Gunleather: Decoration -- Edge Tooling

by Will Ghormley

I'm going to spend our time this issue showing you what my be the most abundant form of holster decoration: edge tooling. Edge tooling can be as simple as running your edge gouge around your holster leaving a line. Reset the depth of the edge gouge and you can leave parallel lines. This was enough decoration for many.

If you want to gussy-up your holster some, and don't want to spend the time fully tooling your rig, or you're not confident in your carving skills, edge tooling is a good way to do it.

Start off with the edge gouge. I have several. One is set for my stitching groove, another is set at 5/8". I have an adjustable gouge that I set either longer or shorter than 5/8" to make parallel lines. The edge gouge can be used in one of two ways. Used the normal way, it will dig up a line of leather leaving a gouge. This is fine if you want the mark to be permanent and very noticeable. The other way is to hold the gouge strait up and down so the non-cutting tip of the gouge drags along the leather. Do this lightly while the leather is dry for a faint line to follow, or do it hard while the leather is wet to leave a noticeable indentation that will stay in the leather.

The first edge tooled design I'll show will be done with a light guide line left by the gouge. We want the line to be unnoticeable when done. In the photos, I drag the line hard while the leather is damp so it will show up on film. (Plate 1)

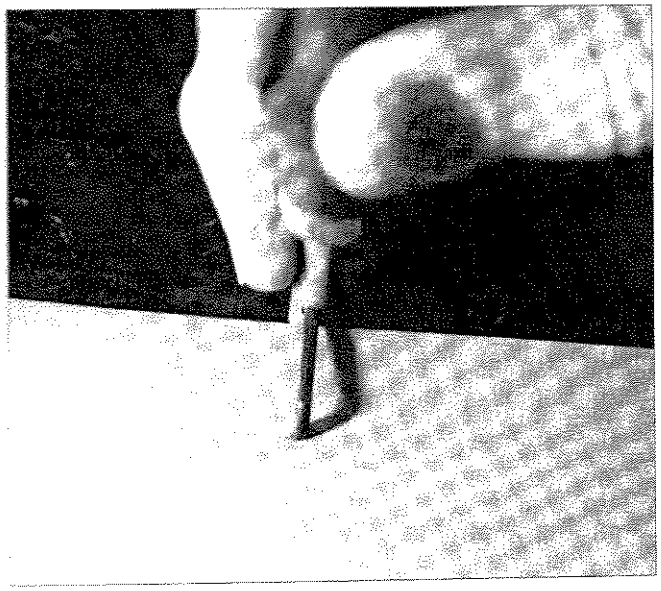

Plate 1

The first example uses a small veiner (the long arched tool), and a small border tool (the one that isn't long and arched).

Aline the ends of the veiner up with the light guide line. After stamping it with one sharp whack, leave a little space before making the next indentation. The space should be about the distance of the width of the border tool. The border tool can be placed on the damp leather to leave a faint impression. Line the veiner up with that impression and stamp it. The space can be used as a visual gauge to stamp the rest of the veiner imprints. You can alternate using the veiner and the border tool so you don't have to guess the distance but it gets very time consuming. In this first edge tooling example (Plate 2), the border stamp has been turned up-side-down. It could just as well been right-side-up for a design.

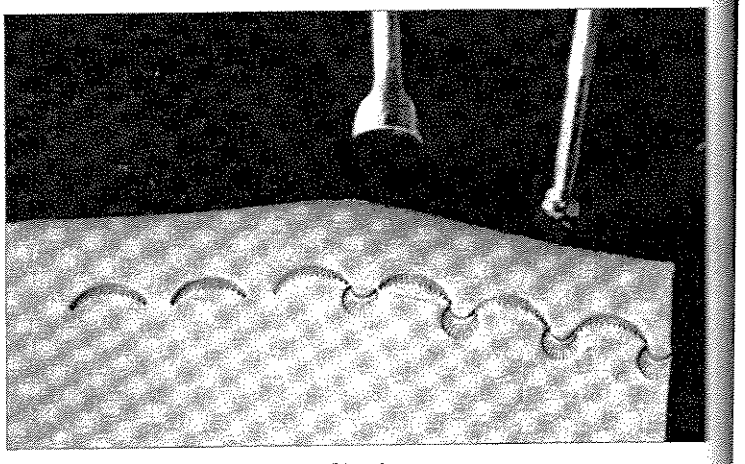

Plate 2

The next example is more intricate. (Plate 3) The edge gouge has been used to make parallel lines. The same veiner and border tools are used. The same technique is used, but the pattern is mirrored on the opposite side of the parallel lines. To make this pattern work on the curves, smaller veiners and border tools are needed to go around the inside curves. The tool's imprints can also be overlapped a little to compensate.

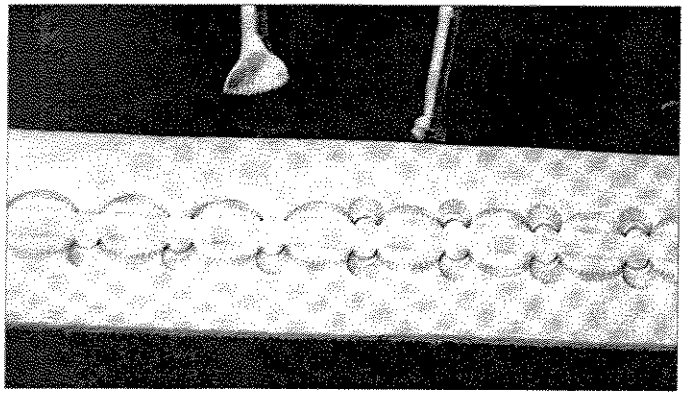

Plate 3

For larger projects like saddle scabbards, saddle pockets, or saddles, the next example is, well, larger. (Plate 4)

