

KENT SUSOTT



Now a retired orthodontist, several years ago Kent wanted to start a hobby he could enjoy once he left his practice. “I chose woodworking because my three children needed furniture for their houses,” he said.

A sentence like “Making furniture in some respects is similar to being an orthodontist” is one only an orthodontist would make, and Kent Susott says, “You cannot start moving teeth without having a treatment plan. Likewise, it is not a good idea to start cutting wood without a detailed set of drawings.”

Upon retirement, the Evansville native began working with wood, and going back to that furniture/orthodontia comparison, Kent says, “The design process is a very important step in making furniture that will be both structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing. Beginning with detailed drawings is important to the outcome.”

While there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of winning smiles thanks to his treatment plans, Kent’s outcomes in wood are stunning. The furniture maker said, “I have learned a great amount about the design process from classes and making reproductions of Federal Period furniture. I like to draw on this experience when designing furniture for clients.”

Kent uses native Indiana hardwood. “I especially like walnut and cherry that is air dried in my shop for one or more years,” he says. He has been at the craft for 15 years, and says for the last 10 he has worked with veneer to make radial matched patterns and marquetry projects. “I also use inlay materials to embellish my work, and as much as possible I like to use intricate details such as hand cut dovetails.”

One of Kent’s signature pieces is a spice chest with radial inlays on both the outer and inner face of the door, as well as walnut burl veneer on the front of the spice drawers inside. True to the historic roots of spice chests, the back panel is removable via a secret hinge, and, once removed, it reveals a hidden drawer in the back of the piece – a place to hide small valuables no one but the owner would find.

Kent enjoys making reproductions from the Federal and Greene and Greene architectural periods, and his original work involves some of these traditional characteristics with more modern designs. “I work with several interior designers,” he says, “and I have made several pieces of furniture in the Federal Style and numerous in a more modern style.”

Kent does not limit furniture making to a single style. He says, “My plans are to incorporate more inlay patterns into the Greene and Greene style to create my own unique style. There are so many different types of woodworking that it’s difficult to master all of the techniques. I enjoy the challenge of completing difficult projects that require learning new skills.”

