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POSSIBILITIES OF LEATHER

FOR

Business, Hobby,

and Convalescence

by Hubert A. Unfried

Ind. Arts
452

POSSIBILITIES OF LEATHER

For

Business, Hobby,
and Convalescence

by

Hubert A. Unfried

An extended paper
written in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
EDUCATION

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July 15, 1962

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, leather has proven to be a most fascinating material with which to work. Almost everyone in the world comes in daily contact with leather in some form or another. After becoming acquainted with the possibilities of leather, many persons have accepted it with permanent interest. Some work with leather as a means of livelihood, while others pursue it strictly from a hobbyist point of view. Regardless of the reasons for working with leather, it takes a skilled person to produce a quality product.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the history of leather, as well as leather as a business, as a hobby, and for its therapeutic value.

I

History of Leather

Leather articles can be traced as far back as thirty three centuries. Such articles were found in Egypt where it was considered to be as valuable as ivory and gold. During biblical times, the Egyptians used leather for sandals, but only the Pharaohs wore them due to their expensiveness.

The beginnings of recorded history were found on skin rolls which existed in 1500 B.C., and down through the years manuscripts written on parchment have been preserved.¹

During the time of Caesar, the Romans had developed such a high degree of tanning that leather was used quite extensively. They used leather for such items as caps, sandals, "calceus" (a shoe that was indication of high rank), high boots and shoes. They were perhaps the first to use colored leather in shoe making.

The Chinese were also one of the early users of leather products. According to Marco Polo, upon his return from China in the thirteenth century, Kublai Khan lived in leather tents lined with ermine fur. They also used flexible leather for such purposes as bed coverings, and for items of clothing.

When the first Colonists came to America, they were much surprised to find that the inhabitants of this continent were tanning animal hides and skins. It is not known exactly where the Red Man obtained his knowledge. However, it was readily observable that the Indians possessed uncommon skill in preparing the hides and skins for use as clothing, shelter, and for decoration.

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p.12

Book making became a highly developed art during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. They were bound with tooled leather, and it was during this period that guilds were formed. These guilds had a great influence on the leather industry. They controlled apprentice training because the masters, who were the craftsman, selected the boys to be trained in this skill.¹

When the early settlers of this country came from the European countries, many brought with them several pairs of shoes, and other items of wearing apparel. But, the country was quite rough and irregular, and as a result, even the best shoes didn't last very long. When ships would arrive from England, naturally they would have cargoes of shoes and other essential items to help maintain existence in the new world, but there were very few ships. Eventually the Colonists adopted moccasins of the Indians made of buckskin leather. These moccasins proved very satisfactory for travelers and hunters, but after a while, even that supply was exhausted, and the need for a shoemaker in the new world became apparent. Craftsmen in other areas were also in demand, and as a result many of our early settlers, by necessity, became quite skilled in several trades.

Thus, it is apparent that it would be difficult if not impossible to say exactly who were the first to use leather. However, the Hebrews are said to have been the first to discover the value of oak-bark tanning, and their method was considered very good until more modern methods were introduced.

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 12

Curing and tanning leather are two processes that leather undergoes before it is ready for use. The purpose of curing is for removing the hair and all flesh that may be left on the skin. It will preserve the skins until they can be tanned. Tanning is the process used to make the cured hides and skins into lasting leather. Either the vegetable, or mineral method may be used for tanning. Sometimes these two methods are referred to as vegetable and chrome tanning methods.

The early settlers used the same method of tanning as had been used in Europe for centuries. Oak bark was used as a tanning agent. The curing was obtained by soaking the hides in lime water and then removing the hair and any flesh that was left. The hides were then placed in large boxes and sprinkled with ground oak bark. Alternate layers of oak bark and hides were placed in the box until it was filled. This method took approximately six months to complete.

Eventually it was found that hemlock leaves, nut galls, certain Oriental trees, and sumac bark also contained tannin. Tannin is the product that acts as the tanning agent. When this was discovered, the tanning process could be carried on in other localities, other than those containing oak trees.

Leather made by the Indians was known as buckskin tanned. The Crow Indians had a method of tanning superior to the other known tribes. The women of the tribe did the work of dressing the skins by removing flesh and other particles. They washed and soaked the hides in the streams until the impurities were loosened, then they removed the softened portions by rubbing the hides.

This was a rather slow process due to the necessity of washing them long enough to permit the flesh and impurities to become softened.

After washing, the hides were stacked up, wetted and left for a period of time long enough for decomposition to set in and loosen the hair. The Crows did more than merely pile their hides up for decomposition. They immersed the hides in a solution of lye water made from ashes of campfires. This operation of the tanning process was what made their method of tanning superior to other tribes.

When the hides had set long enough for the hair to slip, the hair and flesh sides were scraped to remove all foreign matter. They were then hung in a tightly closed teepee in which a smudge fire smoked and cured the skins. The leather made by this method withstood wetting, and after it dried, returned to its original, soft, pliable, condition.¹

Crude as these methods may seem today, basically the leather was of about the same quality as that presently produced with the latest methods at the disposal of the tanneries. Modern methods of tanning are accomplished in the following manners:

Preparation for tanning

Preparing leather for tanning is the same for both chrome tanned, and vegetable tanned leather.

Hides received at a tannery are placed in cold storage until they are ready to be processed. This keeps the hides from spoiling, otherwise they may become decomposed beyond use.

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 15

When the processing starts, they are first washed and cleaned of most foreign matter until they are soft and pliable. Chemicals may be used in this process if the hides are dried out and stiff. The chemicals not only make the hides more pliable but helps to loosen the foreign material on them.

