

The Brazos Valley Woodturners

January 2009 presentation

Basic Carving Techniques for use with Turned Wood Objects

- **CHIP CARVING**

Chip carving can add beautiful dimension to turned wood. It is simple to do and the wood (which must be marked off in squares) can be patterned directly on the lathe using the lathe's indexing system. If squares are not the pattern to be used, the lathe indexing system can provide the user with an easy guide for spacing of other patterns.

- Examples of turned wood projects that may be enhanced texturally with chip carving:
 - Walking Sticks / Canes
 - Bowls, boxes and platters
 - Vases
 - Lamp bases

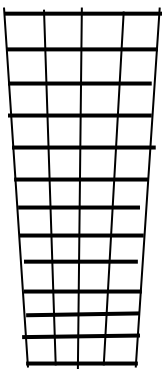
Necessary equipment for chip carving:

- A chip carving knife (or even a box cutter with a sharp blade)
- A pencil and eraser
- A straight edge may be handy if marking off of the lathe

Hint for using the indexing system to mark squares:

Draw the lines length wise on the wood using the indexed spacing. Use the tool rest as the straight edge for the penciled lines. Because the wood may vary in diameter it has been my preference to draw the perpendicular lines spaced according to "eye-balling" the size of the squares.

Example:



Chip carving can take many shapes other than squares and angles within squares (this is just the most common).

Leaves, letters, curves and many other designs can be carved with chip carving techniques.

Chip carving is simply several cuts with a knife that result in removal of a desired clean-cut shape from the wood. This is primarily done with many cutouts that produce a beautiful and predetermined pattern. Many wonderful chip-carving pattern and instruction books are available.

- **SIMPLE LINES CUT IN A V-SHAPE TO OUTLINE A DRAWING (NORMALLY IN COLOR)**

If artistic skills allow for free-hand drawing – that is wonderful. If not, find a picture from a book, internet or other source and trace it onto the turned wood object using tracing paper and carbon paper. Tape one side of the paper to the wood to make sure you stay “right on the mark” until the entire transfer is complete. Oil colored pencils make easy work of “painting” the picture. The colors can be mixed, muted, darkened, lighted – really any coloring can be achieved. *I have found Wood Hollow brand oil pencils on e-bay for very good prices (sold brand-new). Lacquer or paint thinner can be used with a small artist paint brush to aide in mixing, lightening and smoothing color after applying color directly with the pencils.

- o Examples of turned wood projects that may be enhanced with color and texture as well as a painted “picture”:
 - Walking Sticks / Canes
 - Bowls, boxes and platters
 - Vases
 - Lamp bases

Necessary equipment for V-cut lines around a picture:

- **A chip carving knife (a carving knife or even a box cutter with a sharp blade)**
- **A pencil and eraser, tracing and carbon paper, tape**
- **Oil pencils or paint**
- **Paint thinner, q-tips, possible a small quantity of assorted size good quality paint brushes**
- **Can of fast-drying spray lacquer**

Draw the picture. Paint the picture. Let dry (it dries quickly). Seal (or set) the color with a quick light spray of fast-drying lacquer.

Use a sharp knife to cut around desired areas in and around drawing. Use a slight angle to one side and then the other, to release the cut “line” that is in a v-shape.

Don’t hesitate to use this same technique with no color to add detail that lets the recipient know that the gift was made in their honor. For example, my father’s

walking stick has vegetables to represent his love of gardening and dominoes to show his love for the game. Also, I carved his initials into the walking stick with a patterned oval frame. No color was used as it would have been too much (it would have been gaudy!)

- **SPIRALING**

Spirals are a beautiful addition to many wood pieces and there are several ways to achieve them. They can be cut by hand, sanded with an oscillating spindle sander, filed and even cut with a spiraling lathe tool.

Draw the spiral lines (both the edges and the crevices). The technique of drawing the spirals was taught in March last year at Larry's shop. The best hint was to draw every other line with alternating colored pencils diagonally across a series of square grids marked around the diameter of the work. This helps as you might use red to represent the line to remove and blue to represent the line that should be fully present at all times.

Remove the wood from every other line leaving a spiral effect.

OR:

Use the preferred size cutter from the spiraling tool with the angle "or pitch" to give the desired spiral.

The spiraling tool is fast, fun to use, and provides a perfectly spaced spiral – but is limited by the cutter sizes and pitches available. Also – wood type is very restricted. Soft woods don't do well at all. Hard woods that splinter easily also don't work well. But there are plenty of wood species that will allow this tool to make beautiful spirals. Experimentation and practice are a must. The Sorby spiraling tool works very well and the video instructions are invaluable. The written instructions are rather difficult to follow (at least for some people 😊).

- **CARVING A CAPTIVE RING USING THE SORBY CAPTIVE RING TOOL**

Captive rings are just fun! They can be used on walking sticks, spindles and stem work just to create a little whimsy.

Although a captive ring can be cut manually with several tools (thankfully – as the specialized tool can only be used on certain woods with great success), the Sorby captive ring tool makes quick work of creating a perfectly shaped ring. The different cutters also make it very simple to create the desired ring thickness.

- **OTHER QUICK CARVING TECHNIQUES**

- Use carving knife to cut to make unusual bowl rims and base reliefs.
- Use v-tool and rounded chisels to cut stems and leaves.
- Use spindle sander to create a wavy affect (again on rims and bases)
- Use spindle sander to put relief marks into the sides of vessels

- **SAFETY TIPS**

- o Use sharp knives and tools.
- o Wear a carving glove (can substitute a fisherman's fillet glove) on the hand holding the object
- o Wear a rubber thumb tip on the hand holding the knife
- o Try to cut over a surface to protect your legs

- **OTHER 3-DIMENSIONAL CARVING (SUCH AS A WOOD SPIRIT)**

Carving basics may just bring about a desire to carve more. And if that occurs, please feel welcome to visit the Harker Heights Recreational Center on Tuesday evenings from approximately 6pm to 8pm to surround yourself with people who will gladly share their amazing skills with you. The meetings are not formal classes, but simply a friendly gathering allowing time to practice, learn, create and make great friends.

Upon visiting, you may decide to join. If so, the dues for the year are \$20 and we meet every Tuesday.

Sometimes, a teacher is brought in from out of town and teaches a specific skill. In late January we are having a class on relief carving. The cost is approximately \$40 (maybe \$60 – I can't remember). If you are interested, let me know. The class will be held on a Saturday and Sunday. One of our turners, Derrick, does amazing relief carving work and would be a great source for questions.

Also – I have many carving books that I will gladly loan out upon request.

I hope you enjoy the class.
Keeley