

Canadian Leathercraft

Volume I No IV

June 1952

NEW FIELDS

Summer months might well offer Canadian leathercraftsmen their annual periods of relaxation and leisure time to "take stock" of past achievements. We may also enjoy chances to plan for our next more active fall-winter-spring season of craft activities.

Let's use our summer months to experiment with materials and tools; let's resolve also to experiment in design, so that our next season's efforts will reflect some evidence of our readiness to be creative rather than imitative.

Our new design ideas should be "captured" into convenient sketch pads. Whenever visiting new fields be ready to jot down interesting impressions for future reference.

Visits to museums and antique shops to study old hand-crafted products; visits to specialty shops for ideas in contemporary craft designs; visits to craft studios for talks with experienced craftsmen -- all suggest ways to highlight our summer travels. Then, if we will but apply the many lessons we can learn from such use of summer time, we shall have laid the groundwork for a more interesting and progressive season of winter leathercraft.

Page 6 of this issue of our Bulletin reviews some of the achievements of our Society since formation. Having gained recognition among the more experienced Canadian cultural societies, our efforts from now on will be watched with more than passing interest. It will remain up to us - as individual members and as an organized Society - to demonstrate that we may measure up to expectations.



Through "Canadian Leathercraft" CSCL members may learn of new and important services to be developed for the interest of our field. Watch for the beginning of Volume II - commencing in September.

NOTICE

CSCL Fees are Due and Payable in June of each year

All registered and prospective members are requested to complete the new and revised REGISTRATION FORM now being circulated Form with fee (\$2.00) should be sent to the Treasurer:

Mr Robert Muma
62 McGill Street
Toronto - Ontario

Registered Members receive "Canadian Leathercraft" - official quarterly educational bulletin of the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft - serving:

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- the leathercraft instructor
- the experienced amateur and professional craftsman
- tanners, leathercraft supply houses and manufacturers
- the general public appreciating fine articles in leather

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The Leather Carvers' Guild of London

Two years ago at this time, the people on Dorinda Street wondered what was taking place at 475 For two weeks there was a scene of continuous activity and a sound of heavy tapping could be heard through it all

This was the foundation of the "Leather Carvers' Guild of London" beginning under the capable guidance of Jack McDougall of Toronto Thirteen people in all were, in ten days, taking what was normally a fourteen week course in Leather Carving

In the final evening of their classes, students organized themselves as the "Leather Carvers' Guild of London" with Margaret Jennings as President, Helen Wheaton, Secretary, Edythe Stewart, Treasurer and Arthur Burgess, Manager of Supplies Jack McDougall and Margaret McDougall were elected Honorary President and Honorary Vice-President At the next annual meeting Clair Mitchener was made Vice-President The original membership has now been doubled

The constitution and by-laws were drawn up, with meetings to be held on the fourth Monday of the month Those seeking membership must try a working examination - set, supervised and judged by a Board of Examiners After passing the examination a two dollar initiation fee is required with dues at twenty-five cents a month, or two dollars a year in advance

The Guild has put on displays and demonstrations at Western Fair, the "Y" Hobby Fair and various church fairs in London and St. Thomas Members will be seen in action both at CNE and Western Fair this fall

Leathercraft classes in night schools held in Beal Technical, Princess Elizabeth, Arva Collegiate and YM, YWCA Classes are taught by Guild members, as are groups in Leather Carving at Beck Memorial Sanitorium As a group they conducted classes in Carving at "Y" Craft Shop, with practically every member teaching under the direction of the President

The majority of the Guild are individual members of the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft and, as a group, seek to co-operate with the Leathercraft Society to the fullest possible extent In February, they sponsored the Travelling Exhibition in the Art Gallery of the Public Library for four days Demonstrations of many types of leathercraft were held each evening

Regular monthly meetings are opened to the public on special occasions such as:

Ray Potter of Lewiscraft, Toronto, with a showing of supplies, and featuring Don MacKinnon, expert leather carver with a display and demonstration

Dr and Mrs Ralph Larmour of Toronto, demonstrating use of
Garnett Antiques and Finishes, featuring some of Mrs
Larmour's beautifully finished work

Two separate showings of the Craftool Film on Leather
Carving by Joey Smith of Los Angeles

On its solid foundation, the Guild seeks to expand its membership and in-
crease its supplies, its knowledge and, in time, to have its own workshop
where members and other leathercrafters may come to work in companionship
to procure materials and instruction