After the hides become flexible they are passed through a fleshing machine where revolving knives removes any flesh and foreign matter not wanted on the hides.

The hides are then submerged in a solution of lime and sodium sulphite. This process is for the purpose of loosening the hair for removal. The soaking process requires about a week.

When the hides are removed from the sodium sulphite solution, they go through an unhairing operation similar to the fleshing operation except it is much more thorough. Final traces of hair and epidermis are removed by hand. This is done by placing the skins over beams and cutting away the surplus hair that the machines fail to remove.

After the removal of hair, the skins go through a pickling process that leaves the skins in a softened condition, which is necessary for tanning. This pickling process leaves the skins too pliable, therefore they must be worked in a sulphuric acid, salt, and water solution. This makes the hides take on the feel of leather.

Chrome Tanning

Chrome-tanned leather is usually used in shoe uppers, gloves, and garments. It is a speedy process by which the dressed skins can be converted into leather in as short a time as one day.

Chrome is derived from the metal chromium, converted by heat and a chemical reaction into bichromate of soda. The crystals thus formed, when treated with sulphuric acid and glucose, make a green solution or liquor which is used in chrome tanning.¹

The dressed skins are placed in tanning drums which contain the chrome solution, and left there for a specified time. When they are removed from these drums, they have a light bluish color which is removed with baking soda.

After the skins are cleaned with soda, they go through a shaving process. This smooths the flesh side of the skins and makes them uniform in thickness. This is accomplished by passing them between spiral cutting knives on the shaving machine. Skins that are too thick are split so that an upper side, called the grain, and the reverse side, called the flesh-split, result.

Dyeing follows the shaving process, followed by oiling. This causes the skins to become quite wrinkled; however, they are tacked on frames to make them dry smoothly, after which they are treated in staking machines.

Vegetable Tanning

Vegetable-tanned leather is used mostly for tooling, stamping-belt material, luggage, upholstery, harness, and shoe soles. This process requires a much longer period of time than does chrome tanning. It usually takes from two to six months.²

Hides which have been prepared for tanning are hung on frames and

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 18

2. Ibid, p. 24

passed back and forth through a solution of tannin. They are put through a succeeding number of vats each containing a solution stronger than the preceeding one, until the skins are thoroughly saturated. Two to three weeks are usually required for the hides to become properly soaked.

After the hides are removed from the saturating process, they are placed in vats, placing alternate layers of hides and ground bark, to which the tannic acid solution is added. This operation is repeated from four to seven times, requiring two to six months to secure the desired quality of leather.¹

The leather is then removed from the vats and washed in hot water to take away the excess tanning liquid, sediment, and bark. A final scrubber is then used on the leather to remove all traces of foreign material. This leaves the leather very stiff, therefore it must be rubbed with a natural oil, such as cod oil, for the purpose of restoring flexibility. It is then hung for drying in a well-ventilated, humit, dark, drying area.

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 24

II

Sources of Leather

Cattle hides are the most important source of leather in the United States. We produce about three fourths of the cattle hides used for manufacturing purposes, and import the other one fourth. Most of our imports come from Canada, Mexico, and Argentina. Many calfskins are used, totaling about 15,000,000 annually and they are obtained from any region where beef or dairy cattle are raised.

Approximately 40,000,000 sheep and lambskins are used in the United States annually. Roughly half of this number is produced domestically and the other half is imported. About 3,000,000 cabretta (haired sheep) skins are imported each year from Brazil and Africa. These animals are called "haired sheep" because they resemble sheep but produce hair like a goat.

Goat and kidskins are the most expensive per unit of weight and also are the most numerous since each year 50,000,000 are imported from Europe, Central Africa, South America, India, and China.* These countries supply the demand because they use goats for their milk and meat supply.¹

In the past, the United States imported hides from Cuba. They didn't have a huge cattle number, but were still able to export many of their hides. This is possibly due to inadequate facilities for manufacturing at home. Production of cattle hides in Cuba is greatest from December to June, as during this period the sugar crop is gathered

1. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 30

* Goat and kidskins are no longer imported directly from China.

and all sugar mills are operating. There is a large demand for meat during this season, and consequently the largest number of cattle are slaughtered.¹

There are several other sources of leather which include: pigskins, which are mostly imported from Europe; deerskins, imported from Latin America and Canada; ostrich skins, the only skin obtained from birds, imported from South Africa; snake and lizard skins, which are obtained from the python and anaconda snakes, found in tropical countries; and alligator and crocodile skins, imported from Mexico, Central South America, the Philippine Islands, and Africa. Some of the latter skins are found in the bayous of Florida and Louisiana.²

Newfoundland supplies the United States with seal skins and walrus skins. Sharkskins are found in the tropical waters off the coast of Australia and Lower California. France supplies most of the horse and colt skins used in the United States, however a few are produced domestically. Nearly 100,000,000 kangaroo skins are shipped each year from Australia. Water-buffalo hides are imported from Southern Asia.

United States, Canada, and Argentina produce the great bulk of general-utility leather used in the United States with the exception of goat. Goatskins come from various other parts of the world. Rare and more expensive leathers are usually produced in varied, exclusive areas of the world suited to that particular production.

1. J. Schnitzer, Hides and Skins, Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1927, p. 30

2. Chris H. Groneman, Applied Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1942, p. 30

Leather is available in various weights and colors, and a great variety may be obtained by the craftsman. The weight of leather is designated in ounces, with one ounce leather being 1/64" in thickness.

