



*Historic Churchill Downs is among the featured landmarks to recently undergo restoration.*

# Restoring History

Four memorable projects in reproduction and restoration preserve the past.

BY BRAD WALSETH

In a woodworking industry currently hurting from a housing slump, one segment of the field seems to be holding up well, and that is restorations. From the east to the west, north and south, many woodworkers have found that renovation/restorations can be a specialty to focus their business on or a lucrative sideline. Restoring old buildings, often with important historical links, gives these workers a feeling of pride in knowing they have helped maintain an appreciation of history in an ever-changing world. Exhibiting meticulous craftsmanship, these projects remind the public of the dedication, skills and attention to detail that woodworkers showed in previous times, while proving that this high level of work still exists today.

But what are the challenges facing those who engage in restoration work? How are these types of projects priced? What percentage of overall business are restoration jobs for these firms? Is it really possible to earn a profit, or must historical restoration work simply be a labor of love for the business owner?

We posed these questions to four woodworking firms from across the United States, all of whom have been involved in recent restoration projects, and learned that while reproduction and restoration can make up a relatively large portion of a company's business, it can also be a very small, but rewarding part of another's.

Challenges faced by these businesses include everything from: providing high customer satisfaction; replicating the old styles accurately; matching older styles with modern ones; using older materials when possible, working with antiquated structures; getting all parties involved on the same page; outsourcing; governmental red tape; matching design vision with the realities involved; limited space; safety; and of course, the never-ending deadlines presented by time itself.

The clock is ticking away, and the plain fact is that most older buildings may be lost to the rushing onset of progress. But for those buildings that survive, gifted woodworkers will be there to restore them for the public to use and enjoy as long as they can.



*Respect for the rich tradition of horse racing at Churchill Downs includes tributes to famous jockeys of the past.*

# Down to the Wire

Kentucky Millwork had to race against time to complete this landmark renovation and an addition to Churchill Downs' stately clubhouse.

BY BRAD WALSETH

The stakes are high enough on nearly any job a woodworker takes on. But just imagine renovating a national treasure such as the clubhouse at the storied Churchill Downs racetrack, home to the most famous horse race in the world, the Kentucky Derby. The most expansive undertaking in the racetrack's long history, this project involved demolishing 220,000 square feet of the clubhouse, restoring existing areas and adding new features that not only preserved heritage and tradition, but at the same time upgraded and took the facility into the future. Such was the task for Kentucky Millwork and its partner on this project, Louisville Lumber and Millwork.

Much of the strategy Churchill Down's designers had developed was geared toward modernizing and turning the clubhouse into a full-service meeting, convention and special events facility that would draw business throughout the year, not only during the racing season. Additionally, the racing corporation sought to include the casual visitor by featuring educational displays of racing memorabilia, as well as comfortable elegance for all guests,

not just the well-heeled. Throughout the project, the primary idea was to ensure the new architecture would fit well with the existing structures, while golden-stained maple was selected as a contrast to the dark mahogany used in the past.

In an unusual arrangement, Kentucky Millwork teamed with its neighbors, Louisville Lumber and Millwork, to each handle specific elements of the beautiful woodwork that now graces the finished clubhouse. Kentucky Millwork has been involved in several past projects that involved restoration, including a new hotel in downtown Louisville that was built by combining four old buildings together, maintaining many old windows and doors and re-using old wood material in the process. But Partner Mike Bell says this type of work is an exception rather than the norm. "Almost all of our work (99 percent) is commercial," he explains. "My estimation is that restoration would be annually less than 5 percent."

According to Bell, one of the challenges they face on restoration projects in general is engineering the use of existing parts and



*The comfortable Silks Bar allows the "Sport of Kings" to be enjoyed by everyone.*



*Kentucky Millwork built chef's tables that contribute to the class and style of the new addition.*

pieces with newly milled products. "It was possible for us to do the engineering required," he says, "but to get the folks with the purse strings to understand the processes and complications that arise and the associated costs involved was a tremendous challenge."

An additional unique challenge encountered on the Churchill Downs project was working around the racetrack's busy schedule. The scheduled training of horses, meetings and the live racing calendar could not be interrupted by construction noise. So construction teams would sometimes need to break down a setup and return to it after an event. These abbreviated sessions added to an already truncated time frame.

