

BUCKET TOP BOOTS

I did a production of the Crucible and purchased cowboy boots, used off the Internet (wyoboot.com), and cut the tops off of them. This works great for the shoe of the period because of the heel...you generally need to go back in and add a buckle and large tongue for a more authentic feel though.

I also cut the tops off and built new toppers/shafts for the boots and hand stitched them on with a stitching awl.

I purchased leather that was stiff enough to hold its shape (4-6 lb.).

Cut out the original upper and remove any excess leather or binding with a seam ripper (this is key or the extra leather will get too thick and keep the foot from going in).

Drape a form pattern out of that 1/8" craft foam and trace the shape of the upper edge of the boot lower onto it. Make sure you get the right angle for the boot top you are wanting to make, and the right height and fullness. Determine if you need a cuff on it, and what that cuff will be. I made the cuffs out of suede and stitched them to the top and folded them over.

Trace your pattern onto the leather, cut it out, glue up the side seam(s) and use a little contact cement to hold the new upper in place, while you stitch it on with the awl. If you can find a shoe repair store with an industrial long arm patch machine, they can stitch them on for you. I actually own one, but it was not accessible to me at the time and most of the repair stores didn't have the industrial long arm so I found the awl worked fairly well after I practiced with it a bit. It's best to stitch the side seam(s) as well, though I didn't have the time and they lasted through our run fine. I used Barge Cement. Make sure if using Barge, that you follow the directions for contact cement...both surfaces should be coated and almost dry to the touch when you put them together. It's like spirit gum...too tacky and it falls apart.

Make sure the lower part of the new leather upper is soft enough to mold into the current shape of the boot lower, and doesn't pull it in any, or again, your boot lower will be too tight. I had this problem on one of the pairs I made and had to cut slits in the top of the boot lower...which is fine if you are covering it with a big bow. To soften heavy stiff leather a bit, dip it in warm water and start wringing/twisting it to break up the fibers. You don't want to break it down too much...just enough to soften it for movement around the join, or if you want a sloppier, slouchier look, break the fibers down more.

You can dye it before or after you stitch it on. If you are dyeing the original boot, and it's not worn well, make sure you go over it with a swab of denatured alcohol to break down the top glaze. Dye both surfaces (new and old leathers) and, if necessary, coat with a mist of leather spray or floral spray to even out the color. Decorate the lower as you prefer with buckles, bows, or lachets.