

ANTHROPOLOGY 101 TERM PAPER

LADLE CARVERS: THEIR TOOLS AND ART

For: Dr. Mark Mealing

By: Cyril Ozeroff

519771

LADLE CARVERS: THEIR TOOLS AND ART

Introduction:

Folk art is a very interesting part of anthropological study for it does to an extent, reflect the lifestyle of the people it is associated with. The type of material used and the product produced illustrate the creativity, skills and perhaps the needs of the people.

I chose ladle carving as an example of folk art. This craft is common to many Doukhobor men in this area. Being interested in learning the craft, I did a small survey to gather information regarding the tools, styles and methods of some local ladle carvers. I concentrated on their tools with which a handicraft is produced from a piece of crude wood.

Methodology:

A total of seven carvers contributed to this paper. I originally planned on surveying more but problems of time resulting from the busy spring season kept the number of respondents low. I nevertheless feel that the respondents represent a good cross-section of style and ideas. I also selected an areal variance and therefore my sample includes men from Castlegar, Pass Creek, Thrums, Ootischenia, and Glade.

My methodology included visits to the residence or workshops of the carvers. After explaining my purpose, they had

a good idea of the information I needed and gladly obliged to help. I also had a list of questions as guides to eliciting information. All carvers showed me the various tools and procedures involved in ladle carving. I took photographs where and when I could. I experienced some problems with the complex camera, as this was my first attempt at using such. I apologize for the quality of some pictures, with complete realization of the need for more photographic practice. I thought of tape-recording information but soon found the process was quite inconvenient and awkward for the carvers and myself. I therefore recorded information in a note book to which I added material which I retained in my memory.

Generally the interviews went very well. I found the project very interesting and helpful and feel that the carvers were quite happy to help me.

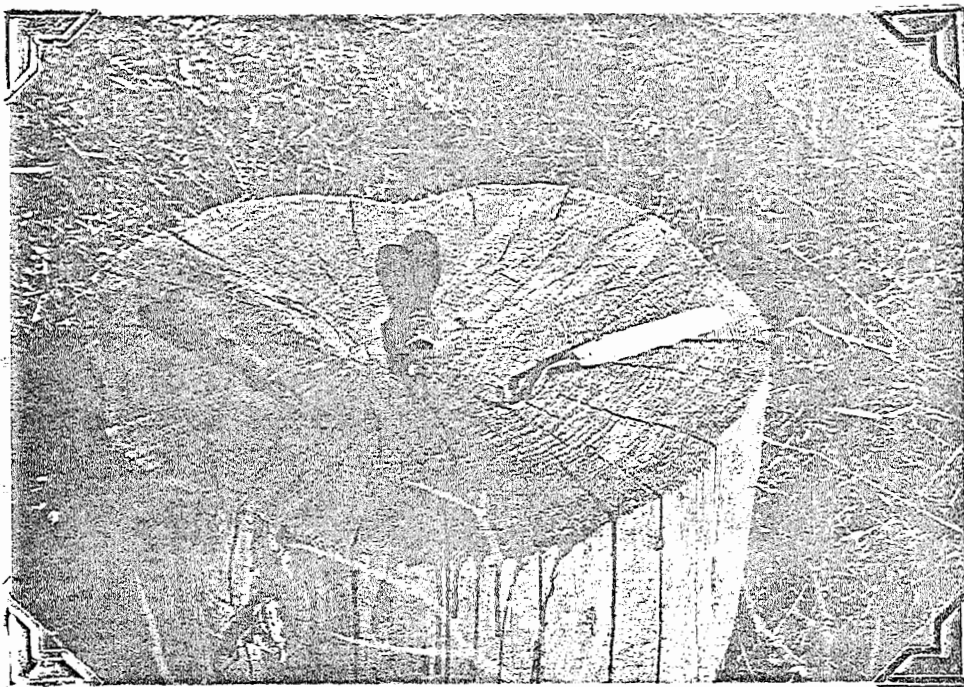
In this paper I discuss each carver separately and include photographs and a brief write-up of his tools, method and style.

Bill Marozoff (Castlegar)

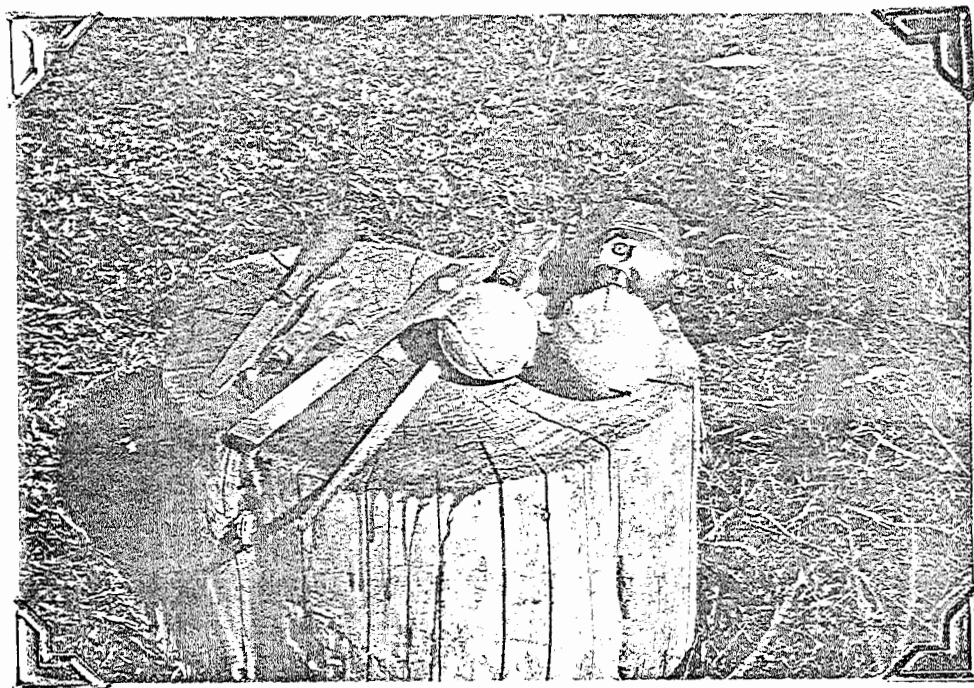
Bill was carving ladles for about two years, becoming interested in the craft after his retirement from the work force. To him, ladle carving is a hobby, intended for the use of the family. Bill has old tools and mechanical tools and uses mostly mechanical tools. The hand tools were given him by some oldtimers and the tools were made by Doukhobor blacksmiths who used very good quality steel. The modern tools include a mechanical gouger, saws, rasps, ball sanders, band saw and others.

His basic procedure is as follows. He selects a block of wood with a 7-8" diameter and splits the block in two. The length of the block is 14-15" and the ladles have a diameter of 3-3½". The mechanical gouger first roughly scoops out the cup of the ladle, then the band saw roughly trims the ladle to shape. The wood is then allowed to dry before the finishing takes place. Bill suggests that when the wood is wet it must be kept away from the sun and stored in a cool place such as the root cellar. Wood is kept this way for about one month and is then brought to a warmer place if the wood did not yet begin to check. Sandpaper wrapped around a rubber ball (ball sander) is attached to an electric drill and is used to sand the cup of the ladle. Mr. Marozoff cautions that if too much heat is generated by the ball sander the wood will check. Before the final finishing the wood must be completely dry. For the finish 027 plastic exterior finish is used. Bill's

ladles are made from apple, cherry, birch, maple and cottonwood.
Mr. Marozoff also makes very attractive burl tables.



