

# New Wave Gothic

H A N D C R A F T E D C U S T O M W O O D W O R K I N G

"WORKSPACES"  
GOTHIC DESK



Tables are of course a mainstay of every household, one in the kitchen, one in the dining room, one for coffee, the ends of the couch, the office, and anywhere else you may want to place objects at a more convenient height than on the floor.

That stated, the function of keeping things 30" or so off the floor is simple enough. When form and artistic presentation come into play, things get interesting. Artisans has created a unique class of furniture we call New Wave Gothic .

The basic premise of our [New Wave Gothic](#) line is to blend Gothic, Renaissance, Jacobean, Elizabethan, and perhaps a touch of mission influence to develop synergy between modern function and classic form integrating seamlessly into a Tudor home, a wine cellar, a castle, a poker room, tavern, or even a cabin or timber frame home. This line is the essence of new antiques; handmade, far from rustic, yet with obvious age and maturity, not overly distressed or beaten down.

Our goal is to maintain the substantial appearance of Gothic origin, providing no doubt the piece will outlast us all, while mitigating the excessive mass of solid wood with elegant fretwork and subtle ornamentation. The Renaissance age introduced steel tools, greatly advancing the capabilities of furniture makers and carvers in the realm of joinery and carving. During this period the mortis and tenon joint was mainstreamed, tracery evolved into an art form, and extensive hand carving adorned the objects of royalty and wealth, not to mention the domination of artistic wood and stone work in churches throughout Europe.

This feature edition of [Artisans Quarterly Review](#) covers one specific area of our custom furniture, providing examples of our existing portfolio class pieces, design ideas for more gothic furniture, a few tidbits and facts, and some artistic photos and stories just for fun!

Check out Eric's documentary ["Creating a Priceless Heirloom"](#) for more gothic history!



Photos by Henry Schweber

## “ THE ORIGIN OF NEW WAVE GOTHIC ”



Photo by Thomas H. Clark, Jr.

Artisans of the Valley, based in Pennington, NJ, is an exclusive custom furniture, cabinetry, carving, and restoration shop. These craftsmen are the last of the traditional apprenticeship method of passing on the skills of furniture design, joinery, carving, and finishing. For over 30 years Master Craftsman Stanley D. Saperstein has perfected his skills and in the process passed these skills to his son Eric. Eric has now taken the reins of the business and studio receiving his Master's certification under his father's eye.

In 2002 Artisans received a commission for a gothic credence table, a memorial to Captain Edward States, pilot of American Airlines Flight 587. Eric executed Stanley's

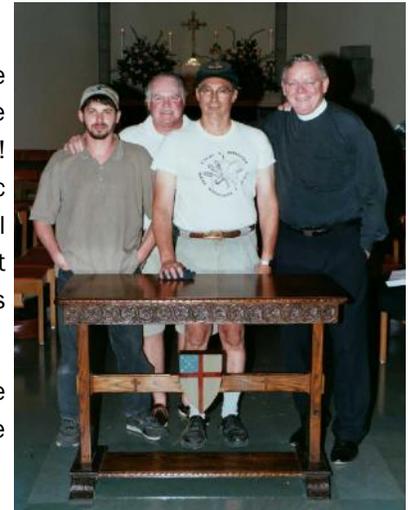
design, which was conceived by lightening the massive traditional gothic form and developing a piece that reflected the original décor of the church without requiring half of an old growth forest in lumber.

Completed late in 2002, this credence table (above) triggered Stanley and Eric's creative modes, and they considered moving forward with a series of pieces based on this original concept. Time passes, as it always does, and other commissions were taken and completed. It wasn't until the end of 2004 when the next opportunity emerged to for a gothic piece.

This time the commission was for a full size dining table. (shown below) The scale went up just slightly from the credence table (shown right) to seat at least ten people comfortably, twelve if your guests are willing to get to know each other intimately! This project centered around tracery panels (fretwork) mimicking the geometric shapes common in church windows, arches, trefoils, & quatrefoils. The mathematical symmetry used to develop tracery designs created a unique opportunity to interact with our client, who just happened to have a Princeton University Degree in Physics with a strong foundation in math.

