



## SCOTT WETTER—THE PURSUIT OF WOODWORKING AND BEYOND

Ever wonder what's involved in the creation of a new SAPFM chapter? It requires a passion for period furniture, a lot of hard work, and in the case of Scott Wetter, a journey of some 1,600 miles. Wetter is the regional chapter coordinator of the new Gulf States Chapter. This is his story.

In 2008, Wetter retired after 27 years with the U.S. Coast Guard. He told his wife, "I'm going to do something I've always wanted to do. I had always wanted to pursue woodworking

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in some form or fashion." So just before retirement, he went on a journey to find the right school. None had what he was

looking for. Then he discovered the Furniture Institute of Massachusetts, (<http://www.furnituremakingclasses.com>) run by Phil Lowe. "Everything in his shop was from some historic period or other. And I don't know why, that just caught my attention. It didn't take me too long to figure out that's what I wanted to do." Wetter travelled from Alabama to Massachusetts and spent two years studying with Lowe. Since there was no place in his part of the country for others to learn these skills, he told himself when he finished school, "Someday I'm going to start something down in an area where fine woodworking is not prevalent. And that's been in the back of my mind for a long time."

Skip ahead a few years. Wetter was running a full-time woodworking business. He was also part of a local woodworking group, although only a couple of members were furniture makers. The idea of promoting and teaching period furniture was still on his mind. "I kept bringing this up, but I didn't see much interest from the group, so finally I just took it upon myself. This is what I'm going to do, even if nobody shows up." But about a dozen people did show up. "And lo and behold, five guys stepped forward and said, 'We want to be the steering committee.'" The new chapter was born.

Wetter's journey to this point actually took an interesting detour. When he left Lowe's school, the economy was bad, so he went back to work. He took a job in construction safety oversight at a nuclear power plant construction project in Augusta, Georgia. In an SAPFM newsletter, he read about a member, Chris Schleier, who was building an 18th-century cab-

Scott's shop



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT WETTER AND USED WITH PERMISSION



# Chronicles (continued-2)

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*The historic shop Scott runs at the "Living History Park" in North Augusta, SC. We had contractors finish the outside, but one other gentleman (Curt Berg) and myself have completely finished the inside of the building. All of the trim is from trees off of my property in Mobile, AL. The beams are from an old mill building in SC.*

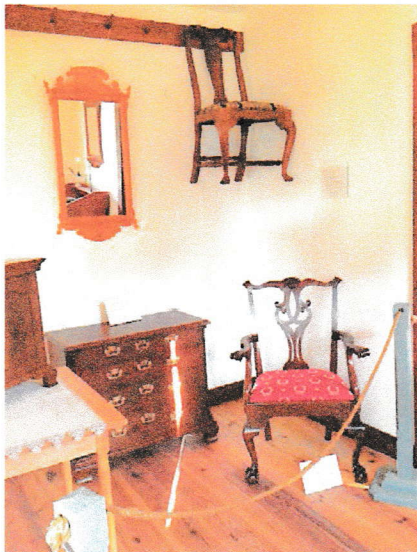
inetmaker's shop at the Living History Park in North Augusta, South Carolina. That's across the Savannah River from Augusta.

"I had just moved to Augusta, Georgia for this job. And I thought, 'You've got to be kidding me!'" The next day he went to the park and met with Schleier. Wetter says, "Chris had this dream to have a cabinetmaker's shop built as part of the park and do demonstrations in it. When I showed up, the building was literally just a frame. We continued working on it, but soon after, Chris's job called him away, and I ended up running it."

Wetter, and later SAPFM member Curt Berg, finished the whole interior of the building, making everything except the great wheel lathe. (Schleier's father bought that for the shop. It made a brief appearance in the movie "The Patriot" with Mel Gibson.) The shop is set in the year 1785. Twice a year, the park holds big history events. Wetter drives 485 miles to get there. He and the others dress in period costumes and do demonstrations. He talks to

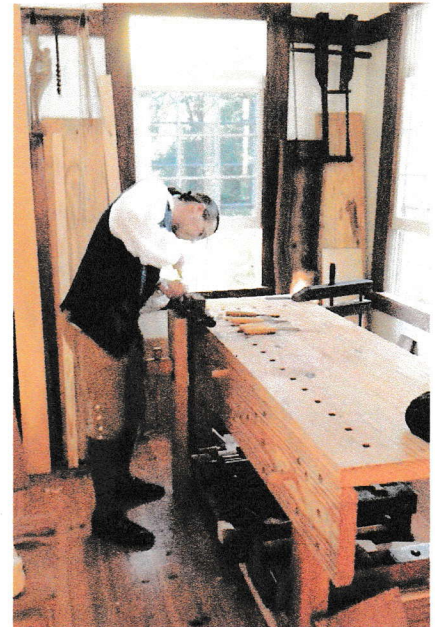
people about period furniture and tries to get kids interested. "And whenever I find somebody who shows an interest, I start handing out brochures and talking about SAPFM."

Wetter continues to learn as much as he can about period furniture.



*Off to the side of the main shop is the "Ware Room" where we display our wares. This room changes for each event because we try to bring in different furniture to show.*

"When I was at Phil's school, he did a presentation for a SAPFM group. He set up several chairs he had built over the years from different time periods, and he explained the tools, the methods, the woods, how styles change, and some of the reasons that drove that. I



*Scott working in the re-created cabinet shop*



*The great wheel lathe*

was so inspired by that, I just started researching it." He is now passing on that knowledge through presentations at the Mobile Museum of Art and various civic groups.



# Chronicles (continued-3)

## SCOTT WETTER—THE PURSUIT OF WOODWORKING AND BEYOND



Scott talking to visiting kids about a Pennsylvania spice chest

Wetter runs his own company, Period Furniture of Mobile, out of an 800-square-foot shop attached to his house. Despite the name, he says there's not a lot of demand for period furniture.

"Unfortunately, people are more into live edge tables and more contemporary stuff. I'll design and build whatever somebody wants."

He enjoys making chairs and doing inlay and carving. Right now he's working on a pair of Federal dressing

tables. He also has a portable lumber mill. "I've had the opportunity to take a couple of pieces from tree to finished product. It is pretty enjoyable."

**"I've had the opportunity to take a couple of pieces from tree to finished product. It is pretty enjoyable."**

His shop also hosted the first gathering of the new SAPFM chapter this spring. However, the chapter is already spreading its wings. The meetings are moving to a larger building owned by a non-profit organization. The steering committee is looking into future events, such as workshops, presenters, and field trips.

But Wetter is thinking big. Really big. He's a member of the Greenville Woodworkers Guild, of Greenville, South Carolina. The guild has more than 700 members and a building with a big machine shop, separate lathe lab, a kids' woodworking shop, a library and conference room, a bench room, their own lumber sales, and even an amphitheater that seats 250.



Pair of Queen Anne chairs made by Scott

"These guys did it right. They're a model to follow. I guess my long-term goal would be to have a guild building like that, where we could teach classes and have seminars, where people who can't afford to have a shop can go to woodwork. We could probably propagate the craft a lot better if we had these around the country."

So the new Gulf States Chapter is clearly one to watch. It may have started out small, but Scott Wetter says, "The word's starting to get out." — JB

Chippendale chair made by Scott



Scott's lumber mill

