



Rustic Brackets

Scrapwood delivers form and function

BY PETER POLCYN

I was hired by clients looking to update their kitchen to a more rustic farmhouse/barn aesthetic. In my original design, the featured white-oak island included posts to support the countertop overhang. We later decided posts were impractical, impeding leg-room, so I suggested replacing them with two sturdy, rustic brackets.

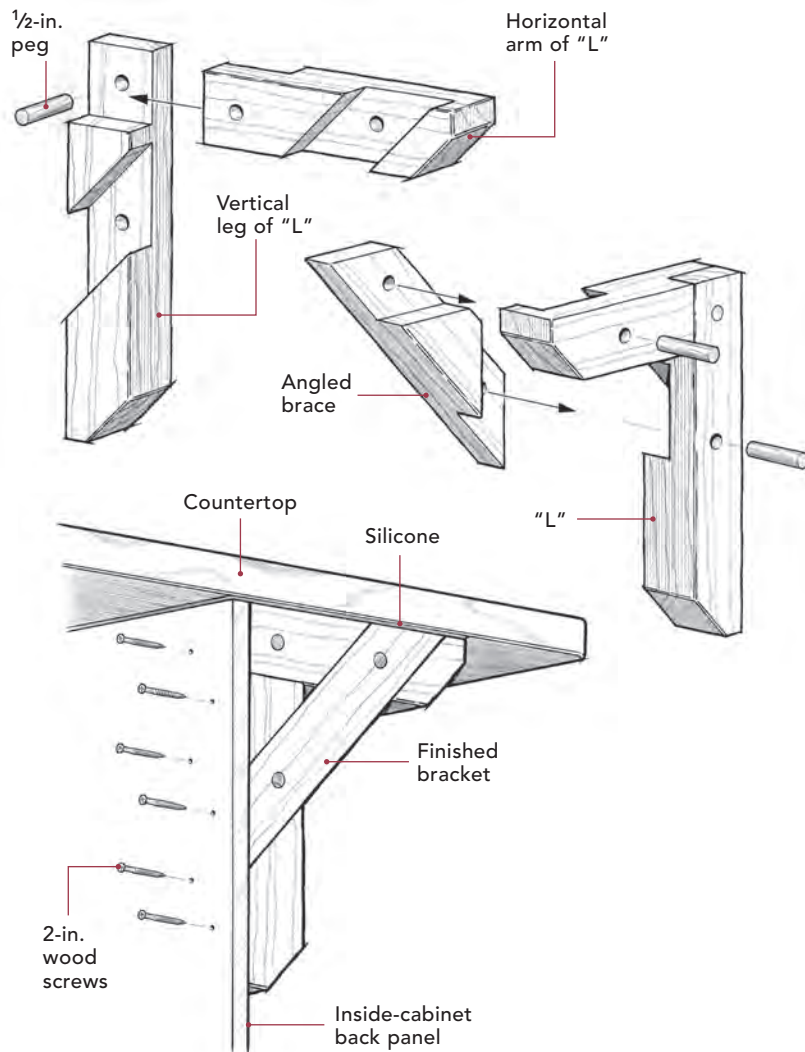
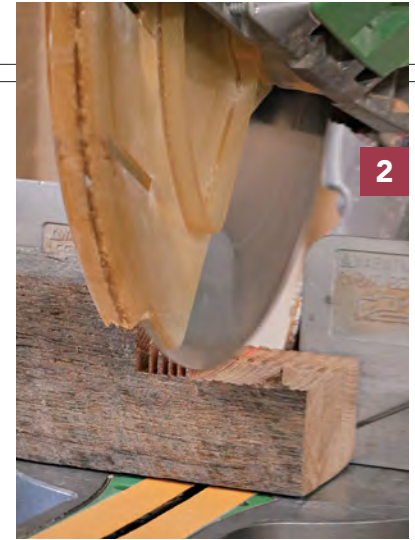
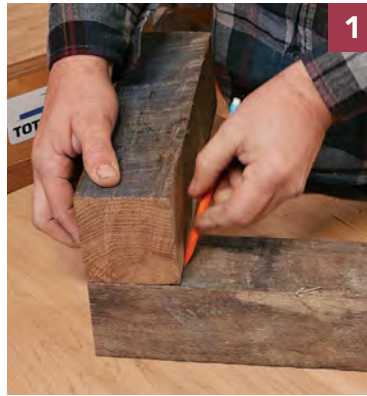
I didn't have any reclaimed stock on hand, but the next time I was at my materials supply house, my eye caught some white-oak timbers used to separate stacks of material. They were rough-sawn, about 3 in. by 3 in., and aged beautifully from being kicked around the warehouse—I thought, “you just can't fake that.” So I grabbed a few, along with my order, and was on my way.

Back at my shop, I toyed around with some ideas and landed on a simple design for rustic brackets that would have looked right at home in a barn a hundred years ago. They're held together with wooden pegs and half-lap joinery. Technically, making them was as simple as the design, but I did find sequencing was important. My tendency is always to measure out and mark all the pieces at the start of a project, but with the uneven nature of this material, I found cutting and fitting individual joints was best. □

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START WITH THE "L"

The goal is to get the joints in the bracket to fit tightly, but not worry about the outside faces, which look best if they're offset anywhere from $\frac{1}{16}$ in. to $\frac{3}{16}$ in. for rustic appeal. I start by cutting both sides of the "L" to length on a miter saw. I lap them to mark the joint (1) and use the depth stop on my miter saw to make a series of cuts just shy of halfway through the stock (2). Then I turn the piece around and make the same series of cuts from the other side to flatten the bottom as much as possible, and I use a chisel to further refine the joint (the fussiest part of the process). I test-fit and pare both sides of the joint (3) until I get close, at which point I switch to a block plane to remove high spots (4). A final test fit will tell you when you're done (5).

