

WOODWORKERS

CLUB OF HOUSTON

VOL. 3, NO. 6

JUNE, 1987

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MAY MEETING

Our May meeting was at the Island City Woodworks, owned and operated by John Webber. The shop was built in 1908 for lumber millwork and fancy work such as window sashes and even ice boxes. The original layout used a sawdust fired boiler producing steam for a single cylinder steam engine. Later, a 20hp electric motor drove the multiple shafts.

The shop has numerous vintage machines, including bandsaws, lathes, molding machines and some almost unidentifiable specialized equipment for making sashes. The present day shop uses modern machinery to copy old moldings and do architectural millwork, often in long leaf yellow pine that is salvaged from old buildings.

The major attraction is an old molding machine which has been used to the present day. John grinds his own profile knives out of 3/8" high speed steel. John would like to set up the shop as a museum some day, but currently is involved in pretigious projects such as the recently completed Washington Hotel.

The June meeting will be held at M.CHANDLER & CO., 6005 Milwee #709 on June 13 at 9:00 a.m. Michael Chandler will be demonstrating large industrial equipment. Please bring ear protection along with your chairs and stools. Michael had a job opening in his shop at the time of the last meeting. If interested, call him direct.

The Annual Charity sale will be held at Northwest Mall, October 23-24. Now is the time to begin working on projects to donate to a club-selected charity.

Ed Caesar reports that last month's solution of using antique oil on cabinet doors works autifully.

Steve Procter reported on the Dailas Woodworkers Show, which was better organized, with more seminars, than Houston's.

Rick Goodheart needs to hear about potential group purchase ideas. Be on the lookout.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Bob Soderblom

Having to write an article every month was definitely not the reason I accepted your offer to be the Club President this year. Writing ranks somewhere around 83rd on my list of "FUN THINGS TO DO" But it does force me to consider some of my more serious likes, dislikes, desires and challenges in life and share them with you, like them or not.

During the last few weeks I managed to spend sometime reading a few books on Woodworking the way it used to be in Decades and Centuries gone by. My Hands-Down Favorite author is Eric Sloane who, to quote one Publisher, "Shows us how to appreciate the past."

I have, for many years, been interested in Antiques, Restoration and Especially Old Tools; Woodworking, Blacksmith--anything old--As well as how they were used in the Atmosphere of those by-gone times.

Restoring and Repairing and Refinishing an article has always been of more interest to me than making something from scratch.

One statement read in another book "Country Furniture" by Alden A. Watson seems to cover woodworkers of any era, past, present and future: "Indeed it does appear that an interminable amount of time and labor preceded the actual work on the bench. Seasoned lumber, a workshop and a good set of tools were the furniture maker's indispensable necessities. Yet none of these alone, or all of them together for that matter, were equal in importance to skill---The more ingenious craftsman would have produced good furniture even in a cramped workshop with the smallest number of tools. By the same token, neither the most spacious workshop nor the most elaborate set imported tools were in themselves enough to guarantee a clumsy workman good results.

Though all tools were much alike, it was the way he manipulated them that distinguished a fine craftsman from a mediocre one."

Nuff said for what it's worth!

SHOW AND TELL

Bob Soderblom had photos of a wall rack, and Ken Wallace had a clever puzzle.

BUY AND SELL

Ted King reports some Phillipine Mahogany was still available, and Bob Soderblom has numerous books for sale.

REFRESHMENTS

Please donate an appropriate amount for coffee and donuts.

SAWMILL "FIELD TRIP"

By Hebert Wilbourn

May 20th Bob Soderblom and I visited with George Hlavinka at his home and sawmill about 18 miles west of Caldwell, Tex. to see if we should recommend it for a club field trip in the future.

The sawmill is a one or two man operation under an outdoor shed but is capable of handling huge logs.

There were stacks of beautiful Red Cedar and a stack of Pecan that had been in the drying shed for about three years along with small stacks of other woods.

George specializes in custom built cedar chests. Several beautiful chests were being completed by an assistant while we were there.