"Everything had to be 100 percent complete before the running of the Kentucky Derby the second year into the project," Bell explains. "For the first Derby, held after the beginning of the new additions, the first floor spaces needed to be complete, and a small part (restrooms, etc.) of the second floor was to be ready for the temporary concessions setup. A tremendous amount of man-hours from many trades went into the project. And with an aggressive schedule, job coordination was a major issue."

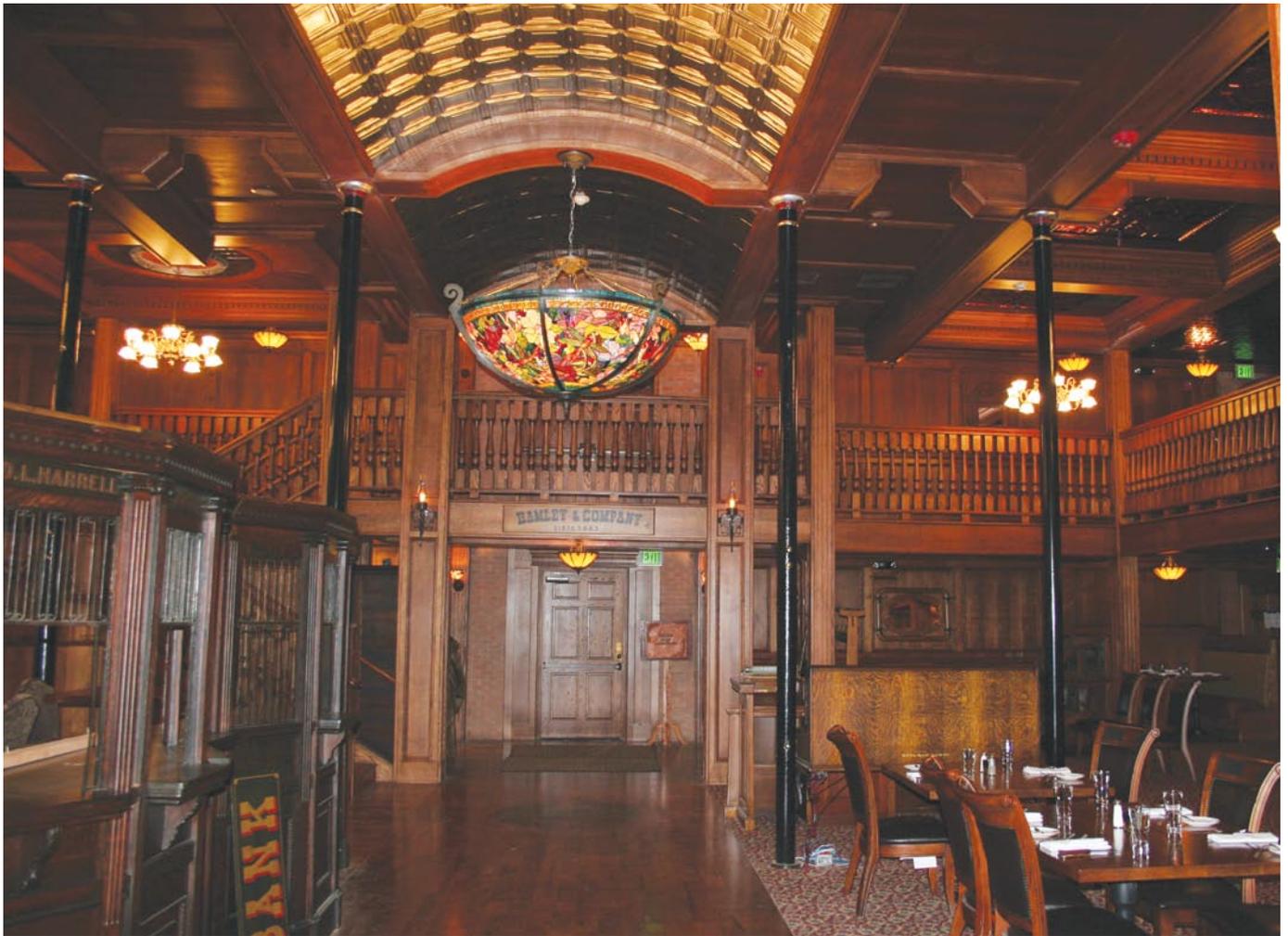
So does this restoration work allow for profit? Or is it mostly a labor of love? Bell explains, "Since we have bills to pay and

payroll to meet, we need to look at all jobs as profit sources. Over the years we have been fortunate enough to provide custom woodwork for many prestigious projects, including the borders on the flooring in the White House Oval Office. We enjoy participating in historic restorations and new monumental projects, but we cannot treat these projects as a hobby and still expect to expend the resources they require to maintain the level of excellence they deserve."

