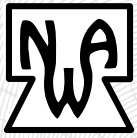


WOODWORKERS NEWS



Northeastern
Woodworkers
Association

March 2025, Vol. 34, Number 3

John Hodgson Tells How to Prepare Your Project for Finishing

By Manav Malhotra

Ask any woodworker about their favorite part of a project, and only the most deranged would choose the finishing process. It's messy, time-consuming, and often feels like pure drudgery compared to the joy of watching perfectly cut joinery come together. Yet, as John Hodgson reminded us in his recent talk, *Preparing Your Project for Finishing*, that final coat is often the make-or-break element in achieving a truly beautiful result.

Hodgson began by underscoring the changes in wood quality over time, focusing on how fast-grown modern pine compares to the sturdier, tighter-grained lumber of a century ago. The difference, he noted, is particularly apparent in growth rings: modern pine grows quickly, resulting in wider rings and weaker boards, while older pine took its time and produced stronger material. While that old timber is largely a thing of the past, Hodgson stressed that choosing the best available stock is still the critical first step toward a high-quality finish.

From there, Hodgson moved on to the nuances of surface preparation and sanding. He emphasized that skipping sanding grits is a false economy—each stage lays the groundwork for the next, and shortchanging the process just makes more work later. Whether you're working with open-grain woods like oak or closed-grain species like maple, sanding blocks can help you keep surfaces flat and avoid the temptation to over-sand certain areas. He also touched on blotch-prone woods such as cherry and birch, recommending pre-stain conditioners or gentle shellac wash coats to keep uneven absorption at bay.

Shellac, a resin secreted by the female lac bug, appeared to be one of Hodgson's favorite finishes. Its versatile nature—used both in woodworking and as a shiny candy coating—makes it worth considering for sealing in stains, popping wood grain, or even as a stand-alone finish on some lighter touch projects. Oil-based finishes, water-based topcoats, gel stains, and specialized fillers all came



up as well, but shellac received repeated praise for its ability to lock in color, play nicely with other finishes, and its relative user-friendliness.

While Hodgson discussed some advanced methods—like spraying wash coats and experimenting with different fillers—he stressed practicality and caution. Proper ventilation, mask use, and safe disposal of chemicals were recurring themes, as were the merits of environmentally friendlier, low-VOC finishes. Hodgson also offered solutions for common preparation pitfalls, such as removing dents with a steam iron, dealing with glue squeeze-out using mineral spirits, ensuring a smooth finish by removing dust between coats, and using rubout techniques—like fine abrasives or steel wool—to achieve a flawless final surface.

The contrasting finish samples Hodgson passed around made it clear that, while finishing may not hold the same excitement as cutting joinery or watching dovetails slide into place, it is the final chapter that can elevate your work—or expose its flaws. Diligent sanding, smart product choices, and careful application are the keys to success. And if you find yourself eyeing the shiny outer layer on a Raisinet the next time you're at the movies, maybe you'll spare a thought for shellac.



A Message From the NWA President

By Kay McCampbell

Folks,

Hopefully this slight warming trend will blossom into spring, eventually. If not, there's always the grey trees and brown grass to enjoy. Okay, that's enough of that. In the meantime, there's gardens to plan, scraps to burn, and most importantly, your entry for Showcase.

Elections are coming up. The Nominations Committee will be afoot, twisting arms and cajoling folks into taking a role in NWA leadership. I sincerely hope some of you will be eagerly stepping up to join the ranks of those that serve on the board.

Showcase is about a month away. Please consider volunteering, whether it be for preparations, setup, working the actual event, or takedown. Any bit of help is appreciated.

While you're turning big sticks into littler ones, you could also consider a donation to the NWA store. I know I'm going to be contributing some of my meager attempts to their offerings, in the remote hope that someone will buy them. Join me in this rash adventure.

In friendship and sawdust,

Kay

Monthly NWA Board Meetings

By Linda Reiss, Recording Secretary

For those members who are interested, all are welcome to attend the monthly Board meetings for our organization. The meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the last Tuesday of the month for most months of the year. Meeting dates and a Zoom link to the scheduled meeting are posted on the NWA calendar on our website, <https://woodworker.org/calendar/>. A separate notice for each meeting is not sent out.

