

# American Period Furniture

Journal of the Society of American Period Furniture Makers



Bess Naylor  
2025 Cartouche Award Recipient



# Details

## Line & Berry Drop Front Desk



The original desk at Winterthur Museum was built in 1740 by Hugh Alexander in the Nottingham area of southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. The fall board on the original was replaced as shown in the museum, and not decorated. This is my interpretation of this magnificent fall front desk. I designed what I thought would be appropriate for the fall board. The line and berry decoration on the drawers is graduated in size as is the original.

The interior has a well with a sliding lid, a feature on early desks to allow access to the opening beneath for the storage and easy access of writing implements. As in the original, the lighter wood is American Chestnut. There are at least eleven hidden compartments, some behind a sliding door in the Prospect area. It was challenging to construct this piece as I needed to plan well ahead in order to properly execute the hidden compartments and ensure their proper function.

– 2025 Cartouche Recipient Bess Naylor

An article about Bess Naylor and her work begins on page 18. An article authored by Naylor begins on page 6.



# American Period Furniture

Volume No. 25

December 2025

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*American Period Furniture* depends on readers and SAPFM members to produce the content in our annual journal. We are grateful for the efforts of the authors who created the issue you are now reading. There is a tradition in SAPFM to share knowledge and experience so that the skills for creating furniture from our past continue to grow and develop in the future. If you would like to contribute an article, see the "Journal Guidelines" on page 101.





*The Annual Journal of the Society of American Period Furniture Makers*



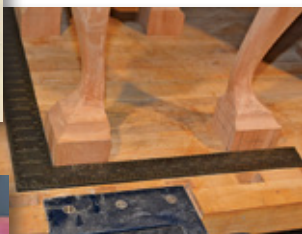
Shenandoah Valley Side Chair

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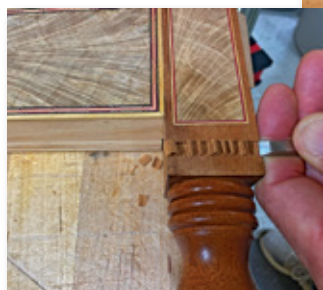
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About Safety: Each reader should consult safety recommendations and standards before attempting any technique shown. *American Period Furniture* publishes information about historic wood-working techniques that may not be safe for a particular reader. SAPFM makes no representation or warranty that techniques or methods shown in this publication will be safe to use in practice.



# A Long & Fruitful Journey.

*SAPFM's 2025 Cartouche recipient tells her story.*



When I was around 11 years old, my mother and Grandmother encouraged me to refinish some pieces of furniture. Those

early pieces were certainly not refined nor valuable, but it did start my woodworking journey at that young age. My first exposure to a professional woodworker was a family friend, Gordon Adams, who specialized in building restoration on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

With this combined exposure, I learned a lot about furniture, styles, construction and finishing. That interest continued to increase as I grew older and sought out others who could provide more insight and information. My professional educational interests followed undergraduate and grad-



*by Bess Naylor*



Upper section of a painted architectural corner cupboard with an arched door.



Painted corner cupboard with fluted pilasters, raised panel door and complex cornice.

uate level degrees in science and medicine, but as I pursued that career path, I became more and more fascinated by furniture finishing and paint finishes, particularly from a chemistry perspective.



Miniature reverse block front chest in mahogany.



Pennsylvania German hanging cupboard with painted tulips and complex cornice.

How various colors and textures were achieved and how various paints and colorants could be used to visually enhance a piece of furniture became an obsession. So, I left my first career and happily entered my second career - woodworking. This path led me into acquiring and reading many books and articles on finishes, colorants, pigments, solvents, joinery, various techniques, wood, and old recipes. The science continued to speak to me personally, always demanding more and deeper information.

My first real woodworking experience came with the opportu-

nity to work with Andrew Marlow in his shop. I first learned carving techniques with him. I spent many "lunch breaks" in his basement with his carving basics instruction. He was always in a white shirt and a little black bowtie. I still have my first attempts at carving, which keep me humble. I learned some lifelong carving lessons while working closely with him.



