

Custom Millwork

Nancy A. Ruhling



AE Sampson's work has been featured in award-winning projects, including Pond Farm, a compound designed by Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects that won a 2021 Palladio for Residential New Design and Construction—Less Than 5,000 Square Feet. Photo by Robert Benson »

A look at the top producers of historically-inspired millwork.

In home construction, architectural millwork, from cornices and crown mouldings to cupolas, has a long tradition.

Although the term itself is quite broad—it references any element made from wood—it doesn't begin to convey the artful aesthetics that it bestows upon residences of every era or the clever hand of the craftsman.

During the Golden Age of millwork in America, which was from 1880 to 1910, virtually every element in the home was made of wood. Today there is an abundance of products on the market, and custom options have never been more varied.

Here are some of the companies that are continuing the tradition in new—and old—ways, whether replicating a historic piece to preserve it for the ages or creating an array of traditional styles that suit the architecture of the period-style home.



Driwood Moulding Co., which was established in the 1890s, has 500 mouldings in stock. Photo by Driwood Moulding Co. »

AE Sampson & Co.
[AESAMPSONANDSON.COM](https://www.aesampsonandson.com)

Known for its custom millwork, Maine-based AE Sampson has replicated details in nearly every period architectural style. The company has more than 30 years of experience crafting and designing flooring, paneling, mouldings, stair parts, cabinetry, and architectural details.

“We are known throughout New England and beyond for delivering uncompromising quality,” says cabinetmaker Bournival, who is the owner and general manager of AE Sampson. “We believe in sustainability—we focus on sourcing local materials whenever possible—and beauty and authenticity, so we create products and modern heirlooms that are graceful, classic, and durable.”

The company’s products have been featured in several award-winning projects, including Pond Farm, a compound designed by Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects that won a 2021 Palladio for Residential New Design and Construction—Less Than 5,000 Square Feet.



Historic Doors, which has seven craftsmen on staff, creates custom doors and entryways as well as tracery and millwork as illustrated in this grand, private residence in Pennsylvania. Photo by Tom Crane Photography »

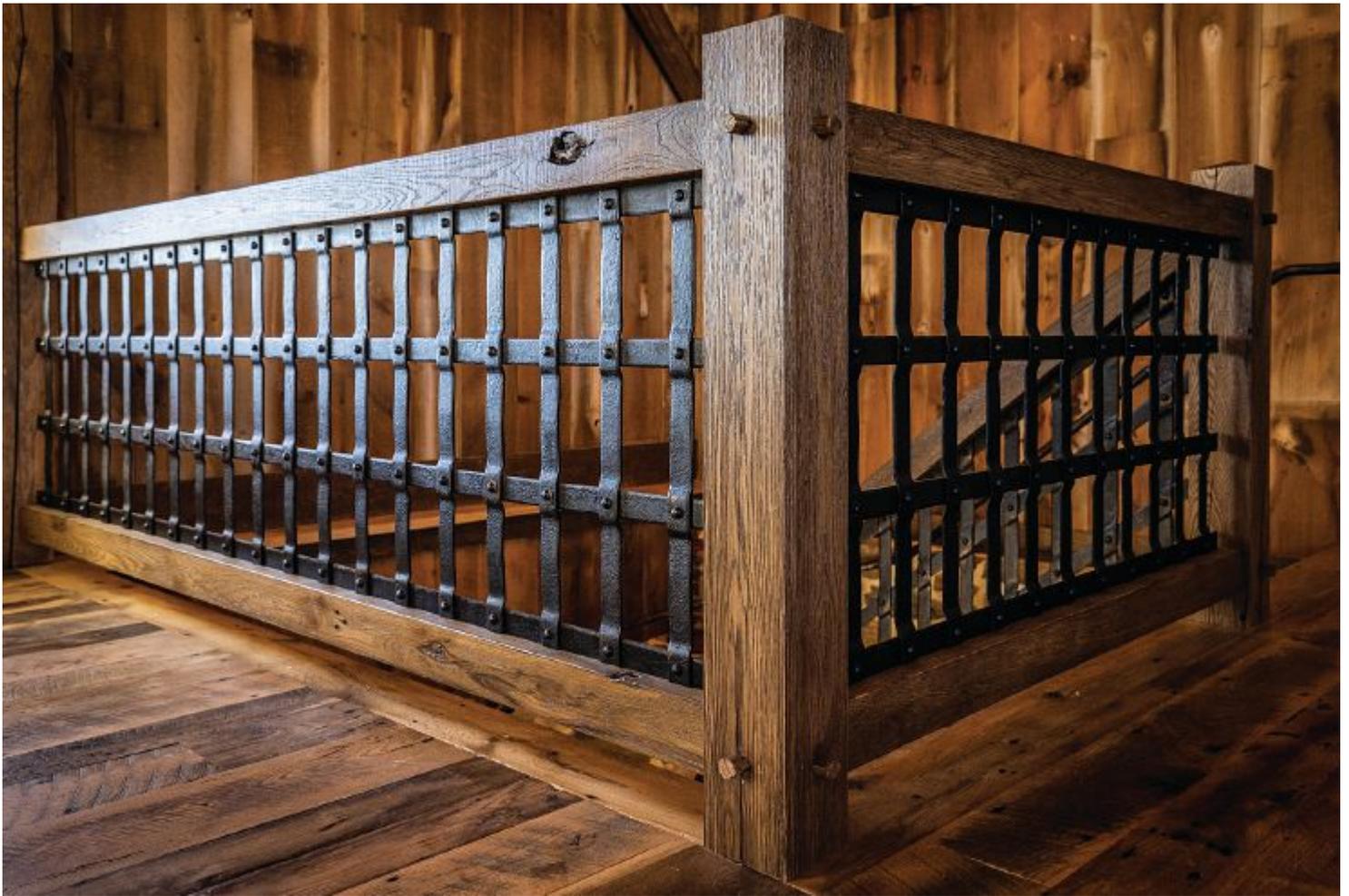
Bournival has devoted a lifetime to his craft. "I was raised in a 1790s Federal house that was a continuous restoration project over a period of 20 years," he says. "I worked side by side with my father while restoring many old homes, wooden boats, and beyond. I have experienced all phases of carpentry, construction, and woodworking first-hand."

