CRAFTSMAN OF THE MONTH

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I'm always looking for new things to make with my rock collection and decided to make a coin bank using an antique post office lock box door. I have made a number of these using a variety of different woods with dovetail joints and thought it was time to try making some using rocks. As there are many different models and sizes of the old doors, the first step is to obtain a door to determine the size of the box. This coin bank was made using my favorite style, the flying eagle door, made in the early 1900s. The doors may be found at antique shops, salvage outlets, and on eBay. The flying eagle door required an opening of 3⅜ inches by 4⅝ inches.

"The next step was to select a rock large enough to cut into five ½-inch-thick slabs. I chose a piece of rhodonite that I collected at the Sunnyside mine dump near Silverton, Colorado. After cutting the slabs, I needed to trim the pieces. I cut the back piece, then ground it square to the exact size of the door frame opening. I cut the top and bottom and ground them square to 4⅜ inches wide by 4⁹⁄₁₆ inches deep, and I cut the two side pieces to a final dimension of 4⁹⁄₁₆ inches square.

"Initially, I squared two sides of each piece on my 8-inch rotary lap and then temporarily glued two together using sodium silicate (water glass) that I bought at local drug store. After it dried overnight, I could grind all four sides square together. I did this with the top and bottom together and the two sides together. I then soaked the pieces in water to release the glue.

"To make the coin slot, I located the center of the top panel and drilled holes using a ¼-inch diamond core drill. Using diamond bits in a Dremel tool with a flexible shaft, I ground the holes into an opening ¼ inch by 1¼ inches long and smoothed the sides. The length of the slot will depend on the specific brass coin slot selected. These can be obtained from woodworking hardware suppliers such as Meisel Hardware Specialties (www.meiselwoodhobby.com) or other craft/hobby suppliers.

"Next, I marked and drilled holes for wood screws to fasten the door frame to the inside of the box and roundhead wood screws to fasten the coin slot. I filled the holes with J-D KWIK Set epoxy steel resin. The flying eagle frame also required a bevel edge, which I ground before assembly. After cleaning the joints with acetone, I assembled the box lap joints using Epoxy 330, applied heat, and let it sit for 24 hours. To provide additional strength, I coated the inside of the box with liquid, pour-on, high-gloss plastic resin. I coated one flat surface at a time to avoid runs. I allowed the plastic to harden for 24 hours before coating the next surface.

"The last steps were to grind all the joints and surfaces smooth in my 15-inch vibrating lap, using 80, 220 and 600 grit abrasive, and to polish with cerium oxide. Although it took me about three weeks from start to finish, I consider it well worth the time. The coin bank provides a unique and useful way to display the beauty and character of the rock, as well as showing a bit of American history.

Craftsman of the Month winners receive a two-speed Dremel Model 2850 MultiPro kit and a wall plaque in recognition of their creativity and craftsmanship.

To enter, simply write a step-by-step description of how you crafted your project from start to finish. Don't worry about the quality of your writing; just state clearly the steps you followed to complete your project. Be sure to include at least one sharp, close-up, color or black-and-white photo of the finished project, suitable for reproduction in *Rock & Gem*. Please submit digital photos as high-resolution files, on disk only. Submissions will not be returned, so do not send originals.

Send your project description and photo, along with your name and street address (required for delivery), to Craftsman of the Month, *Rock & Gem*, 290 Maple Ct., Ste. 232, Ventura, CA 93003.

We want to see the fine lapidary projects our readers are making. Please share your work with us! You have nothing to lose, and a Dremel MultiPro tool and an impressive award plaque to gain. Thank you.