

Artisans Quarterly Review

H A N D C R A F T E D C U S T O M W O O D W O R K I N G

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2013 Mayans be Damned!

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Artisans has been jumping around quite a bit between projects, mediums, events, and random creative endeavors. We have a lot to report.

Restoration work has been progressing on several fronts and we are moving forward on dozens of projects. We have some long standing projects that have been stalled, we will be completing all of them this year; preferably EARLY this year! We have built a strong queue of work ahead of us. This is great, but we also have to remain balanced against being able to take on new projects.

We have several pieces in storage from Hurricane Irene, hopefully those will be released shortly. We now have dozens of additional pieces in the queue from Super Storm Sandy and we have a few more site evaluations pending. Storm restoration work will be a primary focus for 2013.

Concrete work; well we've stalled. Since the pieces we produced for "The Blending of Art & Wine" we have not followed through with plans for launching our new lines. We have a prototype steel mold ready, and we will be casting our first reproducible curved benches as soon as the weather breaks.

Our lathe has been a source of great fun ... and great frustration. We are replacing the motor and speed control with a far more powerful frequency drive system. The coring rig and additional accessories are still on our agenda to configure. Meanwhile we are producing bowls, a few of the latest projects are featured in this issue.

And our new trailer arrived, and thanks to D&D for noticing an issue it was returned to the factory to correct some issues with the build. It's finally ready for duty!

H O L I D A Y P R E P P I N G ... N O W !

Doomsday having passed unnoticed; its time to start thinking about the holidays. Yes, that's right, NOW is the time to start thinking about the holidays!

Custom work takes time. Every year we get a flood of calls around Thanksgiving asking if we can finish projects for delivery for Christmas and Chanukah. Unfortunately our answer is generally "Sure we can get that done for Christmas of NEXT YEAR!"

This time we're going to prep you in advance, now is the time to start thinking about your ideas for custom holiday gifts. If you are already pondering about this image, perhaps thinking how warm and cozy and

comfortable this scene looks, now is the time to think about a custom built-in that we may be able to complete before Christmas of 2013.

Oh, just in case you're wondering about the orange reindeer, that's Smirnoff the radioactive reindeer. There's a legend that Santa's reindeer fly due to a little radiation exposure mishap. Smirnoff got quite the brunt of it, much more than Rudolf who walked away with only a glowing nose. Since he glows way to bright to guide a sleigh and he travels at extremely high speeds, his job is to transport those deviant intelligence gathering elves that keep popping up all over the world. They're creepy, just Google it!



OUR YARDER IN ACTION

Here's the new yarder setup in operation. We have the central power unit (a 12,000lb winch) mounted on a riser in a secondary receiver our custom rear truck bumper. This allows us to have the trailer and the winch simultaneously fixed to the back of the truck providing a strong anchor point and we can keep the winch mounted when in transit.

The winch cable routes up to a pulley hung on a cross member above the trailer deck. The high point allows us to drag logs while lifting the front end to reduce drag and to facilitate bringing the heavy sticks onto the deck. Once the front of the log is at the top of the ramp, we slide the choker chain to the back end of the log and simply continue to drag (push) it all the way onto the trailer.

We can load four or five good size logs onto the deck at this point. Depending on the size, if we can get the front of the log high enough we can actually stack. We'll be rigging up some ramp risers to allow the logs to slide up above the first layer soon. This will also ease the drag on the ramp, which is an open mesh.

This rig is a work in progress. We're learning and designing and (re)building as we gain experience. Our primary design objective is to utilize minimal equipment to allow one or two people to load logs onto the trailer for transport. Our equipment testing shows that we can handle logs up to about the size of the cherry one shown below, marking us at the 80% point. Our goal is to handle a 30" diameter 10 foot log without the assistance of a loader. The rig will require some modifications to fulfill this. We'll continue to report on improvements. We'll be hiring heavier equipment to reach some rough locations to gather heavier logs.



Other changes include the addition of a side loading ramp on the trailer. This configuration worked out great! We can drag logs up to about 12ft onto the trailer and then bring the four wheeler back on board across the front. This helps balance out the load and allows us to take both cargo logs and our helpful Artic Cat workhorse with us in one trip.

Another pending idea for modifications and new equipment include welding up a second wheel set for our skidder or perhaps rigging up a wagon of sorts to pull the heavier logs a longer distance out of the woods.