Mr. Marozoff's old hand-carving tools



Modern hand-carving tools



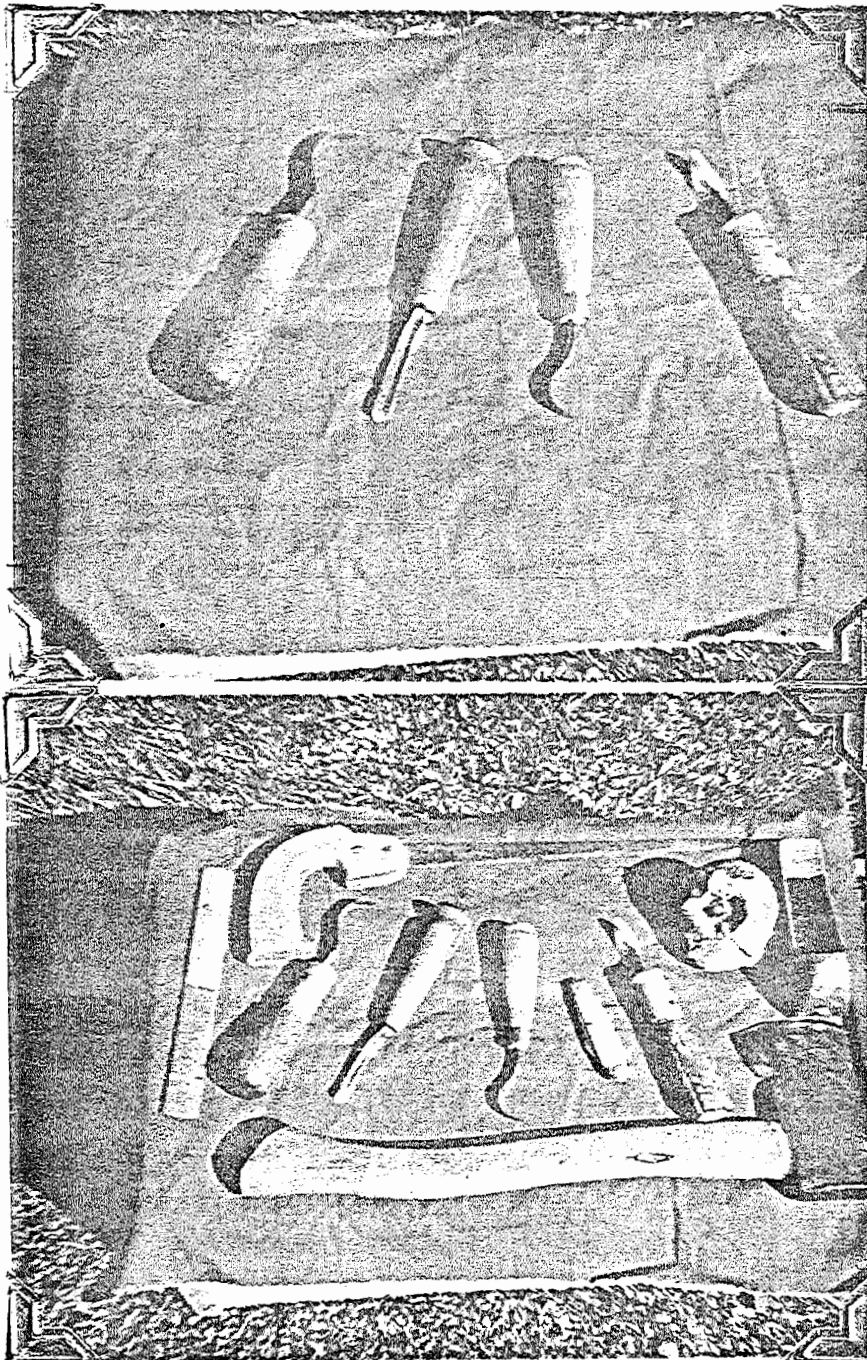
An example of Mr. Marozoff's work; his ladles sit on one of his burl tables.

William Ozeroff (Pass Creek)

My father inherited the ladle carving art from his father who carved until he was too old. The family wanted wooden ladles so William took over the trade. All his carving is done by hand through the use of 50 and 60 year old hand tools given him by his father and father-in-law, who made the tools using their blacksmith skills.

The ladle is cut from a block of wood by an axe and hand saws. The wood is worked while it is still wet and it dries slowly as it is being worked. Mr. Ozeroff has not experienced any problem with cracking and therefore has no special technique to prevent cracking. The finishing sanding is done when the wood is dry. No coating, varnish etc. is used, the natural

form of the wood is preferred. An average ladle is completed in approximately eight hours of work. The ladles are made of birch, cherry, apple, walnut and cottonwood will be attempted. Cherry is liked for its natural grain but birch is preferred to work with. In addition to regular ladles; mixing spoons, colander ladles, foot rollers, darners and food tampers are made. At present Mr. Ozeroff carves for family need and as a hobby.



Old
Carving
Tools

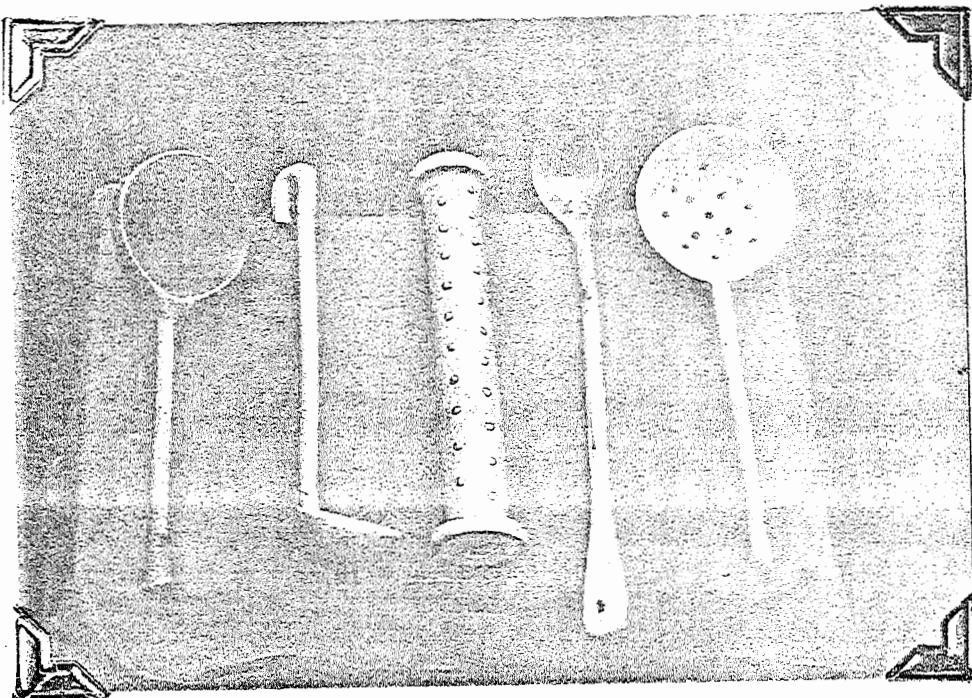
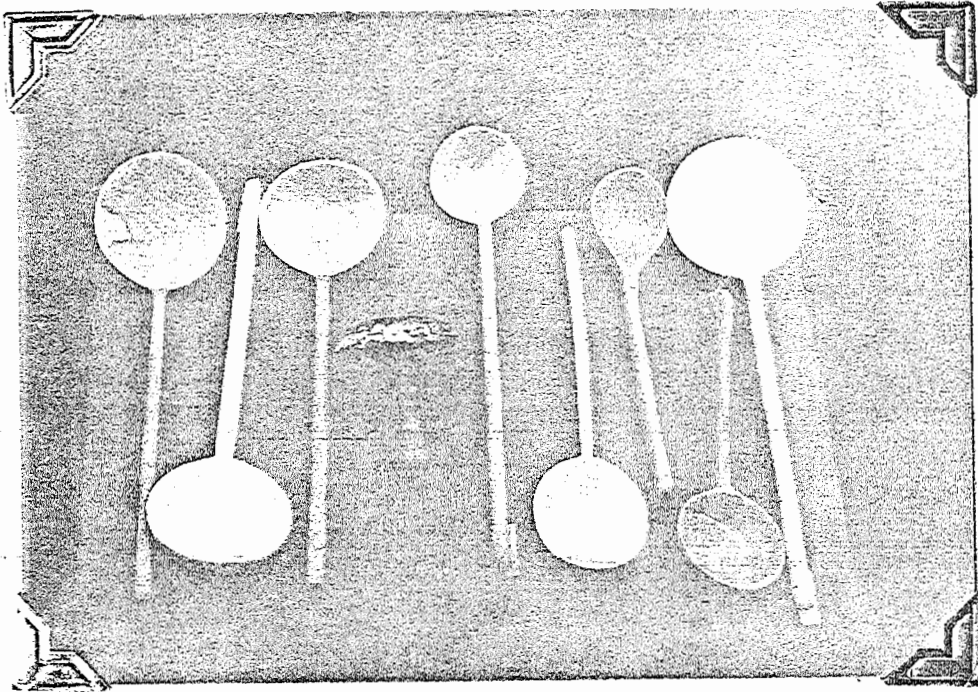
Reezets

Troobachka

Complete
Set of Tools
including

rasps, axe,
keyhole saw,
pocket knife,
ball sander

Examples of Mr. Ozeroff's hand carving



Peter Makortoff (Ootischenia)

Ever since he was a child, Peter Makortoff enjoyed whittling and carving. He grew up on the prairies where wood was rare, therefore any wood he found he used for carving. With a pocket knife he created small images, rattles, and later, ladles.

Mr. Makortoff has old and new tools. His old tools were found by him in the Doukhobor community homes he now occupies. To

replace the tedious hard work of using the troobachka and reezets,

Mr. Makortoff invented a mechanical gouger which is used after

the rough shaping of the ladle from the block by a band saw.

He explains that before, axes were used instead of band saws,

and for jobs such as shaping handles, which are now done by

rasps, pieces of broken glass were used which apparently did

a fine job. The rough design of the ladle is made when the wood is wet and the wood is allowed to dry before final finishing.

