

WOODWORKER'S WJOURNAL

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Classic Project

In this plan you'll find:

- Step-by-step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Construction drawings and related photos.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.

Carved Pineapple

GIFT SHOP



Carved PINEAPPLE

only three different gouges and my whittling knife for the whole carving.

The original hospitality pineapples were carved from pine. Pine was light, easy to work, and best of all, plentiful. New England's thriving shipbuilding trade provided a nearly endless supply of scrap pine for decorative carving. In keeping with tradition, I chose pine for this carving.

To begin, trace the profile of the pineapple on a piece of air-dried white pine that is 1 1/2 in. thick by 5 1/2 in. wide by 9 in. long (Photo 1). Next, cut this profile out with a bow saw (Photo 2). You could use a hand saw, but a bow saw is more traditional. When I make a historic project like this, I really enjoy using the same type of tools that the original makers used. It gives me a feeling of being in touch with the past.



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2

The pineapple is a traditional symbol of hospitality in New England. Odd as this sounds at first, there is a very good reason for it. During the 1800's New England was the hub of a vast seafaring trade network. Sea captains from the area roamed the oceans, sometimes for years at a stretch. When they returned they brought exotic gifts for their friends and families. And with its freezing winters, what could be rarer in New England than tropical fruit, especially pineapples. Some captains even placed pineapples in front of their homes as a sign that they had returned and visitors were welcome.

Eventually, carved wooden pineapples took the place of the real thing. A carved pineapple on the door is still a sign that a hearty welcome awaits within.

This pineapple is essentially a relief carving with the background completely removed. It's a good project with which to start relief carving because it requires few tools. I used

To hold the pineapple so that you can work on it, first fasten it to a flat piece of wood. I used a piece of 3/8 in. thick plywood cut 14 in. square. Drill two 1/8 in. diameter holes through the plywood, and screw the pineapple to it with two 1 1/2 in. long flathead screws. Plywood is a good choice for this because it doesn't split. Then fasten the plywood to the bench with C-clamps. This is a very efficient arrangement because you can easily turn the carving around to work on it from different directions just by loosening the clamps and repositioning the board.

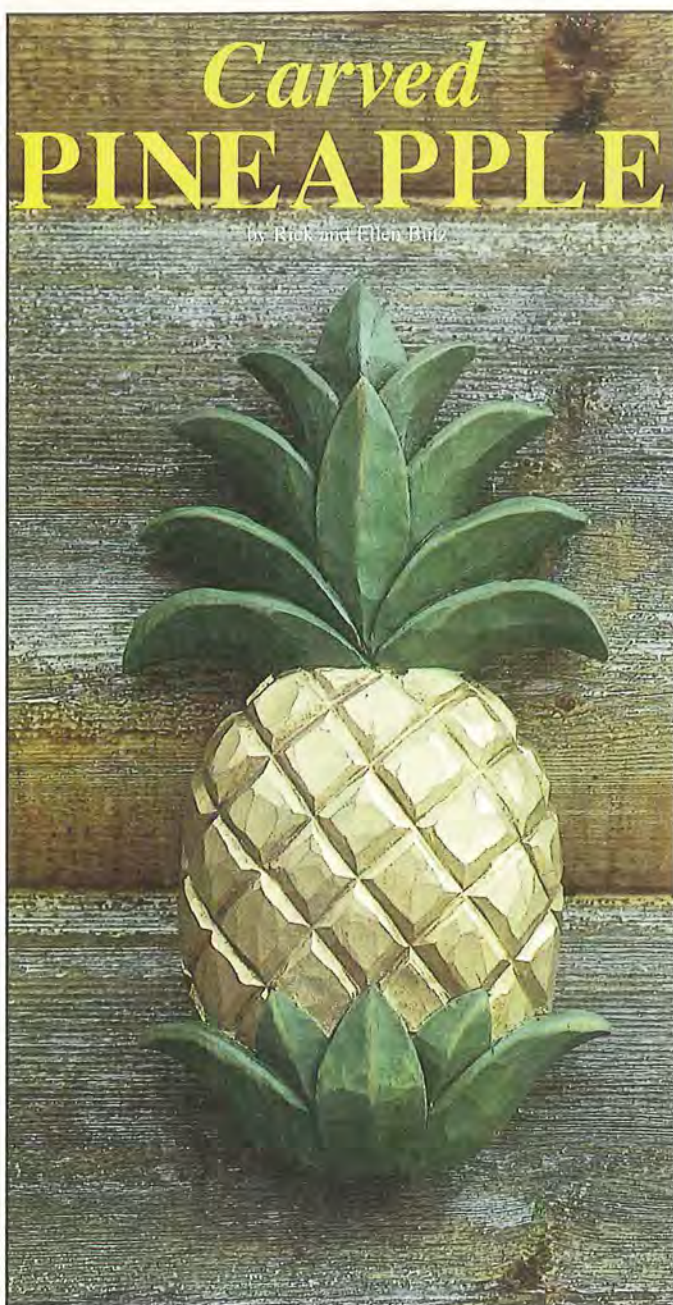
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50



