

ANTHROPOLOGY 203 TERM PAPER.



FROM WOOD TO CRAFT

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FROM WOOD TO CRAFTIntroduction

The art of ladle carving is common to many Doukhobor men. My father also carves; our family always used wooden ladles of all shapes, sizes and purposes. For many winters I have observed my father patiently carving ladles. Although the art was his I felt a part of every finished ladle, for my contribution was felling the selected trees and cutting the logs to lengths.

As a boy, I used to carve and whittle as a past-time, and the neighboring boys and I used to "compete" in carving whistles, toys and other objects. The hobby was later replaced with other experiences, but the desire to carve remained.

Recently, I wanted to try carve wooden ladles. I chose to learn from my father because I feel his carving methods are very close to the traditional way. I wanted to share the feeling of creating a craft^{ed article} out of a piece of crude wood. This was my project for Doukhobor Studies, which I felt would be a beneficial and somewhat historical and traditional experience.

Methodology

The entire project was done at my father's home. I took notes and photographs as I worked, but unfortunately I had some problems with the complex camera, which I was using for the first time. The project was a relatively slow process, extending over a number of days,^{as this was} ~~being~~ my first attempt at such work, I was

very careful and cautious towards preventing the possibility of haste making waste.

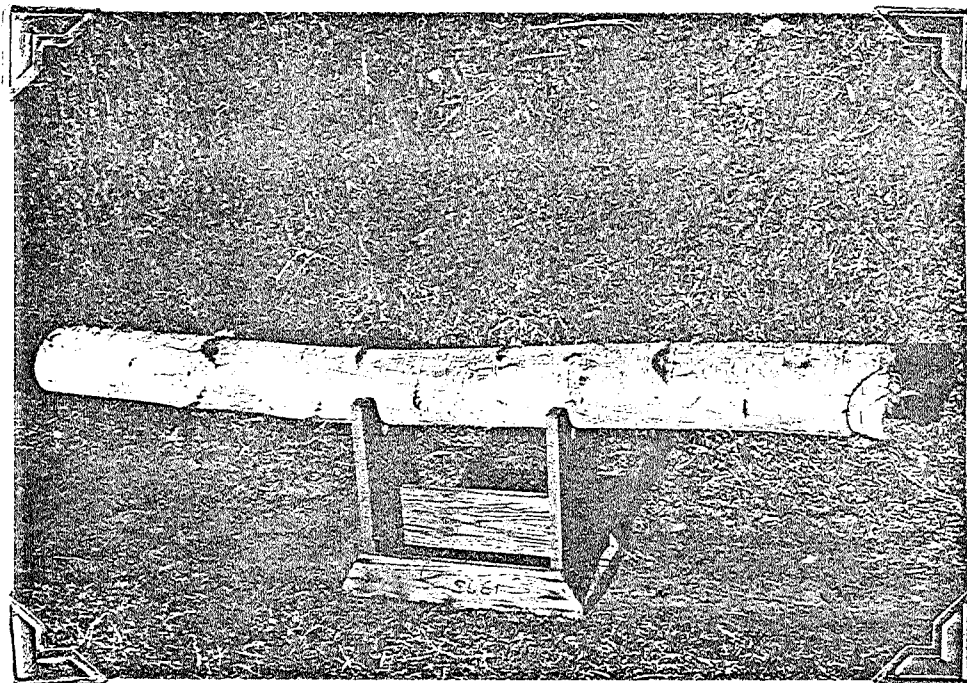
Tools

A complete description of my father's tools is made in my Anthropology 101 term paper. In addition to common hand tools such as axe, saws, rasps, etc., two historical hand tools were used. These can be roughly described as a hand gouger and a curved scraper. In referring to these tools, I chose to use their Russian terms: troobachka (gouger) and reezets (scraper). These fifty and sixty year old tools were given to my father by both my grandfathers who, with their blacksmith skills, made these carving tools out of good quality steel.

