

# Creates own patterns

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By SUZANNE HANSON  
Mike Dennis has been tinkering around with tools and scraps of wood since he was a young lad. But what began as a hobby now occupies most of his spare time.

There has always been wood around from his father's sawmill at Holbrook and Mike naturally began to create things with it. About seven to eight years ago, he applied his woodworking skills to making wooden toys for his nieces and nephews and his hobby mushroomed.

The toys turned into bigger pieces, such as tables and bookcases, cradles and chairs for the family, and he now does work for many other people who appreciate the quality of handmade goods.

The ability Mike possesses when working with wood was not picked up at any school. Most of his ideas come out of his own head or are improvised from other furniture designs and pictures in books. Many people who come to him with requests sketch out an idea of what they would like leaving the basic design up to him.

So far he has relied solely on word of mouth and friends for the business he has received. That has provided him with more than enough work to fill in the spare time he has left after working on the family farm and in the saw mill.

While he doesn't think he could get rich off his woodworking, he is certain he could make a living off of it if he went into it full-time.

You can take courses on the various woodworking techniques but so far Mike has been content to rely on experience and reading numerous books on the subject. He also learns through talking to other craftsmen in the field.

Woodworking is a rather expensive hobby, particularly if expensive woods are required to fashion a piece of furniture, but it is a hobby you can start into slow and build up. Really, all you need is a place to work and some basic tools such as a table saw, lathe and a drill press.

Fortunately, finding wood to work with has not been a problem for Mike. There is an abundance of wood in the area and always scraps available from the sawmill. Wood is getting more expensive to buy all the time, however, he said.

Pine is one of the most common woods available in this area and the least expensive, running about one dollar per board foot. Similarly maple is abundant and relatively inexpensive.

Walnut is one of the most expensive local woods and other woods such as rosewood and teak, not found naturally in this area, are extremely expensive. They are available but most people Mike deals with are

pretty conscious about the cost of the finished item and tend more toward the less expensive woods.

Cherry seems to be a popular wood at present, said Mike. Most people specify the type of wood they would like their particular item created out of.

Mike expects both the demand for handmade goods and the number of people making them to grow. More

and more people are already becoming involved in such handicrafts. With the current level of unemployment, more people have time to spend on them, he said. And little shops such as his can compete with the stores as they eliminate the middle man's cost, selling direct to their customers, said Mike.

Many people today are looking for quality handmade goods and local crafts

and Mike anticipates the day when he may have a showroom set up at his workshop to display his goods. At present he makes things pretty much on demand.

"I haven't had a lot of time to build many pieces ahead," he said.

