



Winter Wrinkles, Kinks and Dodges

By Steve Watts and David Wescott, 2022

“A distinguishing mark of the true sportsman is his constant readiness to give freely to his brothers in sport the benefit of his knowledge and experience. Naturally the spreading of information by word of mouth is far too slow for the up-to-date American outdoorsman.... a vast number of small personal tricks and practices have heretofore obtained but little publicity in this way. There has been a good deal of labor expended in whipping these suggestions into shape for the printer, but there has been pleasure in the knowledge that by this work we were perhaps also doing our bit for the splendid Brotherhood of the Open.”

H. N. Katz, Kink Editor - From *Kinks: A Book of 250 Helpful Hints*, 1917

The knowledge and experience mentioned by Katz came to the reader as *kinks* or *dodges*, tricks of the trade, tips and techniques - what we refer to today as hacks - a word that lacks the panache of the Golden Age of Camping. Ben Hunt added to the lexicon by illustrating a panel he called *Wrinkles for Winter Camping*, one of the few panels he created that was informational rather than skill oriented: his full-page panel, *Fire* (1939) being his most popular one.

Ben Hunt historian, Al Sterkow, recently called to announce the 100 year anniversary celebration of Ben Hunt's construction of the cabin featured in his 1939 publication, *How to Build and Furnish a Log Cabin*. The cabin has been moved and stabilized at a permanent

location by the Hales Corners Historical Society and is open to the public for tours May thru November. Al



Crafts completed from Ben Hunt's winter projects from 1938-1962 - snowshoes, goggles and shovel.

mentioned that some of the furnishings were finely appointed but under closer inspection one might see, inside of a draw or on a back panel, the telltale labels of old fruit boxes that were used to build them. “I noted over and over again how frugal Ben was and how he managed to use just about anything available to him to create something functional. In fact we still have a canoe suspended from the ceiling of the cabin that was made entirely from orange crates.”

Since we're in the winter season, and reflecting on Al's observation of Ben's skill at making something practical from scraps of cast-off supplies - it's sort of like Uncle Dan Beard's instructions on one old project, “Everyone has some old buggy wheels out behind the shop. Just grab those and...” -

Ben's *Eskimo* Snow Shovel* panel from December 1956 seemed the perfect project for this issue of *Backwoodsman*.

The Wooden Snow Shovel

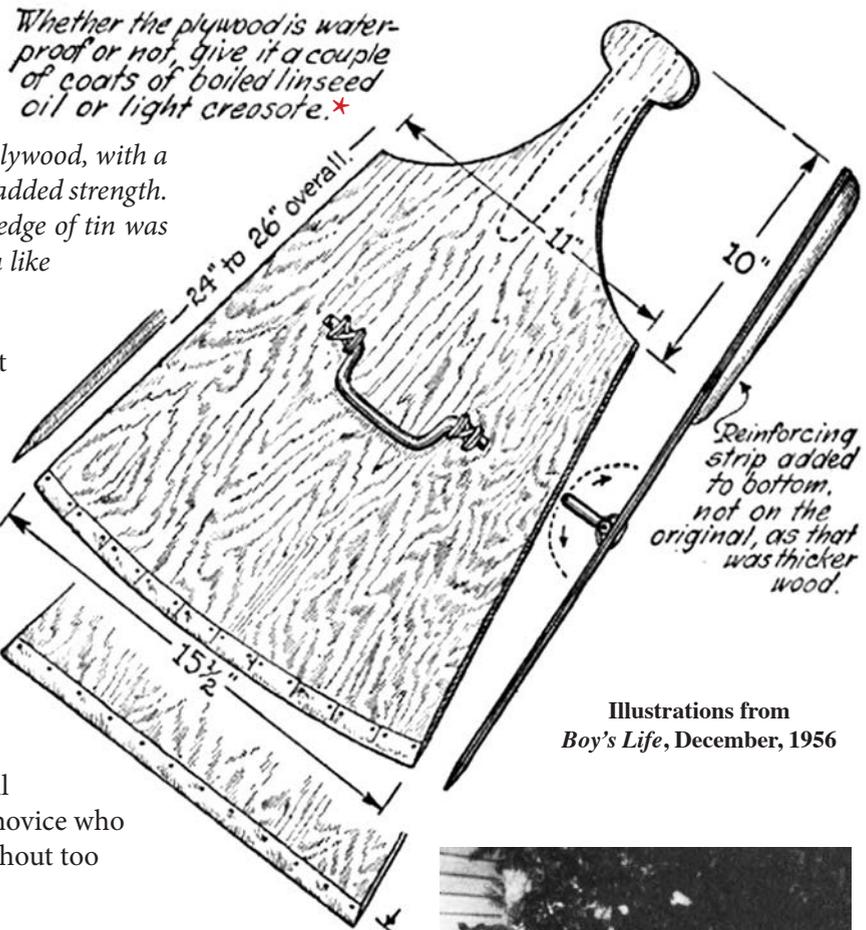
By W. Ben Hunt, 1956

Up [north] where wood and metal are scarce, and weight is a big factor, they made this short, handy snow shovel. They used any kind of wood that drifted in, usually a soft wood. The edge was reinforced with a piece of whalebone sewed on, and the handle was of bone or ivory.

