

Lower Cabinet

The pair of doors is surmounted by a single drawer with a brass bail pull, then an open shelf, and finally an attached box with two sliding doors. In this case, however, the body of the cupboard is canted at the open shelf to follow the lines of the original slant-top desk. Finally, three dovetailed, double-book boxes or closed shelves that together constitute the “great bookcase” are stacked on the attached boxes in the same fashion as the Sergeant cabinet, completing the large square facade of the new desk.¹ Edwards further emulated the Sergeant chest by having partitions installed in the cabinet drawers, creating two spaces for folio notebooks in the left drawer and four for quarto notebooks in the right. Although the new cupboards and the graduated shelves are—like the Sergeant cabinet—made entirely of white pine, the whole ensemble was stained walnut to match the original desk.² To further unify the piece, the base molding on the front of the desk was extended across the cupboards and down the outside ends; double half-round molding was applied to the front edges of the cupboards and bookcases and to one vertical edge of each pair of sliding doors, matching the same decoration on the original desk. Finally, the shoed reel-and-bun feet, also of white pine and aspen, appear to have been made and applied to the old and new portions of the desk at the same time; if not, the match is remarkable.

Edwards's expanded desk, like the book tabletop, reflected the colonial gentry's turn in the mid-eighteenth century from a baroque to a plain, or unadorned, aesthetic, a combination of local materials and craftsmanship with cosmopolitan, even transatlantic, sensibilities. The woods, grown locally, were stained to look like a higher grade. Certainly the desk is not elegant, yet it has integrity. Even the double half-round molding, which might at first blush seem merely decorative, serves to unify the whole in a rather pragmatic, understated manner. Most of all, the desk with its cabinets and bookcases combined taste with function, serving Edwards's needs for composing, for storing and filing different kinds of materials, and even, if need be, for quick transport of books and manuscripts.

Seated at his new desk, Edwards must have resembled a seventeenth-century organist at a console built into the facade of organ pipes. Of course, here the pipes were papers, notebooks, and books, but the ensemble must have been an impressive organic machine nonetheless. His full study now included the enlarged desk, doubtless comprising the “great bookcase” to which Edwards's notes refer, his rotating book table, his writing table, and a “small bookcase.”³ By this time Edwards would also have had most of those books enumerated in his estate inventory. And while the inventory's list of 38 folios, 34 quartos, 99 octavos, 130 duodecimos, and 536 pamphlets gives no indication of the volumes' thickness, surveys of typical eighteenth-century books in each of these size categories indicate that Edwards must have needed

¹ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,”* (Entry Nos. a–z, aa–zz, 1–500), ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 136 (quotation).

² For information regarding the John Sergeant chest, see accompanying “Great Bookcase,” supplement, http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/Oct12/edwards/PDF/GreatBookCase_Supplement.pdf.

³ *Works*, 13: 136 (“great bookcase”); E[dwards] A[masa] P[ark], ed., “Jonathan Edwards's Last Will, and the Inventory of his Estate,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1876, 438–47 (“small bookcase,” 445). In his table to the “Miscellanies,” under the entry “Hell,” Edwards had noted to himself, probably around 1748, to consult on the topic “a loose paper in one of my drawers.” After moving to Stockbridge, however, he interlineated in this entry, apparently in 1753 or 1754, that the paper was now in the “great bookcase at the right hand,” indicating that he added this object to his study furniture at his new location. See *Works*, 13: 136 (quotations). A couple of years later, probably in 1756, writing in “Miscellanies” no. 1349, a wide-ranging collection of materials on the divinity of Christ in which at one point he considered 2 Peter 1:1, he noted: “See Mr. Foxcroft's sermon on that text, pp. 27 ff., in the short box at the left hand of the larger bookcase, a pamphlet with a blue cover” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 23, *The “Miscellanies,”* (Entry Nos. 1153–1360), ed. Douglas A. Sweeney [New Haven, Conn., 2004], 424, referring to Thomas Foxcroft, *Like precious Faith obtained, through the Righteousness of our God and Savior, by all the true Servants of Christ . . .* [Boston, 1756]). The “short box” is the one with sliding doors on top of the cabinet to the left of the desk.

about thirty linear feet of book storage for printed books and pamphlets alone, not to mention his library of his own manuscripts. Folios would not have fit into his shelves with sliding doors and were probably stored in the cupboards and quite possibly in the small bookcase, which may have consisted of only two or three widely separated shelves. The desk itself now offered him about twenty-five linear feet of book shelving for the smaller volumes.

The study was filled with more than one project at a time during the Stockbridge years, and rotation among these closely related projects was inevitable. Although Edwards's *Freedom of Will* of 1754 was largely worked up in notebooks during the Northampton period, Sereno E. Dwight, Edwards's great-grandson and early nineteenth-century editor, claims that the final writing took only four and one-half months, sometime between August 1752 and the spring of 1753, and it is clear from previous writing projects that once Edwards formed his concept of what was to be written, the actual composition made the study hum with his efficient application of the flying quill.⁴

⁴ S[ereno] E. Dwight, *The Life of President Edwards* (New York, 1830), 533.