The ladle work can be done only on dry wood, but dry wood is much harder to work with. To prevent cracking, the bowl is

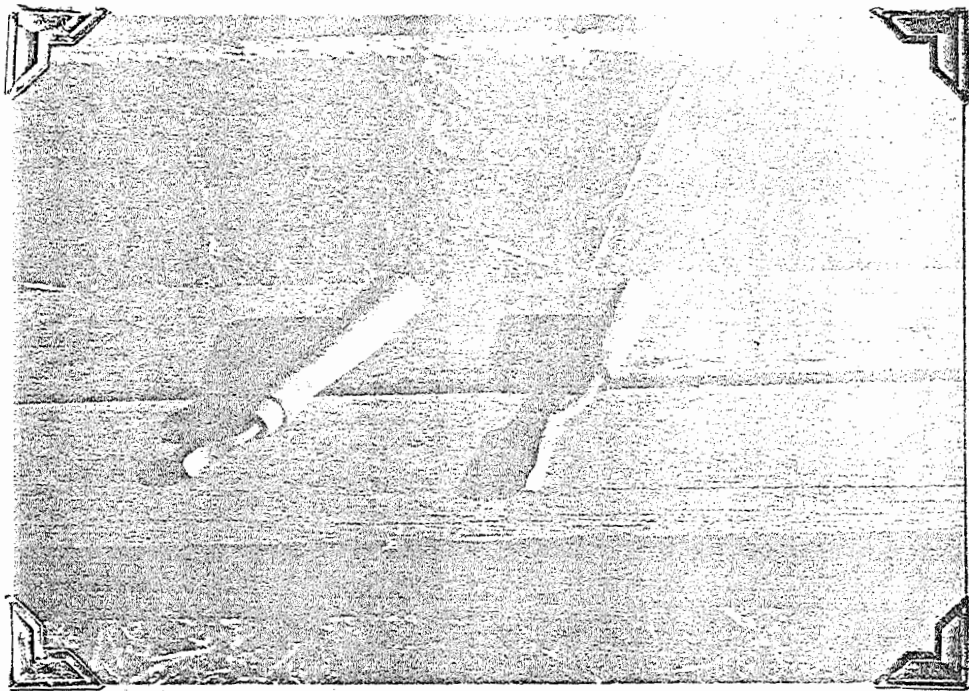
roughly gouged out and then left to dry. Mr. Makortoff explained

that some carvers boil the wood in water or a special solution

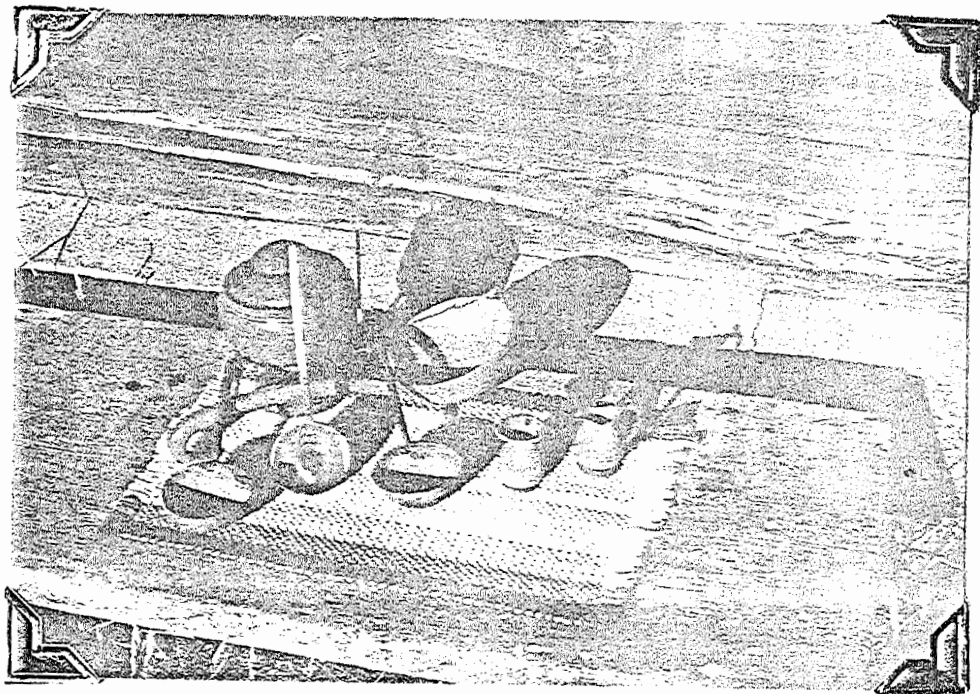
to remove the sap. Mr. Makortoff also makes other projects out

of wood such as spinning wheels -- miniature and full size --

salt chalices and other utensils.



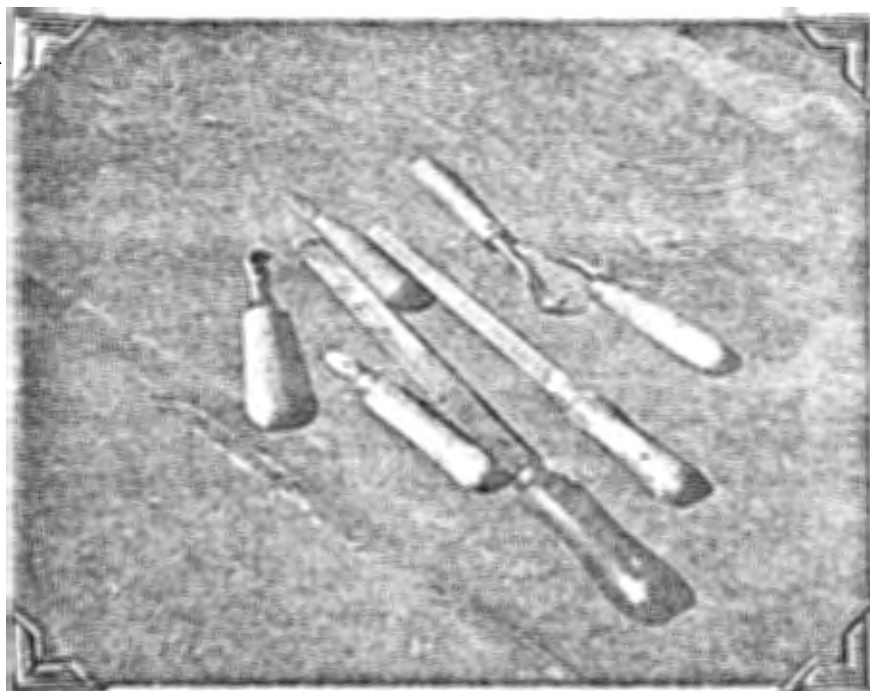
Reezets, Troobachka found in Community Dwellings



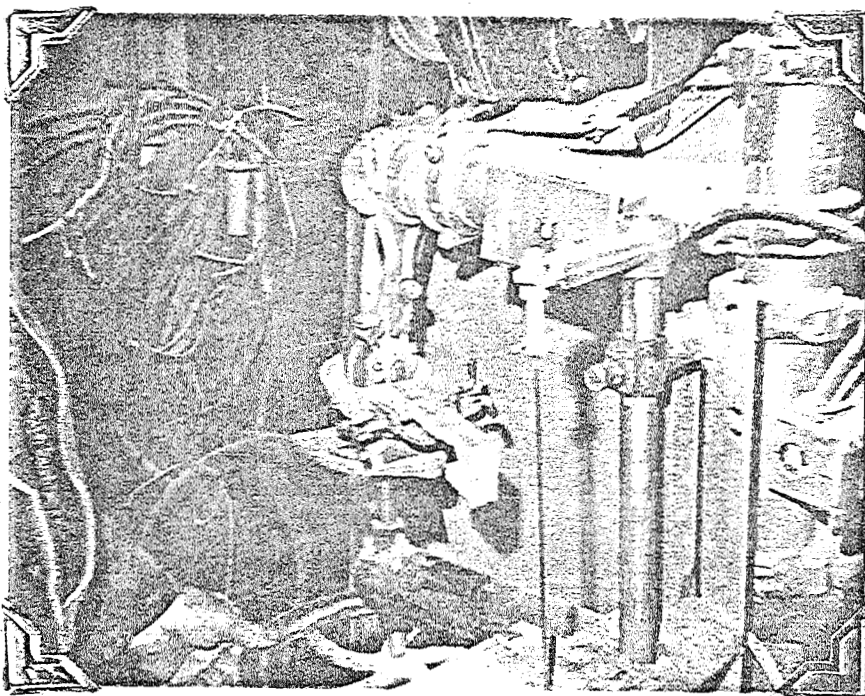
Example of some of Peter Makortoff's work

Peter Soukeroff (Pass Creek)

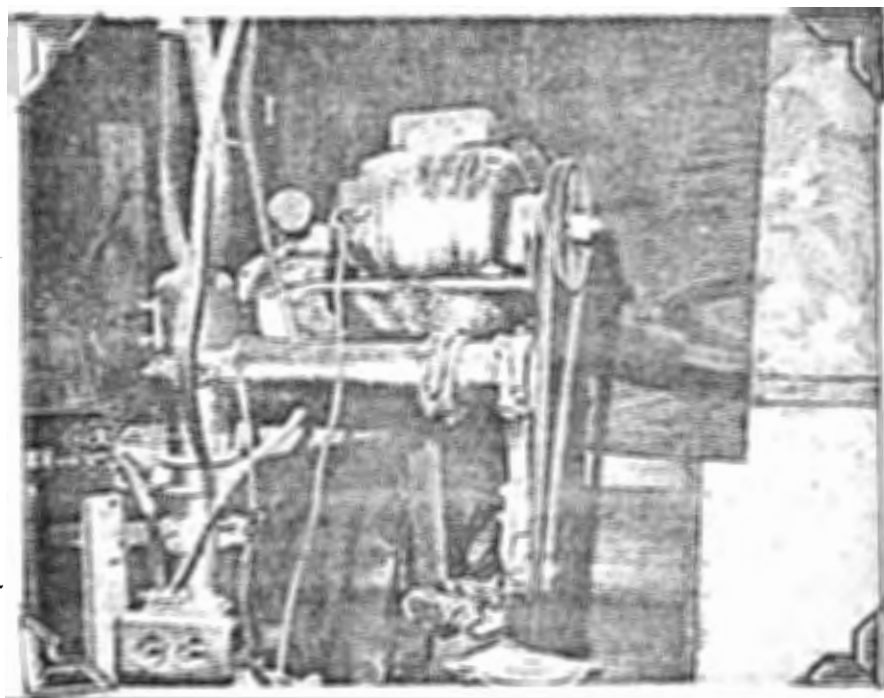
Mr. Soukeroff has been carving for about six years, becoming interested in the craft as a hobby. Although he had made the basic hand tools, reezets and troobachka himself out of the steel of planer knives; he replaced these with mechanical tools "after many blisters". After the ladle outline is traced on the block, the form is cut with a band saw. A mechanical gouger is then used to roughly dig the cup of the ladle, which is then smoothed with a ball sander. Mr. Soukeroff has the talent of fashioning helpful machinery out of scrap metal parts, and his ladle carving apparatus is highly efficient. He uses only two types of wood; yew and wild cherry. To prevent cracking, he boils the semi-finished ladle in water for about half an hour and he cautions that the ladle must be removed while still hot. If the ladle cools with the water, the process is ineffective. Mr. Soukeroff at present does not produce a large amount of ladles, and those which he does are intended for family use.

