



Heirloom Chest

When European craftsmen emigrated to America, they planned to build a new life — quite literally — with a handful of tools they had carefully packed in sturdy wooden tool chests.

These custom-built boxes not only protected the tools vital to their owner's livelihood, but also reflected his skill as a woodworker. As testament to this craftsmanship, many of these chests survived decades of

use to become heirlooms more valuable to future generations than the tools they once held.

Over the years, I've seen a number of these chests at antiques auctions, but it was actually a replica that inspired me to build this version. Adolph Peschke, our resident tool historian, based that reproduction on one owned by his father. When he proudly showed it to me, I thought it would be the perfect project for storing a variety of keepsakes from my own grandparents. It has plenty of room in the

bottom for larger items, while the lift-out tray is handy for holding small treasures. The lid fits snugly to keep out dust, and the lock provides a measure of security (**Chest Construction View**).

While my reproduction maintains the look of the original, I made a few design changes to take advantage of modern materials. An Old World craftsman would have built the chest entirely from solid wood, but I used 1/2"-thick birch plywood for the top and bottom (**Chest Details**). This simplified the con-