

How to make the 'Pattern One' Sharps pasteboard cartridge box (in Pictures)

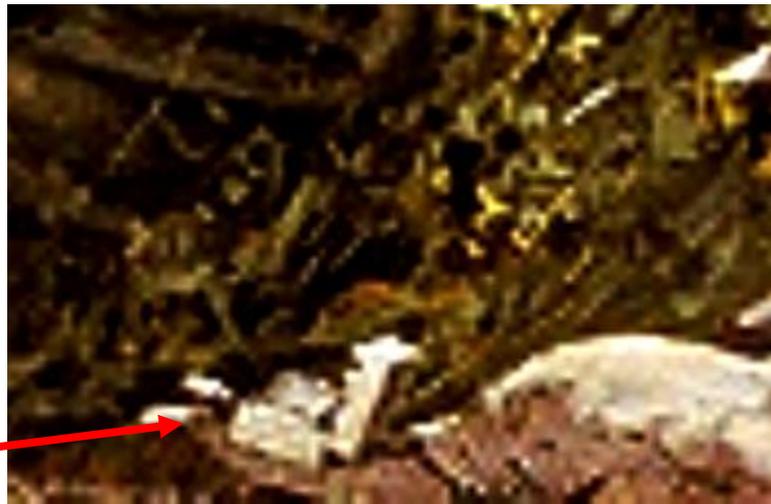
By
Bill Skillman

Awhile back I posted an article on the Berdan Sharpshooter Forum explaining how I made reproduction pasteboard Sharps cartridge boxes. I became inspired to make one after reading how they were used by a pair of Sharpshooters who survived Millers cornfield (Antietam) fight. Edwin Chadwick wrote: *The smoke was so dense that we could hardly tell friend from foe, but when the bullets began to whistle about our ears we were satisfied that they were grey backs and returned the compliment in the shape of a few well-directed Sharps Rifle balls. I had a box of ammunition in my hand ready for them and placing it on the ground I dropped on one knee and began to load and fire. I always stood up when I fired so that I could take better aim. Sometimes I would have to wait a minute before the smoke would roll away or a rebel would expose himself so that I could get a good chance at him*" James S. Kent of Company G wrote: *"We had been fighting in line some time when the Adjutant caught the colors and rushed ahead, saying, "They are running, come on boys!" Quickly as I could gather up a box of cartridges I had lying on the ground loose, I followed and was so busy loading and firing I saw nothing of a brigade of rebels coming down on our left till I heard a Lieut. sing out, "retreat, boys, we are surrounded!"*

Artist Dale Gallon included this authentic detail in his painting 'Breechloaders and Greencoats'



Sharpshooter fighting from behind tree



Note (enlarged detail of open pasteboard box and cartridges)

My 'Pattern One' Sharps boxes are created by converting cardboard jewelry boxes that I buy from craft or paper supply stores. While they lack the authentic dimensions and details of originals, I find they work just fine on the skirmish line. Whenever I need to go prone or fight from behind a friendly tree, I pull a jewelry box full of blank cartridges from a trouser pocket, open the lid and start 'making music' on the skirmish line. Once I used my 'experimental boxes' at a couple events my Michigan comrades asked if I could make a couple for them. Now days, I'll toss a box to a new recruit to try out—I never get one tossed back. The advantages of the Pattern One's is that they are (a) recyclable, (b) strong enough to survive being scrunched in a haversack or trouser pocket (not recommended), and are (c) individually sealed to protect your ammunition.

If you want to make your own Pattern One reproduction Sharps pasteboard cartridge boxes, keep a couple facts in mind. The jewelry boxes are slightly larger than the originals; this means they won't fit into the lower tin of the leather cartridge box. If you want to make your cartridge box more authentic, I will provide directions in my Pattern Two article. Second, the tab that joins the lid and base is only a thin piece of paper. I add a reinforcing strip of tan masking tape to the interior. I also add a 2 inch long piece of masking tape as a 'closure tab'. The tape let's me easily open or reseal the box as needed.

