

# The Saga of the Ebay Dulcimer

by: "Clix"

After visiting a friend in Michigan and seeing her hammered dulcimer I was bitten by the "dulcimer-bug"! (There's a lot of that going around nowadays in Michigan!) I decided, "I gotta have one." I began to check on-line and visit several dulcimer-selling sites. Suddenly it hit me "Those things are way expensive."

In my research I came across the concept of building one myself! I found two choices , build from scratch or build a kit. I said to myself..."self , you can do that. "

While pondering all this I decided to check out the "dulcimer situation" on e-bay auction site. This is where my story really gets weird. I was happily scrolling along and there it was." It was a good-looking dulcimer and wow it seemed to have all the features I'd decided were important to me. First of all it was big, no mere 12/11 here, no sir this was a 16/15. It looked so good too! It came with hammers, a tuning wrench, and a stubby looking peg called a "practice leg. It had a stand too.

I peered hard at the picture on-line and wow it looked good! I could make out some printing inside the lid, no case here this beauty had a matching lid. I couldn't believe my eyes. This must surely be one of those early day commercially built dulcimers of days gone by. The picture revealed fine figuring in the wood it must surely be fine hardwood wow it sure looked good.

I rushed to place a bid, how much should I bid? I know, I'll bid the price of a decent kit. Wow if I get this I'll have a great instrument for the price of a kit! I bid two hundred fifty dollars. Maybe I'll get lucky and actually get this thing.

I anxiously watched the bids over the next few days, my bid held and I was the successful bidder. Joy of joys, I got it. I rushed my payment plus thirty dollars shipping. I began to dream of playing this beauty my prize. I couldn't wait for it to arrive. It looked so good.

My first reaction when I saw that huge box, was, "Is it supposed to rattle like that??" I opened the box and there it was. The dulcimer, the stand ...and NO PACKING for shipping at all? The "stand" turned out to be an old oak drawing board stand. ...with certain modifications of course. I set it aside and began to check out my dulcimer. In spite of the total lack of packing it survived pretty well. There were a few scratches... but hey! I can fix that - right?? But wait what's this? The fine figured hardwood turned out to be paneling (like on your wall).

PANELING! ? (and that printing inside the lid yes it was the name of the manufacturer all right...the name was that of well known wall paneling. Okay, so its not exactly what I expected. I set aside the lid and began to look at the instrument itself. Oh no! It sounded like the strings are made from old fence wire! Looked like it too they were black! Oh well, it looks pretty good. I know, I'll re-string it. After researching for the correct wire gauges and length I ordered the wire, lots of wire, three strings per course on the treble side and two on the bass.

While waiting for the wire to arrive I decided to take a really good look at this beast. When I un-strung the thing I discovered some pleasant things. As it turns out this thing is actually built very well. It has a floating soundboard and solid rock maple pin blocks. The casework is well joined. Under all the heavy layers of poorly applied urethane there was a dulcimer just begging to get out and play. "This is gonna

take some time...but ...hey I can do this."

It took two evenings to re-string it and a week to tune it and get it to "hold" When I played it sounded awful very "tinny" and the notes went on and on a LONG time. This is about the time I noticed the "real dulcimers" I'd seen had delrin bridge caps...so ...you guessed it...I ordered the delrin and installed it in place of the brass rods it had come with. I sanded and sealed the casework and applied a nice coat of acrylic spray paint. I removed the barn door hinges from the lid and the padlock hasp that held it all closed and filled the holes. I replaced these with lovely furniture made of brass. I have a stand under construction too.

As I stand here playing my rebuilt dulcimer held at the correct tilt by its "practice leg" I can't help but think, "It looks so good!!

Here is the finished product!

