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# Gilded Scroll Shelf

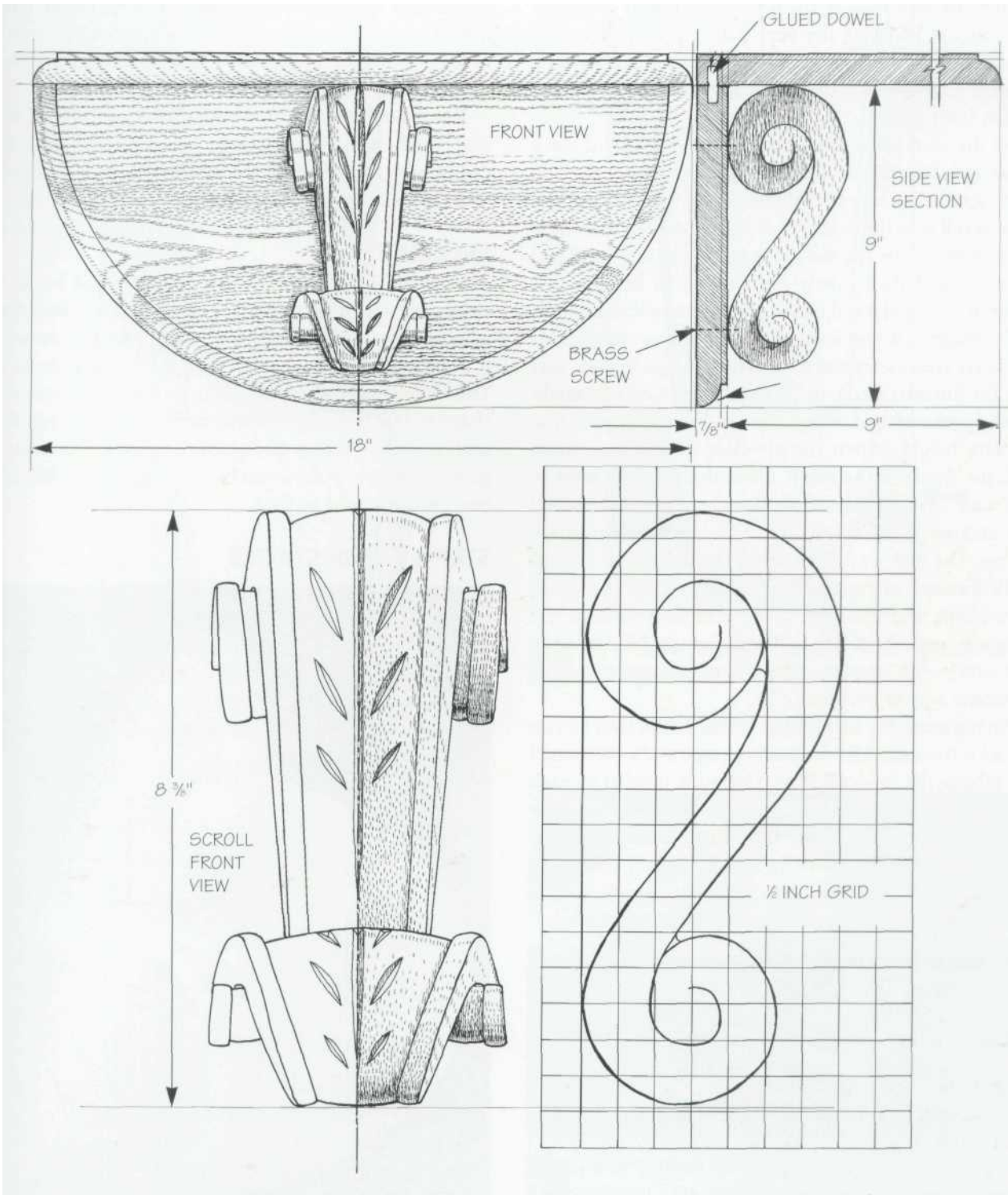


**M**y dictionary defines a console shelf as being an ornamental bracket—especially one used to support a bust—while a scroll is described as being a decorative carving in the form of a stylized roll of parchment. Okay, not very exciting you might think, just a shelf and a bracket. But give the shelf a semicircular form and an ogee-type lip profile, embellish the scroll with a wee bit of carving and coat of gold paint, and then put the two together, and suddenly—Pow!—you have a really special eye-catching item, a truly unique and dynamic piece of woodwork.

