

What's Behind A Painting?

In art galleries, one often studies a painting from various angles and distances, seeking to discover all that is possible about the method and style of the artist and what the artist is trying to communicate. In other words, the observer is trying to determine "what is behind the painting."

What is truly "behind" a painting, whether it's a small inexpensive work or a giant masterpiece valued at hundreds of thousands of dollars? If you look closely, you will find that it is the stretcher to which the canvas is attached!

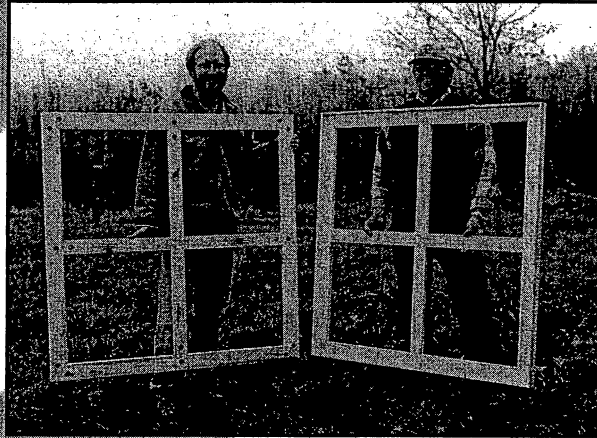
Usually made of wood, one might conclude that little thought would go into this part of a work of art. Join a few pieces of wood into a square or rectangle, attach a canvas and paint? Simple enough!

This might work, however, serious artists need to be concerned that the stretcher holds its shape, the tension on the canvas is maintained over time, and the staples holding the canvas remain secure in the wood. There are many woods in the world from which to choose, including numerous species of exotics as well as common local woods. And likely, they have all been tried.

Two innovative gentlemen from Maine, both with good carpentry skills, a knowledge of wood properties, and an entrepreneurial spirit between them, decided that the best wood for the job was from one of the most common trees in the northern forest—aspens!

At first glance, this seemed an unlikely species. Aspen lumber would not seem to be up to such a noble task. Undaunted, Chris Polson and Joe Calderwood followed their instincts and now have a thriving business, "Twin Brooks Stretchers," that sells stretchers of all sizes to artists across North America and in Europe.

What made these men successful when many predicted sure failure?



Attention to detail at every step of the process and personal knowledge of the craft. Chris is an artist who likes to paint large canvases (often 6 x 6 ft). This interest gives him a good idea of the most desirable product. Both Joe and Chris have had experience in all aspects of woodworking and are "hands on" guys who believe in striving to improve their operation daily.

What is meant by attention to detail? For Chris and Joe, it starts with selection and purchase of the basic raw material—aspens logs. Only the best quality logs in variable lengths to provide stock for stretchers of many sizes are acceptable. The men saw their own lumber on a portable band mill, taking care to recover the best from each log. From the sawmill the rough boards go to a small dry kiln just a few yards away from the mill. The boards are carefully monitored during the drying process

to achieve the right moisture content. Control at this point is a key to quality of the stretcher.

From the kiln, the lumber leaves their care and is milled to their specifications by a trusted local architectural millwork shop. Once it returns to Chris and Joe's shop, there is a continuous job of sorting and cutting to get the most from each piece of wood.

Although most stretchers are a standard square or rectangular and comprised of 4 to 6 pieces of

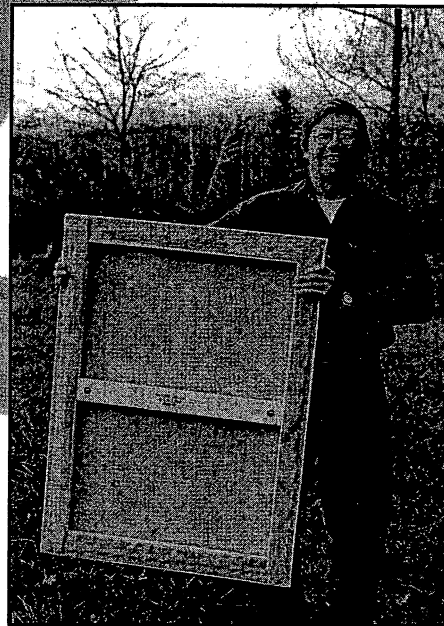
wood, Chris and Joe are willing to try anything that an artist might request. Very large stretchers, some as big as 8' x 10' and 5' x 20', are formed from 8 to 12 pieces of straight and true aspen lumber. The joinery methods they have developed are important to the stability of the product. They use standard cabinetry hardware to provide a

ready means of adjusting the tension of canvas at any time during the life of the painting.

Stretchers are sold alone or fully prepared with Belgian linen canvas made from flax.

Chris and Joe feel that aspen is the best wood for their product for another important

reason—sustainability of the forest resource and energy conservation.



Sustainability . . . the resource

Both are deeply committed to this. Chris is a forester by training and knows what constitutes good forest management and silviculture. Joe and generations of his family dating back to the Revolutionary War have made a living from this land and he wants to see that continued for many generations to come. The logs they purchase come from Maine forests close at hand; not half way around the world.

