

Vermont WoodNet is a coalition of woodworkers and wood product businesses whose primary mission is to strengthen business opportunities for small-scale Vermont wood product businesses that produce “Vermont Made” products and to foster a commitment to the sustainability of the forest resources.

## “Looking for Hollywood..... and Finding Bonanza”

by Russ Fellows

[Author’s Note: The author of the story regrets that the pix that were intended to go with the piece have been lost in “cyberspace”.]

I recently had occasion to drive down to Tennessee, and since I would be driving through some of the best hardwood lumber areas of the country, I decided to drive my truck, just in case I found any “treasures” along the way. It is of recent vintage and light duty, so the gas mileage sacrifice over my car was minor.

Being a segmented woodturner, I am always on the lookout for unusual and nicely figured or colored woods, and one of the best for creating a nice contrast to the darker woods is holly. It is the most nearly white wood we have, not just in the U.S.A., but anywhere in the world that I am aware of, and the Middle Atlantic states, where I would be driving, is where it grows most abundantly, although when it comes to finished lumber, the word ‘abundant’ would likely never be used in reference to holly. It grows throughout the mid-south widely, but is usually either a shrubby and gnarly tree, or it is growing as part of someone’s landscaping scheme, and thus good logs rarely come to market.

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I did a little internet searching, and through a great site called ‘Woodfinder’, ([www.woodfinder.com](http://www.woodfinder.com)) found an interesting looking place in central Virginia called ‘Logs to Lumber, Ltd.’ Located in the piedmont area of the state, about 25 miles south of Charlottesville, a check of the map suggested it would be only 30 or 40 miles off my planned route. A quick call to the owner, Rick Miller, confirmed that not only would he be there on the day I would be coming through, he had some holly! Although he cautioned me that his supply was very limited, I decided it was worth the extra hour or two it would take me out of my way. It would end up taking considerably more than an hour or two, but was well worth the effort!

The town of Faber, once a booming forest products mill town of several hundred, had, not unlike many U.S mill towns, been reduced over time to a ghostly shadow of its former self. Driving by the unmarked turn twice I pulled into a parking area that served in addition as log yard and village main street! As I got out of my truck, not sure of where to look for Miller, a short, solidly built figure wearing a fedora hat stepped out of one of the buildings and said “over here”. We introduced ourselves, exchanged the usual pleasantries, and then immediately got into the usual kind of story and experience-sharing that lovers of wood and woodworking can do so easily. Now in middle age, Miller had grown up in upstate New York, was well educated, and has devoted his working life to his two passions, wood and skiing. He had purchased the mill, which comprised most of the town, in the mid-seventies, and ever since had split his time between operating it in the summer and working winters as a ski instructor at Snowbird in Utah. Admitting that his somewhat free-spirited approach to life may have contributed to the two “closed-out” marriages in his past, Miller invited me into his shop, which also doubled as his living quarters, a mattress on the floor next to his flooring machine serving as bedroom! Formerly the general store of the town, the roughly two thousand square foot

space was a crowded mix of old and new machinery, but all of it the kind “woodchucks” love, big, heavy, and of good quality. He also showed me some of his on-going work and a portfolio of projects from over the years. Through his contacts with the upper strata of the economic world, both at Snowbird and locally in Virginia, Miller had done many spectacular projects, from corporate conference tables to whole paneled interiors for private libraries to magnificent columns for country estates. In addition to such projects he has always been a teacher and mentor in wood trades, and is currently working to help set up a formal woodworking department at a local college.

The “yard” tour, which was what led me to Faber in the first place, was next, and this was where Miller’s love of the unusual really was revealed. Acknowledging that he had no interest in being a production mill, his yard was a hodge-podge of all kinds of wood, most of it still in log form. It actually had more of an appearance of a salvage operation, and in many respects it was. In addition to the more known species such as maple and walnut, there were piles of the less common types like catalpa, sycamore, holly, polonia, mulberry, and heart pine timbers from local demolitions, and many, many, more. It is from these piles of seeming “waste” that Miller would identify and cut out his beautiful flitches, crotches, burls, knees, flames, etc. on a his highly customized bandsaw. Out-of-the-box Miller said it was next to worthless, but by adding extensively to the bed and building his own system of hydraulic dogs for all the weirdly shaped stock he works with, he is able to mill almost anything now. He said on the days when he is milling, his only employee, a “retired” seventy-three-year-old logger and friend, comes in to help out. Otherwise it is all a one-man operation.

