

NORTHERN WOODS

Volume 130

December 2010-January 2011

October Meeting: Violin Making, Lisbeth Nelson Butler

Violin history, violin construction methods, and even a few disparaging viola jokes - Lisbeth treated attendees to all of the above at the Dakota County Technical Center.

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Fall Seminar: Greene and Greene Furniture, Thomas Stangeland

The Guild put on another interesting and educational Fall Seminar November 5, 6, & 7. The speaker was Thomas Stangeland, a well-known designer of Greene and Greene furniture. He talked about design principles, construction techniques, and even had a bunch of woodworkers listening intently while he fashioned metal hardware.

[Full Story...](#)



What's on Your Bench?

"I think there's a table in there somewhere." When oak wilt infected some of my trees, it was the start of a table project. Read about the process I'm going through in trying to find the table in that tree.

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October Meeting: Violin Maker Lisbeth Nelson Butler
Story by David Mitchell
Photos by Bob Bridigum

The October meeting started with these announcements:

- The Show and Tell portion of our monthly meetings is now being expanded to include a display table. Attendees can bring items of interest to leave on display before and after the meeting. This will give everyone a better opportunity for a close-up view.
- Members are encouraged to bring surplus items like tools, woodworking magazines, etc. to give away at the meeting.
- One of our members reminded us of the need to be always vigilant when using the tablesaw in order to avoid painful injury. Keep hands well away from the blade until it has stopped spinning. His personal courage taken to tell his story will hopefully help others avoid an accident.

Lisbeth Nelson Butler then spoke on the design concepts and history of violin making.



History

The very first instruments that are considered violins were made sometime between 1530 and 1550. These early instruments could be in daily use even today. A properly cared for instrument does not suffer any permanent damage. The normal wear items on a violin are replaceable.

Andrea Amati is considered the very first violinmaker. Nicolo Amati, Andrea's grandson, is a noted early violinmaker as well. Very few of the Amati violins still survive today. Probably the most recognized of the early violinmakers is Antonio Stradivari. Stradivari did most of his work in the early 1700s, considerably later than the work of Andrea Amati in the mid-1500s. The mid-1700s is considered the end of the golden age of violinmakers.

Stradivari was an industrious luthier. He lived to the age of 93 and made three violins in his last year of life. There are still approximately 600 surviving violins attributed to Antonio Stradivari. A quality collectible instrument made by Stradivari would sell at auction for 4 to 12 million dollars.

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There are so many variations on the violin today that the whole class of instruments is referred to as VSO, or violin shaped objects. This includes the violin (sometimes called the fiddle), the viola, the bass violin, the cello and king cello.

As a side note on the various VSOs Lisbeth told us there is sometimes a rivalry between violin and viola musicians. One joke that violin players tell is this: Question: What is considered perfect pitch for a viola? Answer: When the viola is tossed into the dumpster without hitting the rim.

The violin is made from natural materials. Sounds vary from instrument to instrument. Different listeners and differing players will disagree on which instruments they would prefer.

Construction

Violin construction is a complex process requiring years to learn. Lisbeth briefly described the overall sequence of construction. The process begins with a base-form that defines the shape. The side ribs are then bent around the form. The front and back are shaped and mounted to the side ribs after removal from the form. There is a sound post that sits in the center of the violin, and is placed through the f-holes on the face.

The face and back are shaped and planed to an approximate 3 mm thickness. The front supports the strings, which are stretched creating approximately 25 pounds of force on the thin face.



The overall shape and size of a violin are standardized. You can vary either when you make your own instrument, but it will not find a ready market unless it is recognizable as a classic violin form.

The selection of wood used for violins is important. The back, sides, neck and scroll are maple; the front and bass bar are spruce; the fingerboard is ebony.

A completed instrument without any finish is referred to as in-the-white. Lisbeth had two violins at the meeting that she has made. The first was completed in approximately 1980 and was finished with a spirit varnish. The second was completed in 2005 and was finished with an oil-varnish.