And how does Bell price this type of work? "With the new products we incorporate into older structures, we estimate our shop labor and material consistent with our operational method of estimating," he says. "When handling existing units that need to be rebuilt and restored, we typically do this work on a time-and-material basis. There are too many unknowns and variables with rehab work, especially installation. If the contractor, owner or developer acknowledges our unique capabilities with this type of work, they need to agree to compensate us according to pre-established shop rates, material markups and determined project engineering time. It is absolutely essential that a high level of trust underlines and underscores the working relationship of all of the players with this type of work."



*Warm maple with a golden stain was chosen as a contrast to the traditional dark mahogany used in the past.*



*This dramatic interior facade rises above patrons of Hamley's Steakhouse, which was built from part of a saddle manufacturing facility.*

# Shades of the Old West

An Idaho moulding company creates an Old West-themed steakhouse.

BY BRAD WALSETH

Pendleton, OR, is a place where the spirit of the Wild West still lives. Nestled in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon, on the historical Oregon Trail and next to the Umatilla Indian Reservation, this colorful town is the home of the world famous "Round Up," a rodeo that draws cowboys and cowgirls from throughout the West, competing for prizes in roping, riding and other skills.

Some of the competitors may be using leather saddles manufactured by Hamley & Co. of Pendleton. Hamleys is the oldest operating saddle manufacturer in the United States, having originally descended, the legend has it, from King Arthur's personal saddle-maker. The company has been operating out of the same building in downtown Pendleton for the last 101 years. When Hamleys recently decided to renovate a part of its building into a first-class, turn-of-the-century style steakhouse, Braided Accents, of Rathdrum, ID, got the call.

A section of the historic building, which is a full block wide, half a block deep and two stories high, was thoroughly gutted before the renovation could begin. "In my 37 years, I'm not sure I've ever done a project quite like this," says Clint Bower, owner of Braided Accents. "What was interesting was that there was not an architect on this project. The owners of the restaurant and building knew what they wanted, and they zeroed in on us to help them do it. It was a fun project for us because they gave us a lot of latitude and asked us what our thoughts were as to how to do what they wanted to do. It was a collaboration between us and them."

Braided Accents, founded in 1997, is a manufacturer of hardwood rope-accented mouldings, dentil crowns and specialty items. Its 22,000-square-foot shop employs 15 workers. According to Bower, they do not do a lot of restoration work, but this was a special situation. "There are just not a lot of projects out there that are



*More than \$130,000 of materials were supplied by Braided Accents for this project.*

so milling, moulding and lumber-intensive,” Bower explains. “There’s so much chrome and brass contemporary look out there now.

“We wanted our name on the project and wanted the involvement, because there is some added value in that,” Bower continues. Despite the inherent value of doing high-profile work, fair profit is still a part of the equation. Bower explains that they estimate the price on these types of jobs in much the same way as a normal job. “Basically, it starts at the very bottom, just like we do with our own product lines. For example, a customer says he needs a 5-inch crown moulding. We then figure that as a 6-1/2 or 7-inch piece of lumber. I don’t want to say you work backwards, you actually work forward. It starts with the cost of the lumber. Then knowing your labor, knowing what it costs to run it through a machine. It takes knowing what some of this high-end lumber sells for in the marketplace. When you can zero in on what your costs are to produce that product, then you can say what is a fair margin. But, I think, because this was a signature project, we did in fact give them good pricing.”

This enterprise presented several special challenges for Braided Accents, as Bowers explains. “The staircases are very dramatic, and we supplied all the wood. And we had some outsourcing, because we don’t do wood turning. So we had 350 of these red oak balusters made by an outsource. They also wanted a very big

handrail, which posed a bit of a challenge, because they wanted a big rail in quartersawn oak. We ended up gluing three pieces of lumber together to make this big rail. Then we had to do it in specific lengths to fit the job.