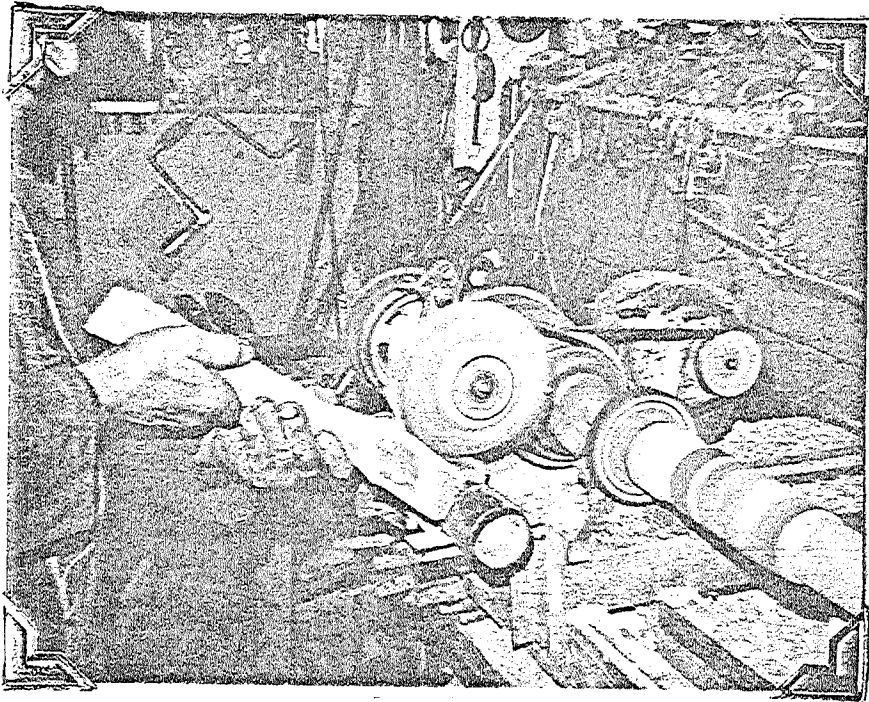


Peter Soukeroff's
self-made
hand tools
with rasps.

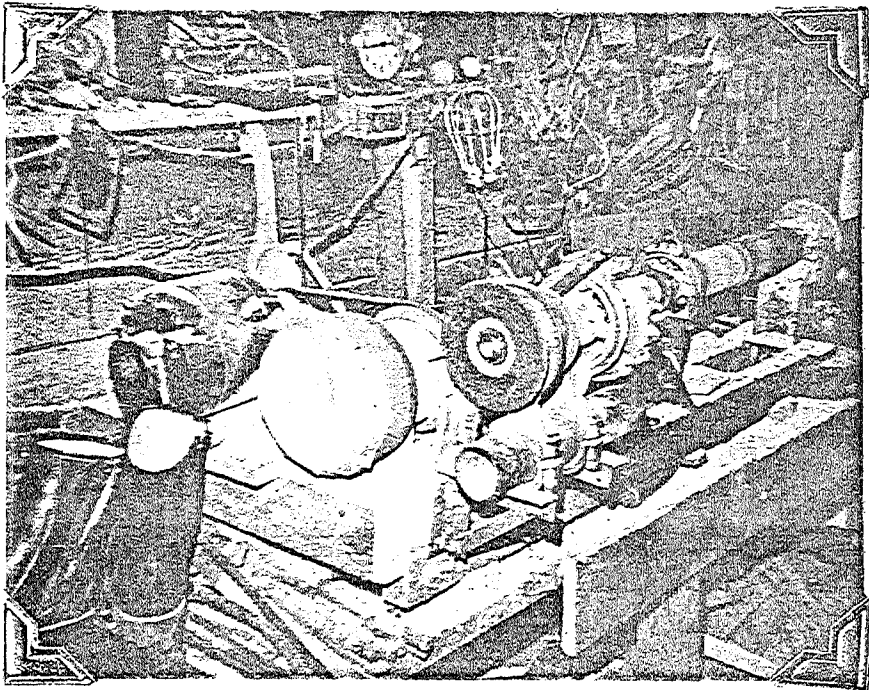


Peter Soukeroff's mechanical gougers. The blade is round with saw-like teeth. The ladle is clamped onto a revolving table which is turned by the carver. This gouger is very similar to those used by Marozoff and Makortoff.

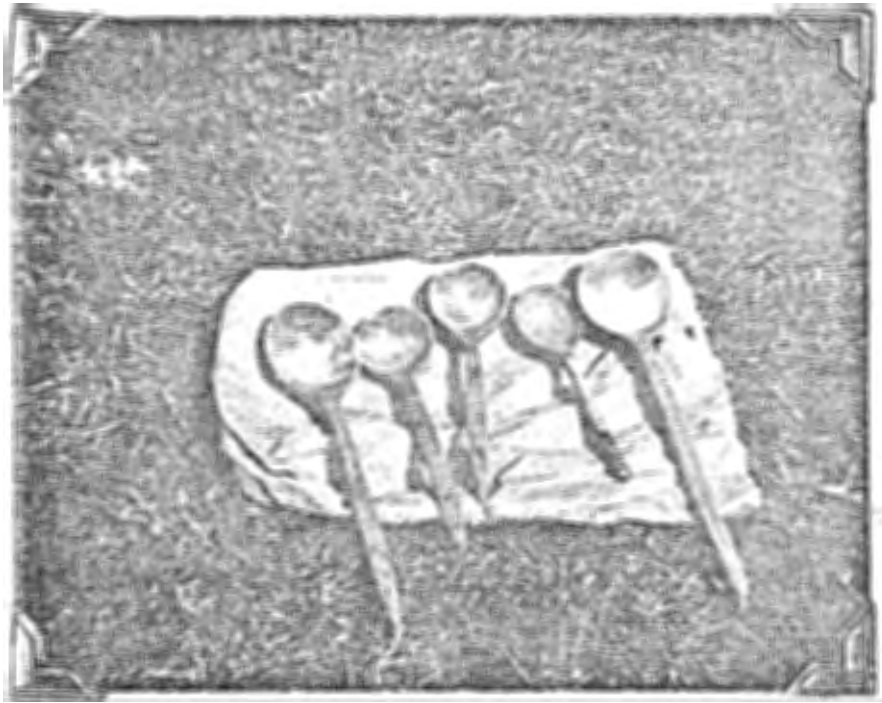




Shaping the back of the ladle cup



Part of equipment used for ladle making,
cup sander in the foreground



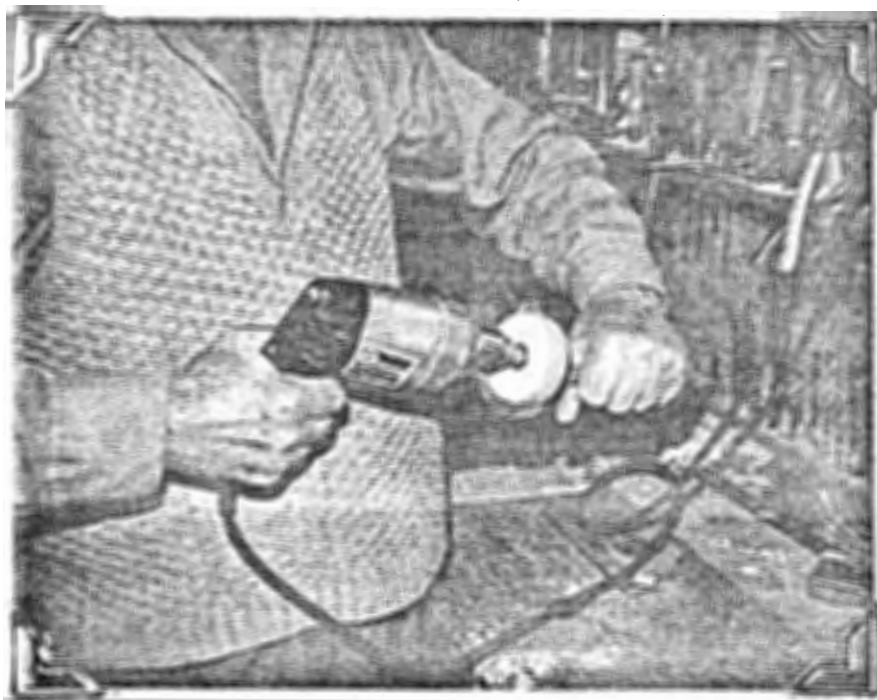
Ladles made by Peter Soukeroff

Nick Laktin (Thrums)