This was patterned after a shovel from the Museum of Winnipeg, Canada, but was made of 3/8" waterproof plywood, with a strip glued onto the handle for added strength. The edge was tapered and an edge of tin was tacked on. Copper or brass of a like thickness could also be used.

This is a great teaching project since it incorporates so many different skills – woodworking (power or hand tools) wood finishing (sanding and sealing – just a lesson on natural – shellac and spar varnish vs modern finishes would be interesting), tinsmithing, simple forge making and blacksmithing, wire-work, and more. It is well within the capabilities of the novice who has access to a home shop without too many specialized tools.

This is a shovel made for mid-winter woodland snow - a snowpack that is well-bonded but not crusty. The shovel can be put in to lift out large solid chunks of snow, or move lots of loose snow for piling into a mound for a snow shelter - *quinzhee*, an Athabaskan word for a loose snow shelter. The snow is moved, packed, and allowed to “cinter” until it bonds into a mass that can be excavated into the shape of an igloo. If it wasn't a Ben Hunt project, one would do well to re-configure the handle and make it a bit narrower and longer. You have to work in a trench or bend way over to use it. DW/SW



Whether the plywood is waterproof or not, give it a couple of coats of boiled linseed oil or light creosote.*

Reinforcing strip added to bottom, not on the original, as that was thicker wood.

Illustrations from *Boy's Life*, December, 1956

* NOTE: Creosote is now considered a carcinogen and should be handled with extreme caution.



Steve Watts [ca1956] standing beside his rare North Carolina igloo. Coincidentally, this was the same year Ben Hunt penned his unusual panel, *Wrinkles For Winter Camping*.

Pattern Making

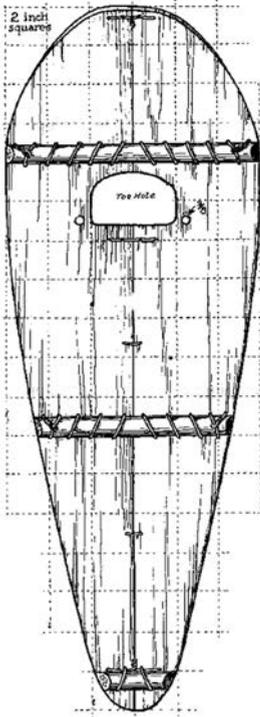
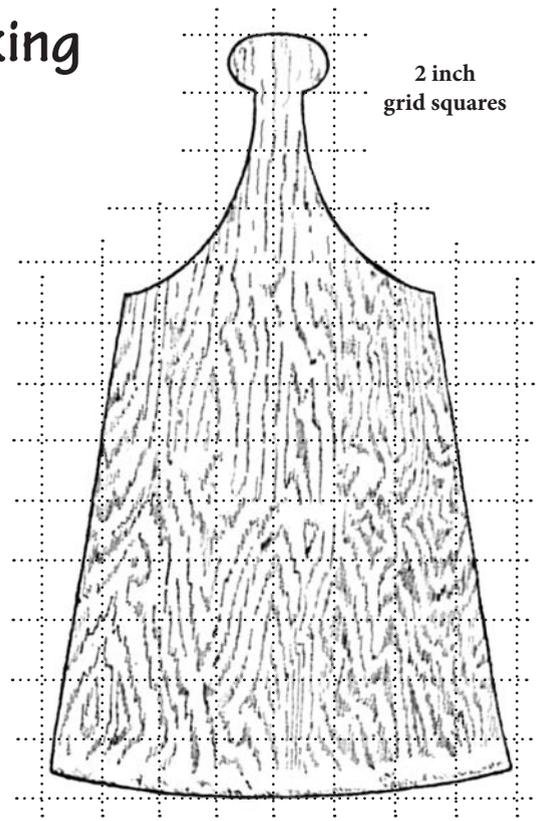
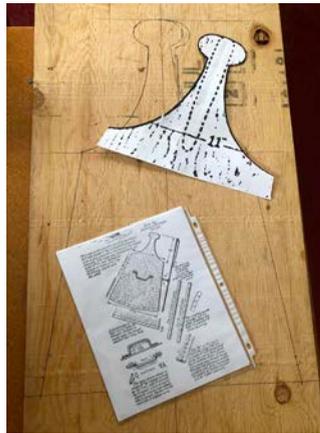


Illustration from
Indian Camp & Handicraft, 1938

If you don't have access to a copy machine that will enlarge, simply make a graph and enlarge the pattern the old-school way. Create a 2" grid on large paper and match the lines of the pattern to the grid. It will create a 15½ x 24" shovel.



