



<http://www.mantoothmanor.com/pillars.html>

## Entrance Pillars



In late 2006 I knew I wanted to build a an entrance to our haunt in the form of some cemetery pillars. After months of sketching and some research, We began construction in March 2007. The following photos are meant as only a guide and are not a true "How To".



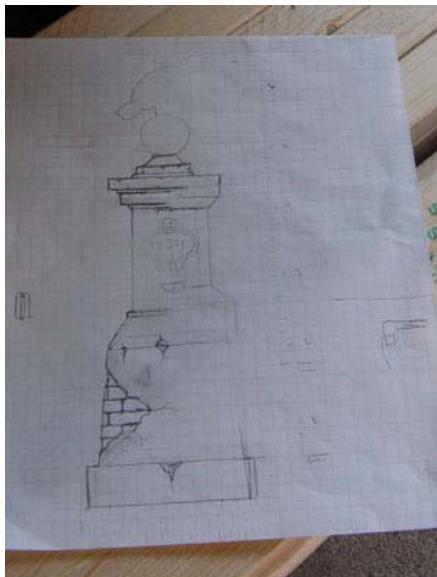
This crow was the inspiration for our pillars.

We bought this crow and its mate at a popular Halloween store during their after Halloween Sales. The idea came to us in the store as there were a pair sitting on the clearance table. They began life as candle holders. With a few modifications, they turned out to be the ideal toppers to our pillars.

Once home we began our research, looking for pictures and reference materials. After a few weeks we came up with a sketch that we felt fit our haunt.

One note on the sketch, using graph paper, we were able to scale it to match the crow toppers. Knowing that the foam was 2 inches thick we would then know roughly how big to make the frames.

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Once the sketches were finished it was time to collect our raw materials and begin building the basic frame.

We started with:

10 Sheets of 2"x2"x96" extruded polystyrene foam insulation (only 5 sheets were used)

Qty:10 - 2"x2"x8' pine boards

Qty:1 - 2X4 for base

Liquid nails

Gorilla glue

3 cans of Great stuff

Plenty of wood screws

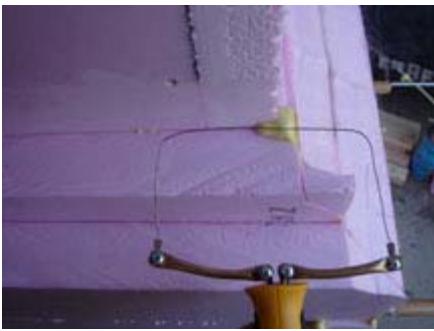


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Once the frame was built it was time to add the foam. Using a mixture of Liquid Nails, wood screws, gorilla glue and great stuff, I was able to create the basic shape. Bar clamps worked well to keep the foam in place while the glue set.



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I left one sheet of foam off of the bottom so that I could have access to the bottom space. Later I added a sub woofer and power strip in this space. When most of the foam was glued and in place, it was time to start shaping it up. I used a free form hot wire cutter to remove large chunks out of the foam to create the angle.

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I used sand paper to start refining the shape, clean up the angle and remove some of the excess glue. After that I used PVC crown molding to cheat the details around the top. I set them in place with hot glue. The opening for the plaque was engraved into the foam using a wood router.

Not shown here is how I made it possible to change and swap the plaque if the need to change the name or info on the plaque ever arises.



Next came the making the custom plaques. Since we designed a left and a right it was only fitting that the plaques didn't say the same thing on both sides. We decided that the left one (the one closest to the front door) would have the Mantooth Manor name. The right one displays the hours of operation like a real cemetery with visiting hours.



I'm lucky enough to have access to Adobe illustrator and Photoshop so creating a full scale sign was not a problem. Once I made a digital template, I could add the text. The plaques began as a chunk of foam. I used the same router with a curved bit to create the outer edges. I wanted some details on the plaques which I felt would be better if I had a casting of the flourishes for the top and bottom. The last pic here shows the bottom castings in place.



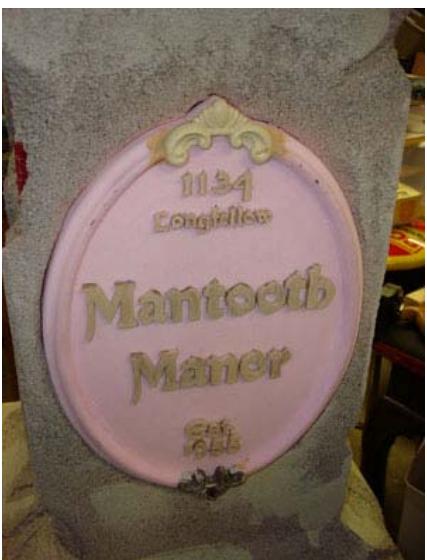
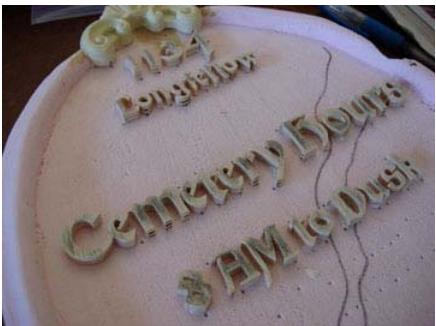
Time for the lettering. I wanted the finished plaque to look like it was a bronze casting. I felt I couldn't achieve this with carving only the foam. I made the decision to cut out each letter from 1/4 inch hobby plywood with a scroll saw. By doing this I made sure that all the lettering had crisp edges.

