

## Silver Wire Inlay

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It seems like the more I make knives, the more I enjoy silver wire inlays in the handles. This extra decoration sets them apart from other maker's work, and sure helps them sell. It is quite easy to do. A few hand tools, circle, oval and French curve templates, fine silver and good pencils are all that you need. Of course, a small chasing hammer and a vice to hold your work, is also essential. Visualizing your pattern and layout is very important. Dynamic proportion (scroll ratio) is important to study and understand. Also positive and negative space is very important and useful. Like most art, your own style will evolve in time.

My customers almost always want silver wire in their knives. In recent years, I have incorporated silver inlay along with relief carving, which I feel has produced a new art form in handles.



Knifemaker: E Jay Hendrickson

Photo By: PointSeven Studios

## THE ART OF SILVER WIRE INLAY

Silver wire inlay is a method of dressing up a knife and a wooden sheath. It is a very old technique. You will see it on old weapons in museums throughout the world. It is enjoyable to do and is a unique art form enjoyed and valued by collectors and those who wish to own a knife with silver wire embellishment.

### TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

Engraver's Vise  
Small Chasing Hammer  
Flat Nose Pliers  
Cut Off Pliers (Snips)  
Small Scissors  
Templates for Drawing  
Set of Fine Pencils (Soft)  
Six Inch Plastic Rule  
Handmade Inlaying Tools  
Precut Patterns

### WORKSPACE:

Use a table with good lighting from both sides and overhead. Work with your back straight because bending over really tires out your neck and back.

### MATERIALS:

Fine Silver (pure.999 Silver)

Nickel (German) Silver Pinning Materials in various sizes 1/32, 1/16, 1/8 are generally used. Gold and Brass can also be used instead of fine silver.

### WOOD:

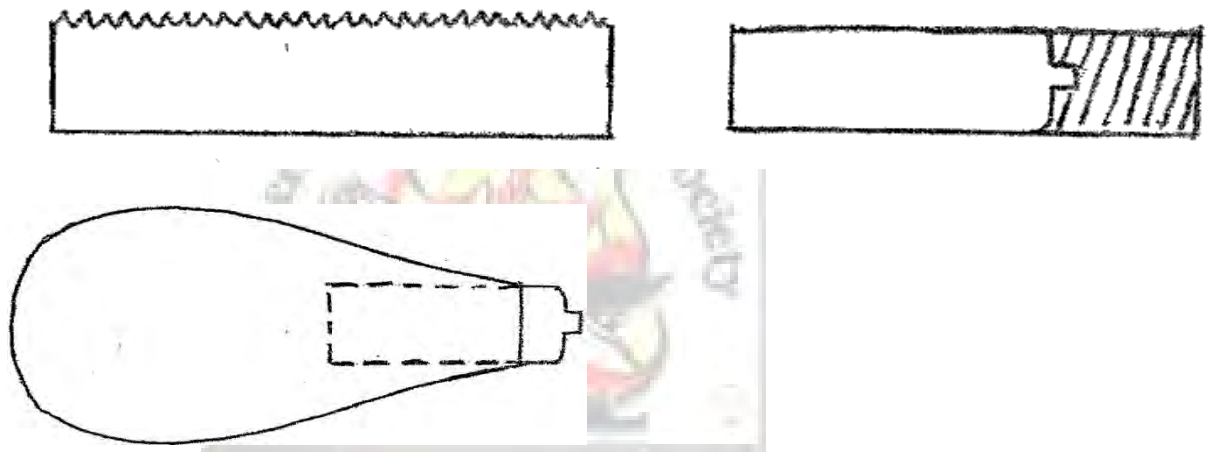
Inlay works extremely good in maple, ash, walnut, oak and other similar woods. Hardwoods, like the Rosewood family are difficult if not almost impossible to work with.

TECHNIQUES:

