

Quick and Easy OZARK Character

Simple cuts bring this country
caricature to life in no time

By Mike Shipley

I've been carving Ozark characters for quite some time. They sell very well for me and I enjoy carving a wide variety of personalities. Even though the basic technique is the same, it's easy to make each one unique by shifting a few cuts.

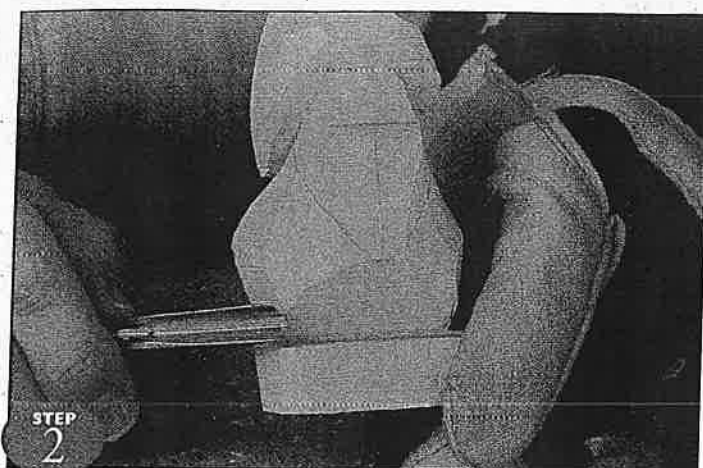
I'm a production carver, so it's important for me to be able to carve and paint my projects quickly. I carve basswood because it is soft enough to carve easily with hand tools, but it holds detail well. Then I paint my projects with acrylic paint washes—that way the paint dries quickly too.

Start by roughing out your blank on a bandsaw. Keep the blank blocky to start—it's easier to carve wood off than it is to add it back on.