Following is a list of leathers and uses:

Tooling and carving leather:¹

Calf is an ideal tooling and carving leather for small projects. It comes in many colors as well as natural finish. The weight varies from 1½ to 3½ ounces. Skin size ranges from 9 to 16 square feet.

Sheep is an inexpensive leather which may be tooled. It is not so strong or durable as calf. Available in many colors, it generally comes in medium weight only. The size of skins varies from 7 to 12 sq. feet.

Steerhide is pebbly or crinkly-grained, pliable leather which tools well. It may be used for all projects. It comes in natural or two-toned colors and varies in weight from 2½ to 5 ounces. The sides run from 20 to 28 square feet.

Morocco goat may be tooled. It is used for linings, billfolds, and book bindings. The weight is about 2½ ounces. The skins varying in size up to 10 square feet, come in several colors.

Pigskin may be tooled. It generally comes in natural color and is very tough and durable. The skins range from 9 to 16 square feet. The weight varies.

Carving cowhide or strap leather is ideal for both tooling and stamping. It may be used for all projects. It is natural in color and always has a smooth grain. The weight varies from 2½ to 10 ounces. The sides run up to 28 square feet.

Lining Leathers:²

Chrome calf cannot be tooled. Lightweight chrome calf makes an excellent smooth lining. It is available in several colors. The skins are from 7 to 12 square feet in size.

1. Raymond Cherry, General Leathercraft, Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight & McKnight Publishing Co. pp. 15-17

2. Ibid, pp. 15-17

Skiver is a very thin grain-split sheepskin. When used as a lining it should be cemented solidly to the cover. It may be cemented to boxes for a covering. The skins are from 6 to 12 square feet, and color varying.

Suede is a type of finish. It is generally made of sheep in a wide range of colors. It is used for linings and garments. The skins average from 5 to 9 square feet.

Miscellaneous Leathers:¹

Genuine alligator comes in several shades of mahogany and brown. It is used for billfolds and handbags. The skins vary in width from 6 to 14 inches. It is sold by the inch.

Genuine ostrich may be identified by the quill holes. The grain is often embossed upon cheaper leathers. The skins range in size up to 14 square feet.

Genuine lizard, available in several colors, is used for small projects. The skins are small, measuring from 8 to 11 inches in width.

Alligator-grained calfskin may be used for most projects. A variety of colors is available. The skins may be as large as 14 square feet.

Embossed cowhide or steerhide is used for briefcases, notebooks, and other large projects. It is generally black or brown. The size of the hides ranges up to 28 square feet.

Hair calf is calfskin with the hair still on it. The hair may be long or clipped. Unborn calf or slunk will have very short hair. It may be used for small projects and garments. The size of the skins is from 6 to 10 square feet.

The commonly used widths of lace are 3/32" and 1/8". Both goat and calf lace are available in several colors.

1. Raymond Cherry, General Leathercraft, Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight & McKnight Publishing Co., pp. 15-17

APPLIED LEATHERCRAFT

The following map shows areas of the world where various kinds of leather are produced.