George also does bird carving. To aid in his detailed study he maintains three open pens of Peacocks and Peahens, cages of Pheasants, Guineas and other exotic species.

The Hlavinka place is in the country with a nice view extending for miles over rolling wooded hills and open fields dotted with huge rock outcrops and boulders.

George also has some very talented neighbors he would invite to display their skills during our visit.

We suggest a special "field trip" some Saturday between late June and early August (other than our regular meeting dates) for our members and families who would like to have an interesting outing.

First, we must determine how many would go.

The distance from the intersection of Highway 290 and West Little York Road (at Holiday Inn) to the sawmill is approximately 112 miles. We drove it in a comfortable two hours and 20 minutes, including a brief coffee stop.

To sign up, arrange car pools, etc. to share gas expenses call Sharon Buckley (944-6739) or see her for a sign up sheet at the meeting June 13, 1987. We hope to have photos of our

trip for you to see. Sharon will coordinate reservations and carpools.

WHEN YOU CONTACT HER, INDICATE THE FOLLOWING:

1. How many, including yourself.
2. Willing to drive and take Riders?(How Many?)
3. Need a Ride?

SAFETY

By Zatis Murphy

We all (I hope!) have a high level of respect for the damage a power tool can inflict in a fraction of a second. But what about hand tools? While hand tools are relatively safe, they are the cause of many small injuries.

Probably the most common culprits inflicting injuries are the cutting tools: chisels, gouges, knives, drill bits, hand saws, etc. all these tools must be sharp to do an effective job safely. A dull tool requires more force to do its job, and when the material you are working on finally damaged project or cut flesh. Gloves offer some protection against injury, but they too can be pierced by a chisel or cut by a knife. Don't hold a small piece in vise. If it is necessary to hold the stock, make sure that the cutting edge moves away from your hand, not toward it. The draw-knife is a vicious tool! I remember as a boy in school my shop instructor telling the story of a man who propped a piece of wood against his knee, hold it while using a draw-knife(great planning, I might add!). The wood was tough and the knife seemed to stick as he pulled. So he pulled harder. When the wood finally gave way, the knife cut a flap of flesh from just behind the knee cap to two-thirds of the way to the hip.

Second among the culprits are the striking tools. Is there a club member who has not hit a finger or thumb with a hammer? Be sure that the heads of hammers, mallets and such are secured tightly to the handles and that the handles are in good condition. ALWAYS WEAR EYE PROTECTION when using a striking tool. Small fragments from the striking face of the tool or the object being struck can be fired into your eye in a split second. And driving nails is especially dangerous. Use the right size tool to do the job. A 16 pound sledbe can be used to drive a 3d finishing nail, but the accompanying dent in your project may not blend well with the overall design of the work piece.

There are other culprits lurking in your shop to do their damage... the screw driver with the distorted tip...the scratch-awl waiting to pierce a hand...etc. Hand tools like power tools must be in the proper condition to function correctly. Take time to plan your work, use the right tool and enjoy the rewards of safe, gratify woodworking.

JUNE MEETING

M.CHANDLER & CO.

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Wood Veneers

Of the nearly 100,000 species of hardwoods in the world, about 4,000 are useful as solid woods and veneers, but less than 100 are considered appropriate for fine veneers. Nonetheless it is a formidable task to select the proper veneer. Although there are similarities that identify each species, the naturally caused differences within species make selection and application difficult.