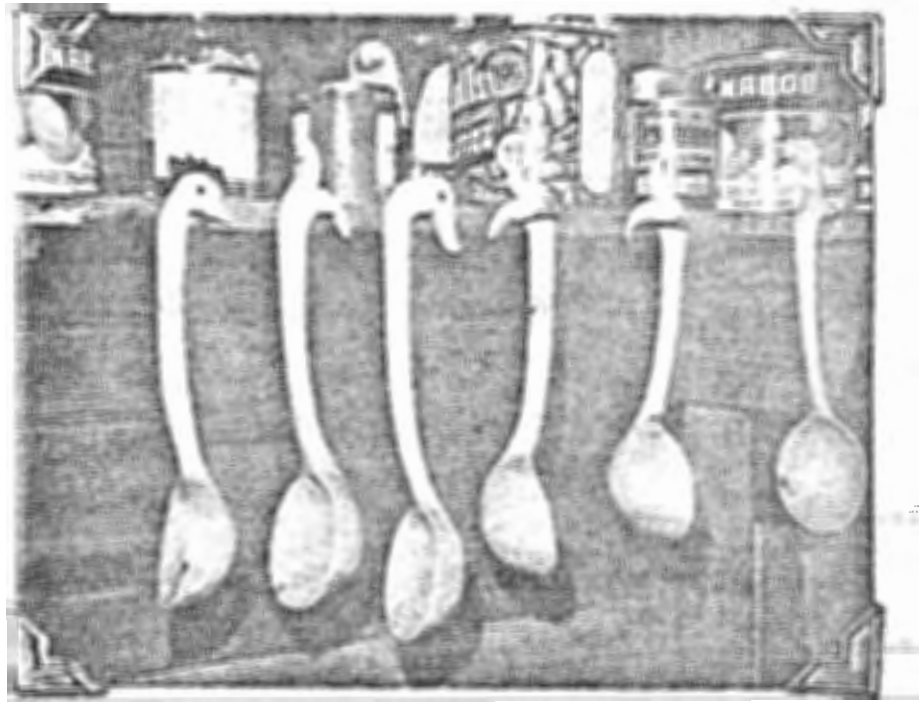
Nick Laktin's ladle carving is done by hand. Axes and saws are used to shape the rough ladle from the block of wood. To dig the ladle bowl, a reezets and troobachka are used. These tools were given to Nick by his father who did much ladle carving in the Doukhobor Community. After the ladles are roughed in they are allowed to slowly dry to prevent cracking. Cracking is also avoided by keeping the ladles face down in shavings or wood chips. The drying time may take about four days and when dry it would take about half a day to complete the ladle. His handle designs include images of heads of animals. Birch is the most preferred carving wood but he also carves out of Juniper and Cherry.



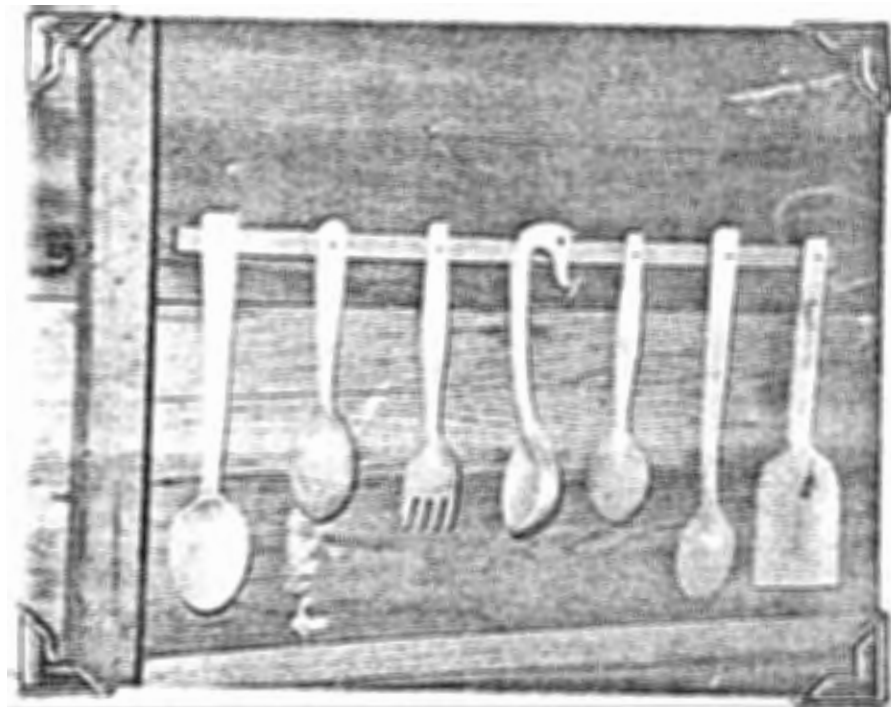
Hand tools used by Nick Laktin. Inside ones were given to him by his father, the ones on the outside were made for him by a friend.



To help smooth the bowl, a round stone attached to an electric drill is sometimes used.



Carvings made by Nick Laktin



Nick Denisoff (Glade)

Nick is the youngest carver interviewed. His interest in ladle carving began when his grandmother asked him to make her a wooden spoon. At that time he used a troobachka and reezets which he made out of planer knives. Nick later switched to using more mechanical instruments. A band saw cuts the rough shape of the ladle. To gouge out the bowl an electric rotary grinder is used, working the grinder from the outside of the cup to the center. To smooth the cup, a sandpaper ball attached to a hand grinder is used. To further shape the ladle and back of the cup, hand planes and rasps are used. All the work is done while the wood is still wet and it dries as it is being worked. When the ladle is not being worked on, it is placed face down in shavings or sawdust and near a cool surface. A further measure taken to prevent cracking is sanding off the band saw marks around the head of the ladle. To check for the beginning of cracking, Nick recommends a "candling" procedure -- holding the nearly finished ladle against a light bulb; the light shining through the thinness of the ladle bowl shows any cracks that are forming. Nick considers cherry wood as the best for ladles, and he also carves out of juniper, chokecherry, and ash. To finish the ladle, varathane plastic finish is used.



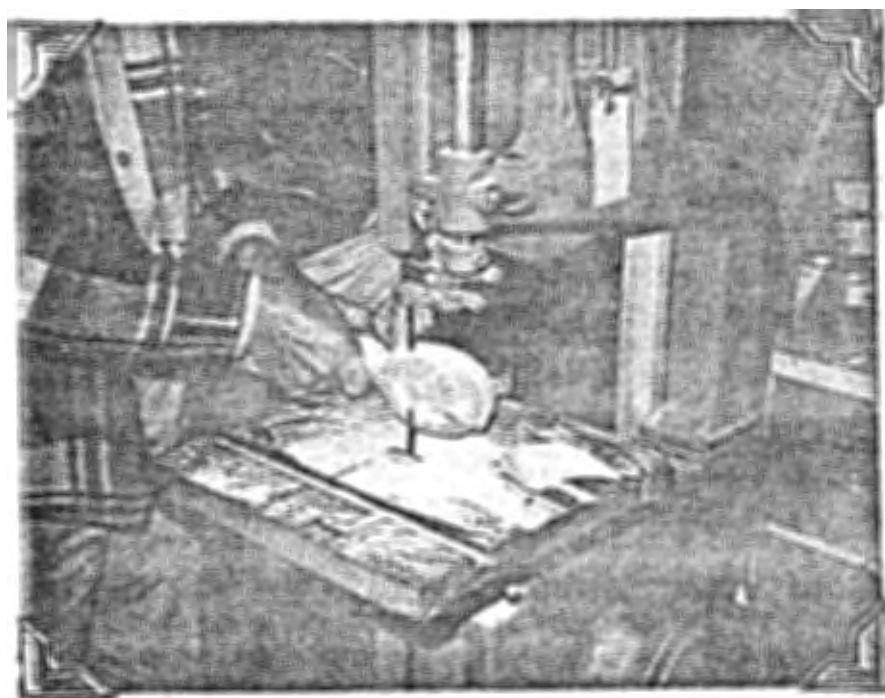
Hand tools used by Nick Denisoff which include:
vise, hand grinder, hollow rasp, hand planers,
troobachka, reezets, jig saw, axe