Lisbeth referred us to three sources for further information. The first was [Martin Schleske's web site](#) and the second was the "Violin Making, As It Was and Is" by Edward Heron-Allen. The third is a book on the basics of violin making, "The Art of Violin Making" by Chris Johnson, Roy Courtall and Yehudi Menuhn.

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2010 Fall Seminar

Story by Jerry Beutel

Photos by Paul Schalekamp

Featuring Thomas Stangeland

Designing and building Greene and Greene furniture.



Greene and Greene style furniture proved to be a popular Fall Seminar topic. Popular enough to entice ninety-nine Guild members to sign up for the event held at Dunwoody the first weekend in November. Thanks to the leadership of Dick Schultz and Al Frank the seminar continued the tradition of providing a high quality educational weekend for our members.

The invited speaker was Thomas Stangeland, a highly regarded expert in the field of Greene and Greene furniture. Like many career paths, his was not so much planned, as it

was an opportunity presented - and he leapt in with both feet. Tom's biography (from his website):

Tom studied woodworking with master furniture builder/designer Emmet Day. What started as an odd job - a way to earn extra money on a remodeling project-evolved into a woodworking apprenticeship. In 1984, Tom took his four-year-old son, Jamie, to Normandy, where he renovated a 16th-century Normandy manor house. When he returned to the states, he resumed his apprenticeship with Emmet Day until 1988, working primarily with the clean curves and sumptuous details of the Art Deco style.

In 1991, someone handed Tom a photo of the Blacker House arm chair, and asked whether he would be able to make one like it. "If I can make that chair," Tom replied, "I can make any chair." That was Tom's introduction to the Greene & Greene style of the Arts & Crafts Movement, and his enthusiasm for the movement's philosophies and craft has strengthened through the years. From that first piece based on the Blacker House chair, Tom has expanded his interpretation of the style, designing furniture that speaks to the language of Greene & Greene while making an individual statement.

The attendees were treated to an array of topics starting with a Friday evening slide show of Greene and Greene pieces. These included important historical pieces designed by the Greene brothers as well as pieces that Tom has designed and built.

Saturday and Sunday were packed with information on design and build techniques for G&G furniture. A few of the many topics discussed includes:

- The design language of G&G.
- How raised pegs and splines add shadow, light and texture to a piece.

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- The process of creating and inlaying a diamond shaped ebony detail



- How to choose solid wood and veneers for the various components of a piece.
- How to create small parts like pegs and splines from ebony stock with a process using hand tools, power tools, and jigs.
- Resolving the visual treatment as well as the attachment methods of butt joints in Greene and Greene furniture as it has no miter joints .
- Two principles for proper placement of table legs with breadboard ends.
- The use of potassium dichromate instead of traditional stains to darken mahogany prior to finishing.
- Why Tom prefers a sprayed on catalyzed lacquer finish.
- The subtle but important details of a pleasingly designed cloud lift.
- Which components of a table should use straight grained wood and which can use figured wood.
- Making brass and copper hardware; special tools required, sources of material (e.g. electrical supply stores) and chemicals used for patination of the metals.



While covering all these topics (and many, many more) Tom answered dozens of questions, took us on a few side trips, and proved to be a very entertaining and informative instructor. He lectured, he chiseled, he took questions, he ran power tools, he drew pictures and he showed slides. All of this under the watchful camera work of Jeff Hand who made sure we all had a virtual front-row seat. When it was over there were a lot of woodworkers fired up to put what they'd just learned into practice.



Jeff Hand making sure all attendees had a front row seat



Fall Seminar organizers: Al Frank, Jeff Hand, Dick Schultz

The Fall Seminar Committee (Al and Dick) asked participants for feedback at the end of each day. This information was very helpful in making adjustments during the seminar - e.g. better lighting of the demonstrations, and changes for next year such as improved lunches and demonstration handouts. Overall the participants rated the seminar as very good. On a 1-5 point scale with 5 being the most positive, the mean score for rating the statement "Attending the seminar was a good use of my time." was 4.5. The statement "The cost of the seminar was

reasonable." received a 4.7 rating and "I liked having the seminar at the Dunwoody Institute." had a 4.0 rating. Some of the participants comments were:

- "I liked the design aspects best. It came down to a statement, "Design to draw eye to visual focal point of the piece."
- "Very personable (presenter), open to questions, eye for detail, teaches from experience, good at answering questions."
- "Camera work was great."
- "The large screen to show demonstrations up close really helps. Dunwoody is centrally located to all parts of the metro area."
- "Very respectful (presenter)-great at answering questions-humor nice."