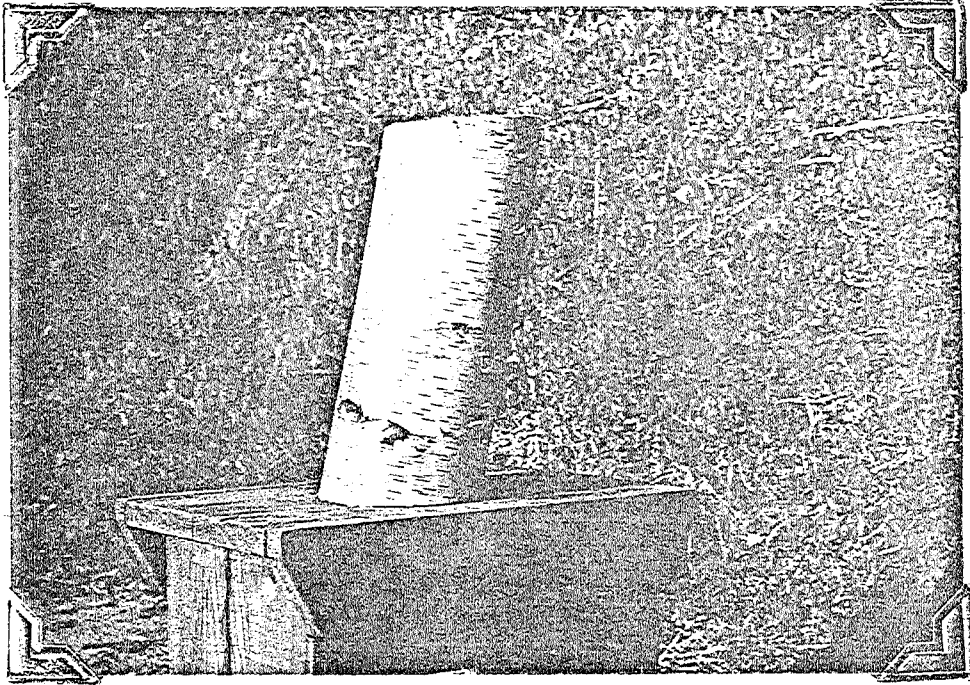
From Wood to Craft

In the autumn we gather the wood which is used for winter carving. Birch is usually selected as it is a relatively easy wood to work with. The trees are harvested in the fall because at this time of year they contain the smallest amount of sap. We cut the trees to four foot lengths which are then stored in a woodshed.

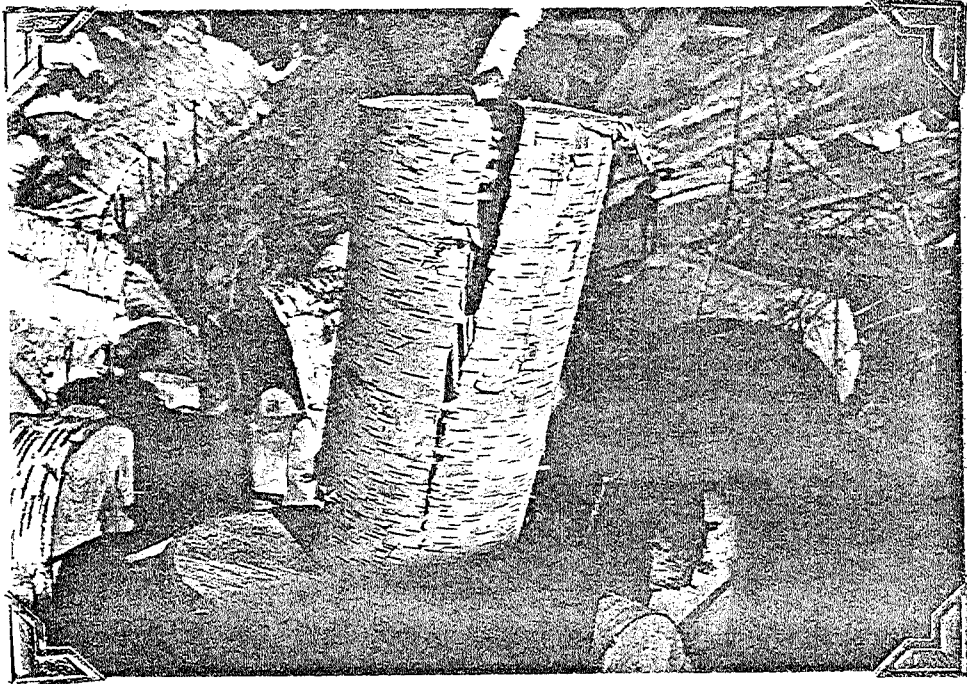
For my project I selected one such length of birch wood.