Interactions between artists and clients, evolving concepts, redraws, and the constant interchange of ideas finally churned out the finished pattern, shown in the completed table. (below right) From this point

Artisans developed a scalable format of this design, and it is now available to suit the specifications of tables, desks, doors, wainscoting, headboards, and other custom pieces.



Above table Photos by Henry Schweber

## ENTERTAINMENT GOTHIC STYLE



Following closely after Artisans' inaugural dining table, this unique quarter sawn white oak gothic entertainment center transitioned the gothic line from the dining room to the living room. This piece is set to hold a wide screen TV, audio/video components, and provide two drawers for storage of remotes, games, and other items.

The metal grids and corner plates, and the powder coat finish on all the metalwork, was handled by Diversatech. Maybe this isn't a traditional blacksmith technique, but it looks great and will likely not rust in our lifetimes! Custom metal work is an option on any of Artisans' gothic pieces, the use of modern or traditional blacksmithing techniques is entirely your choice!

Not only does this unit function to support and display the equipment, it actually glides on industrial swivel casters to allow easy access to the rear panels. This is a great example of integrating modern function into a classic form.

Armoire or closet style cabinets can be designed to accommodate any sort of contents. The obvious audio/video function, wardrobes, computers, gun cabinets, swords, goblets, or any number of collections.

These units can be adorned with carving, metalwork, or fretwork. The options are only limited to your imagination!



## SERVING AND SHOWING OFF

The [“Gothic in Walnut,”](#) project, also known as “Becky’s Gothic,” proudly introduces two new pieces; a server and a corner unit. Clearly traversing well beyond tables, all four pieces (there’s two corner units!) exhibit matching rope carving, corbels, rosettes, and most prominent of all features our classic gothic tracery (also known as fretwork or piercings) reminiscent of a cathedral stained glass window.

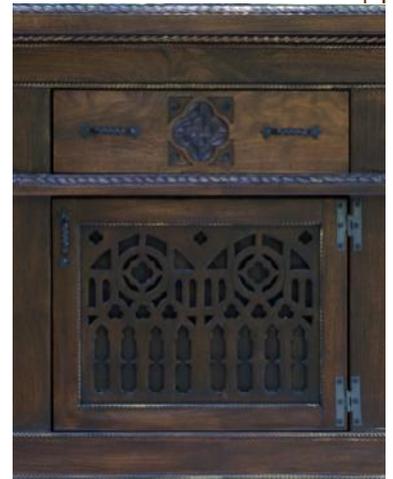
Server storage is optimized, and space considerations within the destination result in a 20” depth for this 90” long 36” high unit. Weighing in; we’re estimating close to 450lbs, this server is truly solid walnut. Custom configurations are available to suit your space and storage requirements, including options for a hutch or breakfront.

The table measures in at 108”L x 46”W x 30”H with two 30” end leaves bringing the total to 14ft long. We’ve decided that 9’ (maybe 10’ in oak) is the maximum single piece top we can physically handle. Larger sizes can be configured either in leaves ... OR ... a split top configuration. We can actually mate together multiple table sections to create extremely large surfaces. It’ll be interesting to see how big these things get as the word gets out!



The set includes two corner units towering at 93”H x 24”D; configurations are available in a variety of sizes with doors or as open shelf configurations. We can also of course setup straight bookcases, [entertainment centers](#), and a variety of other configurations.

Bottom line, we’d like to keep coming up with more pieces in our [New Wave Gothic](#) line. Pending the next commission we’re going to sister on a poker table for ourselves. We have chairs in the pipeline, and a New Wave Gothic frame surrounding a shadow box to house Eric’s master’s papers. Keep checking back. We’ll be continuing to add more pieces to our portfolio. Inquiries are pending for a bed, night stands, coffee table, and a credenza!