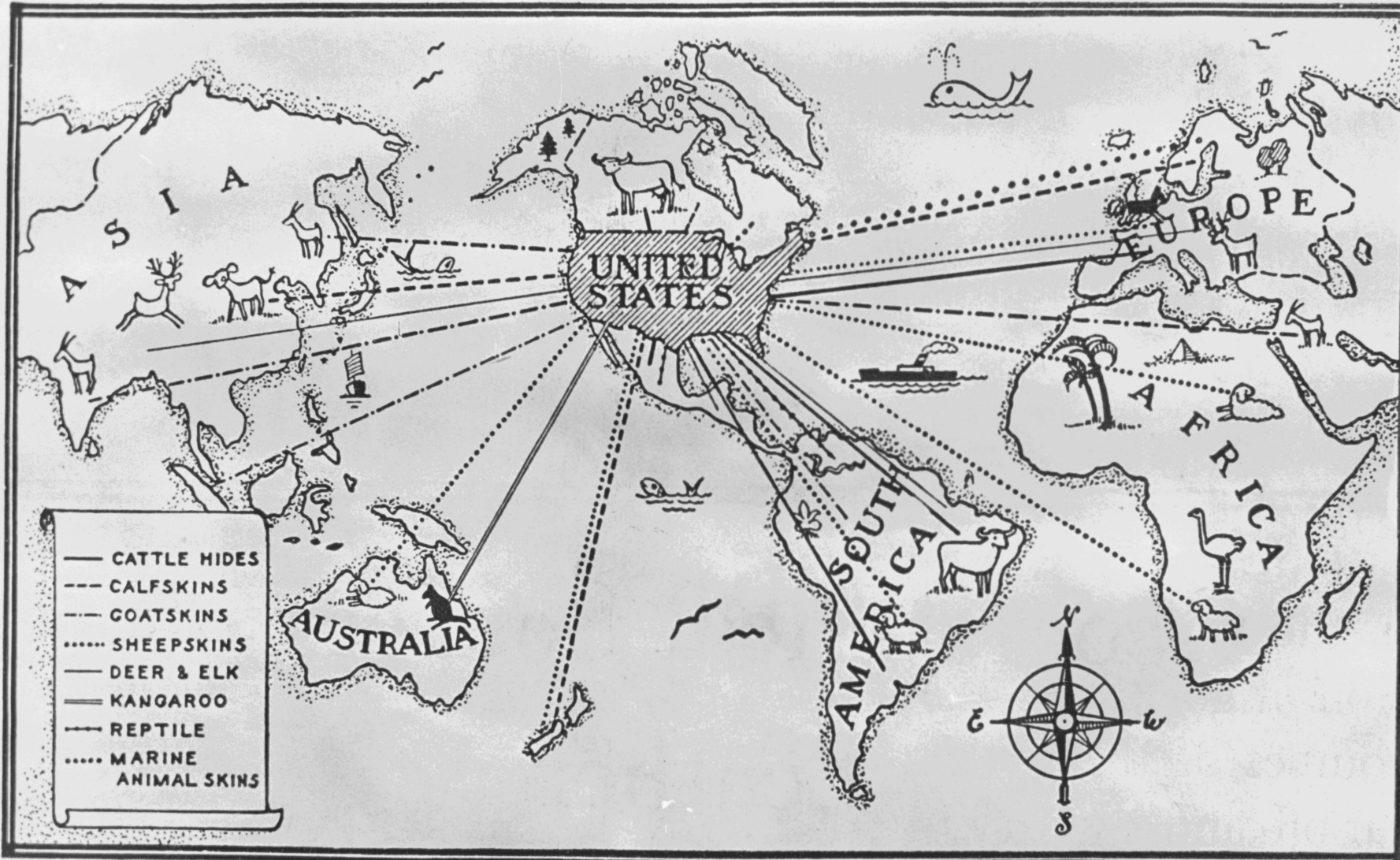


Figure I.

TANNERS' COUNCIL OF AMERICA

III

Leather as a Hobby

Leathercraft is the art of making useful and beautiful things of leather. It is quite an ancient craft, having been in existence for several hundred years. Such items as tents, clothing, furniture, utensils for liquids, and many other items were made from leather before the art of weaving was known. Leather was later used in building construction, with dowel pins, to assemble supporting timbers, in the absence of nails.

The uses of leather have changed considerably throughout the years, and many items of leather are now made that are more ornamental than they are useful. However, many of our practical items are still made in a very attractive manner. Most of the more expensive products are made by hand. Therefore, in spite of the modern methods of stamping designs in leather by manufacturers, the human element still plays the most important role when it comes to quality merchandise.

Leather is a most unusual material, and the mere "feel" of leather gives most people a pleasurable sensation. The more experienced leather worker can tell the quality of leather by rubbing or feeling the product.

Many people seem to have a peculiar fascination for the fresh smell of leather. At the present time, very few people appear on our streets without wearing or carrying one or more articles made from leather. Many of these items, especially of the handbag type could easily have been made by their owner. Some few belts also have the possibility of being home made, as well as billfolds carried by the individual.

Leather as a hobby can be as expensive or as inexpensive as most hobbyist wish to make it. According to John W. Dean of Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y., many tools may be made, therefore leathercraft doesn't require a lot of expensive tools. He says that it is much better to start with a few tools and learn to use them well, rather than to start with a lot of tools and never master any of them. Ordinarily a good set of leather tools may be purchased, for about ten dollars or less, that will contain enough of the essential tools to do quite an elaborate job of leather work. If the individual is handy with hand tools, he may wish to design and make many of the tools he uses. Stamping tools can readily be made from nails. Usually these tools are made from 16 and 20 penny nails.

Nail stamps are made by cutting the point of the nail off, but leaving much of the shank. Designs are cut in the head of the nail to meet the requirements of the individual hobbyist, and can be easily done with a file since nails are a mild form of steel. Edges of the cutoff portion of the shank should be rounded slightly to prevent sharp edges from damaging the mallet or cutting the person using the stamping tool. Some people prefer mounting a wooden handle on the individual stamps, and this can readily be done by drilling a hole in a small block of wood the same size as the shank of the nail and inserting the nail. These handles prove very satisfactory when they are square rather than round, thus preventing them from rolling off the table or workbench. Figure II is an example of a set of some of the special, as well as the common tools used in leathercraft work. Figure III shows designs for homemade nail stamps.

