

Great Canadian Solid Wood has made-in-Canada furniture



By Constance Scrafield

Good news. You can buy real wood furniture which is made in Canada. Even better, that furniture is made by a local business. Mike Taylor owns the Great Canadian Solid Wood Furniture Co., now located at 62-B Broadway, showroom and workshop, which they acquired in May, 2016. This combination of a store and production space is exactly what Mr. Taylor wanted for the company for a long time.

His father started the business of building good wood furniture and, as a teenager, Mike Taylor was working right along with his dad.

“We sent our pieces to a finishing shop – King Furniture. In the early days when I was 16, back in the '60's, I was working refinishing antiques that company which was in King township too.”

He grew up knowing what the business was all about by the time he graduated from high school and was already quite involved in the work of making furniture.

“In high school,” Mr. Taylor remarked with some irony, “I took everything but wood working.”

Before he actually realized that he had settled, Mr. Taylor had thought he might follow his days as a cadet into military police. It was an ambition easy to lose when “I guess I was making a pay cheque with my dad,” and other career plans drained away.

In addition to the pay cheque, Mr. Taylor is also subsequently married with two children, both of whom work, to a greater and lesser extent, in the business.

“I have no regrets. It's the people who work here that keep me at it.”

There's satisfaction too in the achievement the work delivers.

“In my earlier days, I was working with my dad after school. The old ways of manufacturing, they were pretty smart. The wood was rough sawn and hand crafted – the dovetail on the drawers.”

In 1996, Mr. Taylor bought King Furniture, with which “I started to finish new furniture,” he told us. “I liked that way better than refinishing with all those chemicals and it was too much work to be paid. With this business now, one thing we do is offer coloured lacquer and, with Benjamin Moore lacquer, it works really well.”

By 2000, he was ready to purchase the Great Canadian Solid Wood Furniture Company from his father as a business separate from King Furniture. His father had run a shop on Broadway, in Orangeville, which Mr. Taylor closed, moving the whole thing to an establishment north on Highway 10. After some years, he realized that they were ready to have premises back in town. While the furniture is largely built in the new location at 62-B Broadway, the finishing is still being done back at King Furniture.

The company's fine wood furniture is also now sold in stores and Mr. Taylor is conscious of the potential pitfalls: “With the demand from the stores,” he began by saying, “we have to keep it steady as she goes. We have a good product. When crunch time comes, we just try harder.”

At the end of July, this year, they opened the present showroom. Misty Wilson, the store manager, said it was “really a busy

opening. Mike's daughter works here at the store every other weekend and she worked all summer at the stain shop.?

Said Mr. Taylor of the new shop, ?Since we've come here, it's a new lease on life with the public coming in all the time ? it's way busier than it was.?

Interestingly, as Ms. Wilson explained, ?There's a lot more young people coming in and then ? on the other end ? older people come to buy. This place makes a huge difference. Mike's dad started in the loft of his barn.?

She went on, ?This furniture is a lot rustic design ? people are still looking for the older styles. And even in this throw -away society, people like good things and things made locally.?

The company produces exactly what its name implies ? solid wood furniture of a very high quality. The designs are solid too but they fulfill the needs of every room in the home. Some of the pieces, like dining room chairs, are made by Mennonites but finished in Orangeville.

Not only stand-alone tables, beds, every kind of furniture that houses things ? whether soft like clothing or hard, like dishes, but also built in kitchens and bathrooms come under their domain.

?Custom orders take six to eight weeks,? Ms. Wilson said. ?And there's a lot of prep about the design and getting what people really want done. We do kitchen and all kinds of built in furniture.?

The store is a showroom, abounding in a display of what many of the choices are by way of the shop's product. However, there are still walls and places where a little decor creates just the right note.

In this matter, Ms. Wilson is on a bit of a campaign for neighbouring artists to display their work for sale on the walls and shelves of the shop.

She commented, ?I put an ad on Facebook to artists to put their work on the walls.?

Likewise, she would like us to spread the word. ?We would rather have local artists' work ? paintings, hand work ? than the typical stuff you can bring in.?

One lady makes large clocks; a gentlemen does metal work. Candle sticks. Wooden signs. Artists: take note, the Great Canadian Solid Wood Furniture Company would be pleased to display your pieces for sale.

?Some people just love what we do for them; customers' reactions ? it's all about that,? was Mr. Taylor's comment. ?These are heirlooms and they know they can pass on.?