

# TOY SOLDIER AND OTHER SIMPLE ORNAMENTS

## Introduction and Thoughts on Design

Nick Cook introduced me to this simple ornament during one of his many demonstrations. This ornament can be varied in many ways. The overall shape and combinations of beads and coves can be changed, the thickness and length can be altered, and a variety of woods can be used. The finished turning can be colored on or off the lathe with acrylics, dyes, or permanent markers. I like to let my daughters paint their own designs on some of the ones that I turn, thus making it a family project.

Why stop at toy soldiers? Come up with some simple designs of your own. The basic concept behind this project is to practice your turning skills by combining beads and coves to make simple decorative projects. Try making a snowman ornament, which is made up of three beads of progressively smaller diameters, topped off by a cove that forms the top hat. Then there is the angel ornament that has a dress/skirt that is created by turning a stretched-out cove that runs into a half bead that represents the chest, that rolls into the neck, that meets the bead that represents the head, topped off by a thin bead that signifies the halo. Try turning a bell shape. Practice undercutting the bottom of the bell leaving a small ball to represent the clanger. Another project would be to turn a solid globe with a delicate finial. One of my past students turned a series of shapes using beads and coves with a flat plate in between to make a stick or icicle ornament. Take a look at some heirloom glass ornaments for some more interesting ideas. Let's put a piece of wood between centers and turn some ornaments.

## Tools and Materials:

Faceshield  
 $\frac{3}{8}$ " detail spindle gouge  
 $\frac{3}{4}$ " or  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " roughing gouge  
 $\frac{3}{4}$ " skew optional  
 $1" \times 1" \times 3\frac{1}{4}"$  maple blank plus or minus  
Optional  $2" \times 2" \times 6"$  or longer maple blank  
Paints or markers  
Fabric paints—black, dark blue, red

## Procedure:

1. Mark the centers on both ends of the blank and using a scratch awl or nail put a dimple in the center of both ends.



Toy soldier ornament mounted between centers

2. Mount the blank between centers. I prefer to use a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " step center in the headstock and a Oneway live cone center in the tailstock.
3. Using a spindle roughing gouge, turn the blank to a cylinder and begin turning the bottom  $\frac{2}{3}$ 's of the blank into a cone shape.
4. Use a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " beading and parting tool to part down at the tailstock end of the blank to  $\frac{5}{8}$ " or  $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter by  $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide. This part will ensure that the hole left by the cone center will not be in the bottom of your finished soldier.
5. Then using a skew or a detail spindle gouge, make a V-cut approximately  $\frac{3}{8}$ " in from the tailstock end of the cone shape.
6. Turn a bead or ball shape between the V-groove and the tailstock, leaving enough wood on the end of the ornament to allow for the hole caused by the cone center, which can be removed with a sharp knife after the ornament is removed from the lathe.
7. Approximately 2" up from the V-cut, turn another V-cut that represents the division between the head and the shoulders.
8. Approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ " above this V-cut do another V-cut that will represent the top of the head. ▶

9. The next step is to turn a bead between the two V-cuts for the head.
10. On top of the head turn a thin bead for the brim of the hat.
11. The hat is then shaped by turning a tapered cove and rounding over the top. Once again leave enough wood to allow parting off without running the parting tool into the drive center.



Toy soldier taking shape

12. Now you can remove wood from the beads and coves to balance out your figure and then sand it to 180 or 220 grit if you are going to paint it.
13. You may now add color to it while it is still on the lathe or part it off and color it later.

14. The last step is to drill a hole in the top for the screw eye hook to screw into. I use the drill bit sold by Craft Supplies to go along with the screw eye hooks that they sell.
15. Have fun with this project and experiment with shapes and colors. You can try turning a snowman by turning three beads of decreasing sizes with a top hat. Another simple ornament to turn would be an angel with a small bead for a halo on top of the bead that represents her head which rests upon a nice, long, tapered curve that represents the robe. There is always the classic bell shape. Just play around and see what you can dream up that is developed from simple beads and coves of varying diameters and widths. A simple finial made up of various shapes makes for a nice icicle-style ornament. Add a sphere to the top of the icicle and you have a globe-and-icicle ornament. Keep these ornaments fairly small so that they are light enough to hang on a tree branch. You could design the snowman and angel ornaments to stand up on their own. There are lots of ideas, so have fun and experiment. Then try adding texture, color, and decoration to your finished ornaments! ■



Variety of simple ornaments