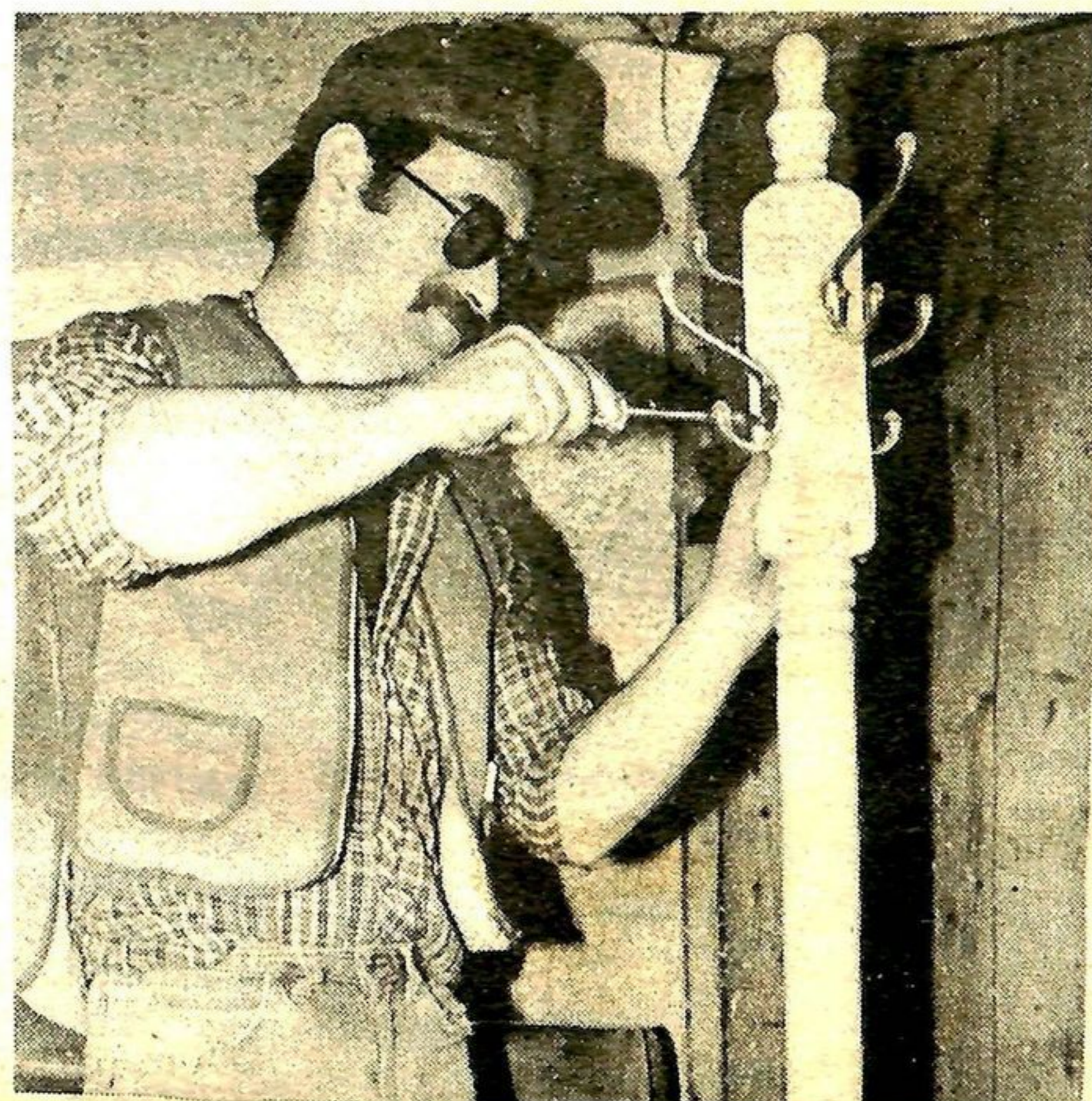
After spending four years making curling ice in St. Thomas, Mike is now content to be at home, spending time in his workshop as he desires. He admits he's still learning areas of the craft but the quality of his finished goods attest to his ability and his knowledge of the wood.

Some things are more difficult than others to make, he said, but there is always the challenge of trying something new. And he enjoys it. It's a lot less like work when you love your job.



## Sizing them up

Woodworker Mike Dennis of Holbrook compares some of the chair legs he has fashioned on the lathe in his workshop located on his father's farm. (NG Photo).



## Finishing touches

The hooks on this coat stand are all that remains to be done before the final stain and finish is applied by craftsman Mike Dennis of Holbrook. He has been tinkering with wood and tools since he was young and gets more involved in his "hobby" every day. (NG Photo).

GRIFFIN — At the Woodstock General Hospital on Tuesday, March 9, 1982, William Wesley Griffin of Woodingford Lodge and formerly of R.R. 2 Burgessville in his 85th year. Husband of the former Daisy Hamner and the late Myra Elkin (1937). Dear father of Lafe Griffin of Brantford and Mrs. Charles (June) Gray of Belleville and the late John David Griffin. Dear brother of Mrs. Annie Force of London. Also surviving are eight grandchildren. Friends will be received at the M.D. (Mac) Smith Funeral Home, 69 Wellington Street North, Woodstock, where the funeral service will be held at 3:30 p.m., Thursday, March 11th, with Reverend Gordon Carder of Woodstock officiating. Interment later in the Burgessville Cemetery. Memorial contributions to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated by the family.



Three-year-old Christine Barnim, of RR 1, Burgessville, was a bit reluctant at first but she finally climbed on Maddy the groundhog's knee to say hello during the early morning Groundhog Day sale in downtown Norwich Tuesday morning. (NG Photo)

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