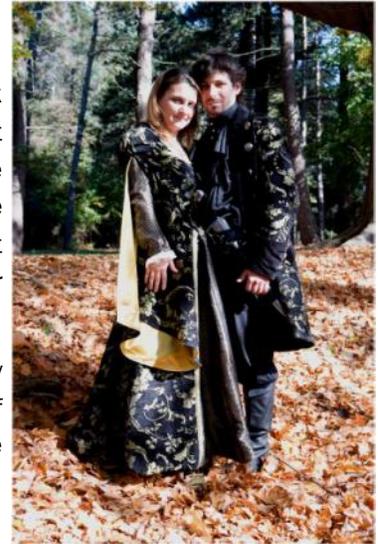


Photos by Henry Schweber

## RENAISSANCE PICNIC

October of 2007 brought us the opportunity to deliver this solid quarter sawn oak gothic dining table to St. Paul, MN. We learned that Halloween is quite a big deal at this destination, so we decided to accept our clients invitation to join in the festivities. Eric & Teri are both outfitted custom tailored matching renaissance clothing including a royal ball gown, leather boots, swords, and jewelry. We thought we were getting carried away, until we arrived on the scene, and found that our efforts barely matched that of the more tenured guests.

This photo shoot was taken in Washington Crossing Park by photographer Henry Schweber, showing off our gothic dining table, and a bit of Eric & Teri's sense of humor. Our gothic line has proven to be some of our favorite pieces, These commissions also turned out to gain us quite a few new friends and memories.



[Photos by Henry Schweber](#)

## HOW GOTHIC IS MADE



Creating a New Wave Gothic piece starts out with a rather large pile of wood; the average dining table requiring over 1000lbs of rough lumber. After a significant amount of rips, cross cuts, planing, jointing, sanding, drilling, scraping, sawing, and carving the net weight is around 500lbs.



Planks are cut from our predetermined cut-sheets, then blanks are glued up to form the leg structures and pieces requiring lamination of multiple 8/4 layers to reach their final thickness. Everything is proportionate to the table surface, so the surfaces are laid out first in rough form, then the formal joint work begins.



Our tabletops are all tung and groove joints for the panels themselves, as well as a deep 3/4" tung surrounding the panel that is actually a floating joint. In other words, no glue actually holds the main panels of the table, they are free to move about to relieve the tension created by natural expansion and contraction of wood.

All the frame joints are mortis and tenon, using high grade adhesives and oak pegs. This process carries through to the table apron, and the rest of the mortis and tenon joints that make the structure of all our gothic pieces.

A table really consists of three main structures, the top surface, the apron, and the legs. Once the construction of the table surface is completed, we can begin work on the apron and leg structures. Each substructure is sized and dry-fit according to a logical progression building upside-down from the surface.



## HOW GOTHIC IS MADE



The apron and internal supporting structures (braces) and the top section of the trestle assemblies all reside flat against the tabletop. As these structures take form, the leg spacing and position is naturally established.

The legs are configured using two main supports, and depending on the width possibly a center divider to separate the two panels. The feet caps, feet structures, and base plates or toes are all built and joints laid out next. The center supporting legs and shelf or cross beam structures are configured once the leg assembly dry-fitting is complete.

At this state, all the pieces are their final size, so it's time to begin carving. Rope carvings, apron carvings, anything that is incised into the actual physical material used in the structure of the piece must be completed before the final assembly. The exception to this rule is the tabletop, which must be first assembled and planed before the rope carving can be applied.



Carving at this stage is essential as the angles required to properly execute specific cuts are obstructed by other components of the piece once assembly takes place. It is also imperative as, no matter how experienced a carver mistakes happen. It's far easier to remake a single component, than an entire custom piece of furniture!

After all the detailed fitting takes place and we're confident that the piece aligns properly and meets all the required measurements and specifications, it's time to introduce the adhesives. The top and leg assemblies are glued together first, and let to cure. Then the permanent assembly of the apron and connecting braces begins. Cure time is usually a good 24 hours to be sure everything is set,

then the cleanup begins removing all the excess adhesives.