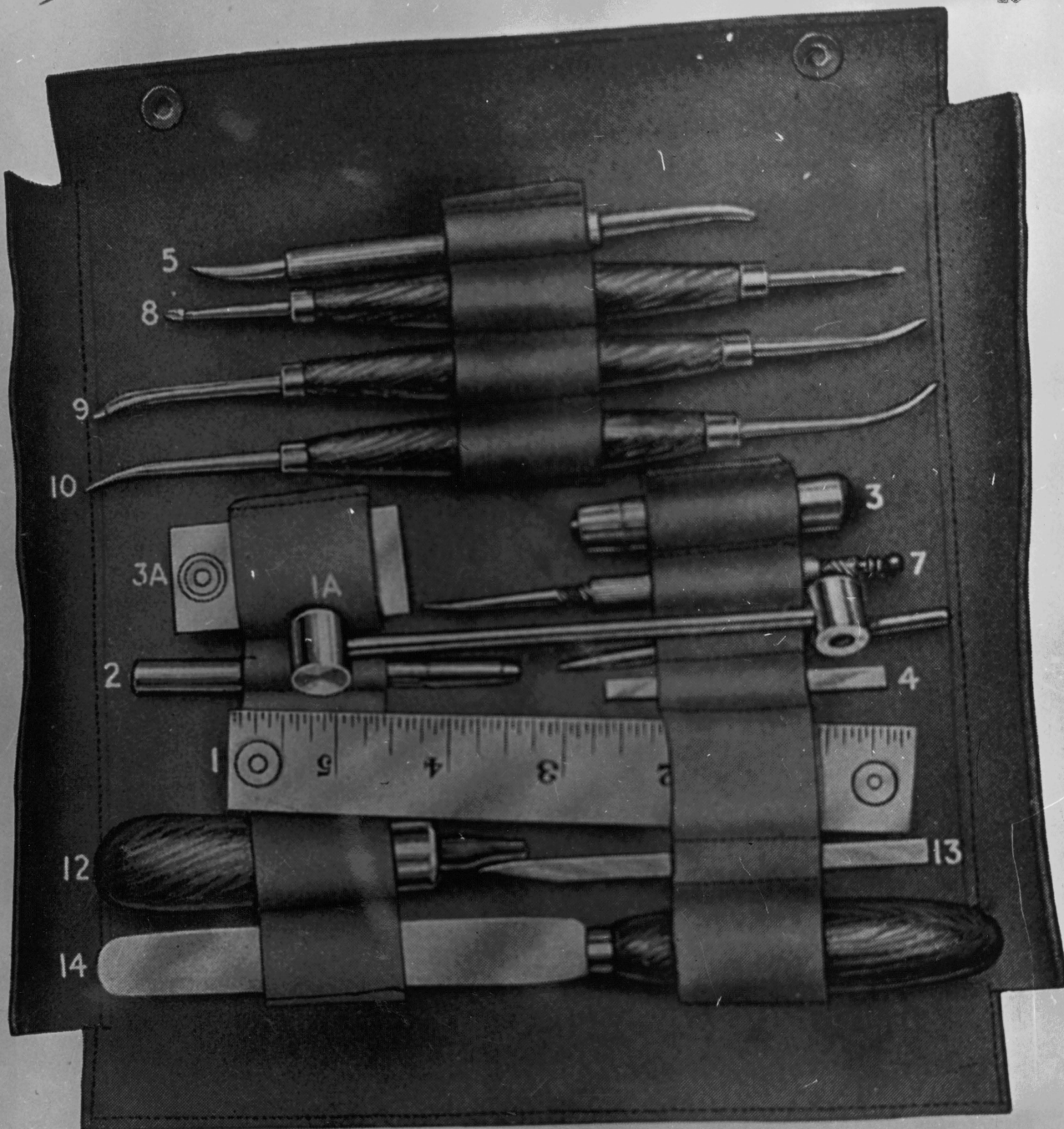
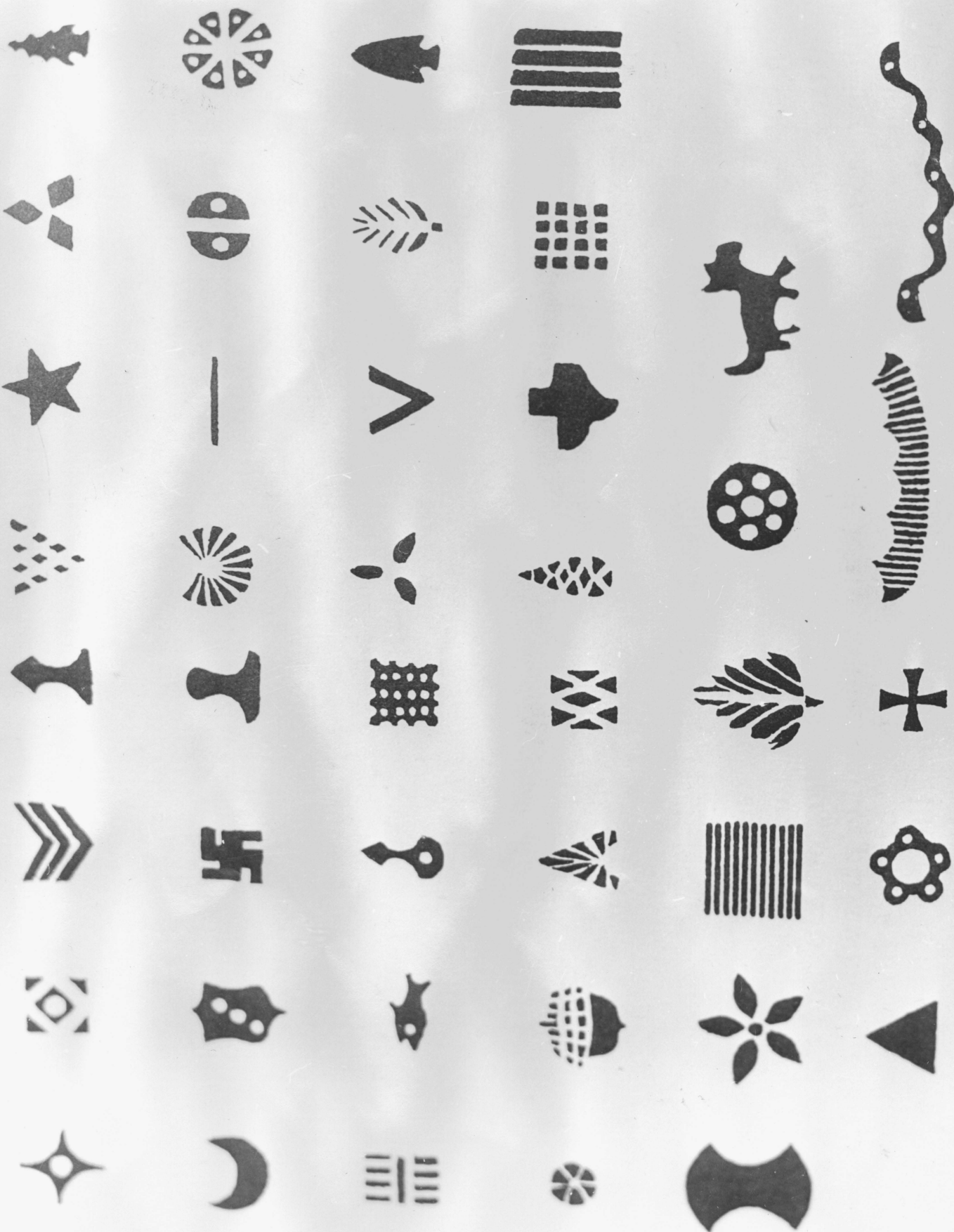


