

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

2008 Q4

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GOODBYE 2008

2008 will soon be a thing of the past. With the twists and turns along the way we've completed a wide variety of restorations, introduced new pieces to our gothic line, created some new carvings and sculptures. Eric even completed his buffalo panel.

As the year closes, Artisans is initiating an aggressive new marketing campaign featuring our solid wood custom furniture, restoration services, carving, and sculptural services. This strategic shift in focus will result in our selective acceptance of commissions and restorations.

We will share our plans and new ventures with all of you in our first Quarterly Review of 2009. In the mean time, we join with the rest of the nation to continue to support the US economy, and we wish you all a safe and happy holiday season!

COVER STORY

We thought we'd revitalize the flurry of attention our [English Library](#) received a few years ago. Artisans completed this solid mahogany hand carved library featuring hand planed raised panels in 1997. (below right)

Our goal with this space was to develop a room that represented the roots of the traditional English library with the warmth of wood and fire, access to a fully-equipped wet bar for an after-dinner brandy, and comfortable seating for after dinner conversation. Check our [libraries section](#) for more photos!

The feature photo, taken by Thomas H. Clark, Jr., captures the essence of the space. This classic image became the cover of a book entitled "[Old School Romance](#)" by Conrad V. Sucatre, [Vintage Romance Publishing](#). (above right) In addition, the image remains on the home page of [www.librarydesigns.com](#). (right)



Photos by Greg Pallente ©2007 North Jersey Media Group

BUFFALO CARVING



This project has been a LONG time in progress. Conception occurred in 1995 when Eric commissioned a custom made 1874 Sharps by [Shiloh Rifle Manufacturing](#) of Big Timber, Montana. After a wait of over four years, he almost forgot about the piece. When it finally arrived, right around the turn of the millennium, Eric decided that this work of art really should be on display. Then life took its toll, having a home remodel in progress forced the rifle into the safe to wait for a turn.



The challenge was to design a display panel worthy of the hand crafted buffalo rifle. After quite a bit of contemplation over the next two years, he decided to lay out a buffalo prairie scene, inseting the rifle into the horizon. Now the decision was made Eric, in character, jumped right into the pattern development and carving somewhere around mid-2002. Just to point out the small gap in the timeline, in case you haven't noticed it's 2008, the end of 2008!



Artisans of the Valley re-established in 2001 under Eric's management, began to gain momentum. The ever-expanding website, extended business-to-business relationships, feature articles and publicity, all played a roll with a consistent referral system. Artisans now engulfed most of Eric's time so the panel sat, receiving moments of attention as the business leash allowed – which amounted to none, really.

Eric's profile "[Master of the Shop](#)" in [Princeton Magazine](#), by Erin Murphy, October of 2007, featured the panel as a work in progress. In doing so it gave a bit of an incentive to get things in gear. Intertwined with a series of gothic commissions, ongoing restorations, and other projects, Eric finally hit a point where the determination to complete this work of art exceeded time limitations. (A "round-to-it" was issued!)

The fine detail is burned for clean lines, delicate grass, fur and texture, and for shadows. The scene is tinted with water colors, providing a natural spectrum of tones and shades. The frame is solid walnut, featuring a rope carving and natural tung oil finish. The rifle is mounted on two wood pegs, and will be secured with metal straps. The panoramic scene for this project was derived from several designs created by renowned wildlife and pattern artist Lora S. Irish. We should note that many of Artisans carving projects are based on Lora's ability to draw!

So, as it stands, the fourth quarter of 2008 is upon us. The Shiloh rifle is now proudly displayed in this deep relief basswood scene, "[Shiloh Prairie.](#)" This piece is only the second formally titled panel. The first, "[Whitetail Sunrize.](#)" remains in the private collection of outdoorsman and musician [Ted Nugent](#).

So what will the future of [Eric's wildlife carvings](#) bring? Well, we'll leak a little on our plans for next year; we intend to title more pieces, and we will make sure they gain notoriety in the worldwide art market!



