

The Little Table

I was looking through some of the pictures that time accumulates. I came upon one of the cannons that I made for the HMS General Hunter exhibit at the Bruce County Museum.



Ken Cassavoy, a world renowned marine archaeologist headed a skilled team working at the Museum. He asked me to make three cannons of various sizes. Over time, he would monitor my progress, but otherwise he left me alone to do what he asked. Musing over my time working for him, I came to the conclusion that he was one of the best managers that I worked for in a lifetime. He was direct and organized.

What struck me about the pictures was not the cannon, but the table. That table and the space it occupies are a symbol. It is just the right area and height for working. Real work can be done with its support. Everyone at the Museum covets that table when they have a need to do some work. Ken got me the table's use and it made my work possible. After all, I could not wrestle the cannons back and forth from home every day.

Work space is important to me. Bad work space sours creativity. Light is vital. As you can see, I had to make the patina realistic for an aged cannon and the colour had to be just right, so good light is what we hope for in our work space. It took me many hours of mixing paint and material to achieve the look that I wanted.

Working space is at a premium at the Museum. Both staff and volunteers have little space to work. The use of that little table and the space it occupies is vital to my progress. Most volunteers never get to use it and so they take their work home every day. It is wasteful and frustrating and soon is abandoned.

The room that houses the little table is always full of things going and coming for exhibits and archiving. Even decontamination with Hazmat suits and masks takes place there. It is hard to work due to the crowding of equipment and exhibit material in progress. If you don't have that little table or something like it, you are forced into doing your work elsewhere. Everyone who uses the area brings their own personal toolkit every day. It's hard to leave tools and space overnight as it may be swept along as multiple projects vie for useful area, light and something like The Little Table.

I know, I know... you find the Museum spacious. Yes, the exhibit areas are well organized, but work space is at a premium. Storage is severely limited. Some items are stored in the old Jail in Walkerton. Ordinary tools disappear and have to be found. The new hoped for expansion of the Museum will have to consider the Little Table's role in progress. Special attention must be given to the needs of skilled volunteers. To repeat one of my mantras:

Let's not make any 100 year mistakes due to outside groups trying to dictate space and its use. For them, I have some advice: Volunteer every day for a year or so to gain some experience.

Mike Sterling

