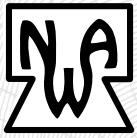


WOODWORKERS NEWS



Northeastern
Woodworkers
Association

December 2025, Vol. 34, Number 10

A Message from the President

Folks,

The trees are grey. The oak leaves cling grimly, awaiting the storm that will give them their final flight. I now dream of snow drifts while feeding the fire.

Hopefully you have all weathered the introduction to the 2025 holiday season in good order. I've been scrambling to get ready, and I'm still so far behind. The holiday project that I'd dreamed of this summer is in disarray. I'm hoping that all of you are much better organized than I am, and your projects will be ready to show off at the NWA holiday party. Keep an eye out for the announcement.

Don't forget to give yourself the best holiday gift and clean your shop in preparation for your Showcase projects.

I hope that you all have a wonderful season, with plenty of warmth and love.

In friendship and sawdust,

Kay

NWA Members Hilt, Howe, and Moran Cover 21st Century Electric with 1900's Woodwork

By Susan McDermott

Three NWA woodworkers love the challenges of restoration projects. Recently, Tom Moran, Pete Howe, and Lee Hilt built and installed a garden arch at Cherry Hill. (See the newsletter article by Rick Bird [here](#))

They use their home shops, using wood donated by Curtis Lumber or resources by Lee Hilt, to design and customize their projects. This November, the trio built a closet to hide a large electrical panel box in the Shaker Barn. The barn is often used for weddings, parties, and community events that appreciate the authenticity of the 1915 barn. But the large circuit panel box, hidden by a curtain, was a modern eyesore.

Lee milled white pine boards which Pete and Tom planed, cut tongue and grooves, and "texturized" the board surfaces. In the future, the frame and doors will be stained to match the barn's inner walls. It is apparent that Lee, Tom, and Pete derive great satisfaction from their teamwork and contributions to historical sites.



The ugly circuit breaker box

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*Some recent position changes
are not yet reflected*

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Totally Turning Chair

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Stock planed, texturized, and fitted tongue and groove boards



Installing the second door



The inside of the new replacement doors



Project completed



Mission accomplished



Nearly finished. Tom Moran (left), Lee Hilt (center), Pete Howe (right)

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



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Bling, Strings, and Musical Things at the Hand Tools SIG Meeting

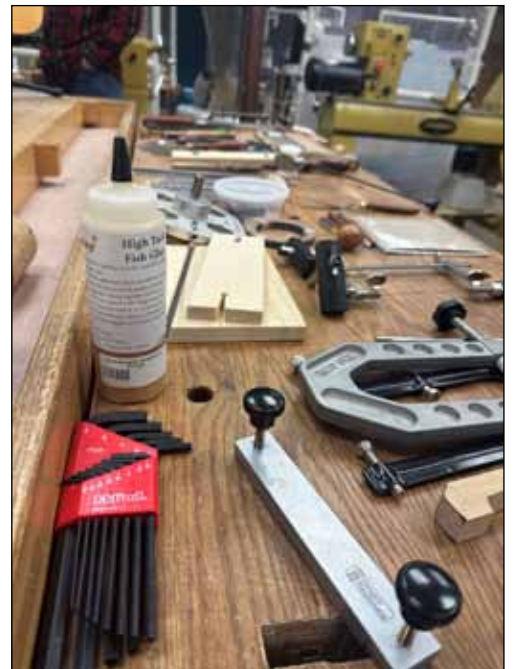
By Steven Doellefeld

On November 4th, the paths of the hand tools SIG and the musical instruments SIG intersected when Ray Puffer and Eric Marczak and twenty or so attendees came to the hand tools SIG to talk about some of the highly specialized tools and techniques used for instrument building.

The evening began with Eric discussing the techniques for building Indigenous-style flutes. He discussed wood selection, preparation, gluing techniques, and the process for locating and tuning the flute holes by burning them with hot files then chamfering the edges. If you are interested in learning more about flute making and even building your own, Jon Hedman will be hosting a flute making class in the near future. Reach out to Jon (jonwhedman@gmail.com) or watch the newsletter and website, as more information about that class will be forthcoming.