With the 150th events upon us, a number of Sharpshooters on the Company C Forum have asked me for a 'how to' photo guide so they can make their own 'Pattern One' pasteboard Sharps cartridge boxes. Well, at long last, here it is:

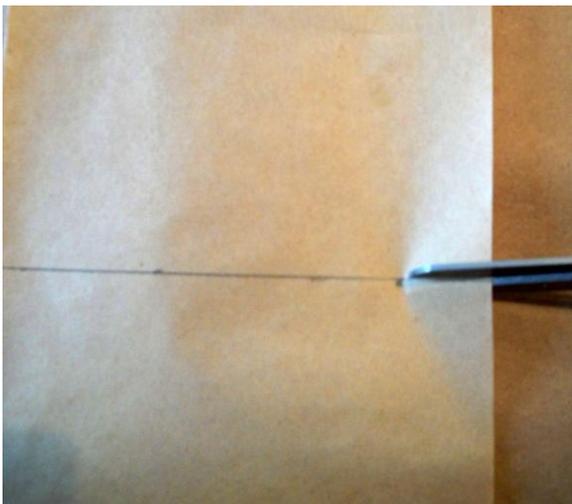
Step One. The Base



Jewelry boxes (3 ¼ x 2 ¼ x 1 inches)



Measure 6 inch off 3M masking paper roll (6" x 4.").



Cut 3M masking paper from roll.



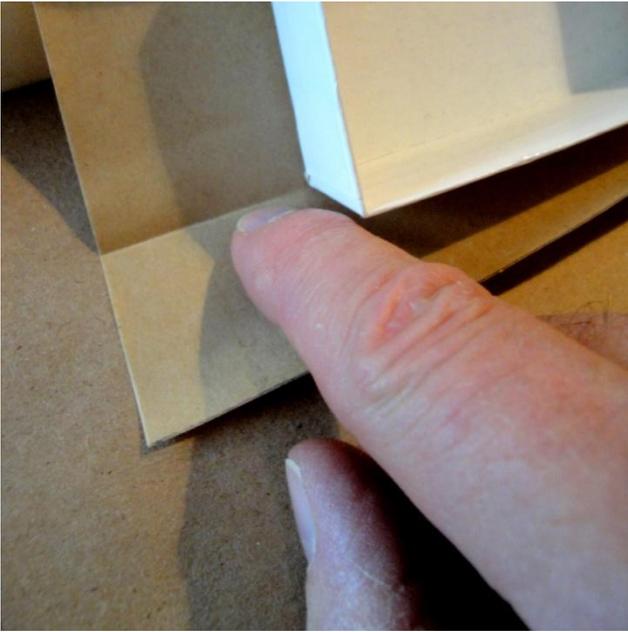
Center box on paper, leave 1+ inch allowance per side



Apply glue to cover entire base



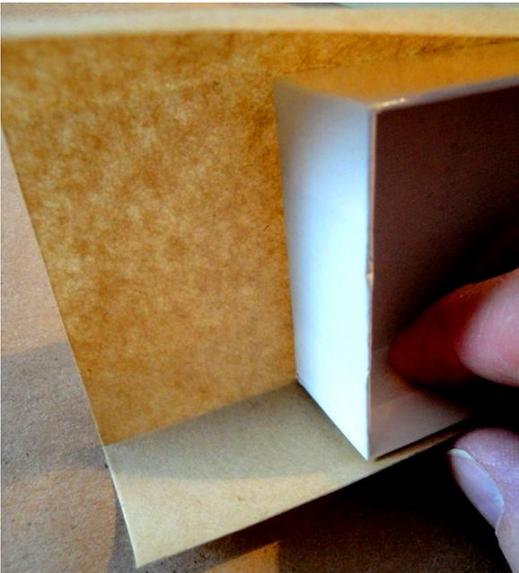
Center box on paper and press down on base and edges



