



Canadian Leathercraft

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TEACHING A LEATHERCRAFT COURSE IN BASIC CARVING TECHNIQUES

by Margaret Jennings

Robert Muma, in his excellent article on "Organizing a Leathercraft Course", CANADIAN LEATHERCRAFT Autumn 1955, has covered the fundamentals of organizing a beginners' course. Don MacKinnon, CANADIAN LEATHERCRAFT Winter 1956, has given many valuable suggestions on the teaching of leathercraft, particularly to large public classes. My widest experience has been teaching Basic Carving to District Night School classes. As there is considerable demand for, and a dire shortage of teachers for such classes, I will attempt to help those who will be faced with such a problem this fall.

Knowledge of your subject is of first importance, and you should always strive to add to that knowledge. Occasional glimpses into the future possibilities of the craft will inspire your pupils to greater effort, in their desire to master the techniques necessary to achieve more difficult projects.

The people with whom you will be working are of second, if not equal importance. Be genuinely interested in these people. Avoid giving them the feeling of inferiority. Sincere appreciation of their efforts will get far better results than harsh criticism. Remember, people differ in their capabilities. Make your criticism constructive and let them correct their own errors. Be quiet and diplomatic about getting a stubborn pupil to change his methods. Cultivate the habit of sympathy with their problems. Be tolerant, don't shut them out, even if you can't accept their views. Consider particularly those people who have chosen to make Canada their home. We can learn much from them. Avoid letting your first impressions of people influence your attitude towards them.

Thirdly, consider your methods of teaching. Have you an over-all program, planned but flexible? Be as completely prepared for your even-

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ing's work as possible, both in your information and equipment. Consider your audience and look directly at them when speaking. Try to have your program brief and interesting. Remember the majority of people can really concentrate for only half an hour at a time, then must come a break or change. When talking, speak the language of the group, be it child or adult. A bit of humour helps unite any group. Avoid extremes, and know when to make absolutely definite statements. Finally, know when to stop.

It is most satisfactory, when teaching in a district school, to be able to handle the supplies yourself, provided you do not let it become too time-consuming. This applies particularly to areas where all supplies are brought in by mail.

I have found it necessary, particularly in a large class, to use standard commercial patterns, with illustrations, to adequately give instruction in the use of basic carving tools. Later on, when a good foundation in fundamentals has been laid, the class will approach the problem of creating their own designs with greater confidence, armed with the knowledge of the tools required to achieve the effects they have in mind.

I have prepared mimeographed sheets of instructions and designs, with which I provide my pupils. When these are not available, I would suggest the pupils procure Stylecraft No. 38.

Your opening class should be planned around a display and demonstration of leather carving, a discussion of leather, tools, and briefly, dyes, antiques and finishes. Have on the blackboard a clearly defined list of the minimum equipment required. Discuss thoroughly with the pupils how to procure this equipment, what substitutes may be made, and so on.

For the second night, I have prepared a large stencil, about three feet high, of a key case design, e.g., the six-hook keycase in Ken Griffin's Scrap Book. The stencil is made of firm, clear sheet plastic, the outline of the design is drawn with a scratch awl, and holes are punched through with a hot needle (cardboard could be used). A well-chalked brush patted over the holes will leave sufficient outline to enable you to fill in the design with white chalk on the board. Also, on the same scale, stencils of the component parts of the design, i.e. flower, stem, leaf, scrolls and acanthus, are made.

Provide everybody with scrap leather. Explain the swivel knife, draw dress cuts left and right, on the board. Demonstrate on leather, and have the pupils work with their knives, checking each person as they work. After a period of this, make a list of tools, with their impression and number, on the board. Have the pupils make a similar record of theirs on a piece of leather, which can be kept, and added

to as new tools are procured. Show them how to trace their design (using component parts on illustrated sheet), first to tracing paper, then with carbon from tracing to brown paper, and finally from brown paper to damp leather, always being careful to do things in the same order. Suggest that they have these designs cut on scrap when they come the next night.