A MAPLE MONSTROSITY!

Here's a special storm fall find, a giant maple burl! A little out of scope for the trailer and winch setup we configured so we brought in DPD Excavating with a backhoe and a heavy duty trailer.

Stay tuned on this one, we have no clue what we're going to do with it just yet. We have no clue what's inside!? Did we just pick-up 100 really cool bowls, or a few small tables? Did we find material for boxes? Until we really open it up we won't know. We had to split off about 1/3 of it in order to hoist it onto the trailer deck. It's obvious the trunk is hollow and thus too rotten for full sized slabs so we are hoping for an assortment of unique pieces. This monster log is off to Willard Brother's Woodcutters for milling. We'll keep you posted!



TAKE YOUR LOG ON A MILL WALK

Shown right, the red cedar we featured in our last issue is now cut into slabs. Next step will be to the edger, then we'll pick up the material to process it ourselves into cedar strips destined eventually for a boat project.



Shown left, this bandsaw mill is the basis of Willard's operation. Its really pretty simple, not a lot of smoke or flashing lights, but there's definitely noise.

The saw mill is basically a frame and track system that supports a bandsaw and a hydraulic pump. The pump drives the blade, moves the carriage back and forth, and provides for a stable platform to raise, lower, and level the blade.

The operators position the log on the track and walk along as the carriage moves the saw. Wedged slats are placed in the cut to keep it level and keep the pressure off the blade. It's a reasonably anti-climactic process.

ROCKING GENERATIONS

This antique rocker has provided generations of service to our client's family. Hoping to pass it on to another generation and having a newborn grandchild, they brought the piece in for an overhaul.

The rocker was completely disassembled, a new right hand spindle was made, the legs were split and the cracks reglued. We split the seat apart in several places and reglued it. A new rocker rail was made. All the joints were separated, cleaned, and reglued. The chair was then scuffed and a blending stain applied. Additional coats of finish restored the overall finish continuity.

Now back in shape, the piece will serve a few more generations. Although we can't formally certify any piece of furniture of this age to be entirely safe for use with a baby the rocker is as sturdy now as it will ever be!



2013 POLAR PLUNGE THANK YOU'S TO OUR SPONSORS

Artisans of the Valley sponsored [“The Frozen Beach Bums”](#) in this year’s [2013 Special Olympics Polar Plunge](#) at Long Branch, NJ. The Bums, and almost 5,000 other cold water psycho’s overcame rational thought and jumped into the frigid Atlantic Ocean in February helping to raise over \$1 million for their cause!

This year’s corporate beach bum sponsors included: [Hopewell Valley Vineyards](#), [Cheyenne Mountain Outfitters](#), [Captain Paul's Firehouse Dogs](#), [Law Office of Michael L. Pisauro Jr. LLC](#), [Life Style Construction LLC](#), [Pennington Quality Market](#), The Adams Family, The Sinclair Family, Franco's Pizza Family Restaurant, [In8graphics](#), [McGuinn's Place](#), & [The Starving Artist Ocean Grove, NJ](#).



JOHN LOOSER'S EXTREME BIRDHOUSES

What exactly IS an extreme birdhouse? What makes a man build an extreme bird house?

We featured John Looser a while back in our blog in a profile called "Lifestyles of the Rich & Feathered." John is a child prodigy to woodworking. Born to a family of carpenters and sawyers, his early years were spent wielding a hammer. By fifteen he was able to build just about anything: homes, fences, decks, sheds, whatever.

Promising initiations into life sometimes take a twist; in John's case this was an accident at the age of forty that rendered him out of the mainstream construction and labor business. The diagnosis wasn't pretty, as John's doctors told him would never return to work due to chronic, debilitating pain. This is devastating to anyone active, especially those with creative skills derived from their physical body.

John realized, "After sitting around for a few years, I thought maybe I could still do some woodworking on a smaller scale. That is when I came up with the idea of building Extreme Birdhouses."

Starting off with just a little more than average, John's first birdhouse was only about 16 inches square with 6 bird apartments. A modest shared home for birds. Not a mansion by any means, but not the normal single hobbit hole style configuration either. Mounted and ready for rental, it wasn't long before tenants took up residence.

