

# Hanging Shelf with



# Pegboard

A twist on a classic design made with modern techniques

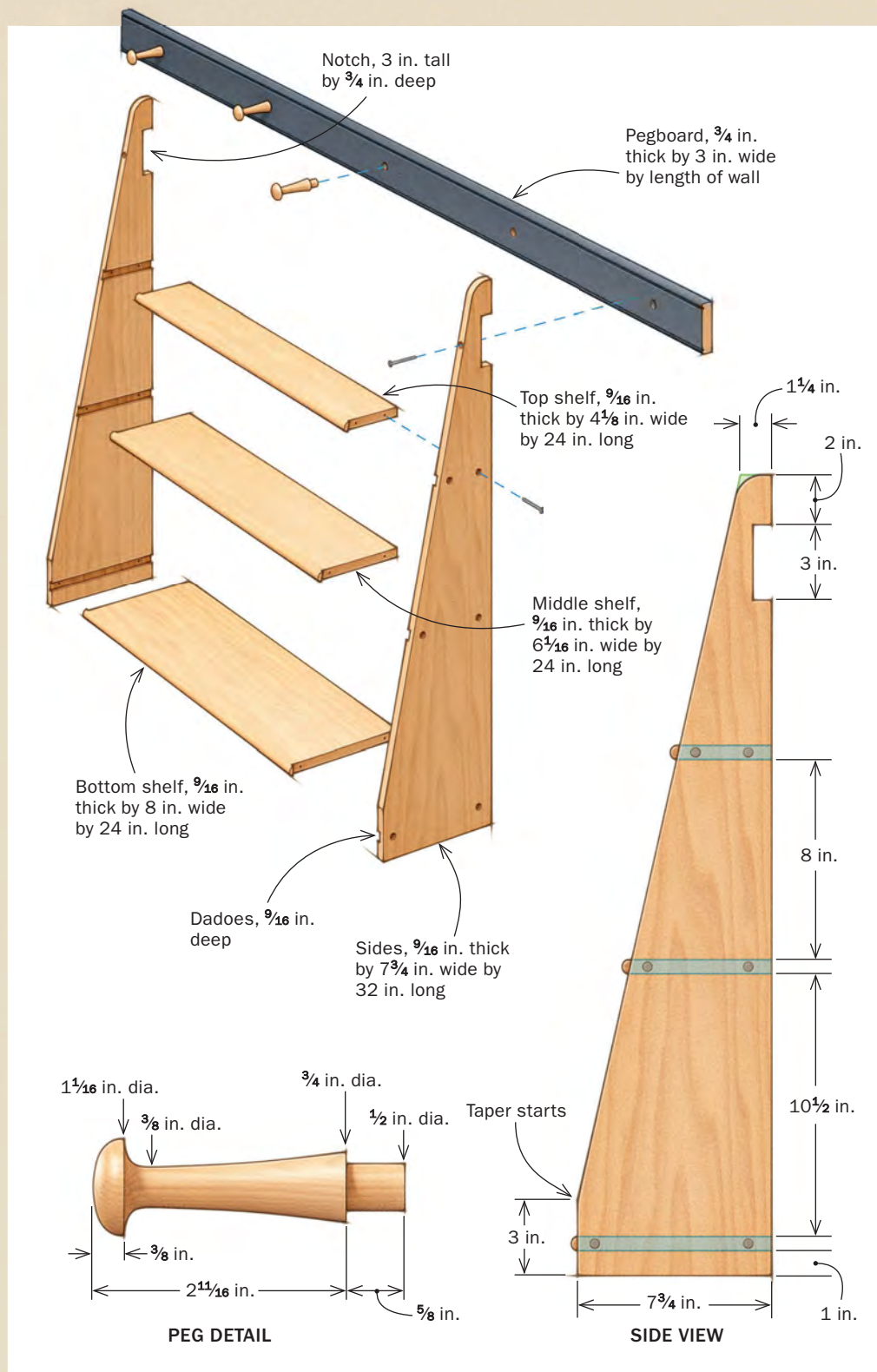
BY CHRISTIAN BECKSVOORT

The Shakers made a variety of shelves, including hanging shelves. These are seldom shown in the literature. However, they make a very useful and interesting project, offering a range of options as to size, materials, methods of attaching the horizontal shelves to the sides, and even how to hang them. This shelf is not an exact copy of a Shaker original; rather, it's a composite of several styles. You can use your wood of choice and adjust the sizes to suit your needs.

