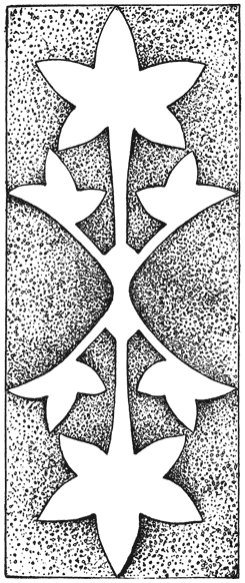
Widow Maker's Crafternoon

EPISODE 134 · CRAFT GUIDE

Indenting and Stamping

Strictly speaking it is not carving at all, which is why it is where everyone starts.



From A Manual of Wood-carving (Leland, 1891) · public domain

"Draw it, groove it, punch the ground, then oil it."

1 Choose the Panel

Take a panel or thin flat board, six inches in breadth, twelve in length, and half an inch or less in thickness. It must be smooth, without knots or imperfections. A finely grained, even, light-coloured wood such as holly or beech is preferable.

2 Transfer the Pattern

Draw your pattern on paper with a very black and soft pencil. Lay it face down on the wood, turn the edges over and gum them to the edge of the panel, then carefully rub the back with something very smooth and hard, such as a burnisher or an ivory paper-knife. Remove the paper, and touch the pattern up if it came out imperfect.

3 Indent the Outline

With a pattern-wheel or tracer, indent a line or narrow groove along the outline. Hold the tracer upright and run it along, tapping it as it goes with a hammer of iron or wood. Where the wheel cannot be used, as in small corners, use the tracer.

4 Stamp the Ground

Take one of the stamps or grounding punches and indent the whole background with the hammer. If any corners are too small to admit the stamp, finish them with a pointed nail or a bodkin. You may then take the tracer and smooth down and depress the ground near the pattern edge, which gives an improved relief.

5

Oil and Polish

Coat the whole with oil, rub it in, and wipe it off with care. Polish only the pattern, using a piece of very soft wood, then rub it off by hand or with a stiff brush.

6

Cut the Outline Instead

On a second panel you may cut the outline in a light groove with a very small gouge, a V tool, or a firmer, the flat carver's chisel,. Be very careful to hold the handle in your right hand and guide the blade with the fingers of the left, and never let the left hand get before the point. Do not cut deeply or too rapidly. Practise cutting grooves on waste wood before you begin on the pattern, or the panel will almost certainly be spoiled.