like before the final finishing work was undertaken.



In order to complete the piece, the following steps were required:

- 1) Fill in gaps between the tops of the legs and the sides of the table. This involved mixing mahogany sawdust with liquid hide glue
- 2) Fit the drawers by paring the tails of the dovetail joints which were not flush with the sides of the drawers
- 3) Sand all the pieces, as not a single item had been introduced to a piece of sandpaper
- 4) Apply multiple coats of shellac to the entire piece, inside and outside, in an effort to help seal the open grain of the mahogany
- 5) Apply multiple coats of polyurethane to the top in order to protect it from liquid stains
- 6) Refinish all the brass hardware which was badly tarnished

The final piece is shown on the next page.



Of the four pieces that were completed for Don, the lowboy required the least amount of woodworking skills and effort, particularly compared to the two clocks and the writing desk.

On a personal note, I experienced a great deal of pleasure when Ken Zoller and I delivered the lowboy and writing table to Cathy Michael. She was clearly moved both by having the completed pieces and knowing the high regard in which we held Don. While I generally hate doing finishing work on any project, this was one of my most satisfying woodworking experiences as a result of Cathy's pleasure at having pieces of furniture created by Don, with some help at the end from his friends.

