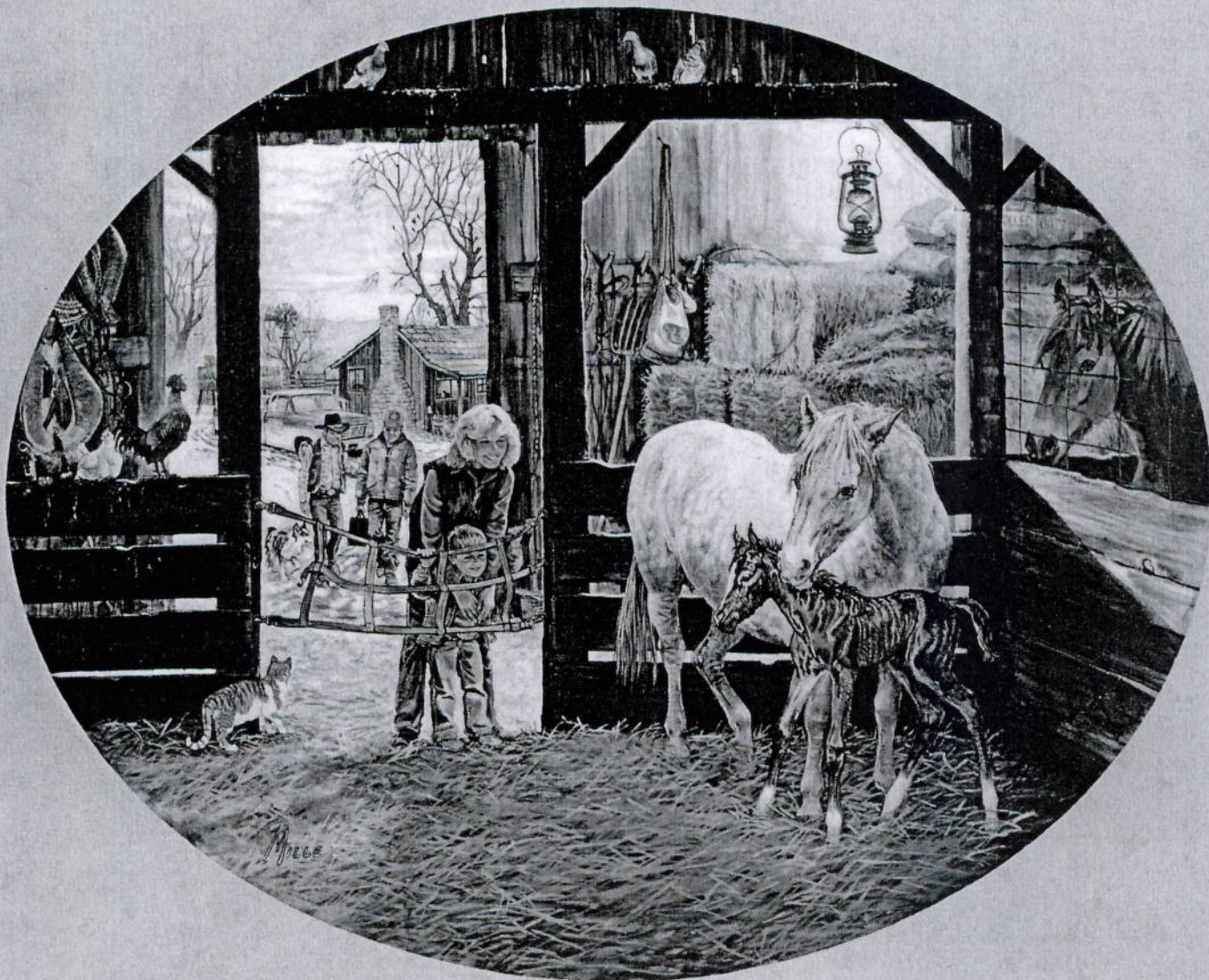


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HORSESHOEING FOR BEGINNERS

An illustrated step-by-step guide

By **RODNEY D. KELLER** Photographs by Robert C. Richardson

AT FIVE O'CLOCK every Saturday morning, my father would wake us to go horseshoeing with him. He wanted his sons and even his daughter to know how to shoe a horse, and Dwain Keller continuously encouraged his sleepy-eyed children to help until they learned the necessary skills.

