

# MAKING HAND-HELD STAMPERS & CREASERS



## An Illustrated Lesson

by Bruce Daniels

Hand-held head stamps and creasers are relatively simple to make, easy to store and, on heavy or wide hot shoes, either develop speed or cook the little finger of your hand. For light racehorse work they are much faster. You aren't working over a large volume of hot metal and each nail hole is stamped in three or so blows of the hammer.

But when you heat a piece of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 1" or  $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 1", you either have to be incredibly tough or have a hand-held punch that is so long you never get a fully completed hammer swing. It takes fewer full swing hammer blows to stamp shoes than if the hammer stops only halfway down.

The way to get the full swing of your hammer and still not burn your hand is to make a handled stamp. Now, the simplest method of attaching a handle to a punch is to hold the punch in a pair of tongs and lock them closed with a ring or chain link on the ends.

A better, more durable method is to weld a piece of  $\frac{5}{8}$ " x  $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 8" on as a handle. Harold Tabor started me using stainless rod to join them and I've never had one come off since. For the most part, this is the head stamp we use at my school. By tapering the end so it is similar to a rasp tang, you can slip a rasp handle on it and have some real control of the tool.

But the real super looking tool, the one that works well and makes you look like you know a little about your business, is the head stamp fitted up for a wooden handle. Anyway, the eye hole is a great place to stick the rung off the chair you were going to fix last year or that old hockey stick or even the handle from the shop broom that gave up in 1965.

Making the eye hole can be a problem if you haven't ever seen one made. The first thought most people have is to bore a hole in the stock with a large metal bit. That is really a bad idea because, first of all, you take away too much stock and the sides then are so thin that they are prone to breakage or collapse. Secondly, you end up with a round hole, which is great, if you don't mind the stamp spinning around like a compass.

If these two reasons are not enough to dissuade you from drilling the hole, you will find, in addition, that most steels good enough for bottom tools are difficult to drill. Unless they are super annealed, they just burn up the average drill bit.

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Making an oval hole that is large enough to hold a fair size wooden handle and strong enough in the eye to withstand a lot of hammering, is not difficult.

You will need two round-edge fore punches. The first one should be approximately  $\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $\frac{5}{8}$ " in section and about eight inches in length. The second or finishing punch should be  $\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and finish out an eye hole about the size of a driving hammer handle. I keep a pair of these punches aside for just this job and have little difficulty finding handles that fit. Carriage wheel spokes fit this hole well.

Steel for a creaser or punch should be hard and not make coarse sparks when put to a grinder. Coil springs and torsion bars are not hard enough, in my opinion. Some cold chisels will work well but the cheapest source of high quality tool steel large enough ( $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 1") to make a sturdy tool of this type is the old fence post tamping bar often found on old farms. You know the one I mean. It is either buried in the grass along the fence where it was last used or it is holding a corn crib door shut. I'm quite sure you can make a deal for it.

When you get it home, cut it into two foot lengths with a torch and you're ready to make seven or eight top tools.

I've found that the steel from those fence post tampers needs no hardening. It is ideal for a tool that will spend a lot of time in hot steel.

Whether you make your own shoes or simply want to crease a toe or stamp some extra nail holes in a keg shoe, you will find these tools a great asset.



Figure 1. You should have a variety of creasers and punches if both heavy and light stock is to be worked efficiently.

Figure 2. By cutting in  $\frac{1}{4}$ " all the way around, the stock heats faster and keeps the handle cooler.

Over the base of the anvil, drive a forepunch to the bottom. Then turn the stock over and come in from the other side.

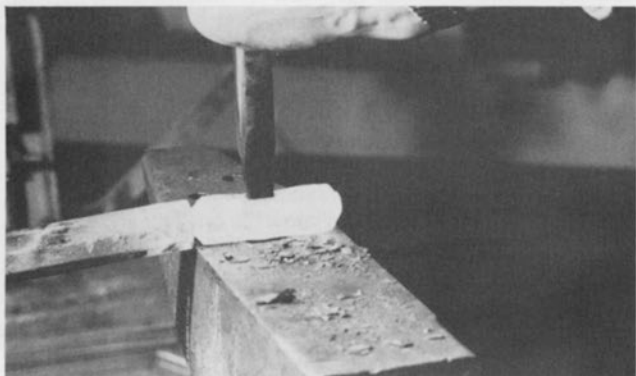
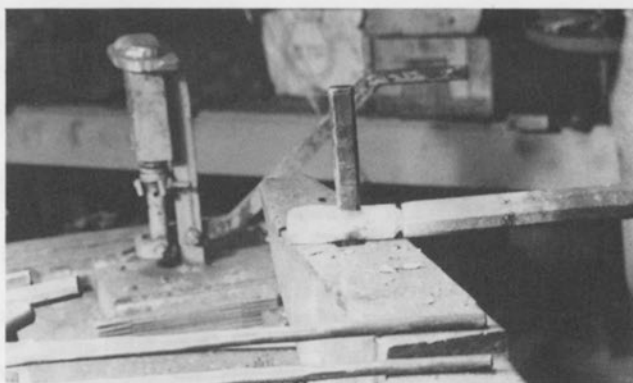


Figure 3. True up the eye hole over a corner of the hardy hole. For less distortion, do this over a partially opened leg vise.



