

Southwest Louisiana Woodworkers Club January 2020

Bill Fey, President
Patrick LaPoint Treasurer

Officers and Directors

Barry Humphus, Editor, Eltee Thibodeaux
Daren Hood, John Marcon, Robin Richard

Mentoring Program - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volunteered to help. Give them a call. Frank Tartarmella 802-8989; John Marcon: 478-0646; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Ray Kebodeaux: 583-2378. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

December Meeting Highlights

Once again, we had the wonderful opportunity to gather for our annual holiday meeting at the Stella Marie Seafarer's Center due to the generosity of our long-time treasurer, Patrick LaPoint. Thanks so much, Patrick, as this is a great place to have this meeting.

We had at least one guest this month with Janet Caudillo (guest of Bill Fey) plus several spouses of members.

Bill Fey announced that the annual dues remain at \$20 per year and Patrick reported that the Club has about \$1,400 in the bank for future operations.

For Show and Tell, Mr. Eltee Thibodeaux once again



J.W. Anderson had of course done one of his wonderful wooden knives -- this one was a fish knife design of mahogany and maple. He also showed a neat sassafras and mahogany box finished with wipe-on poly.

Ray Kibodeaux showed us a Livingston box with an oak ring on walnut. Patrick LaPoint did some tree ornaments that were very nice. He was then asked to give us a bit of history of the Stella Marie Seafarer's Center and who they serve. The facility is funded by the local Diocese and serves the hundreds of seafarers who come to the Port of Lake Charles each year on cargo ships from around the world. The center provides a comfortable place for the men and women coming to the Port and includes a place where they can communicate with their families across the world. The Center also provides transportation to local businesses where they can purchase local goods for friends and families back home. This is a wonderful resource for the Port and the community.

Kyle Andrepont showed us a great push tool for thin stock complete with adjustable features. We need to construct one of these.

Our guest this month was Janet Caudillo who is a weaver of fine cloth. She uses an old spinning wheel and brought the unit to the meeting. She reported that the device Comming Up . . . January 11, 2020 at the shop of Travis McManemin at 9:00 A.M. See the map on page 4.



stepped up first, showed us a Bonnie and Clyde car toy.

Aaron Andrepont had a lovely scroll-sawn lion figure that was framed nicely. Aaron also showed a drafting stool plus described how he would modify it should he build another. The problem he described is that drafting chairs are very upright, meaning that

it is not a chair in which you sit up very straight. Thus, it is not a chair that is comfortable for casual sitting.

Wood Carving Tools

Woodcarving can be as simple or as complex as the project requires or as the carver cares to make it, and so can the wood carving tools used. An amazing amount of work can be done on small basswood or butternut carvings with just a chip-carving knife or an X-Acto knife. Add a few gouges and your range of carving possibilities increases.

Power carving tools such as a flexible-shaft tool can help speed up the carving process and produce effects that you cannot get with hand tools. Large power tools, such as a band saw, belt sander, drill press, and chain saw, fill out the woodcarver's shop.

For carving small, hand-held craft objects, such as duck or shorebird decoys, caricature figures, and chip carving (decorative designs on flat surfaces like the sides of jewelry boxes), basswood is an excellent choice. It is soft and easy to carve, the close grain holds small carved detail, there are few knots or blemishes, and it is stable when dry. However, basswood's softness makes it difficult to apply a stain evenly on carved surfaces or attain a glossy finish. Most basswood carvings are painted.

For sculpture with a natural wood finish, walnut, mahogany, cherry, or butternut provide rich color with an attractive grain pattern. Butternut is very soft and the easiest to carve with hand tools. Walnut, mahogany, and cherry are rich in color, moderately difficult to carve because of the dense grain, and they take finished well. Gouges and a mallet will be needed for these woods.

Chip-Carving Knife - Probably the first tool any carver starts with is a knife. Its primary use is for whittling and chip carving. The blade is about 1 1/2" long, and has a handle designed to fit the hand. Like gouges, it should be made of high carbon steel that will hold an edge for a long time.

Carpenter's Chisels - These chisels have a flat edge (#1 Sweep). They are not usually used for sculpture, because the edge of a flat chisel tends to dig into the wood, twisting and plunging the tool deeper on one side than the carver may have desired. They can give a crude, unschooled look that may be desirable on some types of sculpture.