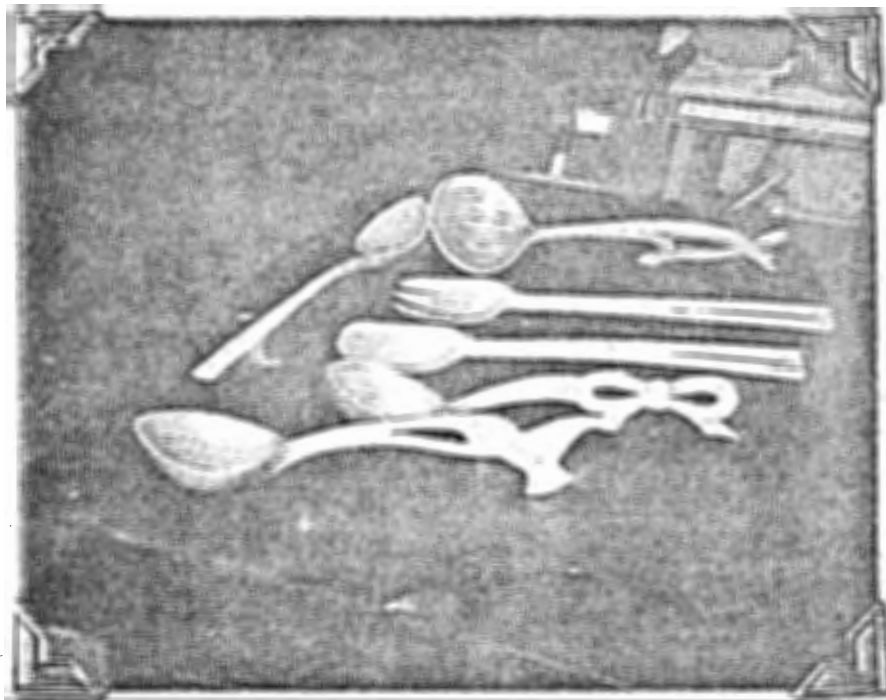


Gouging cup of ladle using rotary grinder



Forming a ladle with a band saw



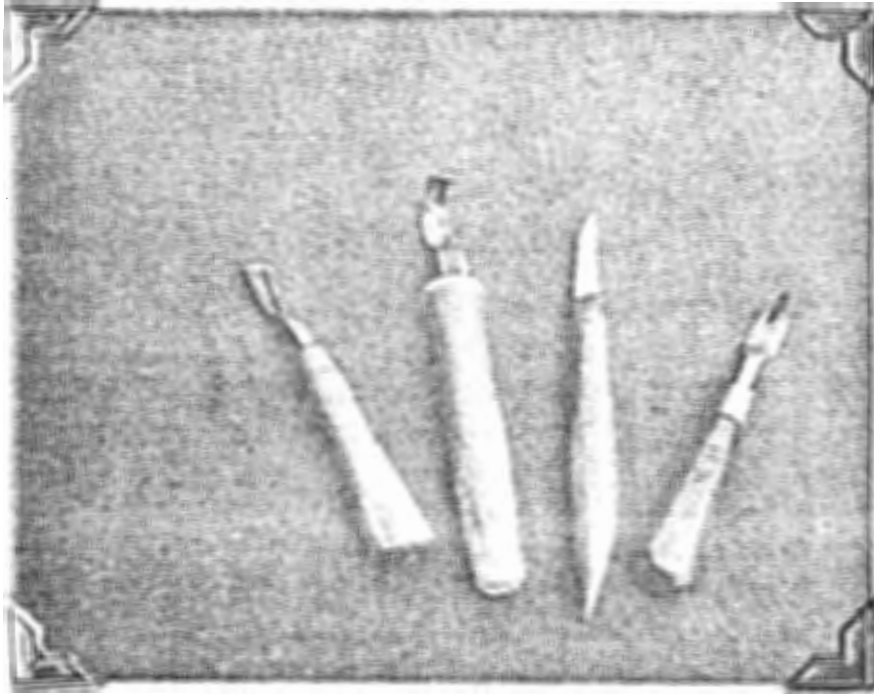


Examples of ladles and spoons carved by
Nick Denisoff

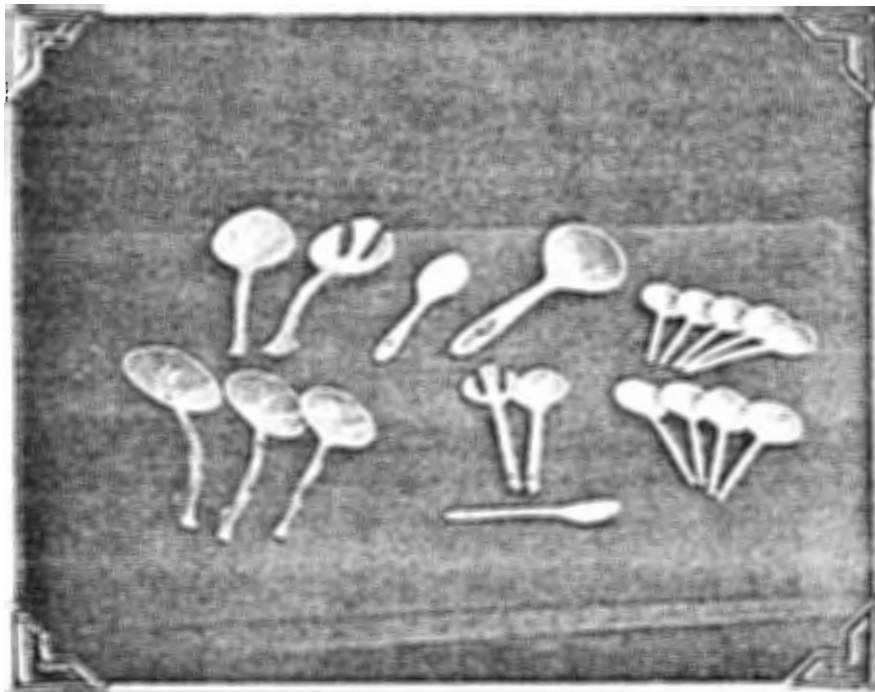
Anton Skerbinc (Pass Creek)

Tony is the only non-Russian interviewed for this paper, but his interest in ladle carving developed after he watched an elderly Doukhorbor man carve a ladle. Tony uses no mechanical tools but rather a troobachka and reezets; seventy year old tools given to him as presents. He also has the same tools made for him by a friend who used planer knives for the steel. Although his craft developed out of interest, at present ladle carving and weaving compromise his livelihood. The designs of the ladles are his own and a common handle design is the rozachka (rose). His ladles are different from those made by Doukhorbor craftsmen by having more definite lines and contours.

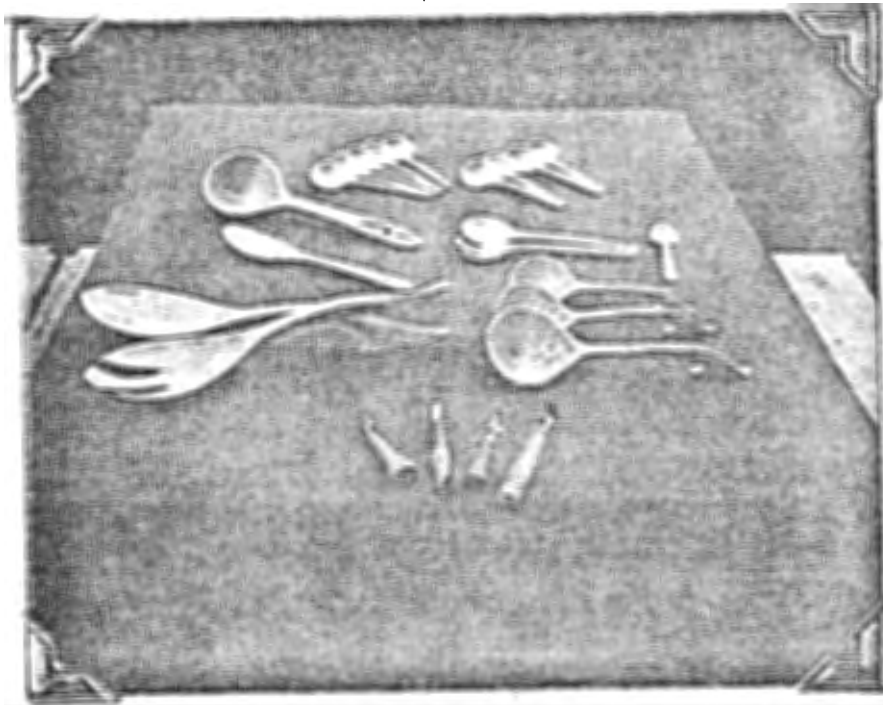
Cracking is prevented by boiling the almost-finished ladle in water. Tony uses only birch wood for ladle carving and he finishes the ladles with varnish.