Figure 4. With the punch still in the eye, swell the stock to cover the wood handle well.

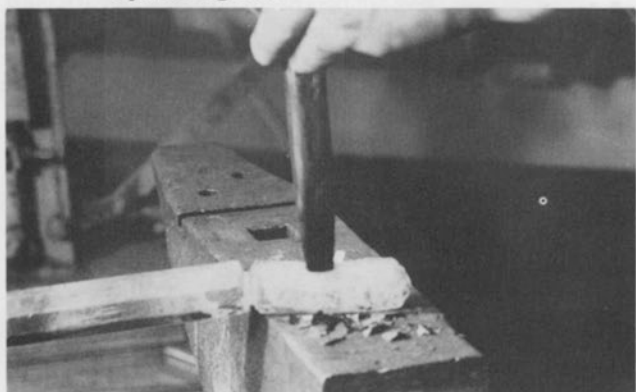


Figure 5. Now go through the eye with a punch about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " longer in section than the first one.



Figure 6. The final straightening out.



Figure 7 Holding the stock flat on the anvil with about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " extended over the far edge, start either your punch or creaser end. Don't let the creaser get over  $\frac{7}{8}$ " wide or you can't make curves.



Figure 8. After you have the shape you want, trim off the excess.



Figure 9. Check the eye for distortion one last time while you still have a "handle" on the stock.

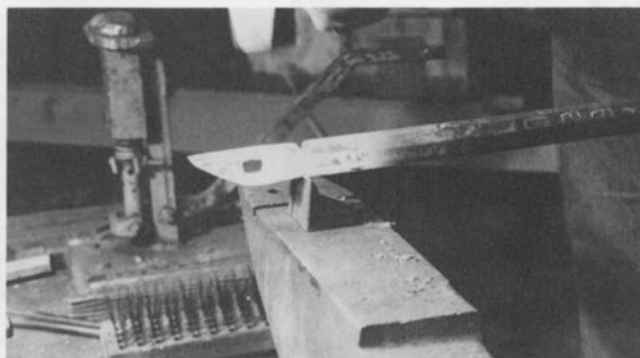


Figure 10. The head will cut off easily with very little distortion and need little or no grinding on the head.

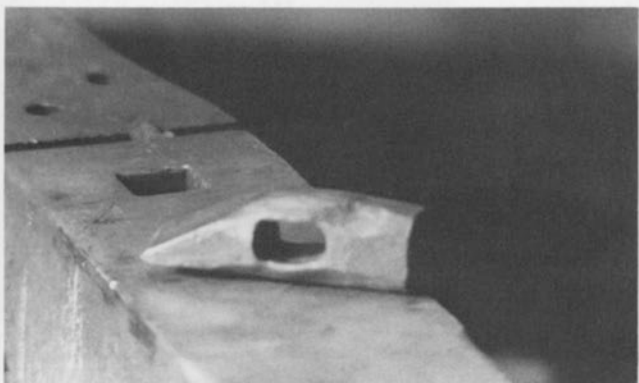


Figure 11. Side view of creaser; note that the eye is large enough but still leaves strength on each side.



Figure 12. Head stamp and creaser, air cooled and ready for final grinding to proper shape.

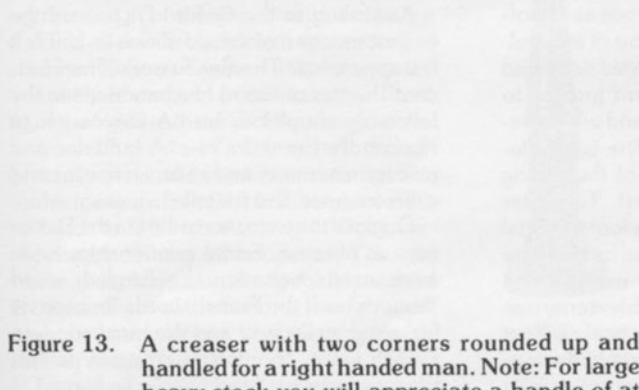


Figure 13. A creaser with two corners rounded up and handled for a right handed man. Note: For large heavy stock you will appreciate a handle of at least 14"