“There was also a little bit of radius work in the job where they wanted some curved mouldings,” he continues. “And we did some matching. They bought a tremendous amount of antique furniture from both the U.S. and Europe. They bought some furniture in Europe for one private dining room that is really dramatic. It’s floor to ceiling. So we had to do a little bit of matching of mouldings to match up to that situation.”

Braided Accents also had to overcome the additional challenge of distance, often making the 235-mile trip from Ranthdrum to Pendleton to oversee the ongoing process. “We’re not the biggest company in the world, but we do a good job, and we made a commitment to them last December, that we would have somebody on the job site every 10 days or more if required,” Bowers says. “That made them feel real good, and either myself, or my salesperson, or both tried to be there every 10 days, because there were a lot of unknowns. We stood in this dining room with them, I don’t know how many times, saying, ‘What do you think that ceiling should look like? How should we do this?’ It was a true collaboration. We really put a lot of attention into this, and it ended up being a terrific job.”



*The Baltimore Basilica was the first great metropolitan cathedral built in the United States.*

# Rebuilding the Basilica

When it was decided to restore Baltimore's famed Basilica, John Franz stepped in to recreate the original furniture.

BY BRAD WALSETH

When the United States Constitution was ratified in 1788, Catholics in the new country rejoiced over their newfound freedom of worship and determined to build a uniquely American cathedral to celebrate an end to their persecution. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, architect of the Capitol, volunteered his services to the effort, and by 1821, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was completed in Baltimore, MD. Considered by experts to be one of the world's finest examples of 19th century architecture, America's first Cathedral has seen nearly two centuries of history made inside its walls, including visits by Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa. In 2001, a campaign was launched to restore the historic Basilica to Latrobe's original vision. This worthy effort enlisted the services of John Franz Furniture and Cabinetmakers Inc. of Glen Arm, MD.

Selected from a short list of qualified craftsmen, John Franz specializes in architectural millwork, including custom furniture. Employing five men full time in a 6,000-square-foot shop, the company does 90 percent of its business in the commercial area, including law offices, corporate offices and lobby areas, reception areas, health care facilities and nurses stations, with a recent highlight being its work on the Northrup Grumman West Quest lobby renovation.

The winner of many awards over the years from organizations such

as the Associated Builders and Contractors, Baltimore Heritage Historic Preservation and a 1994 *Custom Woodworking Business Design Portfolio Award* (Commercial/Institutional Furniture), among others, Franz was the logical choice to provide reproductions of the original furniture in the Basilica.

"I've always been around antiques and really nice furniture and developed an interest early on," Franz explains. He apprenticed in a furniture shop from 1974 to 1977, when he opened his own shop with an emphasis on restoration and new reproduction furniture pieces. "For this job we had to submit our portfolio to the architect and general contractor for review. We had to produce shop drawings of the armchairs, side chairs, stools and kneelers. These documents will be kept in the Basilica archives for generations to come.

"The furniture that we made was from the home of the first Archbishop of Baltimore, Archbishop John Carroll (1735-1815)," Franz continues. "The pieces were probably made circa 1776-1800 and are believed to have been used in the Basilica.

"We were given one of each piece of the original furniture for us to reproduce," Franz continues. "We provided 12 kneelers, 12 side chairs, six armchairs and eight stools. All of the pieces were made with traditional joinery and finished with a full-filled conversion varnish satin finish.



*Franz was responsible for reproducing these kneelers and side chairs based on the original designs.*

“The chairs are made of genuine Honduras mahogany, which we had to hand-pick particularly for color, grain and quality. There is a small amount of poplar as a secondary wood below the upholstery. The front frame rails and the crest rails of the chairs are veneered with crotch mahogany veneer, just as the originals were.

“The stools are also made of mahogany. We veneered the bull nose moulding with crotch mahogany using a vacuum bag clamp.

“The kneelers are made completely of mahogany. The only surviving kneeler is a walnut one that is more or less of a Victorian style. We were given the job to restore the original kneeler to its original appearance. Then we were asked to use the original kneeler’s dimensions and general style to design a new kneeler that would fit better in style and appearance with the new chairs and stools.”