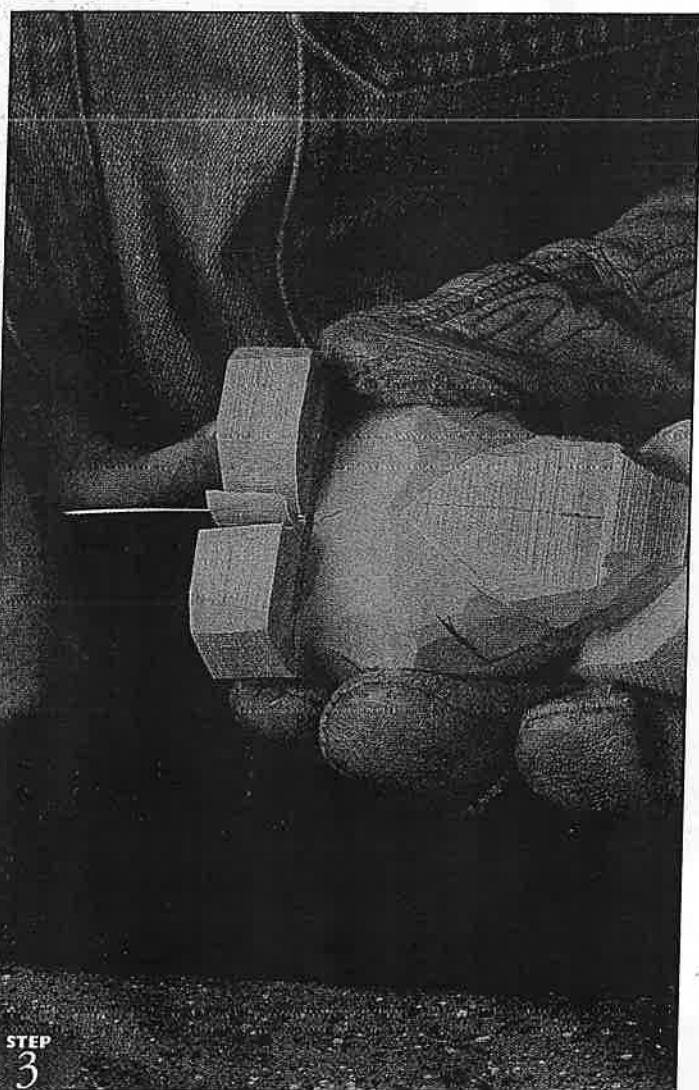




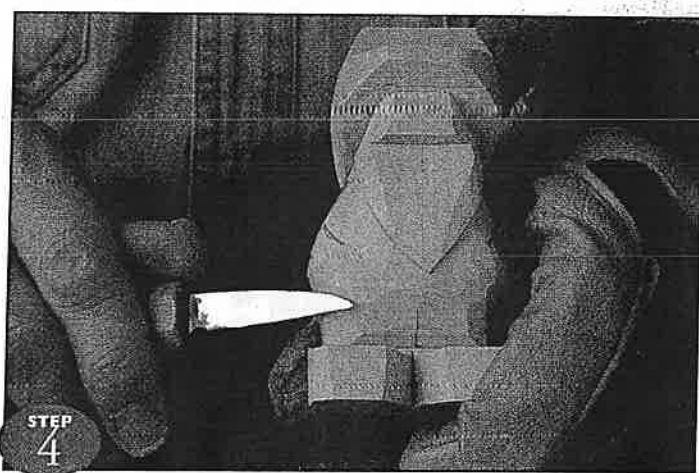
STEP 1
Rough-in the hat brim. Draw a line from the front hat brim to the back of the hat brim on both sides. Connect the lines across the back of the brim. Cut a deep stop cut along these lines with an 8mm V-tool. Use a roughing knife to shave both sides of the head down equally up to the brim.



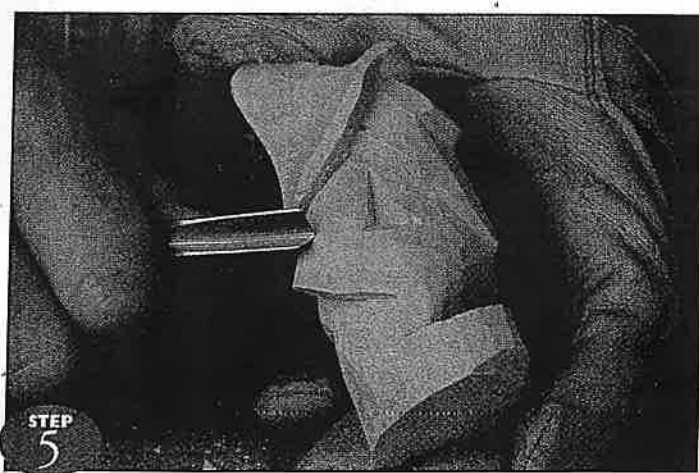
STEP 2
Rough-in the head and body. Shave the head down to about the thickness shown here. Then round the body up to the beard area. Draw on a center line, and sketch the beard line onto the carving. The beard can have various shapes, so the shape of the beard is not critical.



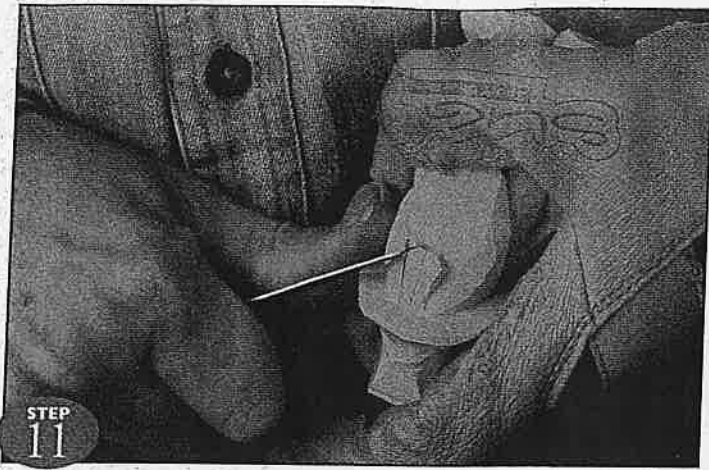
STEP 3
Carve the shoes. Use the center line to find the center of the shoes, and use a roughing knife to make a V-shaped cut. The cut should be wider at the shoe toes and come to a "V" at the legs. Round the pant legs on all sides with a roughing knife.



