

A Desire to Share Expertise and Teach Others Techniques

Timothy Clark Cabinetmaker/Chairwright is a one-man furniture maker located in Waltham, VT. Tim is a master furniture maker who specializes in traditional and contemporary Windsor chairs, rocking chairs, and benches, as well as Shaker inspired designs of beds, tables, and case pieces. Tim services customers from all over the country, he mentioned that two recently made pieces were going to Connecticut and Seattle. Tim has operated his own business for 34 years. Starting out, Tim taught woodwork at a craft school while starting his business. After being in business on his own for 5 years, Tim's desire to teach brought him to the Shelburne Craft School where he also continued building his business. He moved from shop to shop until he was able to build his own on his property. Tim's business is almost entirely online now. He used to feature his work at galleries and craft shows but finds they take too much of the profit from a purchased piece, so he does not use them as a way to market his work any more. His website was launched by some of his former students in 1995 and he maintains it and markets through his online presence.

Tim was getting back into teaching when the Coronavirus pandemic hit in March. Teaching is something Tim has always enjoyed and after a less than stellar 2019 he was offering beginner classes as a way to supplement his business. When the pandemic struck, he had to cancel his classes, but his business picked up tremendously. He, like others, have been experiencing the increase in interest from people who are redecorating in their homes since they are spending more time there. Lately, he has been "jampacked" with orders. Tim does not keep an inventory of items, but all of his work is made-to-order. While he has kept the teaching aspect of his work alive through tutorial videos on YouTube (something he has done for a long time), he is focused on filling orders at this time.

Tim has not had to change many of his business operations to accommodate the Coronavirus pandemic because he is his company's only employee. He would like to have an extra set of hands around to help, but it is too difficult to cover the costs of employees. The pandemic has not led to any new infrastructure needs for his business either. He has made one desk in recent months, but other than that he has not seen a large increase in home office related items like some other woodworkers at this time. Some changes he has seen are an increase in the cost of materials and shipping disruptions. Lumber prices and availability have remained stable, but other building materials have become more expensive. Receiving items and shipping items from

his shop has been unstable and delayed because of the increase amount of online shopping in general, and problems caused by the virus.

Through the pandemic thus far Tim has an appreciation for living in the country and found the need for good internet connection. While always enjoying country living Tim has a new found appreciation for it after seeing how the virus has adversely affected cities. He has a refreshed desire to “hang on to” living and working in the country. Also, whether trying to operate his business, teach virtually, or his kids trying to do school internet connection is a necessity for Tim. He does not always have consistently strong internet which leads him do some work at his brother’s home who lives nearby. He would like to get better internet so he can continue to teach in an online format.

When it comes to the strengths of Tim’s business, design is the predominant feature. Tim creates all his own designs for his pieces and has used them for many years. He continues to improve his work by tweaking his designs where he feels it is needed. Tim is also well versed in custom work to fit the desires that individual clients may have. Being a teacher, Tim is willing to share his expertise and teach others his techniques. However, he expects those he works with to take his knowledge and make their own designs, not simply copy what he does.

Tim has been a member of the VWWC for around 20 years. He is a master furniture maker in the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers, and his involvement in the Guild led him to join the VWWC as well. Tim has enjoyed the shows and meet-ups that the Council hosts since they provide many learning opportunities. He also finds the Council valuable in how it connects woodworkers. The VWWC helps woodworkers “get out of their shops” and become more familiar with the wood and Vermont community in general. It is helpful to know the other members of the wood community according to Tim.