On the third night have the flower, stem, leaf, etc., outlined in white chalk on the blackboard. Now take a piece of colored chalk i.e., red for checked pear shader, and show exactly where it is used in each part of the design. Using a different color for each basic tool, show where they are all used. Finally add the dress cuts with white chalk. Demonstrate with tools on leather. Now everybody goes to work and has a banging good time. Check each one individually.

On the fourth night, work the keycase design completely with colored chalks, as before, on the board. Let pupils who are willing do some of it. Check the outlines they have cut and then have them all try to stamp the design. This is when continuous individual supervision is most important. See that all are provided with their leather for a keycase proper before leaving. It is a good idea to have made up complete individual kits in paper bags, prepared at home, to save time.

The fifth night should see the majority with a presentable carved keycase back. Demonstrate antiquing and finishing and discuss methods of assembly. Suggest practice at home of a design for a wallet back, one panel.

The next night will probably be your last night before Christmas. If time allows, I give a brief display and demonstration of how to make simple filagree pins and earrings, having available pinbacks, scrap, designs, etc. Everybody goes home armed with supplies and ideas for Christmas gifts.

Should your class have started earlier and there is still another night, this is a very good time to introduce stamped belts. There is ample scope for designs, using their basic tools. I have all instructions and diagrams on a large heavy cardboard. You will find your pupils will come early to get it copied.

The night you start wallets, correct their practiced design and introduce set stamping on a similar sized panel for the back of the wallet. I generally introduce the shell and mulesfoot, also the basket weave and sunburst at this stage. A fair amount of time should be spent on introducing new ideas on wallet interiors, with samples. If you didn't manage to do stamped belts before, now is the proper time. Accentuate the difference in procedure for stamped and carved belts.

The next project is a change purse. The type in Baird's LEATHER SECRETS gives a good area on which the more venturesome could try to arrange or adapt a decorative design to match a wallet or purse. Use the blackboard to illustrate the manner in which it can be done.

The next and final project will be a purse. A good discussion of suitable styles, patterns, decorations, etc., is in order. I usually make a practice of cutting a beginner's first purse, of course giving a full explanation of how it is done.

Different classes will vary in the amount they can accomplish. If you see you can't cover all I've suggested, omit the change purse, so that the purses won't be too rushed.

A district night school usually runs for sixteen nights, with a minimum of twenty pupils. Do insist on your pupils moving completely away from their work during their nine o'clock break. This applies to you, too. I usually let the pupils pick up their supplies whenever the opportunity offers, and then go to each one during the last twenty minutes to make out their bills and take orders for next week.

I do hope some of you who read this will be able to benefit by my experience. Just drop me a line at 475 Dorinda Street, London, Ont., if I can be of any assistance to you.

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"THREE D" TOOLING by Bernard Wolff

For want of a better name, the technique described herein shall be referred to as "The Three D" tooling, a technique the result of adapting in modification the action of pincers, that of thrust or push and that of resistance applied to conditioned leather with the resultant pop-up or relief, aided by a yielding surface.

Perhaps it should be known by the prosaic term "the pincer pop-up technique", but by whatever name it is to be known, it is a method wherein but a few tools are used, namely, a tracer and a modeller. Other tools are supplementary to the finished work. However, with only the few tools at command, it calls upon the patience and ingenuity of the artisan, guided by simple fundamental rules, rules so flexible that they lead to many advantages should an occasion arise.

The prime factor in successful 3D tooling is the preparation of the leather, in this instance $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Russet Tooling Steerhide or $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Russet Tooling Calf. The steerhide, being more readily obtainable and more economical, is used most extensively. The leather is cut approximately one third larger, area-wise, than the projected finished article, with an additional safety measure of one or two inches both ways, to insure squaring off the surplus edge in finishing of the article.

There is no positive way of determining the exact shrinkage of the leather, brought about by soaking and rinsing thoroughly in clear, very warm, plain soft water until the water has the appearance of weak tea, perhaps in a minute or two.