Ray, a longtime banjo builder, then took the floor to discuss banjo building. He explained that a banjo consists of two major components—the pot (body of the banjo) and the neck. Ray primarily focused his talk on neck building techniques and tools used in these processes. He discussed sawing of the neck and shaping it with Japanese “dragon” rasps; how to cut slots in fretboards and insert frets with both a purpose-built fretting tool and with a hammer. He also discussed how to do mother of pearl inlays and passed around some stunning examples for the group to look at.

Then Ray demonstrated a neck heel radiusing machine that he built. The machine can both cut a radius in the body that matches the radius of the banjo pot and cuts the angle of the heel for the correct



Artistic shot of tools



Eric demonstrates heat bending techniques for forming guitar sides

alignment and angle of the neck-to-pot joint. This machine makes a task that is quite difficult to do correctly with hand tools much easier.

Ray will be hosting a course on banjo making soon. It requires completing several of the NWA courses to achieve “machine knowledgeable” levels of proficiency. Reach out to Ray (ray.puffer@gmail.com) if you are interested in knowing more or signing up.

Our evening wrapped up with Eric talking about wood selection and processes for building guitars. While a wide variety of woods are used for the backs and sides of guitars, the tops and internal braces of guitars are almost always made with spruce. The top spruce pieces are quartersawn and the alignment of the grain is important, as the tightness of grain and alignment affect strength and stability of the wood, which still allows these very thin pieces of wood (2.5mm – or $\frac{3}{32}$ of an inch – or thinner) the flexibility to produce richness of sound. Eric noted that the Martin Guitar Company has stated that only 1 in 10,000 spruce trees develops wood suitable for use as a guitar top—no wonder they are so expensive!

Eric and Ray then spent a few minutes talking about the “Union College guitar,” which is being built from a walnut tree felled at Union College, and will be raffled off at the Woodworker’s Showcase which will be held at the Saratoga Springs City Center March 28th and 29th 2026.

Getting back to tools and techniques, Eric demonstrated how guitar sides are bent with heat and pressure; how guitar rosettes are made; placement of internal braces is determined and how they are clamped for gluing; and the types of guitar bridges and tuners.

The discussion was lively, and the two-hour session went by in a flash.

If you are interested in joining up with either group, the hand tools SIG meets on the first Tuesday of each month, and the musical instruments SIG holds its meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. For more information see the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) at the end of this newsletter.



Eric demonstrates how to use a fret bending tool



Erik's fifth string tuner and its reamer



One of a set of carving tools for Ray's inlays



Fret slot files



Ray's custom made machine to cut the guitar neck to the pot

Dick Flanders Shop Cleanout - A Legacy of Dedication to NWA

By Juliana Shei

Since joining Northeastern Woodworkers Association in 1997, Dick Flanders has been an active and dedicated member of NWA. Over the years, Dick has served as President, participated in various committees, and led major activities such as the Showcase and the Annual Auction. His commitment to mentoring has benefited many members, and his supportive presence has enriched the organization.

Dick was a regular participant in shop cleanouts, assisting both members and non-members who were retiring from woodworking. No wonder so many members responded to the call when his shop cleanout

was announced. He generously donated his shed-full of lumber and many woodworking tools to support NWA. Moving these materials to the barn storage area was a significant effort, requiring five pickups, two vans, and several cars.

While Dick is missed at our Special Interest Group (SIG) activities, we look forward to his visits in the future. Thank you, Dick, for all your contributions.



