

# The Cherokee Cowboy Gun Cart

## By Dave Steier

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### (A. K. A. Rolan Kraps, SASS # 24084 Life)

As a frequent poster/reader of the SASS Wire, I often see new shooters looking for gun cart plans. Of the many gun cart plans I've made available for free over the years, this design is the one I come back to most. In fact, a "3 gun version" of this cart is my current cart.

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#### The Cherokee Cowboy

This is a gun cart that I designed for my family to use. In addition to our family, other Cowboys with this same cart include Joe West, Blind Shooter, Hondo Howard, Odessa Straight, and DJ Derringer. The photos in this cart were taken of Hondo Howard's cart during construction. Here are the features of this cart:



#### Features

- small enough to lift in and out of a car trunk
- hold at least four long guns
- be easy to maneuver over rough terrain
- have a place to sit
- have "necessaries" close at hand  
(cell phone, keys, snacks, etc.) in a box without having to bend over.

What was NOT a requirement:

The cart did not need to:

- transport a cooler, and
- have provision for an umbrella



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## Tools Required

While the answer to this is undoubtedly “whatever you can afford to buy or sneak into the house”, the cart project we’re going to do “requires” the following tools, followed by a “suggested” list of other “really nice to have” items.

### Required Tools

Circular or Table Saw  
Drill with bits including:  
    1/2” Spade (or Forstner bit)  
    5/16” Drill Bit  
    #8 (1/16” Drill Bit)  
    #6 (3/32” Drill Bit)  
    1/4” Brad Point or standard bit  
Screw Driver  
Tape Measure  
Hack Saw  
Framing Square  
Sand Paper (60-80 grit, 120-150 grit minimum)  
Wood Glue

### Suggested Tools

Powered Screw Driver/Variable Speed Drill  
#6 Tapered Countersink Bit  
#8 Tapered Countersink Bit  
3/8” Tapered Plug Cutter  
Router with Assortment of Bits  
Corner and Bar Clamps  
Power Sander  
Drill Press  
Biscuit Jointer  
750 ml Makers Mark Bourbon (Optional)

## Wood Selection

Now you’re ready to go to the “Home Improvement Store” and/or Lumber yard. The first question is “what kind of wood do I get”. For beginning wood workers, I recommend that for your first cart, you stay away from expensive woods like Mahogany, Teak, Walnut, Cherry, or Hard Maple. Also avoid really hard woods like White Oak or Red Oak unless you’re really up to the challenge. A good “first project choice” would be “Furniture Grade” Pine, Poplar, Cyprus, Soft Maple (which isn’t very soft) or Ash. These woods tend to be easier to work and are cheaper to boot. The wood pictured in this article is Red Oak.

Also, I buy my wood from a lumber yard that caters to Cabinet makers. As such, the wood is sold finished on 3 sides. The fourth side is rough. That means that most boards can be ripped (cut) to 5” wide. For the purposes of these plans, when a dimension of less than 5” is directed, it means that this piece must be ripped from a wider piece.

## Bill of Materials

2 – Plow Handles - These can be ordered at the following site, although, I’ve had luck finding them at Flea Markets

[www.farmerbrownsploughshop.com](http://www.farmerbrownsploughshop.com)

About 67 board feet of the wood of your choice.

1 - 9” x36” shelf stock (for base of cart and key box) or if using hardwood, add one more 10’ board

1 - 1/2” x 3” steel rod (for axel)

2 - 16” wheels (from Northern Tool or other place)

4 – 2” hinges

2 – 3” handles for removable box

3 – draw catches (a.k.a. toolbox latches)

1 box fine thread #6 x 1 1/4” screws

1 coarse thread #8 x 3” screw

4 – coat hooks

2 – “screw in” replacement legs of at least 6”

2 – screw in plates (you’ll find them next to the legs)

4 – 1/2” steel washers

2 - 5/16” retaining clips

Paint or stain

### Optional Materials

Self stick 2mm foam rubber (to line gun rack and base)

Brass “corners” to “dress up” edges

## Step 1 - Preparing the Lower Cart

OK, let's get started. The diagram below illustrates what you'll be building in this step.

