Christmas Bell Ornament - Updated

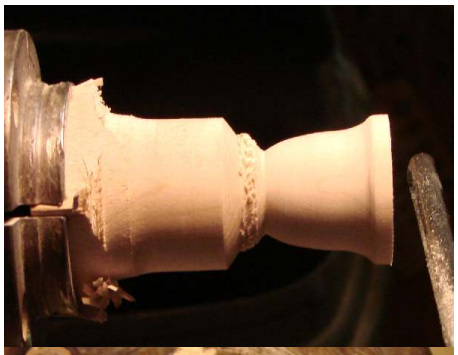
This ornament is a simple hollowed bell, but has a clapper that moves. A two piece clapper/handle and a couple of screw eyes allows the clapper free movement.

Form and hollowing is virtually identical to creating a long stem goblet.

by Ed Malesky

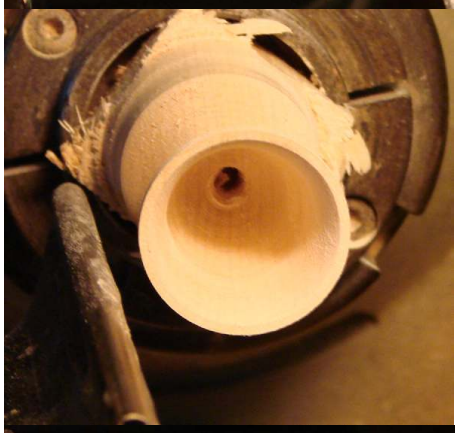
I created the original tutorial about two years ago. However, I recently found an easier way to make the bell. The original tutorial is at the end, but here is my new version.

Create a cylindrical blank and the begin to create the bell profile. I usually make the bell between 1 – 1 ¼" in diameter and between 1 ¼ - 1 ½" tall. Leave the base thick to give some strength to the blank as you hollow.



Drill a ¼" hole all the way through the bell. Use this hole as a "starter" for your hollowing. I use a gouge to hollow, but use whatever you prefer for hollowing. Leave the walls 1/8" thick or a bit thinner.

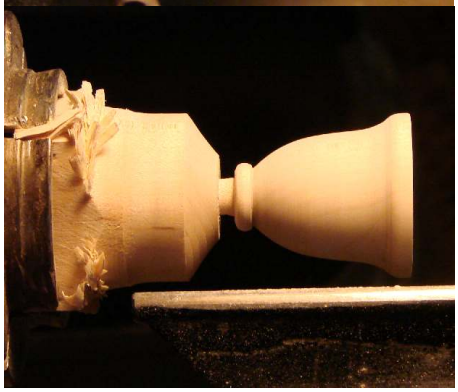
Sand both inside and out.



Finish forming the bell. Unlike the original, this bell will have a separate bell and handle.

I added a small button on the top of the bell to create a flat base for the handle to be glued on to.

Part off right above the button.



Chuck up a blank for the handle and clapper. This should be a fine grain wood. I usually start with a ¾" square blank. Turn the handle with a ¼" tenon on the bottom. Check the fit with the bell.

Drill a small hole for the screw-eye that will be used to connect the handle to the clapper.

Turn a graceful handle about 1 ¾" long.

Begin to form the clapper. Just as with the handle, drill a small hole in the top of the clapper.

I leave the stem of the clapper about ¼" thick and then I drill the hole. Then I use a skew to thin out the stem to 1/8 - 3/16". Doing it this way prevents the stem from cracking when you drill the hole.

Open one screw-eye and screw into the clapper. Temporarily hook the handle and clapper together and hold the bell next to it to gauge where the end of the clapper should be.

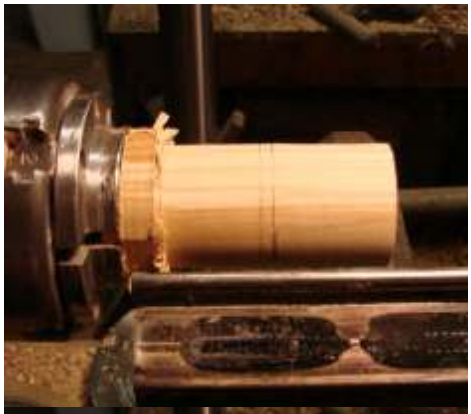
Remember the end of the clapper can't be larger than ¼" or it won't fit through the hole in the bell.

Connect the clapper and handle and close the opened screw-eye.

Add a little CA on the top of the button on the bell and then slip the clapper through the ¼” hole and you’re done.

The older version of the bell. Works great if you want the bell and the handle from the same wood.

Start the bell with a blank about 4” by 2 ¼”. Mark where you want the top of the bell to be, where it transitions to the handle.



Form the bell. Leave a little thick at the base so there is enough strength to hollow out the bell.

Drill a hole to the depth you want to hollow.

Hollow the bell using your favorite hollowing tool. Get the bell fairly thin, 1/8” or less, to reduce the weight of the ornament. Shear scrape the inside to the final wall thickness, then sand both the inside and outside of the bell.

Drill a 5/32” hole in the inside of the bell at the top. This will be the mortise for the clapper tenon.

Then return to the outside and finish the outside of the bell and the handle, then part off.

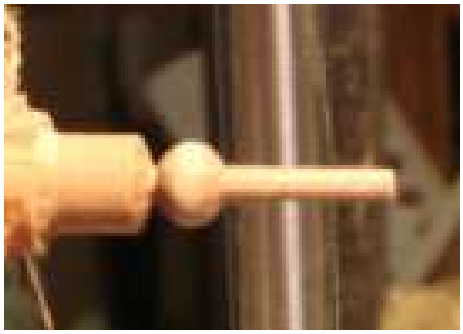
Then begin on the clapper. I generally use a contrasting wood. The clapper is two pieces; a button with a tenon that fits into the hole you drilled in the bell and a clapper. The two pieces are joined by connecting two screw eyes.

The blank only needs to be about 3/8” by 2”.

Form a small tenon on the end 5/32” in diameter. You can test fit against another piece of wood you’ve drilled a 5/32” hole in.

Then form the button. Round over the top a little since the bell will not be flat at the top where you hollowed. Then part off and drill a small hole for the screw eye.

With the rest of the blank, make the clapper. Estimate the length you will need based on the distance from the top of the inside of the bell to the bottom.



Account for the button and two screw eyes which will be about 3/8” and decide if you want the clapper to extend a little below the bell or to be totally enclosed in the bell.

Sand and use a skew on it’s side to make a small divot in the top end of the clapper stem to facilitate drilling a hole for the screw eye.
Open the screw eye on the button and slip it through the screw eye on the clapper stem. You might want to leave the top of the clapper stem a little thicker than the rest so that the screw eye doesn’t split the stem.

Close the screw eye and you’re set to glue the clapper into the bell.

Add a drop of CA into the mortise hole in the bell and using a needle nose pliers or tweezers, grasp the screw eye on the button and push the tenon into the hole.

Add another screw eye to the top of the bell handle and you’re set to hang on the tree.

One modification is that you can do the bell handle out of a contrasting piece of wood. Just put a 5/16” tenon on the end of it and when you drill the hole for the clapper tenon, make the hole extra deep, so when you part off the bell, you can add the handle to the hole.