

# Frank B. Rhodes – Furniture Maker

by Amy Blades Steward

Woodworking shops have always tickled my senses – the sweet smell of wood shavings on the floor, the smooth sound of a sharpened hand plane slicing through a piece of walnut, and the sight of intricately patterned cane being rewoven on the seat of a chair. I was reminded of childhood memories of my grandfather's woodworking shop while recently visiting the shop of Chestertown furniture maker Frank B. Rhodes, Jr.

Frank, who has been building notable American furniture since 1983, also specializes in repair, restoration, refinishing and re-upholstery, as well as designing and building more contemporary furniture and the re-upholstery of marine interiors. He has assembled a team of experienced craftsmen who are carrying on the traditions of some of the country's finest furniture makers.

Frank received an early appreciation of fine furniture from his grandparents, who were collectors of fine American antiques and paintings. They taught him to appreciate the detailed work of bygone craftsmen and, following

their deaths in the late 1970s, Frank started to reproduce many of the pieces in their collection of fine antiques. He also started creating patterns from many other museum quality antiques in hopes of preserving these eras of furniture through period reproductions. Over the last 25 years, he has created more than 35 full scale line drawings of Queen Anne, Chippendale, and Federal furniture from famous Philadelphia furniture makers such as Benjamin Randolph and Thomas Affleck.

A member of the Society of American Period Furniture Makers, Frank has been self taught. While he studied wood working in middle school at the Haverford School in Pennsylvania and later in high school, most of what he learned has been through trial and error. After completing a degree in history from Washington College, he trained with master wood workers to learn the craft and even attended seminars across the country, including studying with Sotheby's.

Frank continues to educate himself about furniture. He comments, "I am passionate about

furniture and want to share my knowledge with my clients by selling highly crafted furniture patterned after classic furniture of fine design. For me, it is about preserving an art form."

The result is that Frank B. Rhodes Furniture Makers has created a national reputation, drawing clientele from all across

the country. Clients appreciate the shop's customer service and attention to detail. Frank adds, "My grandfather was an engineer of German background who was very detail driven and precise. This has shaped my company's focus on quality."

The six full-time employees and one part-time employee now

working for Frank share his passion for creating a work of art. Each employee that works on a piece signs a card that goes with the finished product back to the owner. "Our employees all have an individual passion for the work they do and are very proud of their work," said Frank.

Many of the company's



The staff of Frank B. Rhodes - Furniture Maker in Chestertown includes Brad Ahrens (back, left), Rhonda Gover, Frank B. Rhodes, Jr., Diane Duke, Doris Reedt (left, front), Lori Elborn-Brown, and Bob Sederquest.