FIG. II. LEATHER TOOLS

- 1. Snap Fastener Machine
- 1A. Snap Fastener Machine
- 2. Punch
- 3. Eyelet Machine
- 3A. Eyelet Machine
- 4. Background Stamp Tool
- 5. Modeling Tool
- 7. Tracing Tool
- 8. Modeling Tool
- 9. Modeling Tool
- 10. Modeling Tool
- 12. Cutting Knife Handle
- 13. Cutting Knife Blade
- 14. Skiving Knife

Figure III. Designs for Homemade Nail Stamps



An oil stone is an essential item for the leathercraft worker. It is necessary that all cutting tools be kept very sharp. Much neater, and more accurate work can be accomplished with tools that are sharp. Items not shown in the kit in Figure II that are good items for the leather hobbyist are, glover's and harness needles, lacing needles, oblong drive punch, pliers, revolving punch, leather shears or florist shears, and saddle stamps.

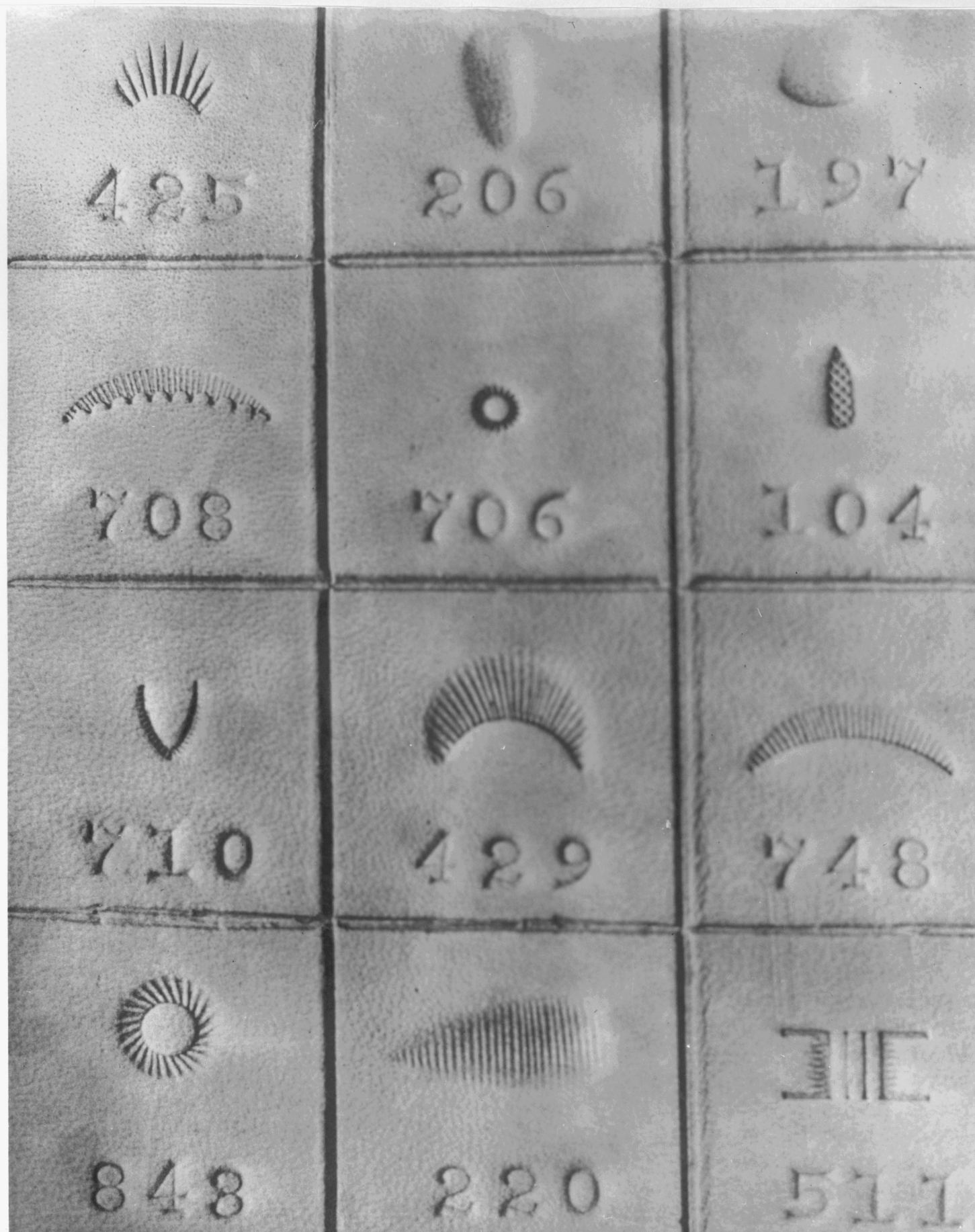
Saddle stamps offer a variety of designs on leather. There are many design impressions which can be made with the numerous tools available. Figure IV is examples of twelve of the more common tool impressions made by commonly-used saddle stamps, together with the number reference of "Craftool" stamps. Saddle stamping tools are generally used in conjunction with carved designs. The beginner does not need to have access to the number of stamps suggested here, but will find that there are small kits available which contain stamps to make the upper six impressions seen in Figure IV.¹

Once a person has learned to use some of the tools for leather work by practicing on scrap material, he is ready to venture on an item for completion. It is suggested that he start with small objects with simple designs, and work progressively to larger and more complicated ones. Patience is a great asset in leather work and by practicing the proper techniques in handling and using leather tools, those techniques can develop into a useful skill.