## **MAKING THE SHELF**

The actual shelf is very straightforward—really no more than two half-circles butted and dowelled at right angles. That said, you do have to be mindful at the layout stage that the top board—the one that will become the shelf surface—needs to measure the radius of the circle from front to back, plus the thickness of the wood.

Use a compass, ruler and square to set out the wood: Fret the two forms out with a band saw. Use a router or moulding plane to cut the lip profile. Then use glue and hidden dowels to butt the forms together at right angles.



## MAKING THE BRACKET

Having chosen your block of easy-to-carve wood, press transfer the side view of the scroll through to the wood and then cut it out on the band saw. Then run a center line down the front face. Next, take some masking tape and use it to establish the tapered shape of the scroll as seen in front view.

Set the workpiece side-down on the bench and use a mallet and shallow-sweep straight gouge to lower the side of the scroll. The best way of visualizing the lowered side of the scroll is to think of it as a mountain road that starts at the center of the big end of the scroll, curls around and downhill, and then slowly back uphill to finish at the center of the small scroll. Staying with this mountain-and-roads imagery, if you leave the scroll on its side, and if you lower your viewpoint to bench level, you will see that with the finished scroll, the scroll centers—or you might say the peaks around which the roads curl—are both at the same height. When you are clear in your own mind as to the shape of the scroll, carve down to the level of the "road" on one side of the scroll, then flip the scroll over and work the other side in identical mirror-image reverse. The best way of ensuring that the scroll is symmetrical as seen in front view is to slightly lower the "road" on one side and then the other, and then back to the other side, and so on. You will find that this little-by-little approach—with constant reference to the center line—is the easiest way to proceed.

Having made the sides of the scroll, turn it over so you can see it front-on. Use the masking tape and a soft pencil to establish the 1/4"-wide track that runs parallel to each side edge. When you are happy with the guidelines, use a knife and gouge to work and model the central area until it is lowered by about 3/16" and is slightly convex.

When you have what you consider is a well-formed and modeled scroll, use the graded sandpapers to rub it

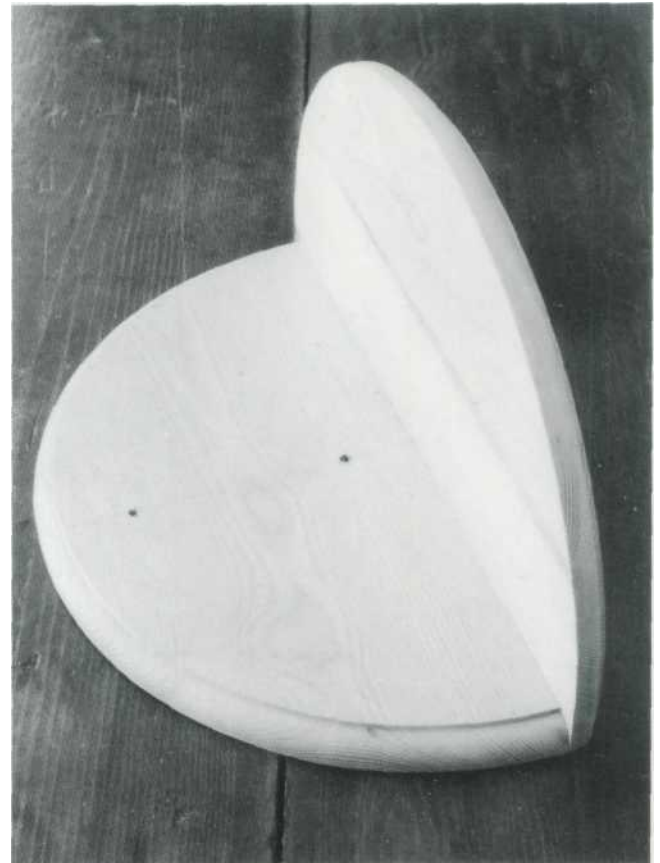
down to a smooth finish. Make sure that all the nooks and creases are crisp and clean. This done, draw the stylized foliage imagery on the front face of the scroll, incise it with the knife, and then give the whole works a coat of matte white undercoat paint, followed by a coat of best-quality gold paint.