Dimitrios Klitsas Fine Wood Sculptor
KLITSAS.COM

For more than half a century, Dimitrios Klitsas, a master wood carver trained in the classical tradition, has been producing wood sculptures, hand-carved furniture, and every type and style of architectural ornament.

He works solo on custom projects in his studio, a 40-foot by 44-foot converted barn in rural Hampden, Massachusetts.

In addition to being commissioned by Steinway & Sons to create a copy of a gold-leafed, Louis XV-style gilded piano that dates to the turn of the 20th century, Klitsas has done projects at Yale University, Fordham University, and the University of Michigan.



Vintage Millwork & Restoration offers a variety of products ranging from custom cupolas and custom entryways for homes to hammered forged iron work. Photo by Vintage Millwork & Restoration »

The 72-year-old carver, who was born in the foothills of northern Greece near Ioannina, learned his craft at the Ioannina Technical School, where he trained from age 13 to 17. He worked in Athens until he was 28 then came to the United States and opened his eponymous studio in 1985, a decade after he arrived.

Working from architectural drawings, photos, or objects, Klitsas creates and/or replicates architectural ornament. "My work is my living, but it is my hobby, too," he says.

"When you're making something good, it makes you happy." His studio has a workshop, a showroom, and a classroom, where he teaches students from around the country.

In 1994, he was awarded the Arthur Ross Award from the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art for ornamental woodwork chiefly in residences in the classical tradition, and in 2015, he received an official citation from the Massachusetts State Senate for being awarded the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Driwood Moulding Co.
DRIWOOD.COM

For more than a century, Driwood Moulding has been crafting embossed and plain-wood mouldings that replicate the look of hand-carved examples from 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century designs in a variety of styles, including Georgian, Colonial, Federal, French, Adam, and Williamsburg.

The seven-employee South Carolina- based studio, whose in-stock mouldings number more than 500, crafts the millwork on vintage precision equipment in its 540,000-square-foot woodshop.

“As craftsmen and keepers of a time-honored tradition, it’s our mission to bring beauty, history, and artistry into every space we touch,” says CEO H. Timmons Pettigru.

