

1" scale Centerpiece

by Gordon Rutherford, Raleigh, North Carolina



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Several years ago I purchased two Northeastern Farmhouse Kits at 144th scale. I thought these houses would be novel pieces to put together, however by the time I had painted and constructed the exterior walls & installed the windows of the first house, other projects robbed my interest and the partially finished farmhouse and second kit sat on the back corner of my shop bench gathering dust. Every once in a while I would get the first house out, dust it off to see what next step should be taken, but there was always something else to do, so back on the bench it would go.

When the call went out for volunteers to construct table centerpieces for the 2003 NAME National Convention, I realized that I had an opportunity to "finish" my farmhouse project without finishing it (and leave that back corner of my bench for some other unfinished project). I wrote to Jayne Paine (Centerpiece Chair) and offered to build two centerpieces. A month or so later I received two centerpiece kits, the circular base made from ceiling tile and the two wall panels made from Foam core board. Because I prefer to work with wood, I asked Jayne if I could make the base and walls from half-inch birch plywood. She said okay, but countered with the proposal that my two centerpieces be made especially for the two co-chairs of the 2003 convention. I thought that was a great idea, so we all proceeded accordingly.

With the idea that some of you might have a small, unfinished structure that could be effectively displayed in this manner (to leave the back corner of your work space for something else), the following are steps that I went through to build these centerpieces.



PREPARING THE BASE, BACK WALL AND SIDE PANEL

The base, back wall and side panel are cut from one-half inch birch plywood. The base is 7-1/2 inches in diameter. (This size is selected so that the completed project can be placed on a base that can be covered with an 8-inch glass dome.) The back wall and side panel are to the pattern shown. After the base, back wall and side panel are cut and the faces and edges sanded smooth, the pieces should be stained with a stain of your choice. I prefer Gel Stain by Minwax and in this case used Walnut 606. The stain should be applied liberally, and then wiped off. One face and the edges can be stained, then, when that has dried (overnight), the other face may be stained. (Other materials may be used for the base and walls, but if so, the finishing techniques will be different.)

PREPARING MATERIAL FOR WORKBENCH STRUCTURE & SHELF UNIT

While the stain is drying on the base, back wall and side panel, the "2

x 4's" for the bench structure can be prepared. These pieces are made of basswood. If you have a saw and wish to be exactly accurate the pieces can be cut, scaled to the exact 1-1/2 inch x 3-1/2 inch size of a 2 x 4. If no saw is available, 1/8-inch x 5/16-inch strip wood is very close to the right size. The following pieces are needed: eight pieces 3-1/8 inches long; eight pieces 1-3/4 inches long; six pieces 2-5/8 inches long; and six pieces 3-3/4 inches long. The 2 x 4's look best if they are stained. A number of weathering stains are available. I used Railroad Tie & Bridge Stain #81721 from Micro-Mark because I liked the slightly green appearance of the finish. A gray or brown would be equally as good. I used 1/16-inch birch aircraft plywood (MidWest) for the surface of the workbench and treated it with the same stain as the 2 x 4's. (An alternative for the workbench top may be 1/16-inch basswood.) The workbench top should be cut to the size and shape shown. (The workbench top should be used as a guide when gluing the side panel to the back wall so that the plywood will fit snugly to the walls.)

A small shelf unit will be placed on the side panel above the workbench. This shelf unit is made with the following pieces of 1/16 inch x 1/2 inch basswood: two pieces 2-1/2 inches long and four pieces 1-1/2 inches long. If the shelf unit is to be stained, it is best to stain these pieces before assembly.

ASSEMBLY

Everything is assembled with the use of one of two glues: Titebond wood glue or gap-filling cyanoacrylate (super glue). First, glue the side panel on the back wall (using Titebond) making sure that the bottoms are flush and the back edge of the side panel is aligned with the front edge of the back wall. Check to make sure that the workbench top fits snugly against the back wall and side panel. After the glue is set (an hour or so), glue the walls to the base. The exact location on the base is not critical; just make sure that the walls are placed so that no part of the walls or workbench top overlap the edge of the base.

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It is now time to fabricate the workbench. (NOTE: This assembly varies from the assembly used for the original centerpieces in order to simplify construction.) Four workbench leg assemblies should be glued together (with Titebond glue) as shown using eight 3-1/8 inch long pieces and eight 1-3/4-inch pieces. When these assemblies are dry, glue them to the underside of the workbench top in the positions shown, making sure that the back legs are flush with the back edge of the bench top. Two of the 2-5/8 inch long pieces should be used to connect the front of the leg assemblies on the short wing of the bench, one immediately under the top at the upper brace and one even with the lower brace. The remaining four pieces

2-5/8 inches long will be glued to the top of the lower braces to form a shelf under the workbench. The six 3-3/4 inch long pieces are used likewise on the long wing of the bench. When the glue of the workbench assembly is dry, the bench will be glued to the back wall, side panel and base (again using Titebond).