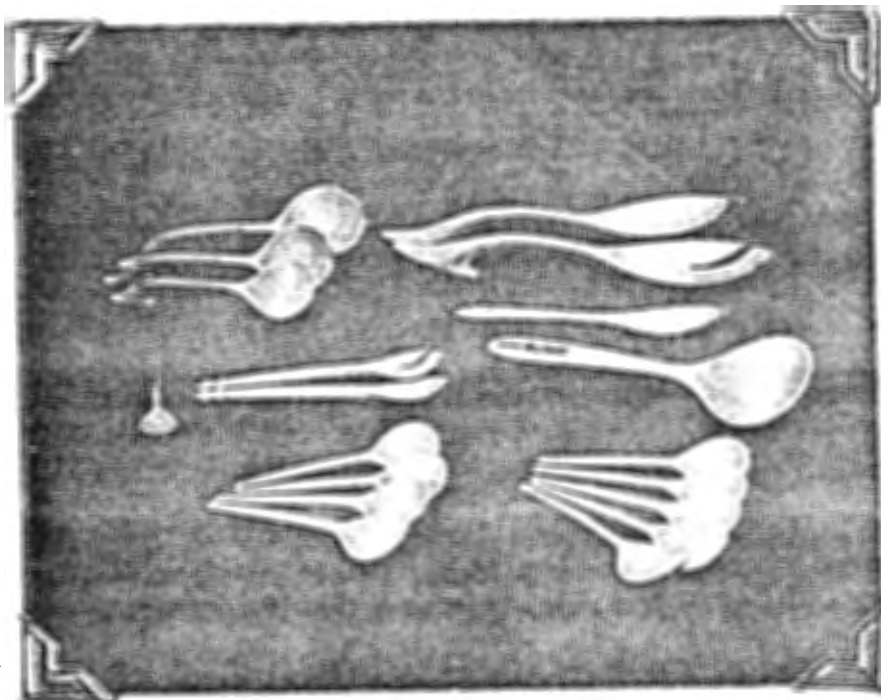
Hand tools used by Anton Skerbine



Examples of Tony's carvings



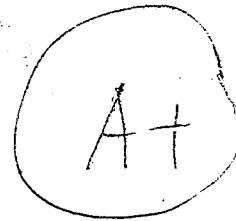
Ladles and spoons made by Anton Skerbinc



Conclusion

Ladle carving still survives as an example of Doukhobor folk art. It is difficult to say how extensive the practise of carving ladles is, but I would guess that it is common among many Doukhobor men. Many changes have taken regarding ladle carving. In the past, the art developed out of a need for utensils; today the practice is mainly a hobby. In the past, most likely because of demand, ladle carving was a year-round affair; today it is a seasonal occupation, being most prevalent during winter when outside work is limited. Earlier, ladle making was for the use of the society or family; today many carvers also make ladles for outside sales. The use and types of tools has also changed; many carvers today are using more modern wood-working equipment, especially those who carve for commercial reasons. Although methods have changed, the art nevertheless remains popular. A concern expressed is that relatively few young men are learning the art of carving ladles, which raises questions about the craft's extent into the future. It is difficult to forecast, but I feel that there will always be people who value the natural quality of wood and realize the usefullness of wood. ^{The} Ladle is also a part of the traditional ways of the Doukhobors. For this reason alone it is very likely that the craft will prevail; for ^{Doukhobors} ~~they~~, as do many members of other ethnic groups, wish to keep their identity; to preserve and maintain many traditional practices which are special and highly meaningful to them.

From the interviews, it is evident that there are as many ideas regarding ladle carving as there are carvers. This illustrates that the craft is highly personal; each developing carver, although he may regard the suggestions of others, will inevitably develop his own personal style. The ladles therefore become products of personal creativity and expression in addition to being good examples of folk art.



ANTHROPOLOGY 203 TERM PAPER.

FROM WOOD TO CRAFT

For: Dr. Mark Mealing

By: Cyril Ozeroff

[1977]

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 falling 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.

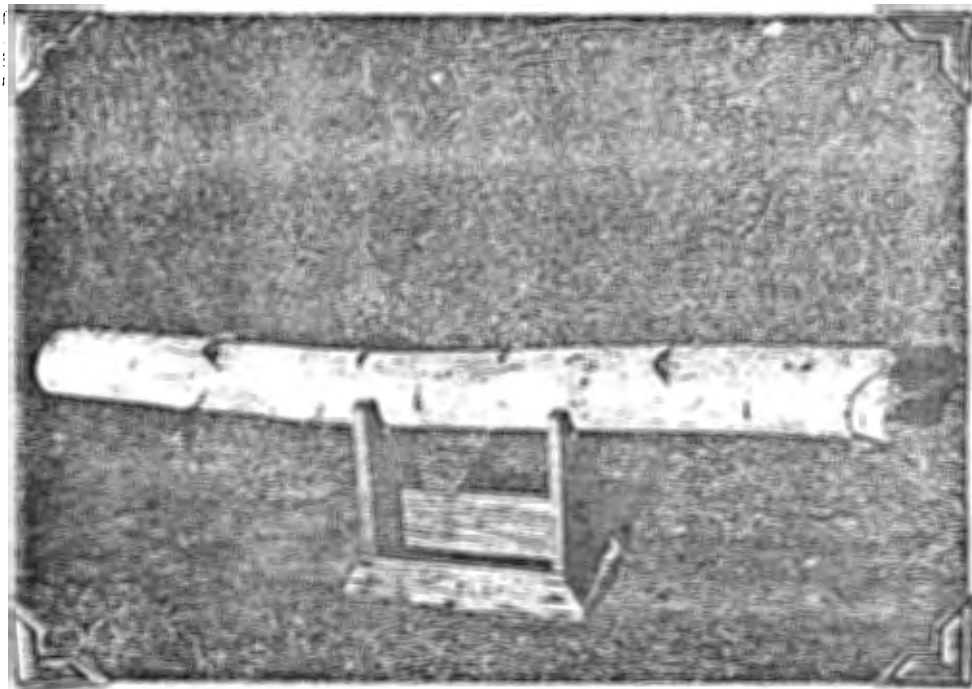
Tools

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.

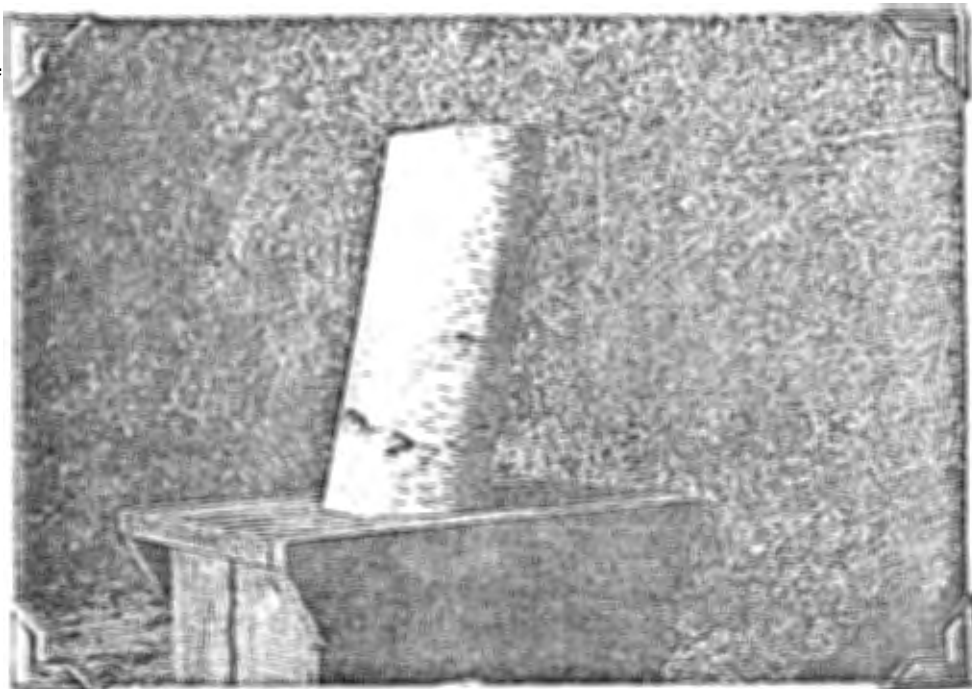
From Wood to Craft

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.

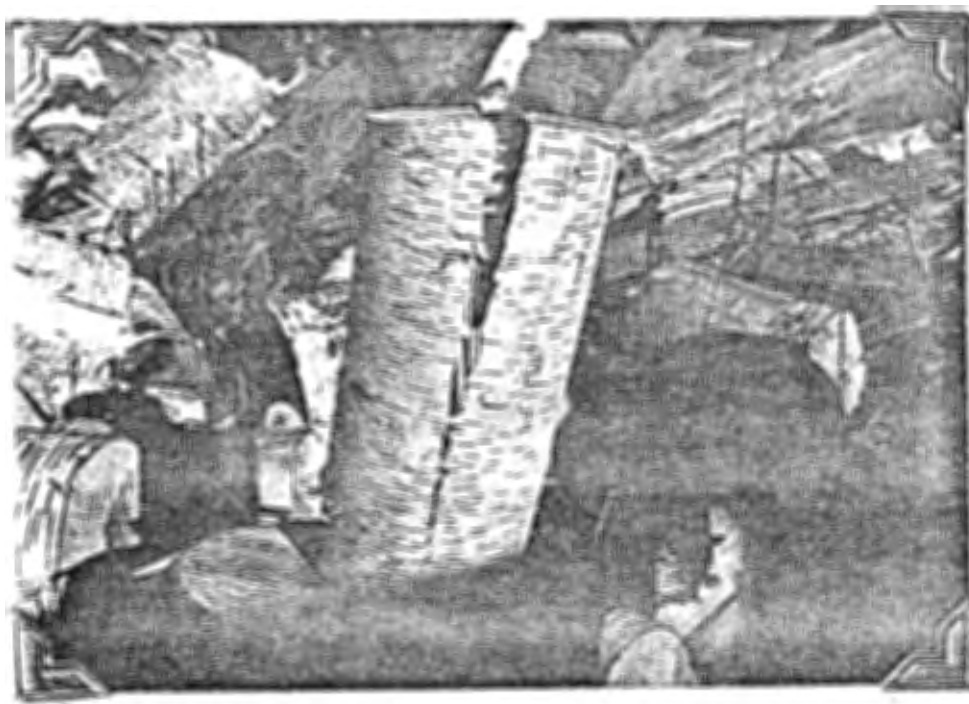
For my project I selected one such length of birch wood.



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.