From this piece a twelve inch block was cut from an area of the log with fewest knots. This block was then split with a wedge; the wedge being placed on a natural center crack the wood already had. From the two halves was selected the piece with the fewest knots and the inside was shaved with an axe to make the surface even. A center line, running the length of the wood was made.

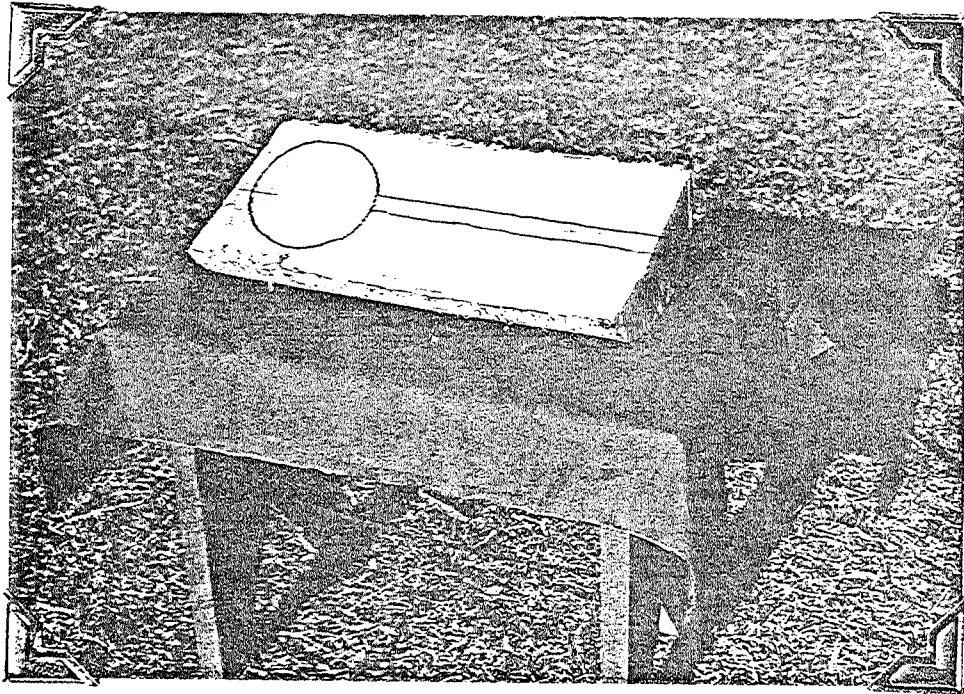


The selected block of wood



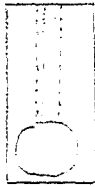
Splitting the block

I used a four inch tin can as a rough cup measure for the ladle. To make sure the cup was centered, we measured two inches on each side of the center line, making two marks on each side of the line. The can was then placed so that its rims touched both marks and then a circle was traced. To rough out the ladle handle I measured $\frac{1}{4}$ " on each side of the line at a place near the cup and lower near the end of the handle and joined the marks. The lines were continued onto the butt to prevent the handle from being cut out crooked.



Block showing the outline of cup and handle of the ladle.

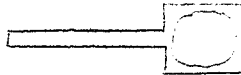
The block was secured in a vise with the face out and the cup outline down. Using a rip saw, I cut down along the handle.



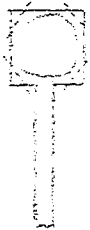
The block was then turned and using a cross-cut saw I cut across the block to join with the length cut.