A Welch Coffin, with inlaid line and tulips, a precursor to Colonial Line and Berry Decoration.



Bess Naylor shows Andy Boro the interior of a William & Mary Philadelphia dressing table.





*Olde Mill Cabinet Shoppe in the winter, an old grist mill and later cider press mill from the early nineteenth century. Timberframe raising day for the new workshop. Lots of help!*

## Right Place – Right Time

After the birth of my third son, we purchased a derelict property in York, Pennsylvania. The only structure present had a stone first floor and frame second floor, previously functioning as a cider press mill. We restored it, stonework and all, into Olde Mill Cabinet Shoppe, as it sat adjacent to Mill Creek.

Then two separate standing log houses were dismantled and moved next to the same location.



*A painted Philadelphia combback Windsor chair with carved volutes and shell on the crest rail.*

One, from Altoona, Pennsylvania, dates to 1790. It is a hemlock, half-dovetail corner notch house, approximately 32' by 26', single logs hewn on all four sides. The other house, from Southern York County, is an early 1800s oak and chestnut corner post log construction with corner bracing, approximately 24' by 26'. These two structures were conjoined into one home.

The next big exterior project was to timber frame a workshop. Steve Chappell came from New England to direct this process. It was built in a class setting to demonstrate three bent constructions, a King Post Truss, a Queen Post Truss and a Hammer-beam Truss. A stick addition was added later. Lastly, another timber frame building was erected in a class with Steve and completed by Charles Vuono and my son Ben.

I started Olde Mill in 1982, with an emphasis on period furniture making and selling hard to find period finishing supplies. This was in pre-internet days. There was a brief foray into selling INCA power tools and other

power tools, but I soon settled into only hand tools, finishing supplies and seminars.

Hard to find finishing supplies involved importing products like many varieties of shellacs, plant resins, pigments, dyes, padding materials, gilding supplies and specialty tools for numerous ap-



*A Philadelphia carved pie crust tea table. The birdcage allows the table top to rotate and stand up.*

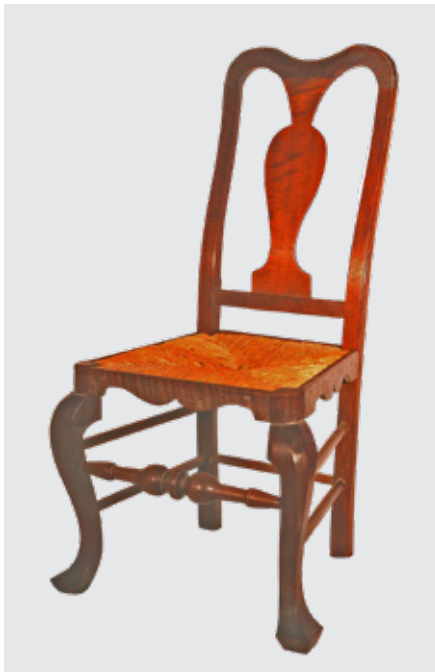




*Miniature Philadelphia William and Mary high chest next to a copy of a rare Philadelphia child's formal chair.*

plications. Educational seminars and workshops were an essential part of the business from the beginning.

My approach was to present seminars lead by an expert in a certain topic, with requisite solid communication skills. My very first seminar presenter was George Frank, who returned many times



*Delaware valley QA side chair original by Solomon Fussell. Maple with a rush seat, and scrolled skirt.*