OFFICERS

*Some recent position changes
are not yet reflected*

President - Kay McCampbell
nwa.president@woodworker.org

Vice President/Program Chair
Lee Hilt
lhagrh@earthlink.net

Recording Secretary - Linda Reiss

Treasurer - Alan Hayes

Executive Secretary - Vacant



NWA BOARD MEMBERS

Pete Chast
Mid-Hudson Representative
Wally Cook
Board Member at Large
Dale Lombardo
Board Member at Large
Doug Wildes
Board Member at Large
Charlie Goddard
Board Member Emeritus



Mid-Hudson Chapter

Bill Sterling, President
Rich Cerruto, Vice President
Patsy Boisvert, Treasurer
Phil Dudek, Secretary



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Registrar - Frank Necaie
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Fiske Fund

Chair - James Lefebvre
Nick Piedmont
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Steven Mapes
Robert Fleury
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Totally Turning Chair

Todd Gunter

From the Showcase Chair

David Rustin

Dear Members,

Showcase 2025 and Totally Turning are fast approaching. Your help is needed more and more as this is an all-volunteer organization. We need our members not only to come to Showcase and Totally Turning to learn, network, catch up with old friends and make new ones, but we need volunteers to help make this happen every year.

I am sending this open letter to ask that no matter what is going on in your busy lives, please consider volunteering for a few hours to help ensure our organization will have a great event.

Volunteer positions can be found on the website [here](#). There you will find four links to sign up for positions for the Totally Turning Symposium, Showcase 2025, the Toy Factory or for Shared Duties for both Totally Turning and Showcase. Shared Duties include truck drivers, loading and unloading trucks, setup and takedown of the center as well as Volunteer Check-in during the events. Clicking on any of the links will bring you to the signup sheets and you can look up available slots. Click the sign-up button and/or enter your name, email and phone number when requested. Save the information. If there are any questions or issues with signup then contact Learay Rayburn-Silvia at nwavolunteerchair@gmail.com.

Please take some time and volunteer for a couple of hours to a great cause and organization. Showcase and Totally Turning both have a great lineup of presenters and judging from the preregistration, it should be a great turnout. Please consider going to the Facebook page and give a like to the event that is posted and consider sharing it with other Groups you may be associated with.

We look forward to seeing you there and volunteering. Remember, volunteering gives you free admission, and family members are welcome to volunteer as well!

Thank you,

David Rustin, Showcase Chair

WOODWORKERS NEWS

is published by the Northeastern Woodworkers Association for its members. The Association's aim is to provide a common meeting ground for lovers of woodworking who want to know more about wood and the techniques for forming it. The newsletter is published monthly. The newsletter is available online at www.woodworker.org



Your next issue of **Woodworkers News** will be published in early April

Submissions are due by the 15th of each month
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Chuck Thorne Demonstrates Building Shaker Boxes

By *Susan McDermott*

For the first time since NWA moved from Solar Drive and before Covid, NWA has resumed face-to-face meetings at the Shaker Meeting House located at 25 Meeting House Road, near the Albany airport.

Lee Hilt introduced Chuck Thorne as an experienced Shaker box maker who volunteers at Hancock, MA Shaker Village, <https://hancockshakervillage.org>. During the visitor season (April 12 to November) Chuck spends one day a week there (a Monday or Friday) teaching visitors about the tradition and technique of box building. At 2:00 PM, he gives a box bending demonstration.

Chuck plans to give a box building class to NWA members in spring or fall, so watch for the announcement as the class will be limited to six or eight participants. Also, The Shaker Heritage Society plans to hold a class in the Meeting House or Barn for its members.

Shaker oval boxes are a type of bentwood box known for their distinctive oval shape, "swallowtail" or "finger" joints, and practical design. They were made by the Shakers, starting in the late 18th century and continuing into the 20th century.

As Chuck prepared to make an oval box for the audience, he had to answer many questions from the interested observers while focusing on the timing and fitting of the box's side, top, and bottom. He prepares air dried hard woods from the NWA auction lumber.