Finished Plaque photo by Eric Saperstein (thus not so good!)

HISTORY HAPPENING (RE-ENACTED) TODAY

Artisans of the Valley offers educational, reenactment, and speaking services using our own tailored presentations or variants customized to your requirements. Services extend to schools, public and private organizations, clubs, museums, newspapers, media production companies; anyone interested in woodworking and historical subjects.

Master Craftsman and Author Stanley D. Saperstein and his wife Cindy speak on a vast variety of topics ranging from revolution and Civil War battles and impressions to woodworking to folk art. Cindy's specialties include women's history and the language of the fan.



Cindy (shown below with her fan) and Stanley both have Masters degrees in Education. Stanley, along with his extensive experience as a period craftsman (including the last formal seven-year apprenticeship given by the Grinnell family) is an [author](#), lecturer, avid historian, and re-enactor portraying US Sharpshooter Wyman White, Revolutionary War hero Timothy Murphy, an Artillery Artificer, and multiple other roles including appropriate uniforms and props. His folk art presentations include demonstrations of carving, whittling, story telling, and folk art restoration.

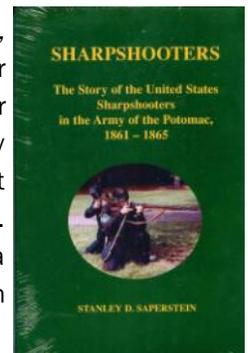


Each is an animated routine, some similar in nature to a character in a renaissance fair that refuses to acknowledge you unless you speak in period dialect; entertaining to say the least!

Cindy provides a feminine touch, breaking away from Stan's extensive array of weapons and military artifacts, her lecture series includes a demonstration of the language of the fan, a device every Victorian woman was never in public without and a variety of topics on focusing on the lives of women intertwined with events in American history as well as daily life.

Artisans current affiliations include [Howell Living Historical Farms](#), the [Swan Foundation](#), the [Sons of Union Civil War Veterans](#), and [Camp Olden Civil War Museum and Round Table](#). Stan & Cindy even provided a folk art lecture series for the [Delta Queen Steamboat Company](#), and offer multiple classes for various adult school & seniors programs.

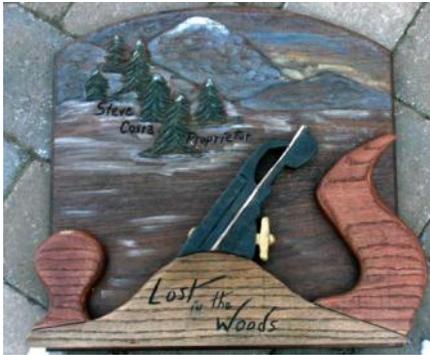
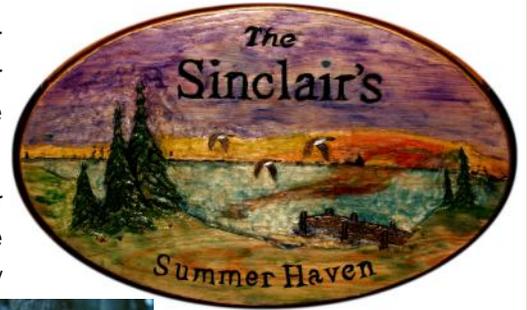
With fellow re-enactors such as Noah Lewis (portraying [Edward "Ned" Hector](#) – shown right) and Fred Minus, USCT (shown with Stan bottom left) and Bruce Sirak ("Governor Olden," - shown bottom right), interactive presentations extend to include characters from our nation's birth through the Civil War. By tapping into their vast network of historians, they can develop programs or recommend appropriate lecturers for any venue. Visit [Artisans Educational Section](#) for detailed information about our lectures and presentations.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Pictures provide more value than words when it comes to signs. Whatever you need to convey, a business name, designate a golf hole, identify your summer home, make a religious statement, or mark a special location there is a sign that does the job.