I learned early that horseshoeing can be learned and developed through practice and patience. Although a professional farrier appears to work effortlessly and quickly, horseshoeing is a complicated process, and for the beginner, the first attempt to shoe may be overwhelming. But it is possible to shoe a

horse. This process consists of ten basic steps, including handling and tying of the horse, lifting the front and hind feet, cleaning and trimming the hoof, and removing, shaping, setting, nailing, and clinching the shoe.

Tools

It is necessary to begin with the proper tools. These tools are specialized to minimize injury to the horse and difficulties for the shoer. The following tools are necessary: hoof pick, hoof nippers, hoof knife, horseshoer's rasp, shoeing hammer, clincher, pincers,



Tools: A) shoeing hammer, B) hoof knife, C) hoof pick, D) horseshoer's rasp, E) shoe spreader, F) pincers, G) anvil hammer, H) hoof nippers, and I) nail cutters.



Dwain Keller.

shoe spreader, horseshoeing stand, and an anvil. A heavy leather apron also provides protection to the shoer.

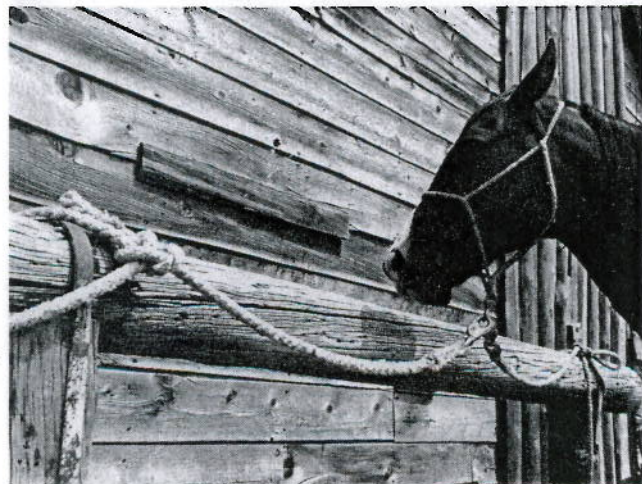
Handling

The horseshoer must always be cautious and never trust the horse, even if it is his own. A horse that is gentle with children may easily be dangerous to shoe. Always use common sense when shoeing, and be alert to any slight reaction from the horse.

Tying

The horse must be securely tied to prevent any unnecessary moving or pulling. Two stout medium or heavyweight nylon $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, 10-foot braided ropes with heavy bull snaps and a nylon halter are better than cotton ropes and halters because they are stronger and have a little give, lessening the chance of breaking.

It is best to cross-tie the horse. Snap the ropes to the bottom ring of the halter, and, using a bowline knot,



Cross-tie horse on two stout posts or hitching rail.

tie the ropes to two solid fence posts or a hitching rail—never to a wire fence. Leave little if any slack in the ropes to prevent the horse from pulling back.

Lifting the Front Foot

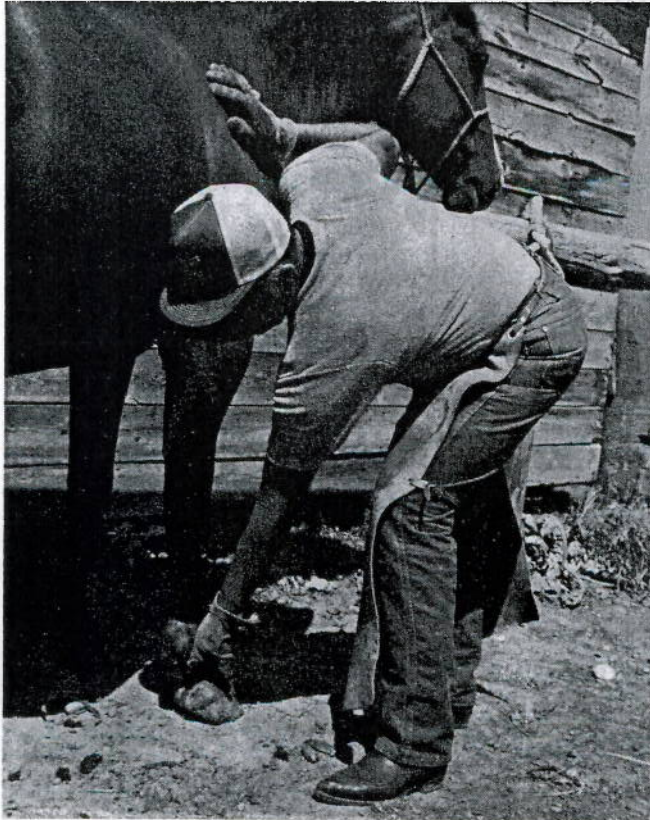
Learning to handle the horse's feet can be the most difficult part of shoeing for the beginner, but repeated practice makes it easier. To lift the front foot walk up slowly to the horse's shoulder and gently rub his neck (feel out his reaction) while speaking softly to the horse. Face the rear of the horse, leaving the hand closest to the horse on his shoulder. With that hand, gently yet firmly push against the shoulder to shift the horse's weight to the other foot. With the other hand, rub down the leg to the fetlock (ankle) and pick up the leg. Bring the hand from the shoulder and hold the toe of the hoof in that hand while bringing the hoof between your legs. Position the foot so it comfortably rests between the knees.