My shelf is relatively small; consequently, I mill my stock to  $\frac{9}{16}$  in. thick instead of a typical  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. It's worth mentioning that the shelves are about  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. deeper than the sides are wide, since they have a profiled front edge that extends across the front of the sides. That's not necessary, but I think it's a nice design feature.

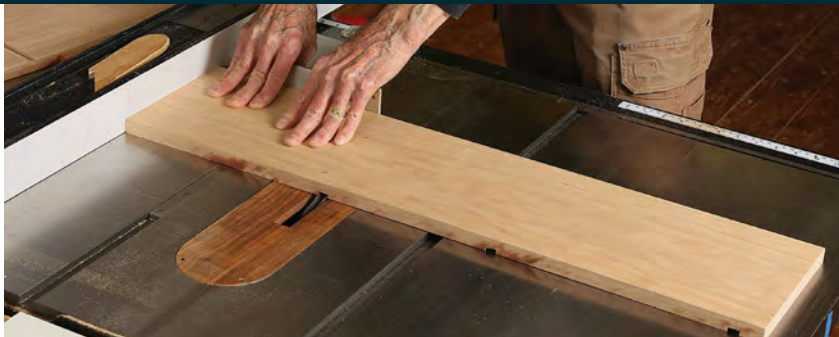
## Start on the sides

It is much easier to cut the dadoes before you taper the sides. Cut the dadoes on the tablesaw with a dado blade, then tackle the tapers on both sides at the same time. Tape the two sides together, with the dadoes facing each other, and cut the taper on the bandsaw. Clean the saw cut with a block plane, and refine the curve at the top with a file, sandpaper, or spokeshave. Cut a notch into the



# Get your side work done

The tapered sides set the stage for the graduated shelves and the hanging mechanism.

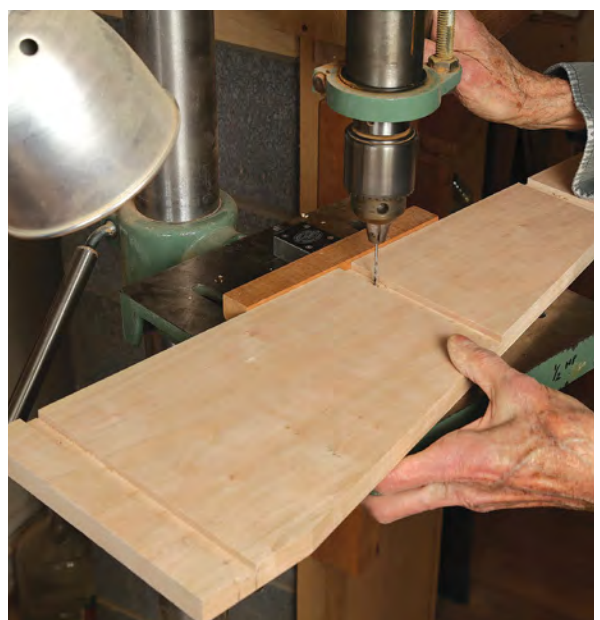


**Dadoes first.** Before tapering the sides, cut three dadoes per side. Becksvoort uses a miter gauge and the fence with a dado blade.

**Shape and notch.** Tape both side pieces together, inside faces in. This allows you to bandsaw the taper and round the top of the sides as well as cut the notches on both sides at the same time.



**Refine the shape.** Smooth the bandsaw cuts using whatever method you prefer: a block plane, file, or sandpaper.



**Pilot holes.** Before moving to the shelves, go to the drill press and drill two small holes per dado in the sides. Later, when you attach the shelves, you'll know exactly where to screw and plug through the sides.

back of the sides if you plan to hang the shelf from a pegboard.

