

by Matthew Power

This small coffer represents one of the few surviving examples of early 13th century English storage chests. It is small by medieval standards and uses vertical pin hinges, a style of hinge that disappeared shortly after the middle of the 13th Century. The carpenters built this trunk from heart of oak, at approximately the time of the call to the Third Crusade.

The odd cutaway discs on the front legs of the Little Canfield coffer suggest strings on a harp. More importantly, my source suggests that they date the piece to about the year A.D. 1200. Another larger, more famous coffer with similar scrollwork

Little Canfield Coffer

can (or at least could in 1929) be found in Winchester Abbey.

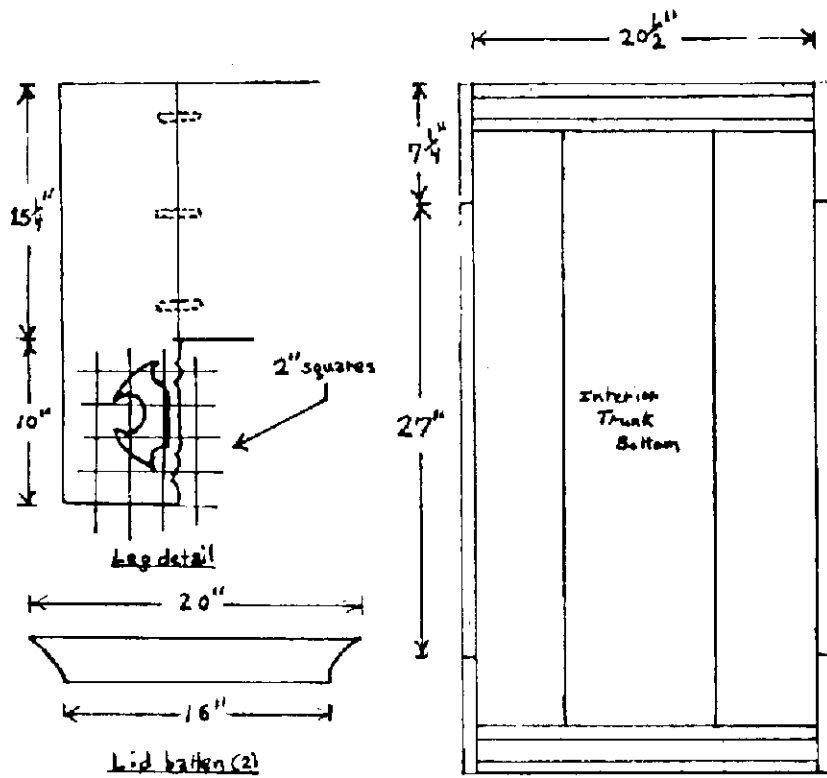
This project, with its simple construction technique and sturdy frame, makes a perfect traveling companion. I have redrawn it as closely as possible to the exact specifications of the original. You may want to consider investing in a hardwood—even oak—to really capture the essence of this old trunk.

Source: Roe, Fred. *Ancient Church Chests and Chairs*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1929), pp. 59-62.

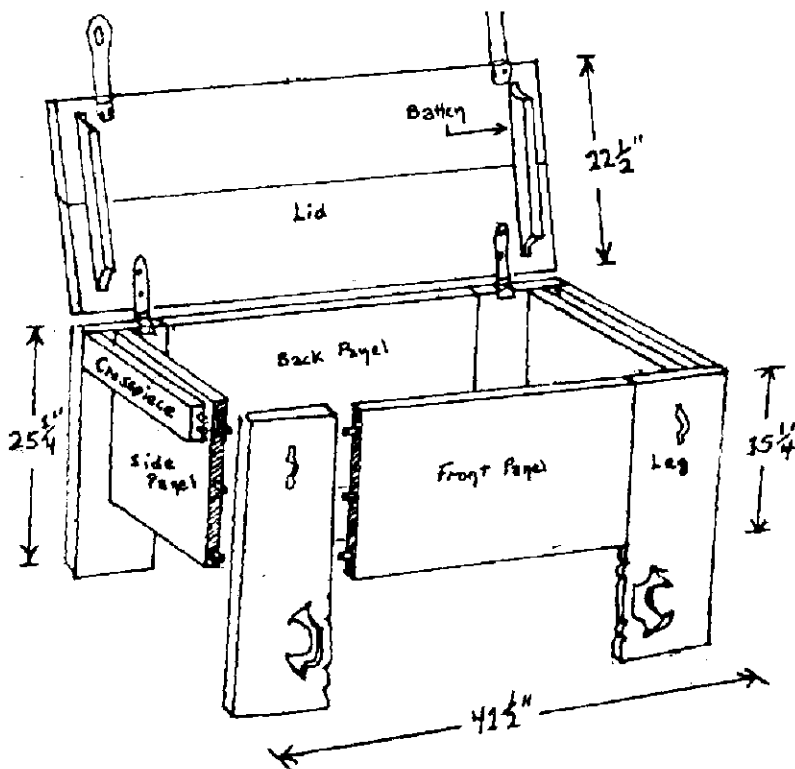
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Plans:

Note: Use hardwood if you can afford it, as the original builder did—or pine if you can't. As a cheap source for hardwood, you might try wooden pallets. Many businesses (such as newspapers) throw hundreds of them away, and they're often made from oak. Even if you have to plane the wood, the pallets may prove worth the investment when compared to purchasing hardwood.



Overhead View
(Lid got showing)



Instructions

- Cut all pieces to size, gluing boards edge to edge where necessary to cover a wider area.
- Make cutouts and complete leg scroll work using a jigsaw or scroll saw.
- Assemble legs, sides and bottom using 3/8" dowels and carpenter's wood glue. Clamp and allow to set overnight. (Clamp lid separately.)
- Attach hinges and clasps (either make your own or modify storebought versions).
- Paint with milk paint or shellac.