Grain and Slicing

The "grain" of the wood refers to the pattern caused by the growth rings. The angle at which a cut is made into a piece of wood determines the relationship between the rings and consequently the grain. To manufacture veneer, a log is cut lengthwise usually in half or in quarters. These pieces, called "flitches," must be cooked in vats for one to eight days prior to being cut. As a rule, a one-inch thickness of wood bears between 36 and 40 sheets of veneer. Veneers are sliced from a flitch in several ways (see diagram below). "Plain cut" (also known as flat cut) veneers leave the heart of the tree intact. If the center of the tree has a grain that sweeps up and/or down, that is called the cathedral; the less pronounced the grain, the less apparent the cathedral. The heart can be narrow or wide and is sometimes darker than the rest of the wood. When the heart of the tree is damaged or otherwise undesirable, a "false quarter" cut is used and the cathedral cut off at the edge. Another common method of production, "quarter cut," causes a straighter, more

even graining. This type of cut is often used for zebra wood or other species with strong dark grains. The "half round" slicing method, which follows the circumference of the log, spreads the grain lines apart and gives them a more undulating, leafy appearance. "Rift cut" is commonly used on oak to eliminate the natural "flakes." Flakes, peculiar to oak, are hard areas that emanate from the heart like spokes and cause random markings in the veneer, aesthetically desirable to some but not to others.

Figure

"Figure" refers to the deflection of the grain in the wood which gives the wood a three-dimensional effect. When a veneer has fiery highlights that seem to jump off the surface of the veneer, then it is figured. Many species of trees have the capability of being figured; however, each individual tree within a species has a different amount of figure. No one really knows what causes a figure, or why it appears in one tree and not another. Figured veneers, like the nap of a velvet, are greatly affected by lighting. Perceived as changes in tone from dark to light, the figure reverses color as the wood is rotated. There are many kinds of figuring. Fiddleback, also known as cross fire, refers to strong horizontal bands that give, in extreme cases, a corrugated effect common to cherry and English hawthorn. A blister figure can be loosely described as having a bubbly or lumpy pattern. Bird's-eye maple often has a blister figure as do Tamo and Pomele. There are also

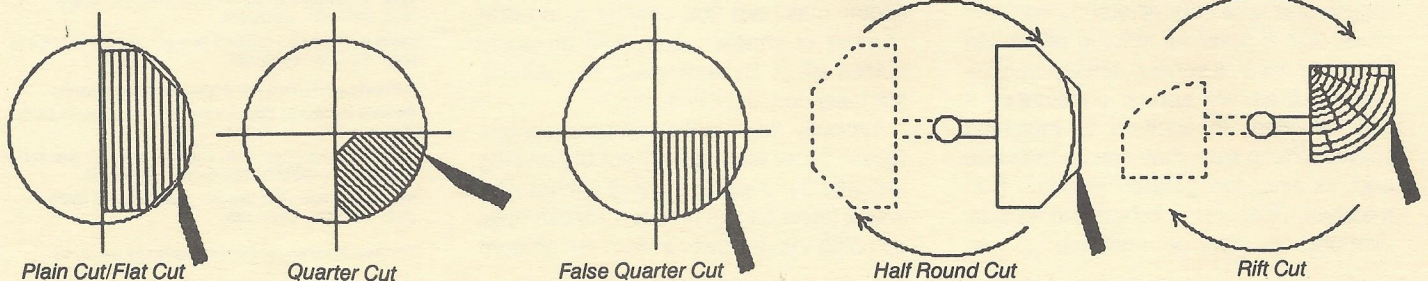
"ropy" figures, where the figure looks like twisted rope, and mottled figures where the pattern is very tight.

