

Club History

1974

Project Woodwork had its early beginning back in 1974, when the City of Waterloo's Adult Recreation Centre sought assistance to establish a woodworking facility for its older citizens. The project was met with great enthusiasm.

1975

In January 1975, a group of interested people under the leadership of Frank Moogk, met at the Centre to discuss the project. Among the initial group were: Ralph Palmer, Ed Tuck, Muriel Cowan, Rose Merner, Isabel East, John Clark, Ben Graham, Stewart McMillan, Fred Moogk, George Ropchan, Isabel Tilton, Charles Huber, Stanley Patterson. Also present were representatives of the City's Community Services Department.

" Project Woodwork, as it is to be known, is intended primarily to benefit senior citizens, male and female, who enjoy creative activities and especially for those who no longer have a home workshop. Construction of wooden articles such as jewel boxes, tables, hostess chairs, picture framing, games and wall plaques, furniture refinishing and upholstery are some of the intended projects. The unemployed people will be considered. Money obtained from the sale of articles will go towards a continuance fund. Other articles will be made expressly for the handicapped, for the local community such as birdhouses for the parks, and games for senior citizens' homes or juvenile homes."

Plans were approved. On January 29th , a meeting was held with staff at Conestoga College to discuss the type of equipment and tooling that would be required. An application for funds was made to New Horizons Program to set up a woodworking and furniture refinishing shop. The application was subsequently approved. Further meetings were held at the Adult Recreation Centre. Next, a search for a suitable facility was launched.

The first building was located on King St. North and Hickory St. in Waterloo. However, conditions were less than ideal. It had to be totally rewired and renovated by the instructors and members. Being on the lower level, it was susceptible to flooding during heavy rainfalls. Tools were known to disappear because the room couldn't be locked. The other slight inconvenience was the washroom or lack of one. One had to go outside and walk or run, depending on the weather, about fifty paces to another building.

"I have great faith, however, that if you are doing something worthwhile, things are arranged by an unseen hand. It has happened over and over again," said Ralph Palmer, one of the guiding lights. In spite of all the adversity, Project Woodwork opened its doors on September 15th ,1975. Sessions ran from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Response was great - 21 people had signed up.

However, on January 5, 1977, a notice was served to vacate the building on King and Hickory by June 1st of that year. Later, that same day, a meeting was held with Mayor Herb Epp to ask for his assistance to locate a suitable building.

On April 6th , the Board was able to come up with a temporary building on Laurel Street. Undaunted, Project Woodwork completed the necessary renovations by June 1st . Laurel housed Project Woodwork for a year.

One of the strangest items to come out of Project Woodwork was an electric powered mechanical horse that could walk but couldn't turn corners. The person who built it entered it in a Toronto Craft Show. The next morning a headline in the Globe & Mail read, "Horse Wrecks Craft Show". Apparently it got away and trampled over several displays before it was recaptured.

1978

In February, the City of Waterloo donated the use of the building located in Waterloo Park, behind the historic schoolhouse, on the condition that the members would do the renovations themselves. It was quite ironic that this building had once served as the ladies washroom.

With a further grant from New Horizons, supplied through the Department of Health and Welfare, the necessary modifications were completed by September - ready for classes. Dedicated volunteers expended many hours of work so that the project would become firmly established in the community for the benefit of its citizens.

On September 25, then Mayor Marjorie Carroll, who had been a strong supporter of Project Woodwork as a city councillor, cut the ribbon to officially open the new facility - its current home.

Board members and volunteers alike continue to work on community projects. In earlier years, they produced thousands of devices such as bath seats, chair and bed rises, and remote stove controls, creating new design for Waterloo Region's Home Care program. Now most aids are made of plastic.

1979

An extension of some 600 square feet was added and more equipment was installed. Considerable interest was shown by the public, particularly by seniors both male and female. Programs were still offered two days per week for 8 week sessions in woodworking, repairs, refinishing and upholstering. Additional volunteers were recruited to assist and guide members in the use of the new equipment. Cost of the membership was set at \$20.00 per session, one day per week, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Members to supply their own material.

1980

The unwritten motto of Project Woodwork quickly became, "We're Here to Help". This was never truer than at Christmas when the volunteers would make toys to put in Christmas Hampers which were distributed through ARC to needy families in the City. Unfortunately, over the years, the number of toys to make became too great to handle.