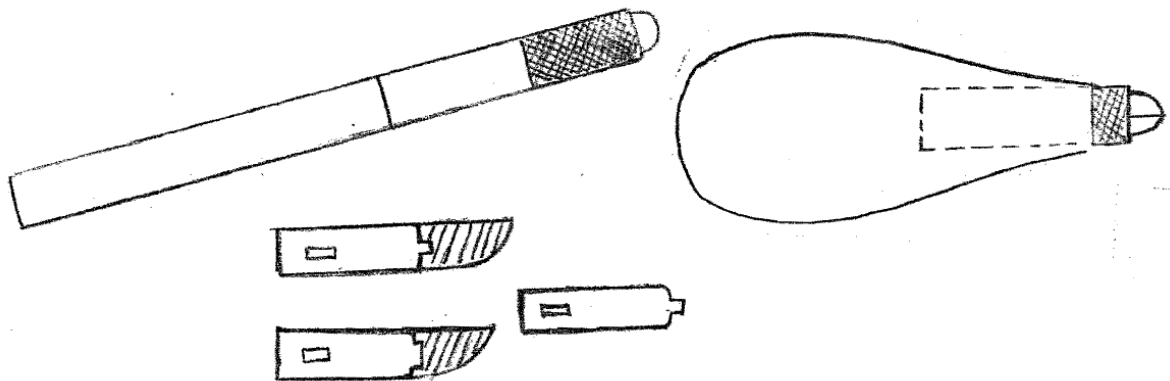
The size of the fine silver I use is .013 X .055. I have this drawn at the T.B. Hagstoz Jewelry Supply Company in Philadelphia, Pa. and their website is <http://www.hagstoz.com>

It is important to have your silver annealed (made soft). Annealing silver is accomplished by heating it to a light red color and quenching it in water. Do this in a dark area of your shop. Do not overheat as it will melt very fast.

The blades for your hand tools can be made from used hacksaw blades. Grind small ends for cutting, and do not overheat and soften the metal. Make long enough to fit and glue into a handle.

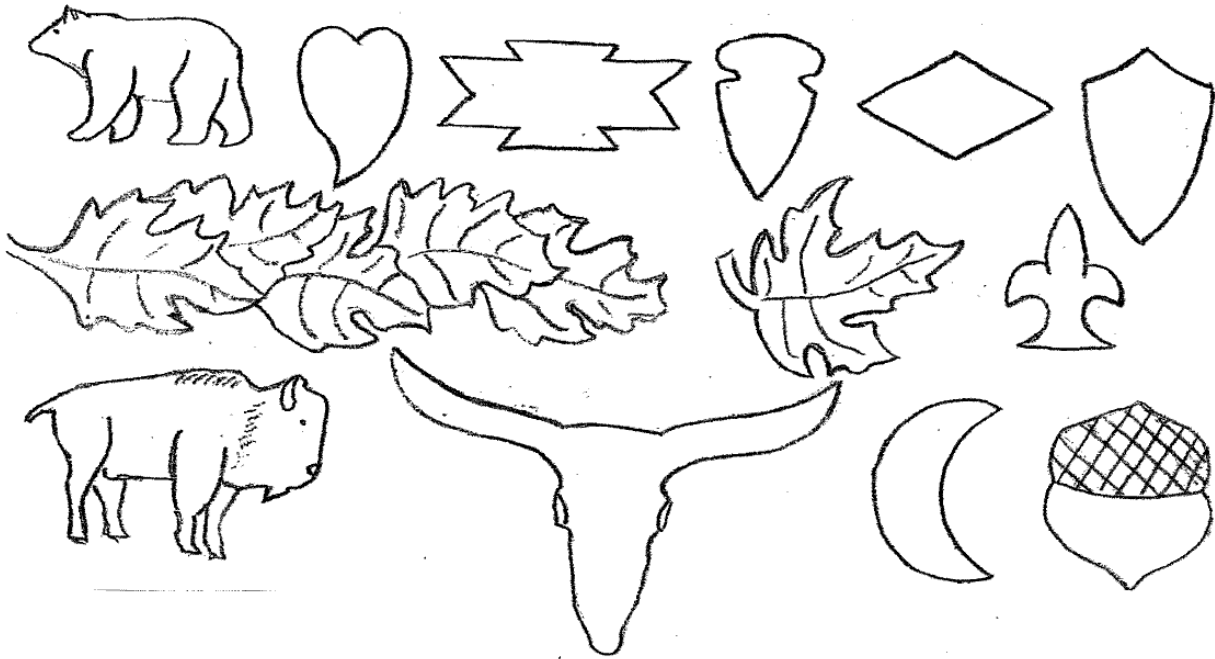


Grind tip and sharpen like a knife edge. Make up a series of tools at different sizes. Another method that I now favor is using the cut off end of an Exacto tool. I reshape the blades, cut the tool off and glue into a handmade handle.



Templates are a necessity unless you can draw perfect circles and ovals. When you do draw other inlaying designs, it is wise to make a pattern for future use. This really saves time.

