

TRADITIONAL BOOKCASE IN THE CRAFTSMAN STYLE

by Gary Rogowski

Of the many qualities that help define the Arts and Crafts style, perhaps the most apparent is straightforward and honest joinery. Wedged joints and through-tenons show the world how a piece was made. Open-grained woods like white oak give a piece a rustic unabashed look, that says, "Here's what I am—sturdy, well-made furniture." No abstractions get in the way, no conceptualizing need be done. This frank simplicity is just the style the progenitors of the Arts and Crafts movement in England hoped for—a direct counterpoint to the machines and machined look of the Industrial Age and its products—and it's just the

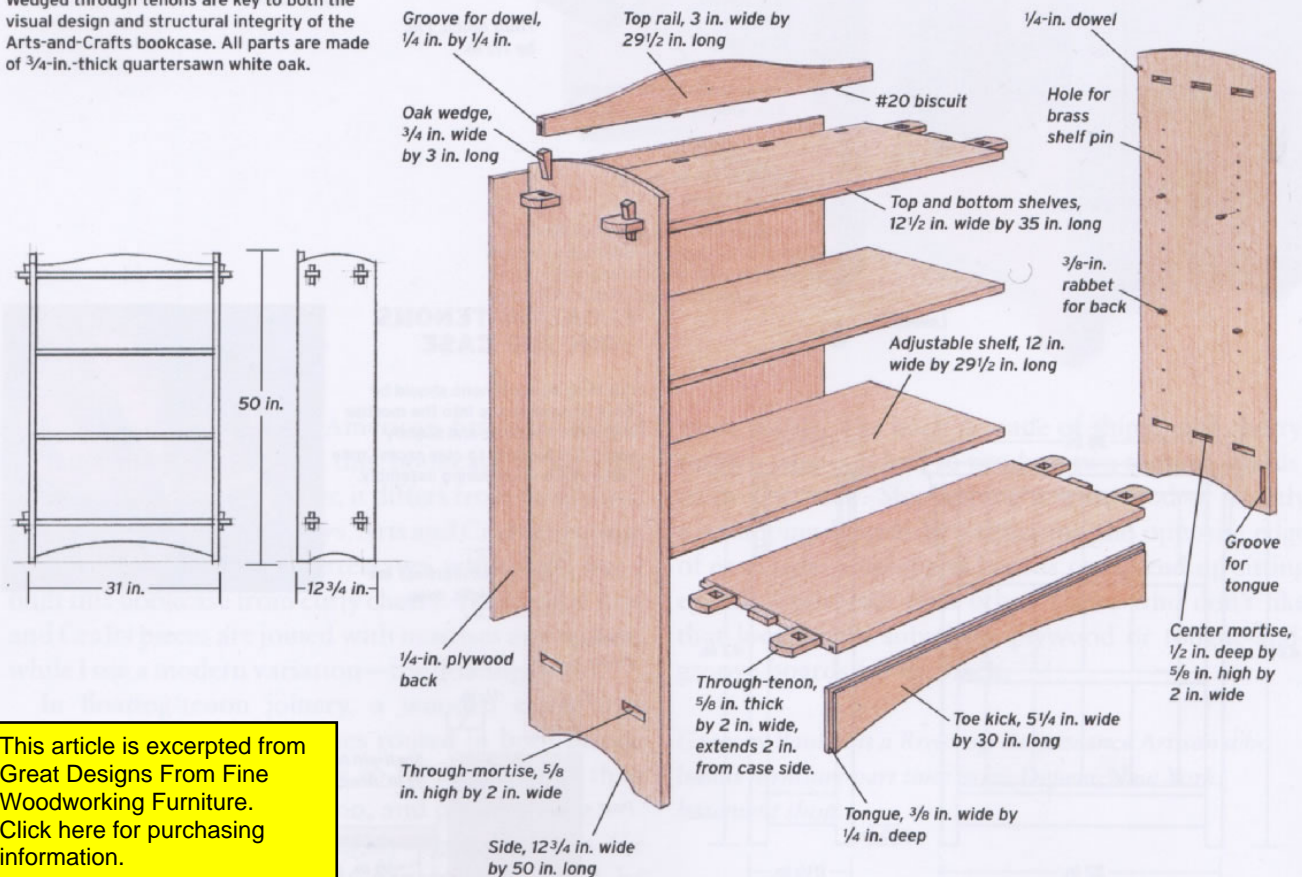
style for the bookcase I made to fit in my bungalow.

