

50TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The City's History THROUGH OUR PAGES

St Louis

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Expert Wisdom

WOODEN WONDERS

David Stine's creations bring out wood's natural beauty.

It's not stained. It's not lacquered. And it's certainly not painted. Woodworker David Stine (16376 Bartlett, Dow, Ill., 618-954-8636, stinewoodworking.com) doesn't try to mask the fact that his furniture—black-walnut cabinets, cherry platform beds, sycamore tables—is made from wood. Instead, he celebrates it, leaving imperfections like natural edges and exposed knots. To Stine, the craftsman reveals the beauty that was already there—something he learned to appreciate growing up on a farm in Jersey County, Ill. —ROSALIND EARLY

➔ Milking cows is no party. It's twice a day every day from now until you die. I wanted to do anything I could to get away from it. I ended up going to law school in D.C., and I practiced law for a year. The whole time, I was also building cigar boxes and small pieces of furniture on the side.

➔ One of my first good, steady-paying jobs was at a small school called St. Albans School, hooked to the Washington National Cathedral. It has original Gustav and J.G. Stickley furniture from 1912, and I restored all of it over the course of a couple years.



➔ I harvest most of the wood off of land that's been in my family for five generations... I only take trees that are dead, dying, or blown over. That way, the best trees are still there, providing the genetic rootstock for the next generation.

➔ As you sawmill something, you can see what kinds of forms come out, what kind of grain the tree has, and what kind of personality it has. I try to let each piece of wood be what it wants to be.

➔ People have the idea that cherry, walnut, and oak are all that's out there. But sycamore, for instance, is amazing stuff. People used to make horse-barn fixtures out of it, because horses won't chew it.

➔ The most popular items right now are the huge slab tables. I'll build conference tables that are 50 inches wide by 10 feet long by 3 inches thick. And it's a single board with no joints in it whatsoever.



➔ I don't do a lot of lacquering and high-gloss polishing and all that horseshit. I prefer a natural linseed-oil finish, hand-rubbed, 20 coats over the course of a week. It gives you a beautiful, touchable finish. It still feels like wood.

ONLINE: Visit stlmag.com to see more examples of Stine's work.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVINA ROBERTS AND COURTESY OF DAVID STINE