Tip box on long side, create crease



Apply glue the length of long sides of box



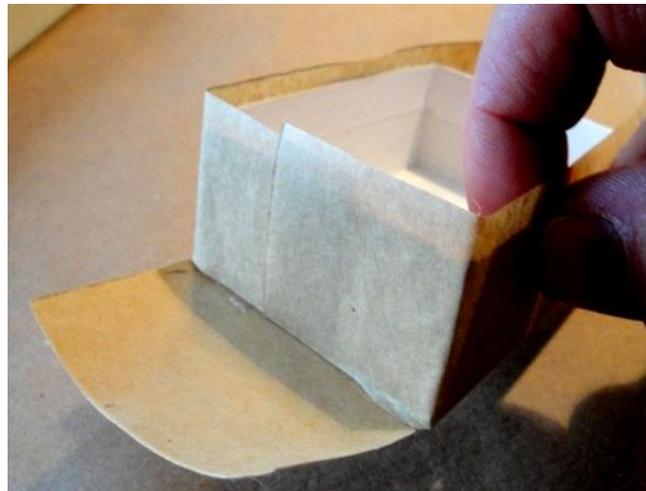
Press & smooth paper onto glued surface



Use scissors to cut 4 cuts along paper crease to box edge



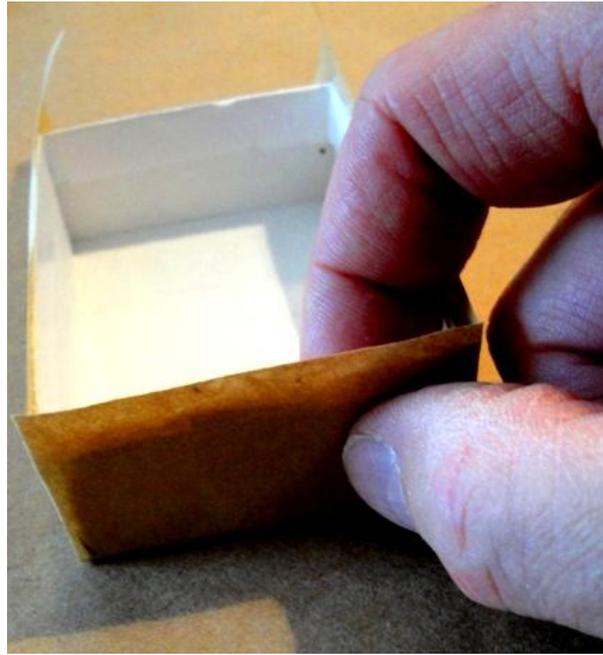
Glue short side/end of box



Fold inwards both horizontal tabs, smooth out



Apply glue to vertical tab on each end.