## Round out the shelves

Next, round the front edge of the shelves with a router or block plane. The profile is not quite half-round, but more of a shallow bullnose. Then notch the ends of the shelves so the profiled front edge overlaps the sides.

Because the taper on the sides begins a few inches above the bottom shelf, the bottom shelf has a 90° notch, but the upper two shelves get notched at an angle. Mark all the notches directly off the sides. Slide the shelves into their dadoes so that 1/4 in. protrudes in the front, and mark the angle of the side taper on the edge of the shelves. On the tablesaw (or handsaw if you're so inclined), cut 7/16 in. off both ends, to within



## Beyond a basic shelf

The three shelves, each a different depth, are rounded on the front edge and notched at the ends.

**Accommodate the taper.** Because the sides are tapered, you must angle the notches in the top two shelves to match the taper. After rounding the front edge of the shelves, either at the router table or by hand with a block plane, set each shelf in its dado and trace the side piece to mark the angle on the shelf (above).



**Tablesaw first.** Use the tablesaw to cut most of the notch. Then use a pencil (right) to extend the tablesawn notch line to the angle line.

**Finish the notch by hand.** Two handsaw cuts, one an angled rip and one a 90° crosscut (using the tablesaw cut as a guide), will give you the final notch. You can clean up those cuts with a chisel.



$\frac{1}{4}$  in. of the front. Cut the marked angle with a hand-saw, and clean the intersection of the two cuts with a chisel. Repeat on both ends of all three shelves. Slide the shelves into position, making sure that the back edges are all flush with the sides.

### Bring the shelves and sides together

The original Shaker shelves were nailed; mine are glued, screwed, and plugged. With screws and plugs, you can opt for either face-grain plugs of the same wood, or end grain of a different wood. I usually just put a tiny dab of glue at the front overhang of the shelves. Glue in the dado works, too. The screws do most of the holding, so any glue is merely a good backup; just be sure that there is no squeeze-out.

Sand the sides to clean them up whether you're using plugs, filled nail holes, or dowels. Complete them with the finish of your choice. I use an oil finish.

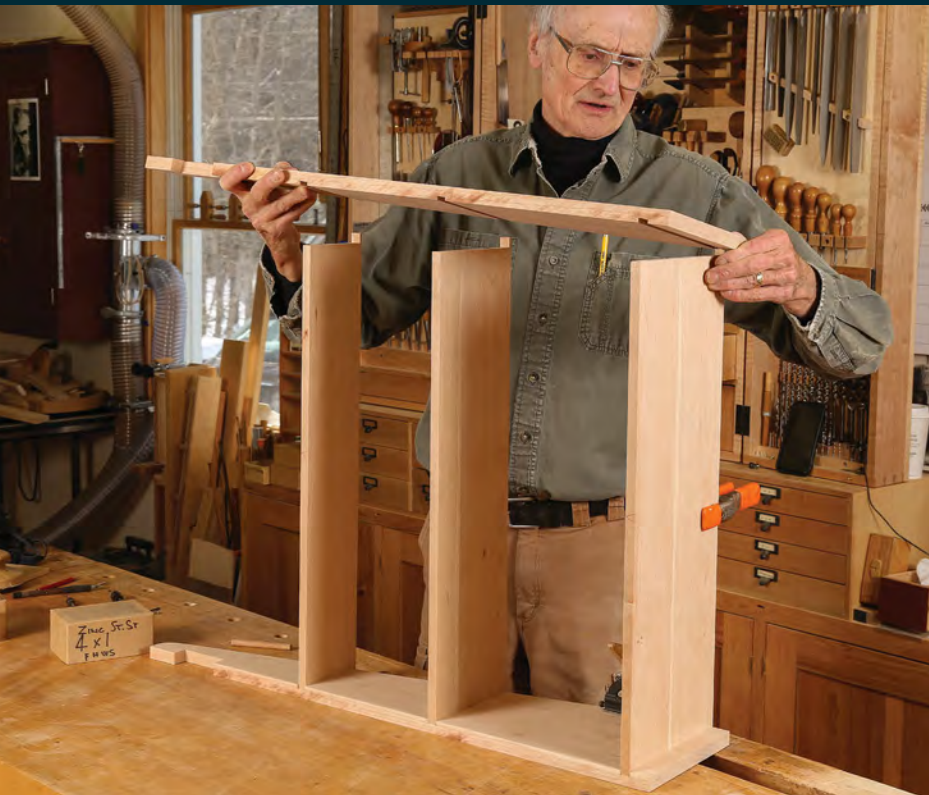
### Pegboard aesthetics

Traditionally, Shaker pegboards doubled as an architectural feature, as part of the trim, and were run along the full length of the wall and around the entire room.



