

Project 11727EZ: Early American Blanket Chest

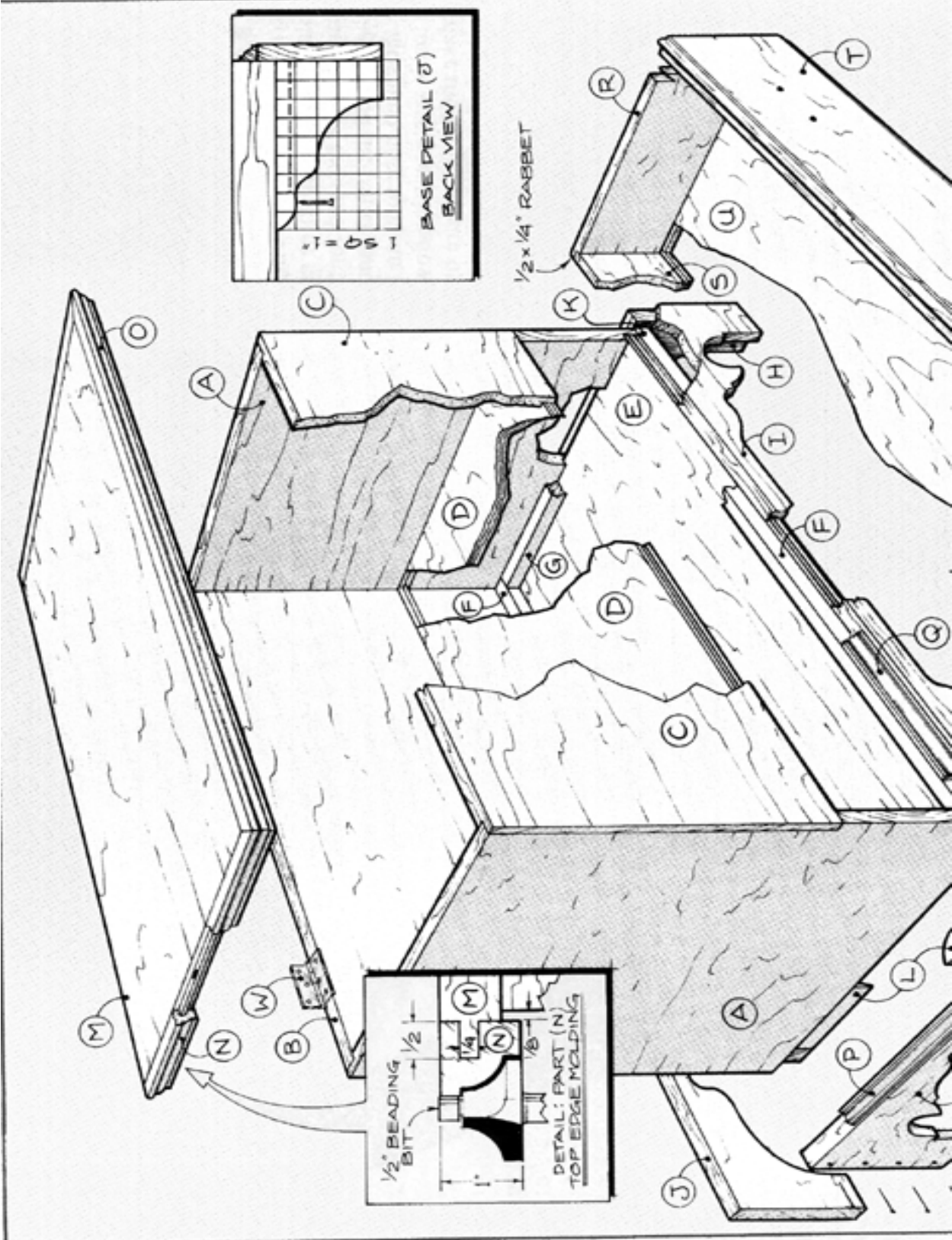


This Early American blanket chest is patterned after a New England chest dated 1792. Chests were common in Colonial and Early American homes since closets were quite rare. Many chests were dated and bore the name or initials of the maker/owner, an idea you may also consider. Although chests such as this often featured a false drawer front, our drawer is fully functional. The space above the drawer is called a well.

Authentic chests of this period were constructed entirely of solid stock, typically maple, walnut, birch, butternut, cherry, pine, or whatever wood was handy. The solid-stock-throughout construction did not present a wood movement problem, since early homes, with little insulation and no central heating, were not subject to the prolonged dry winter heat produced by modern heating systems. To eliminate any potential problem with wood movement, our design specifies plywood for the well and carcass bottom panels, and for the drawer bottom.

Although the photo shows authentic moldings cut by hand with a molding plane, we have called out more common moldings that enable you to fashion the decorative edge with the router and readily available beading bits.