During the next seven years the project of housing feathered critters turned extreme. Tallying over 400 models, this bird estate developer has gone up to nine feet wide by eight feet tall. One of the houses weighs over 500 pounds, has 32 dormers, 14 different roofs and 103 bird apartments. Amenities include swimming pools (bird baths) in the roof, removable pods for easy cleaning, breathtaking views, and sustainability as they are built from salvaged lumber.



These palatial palaces are free form, no initial plans are filed, no restrictive building codes, and no micro-managing architects are involved. The designs evolve from John's own intuition as they take form. The longest term project to date is two years working on his favorite (and largest) birdhouse, most of them require between two days and six weeks to build. The natural aged appearance roots in reclaimed barn wood he uses.

<http://www.extremebirdhouse.com/>



JOHN LOOSER'S EXTREME BIRDHOUSES



ONE REALLY COOL REDWOOD TABLE PART I

Even the legendary redwood is subject to occasionally growing a random anomaly known as a burl. We got our hands on a nice slice of one of these amazingly beautiful natural wonders and worked it into an artistic coffee table. This was one of those slabs of wood that caught Eric's eye one December afternoon back in 2011 when he and Mike wandered into Willard Brothers Lumber. Eric said I want that, Mike at first said why? Well, Eric wanted it, so it was added to the tab for the day.

The piece sat around for a few months until one day Mike realized that he could do something unique and creative. Modern furniture requires visual impact in order to be successful. This design incorporates a unique array of ebony butterflies to secure the splits along the grain lines and grace the surface with contrast. Mike's thought was to inset a series of butterflies (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) along the major fault lines that would follow the contour of the natural grain patterns.

Notice the outer edge of each butterfly ends along the exact path of one of the growth ring lines. This attention to detail is what defines the piece. It also requires a great deal of time to make a pattern for every single butterfly, fifteen in total on the top surface. The bottom is secured with additional standard walnut butterflies.



ONE REALLY COOL REDWOOD BURL TABLE PART I



Here's a preview of Part II; We'll show the table in full finished form!

The base is a design we developed based loosely on a Nagashima form, but we decided to incorporate a floating drawer box. The material we selected is an African Wenge. You'll have to wait for Part II of this article to see the final completed piece.

"COMMON THREADS"

Once again our winery venue proved a success. Art, wine, and brick oven pizza at Hopewell Valley Vineyards is just a winning mix.

"Common Threads," hosted by Craig Shofed, featured Kate Graves, Vanity Sabelnik, Jeff Stewart, Burgess Ekman and George Chevalier. Each brought a unique medium with Trenton as their bounding theme.

Special guest Trenton Councilwoman Marge Caldwell-Wilson joined us to present her perspectives on bringing the creativity of her beloved city into the surrounding community.



ABOVE ARTISTS CRAIG SHOFED, KATE GRAVES, VANITY SABELNIK, JEFF STEWART, BURGESS EKMAN AND GEORGE CHEVALIER WITH VINEYARD OWNER VIOLETTA NERI

Actor Kevin Spacey stated "I think Arts and Culture are a necessity in our lives that it is about our spirit and our health. It is about how we expose young people to Arts Education, to music, poetry, theatre and the ballet".

The City of Trenton has a vibrant, thriving, and incredibly talented Arts Community; without this community thriving, the City of Trenton will not evolve or even survive.