Run a couple holes in from the back of the shelf support, use brass screws to fix the bracket to the shelf, and finally give the whole works a coat of thin varnish and/or a burnishing with beeswax polish.

## SPECIAL TIP

Though generally in woodcarving your wood has to be attractive, straight-grained, free from splits and knots and relatively easy to carve, there are times when, as the wood is to be painted, you don't have to worry about its looks. This being the case, you could go for an inexpensive, characterless but easy-to-carve variety like jelutong. That said, if you relish the notion of the project but want to go for a uniform plain wood blond look, then I think your best choice would be lime.

## STEP-BY-STEP STAGES



1 Butt the two halves of the shelf together and fit with glue and secret dowels.

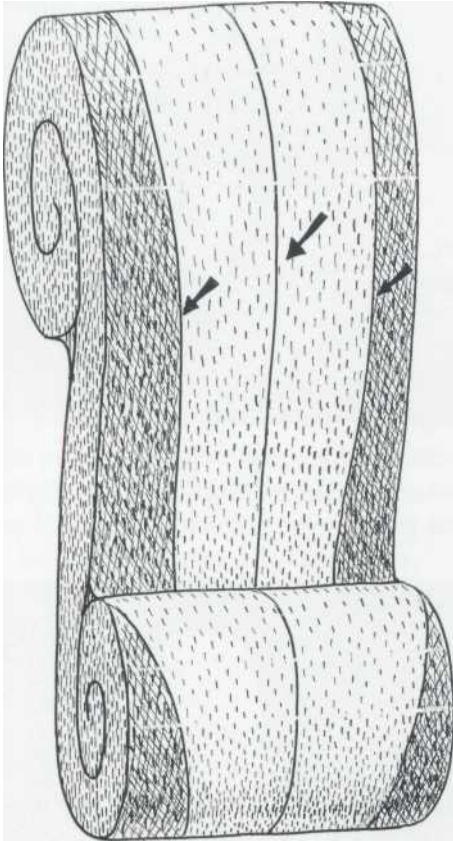
## MATERIALS LIST

### SHELF BRACKET

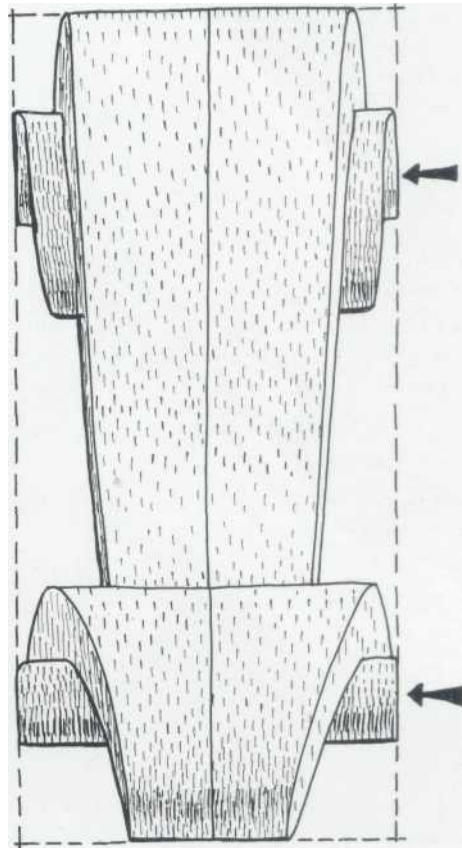
- A Top of shelf (1)  $7/8" \times 9 7/8" \times 18"$
- B Back board (1)  $7/8" \times 9" \times 18"$
- C Carved bracket (1)  $4" \times 5" \times 10"$