Our [hand carved](#) and [chainsaw carved signs](#) are available for indoor or outdoor use in a variety of materials. Signs range in size and shape configure your as a plaques, sculpture, adorned with appliques, simply framed, or as a basic plank. The majority of our personalized signs are of a rustic folk art style, offering an alternative to the ordinary look of an every day commercial cookie-cutter sign. Landmark your home or business with a signed, original, and artistic eye catcher.



RESTORATION OF THE GAME



'Restoration of the Game'

Back in 2003, Artisans completed the restoration of an 1849 Jaques Howard Staunton chess set. This set, is number nine of the original signed 300 first editions. This was the first chess set we restored and it started us off into a new and unique opportunity. Since then we've been engaged to restore pieces from dozens of chess sets from around the world.

Artisans is one of the only shops in the US that handles chess set restorations in wood, bone, and ivory. Chess sets vary greatly in value, like any other antique or collectable. We've handled sets ranging in value from a few hundred dollars to around \$15,000. The moral of course is go dig through your attics and basements and pull out that old set you've been saving for the last 20 years and check out its current value!

The most common damage to sets is the loss of crosses, pips, and other protruding parts. This is followed closely by the collars of pawns and vertically-forming cracks. We can duplicate pieces, including turnings and replicating carved knights.

This blurb merely scratches the surface of our gaming restoration projects. A full feature of our chess set restorations is available on our website in our [Gaming Conservation](#) section. We've also published an article "[Restoration of the Game.](#)" with [Chess Collectors International](#) featuring the restoration of the #9 Staunton series set.

THE NEXT GOTHIC PROJECTS

We decided it was time to treat ourselves to a gothic table. We're simply tired of all these creations leaving the shop and having nothing but profit and pride in our work to show for it. This time we're going to make one and keep the whole thing to ourselves.

Our goal by year end is to produce a gothic dining table of course for our own enjoyment, but we're also planning to take the table on a marketing tour. We'll be offering it to our affiliates, design firms, fund raisers, model homes, and various other venues.

We are also starting the design phase of a custom gothic frame for Eric's master's papers, and the 4th Qtr startup schedule now includes a gothic library table, this one may just be in mahogany or cherry. Then again, it could be in oak, we're honestly just not sure yet. We're looking into various design options to finalize the project for startup later this year. The point is to keep in mind, we're not bound to oak for commissions!

Keep checking our website's [update section](#) for announcements about new projects and updates on current ones. This way you'll know what's going on between newsletters!



AMAZING TRANSITIONS – CYLINDER SECRETARY

This [circa 1860 secretary](#) is an amazing example of an Eastlake design, and of a piece in serious need of restoration. Arriving barely able to hold itself together, the original glue was entirely deteriorated. The structure completely wracked and unstable. The finish was crazed and chipped, dulled and yellowed, and the drawers, doors, and cylinder barely functioned. Overall this secretary could barely support its own weight, let alone function in an office.

Pieces in this condition require a full restoration, meaning the finish is removed, the case and components are broken down as far as possible. All the original glue is removed that can be reached, and the piece is reassembled with fresh adhesives. The finish was revitalized with layers of hand rubbed shellac and tung oil varnish.

The net result is a stable and solid functional secretary that shows off all the natural beauty of the solid walnut grain patterns. None should fear the words “refinish” when it comes to collectable pieces, there is no value to an original deteriorated finish, and there is no value in a piece that’s falling apart at every joint. Restoration revitalizes function, beauty, and value and it’s the right choice to ensure your heirlooms make it to the next generation!



Fudge! That's Right, Fudge

Here's the thing, Artisans of the Valley actually has three spin-off companies. We have already proclaimed "[Smooth Finish.](#)" but we really haven't mentioned "Artisans On-Site Catering" and we actually forged "Artisans Travel and Guide Experience" as well ... Now Smooth Finish, that's obviously for our on-site service calls. Holidays coming, lets focus on the food.