U-Gouges - Gouges are the work horses of carving. U-gouges are designated by the width of the cutting edge (in inches or millimeters), the sweep, or amount of curvature of the edge (an arbitrarily assigned number), and the shape of the shaft (straight, bent, spoon, and back bent). Gouges can be purchased: - in widths from 2mm (1/16") to 60 mm (2 3/8") - in sweeps from #2 (a barely perceptible curve) to #11 (a very deep, half round curve) - in straight, bent, spoon, and back-bent shapes

V-Gouges - V-gouges are designated by the width between the top edge tips and the angle of the vee bottom edge. Gouges can be purchased:- in widths from 2mm to 30mm - in 60° (#12 sweep) and 90° (#13 sweep).

Bent and Spoon Gouges - These specialty gouges are used to get into inaccessible spots on a carving that a straight gouge can't reach. Bent gouge: is the entire length of the shaft is curved. Spoon gouge: is the final 1 1/2" of the shaft is deeply bent in a spoon shape.

Back bent gouges: is a spoon gouge with the curve reversed so the cutting edge is convex instead of concave. These specialized tools are seldom used, but when needed, are invaluable.

Skewed Chisel - A skewed chisel's cutting is angled back from the leading edge at a 45 degree angle. They come in straight, bent, and spoon shapes and in varying widths. These are specialized tools and are seldom, if ever, used.

Palm Tools - Most of the above tool shapes can be purchased as smaller palm tools. A chip-carving knife and an assortment of palm gouges are all that is needed for creating small carvings in basswood or other soft woods.

Mallet - The traditional mallet for carving is cylindrically shaped and made from a heavy, dense hardwood. I prefer using a rubber mallet. While it doesn't have the driving power of a wood mallet, it is less noisy, easier on the chisel handles, and has some spring that brings the head back up for the next swing.

Rotary Tool (Dremel) - A rotary tool is a hand held power tool with a variety of rotating accessory bits and attachments that can be used for cutting, carving, sanding, polishing and many other applications.

Foredom Flexible Shaft Tool - Foredom tools have a motor (1/8 - 14 HP depending on the model), and run at up to 20,000 RPM. A flexible shaft extends from the motor to a hand piece that holds a wide variety of burs used for cutting and texturing wood. Its variable-speed capability is operated by a foot controlled pedal.

Burs and Accessories - A wide variety of burs are available to fit the several different styles and sizes of Foredom hand pieces. Burs that may have been intended for other purposes can be used for woodcarving, such as single cut and double cut carbide burs (intended for metal work). Burs with needle-sharp points of tungsten carbide and burs coated with industrial diamonds can be used for texturing wood. Drill bits can be placed in the adjustable chuck hand piece for drilling holes. Small sanding discs and drums are also available for sanding and finishing. Barry Humphus edited from Woodcarving Tools.com

Wood for Carving

Wood comes in so many types, and it is important to know each wood's individual characteristics to know how to use them while wood carving. Each wood type has a different texture and color, you need to know the purpose it will be used to choose the right type.

For a hand carver the most popular wood to use is basswood and for good reason. The wood is relatively soft, yet because it is close grained it is able to hold detail very well. It is non-toxic. The wood is white although there are occasional streaks of brown in it. There is little difference between the sapwood and the heartwood. Basswood has little grain pattern it may look bland, and as a result it is often painted. If, however, one applies a mix of mineral spirits and boiled linseed oil to the finished carving and then wipes off the excess after a few minutes it will seal the carving and bring out the grain.

Basswood is related to limewood which is popular in Europe and has very similar characteristics. The best carving basswood is obtained from the northern states such as Wisconsin and Minnesota. Basswood is widely available in hobby shops in small blocks or in cutouts that are available with a pattern. These are good for the beginner to try but the wood is more expensive purchased in these venues. If you enjoy carving, you should find suppliers that will provide good quality wood at reasonable prices. There are many on the internet.

Pine Northern white pine is another good choice. It has similar characteristics to basswood, being relatively soft and easy to carve and widely available at reasonable cost. Sugar pine is also an excellent carving wood.