Fold up vertical tab-covering the two horizontal

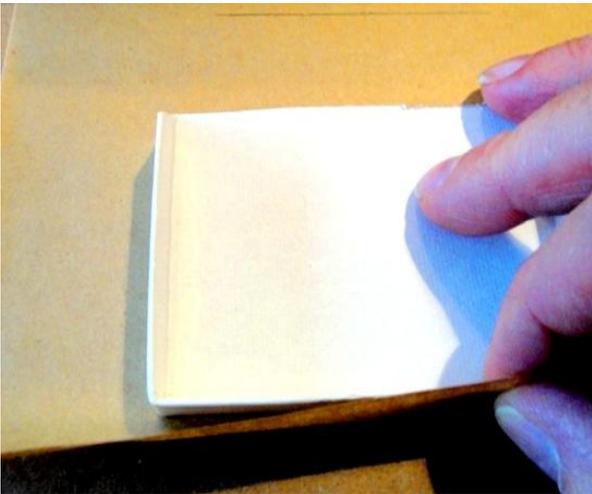


Fold glued excess into box-long side first, then short

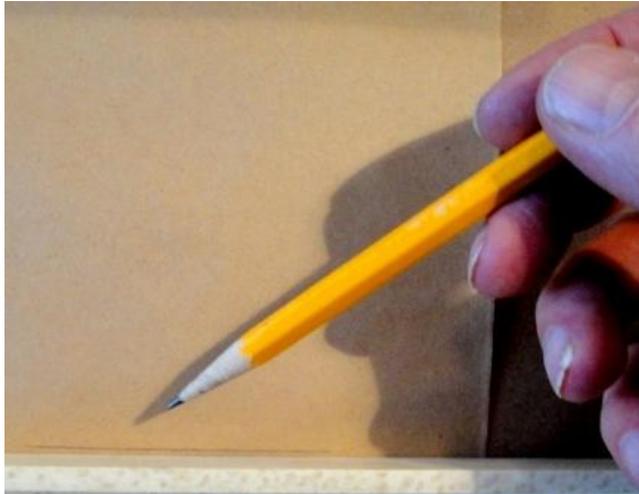


Finished base

Step Two-Making the Pasteboard Lid



Center lid on 3M masking paper



Trace outline of box onto paper + 1 inch extra



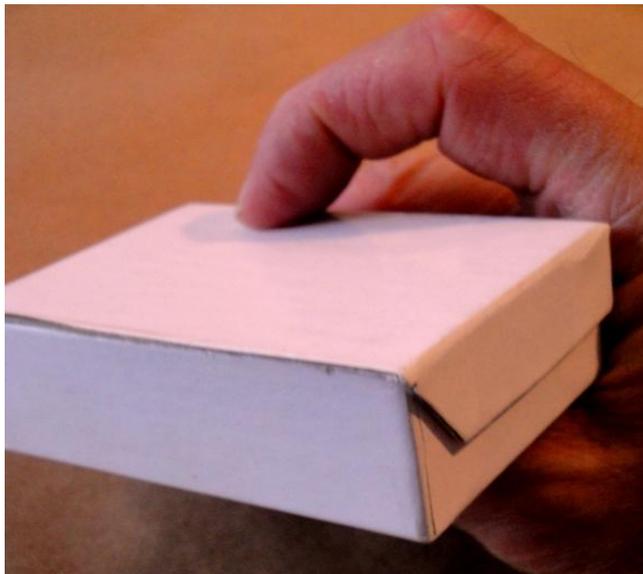
Make two cuts at each end of long lid



Use scissors to remove one long edge



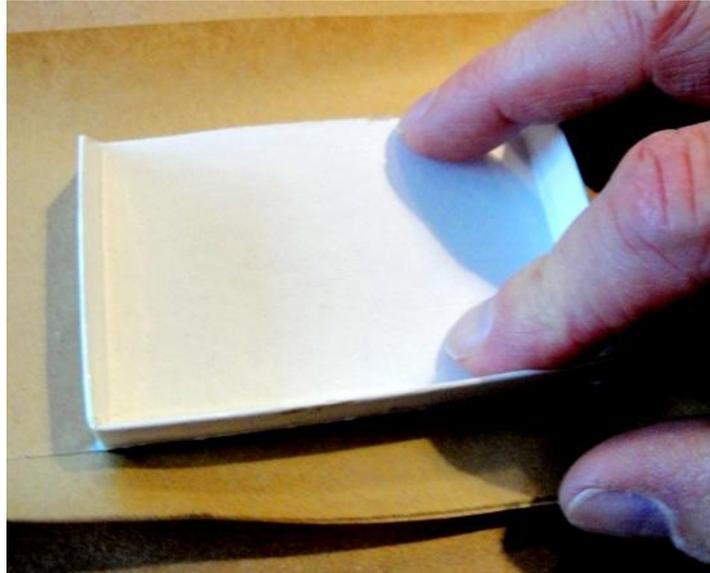
Make two 30 degree cuts