### HARDWARE AND EXTRAS

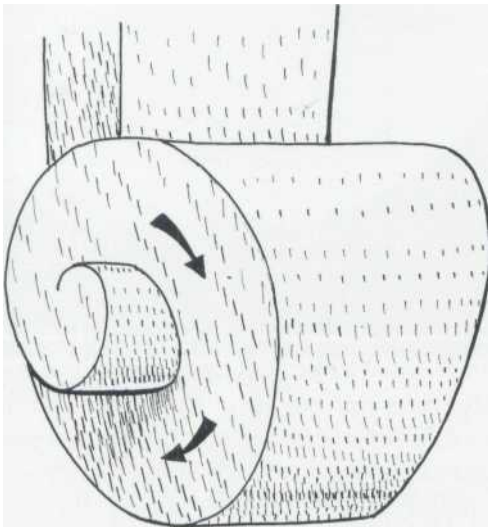
- D 2" brass countersunk screws (2)
- E White matte undercoat paint
- F Best-quality yellow-gold paint or gilding paste



2 When you have made the blank and used the masking tape to establish the shape of the bracket as seen in front view, shade in the waste that needs to be cut away. Note that the arrows indicate the center line and the sides.



3 If you have carved it correctly, you will see that the scroll peaks are at the same level.



4 The mountain road analogy perfectly describes how the side-face curls down, around and up. Be watchful as you lower the "road" that the "cliff face—meaning the face that in this view goes vertically up from the road and through to the peak—is cleanly worked.



5 Use a knife to clean up the sides and to deepen the stop-cut that defines the depth and shape of the camber.



6 The incised cuts are best worked with three strokes: one stop-cut to set in the center line and to establish the depth of the incision, followed up by an angled cut at each side to establish the width of the incision and to remove the waste.



7 Be careful when you are working the top of the small scroll that you don't dig too deeply into what will be end grain.



8 Having used a ruler and square to draw in the center line, do a dry-run fit of the scroll. Establish the position of the screw holes by taking your eye-level down to the face of the wood and identifying the scroll-to-shelf contact points.

## GILDING THE SCROLL BRACKET

Woodworkers are forever coming up with new and exciting ideas. I'm sure you know what I mean. One moment you are half way through a project, and the next . . . Eureka! A new idea or variation springs to mind. And so it was with this project. The moment I had finished describing how to carve the bracket and give it a lick of gold paint, it suddenly occurred to me that perhaps it would be more in keeping with the wood carving tradition to gild the bracket.

Though gilding is a technique that requires a good deal of time and patience, the end result is stunning, well worth the effort. There are two methods of gilding: oil and water. I have opted for what is best described as the shortcut oil technique. That is to say, I follow the whole procedure for the gold painting, and then finish up with the gilding.

## THE GILDING PROCEDURE

Give the finished carving a couple of coats of matte white undercoat paint followed by a coat of gold paint, and wait for the paint to dry. Then take a piece of fine-grade sandpaper and rub the carving down to a smooth-to-the-touch finish—the smoother the better.

Being mindful that the oil gold size dries in about 25 minutes, give a small area at the back of the bracket a swift thin coat. When the size is tacky—almost dry—slide one of the gold leaf sheets out onto the plywood and cut it into small postage-stamp pieces. Press straight down with the lull length of the blade.

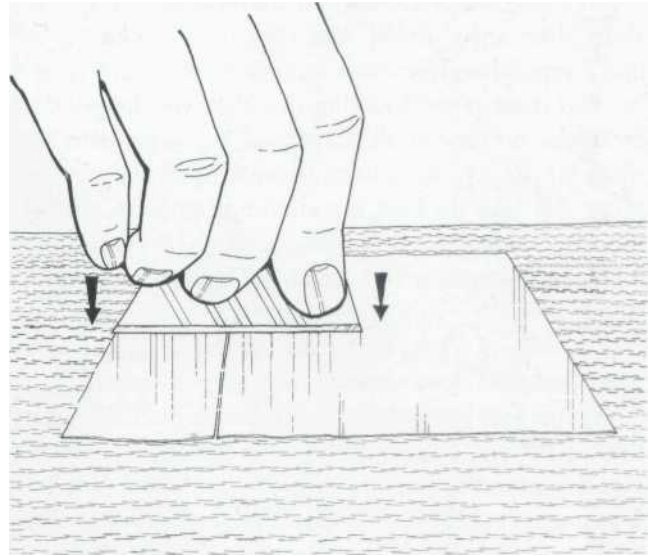
Now for the tricky part! Take the brush or tip, pass it a couple of times over your hair to increase the static, and then touch it down so that it picks up a small piece of gold leaf. Lay the gold leaf down onto the tacky size and dab it into place with a pad of lint-free cotton cloth. Take up the second piece of gold leaf and lay it down alongside the first so that there is a slight overlap. Continue until the whole surface of the bracket is covered in gold.