Report by: Mrs Margaret Jennings, President
London Leather Carvers' Guild

NEWS ITEM

The Leathercraft Club of the Kirkland Lake Arts and Crafts
Association held a 3-day Leathercraft Workshop Conference
May 9-11 at Kirkland Lake

The Workshop was conducted by Deane Russell, Ottawa, who demonstrated for
the twenty-three student craftsmen attending the conference Demonstra-
tions included:

stamping, tooling, wheel embossing and finishing leather belts;
forming, decorating and finishing hand-molded leather trays
from 6-7 iron sole leather; antique finishing with oil paints
and water soluble dyes, as well as colouring with aniline spir-
it dyes

A display of more advanced projects suggested a wide range of possibilities
for student craftsmen All students completed two or three items and felt
they need not lack for ideas as to "What shall I do next?"



Mr. Leather Suggests

If you must polish sterling silver mounted on valuable
hand-tooled leathersgoods, and have not proper leather
masking materials to prevent silver polishing compounds
from spoiling fine leather surfaces - try rubbing over
the silver with crumpled white tissue paper The leath-
er finish will not be marred, and the silverwork will
gleam

Canadian Arts Council Admits New Member

At the sixth annual conference of the Canadian Arts Council, held recently in Montreal, the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft became the eighteenth member of the permanent national organization of Canadian cultural organizations

The Canadian Arts Council grew out of the Arts Reconstruction Committee, after its hearing before a Special Committee of the House of Commons on Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Deane Russell, Ottawa, President of the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft, represented fellow Canadian leathercraftsmen during a hearing of the Leathercraft Society's application for membership in the CAC

Questioned as to the status, objectives and program of the Leathercraft Society, Mr Russell reported that both professional and amateur decorative leathercraftsmen formed the membership, and that the Society's two chief objectives were to encourage originality in design and to establish high standards of leathercraftsmanship. To undertake this program, the Society had already commenced publication of a quarterly educational bulletin, and had organized a travelling exhibition offered for study by leathercraft groups and the general public across Canada.

Among the many special services rendered by the CAC, may be mentioned:

- appointing Canadian representatives to General Assemblies of UNESCO (United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization)
- distributing 60,000 color prints of Canadian art to school rooms in Europe
- assisting in the formation of three provincial art boards
- preparing Federal Government publications on Canadian Art for overseas distribution
- acting as consultants to the Federal Government on matters relating to Canadian cultural programs

In short, the CAC acts as the co-ordinating voice of the artist in matters pertaining to the arts of Canada

The acceptance of the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft as the newest member society in the CAC marks an important step towards raising the status of Canadian leathercraft. Henceforth, the Leathercraft Society may be expected to share in the responsibility of interpreting Canadian leather art at important cultural events where decorative leathercraftsmen may be invited to participate

Progress Report

The third birthday of the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft was observed during the annual meeting of the Society at Toronto, May 31, 1952

After attending to routine business of hearing committee reports, electing executive officers, appointing committee chairman (see page 12), delegates enjoyed a surprise program feature offered by Dr R K Larmour, Toronto, who showed his beginning of a fine collection of color slide films -- using as the basis for his collection all pieces composing the Society's Travelling Exhibition. Dr Larmour's colored slide films showed in clear and graphic detail the possibilities of decorative leathercraft. Also among the films were slides which brought glimpses of leathercraft in the Southwestern United States - including a splendid record of the Larmours' visit to F O Baird, widely known leather carver, author and instructor of Manitou Springs, Colorado.

Delegates considered planning for next year's annual meeting to be conducted as a day-long or week-end conference, in order to cover more adequately the numerous business and program features which it was felt would interest members able to attend annual meetings of the Society.

To help field members understand more of the scope of services rendered fellow craftsmen in the short time since the formation of the CSCL, we offer the following outline of achievements to date:

- 1) CSCL formed - May 1950
- 2) "Canadian Leathercraft" - official quarterly educational bulletin; widely sought by instructors, individuals and groups of leathercraftsmen; a unique publication for our field; feature articles have dealt with:
 - Antique Finishing with Oils
 - Tannery article - "What is Good Leather?"
 - Antique Finishing with Water Soluble Dyes
 - Natural Russet Leathers - most important for decorative leathercraftsmen
 - Analysis of "Contemporary Canadian Leathercraft"
 - Leather Plaque Carving
- 3) Travelling Exhibition under name of "Canadian Handmades in Leather" -- an educational service to scattered Canadian leathercraft groups which is arousing new interests and enthusiasm for decorative leathercraft wherever it appears
- 4) Appointed judges for 1951 and 1952 leathercraft sections of Canadian National Exhibition
- 5) Invited to appoint leathercraft member of jury for next Art Gallery of Toronto crafts display - 1953
- 6) Recommended leathercraft instructors for several boards of education
- 7) Application accepted for membership in Canadian Arts Council (see page 5)