Artisans On-Site Catering is chartered to provide a venue for Eric's desire to feed everyone around him. Eric inherited the family gene from his father's mother (Millie) that causes him to constantly stuff food in anyone that wanders within range of a serving spoon. Feasts are often inspired by someone simply saying "don't make a seven course meal!" ... an outlandish response involving at least ten courses is Eric's most common rebuttal.

Ingredients

5lb Bag of Chocolate Chips
6 eggs
2 sticks of salted butter
1 cup cocoa powder
1 small bag of brown sugar
4 bricks of cream cheese
1 pt heavy cream
1 cup of Khalua
1 bag of powdered sugar

All this said, we'll make it simple, Eric likes to cook so we're going to include a recipe or two every now and again. This will vary from our personal spins on common fare to wild game. The logical place to start seemed with a staple dessert - Fudge!

You'll definitely need a double boiler for this project, so start off by either stopping now to run out and buy one, or taking yours out. A good stick blender is also a valuable asset to take up the burden of the constant mixing. You'll need the shrouded blending attachment as well as the whisks. Warm the cream cheese to room temperature as you're prepping. Fire up your double boiler and dump the chips and the butter right in.

Open your six eggs and beat them up until they are fully mixed, and add your heavy cream right into that along with the Khalua. This is just to save time later reaching for things. As the chocolate melts, begin working the butter in with a plastic spatula.

When the chocolate takes on its liquid form, it's time to start adding in the other liquids. Blend in the liquid mix you made on the side a bit at a time with your stick blender (blending attachment) making it nice and smooth. The chocolate will lighten in the process of mixing in the cream and such. Don't add to much at once or you'll loose temperature and things will mix unevenly.

Once you've mixed in the liquids it is now time for the various solids. Mix in the brown sugar and the cocoa powder (this obviously sweetens the mix and gives it even MORE chocolate flavor.) Put in one cup of powdered sugar for now, and save the rest for the binder later.

Now things get interesting; the cream cheese is the key to making this fudge go over the top. The four bricks of cheese should be put in one at a time, brought up to temperature with the chocolate, then blended. This constant blending really ensures that all the ingredients are fully intertwined. You'll want to monitor the temperature and make sure you spike to 160 degrees due to the eggs, other than that don't let the temperature go too much higher and you'll be fine.

The art now is determining how much powdered sugar to add, think of this as the flour you'd add to a cake batter to thicken it. The fudge should be able to harden and have a reasonable structure that maintains until you take a bite. Then it should almost instantly melt in your mouth. It will take 4-6 cups to make this happen and you will have to try it a few times to get it perfect. You can do a practice run by taking a small amount out, laying it thin on some wax paper and putting it into the freezer for about 5 minutes. If it starts to firm up and hold its shape, the mix is ready. Takes a bit of practice to get the feel.

Spread the fudge mix over wax paper laid out into deep (1") trays and spread it out evenly. Place these trays into your fridge to speed up the cooling process. When cool to the consistency of fudge, then well ... you have fudge! Serving is simple, just cut into squares and pass the plate around. This can be melted back into a chocolate sauce, mixed into home made ice cream, or tossed over brownies towards the end of baking to make a chocolate glaze. Don't forget your option to make a chocolate lava cake with a fudge center!

LIVE FREE OR DIE

Outside of New Hampshire “Live Free or Die” is not a commonly uttered statement. The exception is our shop. Eric’s take on this theme slogan, intertwined with a bald eagle, the concept has made the theme for a series of personal projects.

Patriotic themes have become commonplace in the US, yellow ribbons, flags, and banners adorn our homes, vehicles, schools, stores, and businesses. Embedding these concepts within your décor is a venue not often considered when designing rooms and furniture.

Eric also has the eagle theme air brushed on his GMC pickup by Touch of Class Signs in Jackson, NJ. Another eagle with a flag banner on one of [Eric’s shotguns](#) and on his [cowboy cart](#), were carved by Stanley Saperstein. We should also note the soaring eagle by Randy Mardrus in the illuminated panel in [Eric’s bar](#). We’ll feature more of Randy’s work in upcoming issues, but in the mean time be sure to visit www.permanentreflections.com.