The bookcase is just 50 in. high and 31 in. wide. Quartersawn white oak, the quintessential Arts and Crafts material, was clearly the wood of choice. For the sides and shelves, I glued two boards together, then scraped and sanded them. Wedges made of the same oak secure the through-tenons to the mortised sides and give the bookcase its strength and honest face.

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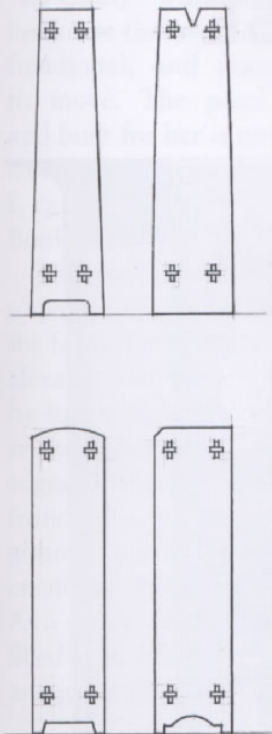
CRAFTSMAN-STYLE BOOKCASE

Wedged through tenons are key to both the visual design and structural integrity of the Arts-and-Crafts bookcase. All parts are made of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-thick quartersawn white oak.



This article is excerpted from *Great Designs From Fine Woodworking Furniture*. Click here for purchasing information.

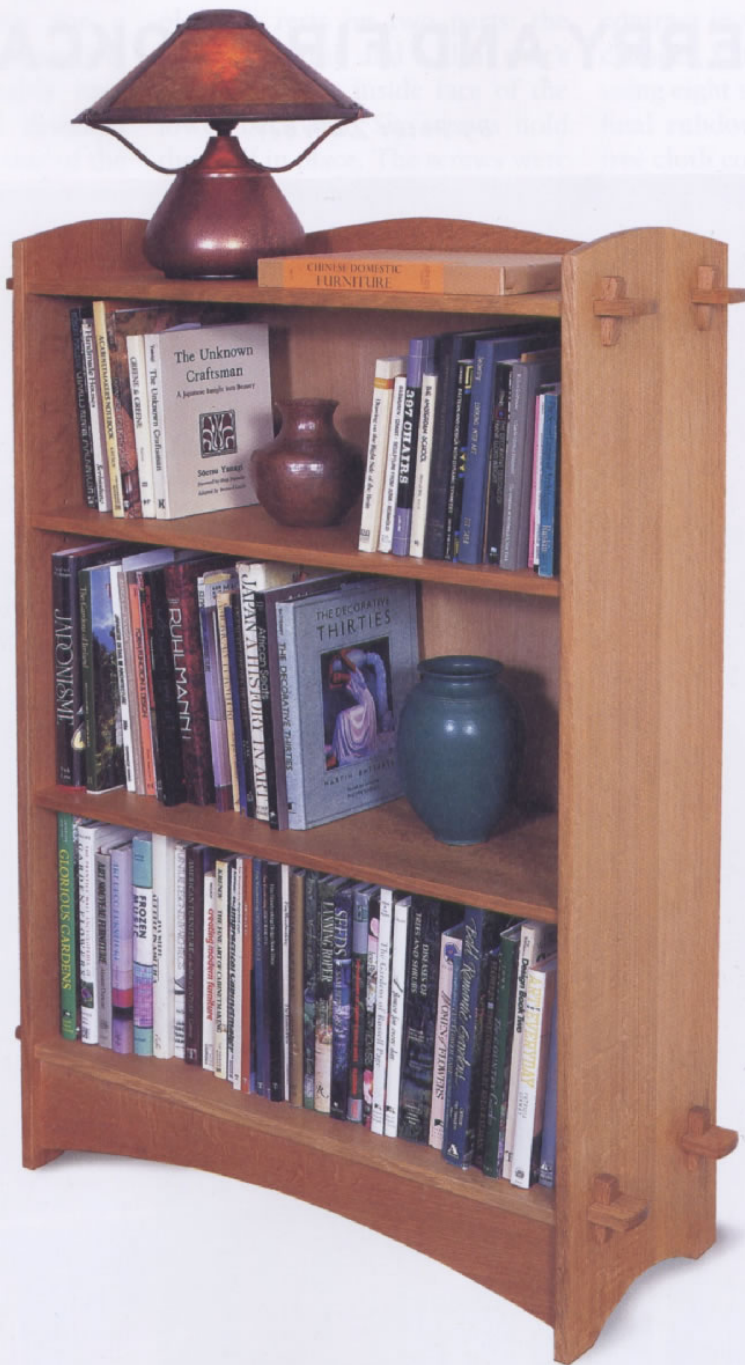
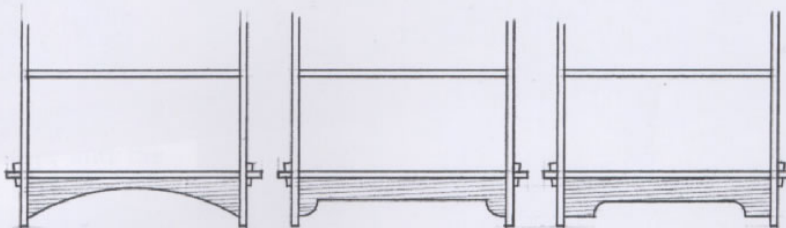
PROFILES



