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## MAY 2009 NEWSLETTER

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### *The Cumberland Furniture Guild's Spring Meeting*

will be on Saturday, May 16th, 2009 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. at  
Worth Squire's Place in College Grove, Tennessee.

*The program at this meeting will be a demonstration of*

### *Harvesting hickory bark for chair seats*

*presented by Guild members Tim Hintz and Alan Daigre.*

*Please turn out to see these two journeyman chairmakers show us how it's done.*

*There will also be a special election to choose a new Treasurer for the Guild.*

### *Directions to the meeting:*

The February Meeting is at the home and shop of CFG editor Worth Squire. The phone number is (615) 368-7798. **Take I-65 South from Nashville to Tenn 840 East** (a few miles South of Franklin Exits) toward Murfreesboro. Take the 31A/41A-Shelbyville/Lewisburg Exit. Turn Right onto 31A/41A. **Mark your mileage at this point.** After a few miles 41A will fork off to the left, but you will **bear Right and stay on 31A** through College Grove. **10 miles South of hwy 840** turn Right onto Flat Creek Rd., next to the cemetery. Go about 3 & 1/2 miles on Flat Creek Rd. and **Turn Left onto Edwards Grove Rd.** Go exactly one mile on Edwards Grove Rd. and Turn Left at big black mailbox. The address is 6840 Edwards Grove Rd., College Grove, 37046.

**OR:** From I-24 take Tenn 840 West. Take the 31A/41A Shelbyville/Lewisburg Exit. Turn Left onto 31A/41A. Then follow above directions from **"Mark your mileage at this point" (above).**

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Editor - Worth Squire - worths@united.net; Contributing Editors - Scott Thompson, Matthew Teague;

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Thanks to all of the people who volunteer their time, without whom there would be no Guild and no newsletter.

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## Letter From The President

By Alf Sharp

Right on the heels of our exhibit's opening in Knoxville, I had the privilege of attending the opening of another great display of furniture art and visionary pedantry.

This opportunity came when, against all likelihood, I was invited to attend the opening of a very prestigious furniture exhibit in Chicago. It was indeed a privilege, because the event was open only to those invited, and each invitee had to present not only his invitation but also his curriculum vitae upon entry to the exhibit. Even that didn't guarantee entrance; I saw another supplicant turned away, despite presenting all appropriate documentation, apparently because he wasn't wearing a single item of black clothing. (I always make sure to be wearing at least my black turtle-neck shirt when venturing into such august events.)

The occasion was the revelation of the latest oeuvres by the celebrated post-rationalist Canadian furniture artist Gordon Peters. Peters is renowned for his capacity to thrust his thumb squarely into the eye of the traditional furniture community. "The bourgeois emphasis on function and craftsmanship is so passé in this era of virtual living," says Peters. "Today the furniture we surround ourselves with should challenge our perceptions of reality and reveal hidden insights into the human condition." This courageous manifesto was amply elucidated by the three enigmatic pieces displayed in a stark white 3500 square foot gallery.

The first piece encountered upon successful navigation of the exhibit's devilish entrance maze was an amorphous white blob of fiberglass. Languid rap music consisting primarily of samplings from Frank Zappa's early works wafted stridently in the background. The artist's statement posted nearby posed a riddle: *"Is this a pillow, a monster marshmallow, or a table yearning for fulfillment? With determined experimentation, this item's ultimate owner will be able to find the one spot on which a glass of wine may rest without toppling. In our hectic and scattered contemporary experience, such an essentially Zen quest offers a crystalline perspective into the frustrations of meaningless striving."* Brilliant!

After the polished sophistication of the last piece, I was unprepared for the intentional evocation of simpler times conferred by Peter's next opus. There, in an intense circle of spotlight sat a one legged chair constructed of recycled concrete-form two-by-fours and rebar. The other three legs lay littered on the floor, as if struck by the prophet Daniel's stone-not-cut-by-human-hands. At first I thought the artist had broken the grasp of pedestrian gravity, before catching a glimpse of the support by a gossamer trout-line leader hanging from the girders above. If one waved one's hands vigorously enough near the chair, the resulting air currents would cause the chair to pirouette jaggedly around its one surviving leg. I couldn't help but chuckle at the Chaplinesque outcome for anyone who actually might try to seat her or him self on this mirage. I was struck by the metaphor of the predicament in which we each find ourselves, attempting to find balance amidst the fervid currents of modern urban life.

