

# *“Tooling in the Yule”*

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December 10, 2016

Brayer and Brush

Oklahoma City

## History:

**16<sup>th</sup> Century bookbinding**—heated tools and gold leaf

**1750 Spanish Saddle** – Briscoe Western Museum, San Antonio

**1752 Embossed Wallet** – Valley Forge

**1830 stamped boots**, Arabia Steamboat Museum, Kansas City

**Civil War Stamped Wallet**, Sweetwater Creek State Park, Atlanta Georgia

1930s Singing Cowboys—Gene Autry, Roy Rodgers

19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Saddle styles – National Cowboy Hall of Fame

**Al Stohlman**; In U.S. Army in **New Guinea** in WWII, observed leather tooling; started with pen knives and tools made from nails; went on to design tools, write numerous books with wife, **Ann Don King**; Developed Sheridan Style of leatherwork; dense floral style—most popular today

Stohlman Museum at flagship Tandy Store in Ft. Worth

Don King’s Museum in Sheridan, WY—includes much Al and Ann Stohlman material

## Common Designs:

- Floral: Tandy (Texas), Sheridan, California, Northwest
- Geometric: basketweave, serpentine, waffle, crazy legs, barbed wire
- Pictorial: cattle, game animals, wildlife, cowboys

## References:

- **“Craftool Tech Tips”** by Al Stohlman (*highly recommended*)
- “Pictorial Carving Finesse” and “Figure Carving Finesse” by Al Stohlman
- Leather Crafters and Saddle Makers Journal
- Leatherworker.net
- Leather Guilds: meet at OKC and Tulsa Tandy stores
- Internet Federation of Leather Guilds (IFoLG)
- Annual leathercraft shows: Sheridan Wyoming and Prescott Arizona (spring)

#### Steps:

1. Cut and edge bevel
2. Tape/glue backing
3. Wet/Let Dry
4. Cut
5. Bevel -> Background/Mat -> Tool
6. Color
7. Finish
8. Edge Finish

#### Surface:

- Some energy of the tool is dissipated as heat, which “burnishes” the leather
- Need correct degree of moisture (drying out—surface should look dry after wetting), and hard surface – make friends your local kitchen counter top people!

#### Leather:

- Thickness given in ounces (1 oz = 1/64<sup>th</sup> inch), 4 oz. = thickness of a quarter = 4 oz.
  - my preference 6/7 oz, generally; 9/10 for large bowls
- Leather expands due to tooling, must constrain (plastic tape; masking tape; rubber cement to cardboard or granite)
- Leather for tooling **must be vegetable tanned** (tree bark)
- Europe does not brand nor use barbed wire—some of the best leather
- Hermann Oak considered best for tooling, has orangish color though
- Tandy.....

Hides sold as sides, shoulders, bend, belly, butt

Pieces (especially Springfield Leather – custom pieces)

Kits \$\$\$

See Hermann Oak web site for video on process of tanning, only tannery in U.S. still vege tanning:

<http://www.hermann oakleather.com/about/tannery-tour-video>

#### Tools:

Two general types:

1. Tools hit once: seeders, basketweave, acorns, flower centers, leaves, etc--hold near bottom so they don't kick out
2. Tools hit repeatedly: bevelers, backgrounders, matters—must walk these tools to make even impressions

Sources:

- Tandy Leather Co.—craftool: beginner tools; \$8 to \$10
- Vintage Tandy: Craftool USA, Craftool Co; hidecrafters: \$12 to \$15 on eBay
- Other vintage toolmakers—see [www.brucejohnsonleather.com](http://www.brucejohnsonleather.com)

- High-end makers: Barry King, Robert Beard, Clay Miller, Tandy Craftool Pro: \$25 to \$85

Modern high-end tools are designed for Sheridan and geometrics.

Tandy, Springfield Leather, and vintage Tandy are the source for Stohlman's figure tools.

Force used varies with tools:

smaller tools much less force needed or they punch into the leather

larger tools need enough force to give good impression

2D and 3D stamps hard to get complete impressions (rock them or use press)

Coloring:

*"The best way to ruin a leather project is to color it" JWW*

*"If all else fails dye it black"*

- None at all—rely on burnishing to show images
- Dyes: alcohol and "oil" based dyes; very difficult to get uniform coverage—do not brush; use sponge or cloth
- Acrylic Paints: generally need to dilute to a wash, so as not to cover tooling marks; problem with uniformity of spreading
- Tandy's Water Stains – very rich colors, made by Italian company—probably used on high-end European leather goods
- Tandy's Antiques and Highlight Stains – dye + black waxes; black waxes accumulate in the crevasses; not water resistant

Finishes:

- Tandy Resolene: Yellowish cast
- Tandy Super Sheen: Don't put pieces in contact
- Sheridan RTC: My current choice for block resist and some finishing
- Clear Lac (Neat Lac, Sher Lac, etc): Said to be banned by EPA, loaded with VOCs, can buy from Springfield Leather; Panhandle Leather; Hazardous vapors—best used outdoors, need special "reducer" to clean brushes

Notes: colors and resists must be dry before finishing; excess dye on surface can smear when finish applied; Clear lac can dissolve and smear acrylic paint; Other finishes can dissolve colorings to varying degrees: apply finish to common-colored areas

Edging:

Leather edges fray with time, even pieces not handled much must have edge treatment,

Edge beveling—coloring—finishing—rubbing;

- Gum Tragacanth (gum trag)
- Bee's wax
- Atom wax + Resolene mixture

## Suggested Supplies

### Basics

Swivel knife: Tandy #8002-00; upgrade with replacement blade #8018-00

Jeweler's Rouge

Edge Beveler, Size #3

Bone Folder #8116-00

Granite Block: Tandy, Springfield, or scrap from local Granite Countertop Co.

Finish: **recommended**: Sheridan RTC from Springfield Leather – also use as a dye resist.

Edging: Atom wax + resolene

### Leather

Leather: Size 6/7 or 8/9 for most projects; must be designated as “tooling leather”

Springfield Leather: Pre-cut Hermann Oak Tooling Leather Pieces sold by the square foot—MUST specify dimensions of pieces desired (not just square footage).

Tandy Tooling Leather Piece 8 ½” x 11” 4/5 oz leather #4033-08

### Coloring Products

Tandy Gel Antiques/High light stains; Earth tones, with black wax accumulation in crevices.

Products designed for leather: Tandy Waterstains

Full range of colors: acrylic paints—heavy body acrylics diluted to wash so as not to cover tooling marks. (note: coloring products are not necessarily compatible with finishes; must let coloring dry thoroughly and test with finish).

### Stamps

Tool numbering: Generally Tandy and Springfield Leather use same numbering system, where only letter and number given either Tandy or Springfield Leather

Look for sets: Springfield Leather “Sheridan Rose Stamping Tool Set”, Tandy’s “Basic Seven Tool Set”

Beveler (**Steep beveler recommended**): Craftool Pro B2044 or Barry King Smooth Beveler #2

Recommended modern Tandy:

- Backgrounder A104, A888
- **Coarse (checkered) beveler B803, B802**
- Pear shader P206
- Veiners (wigglers) V462, V403, V402, V821, V404
- Basketweave X511
- Seeders (all)
- Acorns W552, W553, W554

- **Figure tools (checkered matter) f901**
- Star 054

Optional as desired:

Barry King Double Rope Basketweave #3 (used in workshop)

Seeders

Cams

Veiners/Wigglers

Other figure tools from Tandy or Springfield Leather as desired—see Stollhman books for tool uses.