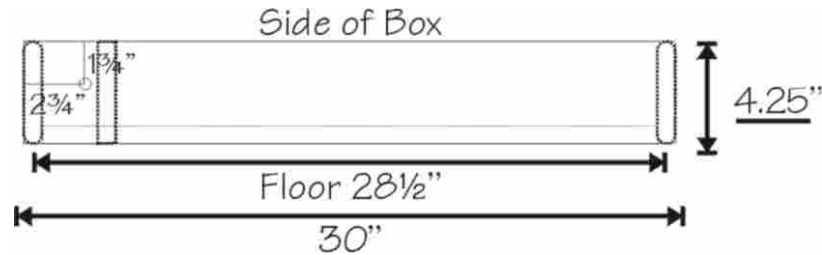


Diagram of lower cart – side view

- Cut two lengths of 1" x 4 1/2" to 30".
- Drill a 1/2" hole through both boards. 1 3/4" by 2 3/4" from top left corner (as shown above) Set aside. This hole will be the pivot point for the gun rack and also serve as the axel for the cart.
- Rip a piece of the shelving to 10 1/4" wide by 28 1/2" long (this is for the base). If hardwoods are used, biscuit together and rip a board 10 1/4" wide.
- Cut 2 lengths of 1" x 4 1/2" board to 10 1/4" for the front and back sides of the box.
- Drill, glue, and screw side boards outside of front and back boards.
- Drill, glue, and screw base inside of box.

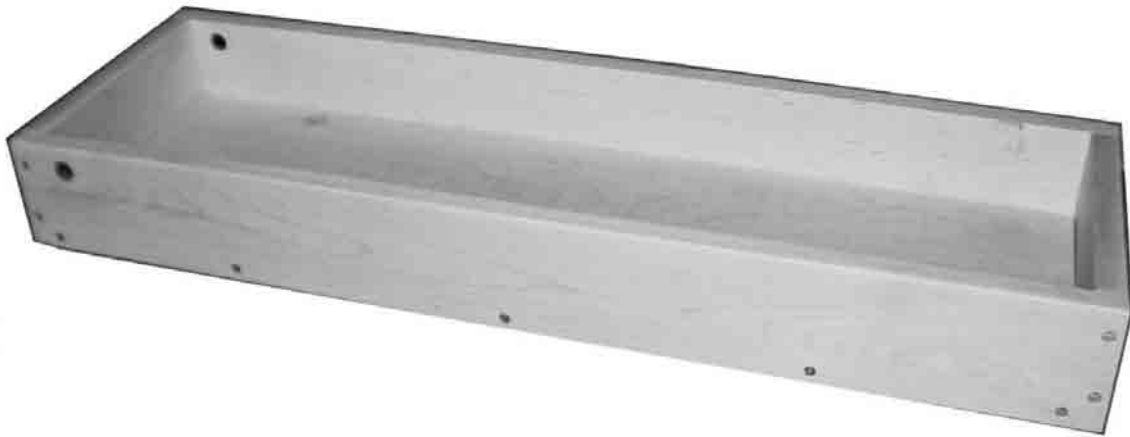
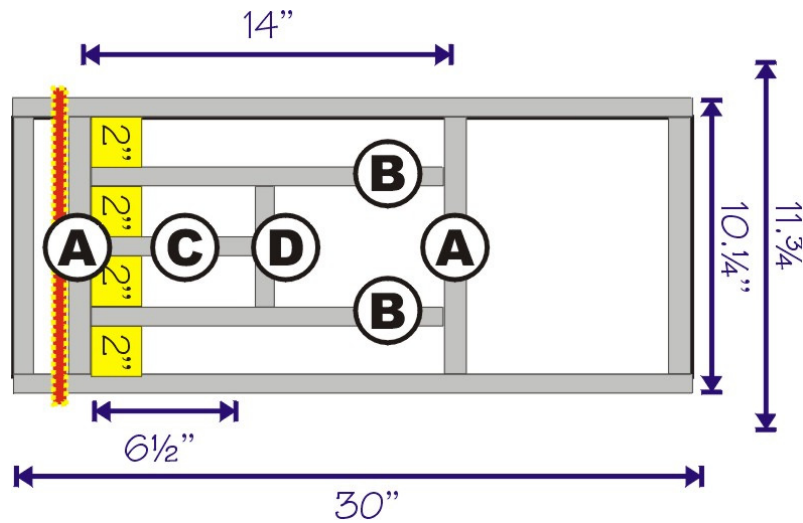


Photo of finished box

## Step 2 – Adding Internal Dividers

Refer to the following drawing for this operation.