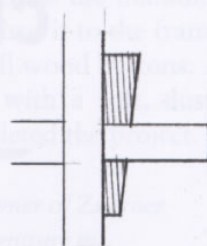
The way the bookcase is shaped on its sides and rails strongly influences the appearance of the piece. Try drawing out a few shapes on cardboard to see them full scale. Flat or beveled bottom edges, simple indents, shallow arcs, or other combinations of shapes all lend a certain feel to a piece. My advice is to keep the shaping details consistent throughout. So a negative shape cut out of the bottom of the sides can be nicely recalled at the top, in the toekick, or in the backslash.

TOE KICKS

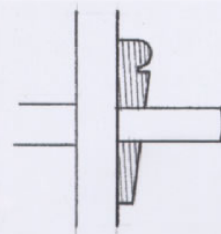
Don't overlook the toekick as a design element. It greatly influences how the bookcase "stands" and can also help tie all of the pieces in the case together. A toekick can be of a simple design, but you may find a complex pattern more suitable. The toekick on this case echoes the shallow arc of the top rail; arcs also appear in the sides, at both top and bottom. The motif is a unifying element.



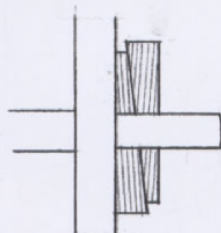
WEDGES



The material of the wedges and their shape and placement can really make a difference in the look and feel of the bookcase. Using a contrasting species, like darker rosewood, gives the wedges a visual punch. But be sure the wedge material is as tough as the white oak.



Oak wedges can be colored to provide contrast. An ebonizing solution of vinegar and rusty nails or steel wool will give oak a color anywhere from a dusky gray to black, depending on the solution and the amount of tannin in the oak. Wedges can be shaped any number of ways.



Double wedges allow you to mortise straight through the tenon at no angle. The angle of the wedges themselves creates the necessary force. The number of wedges can be varied to suit your taste; for instance, you can put three wedges at the bottom and two at the top.

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