



# UNIT 31: FIGURE CARVING (NORWEGIAN MOTIF) FOR YOUTH

Prepared by Dave Ostrum, Idun 5-074 and Phillip Odden of Norsk Husflid  
Modified for children by Rolf Tandberg, Normanden 4-424

## INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

- ▶ Work is to be done with close supervision and assistance of an adult.
- ▶ This unit is intended for children under the age of 16.
- ▶ The objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the basic knowledge and skill of figure carving.
- ▶ You will select a project and a carving knife.
- ▶ Make a leather strop and use it.
- ▶ Draw a pattern.
- ▶ Complete a small figure carving of your choice.
- ▶ Complete all the items listed under Instructions.
- ▶ Submit the Report Form.
- ▶ Submit the Evaluation Form.

## Instructions

### TO DO

**\*1.** a.) Provide a description of three to five (3-5) actual wood carvings. The carvings should be Norwegian or in the Norwegian style, found in the homes of friends or relatives.

b.) Write a narrative description and provide a picture of each figure that you have chosen.

**\*2.** a.) Explain, by drawing, how to use a sharpening stone and leather strop to sharpen and keep your carving knife sharp.

b.) Draw arrows indicating direction to guide the knife when sharpening. You may get this information from carving books or hands-on demonstration from a wood carver in your lodge or neighborhood.

c.) Include a clear copy of your sharpening stone drawing and leather strop drawing with your report. (see # 9 Adult Cultural Skills)

**\*3.** *To be done with an adult.*

a.) Make a leather strop that will keep your knife sharp. You may find the instructions in a woodcarving book or work with a woodcarver in your lodge or neighborhood.

b.) Take a photo of the strop and include it along with your report. (see # 9 Adult Cultural Skills)

**\*4.** a.) With adult assistance design and carve a Gnome or Troll head from a vegetable such as a yam.

**Note:** See "The Yam Yankee & Other Veggie Carving Projects," Tom Wolfe, Schiffler Publishing 8880 Lower Apple Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310  
ISBN: 0-7643-0500-X.



Figure carving by Rebecca s. Hanna, 1-503

b.) Spray the item periodically with rubbing alcohol to prevent spoilage. It should dry over a period of one to two (1-2) months.

c.) With adult assistance, this project can be completed using a paring knife.

d.) Afterwards, it can be painted.

e.) Submit a photograph with the Final Report.

f.) Make a copy of your design and take a picture of your finished project.

**\*5.** a.) Attend a lodge meeting or youth group meeting to show and tell about your finished carving.

# The History of Woodcarving

When the Viking grave on the Oseberg farm in Vestfold, Norway, was excavated in 1904, a treasure was revealed, not only to historians, but also to Norwegian craftsmen. The grave contained the oldest existing collection of Norwegian woodcarving, dating back to the beginning of the Viking period in the 800s. Geometric designs and animal ornamentation offered new knowledge and inspiration to woodcarvers of modern times.

The art of a certain historical period is often heavily influenced by the general culture of the period and place where the art is created. The heathen Viking art acquired a more serene tone when the Viking woodcarvers were exposed to Christianity due to foreign influence. The Christian symbol, the grapevine, was easily adapted to the Norwegian woodcarving style, and the building of stave churches that peaked around 1300 offered a great opportunity to follow the Romanesque and Gothic trend of creating carvings of huge dimensions. The exteriors of these stave churches were lavishly ornamented, especially the portals. The ancient interlaced ribbon and animal motifs, the European-inspired vine, lion, eagle, and the oriental dragon decorated doorways as late as the 18th century. Woodcarving was, however, largely cast aside in the churches after the Reformation in 1536.

The Renaissance ignited a new style of woodcarving in the 17th century. The new methods of furniture construction inspired woodcarvers to find new outlets for their creativity. Solidly carved decorations were replaced by panels of complex outline. Special motifs and a spindly type of naturalistic vine were adapted but didn't come to life until the Baroque and Rococo made their entry on the Norwegian scene. The Baroque paneling and carving, with its often

grotesque lines and deep relief, was in accord with Norwegian nature; and the gaiety of the Rococo period even more so. These styles inspired woodworkers to create the intricate, lively and flourishing carvings that we associate with Norwegian woodcarving in general. Other areas also developed characteristic carving styles, and these were complemented by chip-carving and wood-burning. Not only

were buildings and furniture decorated, but also tools and household equipment. Intricately carved butter, cheese and porridge boxes were common, along with bowls and drinking vessels, mangeltre (for "ironing"), and chests displaying many artistic designs.