Reeling from the impact of such profundity, I rounded a corner, only to slip and prat-fall on a patch of strategically placed Crisco. Sprawling prostrate like a worshipful disciple, I gazed up at a looming wooden washing machine painted in lurid day-glo colors. This outsized faux appliance was twisted as if suffering from a bout of intense irritable bowel syndrome, and was festooned by fearsome cactus-like thorns. The machine's controls and access door formed a fright mask akin to the face in Munch's "The Scream". Totally confounded by this

Photos by Mike Bell

apparition, I sought enlightenment in the artist's explication. *"In this piece I am confronting the subliminal trans-gender issues which haunt our culture. Someone has to do the laundry – who will it be? Will American Women ever cease being emasculated by the chauvinism of our male-dominated society? Could the spectre of illegal immigrant domestic labor be threatening the hegemony of the American Male?"* Thoroughly chagrined, I crawled, or should I say slithered, to the exit.

What a triumph of conceptualism over pragmatism this exhibit had been. I left feeling like a complete Luddite worm. It's good for art to reveal to us what worms we are. It's good to be reminded that if we continue to fashion furniture that merely serves mundane purposes, we will never attain to the transcendent awareness that jaded whimsy and blatant absurdity can thrust upon us. -Alf ♦

## Does Anybody Know What Time It Is?

By Mike Bell

The elegant tall case clock pictured here was made by cabinetmaker John Erhart Rose, who worked in Knoxville, Tennessee, from 1820 to about 1828. He made it in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, after returning to his home state, and signed it on March 12, 1833. It's a pretty high-style piece compared to backcountry Tennessee clocks of that period, with its highly-figured mahogany veneer, carved rosettes, an urn in the base panel, and its animal paw feet. The term "grandfather

clock" became associated with these clocks about 1876 due to the popularity of the song "Grandfather's Clock," written by Henry Work. "Tall clock" and "Tall case clock" were original terms for this form.

Tall clocks were considered luxury items and were placed in conspicuous places in early nineteenth century homes to display the wealth and status of a family. However, as a woodworker, I find myself more interested in the makers of these great examples of early decorative art, rather than their owners.

One such maker was Nathaniel Dominy (1737-1812) who made clock cases and clock movements in East Hampton, New York. Nearing his fiftieth year in 1787, he waxed philosophical with his inscription on the front of a tall clock dial which reads: *"Immortal dost thou know, Time will soon give thee to Eternity? Where, Oh!*

*– where then! And what! Shalt thou be forever?"* On the back of the dial he inscribed *"Made by Nath Dominy, East Hampton Long Island 1787. It is very probable this Clock will by measuring out precious Time, to Precious Souls, when I have done with Time, and all its vain amusements, and become an inhabitant*



Inscription (in pen field, Perry C



*in Eternity –How great the transit. What a grand leap. Where shall I be found? On the right or left. Oh, how it behooves every immortal being to improve Precious Time for great Eternity. God knows who will read this when I am gone – be you who you may, be exhorted, o immortal to seek the Lord, while he may be found, call upon him while he is near – agree with thine adversary quickly. See how the moments pass, how swift they haste away. In this instructive glass behold thy life decay. Oh waste not then thy prime in sin’s pernicious road. Redeem thy precious time. Acquaint thyself with God. So when thy pulse shall cease its throbbing transient play, thy soul to Realms of Peace Shall wing its joyful way.”* Indeed, Nathaniel could have been a Tennessee backcountry preacher!