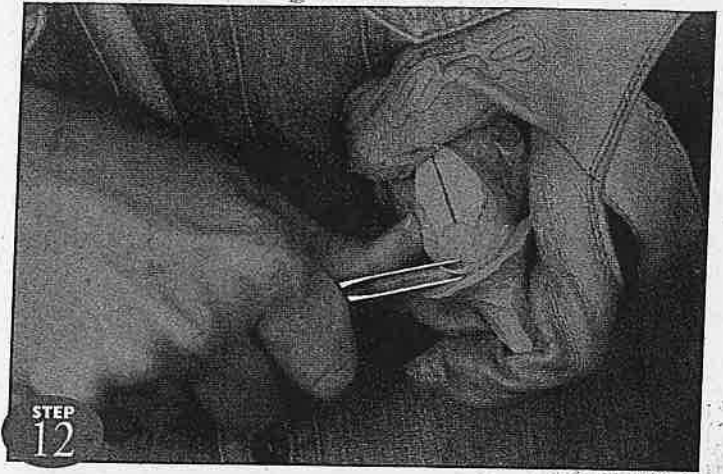
STEP 4
Make a stop cut at the beard line. Use an 8mm V-tool. Clean up to the line with a roughing knife. Round and clean the body up to the beard, using the beard line as a stop cut. You want a nice, clean cut where the body and beard meet. Clean up the lower body down to the shoes.



STEP 5
Carve the arms. Pencil-in the arm lines. Notice that the elbow is visible; this gives a guide line for the arm. Use an 8mm V-tool to cut in the arm lines. Use the sides of the V-tool to clean the side of the body and the arm. Use a V-tool as much as possible, finish the shaping with a roughing knife.



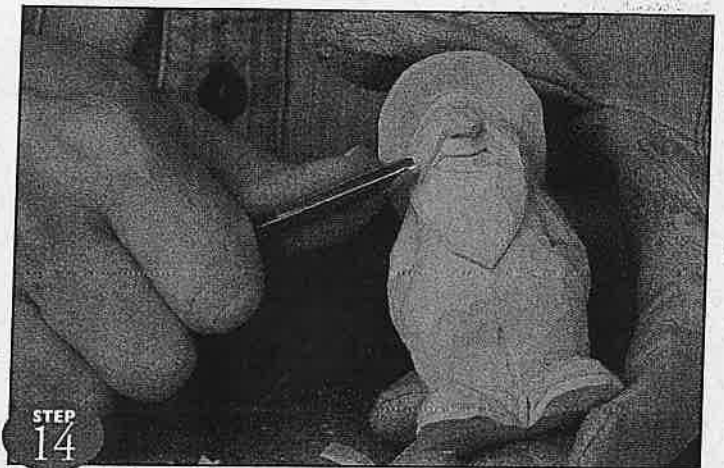
STEP 11
Use the center line to locate the nose. Pencil-in a wide, triangular nose, and cut straight into the lines with a detail knife, making a stop cut. Remove wood from each side of the nose. Then cut the lower corners of the nose.



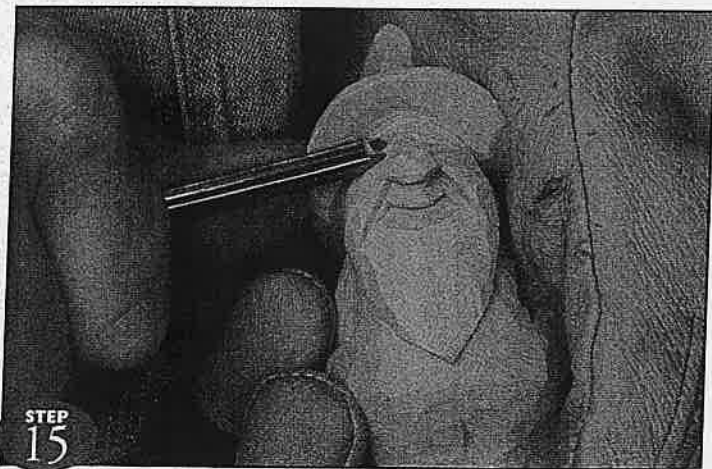
STEP 12
Cut the eyebrow with a 4mm V-tool. Make a cut across the face just under the hat brim. Leave enough wood for the width of the eyebrow.



