



Quality Craftsmanship | Stowe, Vermont

the craftsman.

Spring, 2019

Enhanced Woodworking Capabilities



A stately front door with sidelights was an involved collaboration between architect, homeowner, and our woodworkers. Made of rustic white oak, the door is 4 feet wide, 8 feet tall and 3 inches thick and rests on a 3-inch-thick and 9-inch-wide carved stone threshold. The staircase was designed by a different architect who came up with the geometric pattern balustrade we fabricated in our shop and installed in another home. We carefully selected native red birch with stunning "flame" character for the newel posts, handrails, and the integrated bench. The remaining components are quarter-sawn red birch.

Our local economy is growing, and Sisler Builders is keeping pace with that growth. An exciting recent development is the move of our woodshop to a conveniently located, much larger space in Waterbury Center. We have seen a steady increase in the demand for high-quality wooden products that complement the buildings they are designed for, making them more beautiful, functional, durable, and occasionally whimsical. In response to that demand we have expanded and enhanced our woodworking capability.

Our new space is the result of a collaboration with a long-time friend and client, who had an under-utilized building he was willing to upgrade to meet our specific needs. Together we made the space easy to heat and suitable for our carefully thought-out woodworking facility. It has a state-of-the-art environmentally

friendly dust collection system that allows us to collect raw wood dust in a trailer, and sheet goods waste with formaldehyde glue in a different bin to be disposed of properly. The raw dust is transported a short distance to Grow Compost, another local business, where they integrate it into their compost production. In keeping with our goal to reduce our carbon footprint, the equipment is powered by our landlord's on-site solar farm.

Our woodworking team, Seth Allen, Glen Waller, Craig Gants, and Jeremy Lindorff, spent many hours searching for used equipment at a reasonable cost. They purchased machines that optimize our shop's production and enhance efficiency. We now have more milling capabilities with a 36-inch planer, a 54-inch-wide belt sander, a sliding panel saw, a larger radial arm saw for

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selecting lumber in the rough, a 16-inch joiner, a 24-inch cut-capacity band saw, and 2 large shapers. Glen, who is a locally renowned mechanical genius, modified a few of the more vintage machines to exactly suit our needs. It's exciting to now see this older equipment smoothly humming along with new purpose.

We enhanced our shop's office with more powerful computing capability so we can generate Auto CAD drawings efficiently. This enables us to produce drawings for customer and architect review. Once the drawings have received final approval, they are immediately suit-



A cleverly designed drawer cabinet transformed an awkward corner into a beautiful and functional space. The multi-piece end-grain geometric top is bounded by live-edge American black walnut, that picks up on similar elements used elsewhere in the house. Another customer wanted a Douglas fir shuffleboard table to match the cabinets and bar in their lower level "fun zone." We bought the regulation shuffleboard top and built the table of materials that match the color and grain of the cabinetry.



Our client wanted a unique front door and found the perfect solution. Glen Waller salvaged massive oak pieces from a nearby dam. We cut that wood, which had been stained by the water's interaction with the ferrous iron bolts used to hold it together, into the veneers that face both sides of this door. Visually there truly is nothing else like it!



able for production, really streamlining our process and providing value to our customers.

When thinking about your next woodworking projects, please consider us. We have decades of experience and now we have enhanced capabilities. Our product range is diverse. We've done custom exterior and interior doors, furniture, built-ins, kitchen and bath cabinetry, mud rooms, and even a custom shuffleboard table. We are always enthusiastic about new challenges.

The new woodshop is located on Rt 100 just across from Sunflower Natural Foods. If you are in the area, please stop in to see the space and discuss your woodworking needs with us. You can see more of our work at SislerBuilders.com/Woodwork and reach the shop at Woodwork@SislerBuilders.com or by calling Seth Allen at 802-760-9975.



This American black walnut and stainless steel dining table was designed by the architect to be harmonious with the reclaimed black walnut floors on which it sits. Our build quality led to a collaboration with that architect for a number of other tables. The curvilinear vanity and integrated shelving made for some interesting veneer selection and gluing techniques. Our client was thrilled with the result!

A Garden's Gifts

Summer time is gardening time in Vermont, and several Sisler Builder employees have the gardening bug. They enjoy working the soil, pulling weeds, and reaping the benefits of their labor. Project Manager Matt Rouleau has been gardening since he was a child, annoyed when his mother asked him to help with the weeding of her garden. Now it's his summertime hobby. He derives great satisfaction from a well-tended garden and passing on his love of plants to his granddaughter.

