

Hay-Shop Tables, A Research Note

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***Note To Reader:** The stated purpose of this research note is to discuss some unusual construction techniques found in what is believed to be a Hay table and two other related tables (all circa 1740-60), compare these techniques with known Hay tables, provide photographs and construction details of the tables, pose questions to the readers about the tables, and request assistance from the readers in answering these questions and providing photographs of other tables with these unusual construction techniques.*

We recently had the opportunity to examine what we think is an early table from the shop of Anthony Hay in Williamsburg, VA. To avoid confusion, we will refer to this table as the "early Hay table" (Fig. 1, Early Hay table). This table is walnut with walnut and cherry secondary, and it has a 7/8" thick top.



Figure 1

When compared with a known Hay table (Fig. 2, Known Hay table), common features can be compared.



Figure 2

Included in these features are the distinctive pad-on-inverted-trumpet feet (Fig. 3, Foot on early Hay table) (Fig. 4, Foot on known Hay table).



Figure 3



Figure 4

Another common detail is the dovetail pattern. The dovetails on the early Hay table (Fig. 5, Dovetails on early Hay table) are very close in design and execution to the dovetails on the known Hay table (Fig. 6, Dovetails on known Hay table).



Figure 5

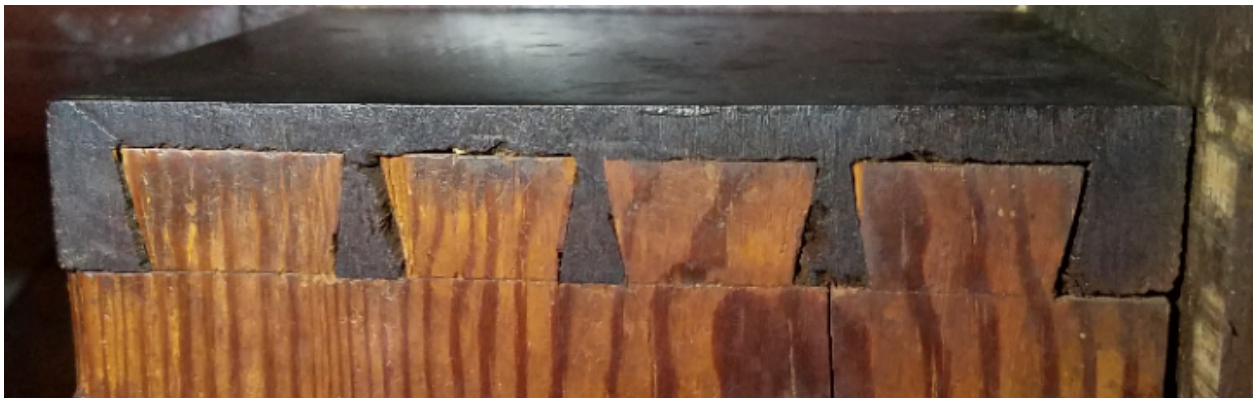


Figure 6

Likewise, both tables are tooth planed under their tops and leaves (Fig. 7, Tooth plane marks, early Hay table) (Fig. 8, Tooth plane marks, known Hay table).



Figure 7



Figure 8

The knuckle joints of both the early Hay table and the known Hay table are nearly identical (Fig. 9, Knuckle joint, early Hay table) (Fig. 10, Knuckle joint, known Hay table).



Figure 9



Figure 10

However, here, the Hay diagnostics diverge. The early Hay table exhibits an unusual framing technique.

In searching the MESDA files, a table with very similar framing is documented as having descended in a Gloucester County, VA, family. This table in the MESDA files is walnut with yellow pine and oak secondary. Below is the link to the MESDA file which contains additional photographs of and information on this table.

<http://mesda.org/item/object/table-dining/14625>

Still another table with very similar framing is documented in the MESDA files as having descended in an Essex County, VA, family. This table is listed as mahogany with maple secondary, but the secondary wood appears to be cherry. Below is the link to the file which contains additional photographs of and information on this table.

<http://mesda.org/item/object/table-dining/14705/>

These three tables have through-tenoned, medial braces with partial, inner, side rails lapping over the ends of the fixed hinge rails and stopping at the medial brace (Fig. 11, Unusual framing

in early Hay table) (Fig. 12, closer view of framing in early Hay table) (Fig. 13, Unusual framing in first, MESDA-file table) (Fig. 14, Unusual framing in second, MESDA-file table).