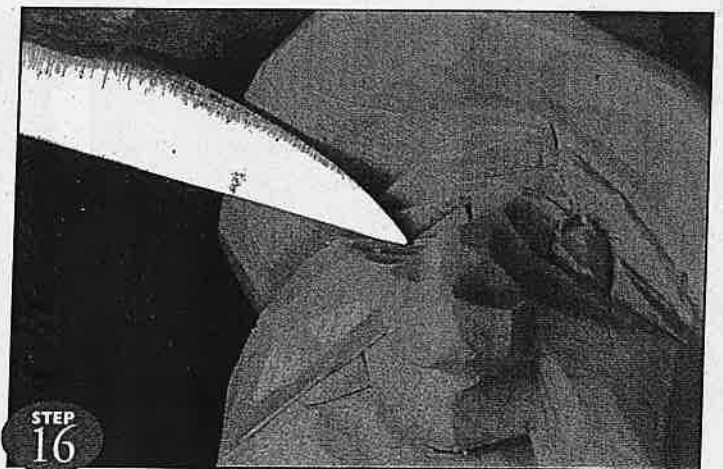
STEP 13
Shape the cheeks. Pencil-in the cheek lines, and cut straight into the cheek lines with a detail knife. Cut straight in under the bottom corner of the nose on both sides. Then round out the mouth area. The cuts will give you separation between the mouth and the cheeks.



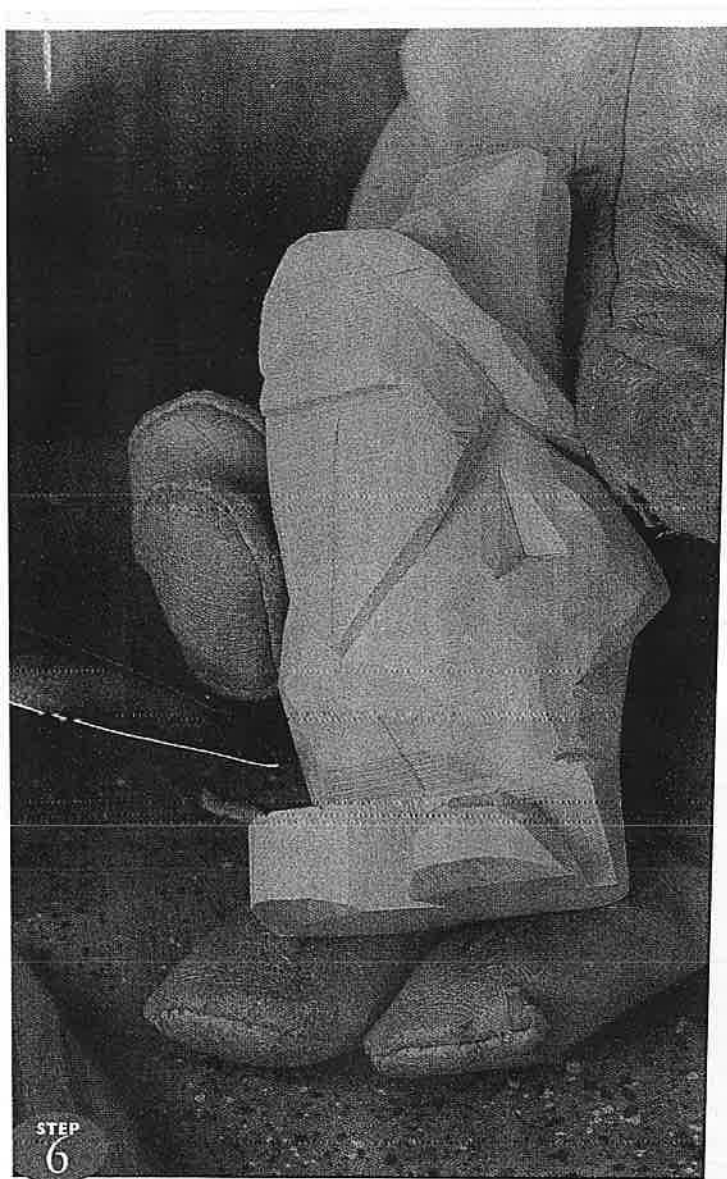
STEP 14
Shape the mouth. With a detail knife, cut a smiling mouth. Make a downward cut at each corner of the mouth. Trim the edge of the lower lip, and use the cuts in the corners of the mouth to tuck the lip into the corners of the mouth. Use a 3mm deep gouge to make a cut under the lip to raise it.