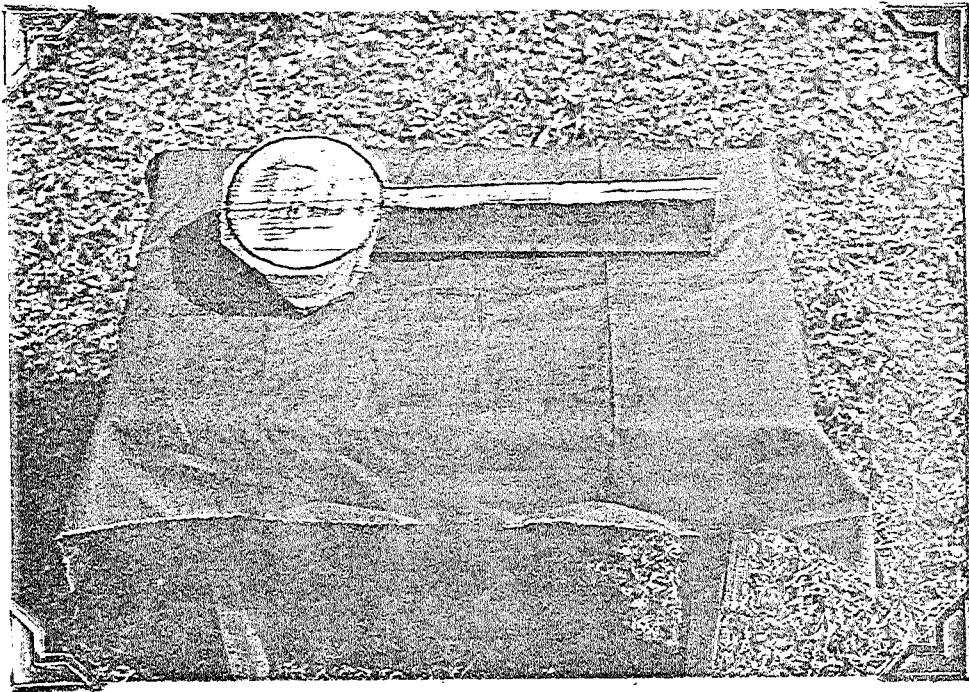
The project now looks like this:



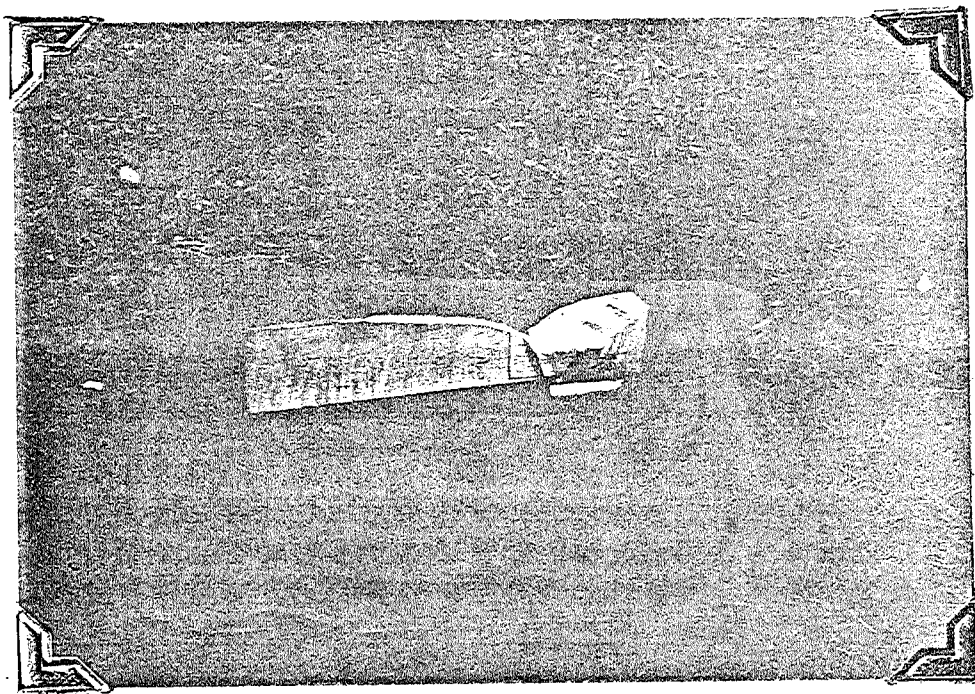
Using a cross-cut saw I then cut the corners of the head of the ladle:



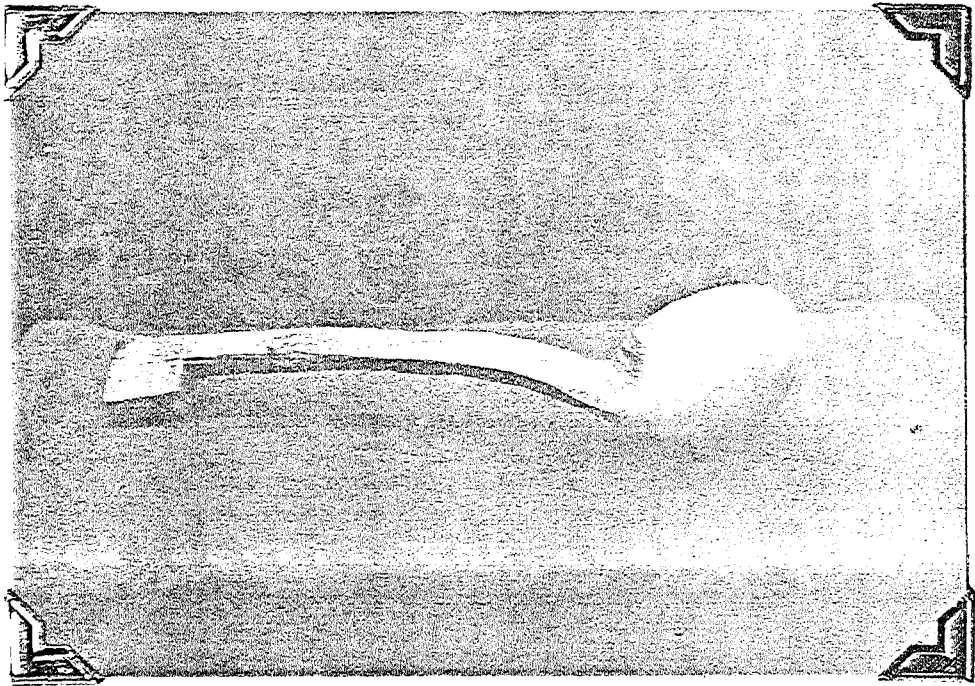
With an axe and a saw the head was roughly rounded so that it looks like the photograph on the following page ~~shows~~.



Next, after making sure the wood was sitting level, the angle of the face of the head of the ladle was cut, so that now the ladle looks as follows:



Next, I found the center of the handle and drew a line through the center of the cup. The final size of the cup of the ladle was chosen which was somewhat smaller than the original outline, and the final ladle cup outline was traced. Then, using an axe I trimmed the head to about $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the line of the cup, and also roughly rounded the back of the head. The outline of the handle was drawn, and with an axe I cut away the excess wood. Using a pocket knife, the back of the ladle was rounded and a rasp was used for smoothing the surface. The ladle now looks as follows:



After the ladle bowl was roughly rounded, work began on gouging the cup of the ladle. I used a troobachka for this job, digging the cup from the center to the outside edge. The troobachka is grasped firmly and worked into the wood by applying pressure and a small twisting motion. The bottom of the cup is roughed to the desired thickness also with the troobachka. After enough gouging was done, the reezets (scraper) was used to smooth the inside of the bowl. The reezets is worked across the gouges until the gouges are scraped away.

After the cup was gouged and scraped, the handle of the ladle was trimmed, rounded, and shortened to the desired length. For this job a pocketknife and a rasp were used. The end of the handle was shaped into a horse's head.

The ladle was now ready for sanding. Three textures of sandpaper were used: coarse, medium and fine. The coarse was used until the marks left by the knife or rasp were removed. Then the medium texture was used until the marks left by the coarse paper were removed. Finally the fine sandpaper was used for the final sanding. The ladle was now completed; I chose not to coat the wood with varnish or other material, but rather kept the wood in its natural form.

Conclusion

The ladle was completed in twelve hours of work. I found the experience of carving the ladle very enjoyable

and satisfying. From this project I have gained a basic understanding of one method of carving ladles. In addition I took notice of suggestions that are of general benefit to all ladle carvers and workers with wood. I chose to carve in the traditional way because I wanted to share an experience of the past. Because of this, the project is much more meaningful to me; as are all ladles which are carved in the traditional manner. I have become familiar with a skill which can be of great benefit and use for me. The feeling of creating a craft from wood is great, and I thank the instructor for allowing me this valuable experience.

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