Many persons engaged in leathercraft make many useful items that become quite cherished gifts. A leather product that is well designed

1. Chris H. Groneman, Leathercraft, Peoria, Illinois: Chas. A. Bennett Co. 1958, p. 15

Figure IV. Impressions made by twelve commonly-used saddle stamps



and made with skill, displaying quality workmanship, is an appropriate gift for many occasions. In our modern society of, "do it yourselfers", numerous people prefer giving gifts that are personally made. With a good quality product, one need not be ashamed, or make excuses for its appearance. Such accomplishments can be had with persistence.

Much personal satisfaction is obtained by persons who enjoy doing work with their hands where a product is involved that may be seen by others. Some students prefer the Industrial Arts curriculum because it gives them a chance to combine subject matter information with manipulative performance and produce a concrete product. Even though the product is a vehicle for learning, it is most gratifying to the individual for praise be given the object. In school, the praise given individuals is usually in the form of grades, however, some teachers make it a habit of personally telling the student when he has turned out a good project. Leathercraft is considered a rather easy art to learn as compared to some other crafts; never-the-less it still requires caution and practice to produce a product worthy of praise. Regardless of what the reasons are for making craft products from leather, the satisfaction is ever present.

Persons interested in doing leather work as a hobby are fortunate in having several books that will give many illustrations on the technique of leather tooling. Some of the many books written for the beginning craftsman are: *Leathercraft* by Groneman, *Applied Leathercraft* by Groneman, *Leathercraft as a Hobby* by Clifford Pyle, *Leathercraft* by R. L. Thompson, *General Leathercraft* by Raymond Cherry, *Leathercraft Techniques & Designs* by John W. Dean, and *Fundamentals of Leathercraft* by Cramlet.

Often persons in retirement are confronted with time weighing heavily on their hands. Leatherwork is of a light type work that wouldn't be strenuous, even for the very aged. Something of this nature would be far better than having the individual sit and brood themselves to death. At the same time it could be a little source of income in the event that the person involved became proficient enough to sell his products. This little income could possibly have a great psychological effect on the individual in convincing him that he isn't entirely useless, as is the common belief of many older citizens.

IV

Leather Business

It is difficult to say exactly what the first leather business was in the United States, but probably it was the shoe business. The first shoemakers to come appear to have been Thomas Beard, a shoemaker of St. Martin's, London, and Isaac Richman, who was sent over by the New England Company to the settlement at Salem, May 28, 1629.¹

The early shoemakers worked out their apprenticeships under a master, and when they had accomplished their training properly, they would set up shop on their own. Leather was shaped and sewn by hand, and it would take many hours to complete one pair of shoes. This practice of making hand-made shoes existed in this country until perhaps the turn of the present century. There are still many older persons who remember wearing shoes that were hand made.

Often the head of the household, in Colonial days, would spend the winter months making shoes near the fireplace, so it wasn't too unusual to find shoe making equipment in almost every house. Later shoes were made in factories, and repaired at home. Today, it is almost impossible to find facilities for repairing shoes outside a shoe repair shop.

The early shoemakers would sometimes travel from place to place carrying their equipment with them and settle long enough to supply the immediate demand for shoes and then move on. Not only did they make and mend shoes as they traveled about but they also related the latest news and gossip of the towns, in the homes in which they stopped. Thus, the shoemaker could have been classified as a roving reporter.

Fred A. Gannon, A Short History of American Shoemaking, Salem, Mass.: Newcomb & Gauss, 1912, p. 6

In the towns, a few shoemakers established stores, in which they sold shoes made by themselves, or imported. James Everell, who came to Boston in 1634, was a leather dresser and shoe maker, also a landlord and a selectman. The inventory of his estate showed that he carried a good sized stock of shoes.¹

From the tiny shops, that were numerous throughout the country in its' early days, have developed the large shoe factories that are also scattered throughout the country. Instead of one person making the shoe in its entirety, an individual only makes, or is instrumental in making a small segment of a shoe. One factory alone may employ several thousand workers and turn out a large number of shoes each day.

Chrome tanned leather is used for the shoe uppers and vegetable tanned leather for the soles. Frequently shoes have soles made of material other than leather. Chrome tanned leather resists tooling, thus it also resists marks, making it the more suitable of the two for shoe uppers.

Shoe manufacturing has come a long way since an early savage man wrapped some animal skins around his bleeding feet to protect them from sharp stones. However, basically shoes are still built for the protection of ones feet from sharp irregular objects, and from the elements.

During our own lifetime, riding equipment has become quite popular, especially since World War II. And with riding equipment, there has developed a need for leather craftsmen to make elaborate bridles and saddles that are in demand. It is a steady growing business and offers many good

1. Fred A. Gannon, A Short History of American Shoemaking, Salem, Mass.: Newcomb & Gauss, 1912, pp. 9-10

opportunities for persons interested in that type work. Not only in the factories where the products are manufactured, but in larger communities, repair facilities and special made equipment are constantly in demand. In a sense it seems that the harness shops are coming back into existence, only with perhaps a little more sophisticated name. Just prior to World War II the harness industry was a tremendous business, but with mechanization, the draft horse became less and less popular. Today, the draft horse is almost extinct in this country except in a few areas that are of a religious sect which will not accept mechanization, and some small areas of the Southern states. With the passing of the draft horse, almost went the harness industry.