Progress Report (continued)

Special Projects Planned:

- exhibitions and competitions of interest to Canadian leathercraftsmen
- introduction of illustrations for "Canadian Leathercraft" articles
- color slide film library of outstanding examples of contemporary and antique leather art
- permanent collection of foreign country leathercraft

Watch future issues of "Canadian Leathercraft" for further details of above and other projects of interest and importance to Canadian leathercraftsmen

Who's Who in Canadian Leathercraft

(to acquaint field members of CSCL with the interests and achievements of fellow leathercraftsmen)

Mrs Reta Larmour - Toronto

Mrs Larmour, formerly of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, became interested in leathercraft through the Leathercraft Group of the Kingsway Women's Club of Toronto

She has studied leathercraft under a number of prominent teachers, including Edith Roscoe, Jack McDougall, Robert Muma and Tiva Limberg of Toronto, and Nila Joel of California

During the past four years Mrs Larmour has competed in many of the major exhibitions in Toronto, Vancouver, London and Ottawa, winning numerous awards, including the Bedford Trophy for 1951 from the Pacific National Exhibition, Vancouver, and has had work accepted in the 1951 Canadian Crafts Exhibition, Art Gallery of Toronto

Mrs Larmour has served as Secretary of the CSCL for the past two years, and is now Chairman of the Travelling Exhibition Committee of the CSCL

Our Thanks for Special Publicity to:

Mona Gould - for her "New Liberty" column story (April) about our Society; also for her several radio program references to CSCL

Brian Chernoff - for his splendid 2-page, illustrated story in "Canadian Hobby-Craft" Magazine - June) about the formation and activities of CSCL

CANADIAN PRESS - for widely-used story about our Travelling Exhibition

Leather Plaque Carving

by
Don W MacKinnon

"One Misty, Moisty Morning - When Cloudy was the Weather
I chanced to meet an Old Man - Clothed all in Leather

He began to Compliment me - And I began to Grin
How do you do, How do you do, And how do you do Agin"

This bit of verse came to light some time ago, during a leathercraft discussion with our good friend Deane Russell -

"Think it would provide a theme for a leather carved picture, Don?"

"It might, Deane Let's mull it over for awhile Perhaps it will clear in time"

It's a catchy thing, this verse, and the words, "Misty, Moisty Morning" seem to intrude into our thoughts time after time A sort of friendly, cheerful groups of words, these, and so many Misty, Moisty Mornings from which to choose So many reminiscent of Ontario in the Fall Cheerful and laughing young Canada on the way to school in the morning, kicking the damp, fallen leaves from the wet pavement The wet, black circles of last night's bon fires Picking mushrooms on a misty September morning; gathering walnuts, butternuts; dripping multicolored trees Nature fattening up for Winter Perhaps we have the making of a picture here

Is it the complascent bellowing of the ore carriers passing in the fog on the St Claire? Is it the two beagle hound puppies yelling exultingly to the wide world of their new found love in the moist, hot scent of the baby cottontail? Remember the skylark after the sun burst through the fog, up in front of Loos? Is it the drenched and bedraggled Cocker, Mickey, feathering like mad to drive a reluctant cock pheasant into the air? Or the bluebill that plopped in among the decoys up at Stoke's Bay? Ideas are becoming really interesting now and they call for a family conference

Results? Who was the Old Man all dressed in leather? Fur Trader? Trapper? Coureur des Bois? Dan'l Boone? Leatherstockings? Drums along the Mohawk? Kentucky long rifles? A trend of thought takes on meaning during discussion Surely a background of misty, trailing vapour, near a marsh Getting closer The old story of the boy and the fish, changed to the backwoods lad and the city dude Good! Disdainful, aristocratic looking setters, potlicker hounds? That's it! Suggestions from all sides Jane then goes to work with pencil and sketching pad

Then the fun started What to do with the sketch? How to translate it to leather with tools and finishing materials? A plump shoulder cut out of about nine-ounce russet cowhide was finally decided upon