We then install the pegs, further securing the joints, and the assembly process of the main structure is complete.

Figuring that without adhesive, mortis and tenon joints can survive for hundreds of years, we're projecting our gothic line will be good for at least 500 years!

From this point the surface preparation goes through an initial phase. It's important that all the surfaces are free of obstruction so the moldings, panels, face plates, and appliques can be properly fit and adhered. Cleanup is easier while things are flat, once the moldings are on rough sanding becomes quite difficult to maneuver.



## HOW GOTHIC IS MADE



All surfaces that are end grain on exposed faces are covered using an 1/8" thick face plate. Moldings are placed around the corner blocks, feet faces, and aprons, as well as framing the panels. Use of appliques is very common to provide subtle ornate features to the piece.

Corbels are a traditional feature on our gothic line, each is installed permanently using dowels and adhesive. In doing so they become an intricate part of the tables supporting structure, not just a decorative feature. We offer a variety of custom made corbels to provide a decorative and personal touch to each project.



The trademark of our gothic line is the tracery (fretwork) panels that span between the legs in our tables and are framed within the doors of our cabinets. The panel shown has become the trademark of this line, but we can develop a variety of custom panels to suit your décor.

Panel blanks are dry-fit, then rough cut, sanded, then hand carved and scraped to ensure a truly handmade appearance. All our portfolio period reproductions are hand scraped as a final step. Waivers, imperfections, and unique natural features are all left intact. A few extra tool marks, even some abuse remains apparent in the surfaces. The result is furniture that looks 150 years old, yet somehow still new. Our pieces reflect the appearance of a well preserved and maintained antique, never that brand new production line furniture.



# HOW GOTHIC IS MADE



Photos by Henry Schweber

Our finishing process is time consuming and completely hands on, an intensive period of applying stains and finishes, rubbing, sanding, scraping, and polishing. There is no modern equipment involved, every step requires our personal attention. To achieve the best appearance in quarter sawn oak or other open pore materials varying greatly in density, our finishes often take 15-20 layers.

Every commission proves a unique works of art. There are no two identical, each is hand signed, receiving our signatures, burned into the framework of the piece, along with a date and our company's plaque. These heirlooms ensure the future of Antique's Roadshow, their value will not only retain, but grow in time. The "New Wave Gothic" line is quickly becoming the signature of Artisans of the Valley, and will likely be their legacy.



# ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

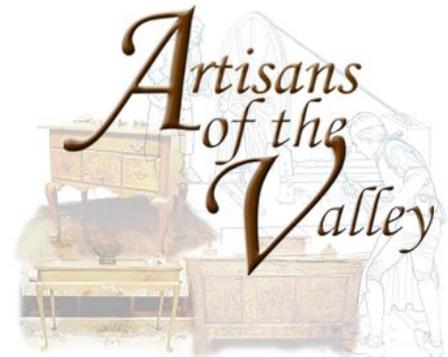
## HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING



Photos by Henry Schweber

### ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

[Artisans of the Valley](#) offers museum quality period reproductions, original designs by commission, and antique restoration/conservation services, hand carving, modern furniture refinishing, onsite furniture repair, hand made walking sticks, and educational programs. Our website is now over 225 pages, including galleries, feature articles, and educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site, and contact us directly with any inquiries or questions you may have.



[Eric M. Saperstein](#) is Master of Artisans, Owner, Webmaster, Editor, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Office Manager, Legal Pit-bull, and he's in charge of vacuuming the shop: [eric@artisansofthevalley.com](mailto:eric@artisansofthevalley.com)

[Stanley D. Saperstein](#), Master Craftsmen, Author, & Historian founded Artisans of the Valley in 1973. Stanley offers historic presentations, impressions, and various lecture series ranging from Civil and Revolutionary War, American Folk Art, and Interactive Role Play of Characters ... sometimes trying to reenact American Chopper episodes in the shop: [woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com](mailto:woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com)



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