1981

Project Woodwork was always capable of attracting sufficient volunteers through ARC without the need to go outside. However, with the growing interest and numbers, it became necessary to recruit. Ralph Palmer, one of the founders, one Sunday in 1981 spotted a 'young' man displaying his woodworking skills at the Arts & Craft Show at the Kitchener Farmers' Market. Attracted by his work, Ralph enticed Sal Schilder to become a volunteer. The rest is history. Sal is the longest surviving member/volunteer of Project Woodwork with over 18 years of service. At 83 years old, he still shows

up regularly at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesdays, ready to help people solve their problems. He encourages people to do the work, but he's always ready to lend a helping hand. Sal Schilder symbolizes what Project Woodwork is, and also what it means to him.

1983

In February 1983, woodcarving classes were formed with eight members. Due to space limitations, this group was forced to hold classes in the evening.

1984

One day, out of the blue, Project Woodwork was offered a table saw over the telephone. The next day one of the volunteers went over to see it. Well, it turned out to be a huge DeWalt complete workshop. Apparently the lady who called, had lost her husband recently and she wanted it out of the house. She was afraid someone might injure themselves. Naturally, while it was a welcome addition, it took six men to dismantle and move it to the shop.

1988

Then, in January 1988, the Woodcarving Club moved to the Adult Recreation Centre and adopted the name of "Owl's Nest Woodcarving Club".

1990

Over the years, Project Woodwork received requests for numerous items, such as bookcases for the Adult Recreation Centre, compost boxes for the parks by the City, bat houses for the parks which school children could assemble. The volunteers were happy to oblige.

Due to the popularity of the woodworking programs, in 1993 it was necessary to recruit more volunteers and guides so that additional days per week could be added to the schedule making it four days per week-Monday to Thursdays,, Project Woodwork sessions start early in October and run through until the middle of May with a break over the Christmas period.

1996

Up to this date, the upholstering section had been limited to smaller items such as chairs and footrests. A number of requests were made to provide space for working on larger items such as couches and chesterfields.

1997

The Waterloo Parks Commission had modified the swimming pool area. Space was now available, for reupholstering when the pool was not in use during the off season. However, all equipment had to be removed when the pool was being used.

Since Project Woodwork was started, literally hundreds of men and women have taken advantage of the facilities. They were business people, doctors, engineers, machinists, labourers, teachers, etc. They

worked under the guidance of volunteers. There is a great sense of pride and satisfaction that goes into every item they make.

1999

Kitchener Woodworkers began their quest for a workshop.

2004

The Kitchener Woodworkers formed what is now the Kitchener Woodworking & Craft Centre.

2005

In May 2005 *Project Woodwork Waterloo*, a group that had been in operation for over 30 years, was asked to join the Kitchener group. In September 2005 the Waterloo shop, after more than 30 years of operation, was closed as a fire hazard.

2006

In 2006 *The Kitchener Woodworking and Craft Centre* became the *Kitchener-Waterloo Woodworking and Craft Centre*. In August 2006 we took possession of the new shop on 173 Rogers Street.

2007-2008

With grants from Trillum and New Horizons for Seniors we were able to purchase state of the art equipment for the new shop. Trillum was generous with a grant of \$52,500.00 which covered the machines as well as electrical drops to the machines and piping for the dust collector. The New Horizon grant was used to purchase office equipment and kitchen appliances. We are also indebted to the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Centres for the purchase of our first "SawStop. With this table saw members were safe from injuring themselves, for if a finger or hand touched the blade it would stop instantly with only a minor nick to the area touched by the blade.

From this point on our membership increased dramatically to the point that we had at least 350 members

2013

2013 was a major growth year for our club, when we added many new members and approached just short of the 270 mark. This allowed us to add new machinery to our inventory and we are extremely well equipped. Two new drill presses were added and the large Delta bandsaw was replaced with an even larger General that has a mouth of 16 inches. This new bandsaw was needed to accommodate the lathe turners who are often cutting large pieces of the trunk of trees. There are also many other uses for this machine. It has a one inch blade with 3 points per inch.

A new 14 inch planer has been purchased and it has the helical cutter, the same as our 20 inch planer that we have had since 1997.

A K reg precision router was added to the list of new equipment during the year. It will replace the JessEm router which will serve as a back-up.

A new lathe has been ordered and we are awaiting delivery. This new Oneway lathe can be operated from both standing and sitting positions. There will now be three Oneway lathes, and all of the attachments are interchangeable. There is a small lathe for pen turning in this area of the shop.

A new 24" General sander was purchased and for most applications replaces the stroke sander that was made by Al Foxall a former member. A new Hegner scroll saw joins the Dremel scroll saw for cutting fine work.

Starting in 2008?? we have had an annual sale of member made articles in November to raise funds for the club. All members are expected to make something for the sale. This event has been an opportunity to show the public, who drop in, what is being made.

A new workbench, built by a member (Dave Peirson), was added and a second is under construction (Chris O'Brien) and should soon be ready. These will replace the older benches that came from Project Woodwork in Waterloo.