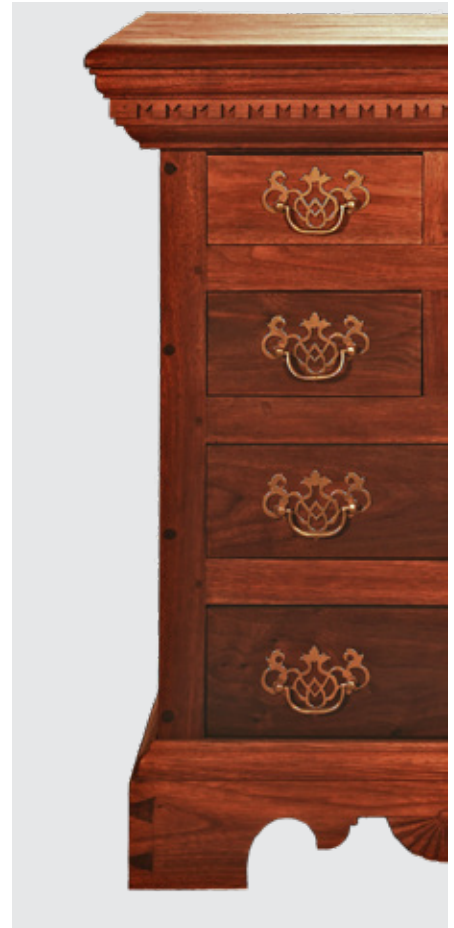
to teach finishing techniques. I have been so fortunate to have many well-known instructors/authors over the last forty plus years, and unfortunately, many are no longer with us. It is my honor to have worked with them to learn as much as possible.

Many instructors have continued to provide insights and techniques allowing even

deeper levels of understanding and performance. Carrying that knowledge forward has always been and continues to be a high priority to me.

Names like: Chris Storb, Steve Latta, George Frank, Tage Frid, Toshio Odate, John Nyquist, Eli Rios, Don Williams, Thomas Goddard, Bill Adair, Margaurite Bierman, Linda Carter Lefko, Carlyle Lynch, Franklin Gottschall, Mike Dunbar, Jim Rendi, Othmar Carli, Ralph Dermotta, Laney Loughridge, Peter Ross, Peter Deen, David Lindow, Wayne Barton, Bob Flexner, Tod Herrli, John Wilson, David Ellsworth, Steve Chappell, Lee Davis, John Kassay, Thomas Moser, Frank Klausz, Robert Mussey, Will Tillman, Drew Langsner, Steve Mankowski to name some. They all presented seminars at Olde Mill, many multiple times.

And, of course, my Mentor Emeritis, Gene Landon, who taught over 75 period projects here. There have been many sponsored visits to museums over the years, particularly Winterthur Mu-



*A Pennsylvania Walnut Child's Chest of Drawers with an elaborate cornice and bold design.*

seum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the York Historical Society and Wright's Ferry Mansion. These trips included special lectures by Dr. Charles Hummel, Lisa Minardi and Wendy Cooper, Greg Landrey



*Gene Landon and Jimmy Carter. This image was on the cover of the 2003 edition of American Period Furniture.*





Left: Philadelphia William and Mary dressing table, walnut. (It may be familiar from the cover of “Worldly Goods”). Right: Philadelphia QA dressing table, walnut. Intaglio tongue carved knees on Cabriole legs terminating in trifid feet. It has a depending fishtail and notched top corners. The original was owned by Ben Franklin.

and David DeMusio. A special note of appreciation to Charlie Hummel, who over many years freely shared with me his deep knowledge and experience with period furniture on visits to Winterthur Museum.

I must also thank the many, many students/attendees who supported and attended Olde Mill seminars over these last forty years. Many of them were/are already outstanding artisans in their field of expertise and were

expanding their knowledge base, an admirable endeavor.

The friendships and camaraderie that developed over so many years from these relationships have been deeply rewarding. I have learned so much from so many very generous people directly and indirectly involved in woodworking - authors, publishers, manufacturers, technical staff, museum folks, fulltime and part time woodworkers, and of course, students. To create an atmosphere

that inspires, encourages and exponentiates the learning process has been my goal from the very beginning.

### Lifelong Student

During this passage of time, I continued in my deep pursuit of learning more about period furniture, finishing, painting and 18th-century life in general. My interest expanded to studying period



Early New England joint stool. Walnut. Draw-bored mortise and tenon joints.



Joint Stool with hand-rasped (American style) barley twist legs. Also draw-bored joints. Walnut.



A QA Chester County Chest of Drawers with Arched Top Drawers and Line and Berry Decoration.