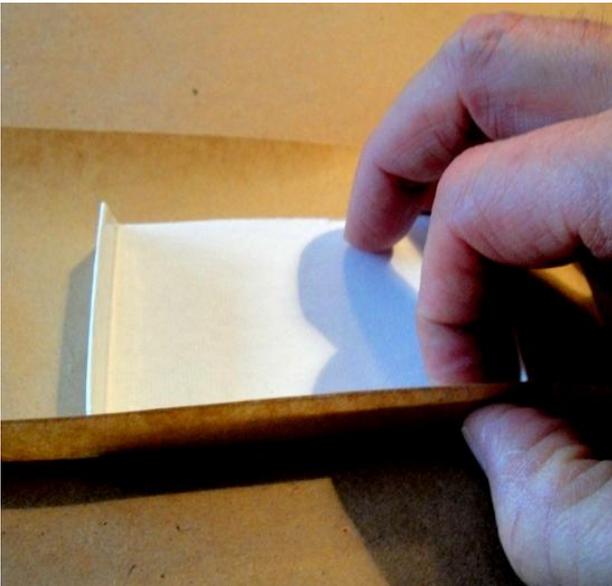
Box lid (from rear) after 30 degree cuts
(cuts make it easier to raise finished lid)



Apply glue over top of cover



Press lid down firmly on paper & press down top/edges



Fold and crease long edge



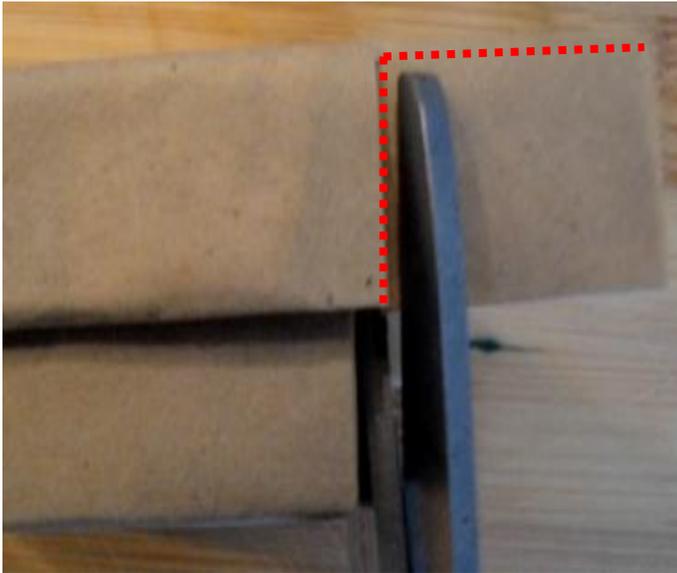
Apply glue to long edge & press/smooth paper



Cut crease, glue long edge, fold in tab



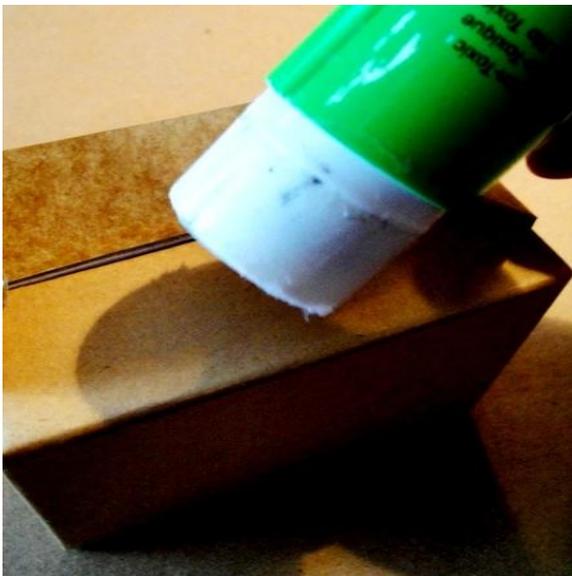
Fold excess long edge to box-fold & glue short edge



Remove excess paper (cut along dotted lines)



