

NEWS & INFO FOR
BOAT BUILDERS
CONTRACTORS
WOODWORKERS

BIRDSEYE VIEW

DECEMBER 2009 ISSUE:

- DECKEXPO 2009 HIGHLIGHTS
- LUMBER CAMP LIFE IN 1909
- MEET MIKE MITCHELL
- CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Here we are with another year coming to a close, Christmas and New Years Day are upon us. Along with the annual festivities come reflection of the past year and planning for the new.

We are offering free planing during the month of December, so purchasing lumber in December for January projects will offer you savings. With today's margins so tight every little bit helps. In addition, our lumber sales and purchasing manager is identifying new product offerings for 2010.

We are also investing heavily in staff training to make sure we can offer you the solutions you need. With our new economy, we believe offering new products and services are a part of the answer to continued success along with expansion of your market.

During the past year we have successfully stabilized our Company through the biggest economic downturn the US has seen since the Great Depression of the late 1920's. While we have had to make some hard decisions, we've also made some fun ones to continue all the product and service offerings you currently value.

Our three Woodworking shows starting with Charlotte in September then South Bend in October and finishing with Grand Rapids in November are commitments to our industry, and to you, we will continue. Please offer topics and products you wish to know more about. You can respond through theworkbench.com or call us at 800-292-5937, your voice matters! We will continue to offer "Everything for the Woodworker". Let us know what you want to learn and we'll bring it to you.

Thank you for a 2009 to remember and let's work and pray for a profitable 2010 for all of us.

Mark Johnson



LUMBER CAMP LIFE IN 1909

When the fiddle had stopped singing Laura called out softly, "What are days of auld lang syne, Pa?"

"They are the days of a long time ago, Laura," Pa said. "Go to sleep, now."

'*Little House in the Big Woods*' by Laura Ingalls Wilder was a fun read for many young children in the 60s and 70s. It gave them a glimpse of what life was like for their great-grandparents.

Having a great-grandfather, L.L. Johnson, who was a lumberjack in the mid to late 1900s makes Michigan's lumber history come to life for our family.

Beginning in 1909, my great-grandfather and his men led a nomadic lifestyle harvesting lumber. The logging crew would move right to a woodlot, drill a well, and set up shanties. When they were done, they'd just pack up and move on to the next job.

The image of the lumberjack was often romanticized in illustrations and stories such as the tales of Paul Bunyan. But the actual life of a logger was

very dangerous, filled with long, back-breaking days. Logging was done in the dead of winter when farmer labor was available. Trees were felled with muscle-powered crosscut saws. Lumber and logs were hauled about on hulking, horse-drawn sleds.

The day for a lumberjack began before dawn. Breakfast was served while it was still dark so the men could eat and be out in the woods ready to work at the first crack of daylight. Lunch and dinner would be brought out into the woods where the men were working. Lumberjacks would work until dark, then walk back to camp for supper. It was not unusual for breakfast to be served at four or five a.m., lunch at nine, dinner at two-thirty, and supper at eight, with lights out at nine.

The camp cook and his helper, often referred to as 'cookee', were vital members of a lumber camp crew. Whether or not our great-grandpa and other camp bosses were able to hire a full crew was largely dependent on the cooking. If it wasn't tasty

(continued on page 3)



Horse power was used with log skidders such as this. Circa 1915.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Tigerwood boasts a 25+ year lifespan without preservatives and offers an economical alternative to Teak.



DECKEXPO 2009

Joined at the Event by Thousands of Construction Trade Professionals, Bob Laurie Shares the Highlights

When it comes to decking, DeckExpo 2009, in Indianapolis, IN, had it all. The show carried everything from exotic hardwoods, composites, softwoods, modified woods and all the accessories. Here is a sampling of some of the more interesting decking products seen at the show.

PureWood is a thermally modified wood decking. Basically the wood is cooked turning the sugars into an organic compound that cannot be digested by insects or eaten by fungus and mold – dramatically reducing rot and decay.

This is natural wood without additives, a 100% chemical and metal free process, non-toxic - meaning no disposal, health or environmental issues, non-corrosive to standard exterior fasteners, cuts, drills, sands, and shapes like non-modified wood.

PureWood is extremely durable over time. It has excellent dimensional stability, resists rot, decay, warping, cup-

ping, twisting, and has less surface checking.

