

"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."

~ Lyndon B. Johnson, address to the nation, November 28, 196

Woods for Carving Starting With The Two Favorites

Basswood

Carves very well with hand tools and the fine even grain holds details. It is very utilitarian and is used for decorative and functional purposes. It can be finished in either stains, paint or many oils. Basswood is Cream colored and is usually painted.

Butternut

Butternut also carves very well with hand tools, but its grain is beautifully figured. It can splinter and chip so you need to pay attention to the grain. It is the favorite wood of many and every little scrap is kept. The color is a beautiful Golden Brown and is usually finished with a varnish or oil. The grain is so beautiful that it is a shame to paint.

These are just two woods that are used by most carvers and will add more when space permits

By Chris Pye

This really happened:

I was moving from bench to bench in an ongoing adult woodcarving class. I got to a busy student carving away at an interestingly shaped block of wood: a project I hadn't seen before. I admired his work. "Nice squirrel!"

"It's a horse."

Now, in terms of social faux pas, that was good. By no means my best, and not quite time for pressing that 'swallow-me-up-trap-door-opening' button - but getting close.

There was a bit of jovial laughter from me; a sort of withering smile from him; and then a longish silence.

But then my finger came away from the button (it's in the middle of my forehead and used too often - but I shouldn't be telling you this in case you're in a playful mood when I meet you) as I realised the student had a fundamental problem which I couldn't let pass.

I asked to see his reference material.

I didn't actually say: 'Can I see your reference material?' Rather: 'Any pictures and drawings of horses?' I could have said 'photographs and pictures, anatomy books, sketches, working drawings, model', meaning all that stuff which tells you what a horse looks like in the pose you want.

He had none. Nothing. Not a picture in a book; sketch on a napkin; horse parked in the yard. How can I put this - Zilch.

"So," I asked. "How familiar are you with horses?"
(I was tempted: "And squirrels?")

"Oh, well, not any really. I've seen horses on TV of course; I know what they look like. I rode a donkey on Penarth beach once."

The story was that he felt like carving a horse. So, fired with enthusiasm, he just started: took a block of wood and got going.

Familiar?

But, you are asking, what's the problem with that?

Well, nothing. *If you can do it.*

But most of us - including me - can't, *and we run the risk of our carvings not reaching the standards we have set in our minds, or what others might reasonably expect when they view the finished piece.*

We all want to succeed in our woodcarving and we don't want ignorant peripatetic teachers failing to see our struggling genius.

Let me come at my point in a roundabout way:

When I was a young lad I was chased by a horse and, as far as I was concerned, this horse was certainly going to eat me.

I had no doubt that it was a 'horse'; I recognised it straight away: the 4 legs, the thundering hooves and the piranha-like teeth.

It was my first blighted encounter with a horse but it was definitely a horse and not, despite the teeth, a piranha.

And, though I've never seen an example in the flesh, so to speak, should I one day find a piranha in my bath I'll certainly cry, without hesitation: 'There's a piranha in my bath!' - and not mistake it for a horse.

No, I'm not losing the plot. Just stay with me:

I heard of an experiment where college students were shown a 1000 or so pictures of objects and then asked to write down what objects they remembered.

A big problem: *what they remembered could be counted in dozens only.*

The students were re-shown the 1000 pictures but with 20 or so new ones inserted into the series. They were asked to indicate objects they hadn't seen before.

They had no problems picking out them all.

This experiment was about 'recognition' and 'memory': our brains easily recognise vast amounts of things but struggle with relatively poor ability to recall them.

Recognising things is a natural and highly developed skill in all of us - you can see how valuable a survival skill it is when making a decision to run away quickly, or not take a bath.

✓ **It is vital to understand the difference between 'recognizing' something and 'remembering' it.**

We can recognise, say, a horse from the merest glimpse of a part or a silhouette but, unless we are exceptionally gifted or experienced, can't draw a fetlock to save our lives.

Like my student, many carvers start into their block of wood mistaking recognition for memory. They expect to wing it.

If there is a difference between them and myself, I've learned not to make this mistake.

I've learned to reign in my desire and not see my carving as starting when the chisel hits the wood.

I see the process that results in a woodcarving as starting much earlier: with *the idea*, which needs firming up into something different and interesting.

It then goes to *the research*, which fills the outline idea and fleshes out simple recognition.

***Only then* does it move into hard wood.**

MWCA CHAPTER* DATES, TIMES and LOCATIONS *Check for possible changes in schedule

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445-2078 Lloyd Clark
George Gunning's workshop
Legion Park Road, Windsor, ME

CARVER STREET CARVERS

Every Tuesday, 1-3 PM
Barbara McCutcheon 453-6048
Seton Village Senior Center, 1 Carver Street,
Waterville, ME

CENTRAL MAINE CARVERS

6-8 PM, 3rd Wednesday, monthly
873-3370, Dave Brown
32 Burleigh St., Waterville, ME

COASTAL CARVERS

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563-2034, Jim Wade
D&L Printers, Route 1, Newcastle, ME

SOUTH COAST CARVERS

4th Tuesday, 7-8:30 PM
603-664-2813, George Calef
Woodcraft Store, 25 Fox Run Rd,
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2nd Saturday, 1 PM
388-2472, Bob Perry
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Notice of publication

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Membership Fees: Individual Member: \$15,

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HIGHLIGHTS !

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