STEP 15
Shape the eyes. Use a 3mm deep gouge to scoop out shallow eye sockets. When the gouge reaches the bridge of the nose, release the pressure, and gently ride up on the nose leaving it higher than the eye socket. Use the same deep gouge to cut shallow scoops for the nostrils. Separate the eyebrows by making a V-shaped cut with a detail knife between them.

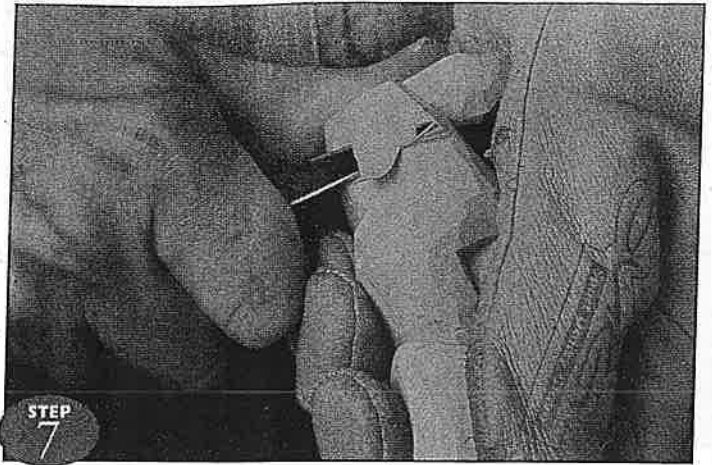


STEP 16
Carve in the eyes. Start with a horizontal cut across each eye socket. The eye will simply be a horizontal line with a half moon cut on top of that. Start at the end of the horizontal cut next to the nose, and make a half-moon cut over the horizontal one—this is the eye ball. With a comical guy like this the size of the eyeball can vary.



STEP
6

Shape the shoes. Round both shoes to the same size. Notice the cut under the toe of the shoe—this turns the shoe upwards and gives the shoe some character.



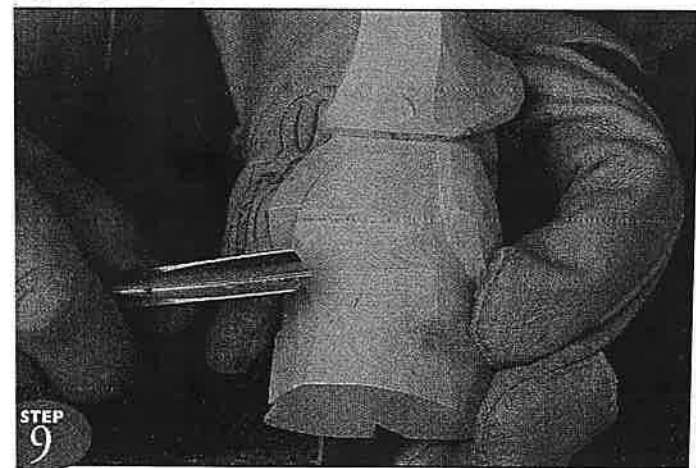
STEP
7

Shape the pant legs. Round both legs equally. Pay attention to the grain change at the back of the legs—be sure to carve with the grain.



