

Mike Paterson

Paterson Woodworking, Upper Amherst Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador

Mike Paterson is a man who is passionate about three things: doors, windows, and Newfoundland furniture. The older, the better.

In his hometown of St. Mary's, Ontario, Paterson owned and operated a sawmill for a time. Always eager to learn more about carpentry, he took courses in design, chairmaking and timber-frame building.

It wasn't until he moved to Newfoundland and opened his own woodworking business, that he found his true love?restoring heritage wood windows, doors, and other architectural products.

When he first arrived East, Paterson used to drive out to small towns and outports, sightseeing and exploring. He was drawn to the honest style of buildings and local furniture. He began to read books about furniture making, millwork and heritage carpentry.

He set up his own business. In the early years, Paterson Woodworking focused on reproducing furniture from original tables, chairs, and other pieces using local materials and traditional methods.

Gradually, heritage groups and governments began to appreciate the value of Newfoundland's built heritage. Paterson won contracts for some of the early restorations.

One of his first projects was restoring the architectural woodwork at Ryan Premises in Bonavista. Now recognized as a national historic site, the Premises are a collection of 19th century warehouses and merchant shops, built at the height of the cod fishery in Newfoundland. Bonavista fishermen were some of the



Mike Paterson restoring an historic wood window
Credit: Brian Ricks



Restored window,
St. Joseph's Catholic
Church, Bonavista
Credit: Brian Ricks

best?catching and processing about 10% of Newfoundland's cod. Ryan and Company shipped the salt cod to Spain, Italy, and the West Indies.

The pine windows of the Ryan buildings are original, nearly 150 years old. The restoration work was slow. Paterson and his carpenters removed the windows one at a time, being careful not to break the hand-blown glazing. Repairs were done with local millwork. To reassemble the windows in the right order, they consulted old manuals.

Another satisfying restoration job involved even more detailed work. The windows of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Bonavista impressed Paterson the first time he saw them.

The church and its eight windows, each 3.8 metres (12.5 feet) tall, date from the early 1800s. The windows were hand-carved, with elaborate tracery and more than 30 panes of glass. The design gives the appearance of stone masonry. Unfortunately, the damage was extensive and restoration was impossible. Therefore, Paterson was commissioned to create replicas faithful to the original.



Restored windows, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Bonavista. Credit: Brian Ricks

Largely self-taught, Paterson has acquired considerable expertise over the years. He modestly admits that he and his team of six full-time carpenters are "pretty good."

From Bonavista to Trinity and beyond, Paterson Woodworking has established a reputation for excellence and high quality.

Paterson Woodworking

<http://www.patersonwoodworking.com/>

Ryan Premises National Historic Site of Canada

http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/ryan/index_E.asp