Wring in any manner, either by rolling and twisting or crushing by hand but at no time put through a wringer or excessive pressure. The twisting, crushing, will bring about a varied crushed grain effect in the leather. If the grain is too prominent it may be smoothened out with the palm of the hand and this can be carried out a step further by flailing flesh side against a smooth surface, a bathtub is ideal. This last action tends to make the leather fibres more supple. It is well to remember that should the grain be unsatisfactory there is only the need of crushing the leather over again and again until a more pleasing grain texture is attained.

Next the leather is laid out, flesh side on a paper, a newspaper will do, and on a flat surface without tacking of edges and no weight but covered with a cloth, kept in a cool place, allowed to dry thoroughly at least 24 hours. By this time it has shrunk to its fullest extent, the fibres have become more dense. It will be noted that the leather approximates the size of the finished article allowing for surplus edge.

The leather now is ready for tooling, immediately or 12 months later. It will not deteriorate as long as it is kept in a cool place.

The leather is dampened in the area to receive the tracing and the tracing is done in the conventional manner, with one possible exception, omitting any detail lines not essential to the overall design, with perhaps a token dot as an identification of the area to be modelled. If the grain is too prominent within the design area it can be smoothened out with a gliding pressure of the forefinger. After removing the tracing paper it is well to retrace the lines more firmly lest they be obliterated when tooling. In tracing and/or tooling it is preferable to use a wooden surface to a marble slab. A waxed hard maple board has been found most satisfactory.

Before attempting tooling, it should be stressed that a thorough study be made of the design, analysing all the salient points, particularly that of all planes in relationship to one another, determining the highest plane within a given area. Always the tooling is begun with the highest plane that will be the highest point of the tooled work.

Beneath the traced leather a loosely woven cloth is placed (a kitchen towel will do). Dampen only in the immediate area to be tooled, fairly wet, for the leather to respond readily in a rolling motion to the pressure and push of the modelling tool. A little practice is needed to acquire the feel of the tool on dampened leather and noting the reaction of stretched leather. Correct dampening is essential.

In the 3 D tooling there are but two important steps, the preliminary tooling or the pincer pop-up movement and the modelling after pop-up. In both instances the same modelling tool may be used. In the first movement, the modeller is held in the same manner as a pencil, placed approximately $1/8"$ or $1/4"$ away from the tracing, depending on the nature of the design, placing the other hand at the outer side of the design tracing but directly opposite the tool and held firmly without any noticeable pressure. The movement is begun with the tool, pressing with a downward-forward gliding action stretching the leather toward the traced line, stopping just short of it, thrust directly in line of the resisting finger. The downward-forward motion can be made in a single stroke or in a repeated semi-circular motion and the pressure may be bold or light in relationship to the planes and modelling. This action is repeated on the opposite side previously occupied by the finger. The leather may be dampened if need be. The result of this repeated tooling is the pop-up. The use of the cloth is not essential in itself, as the leather will stretch in any given direction and gather if a force is applied as described, but the cloth simplifies the process and greatly augments the pop-up.

Removing the cloth, the leather is placed directly on the board, the tooling is resumed in this same area in the same manner as described but carrying it out a step farther gradually stretching the leather up to the traced line, clearly defining the outline, causing a denser gathering of the leather fibres within the outline.

By this time the leather is fairly dry; a slight remoistening is necessary if too dry, and the second step of the 3D tooling is begun, that of modelling of the pop-up area. While modelling, the leather should not and can not be too damp. The modeller is held in a manner to allow a maximum finger control that with but a slight gliding pressure of the tip or bottom of the modeller, the details are modelled progressively, with continuous reference to the drawing until the desired modelling is reached and it is at this time one can give free rein to imagination and improvise.

When the area has been tooled and modelled satisfactorily, the next plane bordering on the modelled area is dampened. Dampening the modelling will not distort the finished work unless pressure is exerted directly upon it when damp. The pincer pop-up phase is repeated and in doing so, the previous modelled area will raise correspondingly to a higher plane. This action is repeated piecemeal throughout the design, disjointed areas are treated individually but in harmony with grouped plane areas.