He likes maple or cherry as they have a tight and straight grain. He resaws the boards with a band saw to $1/16$ " to $3/32$ " strips. One must use a very sharp blade with three teeth to an inch. He then planes the strips, but that can create tear-out and more waste. The drum sander is an alternative to the planer, but it raises the grain and requires more higher grit sanding. Templates for the fingers are used (see photo), and a Yankee push drill puts holes in the fingers to accommodate the copper tacks. The fingers accommodate the inevitable wood movement.



Chuck Thorne, Shaker Box Maker



Some of Chuck's boxes and forms

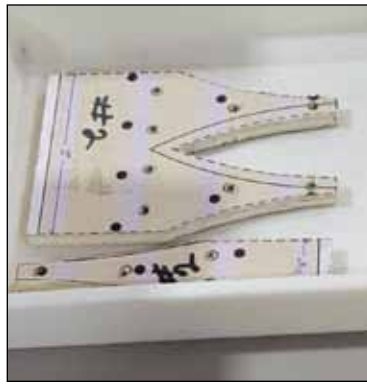
Chuck uses forms to shape various sized boxes which were donated by NWA member Don Osmer and forms donated by the Mabee Farm Historic Site through Pam Bucci, where she volunteers many hours in the spring and summer. After soaking the strips in a hot water bath (180-200 degrees) for 20 to 40 minutes, depending on wood species, Chuck bends the wood strip around the form. Removing the oval side, and using his anvil (pictured), he clinches copper tacks in the predrilled “fingers” with a dedicated hammer. Chuck explained that his hammer is never used for any other purpose, as ordinary hammers create metallic dust on their surface which reacts with the tannin in the wood and stains the boxes’ sides. Beveled shapers are then inserted at both ends of the box. The shapers have holes for ventilation and beveled edges to allow ease of removal.

After drying for a day, the oval side is placed on a $\frac{1}{4}$ ” quarter sawn birds-eye maple board and is then traced with a fine tipped pencil. The oval bottom and top are sawn with a jig saw. With the oval side mounted on the oval base, $\frac{3}{64}$ ” holes are drilled $\frac{1}{8}$ ” above the bottom of the box. This requires a jig to hold a hand drill exactly perpendicular and $\frac{1}{8}$ ” to the center of the oval base.

The bottoms and tops are secured to the side and rim with square toothpicks pegs. Steve Mapes explained that the square toothpicks in the round $\frac{3}{64}$ ” holes will be secure.

Shaker Heritage Society Executive Director Johanna Batman informed us that early Shaker boxes of 1790 to 1800’s were colorfully painted and made of local tree species, pine and maple. Today, craftsmen continue to make Shaker oval boxes for their beauty, the Shaker values of simplicity and their historic significance.

Thanks go to Juliana Shei for managing the 50-50 raffle which netted \$157 for NWA, to Carl Stoner for the video equipment set up and projection, and to Lee Hilt for the many tasks involved



Templates for Shaker box fingers



Dedicated hammer and anvil



Chuck shapes the sides around the form



Chuck scribes the bottom of the boxes base

arranging the meeting, communicating to members, and providing refreshments. Special thanks to the Executive Director, Johanna Bateman, for the use of the Meeting House and to Chuck Thorne for his outstanding demonstration.



A box to hold Chuck's necessary box making tools

Additional information:

John Wilson restored interest in boxes in the 1980's and once presented at NWA. He taught at a community college and published a three-volume set on Shaker boxes. He started The Home Shop in Charlotte, Michigan which supplied materials, tools and instruction for making the iconic Shaper boxes. The business continues after John's passing in 2023 [here](#). You may also view him on YouTube [here](#).

The Perfect Cure for Cabin Fever

By Lee Hilt

It's not often I ask for volunteers to do a shop clean out, in the middle of the winter, on one of the coldest days of the year and in the hilly southern Albany County town of Feura Bush. But this wasn't the usual situation.

The son of a long-time woodworker needed to clean out his parent's entire house, which included a well-equipped and complete basement woodshop. The son was donating the entire shop to NWA. Add to this the house was in foreclosure; the son had been served with an eviction notice and was now scheduled to appear in a court by month's end and things got very serious - very quickly.