Figure 11



Figure 12

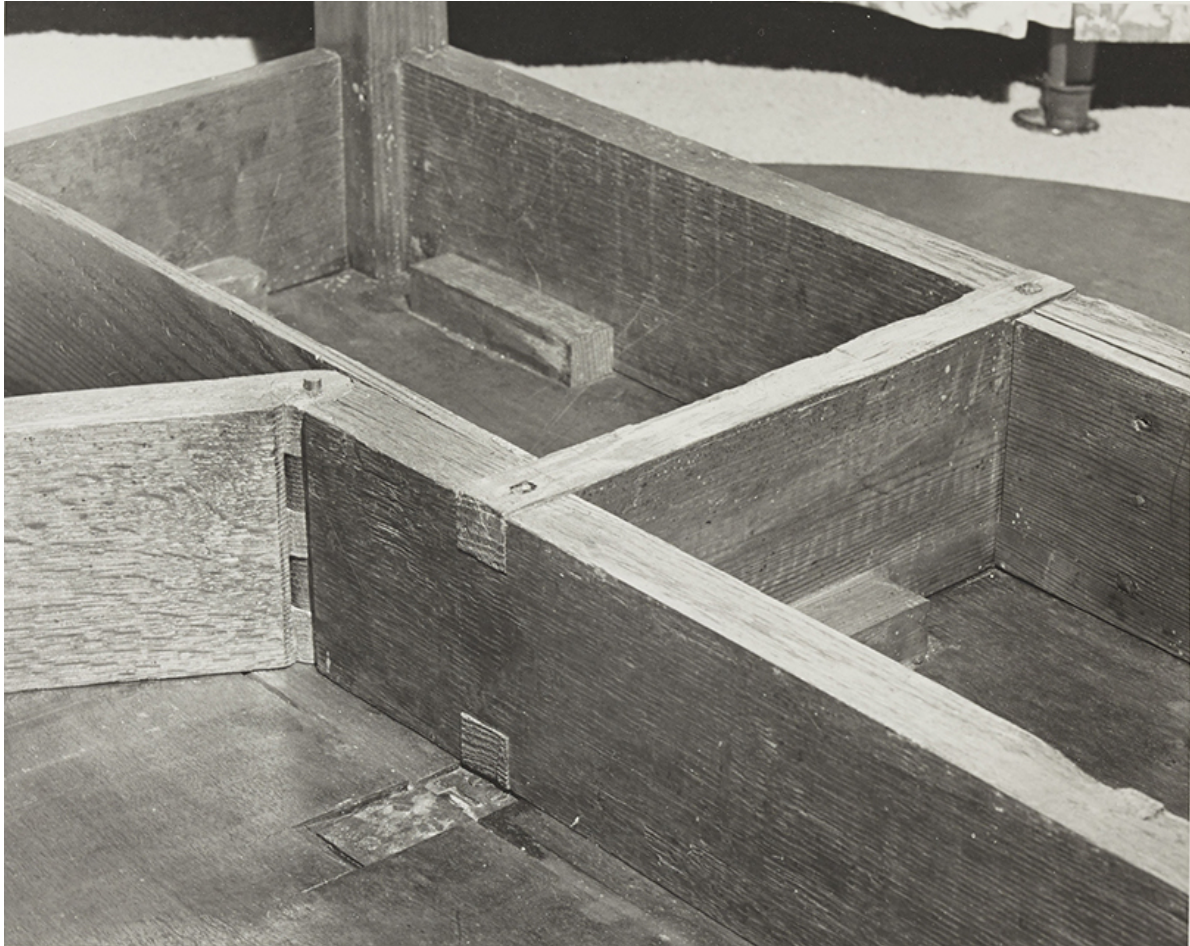


Figure 13

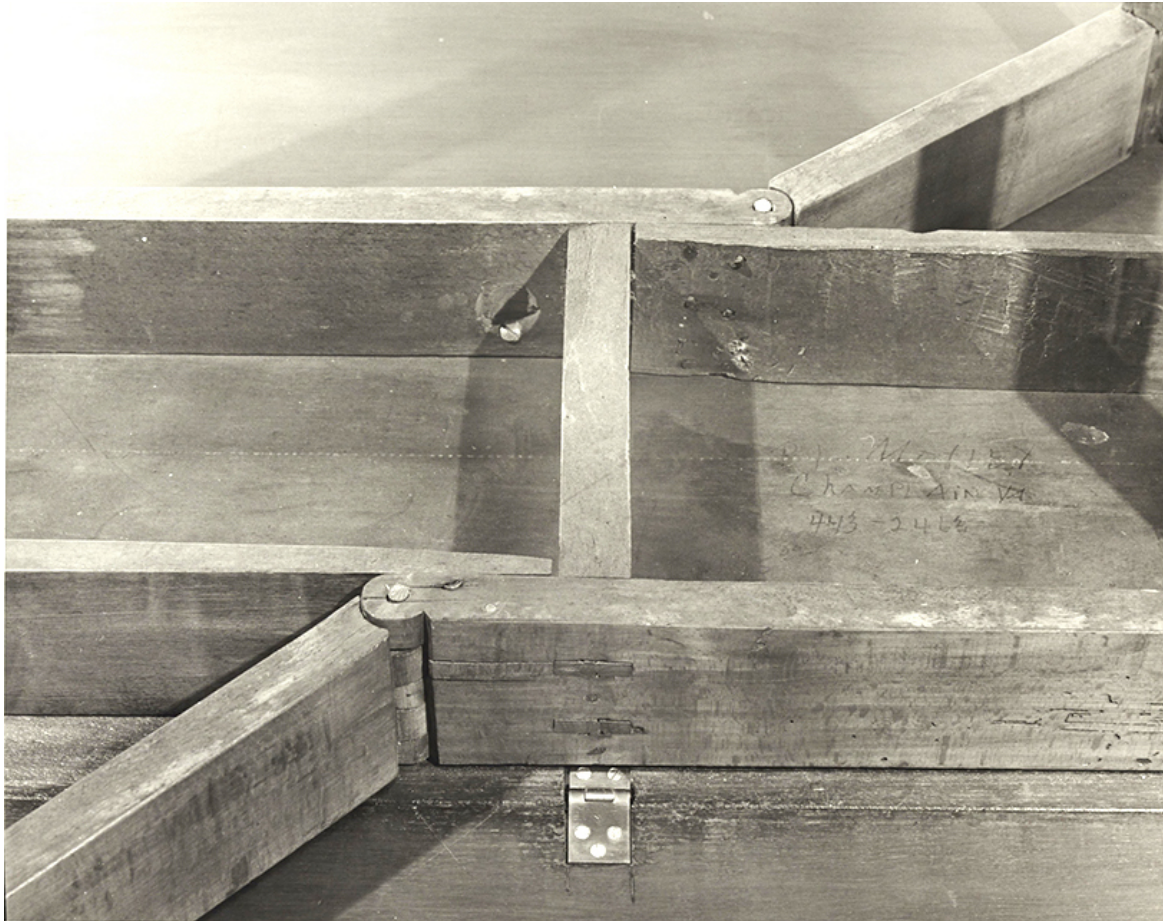


Figure 14

Note that the through tenons in the second, MESDA-file table (see Fig. 14) are virtually identical to the through tenons in the early Hay table (see Fig. 11).

In contrast to this unusual frame construction technique, the known Hay table has full-length, inner, side rails with the fixed hinge rails attached to them (Fig. 15, Conventional Hay table

framing). In the case of this six-leg, Hay table, there are two swing hinge rails on each side.



Figure 15

In a more conventionally framed, four-leg, Hay table, there are two full-length, inner, side rails, a single fixed hinge rail on each side, and a single swing hinge rail on each side (Fig. 16, More conventional, 4-leg, Hay table framing, detail from MESDA-file photo S-4358).