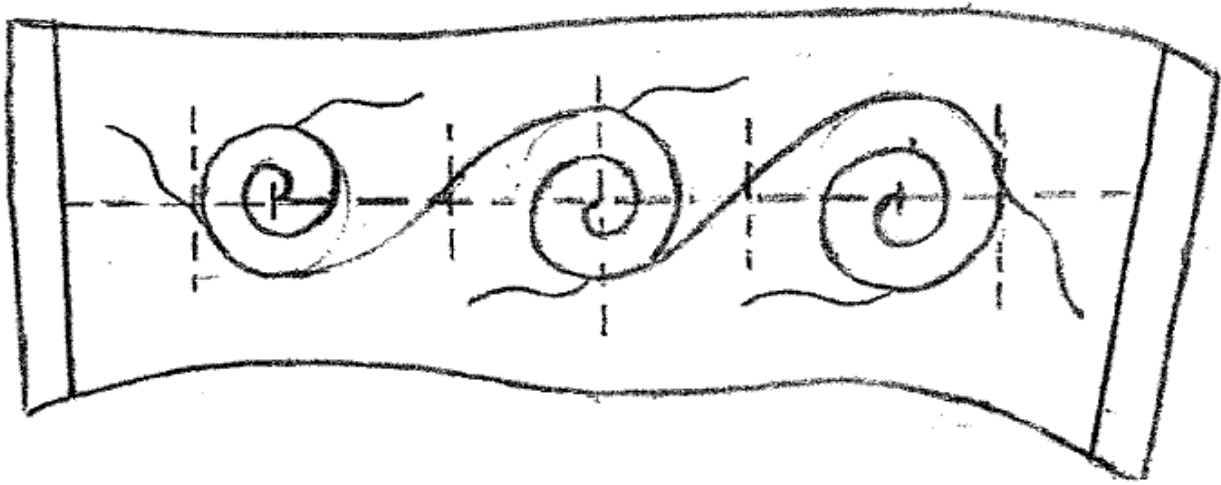
Examples of Patterns:



When drawing scrolls one must keep in mind the Rules of Dynamic Proportioning, also known as the "Golden Mean". This is accomplished by understanding a ratio that keeps design in balance. This ratio is generally 3 to 5 in size. A serious study of the "Golden Mean" can be found in most public libraries. It is worth looking into.

Scroll Templates can be used. I prefer to draw my own. Layout is accomplished as follows.

Lay out the center lines. Use circle template and draw in your scroll as shown. Notice dots for pin placements.



KNIFEMAKER - JAY HENDRICKSON, MS

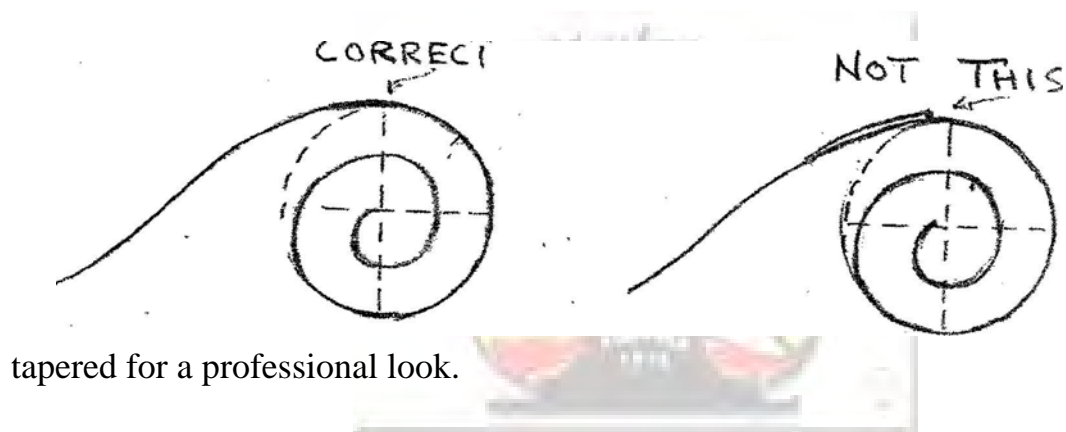
IMAGE - SHARPBYCOOP.COM

## SILVER INLAY:

From your silver spool, cut off an adequate amount of silver for your job. Hold that length with your flat head pliers and draw the silver through some sand paper. This cleans the surface and gives your silver some ridges to secure it in your handles.

When you cut into your wood, you are parting it, no wood is removed. Once your silver is chased into the wood, your finishing process (whiskering, staining, and finish) will seal the silver in place.

When cutting across grain, sometimes it is necessary to score line with larger blade, then use small cutter to cut in groove. This protects the surface of your wood from crushing in. When a line meets another line, the end should be



tapered for a professional look.

I think scrolls always look better with pins at the termination point.



I hope this paper provides you with enough information to give wire inlay a try. Good Luck in your knife making.

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