The final stop on the tour was the “kiln”....a fully-depreciated tractor trailer sitting in the driveway, to which Miller hooks up a gas heater, after filling it with whatever he is ready to dry. His normal procedure is to air dry his wood for however long it takes to get it to ambient moisture content, take a reading, and then use the kiln only for the final few percentages of drying. When I was there, with no drying needs at the time, he was using it for storage, including the holly that started the whole odyssey. I looked over what he had, bought

most of it.....under 20 board feet.....and packed up my truck.

My one hour detour had, with no regrets whatsoever, taken the whole rest of the day, and had led me to my “bonanza”. Granted, a modest one in terms of what I was looking for, but still a very worthwhile one is seeing a very unique place and meeting a kind and generous kindred woodworking spirit! Borrowing from Robert Frost, I took the “road (very much) less taken”, and it made all the difference!

## Weed Sash and Door

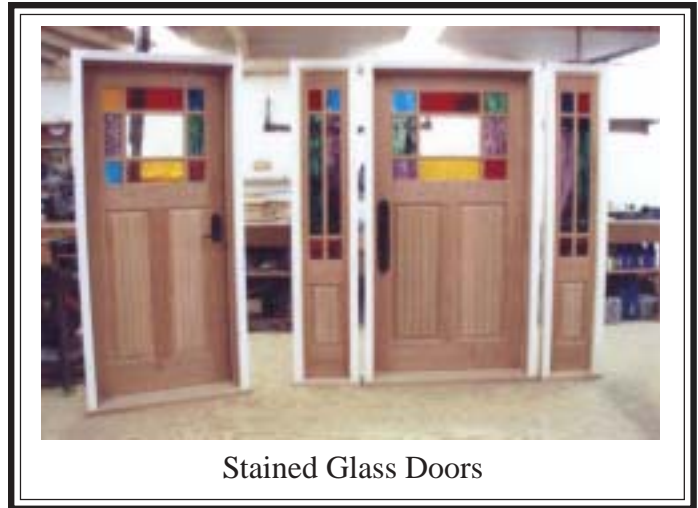
Ben Weed is following in his parents' footsteps. Although the 32 year-old received an automotive technology degree from Vermont Technical College and worked in the automotive field for seven years, he yearned to be back on the Enosburg Falls property working with wood.

"I began to feel that it was a shame to not utilize and develop some of the possibilities that existed right here on the family property," Ben Weed added.

In the late 1970s his father created a small woodworking shop, renovating the old 20' x 24' milking parlor attached to the sprawling free-stall cow barn that had been unused and falling into disrepair for years. In the new space, he opened a window and door business called *Jim Weed Window Shop*. Jim Weed's wife and Ben Weed's mother, Cindy Humiston Weed, took over the space in 1987 and began making native and exotic hard wood jewelry and barrettes under the name *Jewelwood of Vermont* after her husband injured his back.

"I helped my mother sand barrettes after school and during summer vacations when I was in junior high and high school," added Ben Weed.

But the small crowded work space would not suffice for Ben Weed. So in 2003, with his father acting as the resident consultant, he doubled the size of the existing woodworking shop and started his own business under the banner *Weed Sash and Door*. He carefully relegated his mother's tools, equipment and inventory into one section, never disturbing her production schedule. Then he bought a new four-sided planer/molder, shaper, Williams and Hussy molder, and various other small



Stained Glass Doors

tools -as well as utilizing existing equipment -and started making windows and doors.

"I welcomed the addition," said Cindy Weed. "The space is now well-lit and spacious and we jive well working together in one space."

Over the years, Ben Weed has created many beautiful and interesting projects including triangle, round-top, and diamond-shaped windows; interior and exterior doors; beds and tables; entertainment centers; cabinetry; and reproduction work for both local and out of state customers. Many of the window sashes and doors are made of white pine but he also uses walnut, cherry, hard maple, oak and butternut, to mention a few.

"I really enjoy working with wood," said Ben Weed. "It's satisfying to build something beautiful starting from rough lumber to finished product, often from logs that I've sawn on my own mill."