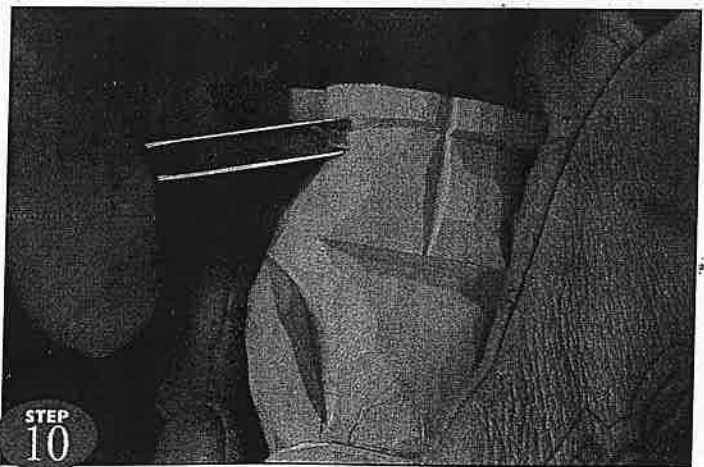
STEP
8

Shape the hat. Use a roughing knife. The final shape is really up to you.



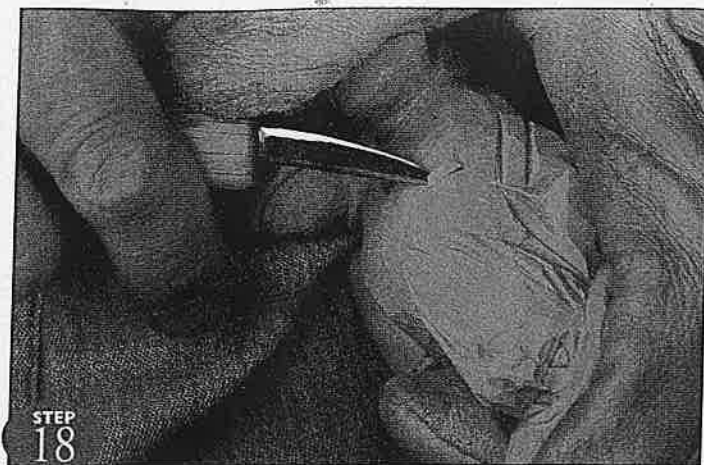
STEP
9

Shape the back and rump. Pencil-in the arm lines on the back side, and cut along those lines with an 8mm V-tool. Again, use the sides of the V-tool on the arm and body. After both arms are finished, clean and shape the back and rump.



STEP
10

Carve the pant leg cuff. Use a 4mm V-tool. Make the V-tool cut all the way around the pant legs, and use the knife to slope the pant leg down to the cuff. Take care to get a clean cut around the cuff. Use a 4mm V-tool to cut the leg lines. Carve-in the shoe soles using the same V-tool.



Detail the clothing. Pencil-in the shirt sleeve lines where the hand enters the pocket. Also pencil-in the overalls. With a 4mm V-tool, cut the clothes lines front and back. Switch to a 2mm V-tool to add in whisker lines.

Carve some patches in various places. With the knife tip, cut a square. Then trim the edges of the patch inside the square. Go back, and add some V-cuts to the hat and at the bend of the arms to simulate wrinkles.

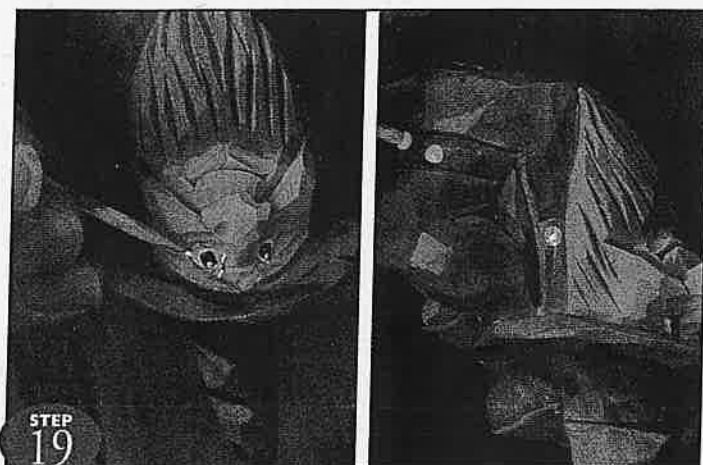
Materials & TOOLS

MATERIALS:

