

THE LEARNING CIRCLE

by Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Trading Company

SLEIGH BELL PROJECT

Round sleigh bells are still the most popular with Traditional men dancers. While casted brass was the old time preference, today the nickel plated bells made with loops are the most affordable.

Lacing the bells onto strap leather with latigo leather lacing (boot laces) has been the common way to mount the bells. This is all right when a dancer uses them a couple times a year, but not for today's pow wow circuit followers. The lacing just doesn't last, even half the summer.

To solve the problem we worked out a method of mounting them with metal fasteners that look and work like a cotter pin. Not only do they last through several rough seasons, but they ring better than when laced with leather.

We have found that 24 gage German Silver makes the best fasteners because they don't rust from being wet with sweat. Brass, though we haven't used it, might work for the same reason. Using a tin snip, cut fasteners measuring $\frac{3}{16}$ inch by $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inch. You will need one for each bell.

To make the complete bell set, follow these instructions.

1. Start with two pieces of strap leather $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. The length will vary depending on size of bell and number per strap.

2. Punch a slit hole for each bell using a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wood chisel. The length of the cut should be parallel with the length of the strap as illustrated in figure 1. The holes should be spaced apart the same distance as the diameter of the bell you are using. Allow an extra inch on the outside of the end bells. (If you don't have a wood chisel, try using a sharp pocket knife, lay strap leather on a scrap piece of wood and carefully slit the leather.)

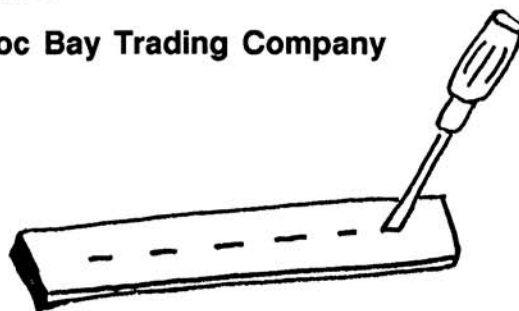


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

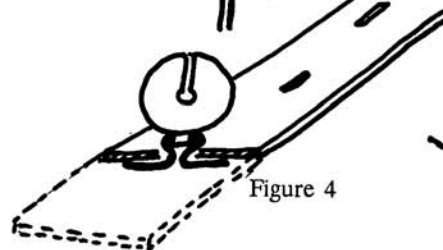


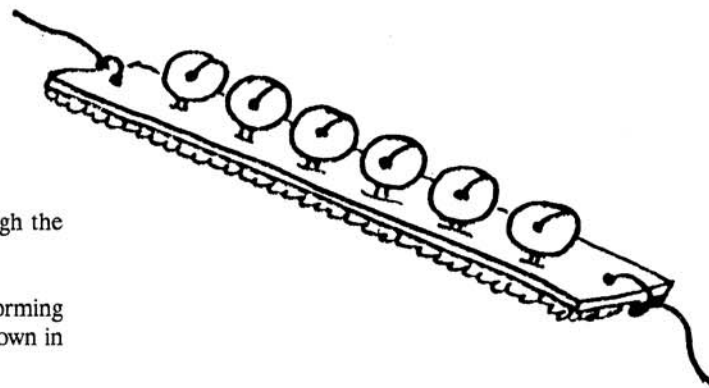
Figure 4

7. Cut imitation wool material for padding, into strips matching the width and length of the strap leather. Apply contact cement to the backs of both the leather and the padding material. Let dry, then contact them together. Trim off excess material with a scissors.

8. Punch a hole at each end of the leather straps. Tie a latigo lacing thong onto each end of the leather straps as in figure 5.



Figure 5



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3. Slip the german silver metal fastener through the loop in a bell as shown in figure 2.

4. Bend the fastener in half with a pliers forming the metal into the shape of a cotter pin as shown in figure 3.

5. Slip the ends of the fastener through a slit hole made in the strap leather and bend back the ends tightly against the underside of the strap leather as shown in figure 4. Use a pliers to slightly curve the fastener ends up into the leather.

6. Complete all of the bells in this way.

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