Early American Blanket Chest Complete Schematic



Early American Blanket Chest Materials List

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd
A	Side	3/4" x 19-3/4" x 17-3/4"	2
B	Back	3/4" x 19-3/4" x 34-3/4"	1
C	Front	3/4" x 13" x 35-1/2"	1
D	Well Bottom	3/4" x 17" x 34-3/4"	1
E	Carcass Bottom	3/4" x 17-3/8" x 34-3/4"	1
F	Long Drawer Spacer	3/4" x 3/4" x 34"	2
G	Short Drawer Spacer	3/4" x 3/4" x 15-1/2"	2
H	Base Side	1" x 6" x 18-3/8"	2
I	Base Front	1" x 6" x 37-1/2"	1
J	Base Back	1" x 5-1/4" x 9"	2
K	Long Cleat	3/4" x 1" x 7"	4
L	Short Cleat	3/4" x 1" x 6"	4
M	Top	3/4" x 18" x 36-3/4"	1
N	Top End Molding		1" x 1" x 19" 2
O	Top Front Molding	1" x 1" x 37-3/4"	1
P	Base Side Molding	3/4" x 3/4" x 18-1/2"	2
Q	Base Front Molding	3/4" x 3/4" x 37"	1
R	Drawer Side	1/2" x 5" x 16-1/2"	2
S	Drawer Back	1/2" x 5" x 33-1/2"	1
T	Drawer Front	3/4" x 5-1/2" x 34-3/4"	1
U	Drawer Bottom	1/4" x 16-1/8" x 33-1/2"	1
V	Drawer Handles	3" polished brass	
W	Hinges	3/4" x 3"	3

Early American Blanket Chest Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Glue up stock for the sides (A), back (B), front (C), and top (M).
2. Cut the stock to size.
3. Use the dado head to cut the 3/8" x 3/4" wide rabbets in the sides to accept the back.
4. Notch the sides to accept the front, using the table saw to cross-cut as near to the notch end as possible.
5. Clean out the rest with the chisel.
6. Cut the rabbet in the bottom ends of the sides and back to accept the carcass bottom (E).
7. Rabbet the front to accept the well bottom (D) and sides.
8. Cut the 3/8" x 3/4" grooves in the sides and back into which the well bottom will fit.

9. Cut the well bottom and carcass bottom to size from 3/4" cabinet grade plywood, making certain the parts are perfectly square.
10. Test assemble and make adjustments as necessary.
11. Glue up parts A through E.
12. Cut, fit, and glue the drawer spacers (F and G) in place.
13. Check to make sure that the carcass bottom fits flush with the sides along the front, and trim back as needed if it does not.
14. Refer to the various grid patterns to lay out the profiles of parts H, I, and J on 1" thick stock. **NOTE: Notice the difference in the foot width of the front and side base profiles.**
15. Cut these parts to length and width.
16. Rabbet the base front to accept the base sides.
17. Use the saber saw, jigsaw, or the band saw with a narrow blade to cut out the profiles.
18. Scribe a pencil line 3/4" up from the bottom edge of the sides of the base.
19. Test fit, glue, and clamp the base parts in place, making sure the location is right.
20. Tack up the two base back parts with finishing nails through H, and also screw them up into the carcass bottom (see base detail).
21. Add the cleats (K and L) as shown to provide additional backing and strength for the base parts.
22. Round over the end of the cleats to make them less visible (see exploded view).
23. Select good, clear, straight-grained boards that will minimize wood movement problems to make the top (M).
24. Joint and edge-glue the boards to obtain the needed width, clamp, and allow to dry.
25. Cut a 1/4" thick x 1/2" long tongue on both ends of the top to fit the corresponding groove cut into the end moldings (N), as shown in the top edge molding detail.
26. Use a 1/2" beading bit, as shown, to fashion the decorative edge on the end molding and on the top of the front molding (O).
27. Drill out and slot the "breadboard" top end moldings.
28. Fix the moldings at the front end to permit any expansion or contraction in the solid stock top toward the back exclusively. **NOTE: The breadboard end treatment for the top is designed to eliminate any chance of the end moldings coming off due to expansion and contraction in the top over the years.**
29. Mortise for the 3" hinges (W).

30. Mount the top, making sure there is ample clearance for the molding on both the sides and the front.
 31. Refer to the molding detail and use a 3/8" beading bit to cut the decorative edge parts in P and Q.
 32. Miter as shown and glue in place.
 33. Make the drawer sides (R), drawer back (S), and drawer front (T), and plywood drawer bottom (U). NOTE: The plywood bottom will fit neatly into the 1/4" x 1/4" grooves cut into the front, sides, and back.
 34. Assemble the drawer by using hand-cut dovetail construction on the front (see dovetail layout), or by simply rabbeting and applying brads throughout.
 35. Finish as desired.
 36. Mount the solid brass drawer handles (V) to complete the project.
-