*Crew of dozen: from left, Ben Breiten, Lee Hilt, Matt Jaskula, **Dick Flanders**, Dave Finlayson, Diane Balch, Walt Addicks, Bruce Nelson, Dianne Lewis, Bruce Susser, Pete Howe. (Not in picture – Yusuf Silk, Juliana Shei)*

Wooden You Like to Know

By Charlie James

I made this scratch cutter from a thick card scraper. Score with a file across the scraper to the size you want and put it in a vise. Hit it back and forth with a hammer a few times and it will snap (wear goggles!). Use a marker or engineers blue to mark the profile and cut with a file. Rub it on a stone to polish it a bit; no need to put a burr on it. I use maple for most of my scratch stock holders and drill a #7 or 7/32" hole and thread it with a 1/4-20 tap and wax. Here it is, only about a minute's work on a piece of mahogany, no machine noise, no dust flying around the shop and the profile possibilities are not limited to router bits.



A scratch stock

Part II of Juliana Shei's Kumiko Class

By Susan McDermott

In August of this year, Juliana Shei taught a class in building a table saw jig for custom cutting of wood stock for making Kumiko designs (see the newsletter article [here](#))

The second part of her class was scheduled for November 7. Enrolled members met at the Learning Center to work on their personal projects using many of Juliana's jigs to miter the precise angles of each thin wooden strip. These parts interlock snugly without glue or fasteners to assemble the Japanese designs that Juliana displayed in her own constructions. Students could measure their cuts using either the metric or US Customary system. They pared their angles with very sharp chisels set against the specific angles of Juliana's jigs. The tolerances could be just 0.1 millimeters. This is slow, very precise work. When done carefully, the result is a highly rewarding decorative panel. Panels may be used to construct screens, lamps, tabletops, or trivets. Juliana can sell some of her personal jigs to members if they wish to continue making panels at home.

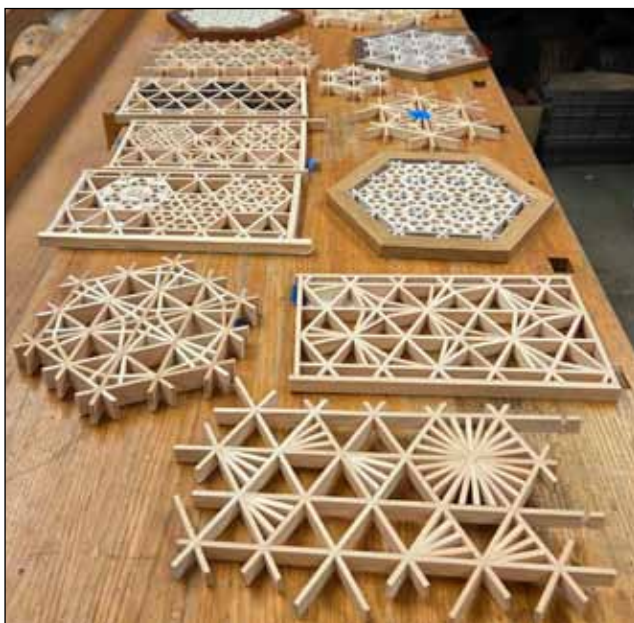
One can observe Juliana's participants quietly focused on their projects in a calm, nearly meditative state. This activity is not meant for the quick or aggressive movements of a novice woodworker!



Careful paring of a strip with a sharp, high-quality chisel



Juliana's variety of jigs



Many of the panels made by Juliana



More of her designs

Peppermill Production

By Wally Cook

Peppermills have become a popular woodturning project. Doug Scharf provided a demonstration of the steps for completing a mill. Doug has turned almost a thousand peppermills in the last ten years and sells them on his Etsy store. During that time, he has honed the process for time and quality.

First and foremost, Doug selects interesting wood that either tells a story or reveals special grain. He really likes lightening-struck wood for the random markings. In the demo, he used lightening-struck camphor wood. He also emphasized the importance of very dry wood to avoid any deformation which affects the joining of the top and bottom of the mill – or of any hole which impedes the crushing mechanism.