All this is on the assumption that the design is not too large or intricate. The treatment involved on intricate and massive areas requires additional aid not of any tools but the use of the fingernail of the forefinger placed from beneath the leather directly under the surface to be modelled. The nail acts as an anvil for the modeller, also as a preventive measure against collapsing of the pop-up if any modelling pressure is required, furthermore it is used to a very good advantage in many other ways.

On completing all tooling, the field or background may be matted with the tracer or modeller in any manner, or other tools may be employed for whatever effect desired, but it is recommended that the immediate outline of the tooled area be gone over with the tracer to insure a right angle surface on the flesh side at the point of contact between the hollow and untooled surface, guaranteeing a perfect bond between the two planes when glued, thereby strengthening the walls of the 3 D tooling.

After the leather is perfectly dry the hollows of the flesh side can be treated in the following manner. First, there is a synthetic starch solution, a commercial product used in stiffening cloth, that is very suitable for stiffening of tooled steerhide, and can be applied with a brush, after which an application of hot glue (preferably bookbinders' flexible) is brushed on, which in turn while warm and tacky is sprinkled with Walnut shell flour, the excess is blown or brushed off. A word of caution, the glue when applied hot is of the consistency of watered maple syrup and at no time is it to be poured as it is likely as not to scorch through the leather. With a bit of experimenting it can be determined how hot it can be used, hot and thin enough to penetrate but a fraction of the flesh side to sear the fibres. This action hardens the contour of the hollow sides without detracting from the pliability of the tooled surface. If the tooled work is of many

hollows and is to be used on any article that may be subjected to any pressure, a brushed application in layers of a putty paste made of walnut shell flour and a synthetic flexible resyn adhesive can be used, or if the hollows are very prominent they can be filled with ordinary cotton wadding well saturated with the synthetic starch solution.

A final word. As a result of the underneath sizing, before or after mounting, the 3 D tooling, especially the modelled area, can be moistened and the modelling accentuated or additional tracery can be added.

This is short in the 3 D or pincer pop-up technique but by no means has it touched upon all the variations of tooling and modelling. These of necessity would have to be described in connection with a specific project.

About the Author: Bernard Wolff is an outstanding member of the Detroit Leathercrafters and has been engaged in book-binding and leathercraft for many years. His original designs are in ornamental, heraldic and natural forms and have been applied to book-covers, albums, portfolios, testimonial covers, wall plaques and many other items.

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C.N.E. PRIZES IN LEATHERCRAFT
CANADIAN HANDICRAFTS GUILD DISPLAY

Most original entry:	1st Women's Committee (Canadian Handicrafts Guild)	Mrs. Anne Hook
	Honorable Mention	Robert Muma
Tooled or carved:	1st Clarke & Clarke Leathers	Endel Ruberg
Neither tooled nor carved, but any other treatment:	1st Lewis Craft Supplies Ltd.	Robert Muma
Handcrafted Leather displaying no more than 20% decoration:	Honorable Mention	Mrs. Jean Newton
Leather Gloves:	1st Ottawa Valley Leathercraft Studios	Don MacKinnon
	Honorable Mention	Mrs. Anne Hook
	1st Lewis Craft Supplies Ltd.	Miss Clarice Packham
Any article of original design, but winner must never have won a prize in any National competition before:	1st Canadian Handicrafts Guild	Miss H.E. Arnold
	2nd Canadian Handicrafts Guild	Miss Olivia Smith
Any article showing the best use of coloring techniques:	Honorable Mention	Mrs. J.A. McNab
	1st Garnett Company	Mrs. Jean Agnew
	Honorable Mention	Mrs. Dorothy Muma



LINO STAMPING ON MOROCCO by Kay Yasunaka

The finished effect is that of tooling and embossing. It is easy yet effective. Careful selection of design is most important. It is most essential that bold, simple designs be chosen for this medium of decoration.

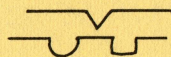
Materials and Tools required for making the Lino Cut:

- 1 piece battleship linoleum in $\frac{1}{4}$ " green or brown. (Red and black are not suitable for this purpose)
- 1 Set of lino cutting tools.