Okay, this is a little heavy, but I suppose making clocks your whole life can get you to thinking about time and the hereafter. Frankly, this whole discussion has me thinking about the present time. Lunch time that is . . . I’m so thankful my watch just indicated my favorite time of day. **-Mike**

*Guild member Mike Bell is the Curator of Furniture and Popular Culture at the Tennessee State Museum ♦*

**Our Thanks to Roger Gramm**

By Scott Thompson

The CFG board and membership would like to say a special “thank you” to Roger Gramm, who has served as Treasurer of the Cumberland Furniture Guild for the last three years. He brought fresh ideas and energy to the guild at a pivotal time. As treasurer he was involved in our application and acceptance for 501(c)(3) non-profit status. He was also pivotal in helping the Guild secure a grant from Tennessee Arts Commission this past year to help with specific funding for our current furniture exhibition. And among many other gifts he has given to the guild, Roger helped guide the exhibition catalog process through a nearly impossible set of deadlines and budget constraints. We all appreciate his honest, straight-forward approach to relationships, business, and life. **Thanks, Roger! ♦**



*(caption): “Made by John E. Rose, New Bloomington, Pennsylvania, March 12th, 1833”*

**Cool Tool Review**

*Drilling at the Right Angle*

By Scott Thompson

There are a lot of nifty new gadgets these days with which to drill holes at right angles, left angles, acute angles and obtuse angles. Some of these inventions allow the cabinetmaker to chuck a drill bit in one side of an adjustable “gear box” and then connect a regular drill to a shaft on the other side. (see photo of the “Milescraft Orbiter” drill accessory) Other companies, (like Bosch), have designed cordless drills with heads set at a right angle or adjustable angles in order to get into tight spots in a cabinet to drill holes or drive screws. (I am still trying to get Bosch to send me their two most recent lithium ion cordless right angle drills for “review.” Even as you read this, I am waiting by the phone.)

While the modern trend has produced some creative ways to drill at different angles, the idea of “angle boring machines” is not new. I have an 1867 edition of the “A. J. Wilkinson Company’s



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ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE of HARDWARE AND TOOLS” in which they advertise a “diagonal bit holder”—much like the Miller’s Falls one pictured with the Milescraft gadget. The catalogue’s description of their bit holder is as follows: “It is made upon just the right angle to allow of its use with the Bit-Brace close in the corner of a room, and in similar places.” My research into the initial idea of drilling at different angles continues to point to Egypt during the 15th century BC, but it is inconclusive at this time.

Sometime before 1867, Norman Bailey (Leonard’s younger and lesser known brother) began to experiment with a “left-angle drill bit.” While the idea was novel, he was unable to bring his invention to the marketplace in part because of the burgeoning success of Leonard Bailey’s “Patent Iron Plane” - which the Stanley Rule and Level Company bought out in May of 1869. Another problem with his experiment was the “counterclockwise fluting” of the bit itself - perhaps where it received the “left” part of the name.

Although it seems counterintuitive, another furniture maker and



Photos by Scott Thompson

*Special, more flexible steel must be used in this new type of right angle bit.*

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I have begun to experiment with a “right angle drill bit” with some success. The bit itself has clockwise fluting and a modern “brad point tip.” It is important to operate the bit at slower speeds than usual in order to avoid significant tear-out in the work. In some of the tests, the bits also seem to drill unusual size holes. Another key element seems to be the use of a more malleable steel than is usually preferred for drill bits - most drill bits just break right off rather than bending to a right or left angle. I would caution anyone trying to replicate these tests. There is definitely a right and a wrong angle when it comes to drilling holes in cabinets and furniture.” **-Scott ♦**

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### About Our New Business Member

CFG members Alf Sharp and Alan Daigre recently formed Stones River Hardwoods in Woodbury, TN, to take advantage of a remarkable opportunity. Milner Carden, who has been sawing and drying extraordinary local hardwoods for over forty years, decided to divest the majority of his collection, which has been supplying discriminating woodworkers with lumber for decades. Included in the sale were approximately 100,000 board feet of walnut, cherry, maple, oak, ash, and sassafras. Much of this lumber had been sawn from veneer quality logs, and air-dried for at least 13 years. There are thousands of board feet in boards over 14” wide, and in thicker dimensions up to 8”. Wide curly cherry, curly walnut, and curly maple are available. The lumber is being transported to Woodbury and stored in an enclosed warehouse.

Prices will be very reasonable, with quantity discounts offered. Buyers can visit the warehouse by appointment, and shipping can be arranged. Alf’s telephone is (615) 563-2831, and Alan’s is (615) 409-6072.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** *The fact that this issue of the newsletter was originally slated to go out very early in April may explain the tone of a couple of the articles herein to our more puzzled readers.*

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