Burls, Crotch and Other Character Marks

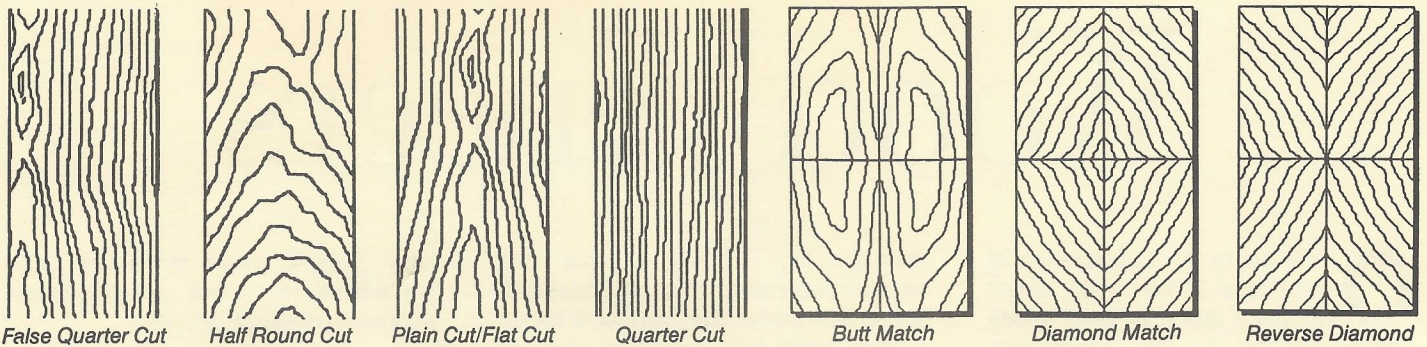
The grain is also affected by nature and unusual growths, termed "character marks," again particular to each individual tree. These include worm holes, branch knots, bark injuries, mineral tracks and wind shakes. Burl woods are also an example of this. A burl is a knobby growth in a tree—similar to a branch stump. Walnut, olive, ash, maple and elm often have these growths. The grain forms twisting clusters of rings and circles. Veneer sheets made of burl are usually fairly small, because they represent only a small portion of the tree. The crotch, or area where two large branches form a Y, may create yet another natural marking like a feathery erupting volcano. Crotch veneers are most desirable from mahogany and walnut.

How to Specify Veneer

The selection of a veneer begins by determining what species to use. In addition to aesthetics, factors such as how tall the tree tends to grow vs. how high the wall to be surfaced is can help eliminate certain types. Also, the availability of the species either within the project's time frame—or at all in suitable quantities—is essential. However, to stop by merely selecting the species and not determining the actual tree, or how it will be applied as a veneer, is inadvisable. Bernard Lee, president of



Illustrations courtesy Wm. L. Marshall, Genwove, Ltd.



Veneer Products Ltd., warns of selecting a species simply by looking at furniture. A veneer might have been selected by a furniture designer because of its rarity, in which case it might never be found again in qualities suitable for paneling.

Veneers are sampled and sold in "flitches" (the longitudinal segment of a log sliced into veneers with resultant veneer leaves maintained in sequence). Sample sheets taken from at least three positions in the flitch should be studied to indicate the progression of grain, figure, lustre and color throughout the flitch. The flitch should be large enough to complete the job, or a second flitch of very similar characteristics found. Once the flitch is selected, the designer determines how it is applied to a panel. Unless a random match is desired, the veneer sheets are kept in the sequence they came off the flitch to insure an even progression of pattern. One can either "slip match" or "book match" veneers. In slip matched veneers the front face of each sheet always faces out, so the pattern marches identically across the elevation. In book matched veneers the front and back of the sheets alternate, like pages of a book, for a mirror-image effect. In some veneers, such as highly figured ones, warns Bernard Lee, there is the potential of obvious dark/light differences between sheets when using book matched veneers. The light affects one face very differently from the other, with a potential striping effect. On the other hand, a veneer with a non-symmetrical grain will appear unbalanced if slip matched. In addition to matching sheets side to side, they can be matched end to end for greater heights. Butt matched, diamond matched and reverse diamond all refer to methods of end

matching (see diagram above).

Once the flitch is selected, how it is applied to a panel backing must be specified. First you determine the most spectacular part of the flitch. This is usually the center (i.e. widest) sheets. A panel width, based on a multiple of this veneer width, is selected. A "balance match" veneer means all the sheets are the same width on a panel. A "center match" means all the sheets are the same width, and there is an even number of sheets, so the pattern is balanced. (A center match must be a balance match, but a balance match is not necessarily a center match.) The center match method is almost always used for doors. For cost-cutting purposes, or for situations in which the wood is rare and every possible square inch must be used, a "running match" may be necessary. Running match means using every sheet regardless of how it fits on the panel, using fractional widths to fill in uncovered areas, and continuing the fractional to the next panel. This is an inadvisable method resulting in a cheap look, according to Bernard Lee. Because the flitch often gets narrower as it progresses to the outer portions, at one point the original panel width will no longer be filled by the original number of leaves. At this point you must decide how to make a subtle transition by adding one or two sheets. By adding one (if the original panel was book and center matched) you change to an odd number of sheets resulting in an unbalanced effect. By adding two, the panel is still balanced, but it is busier.