Matt was happy to discuss his gardening obsession. "I call it my therapy. It relaxes me to go home after a day at work and play in the garden. It helps me unwind."

Vegetables or perennials?

I have a vegetable garden, but my favorites are trees. I love working with plums and cherries. I just like the fruit, and I like that you have to bring each tree forward to the next year. I have planted one tree a year since I moved into my home. I also like blackberries, raspberries, and grapes. Did you know you can root grape clippings? I started growing them because my daughter-in-law wanted to make wine. I have a couple varieties of Vermont-hardy species.

Pest control.

To keep the wildlife out and the dog in, I have a five-foot-high stranded wire fence around the vegetable garden and a four-foot-high sheep fence around the yard. I'm mostly organic and don't put anything on the food I am going to eat. I try to pick off beetles, cabbage worms, and other pests,



but sometimes you just can't keep up with it.

Seeds or starts?

I used to do a lot from seeds, but now I mostly buy starts. Tomatoes, sweet peppers, and jalapeno peppers for canning. The jalapenos are great in sandwiches. All the rest is from seed.

Fertilizer.

We have our own beef cattle and as a result have plenty of fertilizer. I rotate manure piles so that by the time I'm spreading it it's usually four years old.

Most important detail.

You have to pay attention to the soil. I test mine myself with a kit. I like it to be fluffy and crumbly. I add peat and leaves if it gets too dense. I try to keep my blueberries and raspberries as acidic as possible by adding pine chips.

What about mulch?

I use chips for my berries. The veggie garden I weed and cultivate, but don't mulch. I don't mulch my trees, either. I just let the lawn come right up to them.

Favorite hand tool.

A regular hoe. Sometimes I use a Mantis. You really have to do a lot of hand picking between the plants or the weeds will take over.

Favorite tomato.

Plum tomatoes for sauces and cherry tomatoes for the kids.

Gloves or not?

I never wear gloves.

What about flowers?

I have some lilacs and peonies, but I mostly grow annuals. Sunflowers are my favorites and I grow lilacs and snapdragons for my wife.



Clockwise from top: These showy sunflowers typically have 10- to 12-inch diameter flowers.

Matt's granddaughter, weeding the peppers. The concrete blocks serve a couple of functions. Peppers like to cuddle. They do better when they are grown close together, close enough that the leaves touch when they are producing, and the holes in the blocks make that possible. Peppers like sulfur and magnesium so they are easier to feed. They get what they like with less influence on other plants in the garden, and of weeding is a bit easier too. Cherries ripe for the picking. Matt's trees produce a sour cherry that makes the best pie ever. He pits and freezes the cherries for a fresh pie any time of the year.



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In the News

Staff Additions—In the last quarter, Sisler Builders hired two new carpenters, Brian O'Toole and Charles Hough, who work at various sites around Stowe. We also hired Ed Walton, a carpenter who joined the custom woodworking team.

We are also pleased to announce the birth of William Lewis, son of Nate and Chelsea Lewis, born on January 7. Nate is a site supervisor for Sisler Builders.

Custom Woodworking—We are in full swing at our new woodworking shop, located on Route 100, Waterbury Center, across from Sunflower Natural Foods. The shop will enable us to do more custom woodworking for our clients, other contractors, and individuals who need our services (see cover story).



Ask the craftsmen.

What local trees are used in construction?

For softwoods, spruce and hemlock are typically used for structural work; spruce frequently for the dimensional framing members in conventional framing, hemlock for timbers by timber framers. Hemlock works well when wet, and is more dimensionally stable and stronger in larger sizes than spruce or pine. Larch, eastern pine, and eastern white cedar are used for exterior and interior trim and siding. Cedar has a warm honey color peppered with darker knots when finished with a clear oil or urethane. Larch, also known as tamarack, has similar color and figure characteristics. Both are a little out of the mainstream, so we like to use them as accent wood paneling in mudrooms or entries to create a unique look.

Our hardwoods are sought after world-wide. Maple is versatile and varied. The outer portion of sugar maples comprises the blonde “all sap” material, whose monochromatic coloring and hardness is prized for interior trim and flooring. Maple can have grain patterns known as “tiger” or “birds-eye,” which are highly desirable for furniture. When a certain fungus grows near maples it creates dark lines and abrupt color variations called spalting. We have used this for furniture, bar tops, and handrails. The heart of the logs is a much darker color, not generally as desirable, but mixed with the sap wood it creates an interesting, durable, low-cost flooring.

*Send your building question to Ask@SislerBuilders.com.
We'll answer it in our next newsletter.*