



Making a Gavel

By Larry Hancock: Turned Treasures

Below are some text and pictures to illustrate the steps I use when making gavels

I start by cutting all the stock for the heads and the handles square and a couple of inches longer than the finished length. I always cut a couple of extra blanks in case I find a defect in the wood while turning.

Once the blanks are cut it's time to start turning but first it helps to have a size and pattern selected for the gavels. There are traditional shapes and sizes for different purpose gavels. I make the gavels for the Oklahoma House of Representatives and there are two sizes, one for use and a second for presentation. The largest size has a head 5 1/2" long by 3" diameter and finished length of 15". Most judicial gavels have heads around 4" long and a diameter of 2 1/2" and an overall finished length of 10 1/2" to 11". Walnut is the most common wood used.

I use a 4-jaw chuck for most all my turning, the squares center themselves in the chuck and I check the tailstock end for center, then tighten the chuck securely. Now I can adjust the toolrest and round the blank for marking out.



This photo shows the use of a storyboard to mark off the transition points for the handle and has the diameters of the major areas written on it along with a half profile of the pattern drawn on the edge. When you need to make several duplicate pieces this is the easiest way to ensure they stay the same.



The handle has been roughed to shape and diameters sized. Now the handle needs final shaping and sanding.



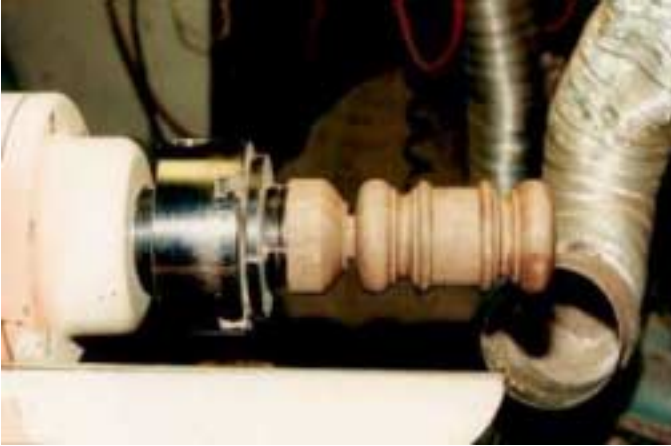
Once the shaping is done, I size the tenon that will be threaded later with a sizing tool set to the exact diameter for the thread I will be using. Once set the sizing tool will insure the exact same diameter on all the handles.



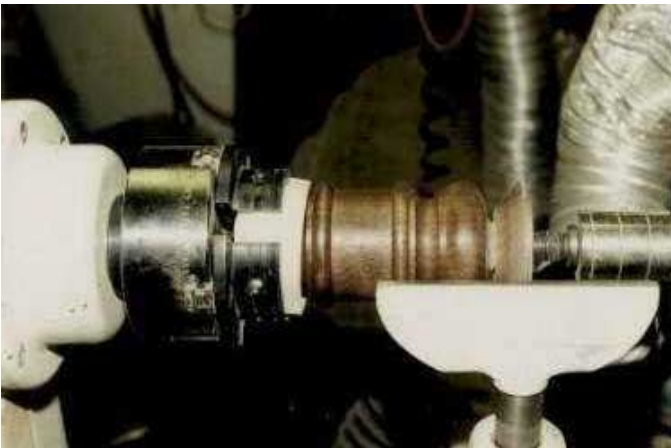
Here is the handle finished on the lathe and ready to be parted off.



For the heads, I have turned them between centers to form a round tenon for the chuck to hold and, using a storyboard, I have already marked off the head and sized the major elements to their diameters



The head is shaped and sanded and ready to have the head reversed and the second face finished. With the piece in the chuck one face can be cut and sanded to a fine finish but the face closest to the chuck cannot be given the same attention so I reverse in the next step so both faces get the same treatment.



With my stronghold chuck and a set of collet jaws with the aluminum inserts removed and dense foam wrapped around the wood I am able to reverse the heads without marring them and finish the second face. The center mark is still in the end of the wood so it is easy to recenter the head and tighten the chuck.



When the turning is done, I drill the heads either on the lathe or in a drill press being very careful to ensure that the hole is perpendicular and drilled exactly in the center of the head. I then use my threading tools to make the male and female threads for the head and handles and glue the handles in. The threads are the answer to avoiding the heads flying off when pounded too hard.



Finished order of gavels ready to be delivered.

Article published with permission. Please visit Larry Hancock's web site at:

[HTTP:// www.homestead.com/turnedtreasures/](http://www.homestead.com/turnedtreasures/)

Showing our Appreciation

The CAW is able to operate effectively and efficiently as a result of volunteered services provided from people both from inside and outside our club. In January, I asked for donations of small turned items (ring bowls, spice boxes, candle holders, weed pots, etc.) as examples of our craft to be given to the man who prints our newsletter free every month. The response was excellent, and included a beautiful tree ornament from C.A. Savoy

We would again like to ask for the same kind of response for items to be given to the person who has hosted our website on their Internet server for the past five years at a 50% discount. To the world outside Washington DC, the impressions and information that people have about our club and its members comes in large part from what they see and read on our website. The quality of the homepage, the speed of loading and response, and the amount of material available on the site (e.g. the gallery of pictures), determines whether people believe that we are a well-run and active club. The WebMaster has a direct and important impact on our reputation and ability to reach out beyond the boundaries of our local area.

The 50% discount allows us to use more funds for other club functions – demonstrators, educational grants, social functions, and top-notch equipment. Help us show our gratitude. Please bring items to be given to the WebMaster to the September meeting or contact Mike McInerney at 703-378-8117.

