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### SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

- A 200 MHz Intel® Pentium®-class or faster processor
- Microsoft® Windows® 98, 2000, XP or ME operating system
- minimum of 16 MB of RAM
- minimum of 20 MB hard disk space
- 16 bit (high color) video card
- CD-ROM drive
- monitor resolution of 600 x 800 pixels

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### FINDS

## Old Wood, Custom Work At Shoemaker Country



BY MICHAEL DIBARI JR. FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Architectural salvage and recycled furniture components play a large part in the unusual pieces to be found in Ellicott City at Shoemaker Country.

By JENNIFER BARGER  
Special to The Washington Post

In the 231-year-old, rail-stop town of Ellicott City, folks tend to preserve and reinvent the past. A 19th-century lumberyard on Main Street now holds a brewpub. A historic stone church has become Howard County's historical museum. And at the Shoemaker Country shop, two generations of a Maryland family turn old wood and architectural salvage into furniture for today's homes.

Combining new wood with antique pine flooring, Victorian-era doors or corbels from old porches, the Shoemaker clan—fifty-somethings Tom and Susan and their 31-year-old son, John—create their wares from past and present.

Consider a coffee table with a new base and a top cut from burnished-by-time barn siding, or a TV cabinet with arched doors from a long-gone cupboard. Other creations are made entirely of new wood but draw inspiration from antiques, like a console with Victorian-looking legs and a modern top. The Shoemakers also do a brisk business in custom orders such as oversize square dining tables or media cabinets designed to accommodate wide-screen TVs.

"Our merchandise has roots in country, but it's more clean-lined," says John Shoemaker, the designer of the family. His primitive-style benches (\$85 to \$225), farm tables with Shaker-style legs and hutches with bead-board backs (\$795 to \$1,195) crowd the 800-square-foot store in the town's historic district.

The first week of November, a second, 4,000-square-foot Shoemaker Country showroom is scheduled to open a few doors down in the Rosenstock Building, a newly constructed building on the site of a 19th-century structure destroyed by fire in 1999. Each space will hold furniture and retro-inspired accessories: cast-iron toy pigs (\$12), lamps with art deco-ish bases (\$98), framed black-and-white photos of Paris (\$225).

Tom and Susan Shoemaker sold primitive American antiques for 20-plus years at flea markets in Columbia and Georgetown before opening the Ellicott City shop with their son two years ago. The store initially carried mainly antiques, but customer demand for old country benches and armoires outstripped supply.

"People liked farm tables, which often had worn-down legs that made them too short," says Susan Shoemaker. "Or the tables were prohibitively expensive." Adds John: "Customers liked antiques, but they also wanted practical things."

So drawing from its collection of architectural salvage, the family began turning out old-meets-new pieces. "In the antiques world, we find old hutches with tops from a different era," says Susan. "This isn't a new concept."

Shoemaker Country keeps many items in stock, like a table with a new pine top on vintage legs with crack-

ling red paint (\$225) and picture frames made of old house siding (\$35 to \$55 each). But just as often, one of the Shoemakers chats with a potential customer who needs, say, an armoire scaled for a tiny bungalow or a bench long enough to hold all the grandkids. Then a custom design results.

John will ask for specifics—How big is your DVD player? How many people do you want to fit around the table?—and then produces a rough sketch. Furniture on display gives a good notion of what a finished product might look like. The store's basement yields further inspiration: doors that could serve as tabletops, Victorian gingerbread that might trim a bookcase or window frames that could morph into unusual headboards. Susan calls the stash "furniture waiting to happen."

"We start laying things out and talking," says John, whose ease with buyers comes from more than 10 years on the job in the furniture departments of Woodward & Lothrop and other stores. "Working with the old stuff is like playing with Legos. We fit it together using certain rules."

Sometimes people bring in pages from magazines; other times family photos help to replicate lost heirlooms. With exact measurements, the store can even fashion bathroom vanities (\$200 and up) or kitchen cabinets.