*A Philadelphia Escrutoire (or Scriptor, the early form of a secretary). walnut. Very, very early. Many hidden compartments.*



*The interior has many small drawers, hidden compartments behind torus molding, pigeon holes and more hidden compartments. Baize writing surface.*

techniques and tools and furniture design. This mandated a deeper knowledge of period construction, use of tools, finishes, hardware and implementation in an 18th century setting. I learned about molding planes, their uses, applications and challenges – and acquired a good working inventory.

Use of appropriate chisels in so many different scenarios. Acquisition and proper use of hand planes and scrapers. Lots of carving gouges, seemingly never enough (especially in a class setting). Layout tools galore. Then the challenge to incorporate proper period techniques with all these tools.

Mastering understanding the differences in formal versus informal, geographical variations in techniques, different time periods and the furniture construction itself all contribute to the required body of knowledge and skill to replicate an object with authenticity.

It was a pleasure to work so closely with Gene Landon for about twenty years. He taught many of us about the intricate details of period furniture, geographical differences, proper construction techniques, hand tool use, and importantly, how to look at an object with a discerning eye.

He inspired us to do the best we could do. He and I would often travel to the object we were going to build in



*Wm. & Mary high chest of drawers with line & berry inlay. Probably Delaware Valley. Walnut. Constructed from a joiner's perspective. The top is also decorated.*





A Philadelphia QA spice chest on frame, Walnut, with many small drawers and hidden compartments. Cabriole legs with trifold feet.

class and vet the original with measurements and photographs. This provided an unexcelled opportunity for me to study original pieces

piece to be reproduced in a very accurate manner. In fact, I offer about twenty-five plans of period pieces we have built in a class

very closely – the best way to learn.

That information was then turned into working plans for a

piece to be reproduced in a very accurate manner. In fact, I offer about twenty-five plans of period pieces we have built in a class

New England tavern table with brush feet and a serpentine skirt. Walnut.



setting, the best way to assure all the details are resolved and that the piece is period accurate. I have detailed information for about 75 period pieces Gene and I vetted that he then taught in classes here. I have at least 30 more period pieces that I have personally vetted and taught myself in classes, in addition to many seminars on period finishes and historic paint finishes.

Gene and I authored a publication entitled “*Carving a Philadelphia Ball and Claw Foot*”, still a solid seller. It was published in the first issue of *American Period Furniture*. The journal also published an article I wrote on Hide Glue in the 2006 edition. Another article I wrote on “*How to Build an 18th century Gout Stool*” was published in “*Early American Life Magazine*”.

The Chesapeake Chapter of SAPFM has held meetings several times in my shop, as have many other woodworking groups. Woodworkers tend to work in solitary workshops. To create social and educational interactions contributes to excitement and encouragement to try new techniques and tools.



A Newport tilt top tea table with a single board top. It does not rotate but does flip up. The triangular center shaft with concave sides has five drawers, wedge-shaped for storage of teas and sugar. Fluted columns.





L: QA Philadelphia child's chair. C: DE Valley child's slat back arm chair. R: Chester County, PA spice box or document with compass inlay on door.

The opportunity to meet and interact with like-minded individuals is essential to perpetuate not only the society itself, but more importantly, the pursuit of making period pieces with historic accuracy. These concepts are important to me.

It has been a lifelong pursuit to acquire the tools, techniques and implementation of all this knowledge to propel me to where I am today. And there is so much more to learn and do. I am currently privileged to have

an Affiliate Researcher status with Winterthur Museum to study specific topics relating to period furniture. I am hoping this research helps us all understand more about the eighteenth-century woodworkers' mindset and how that translated into their daily work.

I have at least 20 major pieces started but not yet completed. My current dilemma is to decide which piece to complete next. And there are always new pieces I encounter that I want to build and teach.

What an exhilarating journey! ♦



Small Chester County, Pennsylvania line and berry decorated box. Walnut.



Sarcophagus Top Tea Caddy. Inside are three compartments for a variety of teas. Mahogany



Spice or Document Box with compass inlay on the door. Bun feet and a serpentine skirt.

All the pieces in this article were built by Bess. They are, though, inspired by objects in the following Museums and Auction houses. It is with deep regard and appreciation that they are mentioned here.

