

- DR. BUEL'S "BIBLE BOX"-

Dr. Buel's "bible box" was displayed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts at one time and is believed to date back to about 1630.

The Bible Box is like a desk without legs, made of oak rectangular shaped with its hinged lid 27" long, 18" wide and 8½" deep. Its front and sides are carved with rosettes and circular floral-like patterns.

Its lid, however is smooth and undecorated and bears a brass plate saying it was brought from England to Dorchester Mass., in 1630 by William Buel, an early settler.

Though some of the Buel descendants called the box a seachest, it's commonly referred to as the "Bible Box" because it could have been used to hold a bible or other books and papers. It's more likely, however, that it's called a bible box because today's society tends to view the lives early settlers led as austere and heavenly woven with religion.

The box was handed down through Buel's descendants to Wales Buel of Walesville.

More information of the "Bible Box" to the right.

On the next page a picture of Dr. Buel's Bible Box."

Attributed to WILLIAM BUEL (here 1630-d. 1681)

Carved box

Windsor, Connecticut, 1640-1680

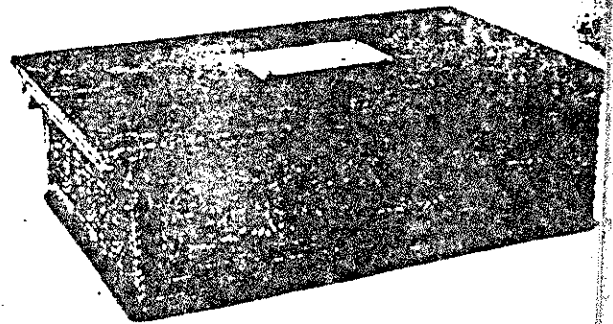
Oak

H: 8½ in. (21.6 cm) W: 27 in. (68.6 cm) D: 18 in. (45.7 cm)

The Oneida Historical Society, Utica, New York. Gift of Dr. Wales Buel

William Buel was born in Chesterton, County Huntingdon, England, and came to Dorchester in the Massachusetts Bay in 1630. He moved to Windsor, Connecticut, between 1635 and 1639 and made "inside work" consisting of joined seats or pews for the Windsor meetinghouse about 1659. His son Samuel (1641-1720) and grandson Josiah (1681-1732) were joiners in Killingworth, Connecticut, a large farming town near the mouth of the Connecticut River; a great-grandson David (d. 1749) was a dishturner.¹

This box was owned and made by William Buel and descended in his family. The front of the box is carved with five rosettes linked by a *guilloche*, or interwined band, a motif also seen on a Salisbury table (see no. 116). Two other boxes made by Buel or his son Samuel survive. The first (Yale University Art Gallery, 1741.45) has similar rosettes inside inter-



secting lunettes or arcs, while the second (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 10.125.2) has repeated units of three rosettes in *guilloches*. Precisely modeled with gougework and punched work, Buel's carving ornaments the sides as well as the fronts of his boxes.

Little is known about the joinery traditions of the Midlands Counties from which Buel came, and no other Buel furniture forms are known. Many objects from two other shops—one in Norwich, Connecticut,² and another in Providence, Rhode Island,³ including boxes, chests, and great chairs—have similar precisely modeled rosettes, but represent altogether different shop traditions, possibly other Midlands masters.

R. P. T.

1. Kane 1970, pp. 78-79; Trent 1977, p. 97.

2. A typical example of this tradition is in Nutting 1928, no. 12.

3. St. George 1979, pp. 65-69.