

# Building a Model A trunk

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After nearly memorizing the excellent article by Marshall Lewis in the January/February 1975 issue of *The Restorer* on building a trunk, I have been tempted to build my own trunk for my 1930 Coupe. As a personal preference, I decided to build one with rounded corners, hoping that the end result would be worth all the extra work. Once the initial plans were drawn, I began a search for the required hardware. The "helpful hardware man" wasn't, but I did find several advertisers in *Hemmings Motor News* who supplied all the pieces.

Actual construction began with two pieces of 3/4" plywood, 15-1/2" x 17-3/4". These were tacked together, cut to the shape of the trunk ends (Figure B), and edge sanded to the exact contour. These must be absolutely identical. When drawing out the curvature of the lid, make certain that the front edge, at stretcher "F", remains flat enough for mounting the trunk latches. Next, make the cuts for the trunk opening. Again, accuracy is a must! The use of 3/4" plywood provides the mass necessary for rounding the corners later. Cut the pieces of 1/8" and 1/4" plywood, and the oak stretchers and cleats. Stretchers "G" and "I" and one "F" must be contoured to the curvature of the lid (Figure B). This was easily done with a block plane and sanding block. Attach stretchers "F" and "G" to the lid ends, "A", with glue and 1-1/2" screws. I suggest attaching this "frame" to a good, strong board to hold it SQUARE while the laminations are applied and the glue dries. When the first 1/8" lamination is thoroughly soaked, begin gluing and clamping, flush with the lower edge of stretcher "F", over the top to stretcher "G", using 1/2" screws into the stretchers and tacks along the ends (Figure D). There will be an excess of a few inches which is trimmed off and set aside to be used later. Allow the lid to dry.

Attach cleats "J" to the trunk ends, "A", with glue and 1-1/4" screws; 1/4" from the bottom, and 3/4" from the edges. Attach cleats "H" and stretchers "F" and "I" to the four corners of the trunk ends with 1-1/2" screws only - no glue. (At this time, "H" is not secured to "J".) Figure C shows these cleats attached to the bottom, but that is just to show how they fit together.

When the lid is dry, the second lamination is applied much the same as the first. Coat the first lamination completely with glue as the second is applied, with 3/4" screws into the stretchers and finishing nails into the "A's" (Figure D). Again, trim off the excess, set it aside, and let the lid dry.

Parts "B" and "C" are attached to the trunk frame with glue and 3/4" screws at the stretchers and cleats only. They are not secured to the "A's" at this time. The two excess strips of 1/8" plywood are now attached - glue and 3/4" screws - to stretcher "I", tight against the top of "C", and trimmed flush with the top of "I" (Figure B).

At this time, I chose to disassemble the trunk proper and apply



The finished product - and you can proudly say, "I built it myself."

the lining to each of the pieces separately, following the patterns in Figure E. For the lining, I took the advice of Mr. Lewis and used a smooth textured, black vinyl (don't use the vinyl with the soft, fuzzy backing). Cut the material slightly oversize and trim it carefully with a sharp razor, assuring no gaps when the trunk is reassembled. During reassembly, glue is applied to all joints and 3/4" screws are added through "B" and "C" into both "A's" (Figure D). Also, 1-1/2" screws are now added at the bottom corners, securing "H" to "J".

Attach the trunk bottom, "D", to the underside of the cleats, with just a few screws, squaring everything carefully since the bottom is a loose fit. Remove the lid from its "support" and apply the lining, ends first, trimming carefully around the stretchers. When finished, the lining should cover half of the edges. This "seam" will be covered with the hinge and the weather-strip. Install the lid on the trunk with just a few screws, checking that everything fits correctly.

My next step was rounding the corners. I began with a belt-sander, carefully; then a wood file and sanding block. Cut a 3/4" radius in a scrap of wood to use as a template to gauge the shape of the corners. This isn't as difficult as it may seem; it just takes time. Any screwheads or tacks that interfered were sunk a little deeper. Fill all screw holes and imperfections with wood putty and sand smooth.

For the outer covering I chose black cobra long grain to match my car's top. Whatever material is used, it should have a little stretch and harmonize with your "pride and joy." Cut the material according to the patterns in Figure F (dotted lines are approximate cuts made during installation. Dotted lines indicating rounded corners are NEVER cut.) Beginning at one strap location, apply contact glue and smooth the material around the corners and end

to another strap location. There must be an overhang of at least 1-1/4" along the bottom edge and 1-1/2" along the top edge. Repeat the procedure with the second piece of material. To ensure nearly invisible seams, overlap the two pieces slightly and cut through both with a sharp razor and a metal straightedge. These seams will be covered later with the straps. The overhang along the bottom is folded over the edge, trimmed and glued, up to the bottom of the cleats. For the top edge, pull the material down the inner surface of the trunk to meet the lining. This seam will be covered with the dust seal. The rounded corners do create some difficulty, but patience will prevail. Care should be taken that the material isn't stretched, cut, or notched any more than necessary, and all edges are securely glued and stapled or tacked if they won't show. Reinstall the bottom, "D", with glue and 3/4" wood screws to the bottom of the cleats, making absolutely certain that the trunk is SQUARE. The bottom is still a little loose, so be sure there is even spacing all around the edges. Cover the trunk edges with masking tape and apply contact glue to the bottom. Position the material carefully so there is an even 1/4" border all around the bottom. This 1/4" is now coated with glue and "tucked in." For this I used an old putty knife with the sharp edges worn off. Remove the tape.

