

Holmes County Folklife Fieldwork for Ohio State Arts Council
Performed by Michael and Carrie N. Kline, Talking Across the Lines, LLC
www.folktalk.org

Summary of Dan Raber Interview, January 12, 2009

Chris Sieverdes, a volunteer with the Holmes County Extension Service, referred us to Dan Raber, a young, skilled Amish woodworker, with a shop and residence about eight miles west of Millersburg, then right on Township Road 333 a couple of miles. Chris has been working with Dan to set up a cooperative of small-scale furniture makers in Holmes County and admires Dan's independent sense of design and craftsmanship.

We found Dan in his shop in a responsive frame of mind and willing to sit for a recorded interview. Over the next two hours Dan talked about apprenticing with his father, Eddie, from the age of fourteen. For three years he hand sanded pieces his inventive father put together and was not permitted to touch the power tools. By the time he was actually permitted to help his father with assembling a small table, he had all kinds of innovative ideas about how to clamp the table apron in place before attaching it to the top with wood screws. He is grateful to his father for insisting that he learn the basics, over time, and develop an uncompromising sense of high quality craftsmanship.



Today Dan produces a wide variety of custom products in his well-equipped shop for a number of satisfied customers. Dan also speaks at length about his desire to get into building black-powder rifles, his love of nature, and ability with survival arts. He traces his ancestry on both sides of his family to Delaware Indians and says that many Amish

families have Native American ancestry dating to the earliest period of Holmes County settlement by Europeans in the first decades of the 19th Century. He learned flint knapping with a deer-antler tool as a youngster, and has made arrowheads that were subsequently identified by a team of archaeologists as dating to the Paleolithic Period. The archaeologists were chagrined to learn from Dan that he had made the flint points only a few weeks earlier. Dan also spoke in glowing terms about the quality of Amish education. He himself won a presidential award for academic achievement in his final year of school in the eighth grade.

Photos: Two prints submitted by Dan Raber of a small table he built
Digital photos by Carrie N. Kline of Dan Raber's shop,
including a table nearing completion
Rabers Holz Shop Wholesale/ Retail Furniture business card