For those not familiar with lino printing and preparation of blocks, here are some pointers:

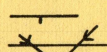
Tools:

"V" Tool 
Gouges 

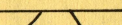


Use after outline has been marked with "V" tool.

Veiner
Knife



Do not undercut



Work with left hand behind right (or cutting hand)

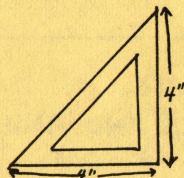
Outline with "V" tool.

Remove center (or raised parts) with gouge.

Use drill punch for circular pieces.

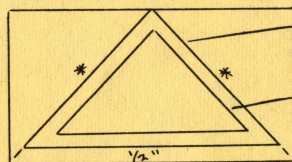
Project: -- Blotter Corners

Procedure:

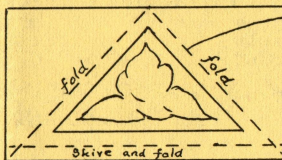


1. Size - 4" on two sides. Border not less than $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Make a pattern and design for stamping. Trace design with carbon paper on to lino. (initials and monograms must be traced on to lino in reverse)

2. Make pattern: - For laced corners add $\frac{1}{2}$ " at the bottom and $\frac{1}{8}$ " at side. Erect perpendiculars at corners where $\frac{1}{8}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " lines meet. Draw a line across the top of the triangle, joining the two perpendiculars.



Outline of finished corner * 4"
Outline of border around design.



* 4" Outline.

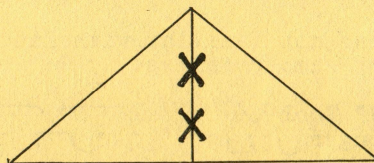
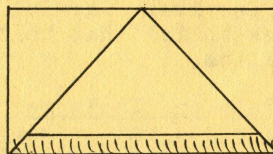
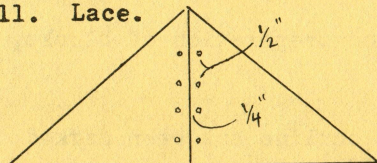
Outline of border around design. Mark only this line on leather. If your "Eye" is good mark only tops of triangles.

3. Mark lino print triangle only on the leather.
4. Wet the leather.
5. Place lino block on triangle part and put in printing press for 2 to 3 minutes. (wooden press 10 minutes)

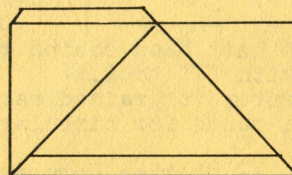
NOTE**Procedure:**

Place a layer of newspapers on piece of masonite. Place the wet leather on newspaper, then lino block on top of the leather. Be careful to centre in press for even pressure.

6. Remove carefully and dry thoroughly.
7. Skive lower edges.
8. Dampen leather and fold (lower edge).
Crease with edge creaser. Cement.
9. Dampen sides and fold.
10. Holes: Make two sets of four, $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart and $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge.
11. Lace.

**Alternate method:**

1. Thonged corners. Add $\frac{1}{8}$ " all around the edge of design pattern. Cut two pieces for each corner. Thong all around in whip stitch.
2. For corners with flap glued: Add $\frac{1}{4}$ " to half of rectangle and mitre.

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LOCAL BRANCHES

HAMILTON:

On October 11th, 1956, a Hamilton branch was officially organized. Meetings had been held in May, June and September to discuss the formation of such a group after the need had been expressed by local leathercraftsmen. Prior to moving to Barrie to take up her new position with Clarke and Clarke Leathers, Kay Yasunaka was the most active in this move towards organization. The meeting on October 11th was chaired by Mrs. Jean Newton, President of C.S.C.L., who spoke of the necessity of friendliness and sharing in an organization and stressed the need for members to exhibit. A resolution was passed officially organizing the group with 23 charter members and the following officers were elected: Chairman, Mrs. A.L. Ford; Vice-Chairman, Mr. Frank Torry; Treasurer, Mrs. W.H. Jones; Secretary, Mrs. Harold Wilson. Mr. Fred Brown, Vice-President of C.S.C.L., read the part of the Constitution pertaining to branches and answered questions arising from the forming of a new organization. Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Larmour showed colored slides of C.S.C.L. work and Dr. Larmour gave a very interesting talk on leathercraft, stressing the new Canadian style. Regular meetings of the branch will be held the second Thursday in each month.