Belts are no small industry. At one time it looked as if plastic would replace leather belts, but in men's clothing leather won out and is still a prominent piece of wearing apparel. Many of the belts worn by ladies are of a synthetic material, but the more expensive ones used by both men and women are still leather.

Brief cases, and handbags are two other products that are in constant demand. Again, the more expensive ones are made of leather. No prominent salesman would be seen without a leather brief case and leather traveling bags if he covers large territories. The better dressed woman wouldn't think of being caught without shoes and handbag to match. Since many of the opinions in our society are based on the quality of clothing that is worn, it often pays individuals in business to consider such assorted items as mentioned above for impressionable reasons. All these items contribute to the vast opportunities in the leather industry.

Leather products distributed in this country are mostly those produced by domestic manufacturers. In 1939 imports of these products amounted to about 0.6 percent and exports from this country amounted to about 1 percent of the total value of those produced by domestic manufacturers. Both imports and exports were greatly principal items imported and the main items exported were footwear, women's handbags, and leather belting.¹

Most of the leather products go directly from manufacturers, or indirectly through wholesalers and jobbers, and the retailers for distribution to ultimate consumers. In 1939 more than half of the finished products were distributed directly from manufacturers to retailers, including chains. Substantial proportions of these products were distributed directly from manufacturers, or indirectly through manufacturer-owned and manufacturer-operated outlets, to wholesalers, and jobbers who in turn distributed them to retailers.²

Prior to World War II, the United States Department of Agriculture published information concerning the number of hides used in the United States annually, and the purpose for which they were used. No later information could be found on the subject, but with the increased population it may be assumed that the number is proportionately larger.

Number of hides in thousands, and purpose for which used:³

Shoes	Belting	Harness	Luggage	Upholstery	Other	Total
26,990	1,236	327	928	431	1,109	31,073

1. U. S. D. A., Marketing and Manufacture Margins for Hides & Skins, Leather & Leather Products. Washington D. C.: U.S Gov't Printing Office, 1948, p. 4

2. Ibid, p. 5

3. Ibid, p. 5

V

Leather & Convalescence

John W. Dean wrote a book entitled, "Leathercraft Techniques and Designs". According to the author, the book was written for the purpose of reviewing the many divisions of leathercraft, for the purpose of encouraging individuals in their interest in leather, and above all as an aid for men in the Veterans Hospitals. He hoped that by writing the book it would be helpful for veterans who desired making leather objects for profit.

Leathercraft has proven itself time and time again in hospitals, especially for individuals having a long confinement. One of the big difficulties with many patients in hospitals is keeping their minds occupied. Some people can't tolerate confinement without something to help them pass away the excess time. Often it doesn't need to be any great task as long as the patient is occupied. During and following a war there has always been many patients in hospitals at a distance so far away from any relatives or acquaintances that they couldn't expect any visitors, therefore, they had to resort to other means for companionship. Lettermans General Hospital in California, and Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland are excellent examples for providing the convalescing troops with crafts material to get their minds off their troubles and bring about a speedier recovery. Leather played no small part in this endeavor.

For individuals with hand or arm injuries, leathercraft provides an excellent means for exercising the fingers. Lacing leather or doing the tooling processes involved on small items provides an opportunity for the patient to maneuver, and gain strength in muscles that wouldn't

normally be used without the incentive to do so. For some patients, every move is a new challenge and thus practically impossible for them to do any tooling of leather. They may be able to do only the lacing processes, and kits are provided with just that item left undone. For the more able and capable, kits are provided that are more difficult. If the patient so desires, it's possible for him to design and complete the entire item of interest.

The Psychiatrist as a person is more important than the Psychiatrist as a scientist. What he is, affects the patients more than what he does.¹ This is the opinion accepted by the staff of the Menninger Memorial Hospital of Topeka, Kansas. This Psychiatric Hospital was established and is run under the direct supervision of Doctors Karl and Will Menninger. It is their common belief that a large number of our mental patients need to be convinced that they are still useful members of society. Often patients will lose coordination due to their mental condition, and crafts, which include leather, are frequently used to help the patient regain confidence and coordination. Doctors on the staff work diligently with their patients, and use such methods as playing in orchestras with them to bring about a speedy recovery.

A person recovering from an illness need not be confined to a hospital to find leathercraft most fascinating. It provides a wonderful opportunity for the patient to pass the time during lonely hours.

1. Steven M. Spencer, The Menningers of Kansas, The Saturday Evening Post: Philadelphia, Penn. The Curtis Publishing Company, p. 19

Leather is of such a composition that it may be worked with a few minutes at a time, and a job need not be completed in any specified period of time to prevent spoiling the material. True, leather isn't the ultimate product for aiding convalescence, but there's no denying that it does have therapeutic value.

Conclusion

Leather products have been made for several hundred years. It is believed that the Hebrews were the first to use oak bark for tanning purposes. The Egyptians, Chinese, American Indians, and many other nationalities had methods of tanning leather, but some of their ways of tanning aren't known at the present time. Regardless of their method they produced a good product, and in many cases hasn't been excelled even to the present day.

Leather offers many opportunities both in business and as a hobby. The best products are still predominantly made by hand, as far as craft products are concerned.

For several years now, leather has proven itself in hospitals for its' therapeutic value. Its value was first tried in Veterans Hospitals and later was introduced in psychiatric clinics.

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