



Made for
the holidays.

Miss. Turner

HANDMADE AMERICAN FURNITURE



The Moser Family's First Christmas in New Gloucester, Maine

In the days leading up to Christmas 1971, Mary Moser was growing anxious. Raised in a big family, her childhood Christmases had always been bustling and crowded, but this was the Moser family's first year in their new home in New Gloucester and their usual guests were away. Mary was also having trouble finding a gift to help her four sons feel at home, a "taproot," as she called it. Then something caught her eye at the curious shop Madam Dapeau's...

On Christmas morning, Mary passed out large boxes to Tom and their four sons and said, "Get changed." Inside the packages, her husband and the boys found historically accurate costumes from the 18th Century. They pulled out tricorn hats, the three-tipped hats popular during the Revolutionary War, and blouses with jabots, the frilly ornamental fabric.

The same thought simultaneously entered their minds: "Where on earth had mom found these costumes?"

Built in 1762, the Isaac Parsons house was the first wood-framed building in New Gloucester, and the property also held a second home constructed in 1781. Tom and Mary purchased both from the original descendants, and with nearly all the woodworking intact, the houses had floorboards made out of pumpkin pine, nine fireplaces, three Dutch ovens—even an outhouse. Tom would establish the first Thos. Moser workshop in the basement.



Tom and Uncle Paul on Christmas Day

Tom and the boys still remember that first Christmas as one of the best in family history. "The most important thing, the costumes shared the spirit of family," says Mary. "It was just a fun day."

The Moser family was joined by the couple across the road and Tom's students from Bates College, and everyone crowded around the white-pine trestle table Tom had made. In the years to come, the family used the table for everything. Mary and Tom planned the origins of the Thos. Moser furniture company at that table. When Mary transformed the family dining room into the first Thos. Moser furniture showroom, the trestle table sat at the very center. The family used it so much the legs would become loose at times, and Tom and his sons would sure them up by tapping tapered pieces of wood into the mortise and tenon joints. It would grow and change with use, building more character with each ding and scrape but never losing its beauty or functionality. "We build furniture for homes," says Mary.

More than half a century later, the table sits in the Thos. Moser archives and will be passed down to the next generation. With her sons and their families now visiting her and Tom for the holidays, Mary needs a much larger table to accommodate "the crowds."



Fostering the Next Generation of New England Craftsmen

Thos. Moser and the North Bennet Street School join forces to create a timeless collectible for a good cause.

On a late-fall day in Boston, students and faculty of North Bennet Street School (NBSS) work in a sun-filled woodshop. The scent of freshly chiseled and shaved cherry wood is warm and invigorating. The NBSS craftspeople are using recycled wood donated by our workshop in Auburn, Maine, to make timeless collectibles just in time for the holidays. The full value of every sale will benefit Toys for Tots, the U.S. Marine-run charity that gives Christmas gifts to children whose parents cannot afford them.

Our partnership with North Bennet Street School began in 2018 based on long-standing mutual admiration. Tom Moser has always believed it is our responsibility to educate the next generation of woodworkers, and he would often visit the school from the nearby Thos. Moser Showroom. Seeking new ways to support the school's activities, we reached out to NBSS to discuss forming a partnership and found common ground in Toys for Tots. The Thos. Moser Showroom had hosted a Toys for Tots community toy drive for a decade, and the school, which counts many veterans among its students, had been active with the organization for years.

From the start, the project gave NBSS students, alumni, and faculty the opportunity to work together on the same plane, ideas flowing freely from one generation to the next. They all agreed the collectibles should be inspired by a toy, but where should they find inspiration? They found the answer in one of the earliest programs at the school, woodworking classes for children.

Established in 1881, North Bennet Street School originally offered immigrants vocational training to help them find employment in their new homeland. The woodworking program instructed young, often poor children, and toy-making was central to the curriculum. In making toys, the children not only learned vital woodworking skills, they could also take the toys home with them.



Pouring over historical documents from the program, NBSS faculty discovered an adorable photo of toy rockers that looked like rabbits, as well as language that described the class participants as "little folks." NBSS selected the design as the basis for the collectible and naming it was simple: the "Little Folks" Rocker.

The design, at least 100 years old, was ingenious. The "Little Folks" Rockers actually rocked or walked when tapped on the head without any winding or gears. In fact, unless you kept a good eye on the little wooden rabbits, they would keep walking right off the side of a slightly inclined workbench. Beyond its ingenuity, the collectible celebrated the long line of New England woodworkers who had come before us as well as paid them the deepest honor in woodworking tradition: passing their hard-won knowledge and skills onto the next generation.

Through this collaboration based on mutual respect and admiration, Thos. Moser and North Bennet Street School released the 2018 prototype of the "Little Folks" Rockers for the Toys for Tots fundraiser just in time for the holidays. Only 10 were produced, and they quickly sold. The 2019 edition will feature up to 20 "Little Folks" Rockers. Each will be unique, bearing the original aesthetic of its maker, and, in a reflection of our practice of signing every Thos. Moser piece of furniture we create, each will also come with a card hand-signed by the NBSS craftsman who made it.