Three off-site carpenters craft the designs. Then, using in-stock colors—mossy green, black and barn red are favorites—or paint she buys based on a customer's swatch, Susan finishes each piece. She usually combines painted and stained surfaces, as in a farm table with an amber-hued, natural top and sleek black legs. Other custom touches include special hardware or mild distressing. "But we don't make things that look as if they've been dragged behind a truck," jokes John.

Prices are the same for off-the-floor pieces and custom jobs. For instance, coffee tables begin at \$325, armoires run from roughly \$600 to \$1,000, and rectangular farm tables, which range in size from five to seven feet long, cost \$100 a running foot. For 35 percent more, Susan will do the finishing, or buyers can finish the furniture themselves. Orders take roughly four to six weeks.

The interplay between new and old materials results in unusual hybrids, things that aren't antiques but aren't run-of-the-mill country furniture either: a little girl's bed with porch-column posts, a console supported by grandiose piano legs. "When we find something old that's broken or not being used, it's satisfying to take it out of context and make something new," says Susan. "It's recycling, a chance to make things useful again."

**Shoemaker Country:** Original store at 8185 Main St., Ellicott City; second store to open the first week of November, at 8095 Main St. Both shops will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. 410-461-1924.

## SOLUTIONS

**Q** I have a piece of Orrefors glass that my father used as a vase. Now the glass is cloudy. What's the best way to clean it?

**A** Water leaves calcium deposits that can cause cloudiness, according to Reyne Haines, a glass dealer who owns Reyne Gallery in Cincinnati and founded the online auction Just Glass. She recommends these removal methods:

- Clean the piece with vinegar and water.
- Fill the piece with a solution of ammonia and water, then let it sit a few hours. Don't use straight ammonia because it can damage the glass.
- Fill the object with lukewarm water, and add a denture-cleaning tablet.
- Gently rub on a little toothpaste or denture whitener with your finger, then wash off the residue with water.
- Use Lime-A-Way or a bathroom cleaner designed to take calcium deposits off glass shower doors. Rub lightly in small circles.

**I am shopping for a burglar alarm system and am looking for a little insight. I would appreciate any help that you could offer.**

Don't be "alarmed," but there is no such thing as an absolutely burglarproof alarm system. However, a good alarm system will help deter and/or detect most burglars and will give you peace of mind. According to the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA), the best alarm system protects the entire perimeter of a home (that is every door and window where entry might be made) and areas inside where valuables are kept.

Most reputable alarm companies will install and maintain a local alarm system that will ring a bell or sound a siren or buzzer on the premises. Many firms also provide central reporting alarms that silently signal the alarm company's headquarters to dispatch police or perhaps alarm company agents. Some companies will offer direct alarm connection to the local police or fire department, if permitted by local law.

The basic home-protection system is a simple closed-circuit loop consisting of contacts on doors and windows. There is also a choice of additional interior protection using pressure mats, photoelectric



BY STEVE MCCRACKER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

beams, ultrasonic, infrared and microwave systems and other motion or space-detection devices. Most residential systems are designed to ring a bell and/or illuminate the area to scare off an intruder.

Never sign a contract that does not specifically detail the points of protection and does not itemize the equipment to be installed.

**I am looking for a decorative roof ornament that sits on the peak of a roof and looks something like a little house. They are usually custom-cut to fit the roof pitch. Can you tell me where I might find one?**

You're referring to a cupola, an architectural element that in older buildings provided ventilation or held a light or bell. Technically a cupola has a domed roof, but the term has come to be used commonly for other small rooftop structures. Today, cupolas are mostly decorative and often are topped by weather vanes.

You could have a builder or carpenter construct one, but lots of companies sell ready-made cupolas that can be cut to fit the pitch of your roof. Check for ads in the backs of shelter magazines, particularly those that specialize in older homes or country design, or search the Internet for dealers. Vendors that sell wood garden structures, sheds and outdoor furniture might also carry cupolas.

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