*John Franz’s designs for the reproduced furniture will be kept in the Basilica’s archives for generations to come.*

The upholstery was subcontracted to a local shop, but the woodworking itself posed its own difficulties. “The back post on the side chairs was a particular challenge,” says Franz. “We had to enlist the services of a shop with a 3-D CNC router to rough-out the profile for us to stay within budget and schedule. After that, the posts were all formed by hand.”

Getting these types of jobs is the direct result of Franz’s commitment to providing the highest level of professionalism. “We have the equipment and the talented personnel that know how to do these jobs,” Franz explains. Employees have a history of longevity and take pride in keeping to the high standards they have set. “We never make promises for deadlines we know we can’t keep. We are not afraid to say ‘no’ if we are too busy. We would rather deliver quality projects than try to put more through the shop quicker. We want slow and steady growth to maintain [no more than four or five jobs in-house at any one time]. That is what we are known for. We are conservative, and that is why we are still here when other shops have come and gone. It is a nice steady pace of growth.

“We got into architectural millwork because of our relationships with general contractors,” Franz adds. “They would call us and ask for doors or mouldings reproduced, and the relationships started growing. Although we work with five to eight general contractors, most of our work is negotiated. We rarely have to bid a job. We will usually get a call saying ‘Here are the drawings,’ and ‘Give us a price.’”

Helping to restore the original American archdiocese offered additional benefits besides monetary profit. “The best part about this project,” Franz says, “was the great personal satisfaction of working on a project of such historical importance and high profile.” Certainly, visitors to the historic Basilica will appreciate Franz’ efforts as well.



*Franz recreated the original kneeler and then used the dimensions and style to create new kneelers that would fit better with the chairs and stools.*

# Rising From the Ashes

New Orleans looks to the past for inspiration as it rebuilds from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.



*The facade on the new Williams Addition in the French Quarter recreates a historical 1850s hotel.*

## BY BRAD WALSETH

Perhaps no place in the United States better represents the importance of restoration better than New Orleans. Still reeling from the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans is attempting to recall its fabled past, while rebuilding for the future. Woodward Design+Build experienced first-hand the effects of Katrina. After the storm, both the corporate office and mill shop had four feet of water in them. A temporary office had to be set up, housing arranged for displaced staffers and arrangements made to use another company's shop. Now back on its feet with a new shop in place, Woodward's 180 employees are actively engaged in efforts to restore New Orleans to its previous glory.

One such project came about recently, when the Williams Research Center, home to a library of historically important documents and artwork, purchased a tin-roofed shed in the French Quarter with plans to house its growing Historic New Orleans Collection. In researching the property, it was discovered that the colorful Conti Verandah Hotel once stood on this site. Architect Davis Jahncke was hired to design the new addition, which con-

tains modern multi-purpose exhibition and programming space, along with three stories of art archival storage. Despite the modern touches inside, the street front of the building features a rose-colored stucco façade, false carriageway, chimneys, a covered gallery and shuttered windows, in an accurate historical recreation of the Verandah Hotel that stood on the lot in the 1850s. Woodward was hired to complete Jahncke's vision.

The Williams Addition offered several challenges to Woodward's team. "The entire structure is new, but located in the French Quarter. The design had to be approved by the French Quarter Architectural Commission," explains Woodward Project Manager Paul Nelson. "This is a City of New Orleans team, which has complete control over what can and cannot be done in the French Quarter. For instance, if you have a structure in the Quarter and want to just repair your front steps or paint them, you must first get permission for the repair and also get paint colors approved. A tough group, but very important, as we must maintain the historic nature of the Quarter."

Upon removing the tin shed on the property, Woodward was then required to put the job on hold for several months, while archeological excavations were completed on the site. Remains of Native American encampments were discovered, along with numerous liquor bottles and rouge pots from the 1820s. (This discovery led to speculation that the Rising Sun Hotel, that occupied the site before the Veranda, was actually the notorious House of the Rising Sun brothel, immortalized in the oft-recorded folk song, made most famous by Eric Burden and the Animals in the '60s).