The side panel shelf unit is also glued together with Titebond. The two pieces 2-1/2 inches long are used for the sides, the four 1-1/2 inch pieces are used for the top and bottom and two intermediate shelves. When complete, this unit will be glued to the side panel as shown with Titebond glue.

The "peg board" above the workbench is made from a 4-1/2 inch x 6 inch prepunched perfboard purchased from Radio Shack. This board should be trimmed as shown to fit the back wall. The face of the board may be painted to get rid of the plastic look. Any color will do, but a light color is best so that anything that is put on the board will show up better. The circuit board (peg board) is placed resting on the bench top and secured to the large wall using super glue.

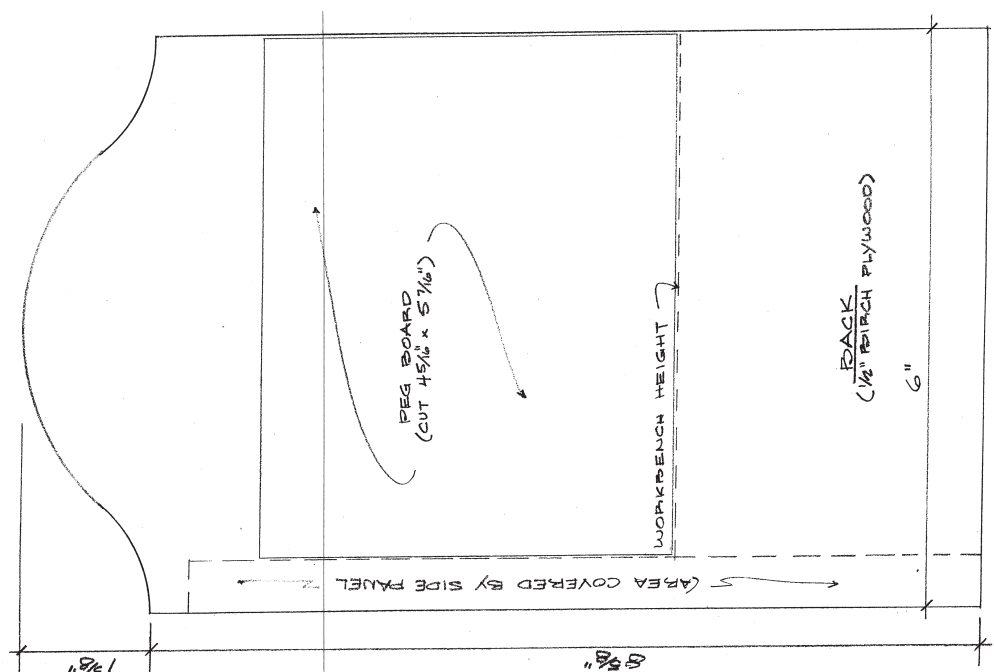
The "fluorescent light fixture" above the "pegboard" is made of .030-inch thick styrene

from Evergreen Scale Models and is modeled after the light fixtures in my shop. The following pieces are needed: one piece 3/4 inches x 4-1/16 inches; four pieces 1/4 inches x 4-1/16 inches and two pieces 9/32 inches x 13/16 inches. Also two small pieces, 1/8 inches x 3/8 inches are required to support the two light tubes made of 1/8 inch rigid plastic tubing or plastic rod (4 inches long). The light fixture is put together with Model Master liquid cement for plastic models. Begin assembly by cementing a 1/4 inch x 4-1/16-inch piece on top at one side of the 3/4 inch x 4-1/16-inch piece. Using the other three-1/4 inch x 4-1/16 inch pieces, construct a U shaped piece. When the U is dry, cement it, inverted, at the other side of the 3/4 inch piece. Cement a 9/32-inch x 13/16-inch piece on each end. Cement the small pieces toward each end of the space within the fixture and cement the tubing (simulating light tubes) to these pieces. The fixture is secured to the back wall above the pegboard using super glue. Drawings for this fixture are shown but any other light fixture (or perhaps none at all) would be just as appropriate.