The handle can be tricky, so enlarged copies can be made and taped together.

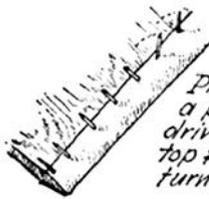
Make A Table-Top Forge



Here's a nifty little *dodge*. Create a table-top forge by drilling a soft fire brick with an 1½" wide wood bit with an extension on it. Drill a

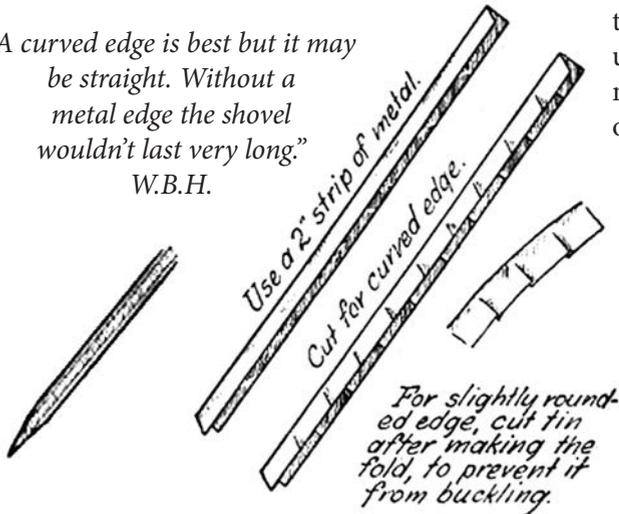
½" hole in the side of the brick to accommodate the nozzle of a MAP gas torch. To make a larger forge, simply draw lines on the brick and saw along them down to the arc, and chip the material out. Use a rasp to make the ½-hole smooth and round. Glue the halves together with furnace cement and bind them securely with tie wire. Insert the round stock into the forge - it heats amazingly fast. Make the ¾" bend first for the handle anchor, then heat it again to make another bend at 2½" for the height of the handle. The small forge barely has space, but it works. Cut the rod to allow for a 4" wide handle and material for the 2 bends on the remaining end. Reheat it, make the ¾" bend then make the matching 2½" bend, and quench it. DW

Reinforce the Shovel Edge By Ben Hunt



Use $\frac{5}{8}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ " nails.
Place the edge flat on
a piece of soft wood and
drive the nails thru both
top & bottom of tin. Then
turn ends over. (Cinch them.)

"A curved edge is best but it may
be straight. Without a
metal edge the shovel
wouldn't last very long."
W.B.H.



Use a 2" strip of metal.

Cut for curved edge.

For slightly round-
ed edge, cut tin
after making the
fold, to prevent it
from buckling.

Sand the edge of the shovel to a nice tapered point, bend the tin on the edge of a workbench with a hammer or use a press-break, snip gores (pie-shaped wedge cuts) into the tin every 1" to 1 1/2" to allow the tin to bend and form to the curve of the shovel without overlapping. You can drill 2 holes in each flap between the gores and hammer a clinching nail through each hole and the wood - the nail bends on itself when it hits the metal on the other side. An anvil or clinching iron can be used to back the tin on the backside and clinch the nail. Flip the shovel over and do the same on the other side.

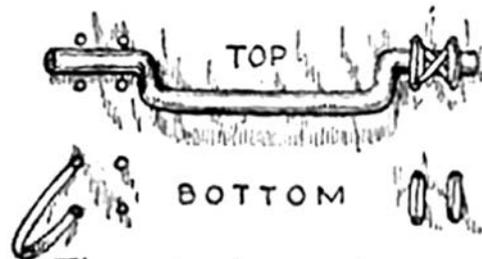
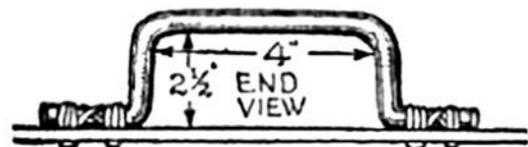


Close-up of a gore cut into the tin strip.