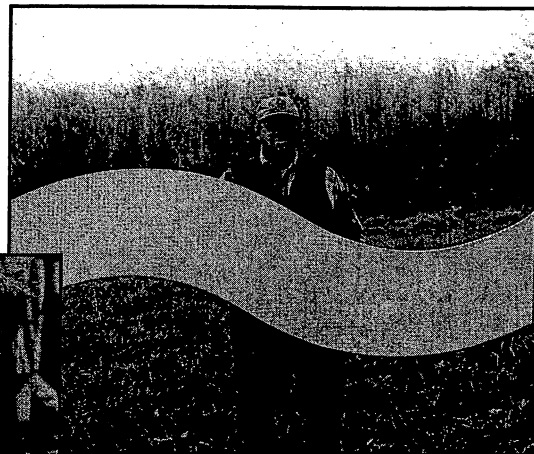
Although they do not specify only "green certified" logs, most of Twin Brooks Stretchers' logs come from the Seven Islands Land Co. which is certified as a "well managed" forest operation from Scientific Certification Systems of California. This kind of assurance is not always possible for woods imported from the tropics.

Chris and Joe are proud that they

have created a product that adds great value to an aspen log and that shows how the value of northern forests can be increased significantly making better management possible.



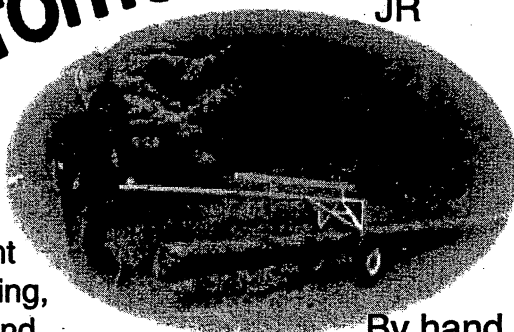
What's behind a painting? Next time you see a masterpiece in an art gallery, it is possible that what's



behind that painting is a stretcher made by the skilled artisans of Twin Brooks Stretchers. This stretcher from a truly renewable northwoods resource, combines ingenuity, skill and commitment to an idea—not unlike the work of art it supports.

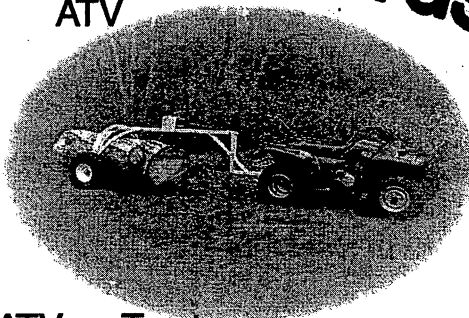
Tools Promoting Forest Stewardship For

Equipment
For Thinning,
Pruning and
Selective Harvesting

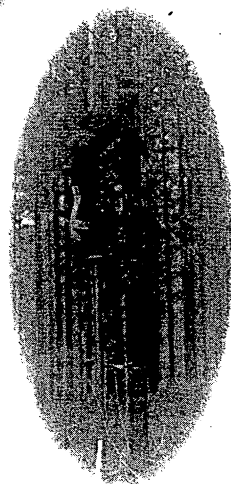


JR

ATV

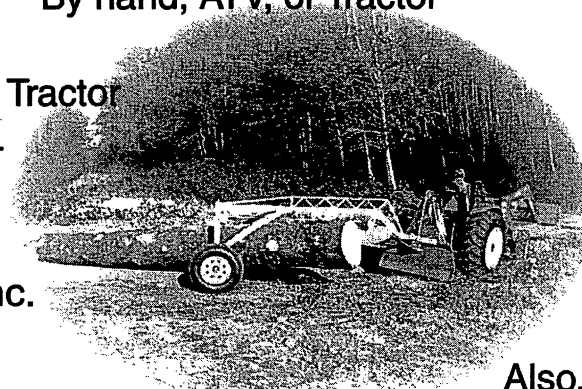


Ascender



By hand, ATV, or Tractor

Tractor



Also, fine saws

Future

Forestry

Products Inc.

Toll Free: 888 258 1445

www.futureforestry.com

Come see our booth at Million Acres in Minnesota Conference (March 2 - 3, 2001)

M I N N E S O T A

BetterFORESTS

Winter 2000-2001

Vol. V No. 4

Welcome to
BetterFORESTS magazine!
If you aren't already a subscriber,
we invite you to join as stewards of
the forests of the Midwest.



PUBLISHED BY

Kathleen Preece
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

PRINTED BY

ProPrint, Inc., Duluth, MN

COVERS

The front cover photos are by nature photographer, Scott Sharkey. The back cover photo was taken by Mimi Barzen, capturing the moment when her daughter first tasted the sweet sap of spring's maple sugar run.