Paint and stain adhere well to PureWood. It has been kiln dried to 6% M.C., and has a factory applied premium sealant to ensure quality.

This is a relatively new product that has not stood the test of time but appears to have potential. I like the fact that you can get this decking with a factory applied premium sealant and it is offered in three different profiles. (purewoodproducts.com)

Another new product, Kebony is a modified wood that has stood the test of time in a rough Nordic climate. It promises exotic hardwood performance with domestic softwood sourcing. Kebony uses furfural alcohol (derived from the by-product of sugar production) which is impregnated into the lumber using a vacuum/positive pressure cycle. The fluid seeps into the voids of the wood penetrating into the individual cells of the wood struc-

ture. Using a heat catalyst system the lumber & furfural alcohol molecules are cross linked and polymerized into a new biologically inert material.

Physically, Kebony is a hard product going from a 3.5 to 4.5 (Brinell), with density going from 510 to 700 kg/m³, and stiffness going from 12.5 to 15.5 GPa. It has better moisture handling, and dimensional stability with up to a 50% reduction in expansion and contraction. Softwoods will perform like or better than exotic hardwood species, without the environmental damages.

Aesthetically, Kebony wood darkens to create a rich tone that can be preserved with staining. This tone will age to a silver gray patina like most hardwoods without staining. The wood grain will become smoother after planing as the polymer fills the void in the wood.

The wood is going to hold its dimensions and durability longer. Kebony's modification process increases the Yellow Pine from a durability class of 5 to 1-2. It will not cup or warp to the degree of non-modified wood.

Kebony is biologically inert and will resist decay. The wood endures wet dry cycles significantly better than other woods. This reduces splitting, warping and cupping. This property also increases the performance of paints and fastener systems as there is much less movement in the wood. The wood is enhanced for heavier foot traffic and load bearing relative to other species. Normal surface cleaning is recommended, however, no other maintenance is required.

Kebony costs more than treated timber, but will last approximately 3X longer.



DeckExpo Continued

Prices are competitive with wood fiber polymer composites, but with significantly better performance and longevity.

Keconomy has been in use for 10-11 years in Europe so it does have a good track record unlike some of the other new products.

I am a little concerned with the environmental impact of shipping SY Pine from the USA to Norway for treatment and then shipping it back to the USA for consumption. They may at some point add a treatment plant in the USA, which would negate my concern. (*keconomy.com*, select British flag in upper right corner for English.)

Latitudes Capricorn decking is a composite made of high density polyethylene that resembles exotic hardwoods like Ipe' and Mahogany. It is backed by a 15-year limited warranty. Latitudes Decking and Railing features Strandex technology. Just as individual strands of fiber make a rope stronger, Strandex makes Latitudes stronger.

In addition, Capricorn decking uses advanced co-extrusion technology -- a surface that not only is virtually impervious to stains, but keeps its rich color from fading over time. It comes with a reversible wood grain finish and is available in both solid and slotted (grooved) deck boards.

Capricorn decking, along with several other high end composites, continue to improve their product. Composites are still not maintenance free (although that impression still exists), but do offer consumers a low maintenance alternative to wood. With estimates of 20% + of the market being composite, we will continue to see them evolve. (*latitudesdeck.com*)

Everyone has an opinion on what material they prefer for decking. It is my opinion that under the right conditions, hardwoods, such as Ipe', Cumaru, Massaranduba, Garapa and Tigerwood still provide the best in appearance, longevity, feel, and strength, without using chemicals, while being a renewable resource.

There are a "head spinning" number of products available and everyone claims to have the best deck material to choose. On your own, it could take a lot of research trying to determine which decking product to choose. We welcome your inquiries for obtaining information to help you choose a decking product that best suits your personal requirements. ■

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Mike Mitchell has been our Southwest Regional Manager overseeing our South Bend, IN, location for 12 years. Many of you may have met Mike as he helps out at our Charlotte Wood Expo and Grand Rapids Wood Fair, as well as planning and coordinating all the efforts for our South Bend Woodworking Showcase.