2 1/8" x 2" x 4" basswood
 Delta Ceramcoat paints: White, Black, Tomato Spice, Navy Blue
 Apple Barrel Flesh paint
 Folkart Coffee Bean Brown paint
 Assorted other colors of choice for patches
 Antiquing Stain: Boiled linseed oil mixed with a small amount of raw umber oil paint and 25% mineral spirits

TOOLS:

2mm V-tool
 4mm V-tool
 8mm V-tool
 3mm deep gouge
 Detail knife with a 1/4" blade
 Knife with a 2" blade
 Roughing knife with a 2 1/4" blade
 Awl
 Pounce wheel
 4/0 spotter brush, toothpick
 #1, #2, #3, and #4 shader brushes



Use a toothpick to add a small white dot on the painted eye. Notice how this highlights the eye. Cut the tip off of a toothpick and dot the buttons on the shirt sleeve and the overalls.

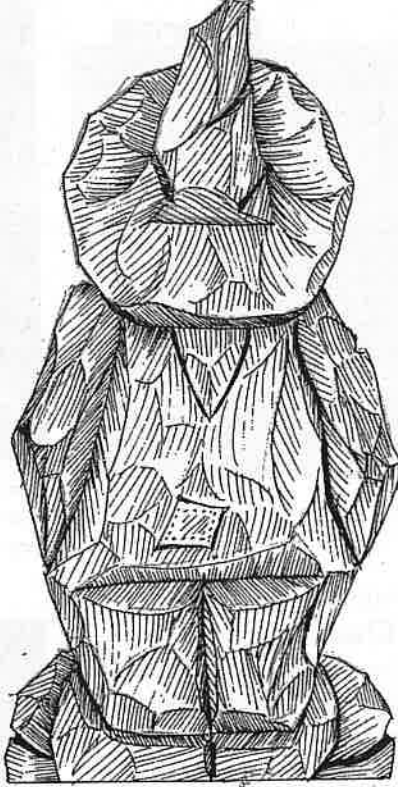
Painting the Country Character

Start by diluting the paints with about three parts water to one part paint. Paint the overalls Navy Blue, the shirt Tomato Spice, the shoes Burnt Umber, the hat Black, and the face Flesh. Go back and paint the beard and eyebrows Coffee Bean Brown. Paint the patches with assorted colors (to get the country look).

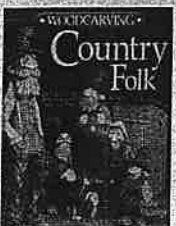


Use an awl to punch thread holes on the buttons and a pounce wheel to roll stitches on the patches. Let the paint dry for approximately 30 minutes and dip the carving into an antiquing mixture of boiled linseed oil, mineral spirits and a little raw umber oil paint. Wipe off any excess antiquing mixture.





**Further
READING**



By Mike Shipley
Woodcarving Country Folk
 While Mike designed this Country Figure especially for *Wood Carving Illustrated*, he shares more of his Ozark caricatures in his new book *Woodcarving Country Folk*. The book includes step-by-step instructions and patterns for 12 other whimsical characters.

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About the Author
 Mike Shipley is a professional, production woodcarver and has been carving for 30 years. Mike and his wife Sherry teach classes around the country and Mike has published five how-to woodcarving books. His last article for *Wood Carving Illustrated* was "Woodcarving the Country Bear and His Friends," which appeared in Spring 2004 (Issue 26). For more information, write to Mike at Rt. 1 Box 4490, Dora, MO 67637, www.ozarkcountycharacters.com/.