Now for the lid. Begin by cutting the material to the rectangles in Figure F. (Again, dotted lines indicate cuts made during installation.) Position the material carefully with equal overhang at both edges and both ends. Temporarily clamp half so the other half may be folded back without affecting the positioning. Apply glue to this half, pulling the material back down, smoothing it carefully. Do not apply glue to the rounded corners yet. Remove the clamps and repeat the procedure for the other half. Let the glue dry.

Starting at the center of one end, the material is glued and stretched (not too much) down over the end, working toward the front and back. The material will only stretch so much so a peak or ridge will have to form along the rounded corners. This ridge should be kept as small as possible without stretching too much or causing wrinkles. This ridge is carefully trimmed off and the resulting seam glued down and stapled, to be covered later with a leather corner. When the glue has dried, the edges are folded over,



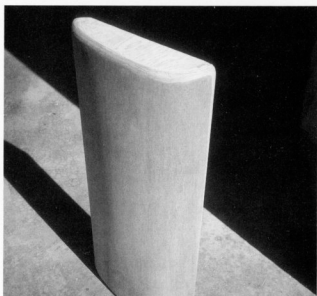
The finished product - and you can proudly say, "I built it myself."

glued and trimmed, to meet the lining.

Almost done. For the dust seal around the inside of the upper edge of the trunk, I used fender-welt, trimmed to 1/2" width and stapled around the edge so the rolled bead protrudes above the trunk edge. The staples were then covered with a narrow strip of stainless steel. I also stapled fender-welt to the bottom edge of the lid with the rolled bead flush with the outer edge of the trunk. These staples were then covered with 1/4" x 5/8" weather-strip (Figure G). Also, 1/8" x 1/4" weather-strip between the leaves of the hinge. Next, install the lid with just a few screws to make sure that it will fit over the dust seal and that everything else fits correctly.

Finally, put the rest of the screws in the hinge, install the lid stay, toggle-latches, center dowel, straps and buckles, end lifts and leather corners. The leather pieces can be left natural or dyed to match the covering. The upper corners will shape more easily if they are moistened. Position the straps carefully so they cover the seams in the covering and the ends line up perfectly at the buckles. Enjoy!

I wish I could show how nice this trunk looks on my car; unfortunately, my car is still in a "zillion" pieces.



Trunk for Model A folding rack  
33"L X 16"W X 18"H

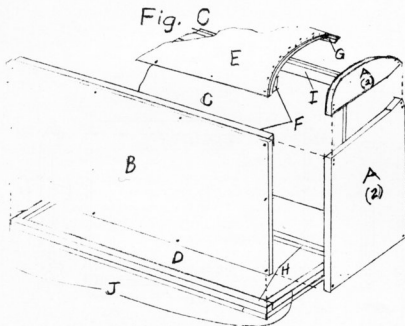
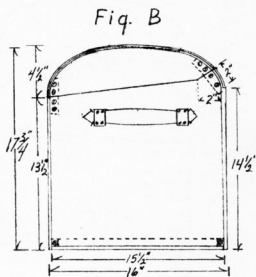
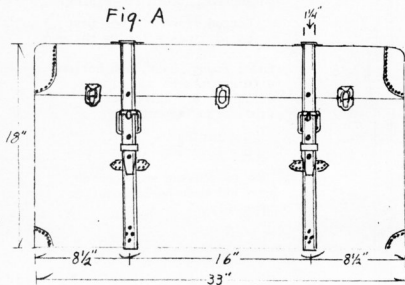
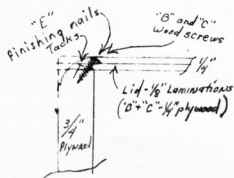