# Assembly required

Becksvoort attaches the shelves to the sides using glue, screws, and plugs.



**Keep things square.** With one side on your work surface, set the shelves in their respective dados. Clamp a square to one side and the bottom shelf. Add the second side to the assembly.



**Glue and screws.** Using the small holes for location, drill pilot and clearance holes for the screws, and counterbores for the plugs. Glue and screw the side to the shelves.

To make them more attractive, a small bead was often cut into the top and bottom edges of the boards. They were painted, and often the pegs were painted as well. I much prefer a painted pegboard with natural pegs. The contrast is stunning, especially on white walls. If you turn your own pegs on the lathe, you can save a lot of anguish by cutting the tenons with a 1/2-in. tenon cutter or plug cutter on the drill press while the peg blanks are still square. I have turned many a peg in my day.

That said, ready-made pegs are available in a variety of shapes and sizes at most wood-supply outlets. I am not against efficiency and will also buy ready-made pegs when the sizes and shapes work for a project. In my opinion, the nicest ones are made by Nice Knobs. Here I'm using the Ashfield Peg from niceknobs.com, available in maple, cherry, and walnut.

## Hanging the board and shelf

Originally, most Shaker pegboards were attached directly to wall lath or studs prior to plastering and were flush with the plastered wall. That is seldom an option today, so they are applied over drywall, as I did here. Most often, pegboards are nailed onto the



**Add plugs.** Once the entire assembly is screwed together, glue in plugs to cover the screws, and then trim the plugs flush to the case side with a handsaw.



# Pegboard possibilities

Profiles, color options, and peg design all work together to create the pegboard allure and utility of the Shaker style.



**Just the board.** A  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-thick by 3-in.-wide board is how it all begins. The length is dictated by the wall the board will be mounted on. At the router table, Becksvoort uses a beading bit to create profiles at the top and bottom along the length of the board.



**Holes in the board.** At the drill press, bore mortises to accept the pegs.



**Pegged.** While Becksvoort has turned hundreds of pegs, he sometimes purchases them. These are from niceknobs.com (item no. PG338MP). Becksvoort chucks them in the drill press to sand them with 220-grit paper. Then he glues and clamps them in place on the board.



## Pegboard profiles



**Eased edges.** For a very plain aesthetic, just ease the edges of the board with a block plane.

**Bead with a roundover.** A beading bit, run along the top and bottom of the board, gives a delicate roundover into a bead.

**One bit, two looks.** The  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. roundover bit can create just a roundover (above left), or—if set to take a deeper cut—it can produce a roundover with a fillet.

drywall and into the studs. They also can be screwed and plugged.

I've seen several methods the Shakers used to hang wall shelves from pegboards. The simplest way was to drill a hole near the top of each upright, make loops out of string, and then hang the loops over the pegs. Another option the Shakers used was to cut notches at the very top back edge of the uprights (so the tops of the uprights were flush with the top of the pegboard), and screw or nail the uprights to the pegboard. A slight change to this method is to cut the notch a few inches below the top of the uprights so that the uprights extend above the pegboard. With this arrangement, the notch takes the weight of the shelf, but it must still be secured with screws. □

*Christian Becksvoort is a longtime contributing editor who makes furniture in New Gloucester, Maine.*

# Modern installation

Affix the board on top of the drywall.



**Seek level.** After finding the studs and marking them with blue tape on the wall, level the pegboard. Then nail it in place.



**Attach the shelf.** Set the shelf in place on the pegboard, use an awl to mark its location, drill, and then screw the shelf into place on the pegboard.