North Ward Councilwoman

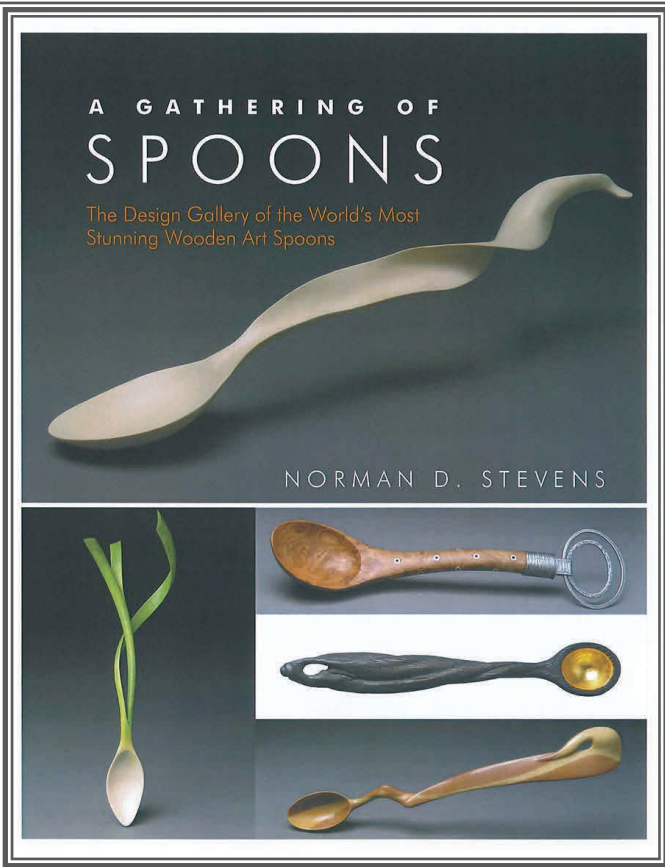
<http://www.margefortrenton.com/>

Marge Caldwell-Wilson

We'll be featuring some of the artists from this event in our upcoming issues as well as a feature interview with Marge pertaining to the art community in Trenton, NJ and the surrounding area.



A GATHERING OF SPOONS: THE DESIGN GALLERY OF THE WORLD'S MOST STUNNING WOODEN ART SPOONS



We recently received word that one of Stanley's spoons was included in "A Gathering of Spoons."

Forward: Featuring more than 200 hand-carved art spoons, this collection is the definitive photographic record of the world's most brilliant and beautiful examples of art spoon design. Spoons are not just utilitarian tools but are also revered as powerful ceremonial and symbolic objects. Showing how spoon making has been a respected craft and art form in many cultures for centuries, this work celebrates the resurgence of the art form in recent years. A fascinating visual record of great art in an unusual form, A Gathering of Spoons presents a dazzling variety of forms, materials, and carving techniques and showcases the finest work in spoon making from around the world, with each piece beautifully photographed to present its unique visual appeal.

About Norman D. Stevens

Norman D. Stevens is Director Emeritus of the University of Connecticut Libraries. He and his wife Nora, also a librarian, appreciate and collect contemporary crafts, and are closely associated with the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. They live in Storrs, Connecticut.

Norman's creative and persistent collecting of wooden spoons has been conducted with dignity, enthusiasm, and affection. He has clearly enjoyed searching for and communicating with each participant. He and Nora have assembled many significant collections with respect and kindness, making numerous friends throughout the craft world. We spoon carvers are grateful to them for their patronage, their understanding of our work, and their willingness to give it prominent recognition. ~ Barry Gordon and Norm Sartorius

<http://www.amazon.com/Gathering-Spoons-Design-Gallery-Stunning/dp/1610351304>

To Purchase "A Gathering of Spoons" Click the Link Above at Amazon!



Hand Carved Red Cedar Spoon by Stanley D. Saperstein - Original piece from 2006

A COPPER BEECH BOWL

A beech bowl – this project is rather special as it is now one of our family heirlooms in memory of my grandmother, Mildred Saperstein, who passed away last year; her home was her treasure and this material came from a tree that grew from a sapling over the four decades that she called this house a home.

This was still a firewood rescue, the beech tree fell during Super Storm Sandy as we were preparing the house for sale. I mentioned to my father that I wanted the tree, and my father decided to take the obscure looking chunk that became this bowl home along with the trunk.

The turning project was completed by fellow craftsman Michael Pietras, as he's a lot better with a lathe than I am and he happened to catch notice of this chunk one morning and decide to cut into it. As soon as he began to bandsaw it down to a turning blank it was obvious we hit paydirt.

This one section shows grain lines that are curly, quarter sawn, end, bias, crotch, straight, and face. Along with this abnormality this is a rare find of beech with an assortment of mineral stains and spalting.

Turning wet allowed us to achieve a thin flexible wall, then allowing a "quick" dry it warped into whatever shape it desired to achieve. The shape became distorted, and the surface rippled. A single butterfly was inserted to stabilize one large crack.

The bowl is finished with West System Epoxy and then final coats with Waterlox Tung Oil. It is stable and waterproof, though given we chose not to completely fill the cracks, it will not hold liquid.

This is yet another reminder – never just toss wood aside. At least take a few samples of a fallen tree to your bandsaw and see what's inside!



HELP FUND OUR NEW LATHE ADOPT A ROUND THING!