Thanks to donations by Porter Cable, six lucky attendees won Porter Cable low profile random orbit sanders. Rockler donated a set of Freud cabinet door router bits and a Forrest Woodworking blade, won by Chad Stone and Don Nellen respectively.



Tom Policek, with his door prize. Phil Baker, Mark Powell, Cliff Clark and Jerry Beutel also won sanders.

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What's On Your Bench?

By Jerry Beutel

"I think there's a table in there somewhere....."

There's a little history behind a project currently on my bench. In the summer of 2008 I discovered several dying red oak trees on my property and that of my neighbor. The arborist confirmed our Oak Wilt diagnosis. Unfortunately seven good size trees were already infected and they were close enough to numerous other oaks for the disease to keep spreading. We quickly cut down the infected trees, dug trenches to decouple the roots between the infected and the healthy trees, and gave a few of the surrounding prize trees the oak tree equivalent of a flu shot. As of now it appears that the disease is not spreading.

There are several methods of handling wood from infected trees that will prevent the spread of oak wilt, and one of those is to wrap it in plastic for a full year. My neighbor (also a woodworker) and I selected a few of the larger tree trunks that might make good lumber and wrapped them up. Almost as an afterthought I threw a couple of crotch pieces under the plastic before we sealed it up. Fourteen months later we unwrapped everything and hauled it to a sawmill. Again, without a clear plan in mind, I brought along the two crotch pieces and had the sawyer cut a four inch thick Y from each one. Five months later we had a few hundred feet of lumber - cut, dried and planed. The price was right at 70 cents a board foot, but the yield of clear lumber is only a fraction of the total.



By this time I'd decided those crotch pieces would make interesting legs for a rustic hall table. I cut them to 29" and paired them with a couple of 6/4 boards that had live or wavy edges. It seemed like those would make a good tabletop. The look was "interesting" but I wasn't convinced the finished table would be that appealing. I decided to leave it sitting at the entrance to the shop for a while as I pondered how to improve it.

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A convenient characteristic of this table is that the legs are stable by themselves and I could just lay the top boards across them, no fastening needed. That makes it easy to mock up the project and get a feel for what it will look like when completed.

I finally decided that I like the wany edges on the outsides of the table top, but I wasn't so fond of the way the two boards came together in the middle. Perhaps I needed to straight line rip the two adjoining edges? I wasn't sure about that but I was leaning in that direction. Well fortunately the table was still sitting in place when a group of woodworkers visited my shop. Naturally the visitors asked about the table and we had some discussions about what might look good. Then one week later I was talking with Jeff Hand (who was one of the visitors) and my table-in-progress came up as a topic. Jeff asked if I had considered making the table-top at two heights. I hadn't, but the idea sure seemed appealing.

But how to decide if this is what I truly wanted without making an irreversible change to the table legs? As seen in the picture below I "faked" the high/low effect by putting a couple of scrap blocks on the two back legs and then laid the top boards back in place.



My immediate reaction was favorable, and remained so after a few days of living with that configuration. And now that the two top boards were not in the same plane, having live edges on both sides of each board looked right. So I knew that I liked the two-height solution but questioned if the actual lower height (after I cut off the two legs) would seem too low? Again I decided to do a mock up as seen in the photo below by substituting a couple of adjustable work stands for the new lower height. The added benefit of this approach is that it allowed me to experiment with having the lower portion of the table-top at various heights.



Satisfied that everything would be OK I finally cut two of the legs (or I guess I should say two of the forks) so that the front board would sit $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches lower than the back board.