Lifting the Hind Foot

To lift the hind foot, start near the horse's front shoulder and rub the hand along his back to the hip. Leaving the hand closest to the horse on top of his hip, gently and slowly run the other hand down the hind leg to the fetlock. Push gently against the horse's hip to shift his weight and raise the leg by pulling it toward you. Bring the foot forward with one hand until it is close to you. Using both hands, hold the leg until the horse relaxes. Holding the leg close against your thigh or waist, slowly walk forward a step or two until the horse's leg is pulled slightly behind the horse and is comfortably resting across your thigh and onto your knee. Hold the horse's leg in position with pressure from the upper arm.

Cleaning

Using the hoof pick, clean the foot by inserting the pick between the heel and the frog. Pull the pick



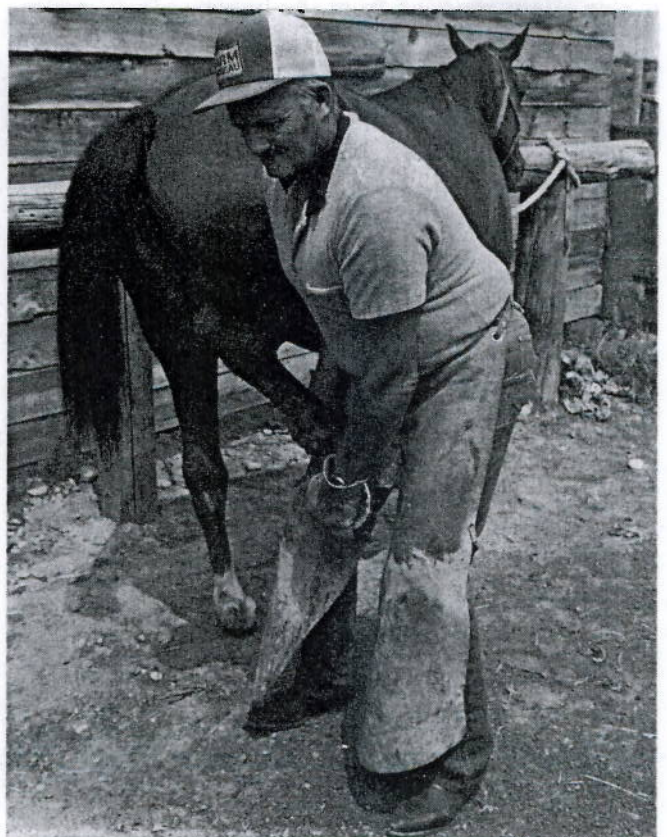
Lifting front foot.



Front foot between knees.



Lifting hind foot.



Lifting hind foot.



Clean foot with hoof pick.



Cleaned foot.



Resting hind foot on knee.

toward the toe, cleaning away any debris such as rocks, dirt, or manure. Place the pick on the outside of the heel and pull the pick around the inside border of the hoof to the toe. Repeat this process on the other half of the foot.