complete, items can be placed on the workbench, on the shelves or on the pegboard as one sees fit. The Northeastern Farmhouse is placed on the left side of the workbench in whatever state of completion that one chooses. (Whatever is placed on the bench should not overlap the edge of the base.) Yet to be installed pieces can be arranged on the bench top. I reduced the farmhouse instructions and placed them on the wall. I purchased a number of different tools and secured them to the pegboard using super glue. The paint cans I made using printed patterns glued to wooden dowels. This is really a place where you can use your imagination in "cluttering up" the bench. Calendars, pop bottles, beer cans, pencils, tools of many sorts, scraps of wood, etc. all make for an interesting bench top. The lumber under the bench was made from scraps of various kinds of wood that I had in the shop, glued together in "random" piles then placed in the bench or on the floor. The work stool & wastebasket were items that I purchased for the scene, but again, it is whatever suits your fancy. The only criticism that I received about this project was that it was not as messy as my own shop, which served as the model for the scene!

ITEMS IN THE SCENE

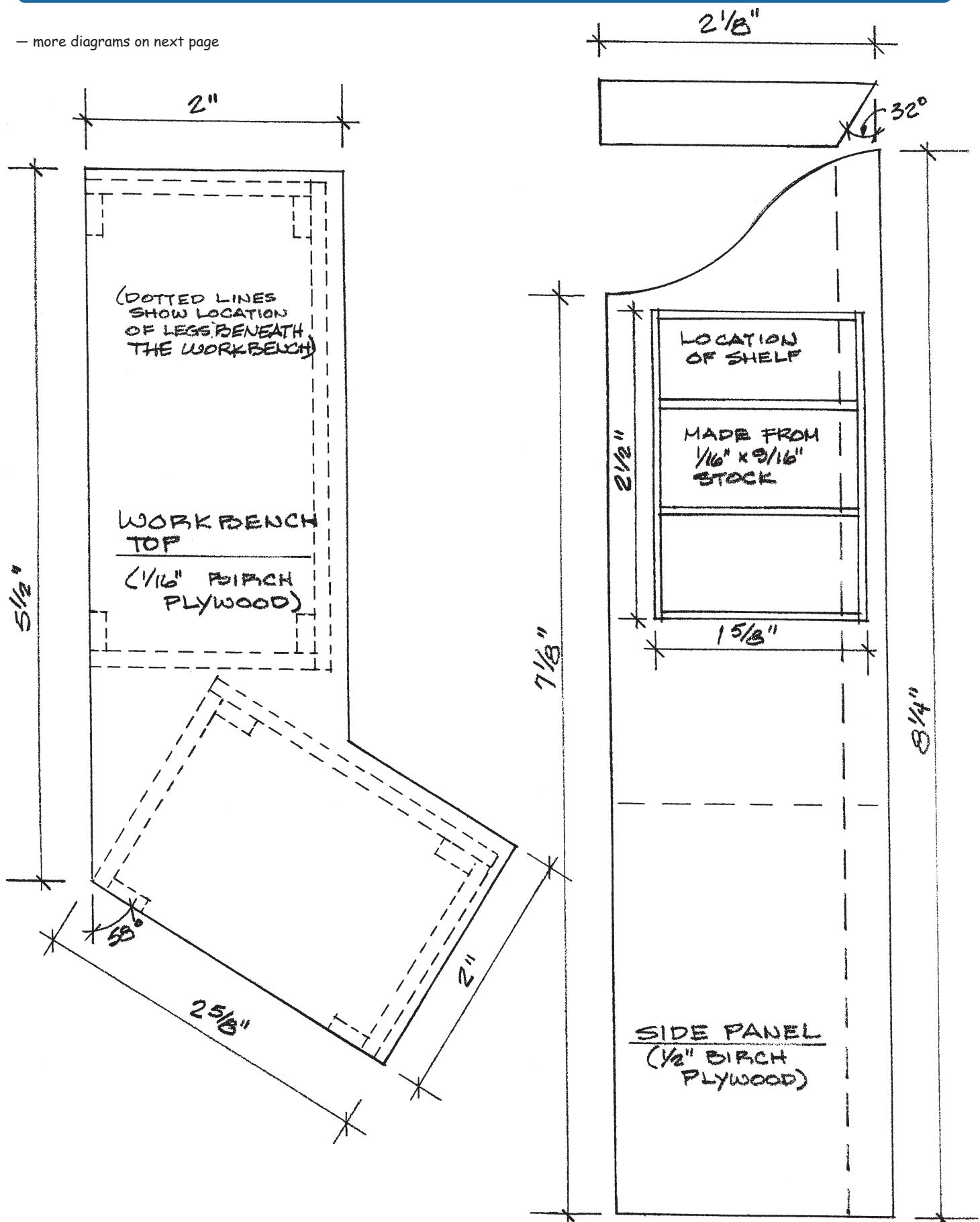
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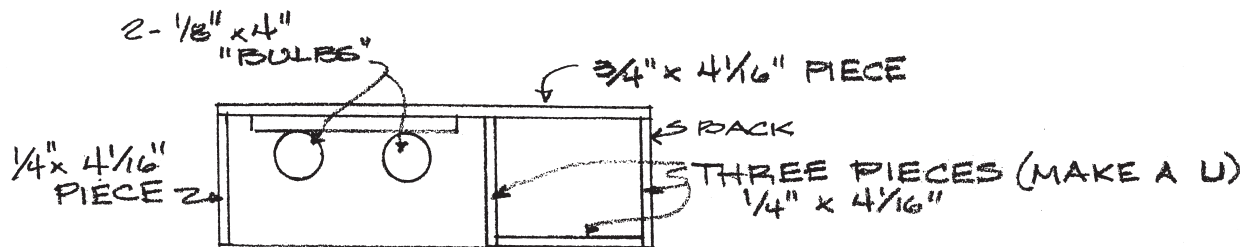
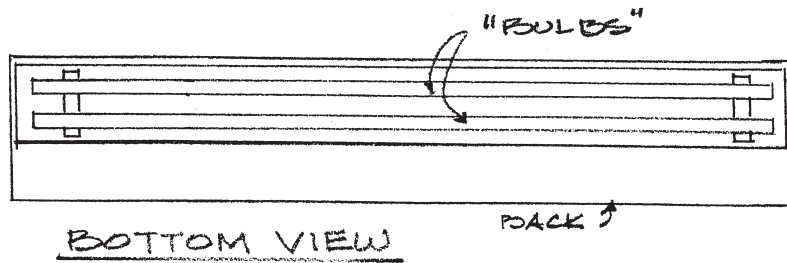
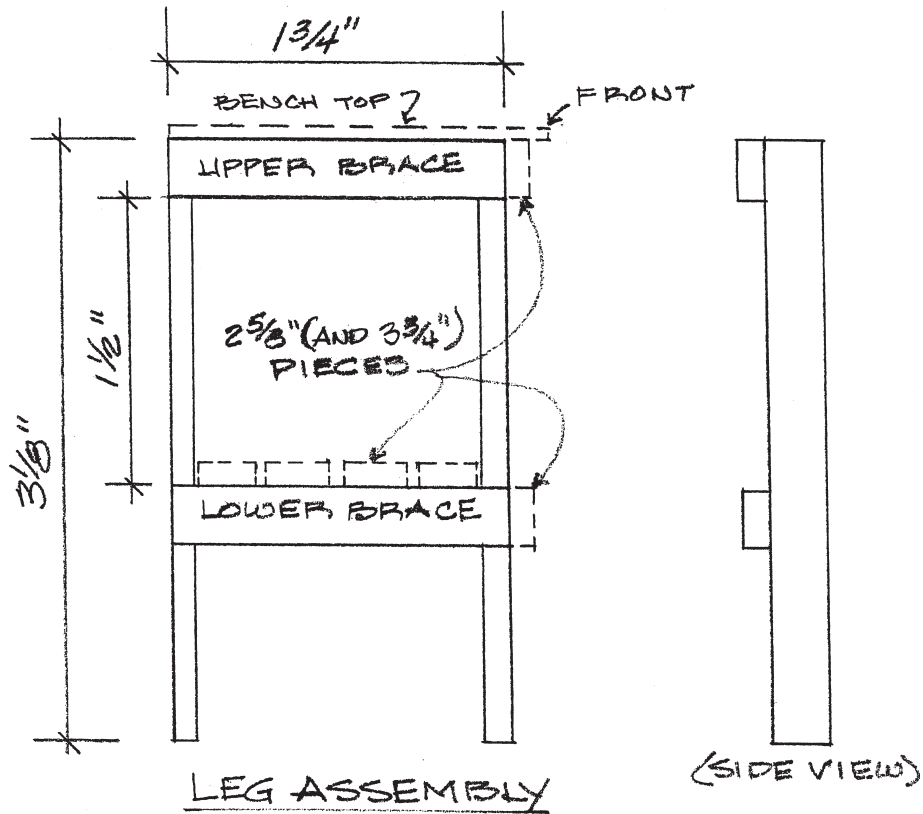
Enlarge this pattern 200%

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— more diagrams on next page



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LIGHT FIXTURE