The leather was thoroughly soaked and left to case between a piece of plate glass and a marble slab After a few days, and when the material was judged to be of proper moisture content, the sketch was carefully traced with a sharp pointed, hard pencil

Leather was again dampened and placed under glass At the proper time, all figures were cut in by swivel knife, using three different blades: 1/2" hollow ground blade; 1/4" and one ground to less than 1/8" The smallest blade ground thin for fine detail cutting

All figures were bevelled in with both plain and cross-checked bevellers, the latter used where deep shadow was required and of course at different depths Undercut bevellers were used on all human figures and to increase the third dimension wherever possible Details of figures, marsh grass, et cetera, were bevelled with plain and checked bevellers in conjunction with a narrow, spoon shaped modelling tool The modelling tool was used to give soft lines to clothing wrinkles, mist wraiths and unevenness of foreground Stamp 935 was reworked to about 1/16" to aid modeller in fine details of faces Hair, dog ears, coonskin cap, et cetera, were cut in hanks, bevelled and finely cut with a swivel knife Detail of ducks, cut in with the knife Different size dot stamps were used for buttons

The sky background was stamped in with reworked 885 to give slightly contrasting texture to mist wraiths which were softly bevelled with modeller Tree was slightly undercut Deep shadow, where required, was stamped in with 889, deep, and 105, lighter During all these operations, depth of tooling was guided by color tones produced in the leather Consistent dampness was sought at all times and the project was kept under glass during lapses in working time

Upon completion of tooling, figures were well dampened and embossed from the flesh side of the leather When dry, cotton and glue were used to give stability The project was again dampened and reworked from the grain side until satisfactory depth contrast was achieved

When thoroughly dried a coat of thin shellac was applied with a cloth pad (use shellac with caution) Next, a coat of antique paste was brushed on and immediately removed from highlights and sky, securing good shadow background When the assembly had sufficiently cured, we turned to the idea of color This phase was placed in more capable hands and the writer bowed out

Jane took over and provided the color sequence with artists oils and mostly in sympathetic colors The big problem was to make the brown leather look "misty" white

Altogether, this was a difficult, though satisfactory family effort A wealth of experiences was gained and new ideas produced - and so - another one for the record

The "Misty, Moisty Morning" now having past, we are eagerly looking forward to our next effort - a country square dance group - caller, fiddler and all!

A lot of good subjects to try in this Canada of ours!

Editor's Note: As token return for his effort, we greatly enjoyed "trading" with Don a piece of equipment for his Studio - one of our leather stitching horses, which Don and Ray Potter recently piled into the Lewiscraft station wagon for their return trip to Toronto



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Ottawa Member, Mrs Margaret Richardson, 364 Huron Avenue

Regina Member, Mrs Lena M Totton, 2358 Ottawa Street, Regina



Leather Plaque Carving

Some of our readers have written to ask whether "Canadian scenes" might be translated into leather. Our ambitious and versatile leathercraft friend, Don MacKinnon, 6 Irwin Street, Toronto, has already completed many experimental efforts in this phase of decorative leatherworking. His latest - a gift to the Editor - is described in the current Bulletin of "Canadian Leathercraft" for the information of readers interested in trying leather as a medium for interpreting "Canadian scenes" suggesting plaque-like decorative possibilities.

Readers are invited to note particularly "the workings of the creative mind" -- through all phases of such a project: from receiving the original inspiration, to crystalizing the theme into a work plan; choice of leather, tools and finishing media. Much thought and time must be spent in this manner by all "creative craftsmen".

In order to better illustrate the interesting possibilities of "Leather Plaque Carving" we have, for this issue, prepared an extra slip-page, showing a reduced sketch (about 1/5" actual size) of the original by Don's daughter, Jane. We feel sure readers will agree, the MacKinnon family had a lot of fun, and produced a fine example of their creative thinking about "One Misty, Moisty Morning...."



For those who may like to explore the use of leather as a suitable medium for plaque-like interior decorating, we suggest:

- combining leather with copper or aluminum modelling
- designing, tooling, embossing and coloring heavy leather masks
- experimenting with full relief masks by hand-molding and baking
- creative thinking in terms of natural or industrial Canadian scenes; or exercises in entirely original "fantasies" of plaque designing - mounted on polished natural wood panels



Whenever CSCL members may learn of similar experiments, remember your fellow leathercraftsmen would like to know of such achievements through "Canadian Leathercraft". Facilities will also be provided for the permanent recording in color slide films of any such examples as may be sent on short loan to the Editor.