Removing the Shoe

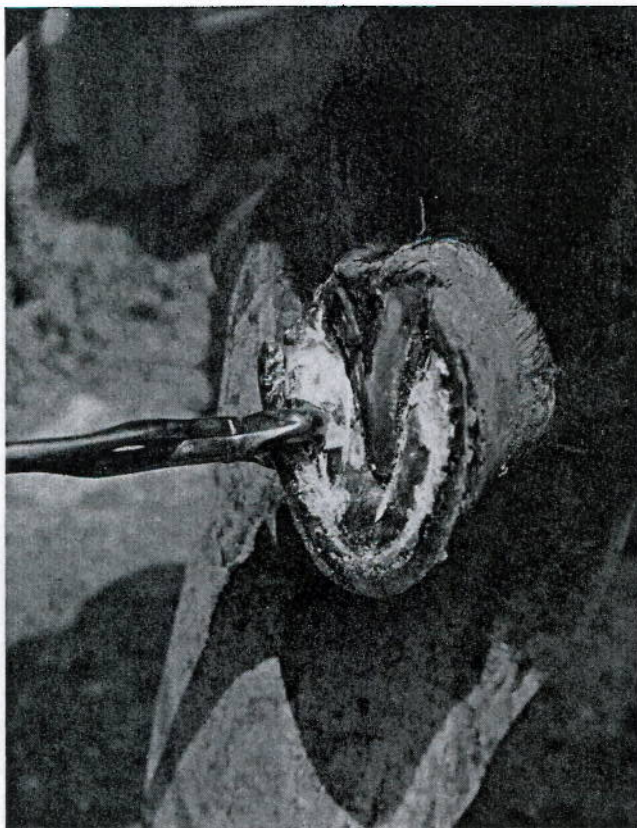
If the horse has already been shod, the old shoe must be removed. Remove the nail clinches by filing the nail clinch with the smooth side of the rasp file, being careful not to file off too much of the hoof wall. (Clinches can also be removed by placing a clinch cutter above the clinched nail, then hitting the cutter with a hammer.)

Pulling the shoe is done with wide-throat pincers. Place the jaws of the pincers between the heel of the shoe and the hoof. Grip the handles of the pincers together and pry the heel of the shoe slightly away from the hoof. Slide the pincers closer to the toe, repeating the process until all the nails have been pulled on one side. Repeat on the other side of the shoe.

Trimming

The trimming process begins the actual work. Most beginners tend to take too much from the hoof, which injures the horse. It is better to make a second cut than to cut too deeply the first try, so be extremely cautious.

Begin by trimming the frog. The frog is a relatively



Trim hoof with hoof nippers.

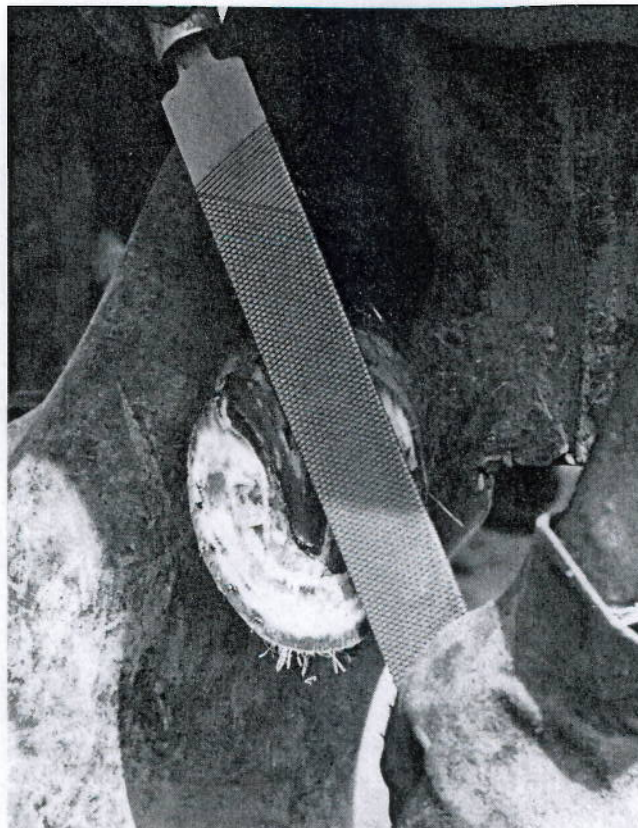
soft tissue that pumps blood to the foot, so be careful not to cut too deeply. Trimming the frog is merely slicing off the rough or diseased edges to prevent filth or rocks from lodging and infecting the frog. Using the hoof knife, gently slice off the rough edges of the frog from the point of the V to the back on one side; then repeat the process on the other side.