■ Winterthur Museum  
(1960.0737: 1961.0278:  
1964.1594: 1968.0132:  
1967.1168: 1654.0511:  
1959.2648: 1955.0136.055)

■ Colonial Williamsburg  
■ Philadelphia Museum of Art  
■ Chester County History Center  
■ The Pennsylvania State Museum  
■ Sotheby's Auction House  
■ Pook and Pook Auction House



## *The Olde Mill*

Of all the pieces of furniture made by Bess Naylor, the community she created around her shop is of equal if not greater importance. Her vision of a place to learn and create was among the first in our era where people could come and learn the fine points of furniture making from accomplished instructors. Many of those became her friends and many of the students rose to become prominent themselves.

It is far too easy to forget the past and think that the way things are today is the way things always were. In the early 1980s the world of furniture making was much like it had always been and was gaining popularity. But the world of learning to be a furniture maker was vastly different than today. We are spoiled, thanks to the internet, with loads of information and access to tools and supplies available at our fingertips.

Forty some years ago it wasn't that way. The arrival of a new issue of one of the few magazines was a special occasion and the few books available were written by men who had devoted their careers to mastery of the fine points of historical furniture. The availability of classes was virtually non-existent. Bess Naylor was in the right place, at the right time and with the right idea. The list of instructors at the Olde Mill represents the best of the best, not only at that time, but for all time. To gather a group such as this was an accomplishment we will likely never see again.

Like many of her fellow Cartouche recipients Bess Naylor is humble and driven by a desire to acquire and share knowledge about how furniture was made in the past, and how we can reproduce it today. This isn't just "book knowledge", it comes from decades of practice, learning from her predecessors and passing those lessons along to those who follow.

Her role in woodworking education is unsurpassed. Without her efforts our world today would be a different place. ♦ RWL

Visit Bess Naylor's website:

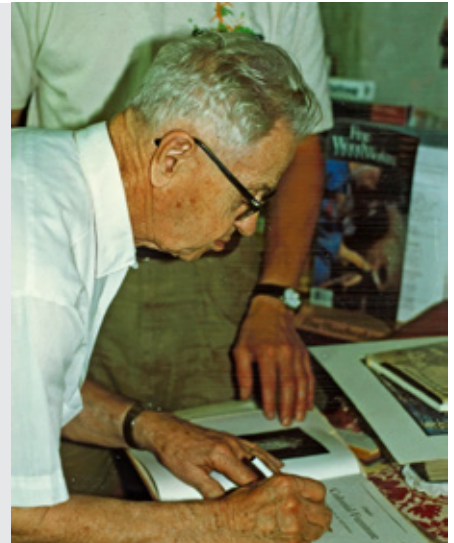
[oldemill.com](http://oldemill.com)



*Finisher George Frank, the first instructor at Olde Mill.*



*Carlyle Lynch with reproduction clock.*



*Franklin Gottshall, signs one of his books for a student.*



*Toshio Odate taught Japanese tools and joinery.*



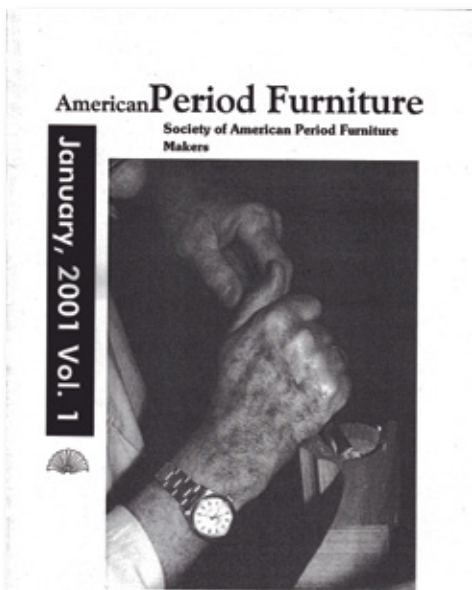
*Tage Frid cuts dovetails in a class at the Olde Mill Cabinet Shop*



*Eugene Landon, Bess' mentor and recipient of the 2003 Cartouche.*

# 25 Years of American Period Furniture

*The SAPFM Journal has been with us all along. Like the organization itself it has changed and grown.*



When Steve Lash and Mickey Callahan planned the Society of American Period Furniture Makers after the first Working Wood in the Eighteenth Century conference in Williamsburg, Virginia their initial vision was remarkably complete. Of course, any respectable national organization should have officers, a system of governance, a website, an annual award, a newsletter and an annual journal.