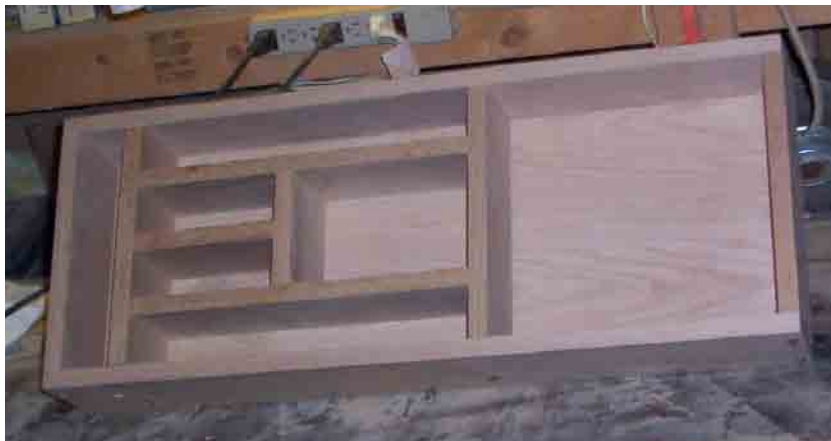


*Schematic of internal dividers*

**NOTE:** Rip all dividers to a depth of  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " to fit inside the cart.

- Cut 2 lengths of  $1 \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ " board to  $10\frac{1}{4}$ " for the internal dividers. (A)
- Rip these boards to  $3\frac{3}{4}$ " height.
- Cut 2 boards to fit between the two internal dividers (B). Mine measured 14" even. This is for the double barrel shotgun divider. **NOTE:** The shotgun divider is so much longer than the Rifle/'97 divider to maintain the open shotgun at a  $90^\circ$  angle when placed in the cart.
- Drill, glue, and screw rear-most internal divider just forward of the pivot hole (A).
- Drill, glue, and screw Shotgun Divider (B) against the back divider (A), 2" from the side of the cart.
- Drill, glue, and screw front internal divider (A) at the front of the shotgun divider (B).
- Cut a divider for the Rifle/'97 to  $6\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $3\frac{3}{4}$ " (C).
- Cut a divider for front of the Rifle/'97 dividers to  $4\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$   $3\frac{3}{4}$ " (D).

**Option:** I like to use a router to "round over" the boards.

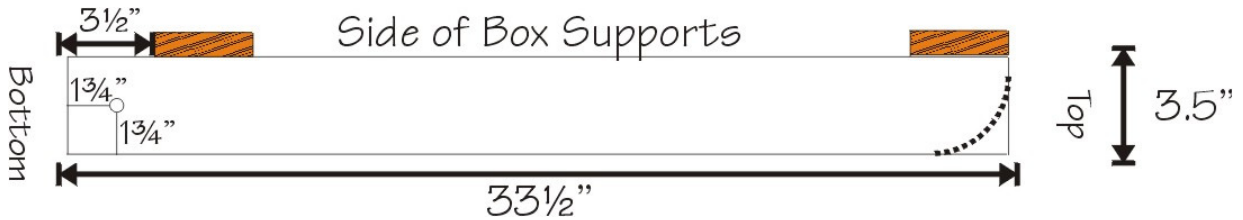


*Finished lower "Box" with dividers*

### Step 3 – Building the Gun Rack

This step will construct the “gun rack” part of the cart. NOTE: DO NOT USE SOFT PINE FOR THIS STEP! It’s just not strong enough. Best to just get a piece of Oak or other hard wood.

Refer to the following drawing for this operation.