He likes to keep the blank intact as long as possible to prevent wandering drill holes. He also always drills from either end to the middle of the blank because the openings at either end are critical. Doug uses Famag drills, which have a unique cutting profile. He does not sharpen the drills but rather replaces them after 50 cuts.

Embellishment is a strong feature of Doug's mills – he uses the Sorby texturing tool quite often. A favorite finish is Parfix 3408, which is very thin. One coat will soak in and hardens the blank, which Doug will buff using the Beal system.

Here are the steps he uses to build his peppermills:

1. Round the blank and create three tenons: one each for either end of the blank and establish one tenon rebate to define the top of the mill, but do not yet separate the top and bottom. Keep the tenon a bit longer for a secure hold while drilling.
2. Drill a $1\frac{7}{8}$ " hole in the bottom of the mill. Note: a $1\frac{5}{8}$ " hole is usually recommended, but Doug prefers a larger inside diameter. Doug goes for a depth of approximately $1\frac{1}{8}$ "
3. Drill a 7mm hole through the entire blank. Always drill from either end to the middle and rechuck the blank to complete the through hole. Doug prefers to keep the entire blank intact to reduce drill wandering. A drill extension will be required. In addition, use your hand to hold the Jacobs Chuck with some pressure in the quill to eliminate any movement or wobble.
4. Separate the top of the mill from the rest of the blank. Doug likes to keep the kerf narrow by using a slim cutoff tool and then sawing off the top with a Japanese pull saw. The top's base will have a tenon for rechucking, as well as a 7mm through hole at this stage.



Doug and some of his peppermills



A Famag drill is recommended for creating the through hole in the blank

5. Drill a $\frac{1}{16}$ " hole through the bottom section of the blank. Again, drill to the middle and rechuck to completely drill the hole from the other end. Note that there will be a wafer-like plug left in the blank at the middle of the through hole which must be pushed out.
6. True the main mill blank and square off the end. Doug uses a spindle gouge to cut a very slight dish in the end. Sand to smooth any roughness.
7. True up the top and shape. Doug makes a jam chuck with a tenon to fit in the 7mm hole. It is important that the wood used is very dry to reduce movement. He uses Parfix in the 7mm opening to seal the wood and prevent any deformation.
8. In shaping the top blank, leave a nodule where the nut will attach to the rod hardware. This nodule can be shaped into a bead and prevents any finishing issue at this intersection.
9. The main blank is now shaped. Doug uses Oneway spigot jaws in an expansion hold from the bottom of the mill (in the $1\frac{7}{8}$ " opening). The handle area is important, as hand sizes differ. Generally, the outside diameter is correct when two fingers can touch, encircling the handle area.
10. The mill hardware is inserted from the bottom of the mill. The kits may provide various choices, but customizing is easy. The crush rod extends from the bottom of the mill through the top knob. Excess rod is marked and cut off with either a saw or Klein Tool cable cutter and the nut is fastened.



Doug cuts off the top of the peppermill blank with a thin kerf saw



A jam chuck with a tenon is used to finish the top of the peppermill



The rough shape of the mill is formed



Sawdust...

From the editor and staff here at Woodworkers News, we extend our heartfelt wishes to all our readers and contributors for a safe and Happy Thanksgiving. We appreciate your continued support and engagement throughout the year.

As the Christmas season approaches, we also wish for blessings and joy for everyone in the coming weeks. May this special time bring happiness and peace to you and your loved ones.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs):

Adirondack Woodturners Association - The AWA holds a general meeting (usually including a live demonstration) at 6:00pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except for January and July, when the meetings fall on the second Wednesday). AWA also hosts Open Turning where turners can come to learn and refine their skills from 5:30pm to 8:00pm on all other Wednesdays. Contact: Bill O'Brien at williamobrien33@hotmail.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. Meetings are held at 12 noon on the second Saturday of the month at the KWA Shop, 2076 Sawkill-Ruby Road, Kingston, NY. **Contact:** Stan Pressner 917-535-4195 or spressner@me.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.