Finally, dust the surface with a dry brush to remove loose pieces of gold, and the job is done.

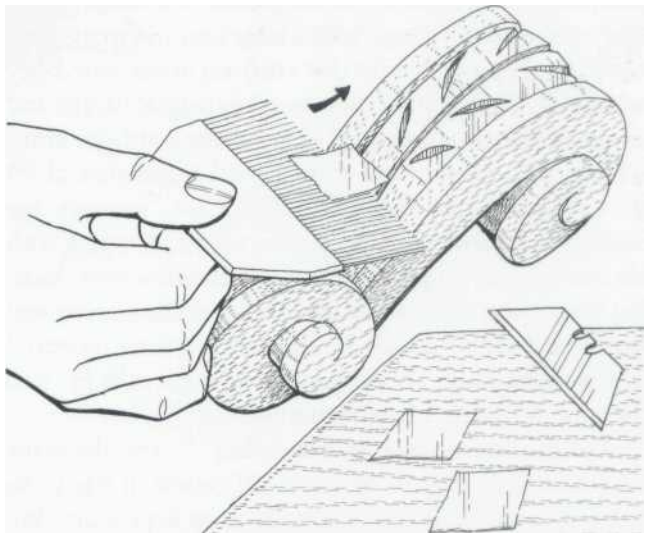
### MATERIALS LIST: OPTION

- A Quick-drying oil gold size
- B 25-leaf book of gold leaf—or metal leaf (imitation gold) at a quarter of the price
- C Gilder's brush or tip
- D Craft knife blade
- E Piece of easy-to-hold plywood (12"×12")

## STEP-BY-STEP STAGES



- 1 Having made sure that everything is clean, dry and free from dust—your hands, the blade and the plywood—take the blade and press the whole length of the cutting edge down hard on the gold leaf. Make the cut by slightly rocking the blade.



- 2 Wipe the brush over your hair to increase the static, then swiftly pick up the gold leaf and lay it down on the tacky gold size. Press the leaf down with a clean cotton pad.

## COMBINATION AND MULTIPLANES

I don't like routers. Okay, so maybe they are the best thing since sliced bread. Yes, they do a wonderful job, and I agree that they aren't as expensive as they used to be, and there is no doubting that they get the job done in almost no time at all. I know all the arguments. The thing is, I don't like routers because of all the dust and noise. But how do I cut my moldings, grooves, tongues, rounds, hollows and all the other profiles? Well, the beautifully simple answer is, I use an old Stanley 45 combination plane.

The Stanley 45 is, to my way of thinking, one of the most beautiful woodworking tools ever invented.

It came into being at the end of the nineteenth century, when there was a huge push by the iron plane manufacturers to come up with a single do-it-all plane. You have to remember that up until that time, every type and size of slot, tongue, fillet and fancy profile needed to be worked with a dedicated plane. Can you imagine? If you were a keen woodworker in the nineteenth century, it's likely you would have needed 40 to 50 or more different wooden moulding planes!