Side view of “Gun Rack” assembly

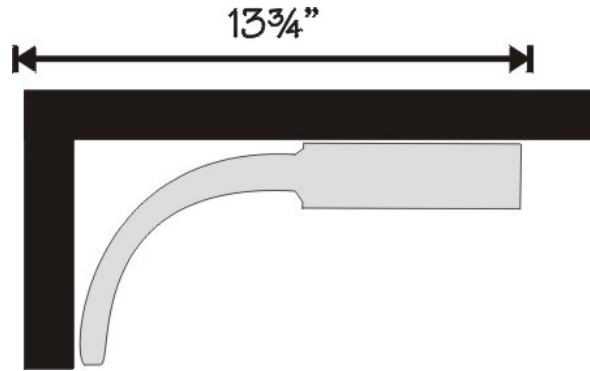
- Cut two boards  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ” x  $33\frac{1}{2}$ ”
- Drill a  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” hole in the base of each for the axel,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ” x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ”
- After sanding, slide  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” rod through bottom of cart. Slide vertical supports onto each side of the cart.
- Cut two boards  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ” x  $13\frac{1}{2}$ ” for the horizontal portion of the gun rack.
- Square off and attached one of the boards across the top of the vertical supports, Drill, Glue, and Screw.
- Pivot the gun rack so that it is at a right angle to the base, and Drill, Glue, and Screw the board across the bottom (as shown below).
- **Optional:** I like to round off the top, outside edge of the gun rack and then take a router to the outside edges.



Attaching the bottom horizontal support to the gun rack

## Step 4 – Gun Rack Dividers

- Glue two 1x4 boards together to make dividers.
- Cut plow handles to 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (as shown).



*Measuring the cut for the Plow Handles*

- Take the cut, plow handles and drill, glue, and screw them into each side corner of the gun cart. The inside of the plow handle will serve as the rest for the shotguns. The plow handle should be flush with the bottom of the horizontal cross-member of the gun rack.
- Now go and get your guns.
- Start on the outside by setting your SxS shotgun in the cart.
- Mark on the outside of the shotgun. Replace the shotgun with a Rifle or '97 in the second slot. Again mark on either side of the gun rack. Repeat until all slots are full.
- Measure the areas between the marks, and cut part of the two boards you glued together earlier. I like to use a contrasting wood like Cherry or Walnut to provide some contrast.
- **Optional:** I like to use my router to "round over" the edges of the dividers, but it's not really necessary.
- When finished, it should look like this...



*Gun rack with dividers*

## Step 4 - Adding the Wheels and Front Supports

**NOTE:** A drill Press is required for this operation. If you don't have one, or access to one substitute a 1/2" Threaded Steel rod for the 1/2" Steel Rod, and use two, 1/2" nuts on each side, or a Nylon Nut.

### Step 4A – Installing the Axle and Wheels

- Place the gun rack on top of the base of the cart.
- Thread the rod through the holes in the Gun rack and the base of the cart.
- Install the draw catches (or “tool box latches”) on the base of the box and the lowest brace of the gun rack.
- Add a washer on each side of the rod, and place the wheels on the rod.
- Adjust the rod until the end protrudes approximately 1/2" through the left side of the cart.
- Add a washer, and use a permanent marker to mark a spot to drill a 5/16" hole.
- Add the wheel and washer on the other side of the cart.
- Using the permanent marker, mark the spot to drill the 5/16" hole and add about 1/2" to mark where to cut the rod off.
- Remove rod, drill two holes where marked and cut off Rod. **HINT:** I find it's best to drill the first hole, install the retaining pin, washers, wheel, then pull the rod through the cart to mark and screw.



Photo of back of cart

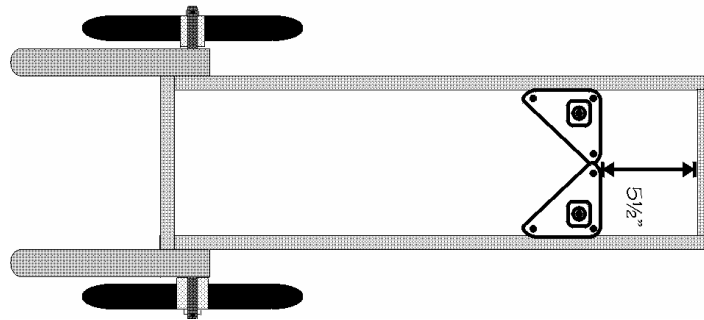
### Step 4B – Adding Front Support

- Turn the cart over and measure 5½” from the FRONT of the base of the box.
- Drill and screw the two foot plates onto the cart.
- Screw in legs.