By the time of the second conference in 2000 most elements of the plan were in place. In September of 1999 SAPFM's first

publication, a two-page newsletter announced, the first meeting of SAPFM to be held in conjunction with the Williamsburg conference.

The newsletter also reported on the progress of the society; Gene Landon had accepted an invitation to be on the SAPFM steering committee, Gene's son Ben, an attorney, agreed to help SAPFM organize and Quentin Wheeler volunteered to produce a *"more formal newsletter for the SAPFM"*.

## The First Journal

Mickey Callahan, in his "President's Message" in the 2009 journal had this to say about the 2001 edition *"... everyone should thank Quentin Wheeler for his die-hard efforts to keep the Williamsburg Kinko's open late one evening in order to have our first American Period Furniture journal printed and ready in time for distribution the next day at the second annual symposium and Cartouche Awards banquet."*

That journal was in black and white, contained 38 pages and was edited by Quentin Wheeler. While



the production of the journal was modest, the content was remarkable. There were articles written by Steve Latta (Line & Berry Inlay), W. Patrick Edwards (Form Follows Function) Gene Landon and Bess Naylor (Carve a Philadelphia Chippendale Ball and Claw Leg) and others.

Quentin Wheeler reported on our first Cartouche award recipient Harold Ionson who received his award at the initial SAPFM meeting in 2000. Steve Lash wrote about his reproduction of Benjamin Franklin's "Armonica" an eighteenth century musical instrument.

In his Welcome message Wheeler said: *"It is our vision that this journal will evolve into an important tool*



*By Robert W. Lang*

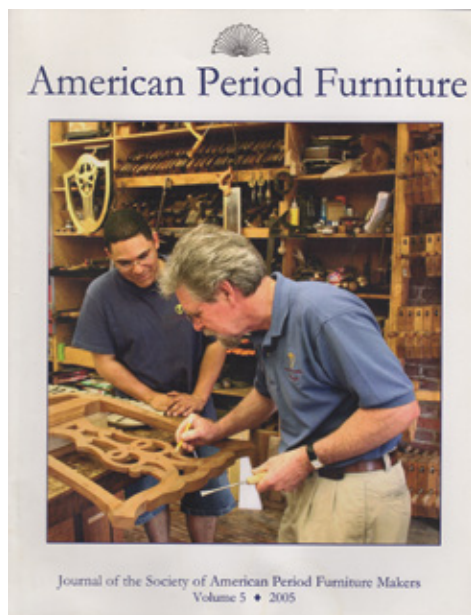


*for those who make, collect, design, conserve, or simply admire American period furniture. This will be a scholarly, informative, factual source of accurate, authoritative information about period furniture written by those engaged in the field."*

He also noted: *"This publication, however, is a work in progress and we invite all SAPFM members to play an active role in defining the APF to meet their needs. Through your articles, comments, and input we hope to develop the APF to meet a wide range of needs for knowledge, information, and points of view."*

And he recognized an issue that has confronted every editor since his tenure: *"While it is intuitively obvious that furniture makers are frequently more interested in working in the shop than typing on a computer keyboard. I was nonetheless not fully prepared for the difficulty wrenching an article out of some furniture makers."*

The cover image showed a pair of hands engaged in carving. Those hands belonged to Gene Landon and a story inside detailed his selection to make 13 spice boxes from the last surviving Liberty Tree.