The Metal Handle



This appears to be the flaw in the design. The number of holes drilled to attach it to the wood creates a weak spot and has the potential for tearing out under hard use. Perhaps some reinforcing on the back side might help.



The grip shown above is made of $\frac{3}{8}$ " copper tubing or $\frac{1}{4}$ " iron rod. It should be "hinged," since a rigid handle would soon break the plywood. Fasten it with rawhide or copper wire.

The Wooden Snow Shovel

A Winter Project 2022 - David Wescott



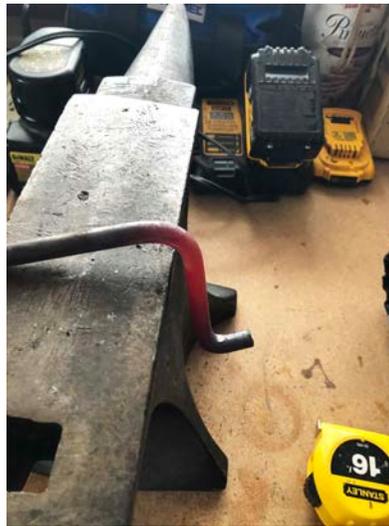
Mark a centerline on the plywood and position the pattern on it. Trace the handle pattern.



Measure the width of the tip and draw the sides. Use a string and pencil to create a compass to mark the arc.



Cut curves with a jig saw or coping saw. Use a table saw or rip saw for straight cuts.



Heat and bend the 3/8" handle stock.



Anchor the handle with wire.



Glue and nail the reinforcing strip.



Securely tack and bend the edge fin. These are self-clinching nails.



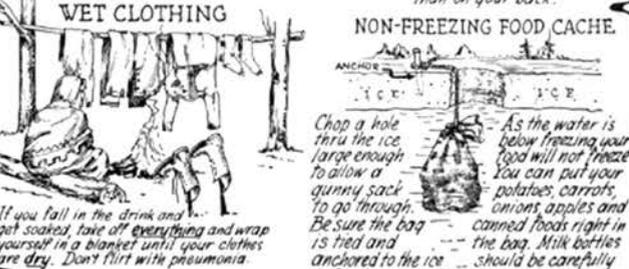
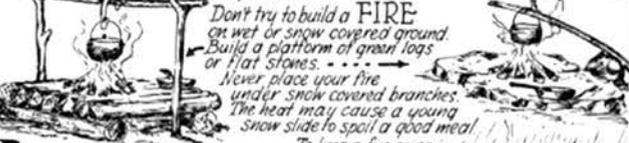
"Swell for cleaning up a campsite." Ben Hu

WRINKLES FOR WINTER CAMPING

.....W. BEN. HUNT.....HALES CORNERS, WIS.....

Winter in the United States means cold weather and snow in some sections, rain in other areas, and some places just plain cold weather. The suggestions offered below are to make winter camping a pleasure instead of a chore.

3 SHELTERS THAT CAN BE HEATED WITHOUT STOVES.



• Materials Required

- Plywood Scrap - 16" x 26"
- Scrap Lumber - 12" long 2x2"
- Tin Strip - 2" wide by 16" long
- 3/8 inch round bar - 13" piece
- Tie (Bailing)Wire
- Nails
- Shellac/Varnish/Linseed Oil

• Tools Required

- Tin Snips - Wire Cutters
- Gas Table-Top Forge
- Hammer & Anvil or Clinching Iron
- Coping Saw
- Rip Saw
- Hack Saw
- Drill and bits
- Sand Paper

• Optional Tools

- Table Saw
- Jig Saw
- Orbital Sander
- Press Break

Illustrations and Notes

Old vs New

We have a tendency to compare old to new - how much nicer it is and how much better we have it. This is incorrect. To see true value, we should compare old technology to nothing at all. To compare a stone knife to a metal knife is unrealistic; but to compare a stone knife to no knife at all is heaven. One would have to compare this shovel to how hard it is to move snow with just a snowshoe or by hand. A wooden snow shovel is of limited use, but when used properly, under ideal conditions, and with no alternative tools, it's superior to nothing.

1938 - Hunt, William Ben

Indian Snowshoes of Wood, Indian & Camp Handicraft with Fred Schmidt.

1944 - Hunt, William Ben

Wrinkles For Winter Camping, Boy's Life magazine, December 1944

1956 - Hunt, William Ben

Eskimo Snow Shovel, Boy's Life magazine, December 1956

* Historically, it is believed the word "Eskimo" was derived from a Montagnais (Innu) word that means netters or lacers of snowshoes. It is now considered outdated and derogatory, and the name *Inuit* is preferred. It is used here only in it's historic context and not meant to perpetuate anything offensive.