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To begin, trace the profile of the pineapple on a piece of air-dried white pine that is 1⁵/₈ in. thick by 5¹/₂ in. wide by 9 in. long (Photo 1). Next, cut this profile out with a bow saw (Photo 2). You could use a band saw, but a bow saw is more traditional. When I make a historic project like this, I really enjoy using the same type of tools that the original makers used. It gives me a feeling of being in touch with the past.



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2

To hold the pineapple so that you can work on it, first fasten it to a flat piece of wood. I used a piece of ³/₈ in. thick plywood cut 14 in. square. Drill two ¹/₄ in. diameter holes through the plywood, and screw the pineapple to it with two 1¹/₄ in. long flathead screws. Plywood is a good choice for this because it doesn't split. Then fasten the plywood to the bench with C-clamps. This is a very efficient arrangement because you can easily turn the carving around to work on it from different directions just by loosening the clamps and repositioning the board.

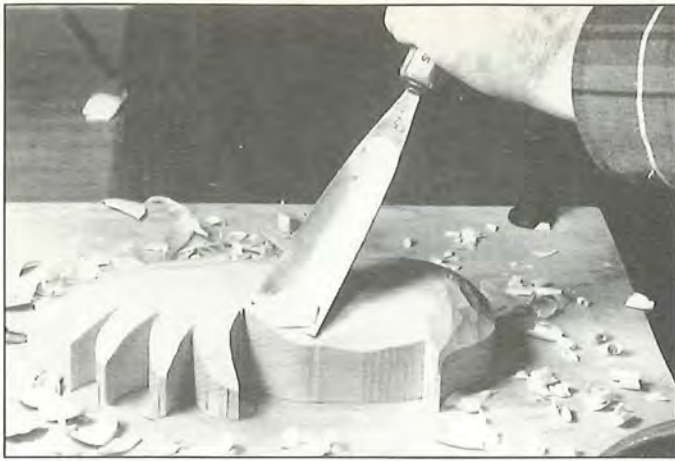


PHOTO 3

The first step in making the carving is to round over the general shapes. Use a 35 mm no. 5 gouge to rough out the pineapple (Photo 3). Be careful not to put too much pressure on the leaves as you carve. The leaf tips are cross-grained and could break off.



PHOTO 4

Use the same gouge to cut a large notch between the top of the pineapple and the leaves (Photo 4). Cut first from one side and then the other to remove the excess wood.



PHOTO 5

After the basic shapes are roughed out, draw the leaves (Photo 5). Don't worry about making them perfectly symmetrical. In fact, your carving will look more authentic if there are some slight irregularities in the design.

Next, make a cut straight down about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. deep along the outline of the center leaf with the 35 mm no. 5 gouge (Photo 6). The curve of this particular gouge matches the curve of the leaf. In relief carving, this step is called "setting in."



PHOTO 6



PHOTO 7

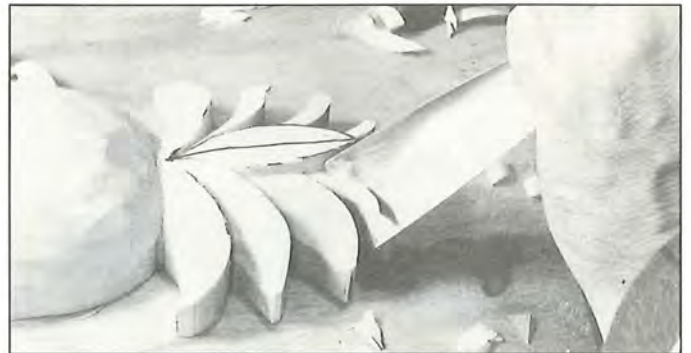


PHOTO 8

Then use the same tool to bevel down the wood on either side of the center leaf, leaving it raised (Photo 7). Set in the other leaves the same way. When all the vertical cuts are made, use the 35 mm no. 5 gouge to bevel the bottom edge of each leaf (Photo 8). This will make the leaves appear to overlap.

