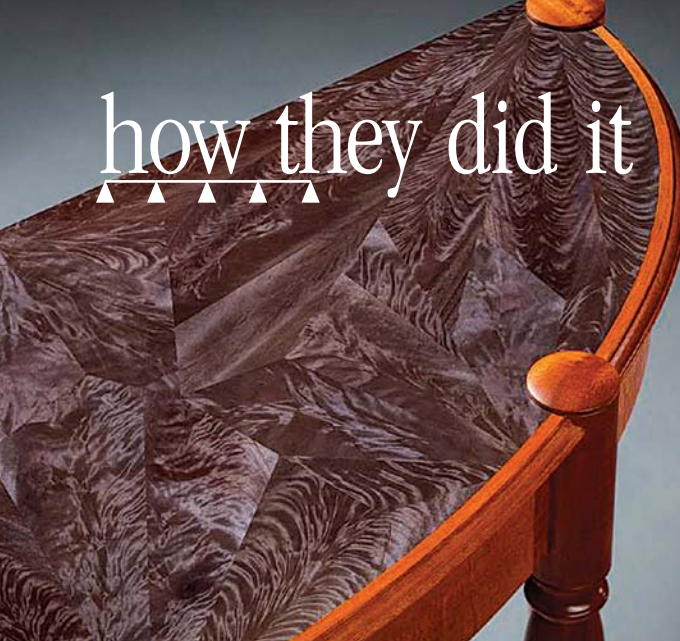


how they did it



The zipper and the feather. The dark fissure in the birch bark—the zipper—where the trunk separates, telegraphs the fountain of feathery grain within.

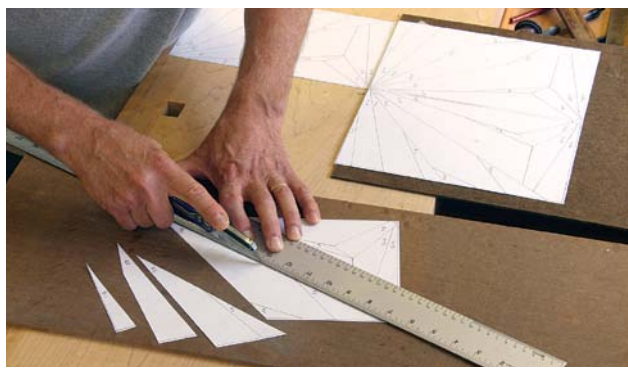


Billets into blanks. After cutting the crotches into billets on the bandsaw mill, then air-drying the billets, Lamb slices the wood into veneers on the bandsaw.

Fabricating frost

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

David Lamb's frost-patterned marquetry (see the back cover) begins with birch crotch sections 3 or 4 ft. long. When he's collected a few, he takes them to a friend with a bandsaw mill. One cut through the crotch reveals whether the figure within is strong enough to warrant the effort of cutting it into billets. Lamb air-dries the billets for some months on a hot, high shelf in his shop, then cuts them into veneers. He likes to get the veneers down to about 6% moisture content, using a moisture meter to check and a microwave oven to finish the job, if necessary. Then he sends them through a thickness sander. Lamb likes birch for its warm tone and for the connection to so much American period furniture in which birch was used as a substitute for satinwood. He also doesn't mind that birch is so commercially neglected that he often gets the material for free.



Nature's templates. Having drawn out the marquetry pattern, Lamb cuts up the component pieces to use as templates, which he'll glue to the veneer.



Careful placement. Lamb orients the paper templates to take best advantage of the crotch figure. He keeps an extra copy of the overall drawing and numbers all the parts to guide both grain selection and reassembly.



Perfect joints without a knife. After rough-cutting on the bandsaw, Lamb makes finish cuts with a sliding miter saw. His sandwiching jig, made with $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. MDF, keeps the marquetry pieces still and the joint lines perfect.



Piece it up. Lamb edge-glues adjacent pieces, clamping them with tape on the show face and the underside. Then he'll cut any joints that cross both pieces.



Nearly in the bag. With the marquetry for one quadrant of the design complete, Lamb peels off the tape on the underside, then scrapes the joints flat to prepare for gluing the sheet to a substrate in the vacuum bag.

