



Cowboy Hat Ornament

Power-carve a perfect hat ornament in a few hours

By Keoma McCaffrey

Whether you're a fan of old westerns, plan to be a cowboy when you grow up, or just spend a lot of time outdoors, you'll enjoy this cowboy hat ornament. You can dress it up with greens or leave it unadorned. Either way, it looks great hanging on your tree. If you prefer, alter the shape slightly to change the cowboy hat to a top hat for your more formal family and friends.

Getting Started

While you can just trace the pattern onto the wood, here's a way to use any size piece of scrap without

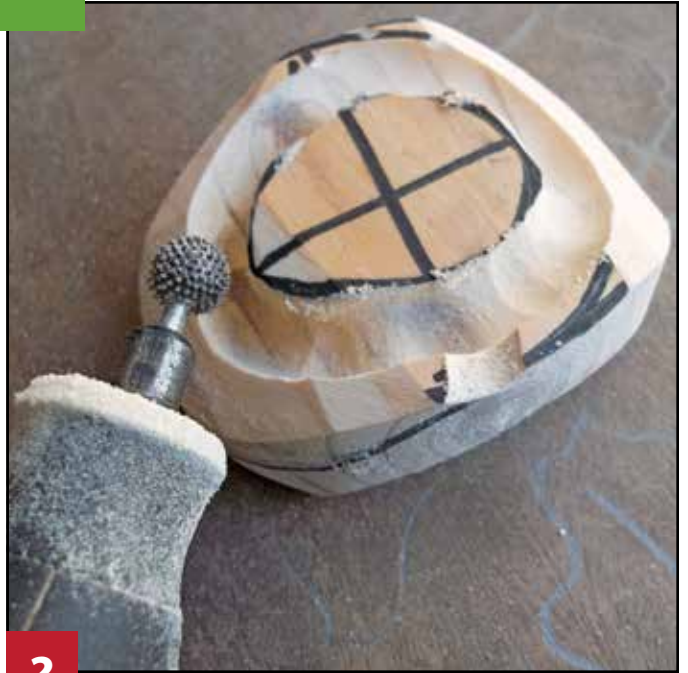
resizing the pattern. Draw a circle onto the wood and divide it into four sections (front, back, left, and right). Elongate the circle to the front and back to create the oval-shaped hat perimeter. Cut around the outer oval, and then draw another rough oval in the center to represent the crown of the hat. Don't worry about creating perfect circles or ovals; this is supposed to be a well-worn hat. Drill a $\frac{3}{4}$ "- to 1"- (19mm to 25mm) diameter hole from the bottom up into the center of the crown while the blank is still flat and easy to drill.

COWBOY HAT: CARVING THE ORNAMENT



1

Rough out the brim. Use a flame-shaped carbide-point bit in a rotary tool. Taper the tops of the front and back. Flip the hat over and taper the sides up. Imagine a cowboy hat with the brim pulled low in the front and back, but the sides folded up.



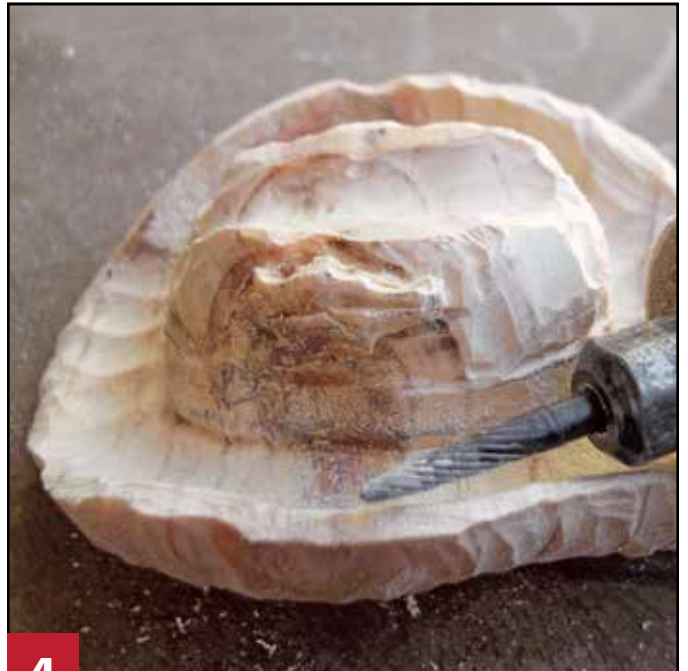
2

Remove the wood around the crown. Use a bit of your choice. Remember, the crown of a cowboy hat tapers slightly from the bottom to the top. Then, carve the groove in the top that comes from years of pinching the top of the hat. The crown is more pinched in the front than in the bank.