Trimming the hoof makes the horse's hoof flat. The foot naturally has a small dip in front of the heel, and the foot does not grow evenly (the toe usually grows at least twice as fast as the heel). Remembering the dip and the growth, draw an imaginary flat line from the heel to the toe. Using the hoof nippers, trim away the excess hoof, being careful to follow the imaginary line, so a smooth, flat surface will remain. Since the toe grows faster than the heel, sometimes little or nothing is cut off the heel, but usually twice as much is removed from the toe. When trimming, be careful not to cut the hoof wall below the sole of the foot. (The horse puts pressure on the hoof wall and not on the sole.)

Use the horseshoer's rasp to level the foot with long smooth strokes from heel to toe. If only trimming the horse's hoof, use the rasp to smooth away the feather edge around the edge of the hoof.

Shaping

In shaping the shoe for the horse, remember the shoe is made to fit the hoof, not the hoof to fit the shoe. Select shoes (usually plates) that fit from the toe to the heel. The heel and toe of the shoe should fit flat against the heel and toe of the hoof. If the toe or heel of the shoe is smaller or larger than the foot, severe foot

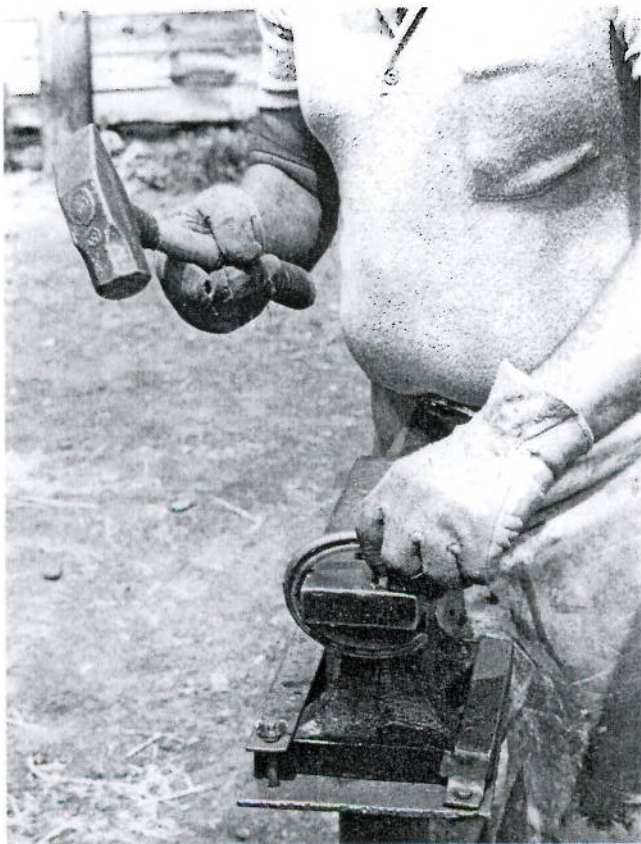


Smooth sole with rasp.

problems or tripping may occur. An exact fit is necessary. (It is not always possible to use old shoes in resetting because the feet do not always remain the same size. Front feet generally take a larger shoe size



Set shoe flatly on hoof.



Shape shoe with anvil and hammer.

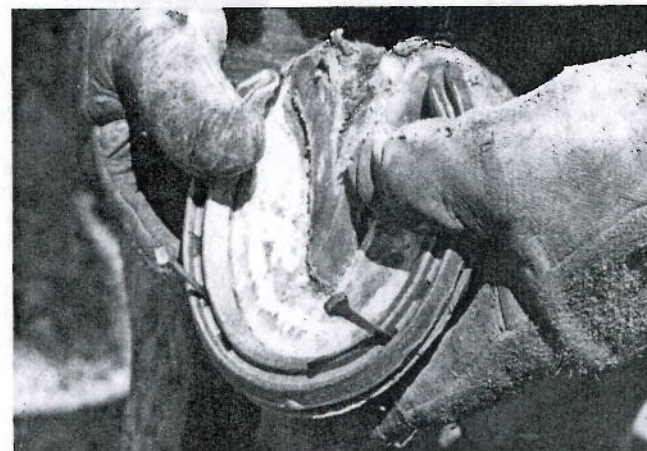


Shape shoe with anvil and hammer.

than hind feet because the front supports more weight and grows more.) To get an exact fit, select a shoe similar in size to the horse's foot; with the horseshoe spreaders, anvil, and hammer, shape the shoe. Most shoes need some shaping: rounding the heels, spreading the heels, narrowing the toe, or straightening the curve. After shaping the shoe, be certain the shoe is flat. Shaping is also a skill requiring practice.