Born in Buchanan, MI, Mike grew up in a family of five kids -- he is one of four brothers, with one sister. In his early years Mike began his first career at the Tip Top Bakery in Niles, MI, where he started out as a mechanic. With Mike's strong work ethic, it wasn't long before he became a truck driver. Mike continued driving truck for 18 years for the bakery and Niles/Buchanan Manpower. All the while Mike ran his own woodworking specialty company called Michael's Custom Wood.

Mike has been married for 23 years to Carole. He has one son, Michael Paul, from a previous marriage, who has given Mike and Carole two grandsons, Michael Lane, 15 years old and Gage Earl, 2 years old.

Mike rarely sits still for very long keeping more than one iron in the fire at a time. He worked part-time for us off and on throughout the 1990s. In 1993, Mike and Carole tried their hand in the restaurant business for 2 years,



opening "Auntie Carole's Table" from 1993-1995, while continuing with his woodworking business. In 1999, Mike accepted a full-time position with us as Assistant Manager, being promoted to his current position in 2003.

Besides spending time with his family Mike enjoys woodworking, and growing potatoes (but that's another story for another time). Mike's favorite snack is popcorn with a nice cold Budweiser beer.

His good nature, calm demeanor, and hands-on woodworking background make him a valuable asset to our management team. Thank you Mike. ■

(Contributed by Tim Johnson)

Camp Life Continued



enough or plentiful enough, lumberjacks were known to walk off the job.

The cook and cookee worked 16 to 17 hour days, seven days a week. Their day would begin no later than 3 a.m. grinding coffee beans. It would take up to an hour to grind enough coffee for 25 to 30 men.

Breakfast might consist of fried potatoes, beans, pancakes with molas-

ses syrup or gravy, hot biscuits, coffee, pork sausages and other meats. Lunch was eaten in the woods. A campfire would be set to boil tea and food would be placed around the fire for the men to dish up and eat quickly before it had a chance to freeze on their tin plates.

Supper was more substantial with pork and beans, potatoes, meat and gravy. For dessert there were usually dried fruit pies -- raisin, and dried apple. "Vinegar pie" was often served.

Many is the impression that lumberjacks were rough, rowdy, loud, and burly, up until all hours of the night drinking, singing, and storytelling. But that was only after the logging season was done in the spring. Several historical entries report of strict camp rules such as no talking while eating, and early lights out. Good food, long grueling days, strict rules of conduct -- that was life in a logging camp in 1909. ■

(Contributed by Sherry Johnson)

When dried fruits were depleted in the winter, Vinegar Pie would be the dessert for a lumberjack's meal.

L.L. Johnson Lumber Mfg. Co. & Johnson's Workbench

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**YOUR
BIRDSEYE VIEW
HAS ARRIVED!**

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CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

MIKE BELZOWSKI, CUSTOM CARPENTRY

"Creating Distinctive Legacy Homes"

**Mike stays
involved
thru project
completion,
to achieve
clients'
vision.**



Raised near LaPorte, Indiana, Mike Belzowski had a unique passion early on for creating objects from wood. By the time he turned three, Mike had acquired many tools from his first mentor, his grandfather. Mike's grandfather also passed along much knowledge and insight about tools and how they help complete the vision of an original design.

As a young man, Mike continued to hone his skills in woodworking and design. High school industrial arts programs helped channel this interest. He later attended Purdue University, graduating with a degree in Building Trades and Construction Management. Mike also drew inspiration from Roy Underhill and David Marks. In addition, he has attended seminars offered by other masters of the woodworking profession and



won the Master's Award from the Marc Adams School of Woodworking. These masters – from Frank Klauz and Sam Maloff to Marc Adams and Michael Fortune – quickly became Mike's new mentors.

Mike started his own carpentry business in LaPorte in 1999. He blended his knowledge of woodworking and design to create unique living spaces unlike others in the trade. Over the years, Mike has employed as many as three associates. Most importantly, his wife Nora has always been Mike's partner in their business. As the business grows, Mike has become more involved in the entire process, from design through project completion, helping his clients complete their vision.

We know exactly how Mike's clients feel. He has shared his expertise by hosting seminars at our Wood Expo in Charlotte, Woodworking Showcase in South Bend, and Wood Fair in Grand Rapids. These programs clearly show Mike's passion for shaping wood and completing the original design – and his ability to be a mentor in his own right. ■

(Contributed by Earl Breen)