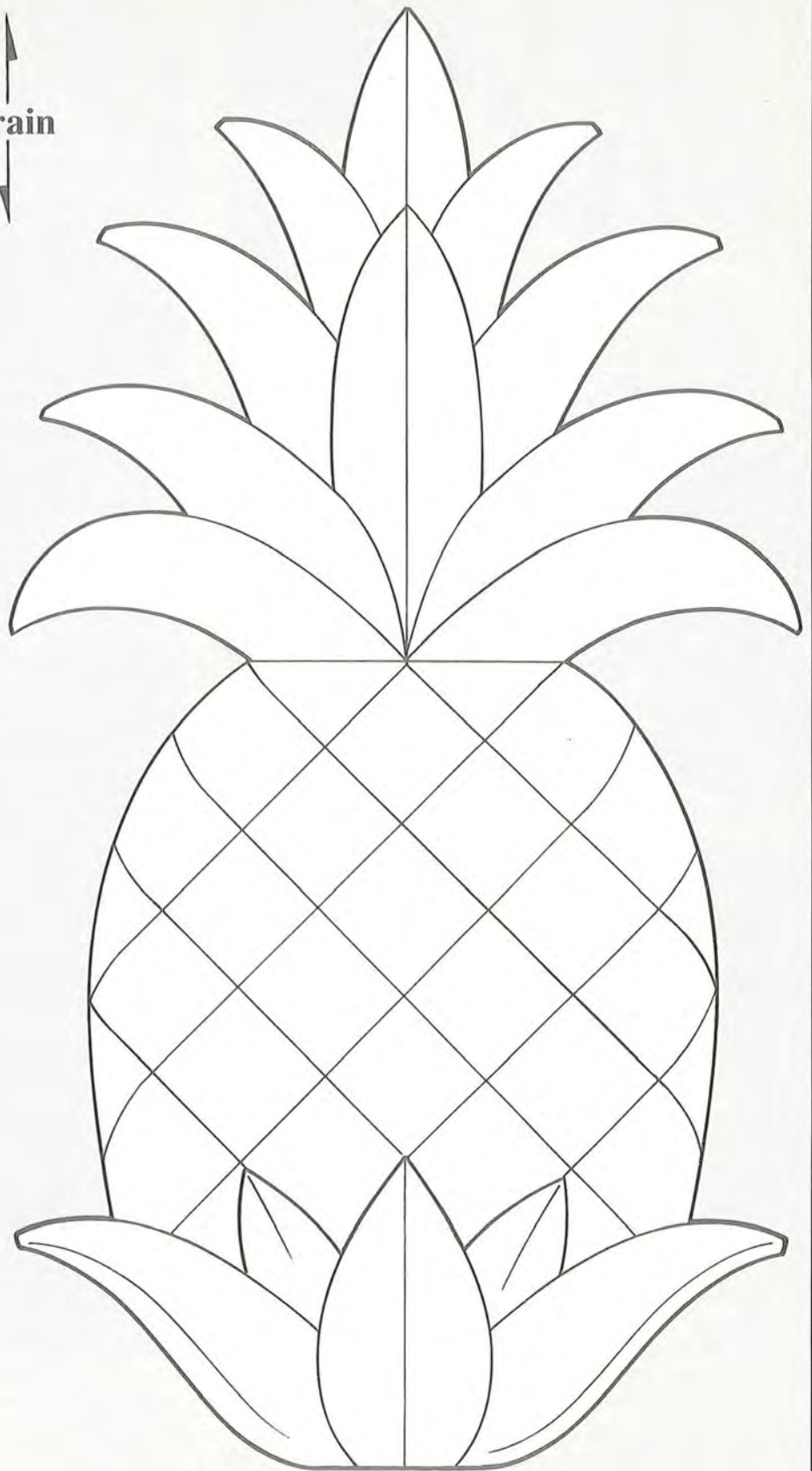
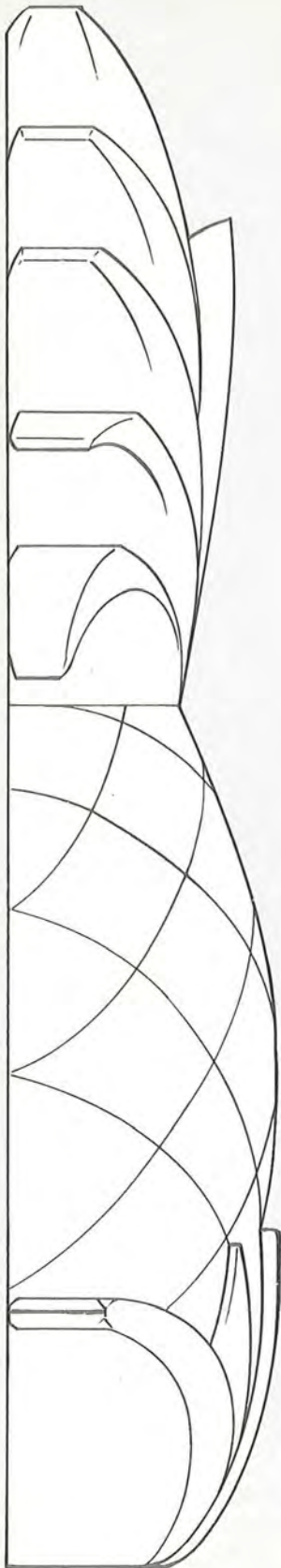