Fold and crease lid tab to base



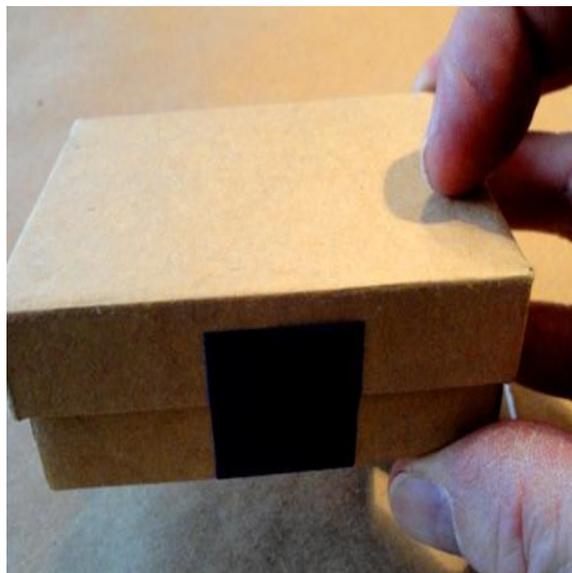
Apply glue to base



Press and smooth lid tab to base



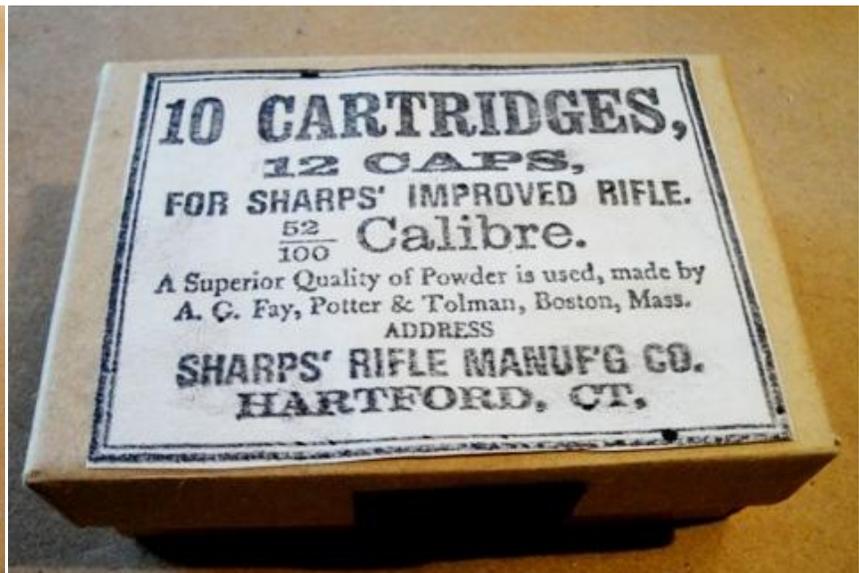
Add masking tape to reinforce lid/box joint



Masking tape closure tab to secure lid (blue color is sample)



Sharps label stamp



Stamped label glued to lid of pasteboard box

The Label: I stamp the Sharps logo onto adding machine tape, cut it off the roll and then glue it on the top of the box. To make the label, I took a 'to scale' photo of an original Sharps box label and had a local stamp maker create a duplicate. Once you stamp the paper give it time to dry—otherwise you get smears (notice the smudged 'Sharps' in the photo) when affixing the label to the lid.

The slightly larger Pattern One box holds 14 'flat base' cartridges (I usually forego the tube of percussion caps). When I pack for a weekend event, I stack 10-12 boxes (140-160 rounds) inside my knapsack and secure them in place with a rolled up shirt. I keep a spare supply of 10-12 boxes in my Jeep; though I rarely need them. Before taking the field, I empty 2 boxes of 28 cartridges into the upper tins of the leather cartridge box, and then drop another 3-5 boxes into the haversack. This combination gives me the flexibility to choose either one once the shooting starts.

The link is to my written article: <http://www.berdansharpshooters.com/usssbb/viewtopic.php?f=96&t=46>

Good Luck and see you on the Skirmish Line

*Bill Skillman
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