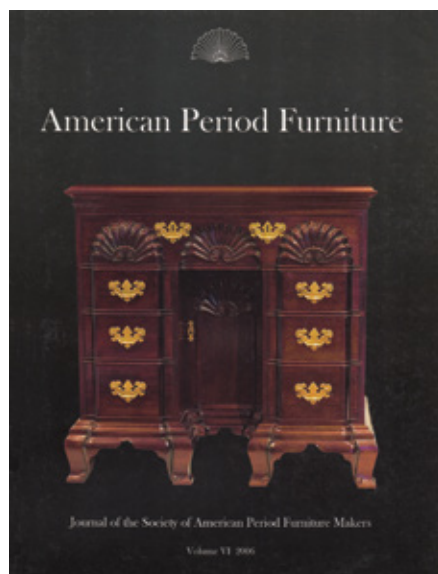


Cartouche recipient Phil Lowe, with Freddy Roman was featured on the cover of the 2005 journal.

## Early History

The following issues showed growth in the number of pages and a more professional presentation of content. The 2002 edition saw a color image on the cover and color photographs inside. Wheeler again traveled to visit the previous year's Cartouche recipient John McCalister, and Horton Brasses became our first advertiser.

In 2003 Landon was again on the cover in the company of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter who was presented with a popular bible box also made from the wood of the Liberty Tree. Landon received the Cartouche award that year but the only mention of that was a brief note at the bottom of the Table of Contents.



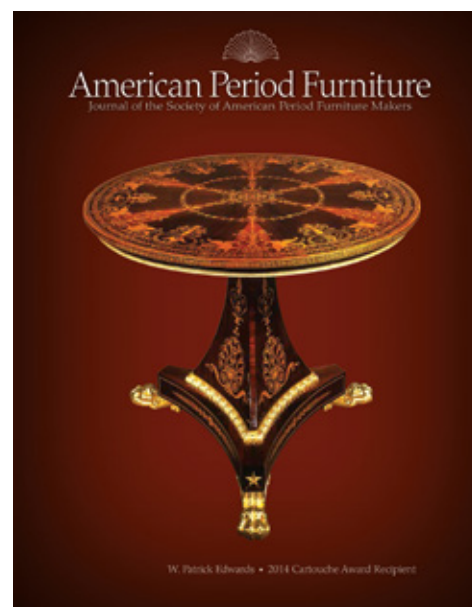
In 2006 APF had grown to 83 pages printed in full color and with "perfect" binding.

## Milestones

The 2005 edition of the journal saw the arrival of Mark Arnold as editor, along with Margaret Arnold as associate editor. That issue was 68 pages and featured Phil Lowe on the cover. Phil also contributed the first journal article written by a Cartouche recipient.

2006 saw the first full color cover, 83 pages and a switch to "perfect binding", more durable

from the previous center-stapled format. The journal continued to grow, adding pages until 2013 when we arrived at the 120 page format we use today. The following year Carl Voss became editor and for the first time APF had an art director, Ray Neubauer.



The 2014 edition featured this incredibly detailed table by Cartouche recipient W. Patrick Edwards.

In 2018 I became editor and I also perform the tasks of art director and illustrator. My goal from the beginning was not to break anything and uphold the values of the journal. *American Period Furniture* holds a unique position in the publishing world and has since its inception. No one else publishes the type of articles seen in these pages. These are the standards that were named in the first edition that we strive to continue to this day:

1) *A level of scholarly content and objective information not matched by popular magazines, derived from the excellence of our members knowledge and skill;* 2) *the use of peer review to assure accuracy and strive for consistently high quality content.*

That's the secret, the quality of this publication is a reflection of the quality of SAPFM members and they work they do. ♦



# *Society of American Period Furniture Makers*

## **“CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF WOODWORKING DEDICATION”**

The Society of American Period Furniture Makers (SAPFM) promotes the understanding, education, and appreciation of American Period Furniture. **There is no other organization that promotes these goals**, particularly in the context of the makers' movement.

SAPFM is organized as a volunteer run, non-profit educational organization. We assist the furniture maker to further their craft by locating resources and individuals with specialized expertise in period furniture. Our members include professionals and hobbyists alike. Not all members are furniture makers. Some are furniture and tool collectors, museum curators, and historians to name a few.