The call for volunteers went out and on a chilly Thursday morning in January, with single digit temps and a fresh 5 inches of snow, a group of 12 hardy volunteers and pick-up trucks arrived and got busy. We were going full steam by 9am and by the time I first checked the clock - at about 10:30 - we were already 90% done. The shop was empty, and we were heading to the Shaker barn with five loaded pickup trucks and a bunch of filled Tupperware containers in cars and vans a bit after 11. Amazing!

The donor was impressed as heck with the flurry of activity and the mountain of wood working equipment moved out of his basement in a few hours. A BIG thank you to the following member-volunteers who gave their all for this event. You are the best - Alan Silvia, Bruce Nelson, Chuck Thorne, Don Orr, Juliana Shei, Learay Rayburn-Silvia, Matthew Jaskula, Rick Bird, Robert Wither, Scott Simonson, Walter Addicks and Worth Gretter.



Bruce Nelson, Lee Hilt, Alan Silvia, Walter Addicks, Learay Rayburn-Silvia, Matt Jaskula, Juliana Shei, Chuck Thorne, Scott Simonson, Don Orr, Worth Gretter, Robert Wither

Finally, these type events are where NWA gets the tons of woodworking tools, equipment and lumber for our annual auction. If you know of anyone who has items to donate, please provide them my contact info below. As a qualified 501(c)(3) organization, all accepted donations to NWA are documented with a donation letter to the donor, which could result in a qualified charitable contribution at tax time.

Lee Hilt, Auction Chair

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KWA News

By Wally Cook

The weather dampened our February meeting, but the hearty souls who showed up came with the goods! There were some beautiful pieces for show and tell, contributed by Paul Phillips, Mike Schappert, Mike Giuliano, and Stan Pressner.



A collection of Show and Tell items from the KWA February Meeting

A fair amount of time has been spent organizing and unpacking tools and accessories in the new shop. Regular turning sessions started in February on Tuesdays and Thursdays. However, the focus has been on reconditioning lathes and determining the optimal placement of lathes, sharpening stations, tools, and supplies.

We discussed outreach plans for a follow-on class for 4-H students. Our initial class on woodworking was coordinated through Ulster County Cornell Cooperative center and was highly successful. A new course is in planning stages for April and May.

Our demo schedule is taking shape: Paul Phillips provided a reprise of Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Ratio – and why they are useful in woodturning design. The Fibonacci numbers are in a sequence where the current number plus the previous number equals the next number in the sequence, e.g., 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 and so on. This sequence appears often in nature when looking at the pattern of spirals, branching in trees and distribution of leaves on a stem.

These sequences are related to the so-called Golden Ratio that many follow in designing shapes which are pleasing to the eye. The Golden Ratio is achieved when the ratio of two segments is the same as the ratio of the larger segment to the sum of the whole. Generally, this figure results in a 1.618 ratio. In the practical sense, turners use rough approximations of this approach by making design changes that leave individual segments at a 1/3: 2/3 division. For instance, Ray Key always makes his box lids 2/5 of the total height of the box.

Paul described his investigation to appraising not only height, but diameter in shaping vases. He also demonstrated how catenary curves can be created in order to guide design.



Doug Scharf made a pair of matching pepper grinders out of redwood burl – no finish yet applied!



Paul Phillips demonstrates a catenary (chain) curve to Sam Amodeo

Musical Instruments SIG Show And Tell

By Susan McDermott

Eric Marczak, Jon Hedman and Ray Puffer set up a Show and Tell display from the Musical Instruments SIG at the general meeting. Special guitar-building jigs and tools were displayed, informing the viewer of the process and fine woodworking that goes into building these instruments. Also, Eric and Jon displayed guitar making tools and Jon's cigar box stringed instrument and flute. Eric, Jon, and Ray Puffer hold a monthly class in guitar construction and flute making at the Railroad Avenue shop.



Eric's guitar neck from Union College's Black Walnut



Inlay by Ray Puffer



Eric's jig to secure parts during construction



Eric's jig to bend sides of a guitar



Jon Hedman's cigar box guitar



Another of Eric's jigs



Interior of guitar sound board

Call for NWA Store Showcase Items

By Linda Reiss

As always, the NWA Store at our Showcase weekend will be a big draw for visitors and members alike. Happily, we had a very successful booth at the Shaker Heritage Society Holiday Market; unhappily that success led to our inventory being pretty bare for Showcase. I know that there are many members who have said they will be making a few items for the Store, so thank you in advance to those generous members! If others have a few pieces in their home stock they would be willing to part with, we would be very appreciative.