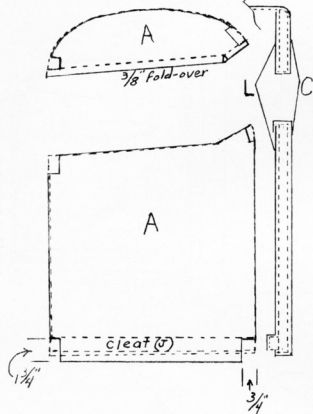
Fig. D  
Rounded corner detail



MATERIAL LIST AND COST

Material	Cost
3/4" Plywood: 1/2 sheet	\$9.80
(2) 15-1/2" x 17-3/4" (a)	
1/4" Plywood: 1/2 sheet	4.90
(1) 13-1/2" x 33" (b)	
(1) 14-1/2" x 33" (c)	
(1) 15-1/2" x 31-1/2" (d)	
1/8" Plywood: 1/2 sheet	6.40
(2) 22" x 33" (e)	
water soaked and bent to form lid	
3/4" Oak: 3/4" x 8" x 6'	16.00
stretchers and cleats	
(2) 3/4" x 1-1/2" x 31-1/2" (f)	
(1) 3/4" x 2" x 31-1/2" (g)	
(2) 3/4" x 1" x 31-1/2" (h)	
(1) 3/4" x 2-1/2" x 31-1/2" (i)	
(2) 3/4" x 1" x 14" (j)	
30" Piano hinge	6.09
Weather-strip	2.69
Spray contact glue	2.96
Nails, tacks, staples	5.00
Screws	4.00
Upholstery tacks	5.00
Wood glue	2.75
4 rubber feet (optional)	1.00
Lid stay	2.25
Fender welt (full roll)	6.95
Stainless steel (scrap)	3.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$78.79</b>

Fig. E



Suggested pattern for lining.

Dotted lines = trunk part  
Solid lines = lining pattern

Ends, front, back, and bottom, with stretchers and cleats attached, are lined before final trunk assembly.

L = Lining  
C = Covering

Due to soaking and bending, the lid must be lined after assembly.

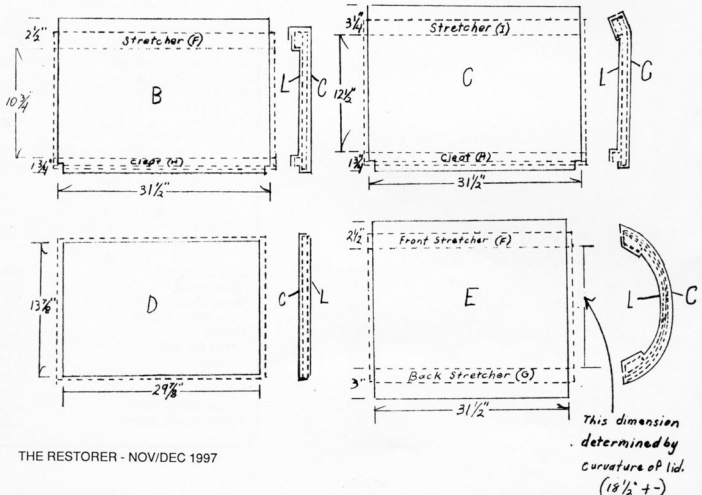


Fig. F

Pattern for outer covering.

Following these patterns, all edges and "seams" are covered by leather corners, straps, weatherstrip, or dust-seal.

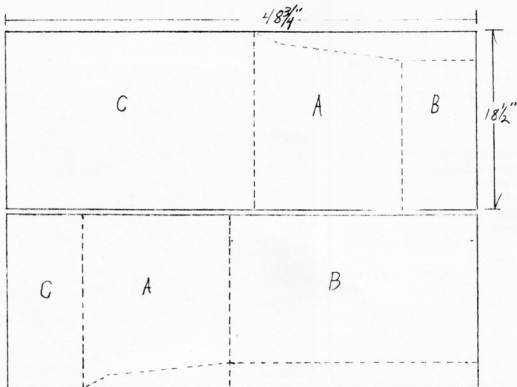
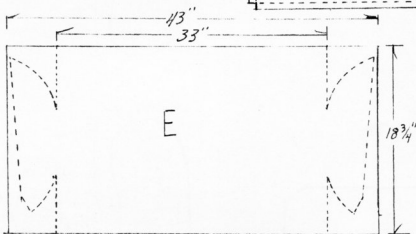
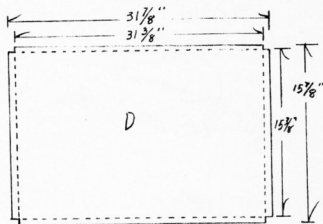
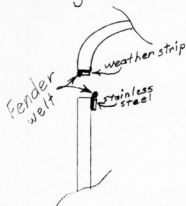


Fig. G.



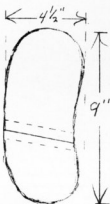
Leather trim pieces



Bottom corners  
4 req.



Lid front corners  
2 req.



Lid rear corners  
2 req.  
Split at hinge,  
folded around edge.

COVERING AND TRIM LIST

Material	Cost
1-3/4 yards black vinyl	\$5.65
1-3/4 yards black cobra long grain	30.00
2 Locking latches	16.00
1 Center dowel	2.00
4 Handle loops	3.00
2 Footman loops (optional)	3.00
2 Hold down straps (optional)	10.00
2 Leather handles	8.00
8 Strap guides	8.00
2 Straps, 1" x 72" with buckles	30.00
Leather for corners	<u>20.00</u>
Subtotal	135.65
Construction material	<u>78.79</u>
Total	\$214.44



The finished product - and you can proudly say, "I built it myself."