Next I will have to decide on the spacing between the legs, how to attach the top to the legs, and whether or not I need/want a bottom stretcher. I have to give credit to Jeff for the inspiration on the two heights. In my opinion that idea is taking this table from "interesting" to "pleasing." Also, it has been kind of nice to have a "background project" going on that I can just work on when time allows and I feel so moved.

[Your comments](#) on this table would be greatly welcome. Criticism is great as long as it is offered in a constructive manner. This newsletter is also looking for other projects to feature in What's On Your Bench. Please send me a note (click on "Your comments" above) about your project.

The Newsletter of the Minnesota Woodworkers Guild

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New Members:

Mike Hadler
Terel Letcher
Leo Ikeda
Rob Crawford
Troy Passe
Ted Erickson
Ethan Hauenbuck
Andrew Monson
Gary Rocheleau
Chuck Screffler
Mark J Anderson
Lavern Eick
Lester Strom
Paul Ydstie

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Upcoming Meetings:

December Meeting: Tour of Northern Lights Timber Framing

Date: December 14th, 2010

Time: TBD. watch the guild website for details

Location: 1620 Central Ave NE Mpls.(see link below)

[Northern Lights Timber Framing](#), started in 2002 by Clark Bremer is located in Minneapolis and serves Minnesota, Wisconsin and the surrounding area. Clark considers a major component of his job to be creating delighted customers. He and his team of joiners achieve that goal through a commitment to education, craftsmanship and partnership with clients. Clark also teaches timber framing at the [North House Folk School](#) in Grand Marais, MN, and has recently been elected to the Board of Directors of the [Timber Framers Guild of North America](#).

Clark will take us through some of the considerations and unique differences of timber frame construction. There will also be demonstrations of some of the joinery common to these structures.

Northern Lights Timber Framing is located at 1620 Central Ave NE #179, Minneapolis, MN 55413 ([Driving Directions](#)).

NOTE THE DATE: We will meet on the **second Tuesday**, December 14, 2010. Additional details on time will be posted on the Meetings page on the guild website the first week of December.

January Meeting: Ebonizing Wood with Richard Tendick

Date: January 18th, 2011

Time: 6:45

Location: Richfield Community Center, 7000 Nicollet Ave. Richfield

Did you ever have a need for a dark piece of wood such as ebony but can't get your hands on any that is to your liking or within your budget? Our January meeting will feature our very own Richard Tendick as he shares techniques and ideas related to ebonizing wood. He will demonstrate his method and some of the applications.

Richard is a valued member of the MN Woodworkers Guild Board of Directors and is the organizer of the annual [Northern Woods Exhibition](#). You may remember his 2008 Entry, Cryptex, which was the recipient of the Burton and Ruth Elvig award.

The meeting will be held January 18, 2011, at the Richfield Community Center. Show and Chat will be held at the back of the room around 6:45. Bring whatever you have on your bench right now (that's portable) and engage your fellow woodworkers for some feedback and/or troubleshooting advice.

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Advertising in the classifieds is provided to members of the Minnesota Woodworkers Guild free of charge. Ads placed should be for goods or services of general interest to the woodworkers who make up the guild community. Ads for services will run until cancelled. Other ads will run for one issue unless renewed. Submit ads to: jebeutel@gmail.com.

Tools

10" Radial Arm Saw by Ridgid with mobile base Very Good condition. \$350 ecbartz@msn.com
Cell 651-307-9184

Binks HVLP 2001 Spray Gun. Minimally used by hobbyist. Well maintained. \$150. Includes: Instructions, Cleaning kit, Binks Drip Proof 2 Siphon Cup, Fluid Nozzles 94F & 94S, Air Nozzles 95AP & "Blue Max" 95AS
Steve at 651-398-4838 or e-mail steve_colleen@comcast.net. Cash only

Craftsman Air 2 1/2 Gallon Heavy Duty, Pressure Paint Tank (model no. 919.161020) - Minimally used by hobbyist. Well maintained. \$80. Includes: Instructions, Pressure gauge and regulator, Two air hoses
Steve at 651-398-4838 or e-mail steve_colleen@comcast.net. Cash only