And of course, all members are encouraged to have their special pieces in the Store on a consignment basis. Your consignment items should be boxed and dropped off at the Learning Center by Thursday, March 20; be sure to include the consignment form in the box. Click [here](#) to download the consignment form. If you cannot drop off your items in advance, you must send the completed form prior to Showcase to Linda Reiss at lindareiss467@gmail.com. We are looking forward to seeing you all at Showcase 2025!

Sawdust...

All the best and Godspeed to Lee Hilt as he goes back to help with storm recovery in western North Carolina...

SHOWCASE

March 29th and 30th, 2025

Saratoga Springs City Center
Saratoga Springs, NY

Hope to see you there!

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs):

Adirondack Woodturners Association (AWA) - The AWA is active throughout the year. General Meetings and Bowl Turning are held the first Wednesday of the month (except in January and July when it is the second Wednesday), at the NWA Learning Center located at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY from 5:30 PM to 8:45 PM. **Contact:** Steve VanDerZee, (518) 727-6511 or stevevdz@msn.com.

Spindle and Pen Turners plus Introduction to Woodworking - Meets Mondays 9:00 AM to noon and Mondays 5:30 PM – 9:00 PM, including holidays except Christmas. **Contact:** Pam Bucci at (518) 429-6440 or woolglass2@gmail.com. Wednesday “Learn and Turn” sessions occur on alternate Wednesdays at the NWA Learning Center. These sessions run 5:30 PM to 8:45 PM. www.adirondackwoodturners.com **Contact:** Pam Bucci at (518) 429-6440 or woolglass2@gmail.com.

Kaatskill Woodturners - Also an AAW Chapter. Meets on the second Saturday of the month at the Hurley Reformed Church, 11 Main St. Hurley, NY 12443. **Contact:** Wally Cook at (845) 338-2193 or wally.cook@gmail.com.

NWA Crafters - Meet Tuesdays and Saturdays 9:00 AM to noon. They provide public service woodworking for various charitable organizations, including the Double H Hole in the Woods camp for children, Saratoga Builders Association, the Warren Washington and Albany Counties ARC (A Respectful Commitment), and the Northeast Construction Trades Workforce Coalition which is the non-profit arm of Curtis Lumber. Sharing information, fellowship, education, and relating experiences are a major part of these sessions. **Contact:** Rick Bird biggrbird@gmail.com for more information.

The NWA Wood Carvers SIG – Meet Thursdays 5:00-8:30 PM all year at the NWA Learning Center located at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY. The goal is to promote the art of wood carving and to have a good time doing it. The only prerequisite is a desire to carve while making new friends. Wood, tools, and patterns are available. **Contact:** Diane Balch at (518) 885-9899 or dbalch1@nycap.rr.com.

Hand Tool SIG – Meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00-9:00 PM in the Herm Finkbeiner Education Center at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY. **Contact:** Dave Parkis at (518) 429-6581 for further details: dparkis@nycap.rr.com.

Scrollers SIG – Meets Mondays 5:45 to 8:00 PM - new scrollers welcome. Wednesdays 5:45 to 8:00 PM - machine qualified scrollers only (possible demonstrations) **Contact:** Stephen Koonz (518) 290-0722 (text only)-

NWA Musical Instruments SIG – Meets at 97 Railroad Avenue shop 6:00 to 8:00 PM, second Tuesday of the month. **Contacts:** Jon Hedman, jonwhedman@gmail.com, (518) 399-7849; Ray Puffer, Ray.Puffer@gmail.com, (518) 272-6421; Eric Marczak, epm03@hotmail.com, (518) 872-9324.

CHAPTERS

NWA Mid-Hudson - The address and hours for the Mid-Hudson shop to be changed. **Contact:** Bill Sterling wster1156@aol.com or Wally Cook wally.cook@gmail.com for details.

Boat Building SIG – Tuesdays at Rich Cerruto’s shop in Gardiner, NY from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm with a lunch break. r_cerruto@yahoo.com