TABLE CARDS



We've all heard of card tables, but table cards? We've pondered the idea of a cool Artisans trinket that would serve as a unique reminder of our existence for quite a while. There's the obvious pens, T-shirts, and other common promotional items. A few weeks ago the idea struck us that perhaps we should align this concept with our signature furniture line. Ergo, laser cut miniature renditions of our New Wave Gothic dining tables.

Why? Well, why not? Unlike a business card, these are just too cool to throw away, especially if we make a few into Christmas tree ornaments and refrigerator magnets. Now if you want a table card, you're gonna have to contract a commission or restoration, or send us a referral lead. Maybe if you've already completed a project with us, and you ask nicely (IE remind us you haven't forgotten us) you are still a worthy recipient!

The table card was created by Daniel Augustson of [Elite Laser Graphics](#) who can design all sorts of creative pieces ranging from wood business cards to awards, photo albums, and silhouettes. Anything that can be turned into a line drawing (vectors or CAD file) can be laser cut. Don't forget the power of software even allows transition of photographs and digital logos into laser etched images. Contact Dan directly for more information on laser graphics!

BUSTED LINCOLN

Artisans has a diverse conservation skills. On occasion, we're lured off our daily routine of working with wood. We've restored a variety of pieces ranging in materials. Stone, plaster, paper-mâché, antique leather, ivory, bone, plastic, and metal. Not upholstery though, we'll refer you to our affiliate Brown's & Sons for that service.

This Lincoln bust is one of Stanley Saperstein's volunteer projects, a donation of time and materials by Artisans to the [Son's of Union Veterans](#). Stanley has served many posts for the SUV, is currently Post Commander, and is responsible for preservation of their museum collection.

Plaster restoration in itself is not amazingly sophisticated; generally it consists of mixing new plaster and fixing it into place against the existing material. The skill comes into play when sculpting the new material, not only recreating the original form but blending to create a seamless appearance. Then just match the color and finish and your all set!



ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

LEATHER TRANSITIONS

Russell Heath of Heath's Restoration handles the job when Artisans requires a leather desktop, leather embossing, or any detailed custom leather. With thirty years experience in furniture, gilding, and leather restoration, Russ' affiliation adds a unique and valued resource to Artisans. Visit his website at www.heathsrestoration.com

Leather sustains damage from time, neglect, abuse, and just general use. Restoration or replacement is a common step when fully restoring your heirlooms and treasures. High quality leather, proper preparation, and installation are all key.

Russ maintains a collection of all sorts of interesting embossing tools, and can often replicate or recreate your original design for a restoration. His skills with gold leaf application are employed to highlight the patterns. Shown to the right is one example of the collaborations between Artisans and Heath's Restoration Shop.



HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING



[Artisans of the Valley](http://ArtisansoftheValley.com) 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 225 pages, including galleries, feature articles, educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site. 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



Theresa Tonte is the owner of Smooth Finish by Artisans of the Valley. Teri provides onsite touchup & repair services for residential, corporate, and institutional clients as well as serving to fill a variety of roles in the shop including referee: teri@artisansofthevalley.com

Stanley D. Saperstein, Master Craftsmen, Author, and 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



THINGS WE MAY PUBLISH IN 2009

We've determined that prediction of what we'll get in our next newsletter is like predicting lottery numbers ... we don't know until after the drawing (layup) is complete. So, here's some things we're thinking could be coming up in the next issue: A Gothic Side Table, a feature on pie safes, more cool chainsaw carvings, our solid walnut gaming coffee table, maybe a gothic poker table, and we have gothic chairs on the design table. Also in the works is a frame for Eric's Master's papers!

2009 will be interesting for many reasons. We have a lot going on with new marketing plans, and some to be announced business ventures. To be continued ...



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Portraits by Henry Schweber