3

Make the hole in the bottom wider. I use a ball-shaped carbide-point bit. Now that the hat is starting to look like a hat, carefully hollow the bottom, but do not carve through the hat. When you are holding the hat, you can tell you're getting close to carving through when you feel the heat generated by the bit as you carving. This is a good time to check and see how thin the wood is.



4

Carve the hat band. Use a small cylinder-shaped fluted bit to carve two parallel lines around the bottom of the crown. Use the tip of a small tapered fluted bit to add a feather or leaf embellishment. After you draw around the embellishment, lay the bit flat and smooth the area around it. Then, sand and smooth the ornament. I use a medium/fine sanding sponge, which bends and shapes to the contour of the ornament without sanding off too much or leaving unwanted grooves.



5

Drill a small hole through the crown. Use the small tapered fluted bit. This is for the hanging string. Tie a small knot in a piece of wire, jute, twine, or ribbon. If the knot slips through the hole, make a fatter knot, lock it in place with a dab of glue, or tie something, such as a small bell, to the knot. I like the bells because you can hear them but you can't see them.

materials & tools

MATERIALS:

- Pine, 2¾" x 2½" x 1½" (70mm x 64mm x 38mm)
- Sanding sponge: medium/fine grit
- Wire, jute, or twine
- Instant coffee (optional)
- Non-toxic markers (optional)
- Spar varnish (optional)
- Glue (optional)
- Small bell (optional)

TOOLS:

- Rotary tool
- Bits: flame-shaped carbide-point, ball-shaped carbide-point bit, small cylinder-shaped fluted, small-tapered fluted pointed, assorted bits of choice

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.



Keoma McCaffrey lives in Northern California with her husband, Jeff, and three boys. She carves most of her work from salvaged local hardwoods. She is also a moderator on the Woodcarving Illustrated message board, www.woodcarvingillustrated.com/forum. Keoma sells her work at www.etsy.com/shop/willowthewisp.

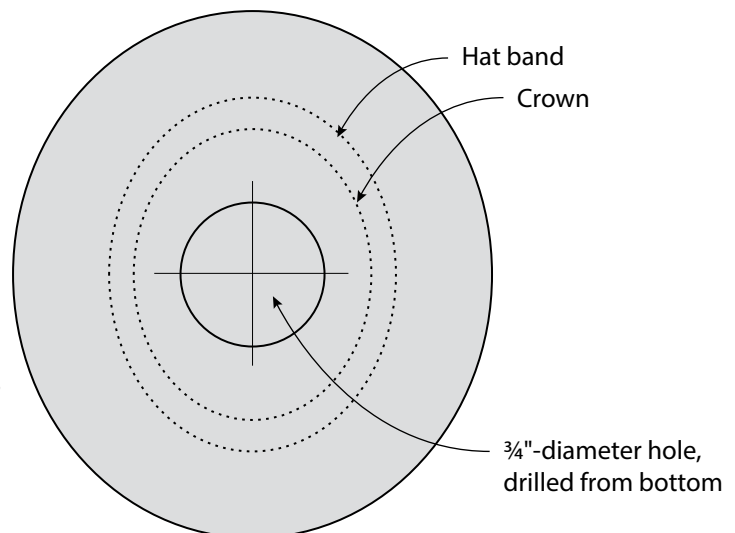
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Finishing Options

I always debate whether to add a finish or leave this ornament unfinished. It really does look neat and rustic if you leave it the natural color of the wood. But I do add color to some ornaments.

- **Stain the ornament.** Sometimes I stain just the hatband, and other times I stain the whole ornament. For stain, I always use instant coffee. Mix 2 tablespoons coffee with 1 tablespoon hot water, and allow it to sit for a few minutes to make sure the coffee fully dissolves. Coffee gives a rich brown color that is non-toxic and smells good.
- **Use a marker on dry wood.** I use a non-toxic kid's marker. If you use markers, touch the tip to the center of the area you want colored, and watch to see how the marker bleeds into the wood. Work slowly so you can control where the colors go. Caution: Some markers will fade if exposed to sunlight. Either retouch the marker colors as needed, or seal the ornament with a UV-resistant finish, such as spar varnish.
- **Use a marker on wet wood.** This allows you to blend markers like paint. Use a paintbrush and water to dampen the area you want to color. Touch the tip of the marker to the wet spot and watch the color flow onto the wood. Dab the area with a paper towel, and then add another color. The colors blend right together.

Cowboy hat ornament pattern



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