PHOTO 9

Use the same techniques to lower the base of the center leaf so that it appears to come out from behind the other leaves. It's best to shape this lower part of the leaf first, because the surrounding leaf edges are delicate and can be accidentally chipped off by too much pressure. Then finish shaping the leaf by beveling down either side of the top section (Photo 9).

Full-Size Pattern

Grain



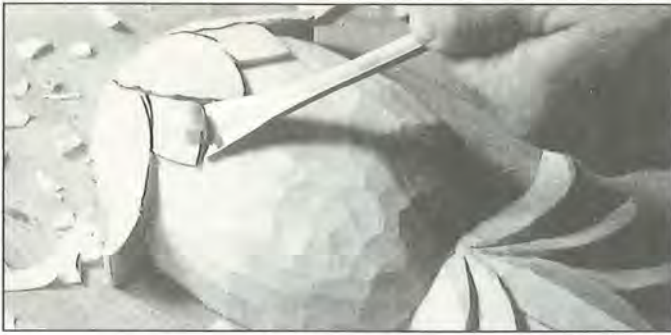


PHOTO 10

To shape the bottom leaves, first use the 35 mm no. 5 gouge to set in the center leaf and the two large side leaves, just as you did with the top leaves. Then set in the two smaller leaves with a 20 mm no. 5 fishtail gouge. When all the bottom leaves are set in, use the 20 mm no. 5 fishtail gouge to round the pineapple, leaving the leaves raised (Photo 10). The tapered edge of this gouge allows you to reach into the corners between the leaves more easily. Define the shapes of the bottom leaves the same way you did the top ones, beveling them so they appear to overlap.



PHOTO 11

There are many different ways to create the texture of the pineapple's skin, but the one I like best is a cross-hatched pattern. Its simplicity shows up well from a distance. Begin by sketching in diagonal lines about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. apart. The lines wrap all the way around the sides of the pineapple. Once again, don't worry about making these perfect. Strict mathematical precision isn't necessary and might even detract from the overall effect.



PHOTO 12

Use a 6 mm V-gouge to make cuts along the diagonal lines (Photo 11). Then remove the pineapple from the board.

If you like, you can now undercut the leaves slightly with a knife (Photo 12). Don't get carried away or you'll make the leaf tips too narrow and pointed. Remember they are cross-grained and will be fragile. A carving like this one, which may be displayed outdoors, needs to be sturdy to stand up to the elements. Remove a little wood to make the carving appear less "blocky," but not so much as to weaken it.

Carved pineapples were often painted gold. In some cases they were actually gilded with thin sheets of real gold. But this is an expensive and tricky process, so I used gold colored enamel paint instead. I selected enamel paints because I plan to display this carving outdoors. Enamels are more weather-resistant than other paints and were preferred by seafarers.



PHOTO 13

Color the leaves green, again using an enamel paint (Photo 13). Use a no. 8 flat synthetic sable brush for the large areas, and a no. 4 pointed one for the edges of the leaves. Let the paint dry thoroughly.

You can leave your pineapple like this, but if you want it to look more antique, there's a technique to speed up the aging process. First, spray a light coat of lacquer, like Deft Clear Wood Finish, on the carving. This will seal the wood and keep too much paint from rubbing off during the steps that follow.

Next, sand the pineapple very lightly with 220-grit garnet paper. This removes a bit of paint from the high spots to duplicate the effects of weathering.



PHOTO 14

Then brush on a coat of Wood Finish by Minwax in Special Walnut. Wipe it off promptly (Photo 14). The stain will remain in the crevices of the carving and darken them. It will also tone down the brightness of the paint, making it look more aged and mellow. The undercoat of lacquer keeps the stain from penetrating too deeply into the wood and darkening it too much. It also keeps the mineral spirits in the stain from softening and removing the enamel paint.

To display the pineapple, drill a small hole in the back and hang it up on a nail. This carving adds charm indoors or out. If you hang it on your front door, the natural effects of weathering will help to enhance the antique look.

So, try carving one for your home. The sight of a cheerful pineapple on the door will warm the hearts of visitors on even the coldest winter days.