**Hint:** I like to add the “nail in” furniture “feet” to my front supports to keep them from splitting.

- Stand cart up on a level surface. The cart base should be level or should only have a SLIGHT incline to the rear. You may have to saw off the front legs to level the cart.

*Bottom of Cart*



*Bottom of cart showing placement of screw-in plates*

### Step 6 – Building the Retaining Rod

The retaining rod keeps the long guns from falling out of the cart.

Using leftover welding rod (from the axel), or a new ½” wood dowel, cut the rod to 11 11/16”.

Drill a hole in one side of the rod, ½” from end, set aside.

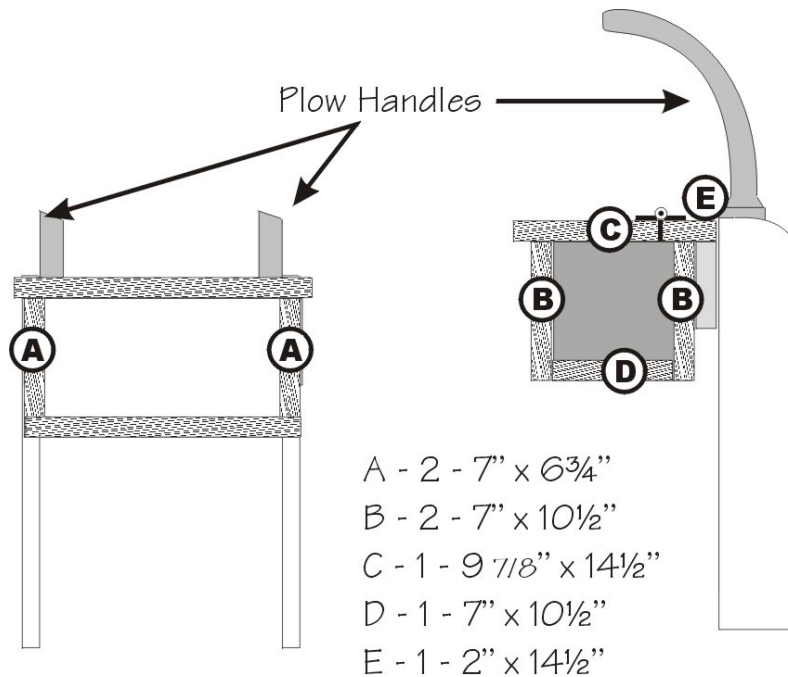
Take some of the remaining plow handle and use a 3/8” Forstner or spade bit to take off the corner as shown in detail photograph below. Glue into the side of the cart. Screw the retaining rod into the other plow handle.



Retaining Rod Detail

### Step 7 – Building the Key Box

A small box on the back of the cart is useful for keys, snacks, cell phones, pens, and other things you want to be able to get to without bending over. This step creates a box on the back of the cart. Refer to the drawing below for details.



Key Box diagram from rear and side

- The first step is to cut the sides of the box (piece (A) in the diagram). Cut two pieces of wood that measure 7" x 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". This board can be made from scraps from the shelf (used to make the base of the cart) or by other boards.
- Cut out the front and rear pieces (pieces (B)), to a size of 7" x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>".
- Cut one piece (D) at 7" x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"
- Cut one piece, (C), for the lid at 7 7/8" x 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>". I prefer my lids over sized so that rain has at least a chance of rolling off the sides and not into the box.
- Cut one piece (E), for the back of the lid.
- Drill, glue, and screw both (B) to (D) (this will make a "U" shape).
- Drill, glue, and screw the sides (A), between the completed box.
- Drill, glue, and screw the partially assembled box to the back of the gun cart. This should be flush with the top of the horizontal support of the gun rack.
- Drill, glue, and screw the front piece of the box (E) to the top of the box AND the gun rack..
- Attach front part of lid with hinges.