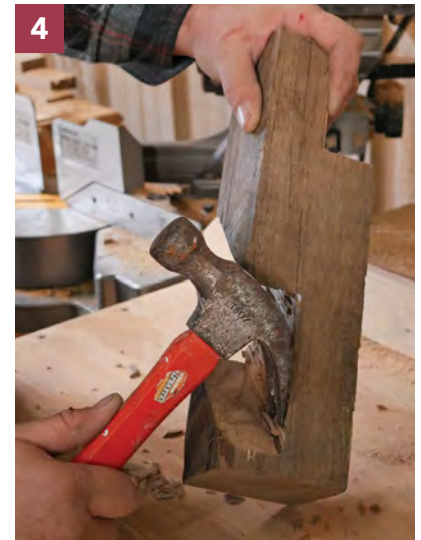


Reclaimed lumber is easy to get these days, but I find that scraps of oak, used to separate stacks of lumber at my local supply yard, are the perfect material for rustic cabinetwork.

FIT THE BRACE

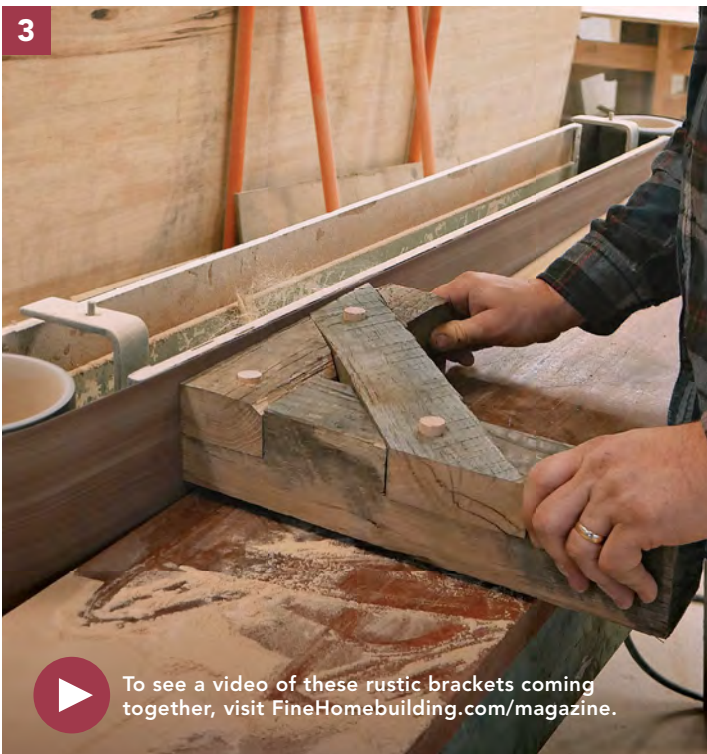
After dry-fitting and squaring up the two parts of the "L," I line up the brace piece against the 45° edge of my rafter square (1). Then I scribe the brace location on both sides of the "L," and the "L" location on both sides of the brace (2). Next, I use a combination square to continue the marks for the lap joints on all three pieces. With the depth-stop set and the saw set to a 45° miter, I make the depth cuts for the lap joints on both the "L" and the brace (3). I remove the depth stop to make the full angled cuts on both ends of the brace.

After breaking out the waste with the claw of a hammer (4), it's back to the chisel and block plane to refine the joints (5). Again, this is a multiple-pass, back-and-forth process of test-fitting and paring to get the parts to fit correctly. Done right, it's a tight joint that takes a decent beating with a rubber mallet to get the parts fully seated (6). Even before pinning, you should be able to lift and handle the bracket without any of the joints coming apart.



DRILL AND PEG

There's no glue in this assembly, just 1/2-in. dowel stock used as pegs. I center the pegs over each joint and use a 1/2-in. Forstner bit to drill the holes (1). The bit's shank is shorter than the bracket's width, so I drill as far as I can and then separate the parts to complete the holes. Then I line up the holes and pound in the pegs, which are cut long to stay proud of the surface (2). It should take some heavy hammer blows to seat the pegs and lock the joints tightly together. Then I use a belt sander to smooth the surfaces that meet the cabinet and countertop (3). Finally, I clip off both ends of the "L" with a miter saw set at 45°.



To see a video of these rustic brackets coming together, visit [FineHomebuilding.com/magazine](https://www.finehomebuilding.com/magazine).

APPLY FINISH

Before applying finish, I use a Restorer tool with an abrasive brush to clean away any dirt (1). (My version is made by Porter-Cable, but the tool is licensed to other manufacturers and can be found at [imarestorer.com](https://www.imarestorer.com).) It produces the same effect as a wire brush—cleaning reclaimed lumber without removing its character—but faster. To finish the brackets, I apply dark stain (2), wipe it with a rag, and hit the edges with a sanding block for a little additional distressing (3).



Porter-Cable Restorer Tool
(PXRA2676, \$80)