Once work recommenced, multiple new challenges arose. Nelson lists a few: "The French Quarter has very narrow streets. Large trucks are not allowed in the Quarter. All deliveries had to be made with small trucks, making many trips. As the building took up the entire site, 65 feet by 65 feet, we had no lay-down or storage area. Everything had to be brought in and then installed within a very short time frame. When any delivery was made, which had the potential to stop traffic, we had to hire a New Orleans police detail to direct traffic away from our street: this was very expensive.

"We were putting up perfectly squared-up buildings against two buildings more than 150 years old, which as you can expect are not exactly square," Nelson continues. "Lots of copper flashing was needed between the two buildings to prevent rain from collecting between them. Finally, on the front of the building, specialty items had to be found which replicated the circa-1800 hardware: ornamental gallery steel, downspouts and columns."

Woodward was able to overcome these obstacles, and the end result is a stunningly beautiful structure that preserves the architectural heritage of the city. The first new construction com-



Architect Davis Jahncke based his design on architectural renderings of the Verandah Hotel.

pleted in the French Quarter since Katrina, many hope the Williams Addition will lead the way to the revitalization of the entire area. Woodward plans to be involved.

"For many years, the core of Woodward Design+Build work was all new commercial construction," Nelson says. "But recently, New Orleans construction development has turned to converting older historic buildings into residential units and/or hotels. In addition, since Katrina, many historic buildings were damaged by wind and

## European reliability at affordable prices!

### 2-year manufacturer's warranty

**ROJEK**  
1921

**PK 300A**  
Panel Saw  
w/ 102" Sliding Table

**MSP 415**  
16" Planer/Jointer  
Combo Machine

**PF 300L**  
Industrial Panel Saw  
w/126" Sliding Table

**RFS 415**  
16" Long  
Bed Jointer

**FSN 300A**  
Tilting Shaper  
w/Sliding Table

**VDA 316**  
Slot Mortiser

Visit us At  
[www.rojekusa.com](http://www.rojekusa.com)

800.787.6747

flooding. Woodward is now involved in many of these conservations and restorations, which make up perhaps 25 percent of our work.”

The Williams facade featured 21 pairs of shutters, which were custom made in Woodward’s millshop. “Our millshop has found that Spanish Cedar is an excellent wood for our projects” Nelson explains. “It is easy to work, has good grains, doesn’t split and is very resistant to our wet climate.

“Behind the first floor shutters, you can see the six pairs of French doors we built. The one large set of shutters is to replicate a carriageway, which would have been in the original building. Additionally, the top three floors all have custom made, double-hung windows with 1/4-inch laminated, missile-proof glass held by wood stops.”

Other challenges can arise in these types of projects, according to Nelson. “Developers and builders have great vision on the potential of older buildings: the challenge of construction comes when the work starts.” These issues include: foundations, which can be marginal for the new loads; marginal walls on old brick buildings, where additional structural support must be passed on to the existing foundations; other neighborhood entities (beside the French Quarter Architectural Review Commission) which can impact use and design; and unanticipated major water and/or termite damage to brick or wood framed structures.

But can historic restoration work prove profitable? “Yes, profit is placed into our price,” responds Nelson. “In addition, when we discuss the pricing with the owner, we usually include a contingency for all unknown items. If used, ok: if not, it is returned to the owners. We have a very experienced estimating department. As we become more and more involved in these projects, we continue to learn and apply lessons to future projects.”



Woodward used Spanish Cedar, known for its resistance to New Orleans’s wet climate, for the moulding.

# POWERED TO WORK... And Work. And Work.

Our DK1100 series of machines are the standard in the industry for drilling Pocket-Holes. We’ve packed a ton of functional features into these machines that set them apart from the competition. Choose from electric or pneumatic powered, free-standing or bench-mounted to fit the way you build.



**Demo Videos Available Online**

## OTHER KREG PRODUCTS



**FACE FRAME TABLE**  
Greatly speed face frame assembly with our pneumatic framing table.



**DK3100 MULTI-SPINDLE**  
Drill 2 Pocket-Holes in one machine cycle. Perfect for building face frames.

**FOREMAN SEMI-AUTOMATIC**  
Production machine for the small shop at a great price.



DK1100FE  
FLOOR STANDING  
ELECTRIC MODEL

DK1100FP  
FLOOR STANDING  
PNEUMATIC MODEL

DK1100TP  
TABLE-TOP  
PNEUMATIC MODEL



www.kregtool.com | 800.447.8638