## Step 8 – Building the Removable Front Box

OK, so are you still with me? If you made it this far, you're ready for the next step!

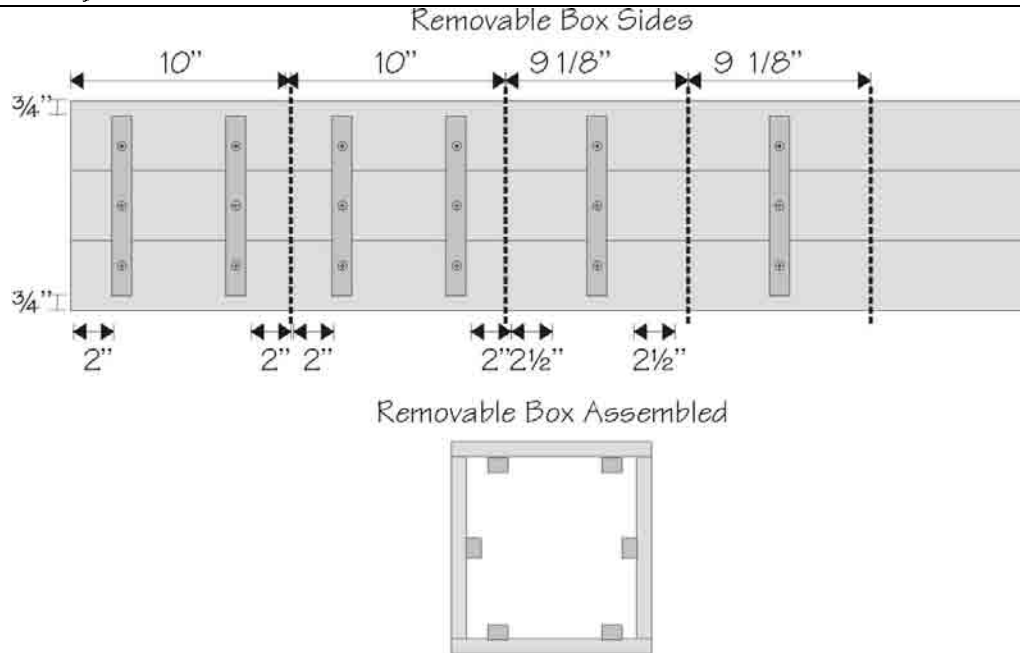
In this step, we'll make a removable box for the front of the gun cart. If you have a biscuit jointer, simply join the boards together and glue. If not...

Let's build a box. To fit in the cart, the external dimensions of the box need to be 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 10".

In order to save on wood, we'll "make" our own board.

### *Making the Removable Box Sides*

- Cut three boards, 48". **Note:** While this operation shows that less than 48" total will be needed, it's always best to add a little bit to take the cut into account. Most blades loose 1/8" on the cut. You should adjust accordingly.
- Cut 2 boards that are 10"
- Cut 2 boards that are 9 1/8"
- If you don't have a "biscuit jointer", then cut 6, 1" boards to secure the sides together.
- Lay out the three boards as pictured below. Glue the boards together (Clamp 'em if you've got 'em).
- Glue the six, 1" boards to the "sides" of the box.
- Using the # 6, 1" screws, screw one screw into each board.



*Removable box construction*

- Assemble the box so that the long edges (the 11" lengths) overlap the 9 1/8" sides. This will yield an external dimension of 10 5/8" inches. Drill, glue, and screw.

### ***Making the Box Floor and Lid***

To make the floor of the box,

- Get remaining "shelf" to cut a piece for the floor.
- Fit board into the top and bottom of the box.
- Drill, glue, and screw the top and bottom into the box
- Set aside to dry.
- On a table saw, set the rip fence to a depth of 2".
- Cut through the entire box, flip and run through again.
- This way, your top and bottom will match.
- Add hinges on the back, and handles on the sides.
- **Optional:** I like to get a piece of chain to keep the lid from opening more than 90°.



### Finished Product

Good Luck, and enjoy your new cart!