Tools used were the axe and broadaxe for constructing furniture (the plane and saw came after the Reformation), draw-knife for smoothing, the bowed axe for hollowing out wood and the lather for making bowls. Finishing was done with a curved gouging iron, while various types of knives, routers and special-curved rabbeting planes were used for the carving of orna-

ments. There were also simple types of calipers and compasses. These tools made possible the abundance of moldings that characterize Norwegian woodcarving.

The art of woodcarving is still alive in Norway but the era of excellence in terms of developing and consolidating new styles is over. In America, Norwegian immigrants and their descendants have carried on the woodcarving traditions of the old country. Some of these woodworkers excel in the application of traditional styles and designs and their skills match the best Norwegian craftsmanship. Inspired by the old woodcarving masters, people on both sides of the Atlantic still feel pleasure and excitement in giving form to a piece of wood.

*From Sons of Norway's Information Bank #206, Woodcarving, by Liv Nordem Lyons.*



# Partial List of Woodcarving Books Available in North America

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**Title**

**Publication**

The Folk Arts of Norway . . . . . Stewart, Dover Publications

Chip Carving Designs . . . . . Crowell, Dover Publications

How to Carve Folk Figures . . . . . Enlow, Dover Publications

Chip Carving . . . . . Moore, Dover Publications

Create Chip Carving . . . . . Manning, Dover Publications

Norwegian Wood:  
A Tradition of Building . . . . . Holan, Rizzoli International Publications

Woodcarving in the  
Scandinavian Style . . . . . By Harley Refsal, Sterling Publishing Co.

Sculpture in Wood . . . . . Heart Prairie Press

Woodcarving: Techniques and Projects . . . . Johnstone, Lane Publishing Co.

Carving Small Characters . . . . . Jack Price, Weasel Publishing Co.

Caricature Wood Carving . . . . . Gerald Ekern

# Report Form

# Norwegian Cultural Skills Program

## Unit 31: Figure Carving (Norwegian Motif) for Youth

*I have completed the requirements for Figure Carving*

I. Attached are:

- A description of my sample woodcarvings with pictures
- A sharpening stone drawing
- A leather strop drawing
- A design and picture of my carving project

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Lodge Name/District/Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Age (if younger than 16): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received Cultural Skills Program pin awards previously?  Yes  No *If yes, please specify:* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (Applicant) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of Lodge Cultural/Social Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address of Cultural/Social Director,  
Secretary or other designated person \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (Headquarters) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form and your report to: Sons of Norway  
Cultural Skills Report  
1455 West Lake St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55408**

# EVALUATION FORM

Please keep this original and make the necessary copies to complete your report.

## CULTURAL SKILL COMPLETED: FIGURE CARVING (NORWEGIAN MOTIF) FOR YOUTH

**Instructions:** For each of the seven questions below, please check the box which fits your opinion most accurately. The choices are: **Agree (A)**, **Neutral (N)** and **Disagree (D)**. It would be helpful for improving the unit if you would also add your specific comments in the space provided.

- |   | <b>A</b>              | <b>N</b>              | <b>D</b>              |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The instructions for this unit were easy to follow                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. The requirements for this unit were reasonable                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. There were enough varied choices for optional activities               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. There were enough instructions and guidelines for doing the activities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. The unit provided interesting activities                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. The unit increased my understanding of Norwegian heritage              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. The unit promoted my involvement in the lodge                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**SPECIFIC COMMENTS:** In the space below, please add other comments and suggestions you may have with respect to this unit. Your comments are confidential and in no way affect the awarding of your completed pin/bar.

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Please send the Evaluation Form to:  
**Culture Department**  
**Sons of Norway**  
**1455 West Lake Street**  
**Minneapolis, MN 55408**