Typically there is a three-to-one waste factor: every one square foot of paneling requires three square feet of veneer. The waste factor can be reduced, for example, by using the narrower sheets on furniture

or for drawer insides. It can also be even greater if you have to make up a two-foot difference between veneer length and ceiling height with another 10-foot length of veneer.

Many of the sources listed below offer a wide variety of wood species, and work with interior designers and architects to help select the proper veneer for specific projects. For further background information the Fine Hardwoods/American Walnut Association offers a book "Fine Hardwoods Selectorama" that covers many species of wood. It costs \$10 from the association, at 5603 West Raymond Street, Suite 0, Indianapolis, IN 46241.

ANDREA LOUKIN

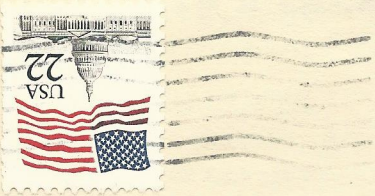
SOURCES

- Bangkok Industries:** Gillingham & Worth Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19124 (215) 537-5800 *circle 576*
- Brookside Veneers:** 215 Forrest St., P.O. Box 908, Metuchen, NJ 08840 (201) 494-3730 *circle 494*
- Eggers Industries:** 1819 E. River St., P.O. Box 88, Two Rivers, WI 54241 (414) 793-1351 *circle 496*
- Jacaranda:** 1590 N.W. 159th St., Miami, FL 33169 (305) 624-0003 *circle 463*
- Loughman:** 2121 Walton Rd. P.O. Box 2459, St. Louis, MO 63114-0459 (314) 428-0321 *circle 464*
- William L. Marshall-Genwove:** 145 Palisade St., Suite 315, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522 (914) 591-5245; (800) 992-3600 *circle 465*
- Pittcon Industries:** 6409 Road Island Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737 (301) 927-1000 *circle 450*
- Chester B. Stem:** 2710 Grant Line Rd., P.O. Box 69, New Albany, IN 47150 (812) 945-6646, (800) 457-2500 *circle 449*
- Veneer Products Ltd.:** IDCNY, Center One, 30-30 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101, (718) 482-8448; (800) 535-5307 *circle 444*
- David R. Webb Co.:** 150 East 88th St., New York, NY 10155 (212) 753-5176 *circle 612*

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- Laminating Services:** 4700 Robards Lane, P.O. Box 32159, Louisville, KY 40232 (502) 458-2614 *circle 618*
- Walker & Zanger:** P.O. Box 241, Scarsdale, NY 10583 (914) 472-5666 *circle 646*

*Companies interviewed for information for this article



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Houston, Tx 77234

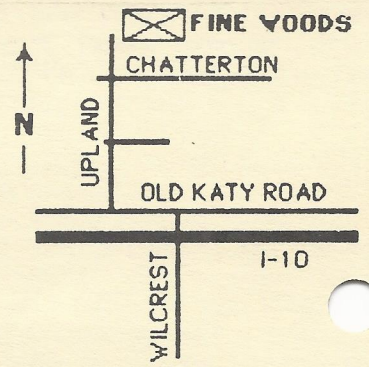
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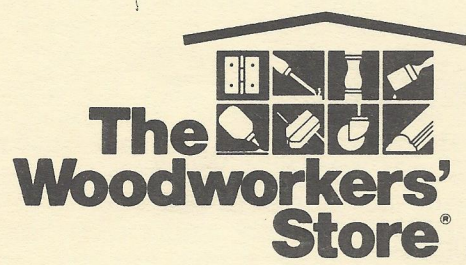
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