Set of Japanese Water Stones. Minimally used by hobbyist. Well maintained. \$75. Includes: 220 grit Sun Tiger. 8 1/8" x 2 1/8" x 7/8", 800 grit King. 8 1/8" x 2 5/8" x 1 3/8", 1200 grit King. 8 1/8" x 2 5/8" x 1 3/8", 4000 grit King 'S-1'. 8 1/4" x 2 3/4" x 3/4" with stand and Nagura stone.
Steve at 651-398-4838 or e-mail steve_colleen@comcast.net. Cash only

Leigh D4 24" Dovetail Jig. Minimally used by hobbyist. Well maintained. \$300. Includes: D4 User Guide, Wooden stand, Leigh # 120 Dovetail Bit (new), Leigh Universal Guidebush System, Leigh Cam-Action Speed-Clamps, Leigh VRS Vacuum & Router Support
Steve at 651-398-4838 or e-mail steve_colleen@comcast.net. Cash only

Leigh F1 Finger Joint Template. Minimally used by hobbyist. Well maintained. \$150. Includes: F1 User Guide, Leigh HSS Spiral Upcut Bit Set in wooden box, 1/16" (#162) - new, 3/32" (#163) - new, 1/8" (#164) - new, 3/16" (#166) - new, 1/4" (#168) - used, 3/8" (#173) - new, 1/2" to 3/8" collet reducer 172-375, 1/2" (#180) - new
Steve at 651-398-4838 or e-mail steve_colleen@comcast.net. Cash only.

Lumber

Free Buckthorn. 50+ buckthorn trunks, 5-8' long, and 1" to 3" in diameter. Cut last year so most are dry. Buckthorn is a beautiful wood stock for carving, it's white with red center. Located in Plymouth, MN about 1 mile North of Wayzata. email amkbnsjunk@comcast.net

Quarter sawn white oak for sale. \$3.75 bd. ft. Abrasive planed to 7/8 in. Contact Todd Williams 507-364-5584

Shop Space

Woodworking space (750 sq ft) and equipment (hybrid saw, planer, jointer, etc.) to share for portion of monthly rent (negotiable). Centrally located off Hwy 280. Contact Mark@StatEase.com.

Services

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Mike Siemsen's School of Woodworking. We have another great line-up of classes this year including some tool sharpening and tuning classes with Mike and a fantastic finishing class with Roland Johnson. We are also highlighting Glen Huey's class Build a 4 drawer Chippendale Chest. Classes are held in my shop on a quiet rural setting 35 miles north of the Twin Cities. The shop is heated and air conditioned for your comfort year around. Reserve your spot now!
Website: www.schoolofwood.com
e-mail: mike@schoolofwood.com
Phone: 651-257-9166

Plane soles milled flat, price ranges from \$12 for a block plane to \$40 for a #8. Sides can be milled square to the sole for \$15-\$20. Contact Chuck Pitschka at 952-935-0660, or by e-mail at cpitschka@mn.rr.com.

Workbench Plans. Plans now available for Adjustable Height Workbench with a built in Mobile Base. Email Charlie Kocourek at Charlie@Jack-Bench.com or visit my website www.Jack-Bench.com

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President's Notes

by Charlie Kocourek



If you are one of the nearly 100 people who were able to attend the Fall Seminar by Thomas Stangeland, then you already know what a great seminar this was.

I personally found it inspiring, and I left with a greater appreciation of the Greene & Greene style. What I liked were all the details; the ebony splines, the cloud lifts, and the inlay work. I also enjoyed Tom's demonstration and lecture about how he makes his own copper hardware. I am now thinking about how to incorporate some of what I learned that weekend into one of my next projects.

There is a lot going on behind the scenes for seminar like this. I want to extend a special thanks to Richard Schultz and Al Frank for all the planning, preparation, and work they did to make this a very successful and fun weekend. I also want to thank Jeff Hand for the great job he did with the video camera, Alberto Catarino for taking care of the beverages, and Steve Schwabacher for helping with registrations.

Now that winter is settling in I hope you are finding more time to work in your shop! I know I am. Who knows, I might even have something ready for the Northern Woods Show in April.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season,
Charlie Kocourek

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