Setting

Setting is positioning the shaped shoe onto the hoof for nailing. The shoe should fit out to the edge of the hoof with the nail holes covering the white line around the hoof wall. Again, the heel and toe of the shoe should fit flat and evenly against the heel and toe of the foot.



Secure nails into shoe and hoof.

Nailing

The nailing of the shoe is a delicate process. The horseshoer must know how to drive the nails correctly to prevent injury to the horse.

Select the proper size nails. For most plate shoes, use a #5 city head nail up to size 1 shoe, then use #6 city head nails for size 2 shoes. To check the nail size with different makes and sizes of shoes, simply slip a nail into the hole. The nail should easily slide until it is about one-fourth inch or more through. If it drops all the way through, go to a larger nail.

With the shoe properly set on the foot, hold the nail in the first or second hole from the toe with the beveled, trademarked side of the nail toward the inside of the hoof while the straight side of the nail is toward the outside of the hoof. Lightly tap the nail to secure

the shoe for nailing. Repeat this process on the other side of the shoe. After the shoe is set, steady the hoof with the left hand and knee grip (if right-handed), and drive the nail on through with firm, sharp blows of the hammer. Check to see if the nail is emerging on the other side at a safe distance. The nail should come out about 1¼ inches above the edge of the hoof. If not, pull the nail out and lean the nail at a little more angle to get it to emerge at the proper height. Sometimes it is necessary to slightly bend the nail point to get the proper height.

After the nail is properly driven through the hoof, *immediately* twist off the end of the nail by using a fast quick twist of the hammer's claw or cutting with nail cutters. A hoof with an extended nail is a dangerous weapon that can rip an arm or leg (even through a



Pound nail through.



Twist off nail.

heavy leather apron) of the shoer or of the horse. Hammer in all nails firmly, always remembering to cut off the end of each nail as soon as it is driven through the hoof.

Clinching

Clinching smooths the ragged edges of the nail and secures the nail to the hoof. Lift the horse's foot as before, but extend the leg toward the front of the horse and place the foot onto a horseshoeing stand.

With the foot on the stand, use an old rasp to rasp

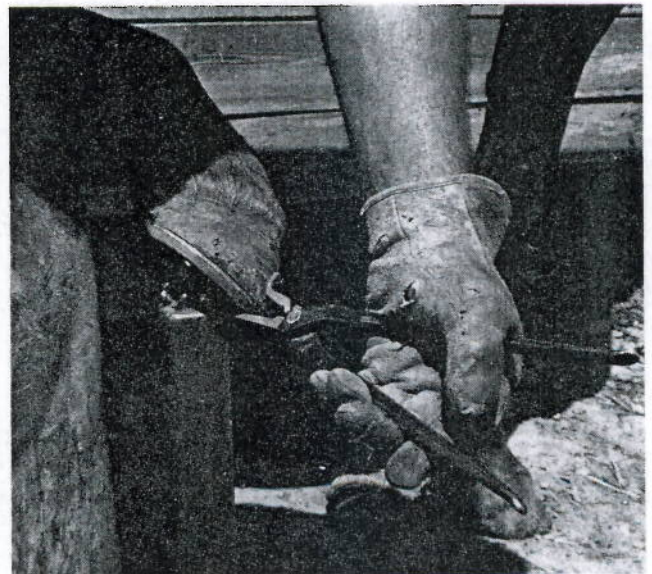
off the feather edge of the hoof where the shoe and hoof meet. Make a slight rasp mark under each nail so the clinchers will not break the hoof down. Then with the clinchers, bend the nails over to secure them into place and rasp to remove the rough edges.

Repeat this process on the other three feet.

Horseshoeing is hard, physical, time-consuming work. It is not as easy as a professional farrier makes it look, but with practice, perseverance, and patience, the beginner horseshoer may learn to shoe his own horse. 🐾



File under nail.



Clinch nail down.