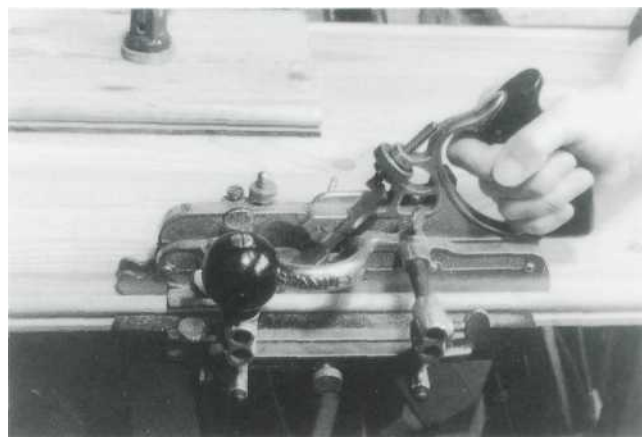
The Stanley 45 is a quality tool, more like a hand-built gun than a plane. It has a main body piece with a sledge-skate sole runner and a rosewood handle; a cutter clamp and integral depth gauge with a large knurled wheel; two nickel steel outrigger arms that are fixed to the main body with screws; a middle section with an integral handle and sledge-skate sole runner that fits onto the outrigger arms; a fence with a rosewood runner; and a selection of 45 plus cutting irons. And as if all that isn't enough, my Stanley 45 is covered in fancy cast metal motifs; dripping with chrome and nickel plate; heavy with thumbscrews, locking nuts, wing nuts, adjusting screws, cutting spurs and knobs; and supplied with the set of cutting irons packaged in a wooden wallet. Better yet, the whole works fits into the most attractive tin presentation box.

And just in case you are wondering . . . yes, the plane does indeed live up to its looks. Of course, it has to be carefully tuned and the irons need to be kept sharp, but that said, it is a most efficient tool.

### Setting up the Plane

As to why Stanley stopped making the "45" way back in the 1960s, who can say. They are still being sought by today's woodworkers, and though they are relatively easy to obtain, the main problem is that most secondhand 45's come disassembled and without the necessary setting, tuning and using instructions.

And just in case you are one of the growing army of avid user-collectors who have a secondhand Stanley 45, and would dearly like to know how it needs to be sorted



**STANLEY COMBINATION PLANE**

*The legendary Stanley 45 in action.*

and tuned, then help is at hand.

The order of setting up or tuning—the way I do it—is as follows. I first select a cutting iron and check that the edge is clean and well honed. If necessary, I wipe it on the oilstone and use a slipstone and a strop to bring the cutter bevel to a razor-sharp, 35° edge. This done, I fit the cutting iron into the groove and adjust the wing nut so that the iron is held in position. Next, I slide the middle sole runner on the outrigger arms and slide it up to the body of the plane so that the blade has a runner at each side edge. If I am going to cut across the run of the grain, I set the spurs so that the little cutter or nicker blade is in the down position. Lastly, I measure and set the fence and the plane is ready for action.

Okay, the plane is well set up and tuned, you have a nice straight-grained piece of wood in the vise, and you are ready to go. The first thing to do is get a household candle and wipe it over the sole and fence of the plane. Certainly it sounds a bit strange, but a couple strokes with the candle will dramatically reduce the friction—it will just about cut your sweat by half. And just in case you don't believe me, try it without the candle—ha!

When you are ready to go, with the depth gauge set, set the runners down on the workpiece so that the fence is hanging over the side edge of the workpiece. Clench that fence hard up against the side edge, and then take repeated passes until the groove, tongue or profile is cut. The best procedure is to start at the end of the wood furthest away from you, and then gradually back up. Of course, you might need to adjust the depth of cut, but if you have it all together, with the plane nicely tuned and set up, the rest is easy.

As I said at the beginning, the Stanley 45 is a beautiful tool: no dust, no deafening noise, no need for a mask or ear plugs, no motors or dangling cables. Just a sweet slickkk . . . slickkk . . . as the paper-thin shavings curl up.

CUTTER BOLT

CUTTER PIN

CUTTER ADJUSTMENT

ROSEWOOD  
HANDLE

CUTTER IRON

SLIDING SOLE

CUTTER NUT

SOLE  
RUNNER

MAIN STOCK

FENCE

NICKER  
SPUR

DEPTH  
GAUGE  
FOOT

FINE  
ADJUSTMENT  
SCREW

ADJUSTMENT  
SCREW

**STANLEY PLANE ANATOMY**