Cottonwood is available in the Midwest is another good white colored carving wood. Its bark is very popular for carving wooden spirits and whimsical houses. The bark is soft and easy to carve but does have a tendency to split. The bark is very attractive when finished unpainted.

Butternut is more difficult to find, especially in larger sizes, but also a popular carving wood, butternut has beautiful color and grain. It is related to walnut yet is lighter in color and more easily carved. Butternut is prone to insect problems. Much of the butternut will have wormholes in it. Carvers generally consider this a natural feature of the wood which gives the carving character.

Walnut is a very popular hard wood. It is difficult to carve with hand tools. You must use sharp tools and a mallet for better results. Walnut is a good wood for the power carver. The rich color and grain has made walnut into a popular furniture wood, but when finished with a clear sealer walnut also makes a beautiful carving.

Mahogany is any of many similar reddish colored woods. It is difficult to know what the characteristics will be a piece of wood labeled as mahogany. A strong lightweight wood with a relatively straight grain, it is easily worked with hand or power tools but does have a tendency to split. Other hard woods that may be power carved with good results are maple, fruit trees, rosewood and teak.

There are many other woods that can be carved, but a beginning carver should begin with this list and once they have had some success, and then try other woods. So grab some tools, get some wood and start carving.

A beginning carver will often pick up the most convenient piece of wood, maybe a scrap of lumber, or a piece of driftwood and pull out the trusty pocketknife and begin carving. Often the beginning carver becomes frustrated with the lack of progress. The wood is either too hard, which results in a great deal of work with little results, or too soft in which case the wood is quickly cut but no detail can be obtained because the wood crushes under the knife blade rather than cutting.

The type of carving you do will influence the type of wood which is best to use. A power carver will often use different wood than a hand tool carver. With power you can more easily carve a hard wood and get great detail while the same hard wood might be very frustrating for a hand carver.

Safe Carving

When the chips are flying with gouges and mallets, or when using any power tool, wear safety glasses. Your eyes are your most valuable tool; protect them. If you are using power tools that create dust, be sure to wear a dust mask. Wood can contain toxic fungi, and some woods themselves can be hazardous.

While applying force to push a knife or gouge through wood, tools frequently slip. Always keep your hands behind the tool's sharp edge. Do not hold the wood in your lap while carving. Always try to secure the work piece on a table or in a vise so that both hands are free to control the tools. Cuts often happen when one hand is trying to hold the piece and the other hand is pushing hard on the tool - and it slips. Secure the work piece, and keep both hands on the tool and behind the sharp edge.

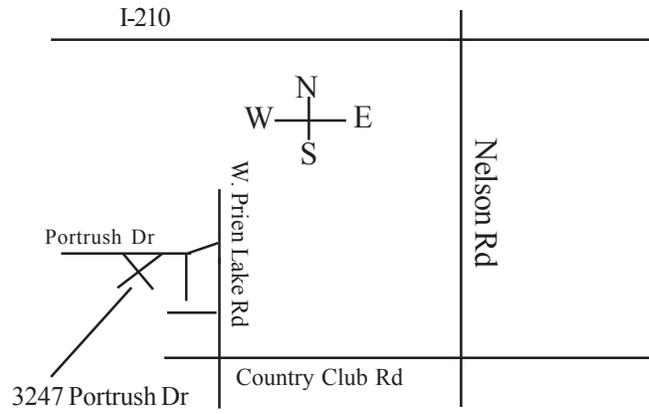
Use common sense. Listen to the voice of self-preservation. Every time, just before I hurt myself, there was a little voice in my head saying "you shouldn't be doing this, it's unsafe." Ignoring it even for a second may result in a trip to the first aid kit. Speaking of first aid, be sure to keep a well-equipped first aid kit handy. Edited from Woodworking Fundamentals.

January Meeting Location

For the first time, we have the great opportunity to meet at the shop of long-time member Travis McManemin. His shop is located at 3247 Portrush Dr., Lake Charles, LA 70605.

To get there, go south on Nelson Rd. to Country Club Rd. and turn right. Go west to West Prien Lake Rd. and turn right (north). Portrush Dr will be the second left, so turn left. The first street on your left is Troon. Travis' home and shop will be on your left at the third home on your left at 3247 Portrush Dr.

Should you need further directions, please give Travis a call at 337-540-3265.



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