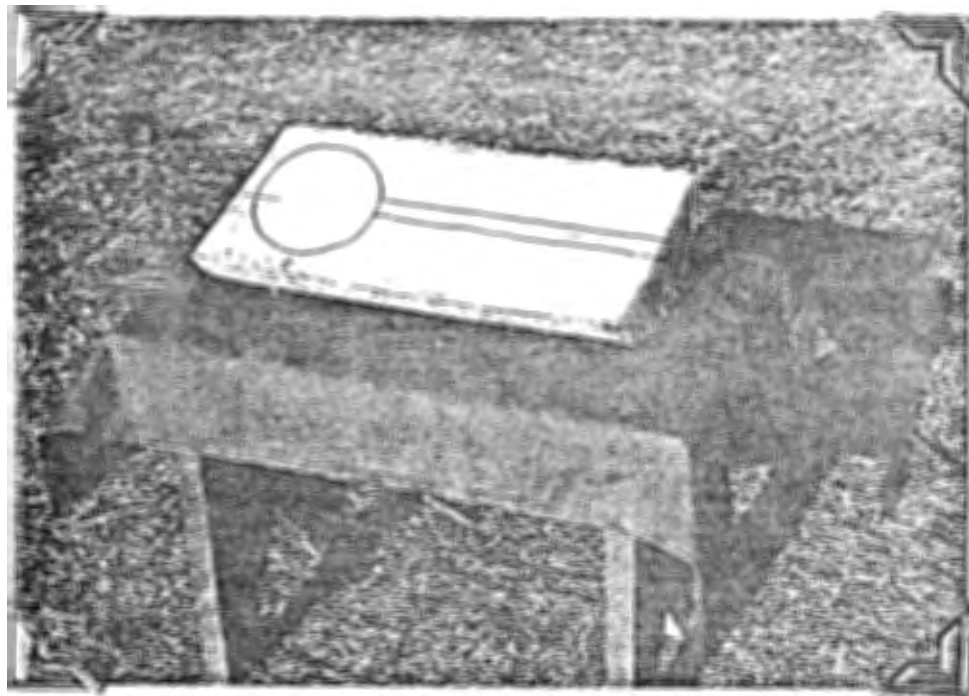


The selected block of wood



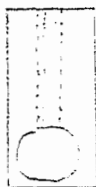
Splitting the block

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.

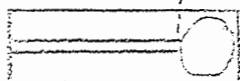


Block showing the outline of cup and handle of the ladle.

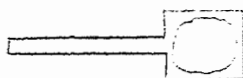
The block was secured in a vise with the face out and the cup outline down. Using a rip saw, I cut down along the handle.



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



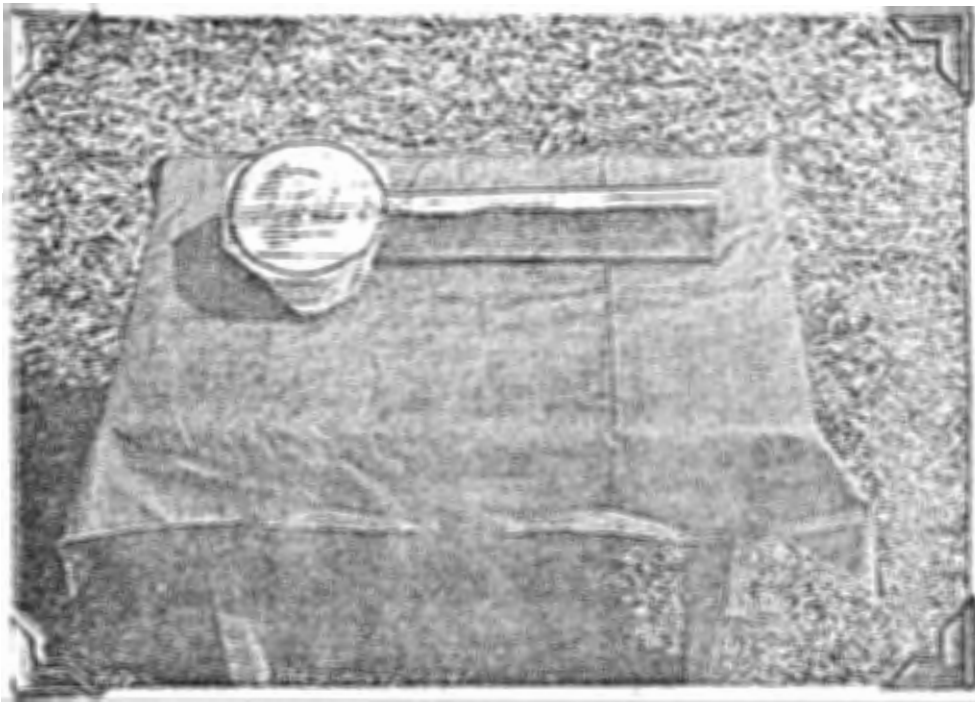
The project now looks like this:



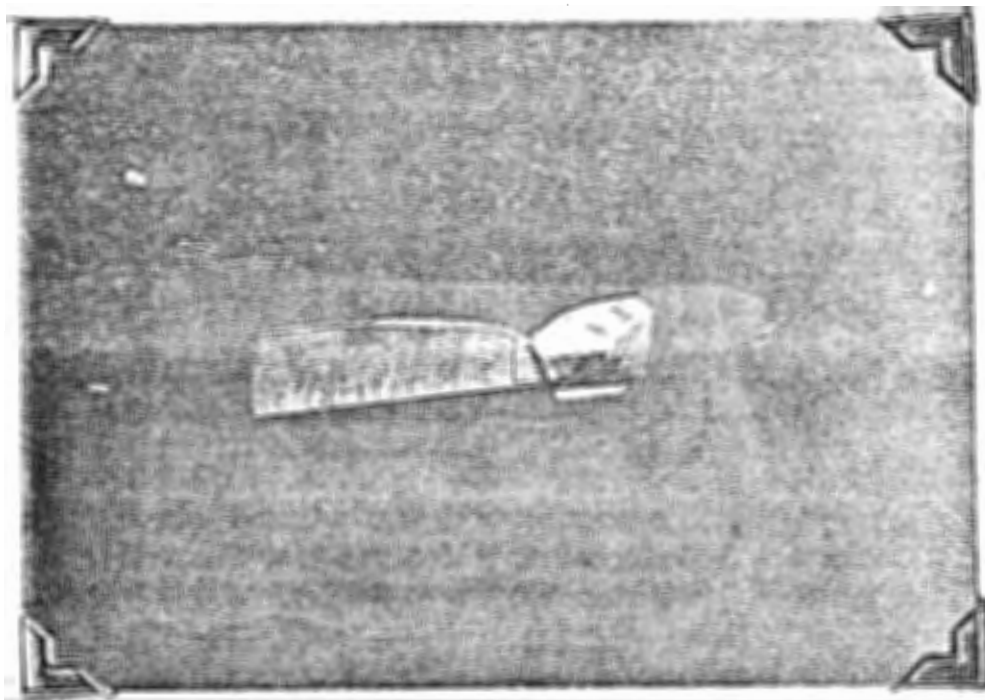
Using a cross-cut saw I then cut the corners of the head of the ladle:



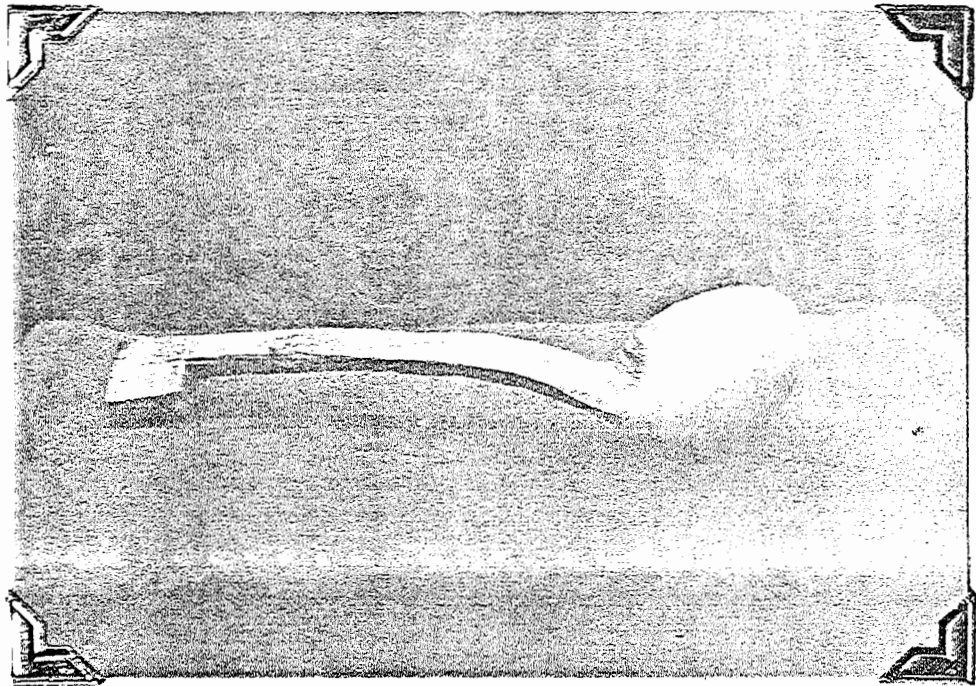
With an axe and a saw the head was roughly rounded so that it looks like the photograph on the following page ~~shows~~.



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.

A