

## Maker Mondays

*Created by Historic Deerfield Museum Education Staff Members, Claire Carlson and Faith Deering.*

Welcome to Week Eleven of Maker Mondays from Historic Deerfield. Check your social media feed or look for an email from us every Monday for a fun activity that you can do at home, inspired by history and using common household items.

### Homage to Decoupage



Decoupage box made in the nineteenth century. HD 88.088

This week's Maker Mondays project comes from a suggestion made by Amanda Lange, Curatorial Department Chair. We have a small wooden box, beautifully decorated with paint and paper cut-outs in our collection. This box represents an art form called *decoupage*. We thought you would enjoy learning about it and trying to decorate your own special box at home.

First we will give you a little of the history and background of the decoupage box in our collection, and then explain how you can make your own contemporary version.

The box in our collection is a rectangular hinged decoupage box painted black and highlighted with numerous cut-out printed figures covered with varnish. The box was owned by Mrs. Dorothy Wise Smead of Deerfield and Springfield, MA, and Meriden, NH, and was given to the museum by her daughter. The box is inscribed in

graphite on the bottom of the box: "Nancy Clay/Box 1832 or 1892?" We don't know for sure who Nancy Clay was. She *could* be Nancy M. Clay, daughter of cabinetmaker Daniel Clay and his wife Lucinda Smead Clay of Greenfield. She was born on July 30, 1820 and died January 29, 1883. The date "1832" could relate to the family's move to New York City when Daniel Clay left the cabinetmaking business and became a druggist. This is still a bit of a mystery, but if this box is connected to the Clay family, it provides a glimpse into the family life of an important local cabinet maker.

### **What is decoupage?**

Decoupage, or **découpage**, is the art of decorating an object by gluing colored paper cutouts onto it, and then varnishing the finished product to harmonize the elements. Decoupage grew in popularity in eighteenth-century Europe, particularly as a way of decorating furniture. Decoupage remained in use through the nineteenth century as a simple way for people to beautify ordinary objects, as well as imbue them with specific meaning: choosing and arranging different paper cutouts personalized objects, as well as embellished them. We hope you'll enjoy this process as well!

### **Decoupage your own box:**

We looked around our homes for cardboard boxes. We found different shapes, some large and small boxes; shoe boxes work well but there are many possibilities.



First, we will show you a step-by-step method using glue, spray paint, an old shoe box, and cutouts made from old holiday cards. Second, we will show you a simple, less messy way to decorate your box.

**Step 1:** Spray paint the shoe box. Suggestion: do this outside on the grass or cover the grass with newspaper. Let dry. Spray on another layer for good coverage. Let dry. You can also use any paint you have around the house: acrylic art, house, or wall paint work well.



**Step 2:** Choose images and cut them out:







**Step 3:** Prepare the glue, using three parts white glue and one part water. Mix with your paintbrush until it is smooth.



**Step 4:** Choose a design and start gluing your cutouts onto the box. Work on one side at a time. Spread the surface of your box with glue with a paintbrush or foam brush, then apply the cutouts. After you apply the cutouts, use your brush to cover them evenly with a layer of glue. Let the glue dry, then cover them again with glue. Repeat this step as many times as you like to achieve a layered decoupage look. Note: it is good to have a damp washcloth or towel with you to use to wipe your fingers when they get sticky.



**Step 5:** The box is almost complete. You can see how the gold spray paint has taken on an antiqued look after many layers of glue.



**Step 6:** Enjoy your finished box. You can use it to store important papers, photos, letters, or cards. Claire will use this box to save special holiday cards.



## Decorate with Stickers:

Faith decided to try “decoupage” with stickers! Even though the stickers peeled easily off the sticker book page, she discovered she had to cut each sticker from the background, then stick it on her box. Can you guess what special items she will keep in this box?



We hope that you have enjoyed this week’s Maker Mondays activity. We have loved the photos and comments you have sent to us over these past few months. Thank you.

Take a photo of your decoupage box and share it with us at [historicdeerfield@historic-deerfield.org](mailto:historicdeerfield@historic-deerfield.org).