PETERBORO:

On Wednesday evening, October 17th, 1956, a meeting was held at the YWCA for the purpose of organizing a creative leathercraft society for Peterboro and the surrounding district which would be affiliated with C.S.C.L. There were 65 present with Mr. Ken Robinson, Recreational Director, as Chairman. Mr. Robinson called on Mrs. Jean Newton, President of C.S.C.L., who expressed her pleasure at being invited to the meeting and outlined some of the activities of the various branches. Mr. Fred Brown, Vice-President of C.S.C.L., pointed out the benefits derived from being a member branch. Dr. R.K. Larmour gave a very interesting talk on "Leathercraft" and showed films of various types of leathercraft. Demonstrations were given by Don MacKinnon on leathercarving; Mrs. Jean Newton on spatter dyeing and the technique of masking; Mrs. Reta Larmour on the assembling of framed handbags. The following were elected officers for the current season: Honorary President, Dr. R.K. Larmour; President, Mr. R.G. Schwab; Vice-President, Mrs. M. Niblett; Secretary, Mrs. Joe Watson; Treasurer, Mrs. E. Cockerill. Membership Committee: Mrs. D.M. Wood, Mrs. E. Renwick (Lakefield), Mrs. Newman (Campbellford). Advisers: Mrs. J. Wharry, Miss G. Mortimer, Mr. Ken Robinson, Mr. Don MacKinnon.

KIRKLAND LAKE WORKSHOP:

On the weekend of September 21st, Kirkland Lake Leathercrafters had the opportunity of learning from Endel Ruberg his methods of designing and shading. Twenty craftsmen from the surrounding district met for three days of intensive craftwork under Mr. Ruberg's guidance and out of this weekend, classes are growing up in local areas outside of Kirkland Lake.

TORONTO EXHIBITION BY CSCL

The two days October 26th and 27th saw the holding of the second exhibition of leathercraft by CSCL at the Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto. Many new pieces were on display by craftsmen from across Ontario. Again notable was the trend towards smaller areas of decoration with emphasis on fine craftsmanship.

Demonstrations were given by Don MacKinnon on carving; Robert Muma on gold tooling; Sadie Roebuck and Reta Larmour on purse framing; and A.Z. Legzdins, who demonstrated a somewhat different technique using Latvian design motifs. Colored slides were shown by Dr. R.K. Larmour, who called attention to the outstanding features of each item as shown on the slides. Representatives from various Ontario groups were present and craftsmen had the opportunity of viewing the finest in contemporary Canadian leathercraft.

CSCL EXECUTIVE

President: Mrs. Jean Newton, Toronto.

Vice-President: Mr. Fred Brown, Toronto.

Treasurer: Miss Olivia Smith, Toronto.

Recording Secretary: Miss Viola Harris, Toronto.

Corresponding Secretary: Miss Winifred Barratt, Toronto.

Executive Council: Past President, Dr. R.K. Larmour, ex-officio.

Exhibitions Chairman, Mrs. Nora Huyck.

Membership Chairman, Miss Elizabeth Prince.

Editor, Mrs. Dorothy Muma; Assistant, Mrs. Jean Agnew.

Advertising Chairman, Mr. A.W. Jeffery.

Teaching Standards, Mr. Robert Muma.

Canadian Handicrafts Liaison, Mrs. Reta Larmour.

Others: Mrs. Anne Hook; Mr. Don MacKinnon, alternate, Mrs. May MacKinnon; Mr. Clyde Johnson; Mr. Cecil Roebuck; Mr. Harold Frost; Mr. Deane Russell.

Presiding Officers of Local Branches, and Regional Representatives will be ex-officio members of the Executive Council.