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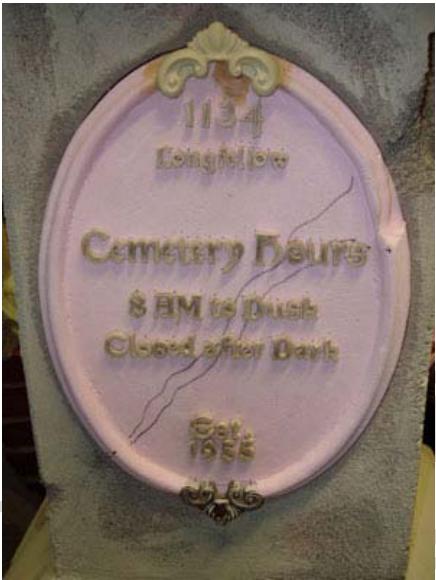


This was very labor intensive but in the end I think it added that special touch. Once cut, I sanded each letter to remove any burrs and rough edges.

Next I used a duplicate template to mark the placement of each letter. I then glued each letter into place with regular white glue.



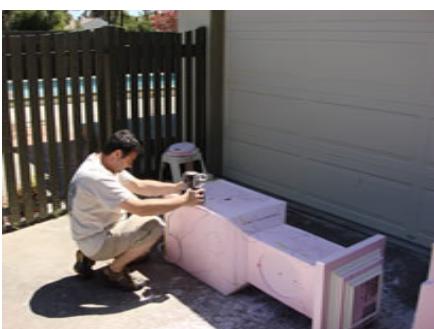
Once the letters were dry, it was time to add the texture that would be the basis for the bronze casting look. I was able to find a water based trowelable wood putty at the local hardware store. It worked great because I could add small amounts of water to thin it as needed. Using an old paint brush, I dabbed the putty around the letters to imitate a rough casting texture. I made sure that the face of the letters were wiped clean so that the smooth face of the letter appeared as part of the casting. Once the wood putty was dry, the edges were sanded smooth and prepped for paint.



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Next came the distressing of the pillars. Tracy and I used felt tip markers to draw the damage we wanted to create. The idea was to have it appear as though the pillars were made with red brick with mortar or concrete covering the brick. Then we used a hand router to make the basic carvings of damaged areas we drew. We also used a coarse wire brush, sand paper on a sanding block and a sheet rock knife.



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Here is a good example of how the wire brush was used. The flat parts will be the brick. By shaving down the edge between the brick area and the outer layer, I created some depth as if the mortar was broken away.



Marking the lines for the brick wasn't as easy as I had hoped. I made a template of a real brick with some thin cardboard.

Using the template, I marked the grout lines making sure that the bricks were even and consistent on every side. It's these details I believe help contribute to the realism of these pillars. Before I owned a Dremel tool, I used a pneumatic die grinder with a rounded stone to create the brick's grout lines. After all that it was time to use the same wood putty as the plaques and go over any seams between the foam

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sheets, PVC crown molding, screw holes and any other imperfections.



While the wood putty on the pillars was drying, I could focus on the crow toppers that started this whole chain of events.

Since both crows were identical, the heads were facing the same way. To make a left and a right sided crow, one had to loose its head.

The crows were made from a fiber glass material so it was easy to use a Saws-All to cut the head from one crow.



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I used a two-part epoxy to re-attach the head facing in the opposite direction from its mate. Once set, I used fiberglass resin and a fiberglass mesh to give some strength to the weak seam. Once that was dry I used an automotive body filler (bondo) to fill in and smooth out the neck of the crow.



Once I was happy with the look of the re-attached head I began to paint the entire crow with the same Bronzing kit as I used on the plaques.



Once the wood putty on the pillars was dry painting could begin. To help protect them against the weather I gave the pillars a coat of outdoor latex house paint. just so happens that I had 5 Gallons of our house paint left over. Not only was it free, but the base color matches the house.

I used an automotive paint gun to quickly apply the paint over the entire outer surface. Latex paint is a good base for adding other paints.



Once the base coat was dry the real details were now ready to be painted on. I used a spray-on stone paint on the damaged edges and grout lines.

I then added the red for the brick followed by some black and dark gray to give more depth.

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Once everything was painted and dry, assembly could begin. The crow toppers and plaques were designed to be bolted on so that they can be removed if needed.

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