Here are some of the many great resources available to the SAPFM Member:



### **American Period Furniture**

American Period Furniture is the annual journal of the Society of American Period Furniture Makers. This distinctive publication is sent to SAPFM members in December of each year.



### **Woodworking Plans**

SAPFM Members have access to over one hundred member submitted working plans as well as the professionally created woodworking plans of the outstanding furniture maker, Phil Lowe.



### **Pins and Tales**

Pins & Tales is the quarterly digital newsletter of SAPFM, published in Adobe PDF format. Issues consist of the latest listings of classes, events, news and articles on research, construction and finishing of historical forms of furniture.



### **Local Chapters**

SAPFM fosters learning the craft of period furniture through its 22 chapters located throughout the US. Participation in a local chapter offers our members a variety of benefits, such as working with like minded furniture makers who eagerly share their experience in furniture construction.



### **Phil Lowe Makers Challenge**

This furniture making contest is open to all SAPFM members who wish to display their wood working talents. Members submit their entries in Novice, Intermediate, and Expert categories. One winner is chosen yearly from each of these categories by a popular vote.



### **Video Archive**

Our Video Archive consists of video recordings from our monthly online discussions with leading experts in the period woodworking field and our on-line video meetings that discuss the traditional tools and methods used to make period furniture.

Visit our website at [www.sapfm.org](http://www.sapfm.org) to join and learn more about our organization.



# Back Issues / Membership



*American Period Furniture is just one of the many benefits of membership in the Society of American Period Furniture Makers*

**Visit our website: <https://sapfm.org/join> to initiate or renew your membership.**

*If you recently joined SAPFM, get up to speed with back issues of the annual SAPFM journal, quantities are limited!*  
**Back issues of American Period Furniture are available to SAPFM members online at:**  
**<https://www.sapfm.org/sapfm-store/publications>**

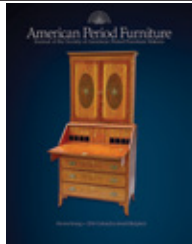
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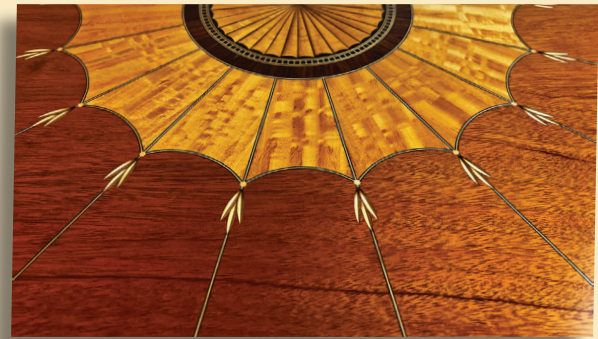
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2013 & 2020 Editions Now Available in PDF

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|   | Volume 24, 2024<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$35.00 |   | Volume 18, 2018<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$35.00 |   | Volume 12, 2012<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$35.00 |
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|  | Volume 21, 2021<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$35.00 |  | Volume 15, 2015<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$35.00 |  | Volume 9, 2009<br><br>Member Price:<br>\$27.00  |

# Excellence & Elegance

Michelle Hallee Wong's Federal Style Card Table is a tour-de-force in detailed, thoughtful inlay work. In addition to being featured in an article on page 34 of this journal, she also was a category winner in the 2024 SAPFM Phil Lowe Maker's Challenge this table was awarded "Best in Show" in the 2024 New England Furniture Competition sponsored by the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers. She was also named as a New Hampshire Furniture Masters Emerging Artist, 2025.



Decorated furniture whether modern or traditional is what I most enjoy creating. In making this federal style card table I was aspiring to create elegant but not overdone decoration for a classic timeless appearance. I think I succeeded and very much enjoy looking at this table in my front hall everyday. Building this table was a pleasure and I hope to produce more federal highly decorated pieces in the future. Please visit my website or follow me on instagram to view my work. –MHW

Visit Michelle Hallee Wong's website: <https://michellehalleewong.com/> for photos of her work.