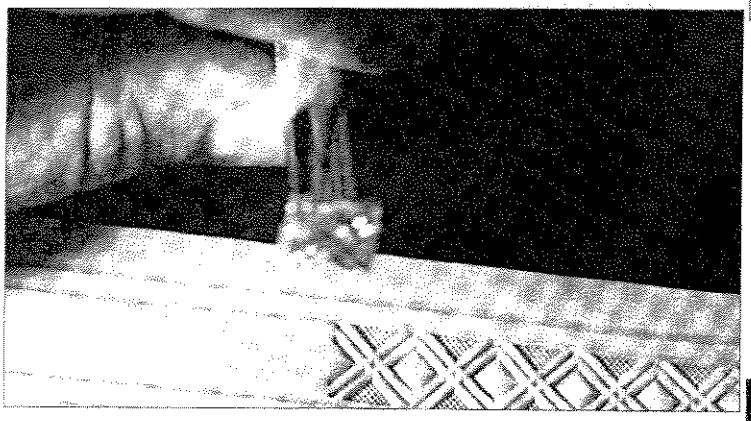

Plate 4

With adjustable edge gouge make two sets of parallel lines. I used a saddle compass to lay down these lines. In the case of this geometric "X" tool, the space between the sets of lines is ½". On large stamps like this I use a two pound maul. Going around curves the tool has to overlap itself on the inside edges.

Next, (Plate 5) find a veiner that has the right proportions to more-or-less line up with the imprint of the geometric tool.

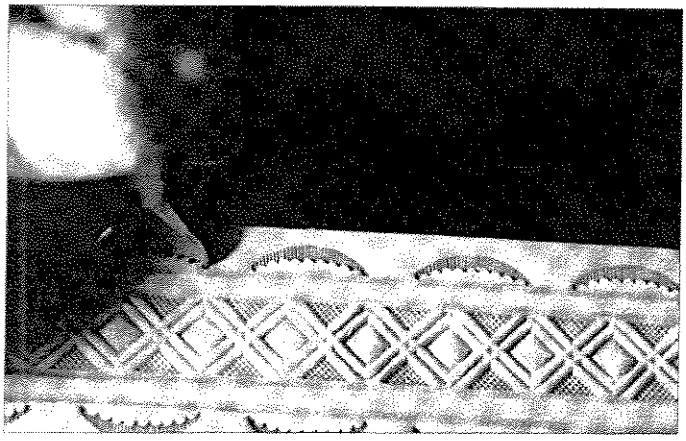

Plate 5

The veiner I used lines up with the center of where the legs of the "X" meet, to the center of the shaded triangle. Again, veiners of varying sizes will have to be used when going around curves. A large camouflage tool (Plate 6) the right size is then used to fill in the space between the veiner imprints. Camouflage tools of varying sizes will have to be used around the curves also.

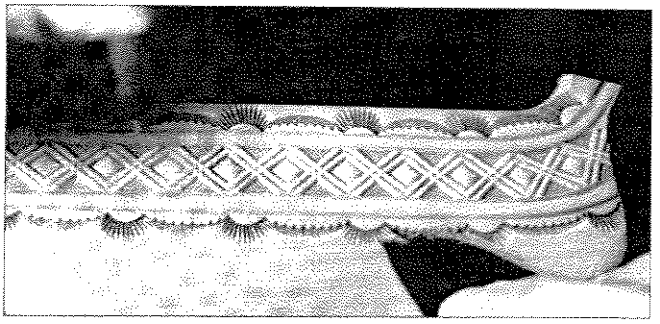

Plate 6

The next example (Plate 7) is what to do when you get to a corner and the tooling doesn't line up. On this piece I rocked the border tool so it would leave a faint imprint at the corner. Then I used a large seeder in each corner. I didn't like the way that looked so I stamped around it with a camouflage tool. You won't have that problem if you space the tooling out.

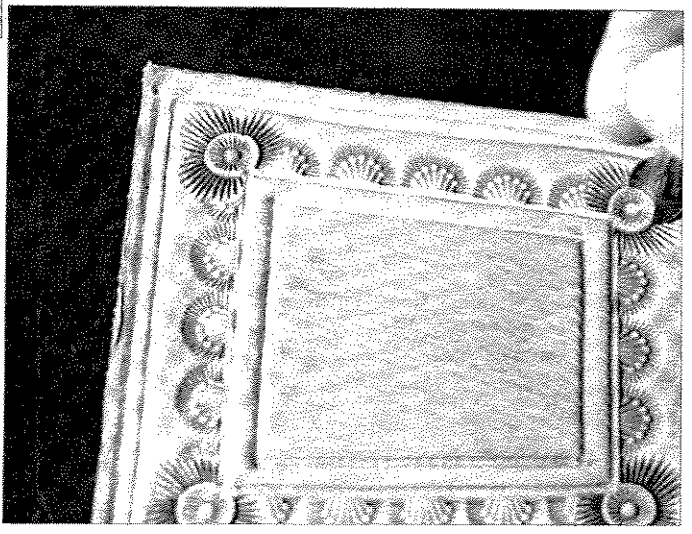

Plate 7

Starting at one corner you make faint impressions side-by-side down to the next corner. If it doesn't line up exactly, either crowd the stamping or spread it out to make it line up right. Use the faint marks as a guide as you stamp.

Next issue I'll cover edge rollers to make the design, and talk a little about basket weave stamping. Until then, see you on the range.