In his spare time and using his mechanical skills, Ben Weed renovated both his grandfather's Chase sawmill and the big barn that housed it. He began sawing lumber for his own business, as well as custom sawing services, four years ago. Discovering that sawmilling was indeed a passion, Ben Weed sold the Chase mill to a neighbor 9 months ago and purchased a used, fully hydraulic Helle circular sawmill from Virginia shortly after. Some of the mill has been refurbished and set up in the barn on the new concrete floor while the balance undergoes his careful rebuilding. Next year he hopes to begin custom sawing for woodworkers, contractors and the general public.

"So keep me in mind if you would like any custom sawing done or need any lumber for a project" said Ben Weed. "I'm at (802) 933-5555 and on Facebook, too."

## Hickory Entry Benches—A fun and challenging project from very ornery wood!

By Gary Pittman

Email Gpittman@gmavt.net

I am an admirer of the late George Nakashima and these are the first pieces that I made using butterfly joints.

Since I owned my own woodlot, I have been air drying native Vermont lumber for years. The great ice storm of 1998 forced me to harvest timber from the lot and I kept all of the Butternut, Slippery Elm (red Elm), Bitternut Hickory and other assorted northern hardwoods. (My wife claims that I will have to live to 103 in order to use it all). The lumber was flitch cut including crotch and other crazywood. These benches were fabricated from a Bitternut Hickory bole that I had initially put in the burn pile. I'm glad that it didn't make it to the stove.

I enjoy making natural-edge furniture and allow each tree to dictate a project. Every tree holds it's own secrets and challenges for making beautiful, functional furniture.

There are butterfly joints hidden on the underside of the tops of the benches.



Bench from hickory bole



Bench from hickory bole



Some of the butterfly details. The butterflies are made from black walnut.

# Council on the Future of Vermont

***Were you at the Summit on the Future of Vermont in May? Did you attend a public forum in 2008?***

**Join us in your region this summer!**

*The Council on the Future of Vermont (CFV) was a two year project of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Join us in a regional roll-out of the results where residents can learn about the CFV process and share their ideas and priorities for their own towns and Vermont. A series of free and open public discussions will be held around the state **this summer**.*

**FIND YOUR REGIONAL MEETING BELOW!**

**All Meeting Times are: 6pm to 7:30pm**

**June 10: Randolph**, Gifford Medical Center, Conference Center

**June 11: White River Junction**, Hartford High School

**June 16: Barre**, Old Labor Party Hall

**June 18: St. Albans**, Bellows Free Academy

**June 23: Newport**, Goodrich Public Library

**June 24: St. Johnsbury**, Fairbanks Museum

**June 25: Hyde Park**, Green Mountain Tech and Career Center

**July 1: Island Pond**, Island Pond Welcome Center

**July 2: North Hero**, Public Library

**July 7: Middlebury**, venue TBA

**July 8: Burlington**, Fletcher Free Library

**July 9: Rutland**, Rutland Free Library

**July 14: Bennington**, venue TBA

**July 15: Brattleboro**, Marlboro Graduate Center

## Sale and Services

Gerald A. Bouchard  
A2W Woodworks, LLC  
4285 Ethan Allen Hwy (aka RT 7)  
Charlotte, VT 05445  
802-425-6291

### Sawing services available

Logs to lumber and/or timbers.

Wood planeing services available  
Limited to 6" thick and 18" wide  
A 2 W Woodworks LLC  
802-425-6291

**For Sale:** Cherry half logs prepped for bowl turners.  
Cherry tree crotches (10 pieces available) (5 pieces sawed in half).

Air dried maple in 1", 1-1/8", and 2" thick. Width from 3" to over 12".

Air dried native white cedar in 1" and 2" thick, in various widths.

Have cedar logs in the yard and could cut some to your specs.

200 board feet of Shag Bark Hickory.

Pen blanks in numerous species of wood. 3/4" x 3/4" x 5" and 3/4" x 3/4" x 2.5"

Basswood blocks for the wood carver in the family.

Have small quantities of other varieties of wood.

Hope to be sawing Ash in the near future. Could saw some for you.

Special requests/requirements entertained.

802-425-6291



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