

People

# Woodworker dovetails heritage with love of reproductions

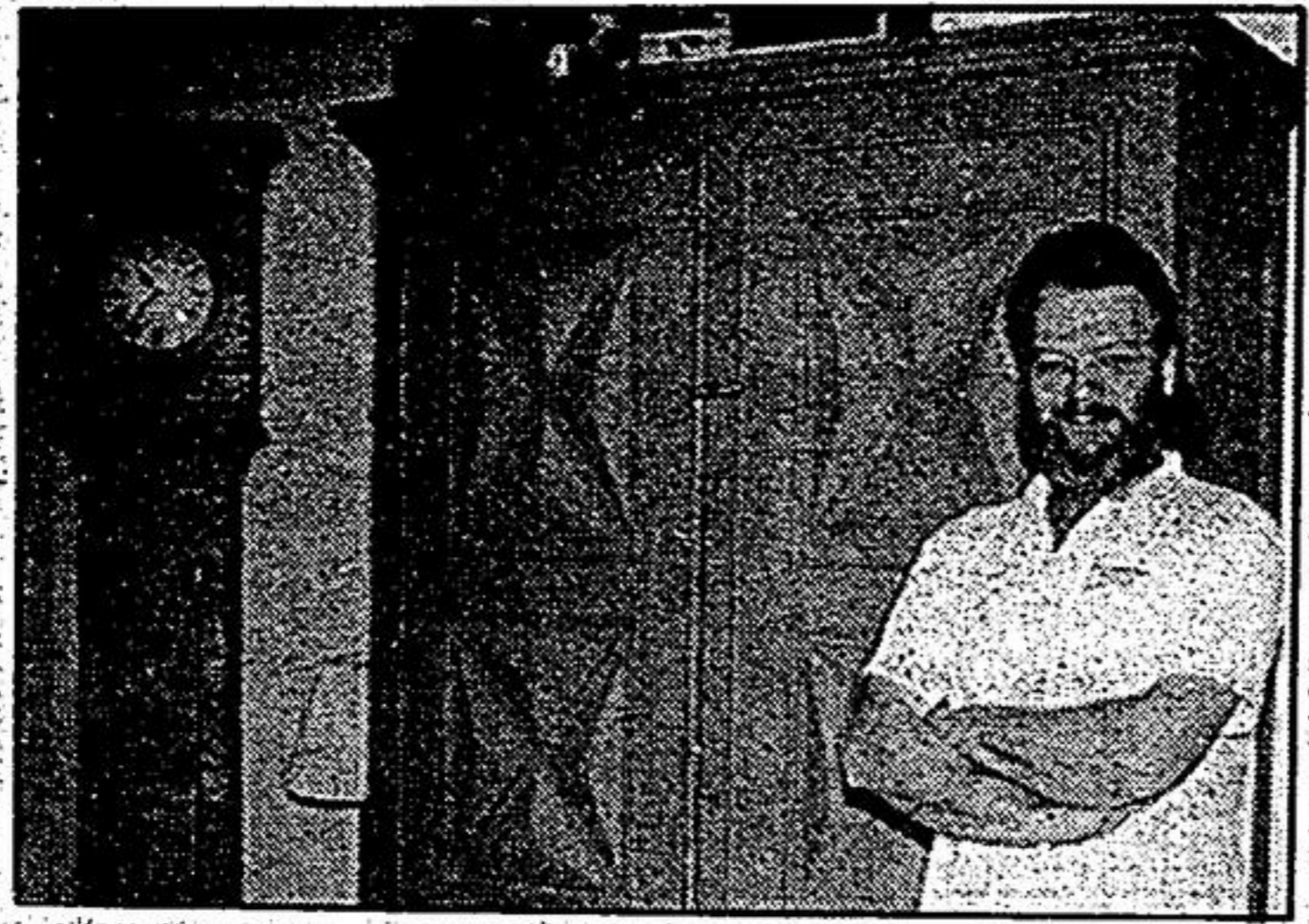
**BRUCE STAPLEY**  
Correspondent

John Wittenbols is a third generation wood working craftsman who is as versatile as he is talented.

Working out of his Old Brock St., Claremont shop, called Diamond Point Reproductions, Wittenbols is likely to be found assembling a set of authentic diamond point doors for a custom pine armoire, putting the finishing touches on an oak fire place mantle, or even puttering with his half finished 18 foot mahogany sea skiff.

"I'll take on just about anything," Wittenbols said in a recent interview. "I've done everything from furniture through additions, renovations, and decks. While I do prefer doing things in the Victorian, colonial, or Canadiana style, I'll do whatever it takes to stay busy."

That includes the gutting and complete interior restoration of a 1973 Gray Coach bus last summer. Wittenbols outfitted the vehicle so it could be used as a mobile home, installing oak cupboards and bedrooms, cedar



Woodworker John Wittenbols with the armoire and grandfather clock he made.

tongue and groove paneling on the ceiling, and a striking kitchen in wood.

"That was a fun job," said Wittenbols, adding that the project took two months to complete. "We took it to a bus show in Guelph and it really stood out."

Wittenbols comes by his carpentry skills honestly. His grandfather practiced the trade in his native Holland, while his father worked with wood as well. Wittenbols learned his craft under Dad's watchful eye, working part time as a student in the 1960s,

then spending three years in the full time employ of his father.

He abandoned the trade to try his hand at an assortment of other types of work, but eventually came to realize he was meant to work with wood.

In 1979, he was hired by Uxbridge area reproduction house builder Mel Shakespeare. "It was at that time I developed my love for reproduction houses and furniture," said Wittenbols.

He then struck out on his own, working mainly as a sub contractor for Shakespeare.

He set up shop in Uxbridge for five years in the mid to late 1980s, bouncing around from back shop to garage before finally settling into his current location in 1990.

While the shop contains only the odd sampling of his work,

Wittenbols takes his prospective customers to his home near Balsam to show them the more exceptional fruits of his labors. A massive armoire, complete with 12 dadoed diamond point panels front and sides, stands beside a grandfather clock with no less than 785 dovetails.

A large photograph album affords more evidence of his versatility, with shots of the reproduction homes, porches, kitchens and numerous other custom projects he has completed.

"I just love working with wood," he concluded. "And every project offers a different challenge."

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