BetterFORESTS is written for, and about Minnesota's 149,000 private forest landowners. It is published quarterly. Publishing office is at PO Box 432, Grand Rapids, MN 55744. Phone: 218-326-0403. E-mail: kathleen@uslink.net. FAX: 218-326-0892. Third class postage is paid in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

Subscription rates are \$15/year; \$28/two years. For rates outside the contiguous U.S., contact the **BetterFORESTS** Circulation Department.

A subscription to **BetterFORESTS** is available through the mail, or as a benefit of membership in the Minnesota Forestry Association.

Writers contributing to **BetterFORESTS** represent some of the most knowledgeable and experienced forest and natural resource managers. The information shared in **BetterFORESTS** is edited to be applicable, practical, and up-to-date, focusing on topics related to the management and stewardship of the state's natural resources, in particular, its forests.

BetterFORESTS welcomes submissions of articles and photographs from readers.

Advertising rates are available upon request.

MINNESOTA
BetterFORESTS

*"The small landowners
are the chosen people."*

Theodore Roosevelt

BetterFORESTS
Editorial Mission

- ▲ To inspire a stewardship ethic in private forest landowners by increasing their awareness of natural history, ecology of the land, and the principles of regeneration and sustainability
- ▲ To encourage timber harvesters, the gatherers of special forest products, forest land managers, and the purchasers of raw natural resources, to continually strive to improve the standards by which they utilize the forest's resources
- ▲ To raise the level of knowledge about, and provide a forum for, the discussion of environmental and natural resource issues

From the Editor

by Kathleen Preece, publisher

My father recently gave me 2-1/2 acres of land. The southeast border of that ground runs a gentle soft curve along a lake that is frequented by only a very few fishermen. The soils of the land are sandy and grow mainly jack pine, with the added bonus of a corner of oak/savannah grassland just holding its own and reaching a few fingers into one corner of the property.

My first reaction to this gift was, admittedly, one of "shock." That is not an appropriate response from someone who has just been gifted clear title to 2-1/2 acres of woodlands and a few hundred feet of lakeshore.

But that's not the whole picture. You see, for 30-plus years I have wandered those 2-1/2 acres—and many many more, including the 300-plus acres of forests and fields of my father's land that surround "my" 2-1/2. Name any one of Minnesota's many seasons and I can tell you where the sun first touches the field in the morning, and which trees are the last to cradle its light at dusk.

I know where the otters cross the spit of land between the two bays of the lake, and which trail the white-tails use to come to this woodland sanctuary in November. I even know the kingfisher's favorite willow overhang and the very perch he uses to celebrate a successful dive.

The deed that was handed to me for those 2-1/2 had delineations . . . it drew a line between the jack pine with the bent trunk and the gnarled oak that stands on the beach near the shore—just north of that kingfisher sentinel. The apple tree is "in," the plum tree is "out." I had never noticed boundary lines until I became this 2-1/2-acre property owner. To say that one side of that line is "mine," and the other is "not," doesn't feel right. A line across this land?

Now, mind you, I don't take lightly the red boundary flags marking the borders of my acres, nor the stakes driven into the ground that say "property line." My sense of both pride and humility in private land ownership overwhelms me.

In fact, it wasn't until those red flags were placed in the ground that I even noticed the solitary white pine seedling shaded and smothered under the grove of conifers huddled on the slope next to the lake. I pruned those jack pine branches, allowing more sunlight to pass through to that little tree. I did it because I felt as if that white pine were "mine" now. I walk those 2-1/2 acres with a new step, a more observant eye, and a more caring heart. I find that my sense of ownership carries with it a sense of guardianship.

I suggest that when you draw the boundaries of your land, draw them in pencil. Learn the green and the growing there; become familiar with the soils and listen for the songbirds between those pencil lines.

And then boldly redraw them—surround your neighbor's yard and your neighbor's neighbor. Draw in pencil so you can erase those lines and re-draw them—even more broadly next time, encompassing your school yard and enveloping the boulevards and parks of your community.

You might begin to take ownership. You might walk with a new step, watch with a more observant eye—care with a more caring heart. You will probably become more than just a visitor to the woodlands across the land.

This issue of **BetterFORESTS** is about sustainability—caring and respecting what we have today so there is a 'tomorrow' for those resources we cherish. Perhaps the most important message we can start and end with is this: Sustainability begins in your own back yard—be it 2-1/2 acres or a landscape.

IN THIS ISSUE

**Sustainable forestry
commitment to the future**
- 5 -

**Time to pick up
and move ahead**
- 6 -

**Sustainability
by the people
Tree Farmers**
- 8 -

**Sustainability
by the people
Woodland Stewardship**
- 11 -

**Sustainability
of the resource
More than pulpwood**
- 12 -

**Sustainability
of the resource
The house that John built**
- 14 -

**Sustainability
of the resource
What's behind a painting**
- 16 -

**Sustainability
a mark of excellence**
- 18 -

**Sustainability
and economics
The St. Louis County story**
- 26 -

**Minnesota Forestry Assoc.
the landowners voice**
- 28 -

**Lions, tigers and aliens
Oh no!**
- 32 -

**Woodland Owners Project
do it yourself**
- 36 -