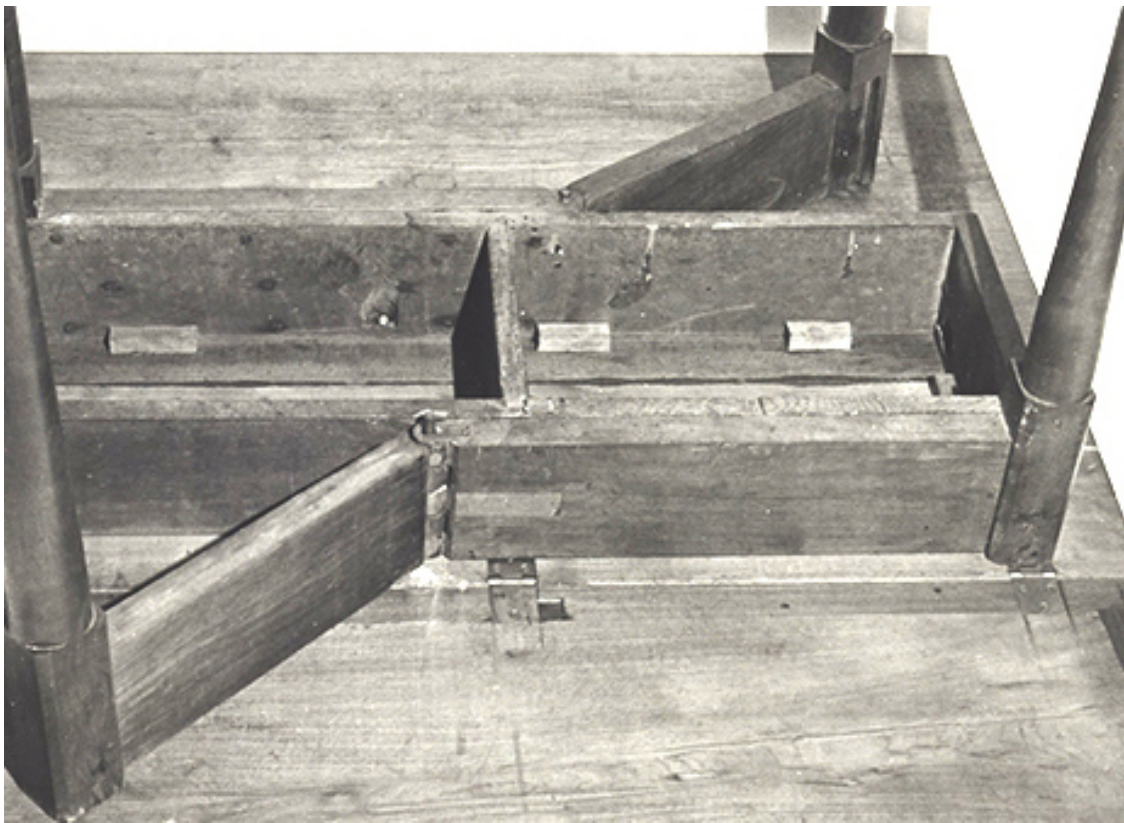


Figure 16

In the early Hay table and in the two, MESDA-file tables, the medial braces are through tenoned (see Figs. 11, 13, & 14).

Whereas, in the known Hay table and the 4-leg Hay table, the

medial braces are dovetailed into the inner side rails (Fig. 17, Medial brace in known Hay table) (see Fig. 16).



Figure 17

These three tables, likely by different hands, are obviously related, but how? Was Hay working with someone in Gloucester County before his arrival in Williamsburg, previously thought to be 1751 but now believed to be 1749 (Personal communication, Ron Hurst, CWF Chief Curator and VP)? Did the maker of the first, MESDA-file table bring this construction technique with him to the Hay shop? Where and when does the second, MESDA-file table fit into the picture? Did Hay use this technique for a while before transitioning into the more conventional framing method of his later production? Is there a common source for this construction technique in eastern VA (e.g. Williamsburg, Norfolk, another American center, Scotland, or England)?

Scotland is a prime suspect as there was considerable trade in VA with Scotland, numerous Scottish and Irish tradesmen worked in Norfolk, and Hay was from Scotland. The Walkers in King George, County, VA, were from Scotland; and on a recent trip to Scotland, numerous pieces of furniture were observed with traits found on their counterparts from the Hay shop and other eastern VA locations (Personal communication, Robert

Leath, MESDA Chief Curator). That said, we just do not know at this time and are keeping an open mind. Therefore, we request our readers to consider all of the above evidence and to provide us with any information, documentation, and photographs related to the unusual framing technique in an effort to answer the questions.

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