

# Classic hand-crafted furniture made by island artisan

By Michaela Kennedy

Steven Sabella is a local artisan of wood furniture. From scalloped shells floating on waves of red mahogany to cannonballs balanced on cherry wood bedposts, Sabella preserves local New England wood craftsmanship with classic style and personal touch.

In a tour of his home and garage-turned workshop on Keel Avenue, Sabella reveals the attention he gives to grain textures and natural wood colors in his designs. Against the wall in his workshop, he draws the eye to long boards of various woods, many of which are indigenous products of New England. Reclaimed pieces of wood hold promises of future hand-crafted treasures from Sabella's workshop.

His home is a showcase of personally-crafted wood furniture. A tiger maple desk with spade legs spotlights a computer in the study. A bookcase shows off a carved



Steven Sabella stands amid his woodworking tools in his garage workshop on Keel Avenue. Sabella makes personally-crafted wood furniture.

Photo by Michaela Kennedy

base design preserved from an earlier incarnation. Many of his pieces include a carved compass signature dropped into a knot in the wood. "I don't stain much," he explains. "A stain is used to color a wood. I like

to use the real color."

Sabella was born in Rhode Island, but lived in Connecticut for many years. He started out as a young apprentice in woodwork, and also took carving courses. He

has been fully immersed in the craft for about 25 years. Sabella spent the last two years planning his own business, and a year making samples to showcase his work. He still currently works full-time as a shop foreman for a cabinet maker in Massachusetts, but holds a clear vision for his future as well. "I knew if I ever could start my own thing, I would," he says.

Sabella understands the worth of his art is what drives him out on his own. He grew up in period homes with traditionally styled furniture embedded in the surroundings. He shows conviction that true craftsmanship comes out of Newport, mentioning the Goddard and Townsend cabinet makers that ruled home style for generations since the eighteenth century. "It's all about recognition," he says. "If you give someone recognition, especially for the craftsmanship, it's important."

Sabella calls himself a cabinet-maker, but grins at the name. A cabinet maker produces much more than just cabinets, he points out about the misnomer. His specialties cover chairs, desks, case work and bed sets, to name a few.

At the moment, Sabella's capability is limited only to the size of his shop. He covers a wide spectrum of specialties in home furniture, and enjoys working with clients on custom pieces. Sabella looks forward to the day he can do the business full time, in a larger setting. "An apprentice, an extra pair of hands in the shop, would be nice," he adds.

Sabella has been online since last October with an introduction to his wood crafts.

For more information on his work and a gallery of his designs, visit online at [www.sabellahand-crafted.com](http://www.sabellahand-crafted.com), or call 423-8989.

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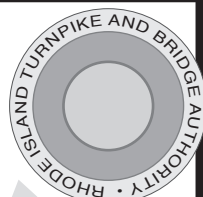
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