

RIVETS AND TRUNNELS

By Oliver Cameron
with Ole Wik

Rivets

I remember that you used to make your own rivets.¹

I did, especially in making stoves. If I didn't have store-bought stove rivets, which I usually didn't, I'd take a 20d nail, clamp it in my vise, and cut off as much as I needed. I'd leave enough that I could peen both ends over.

The steel in imported nails is much softer. If you don't know how to cuss, just try driving some of those nails. But they do make pretty good rivets.

Did you use them in leather work?

Not that kind of rivet, but I did have split rivets and the big-headed copper rivets with a washer. It's good to have them around.



Copper rivets with washers. Image:

<http://www.lazybgeneralstore.com/leather-care-accessories/>

What are split rivets?

The end of them is split, and each side of the split is a little bit tapered. When you drive one against something solid, it spreads out on both sides.



Split rivet. Image:

<http://www.apexfasteners.com/fasteners/rivets/split-rivets>

Are they made of steel?

No, copper.

What did you use them for?

Fastening leather together. Some people use them for their knife and axe holsters. They're easy to work with, and they don't get cut like thread would.

Did you ever use them in making harnesses?

No. One time I tried making some leather harness, with light leather doubled over and sewed up, but I never had occasion to use rivets. I just sewed it together. That was the only time.

When I first started making dog harness, all we had was cotton webbing, not nylon. I used to buy webbing in huge rolls, maybe 100' in a roll, and I always had it on hand.

What were some of your other uses for rivets?

I don't think of anything right off, but I've used them for a lot of different things, like putting knife handles on.



Commercial knife handle rivets. Image:

<http://atomictoasters.com/2012/05/replacing-a-knife-handle/>

Trunnels

Do you know what a trunnel is? It's a contraction of "tree nail".



Round trunnell. Image source:

http://www.worldwideflood.com/ark/design_calculations/tree_nails.htm

You make a round hole and take a square peg. The diameter of the peg is almost the diameter of the hole. You put that in there and put an edge on each end of the trunnel so it's fastened in there solid.



Mortise and tenon joint, pinned together with trunnel. Image:

<http://historichouseblog.com/2013/06/24/what-do-you-call-it-carpenters-marks/>

If you want to put a peg in a wall, you make a little cut in the end and start a wedge in it. You stick the wedge end of the trunnel in the hole you've drilled, and tap it in. As the trunnel goes down onto that wedge, the wedge spreads the end of the trunnel apart, and it's solid.

1) This essay stems from a series of telephone conversations that Ole Wik had with Oliver between December 2007 and February 2008. Highlighted text indicates remarks made by Ole.