Everything you see here is somewhere in the cycle of turning it round! This is just a tiny sample of what we have in our materials inventory to ramp up our adopt-a-round-thing campaign.

Our plan is to generate a full array of bowls and vessels for an eclectic list of purposes from a small single ring bowl to the largest we can get spinning.

This brings us to another new upgrade for the lathe. All the recent additional chucks and devices and further uses for this machine required we enhance the power plant substantially. The old Delta 1.25hp DC motor served for over 30 years for spindles and small projects. We've had a lot of problems with it in the past year or so with holding speed, fast starting, and overall limiting of our efficiency and capabilities. Not to mention it was just plain dangerous to operate.

A new Leeson 3HP variable speed motor and a frequency drive unit fitted into the machine did the trick. We now have torque to spare; and we're finally ready to pickup that bowl coring rig we've been wanting.

Watch our upcoming issues for projects in spalted maple and beech, osage orange, mulberry, dogwood, walnut, cherry, apple, locust, maple burl, elm, cedar, and well just keep watch you'll see!

Watch our FaceBook page for offerings of bowls for sale as they come off the lathe. We'll offer them first online then in shows and other venues.

<https://www.facebook.com/ArtisansOfTheValleyLlc>



THE LATHE UPGRADE PROGRESSES



This is where we woodworkers have to step aside and let Sinclair Power & Electric come in to handle the wiring. We can rig up most of our tools, but we're out of our league when it came to configuring and programming high voltage systems.

The additional RPM range and power, especially at the low end, is already proving to be of great value. We're mounting some of the larger pieces we have been storing away and they are turning quite nicely!

We'll be working on a custom built outrigger system soon, and we are planning to move forward with ordering the bowl coring rig as well as a tool cage system to provide a stable and safe platform for deep vessel hollowing as soon as possible.



PAPER MACHE TABLE RESTORATION

Paper mache projects appear in the shop once or twice a year. This material is a compressed paper that often contains a variety of inlay material. Japanning was common for finishing, usually a gloss black. The repair process employs a variety of common fillers, and an asphalt black Japanning finish.

We patched up all the chipped out sections including securing each of the separated layers of paper. The profile was resculpted to match the existing, and then color and finish were applied. It is time consuming to patiently build up the layers and not rush the process. A little extra time makes all the difference in the final results.



ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING



[Artisans of the Valley](#) offers museum quality period reproductions, original designs by commission, and antique restoration/conservation services, hand carving, modern furniture refinishing, onsite furniture repair, hand made walking sticks, and educational programs. Our website is now over 250 pages, including galleries, feature articles, and educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site, and contact us directly with any inquiries or questions you may have.

Eric M. Saperstein is Master of Artisans, Owner, Webmaster, Editor, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Office Manager, Legal Pit-bull, and he's in charge of vacuuming the shop: eric@artisansofthevalley.com

Stanley D. Saperstein, Master Craftsmen, Author, & Historian founded Artisans of the Valley in 1973. Stanley offers historic presentations, impressions, and various lecture series ranging from Civil and Revolutionary War, American Folk Art, and Interactive Role Play of Characters ... sometimes trying to reenact American Chopper episodes in the shop: woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com



SPINNING COLORS PREVIEW!

In our next issue we'll demonstrate the addition of gold and other metallic as well as a variety of unique contrasting offerings from the standard rainbow. This process is messy and often requires working layers over several days or longer. The net result though is very unique, and we can use the technique to stabilize otherwise useless material or improve our yield by avoiding cutting material down into smaller projects.

Once again this falls into a green effort, we are utilizing material for projects that would otherwise be considered firewood!



2013 2ND QUADRANT

Completion of the Redwood Burl Table (We hope?!)
Updates on TONS of restorations we've had in progress
A truckload of new turning projects.

We're determined to finish that 10ft long bench we keep mentioning.

What's inside that Maple Monstrosity?

The Slab Catalog - As we collect our bounty from the mill we will show you our wood!

Keep the projects coming and we'll figure out what we cover next!



Our studio hours are by appointment. Please call ahead!

Office Address: 60 Bakun Way Ewing, NJ 08638

Shop Address: 103 Corrine Drive Pennington, NJ 08534

Office: 609-637-0450 Shop: 609-737-7170 Fax: 609-637-0452 Cell: 609-658-2955

Email: woodworkers@artisansofthevalley.com

www.artisansofthevalley.com