“Honed over decades, our precision process requires that every detail be architecturally correct in proportion, scale, and design. So every moulding, every piece of millwork, and every inch of paneling replicates the intricately hand-carved work of history’s greatest woodcrafters.”

The company, which designs and manufactures custom entrances and custom paneling and built-ins for residential and commercial projects, crafts casings, cornices, chair rails, panel moulding, mantels and fireplace surrounds, paneling and custom millwork.

It makes its mouldings from 100 percent popular but also works, upon request, in a variety of exotic woods, including mahogany, cherry, walnut, and cypress.

Driwood Moulding’s millwork has been installed in projects around the world, including in the public rooms of The Westgate Hotel in San Diego and in the historic Hobcaw Barony house in South Carolina.

“Our singular attention to detail is inspired by more than a passion for the process, by more than decades of diligent design—it’s inspired by those who love history, beauty, and artistry as much as we do,” Pettigru says. “Everything is made—by design—to last a lifetime.”

Heritage Restoration and Design

HERITAGERD.COM

A specialist in restoring and replicating architectural millwork for churches, historic buildings, office buildings, health-care centers, and private homes, Heritage Restoration and Design also builds custom furniture for churches and designs and restores art glass and other artworks, including oil paintings and statuary.

The company, which has a 56,000- square-foot studio, uses CNC technology and 3D scanning for its projects.



This project, with millwork by Zepa Industries, won the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art's 2020 Julia Morgan Award for Craftsmanship and Artisanhip. Photo by Durston Saylor »

“That said, even with all of today’s technology, it often requires us to do our work the old-fashioned way with chisels and mallets,” says Sir Michael Berlinger, the company’s president.

Heritage Restoration and Design, which is based in Illinois, traces its history to 1820 in Germany. In 1965, it set up shop in the United States under the name Alois Berlinger Painting.

It won a 2018 Docomomo Award for Excellence for its part in restoring the interior trim and light fixtures for Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois.

Other clients include the historic Reddick Mansion in Ottawa, Illinois; the Natural History Building at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Zion Lutheran Church in Ottawa, Illinois; St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church in Las Vegas; and Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Alexandria, Louisiana.

It is the firm's meticulous attention to detail and its ability to develop tailored solutions for clients that sets it apart.

For example, when Heritage was commissioned to replicate and build a new staircase that was to be placed next to its 150-year-old counterpart, "we worked some serious millwork magic and were able to get the replica's wood to match in grain, color range, and color depth," Berlinger says. "We even worked a hundred years' worth of simulated wear into the newel posts to bring the artistry together.

Berlinger considers it a privilege to work on historic homes and buildings because "I like making an impact on our culture by preserving and restoring the buildings of yesteryear with the technology of today."

Historic Doors **HISTORICDOORS.COM**

The woodworking services of this family-owned company, which specializes in custom exterior and interior doors and entryways and traditional joinery, extend to tracery and millwork and replicas of historic architectural elements.

"An entryway is the centerpiece of a building and can be considered the keynote of its design," says Steven Hendricks, owner of Historic Doors, which has seven craftsmen on staff. "We take our inspiration from great architecture. We interpret it from a classical perspective, building new architectural elements using traditional construction. With an eye for overall composition, we strive to produce work that is in harmony with its setting."

Established in 1981, the Pennsylvania-based company, which won a 2016 Palladio Special Award for Craftsmanship, has done work for churches and private residences around the country.

Clients have included Princeton University, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Pennsylvania, Vassar College, Yale University, Bryn Athyn College, The Plaza New York Hotel, and Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

"We build with quality and longevity in mind," Hendricks says. "Years from now, our doors will still be adding to the value of the house."

Hull Works **HULLWORKS.COM**

Dedicated to the craft of architectural millwork, residential construction, and historic restoration, the craftsmen at Hull Works, using traditional woodworking methods and materials, create custom windows, doors, cabinetry, paneled walls, stairs, mantels, trophy rooms, mouldings, and trim.

The portfolio of the Texas-based firm includes institutional and commercial restorations, some of them National Register properties.

“Everything we do is based on historical precedent, using the millwork catalogs and design books of the period,” says Founder/ Owner Brent Hull, who established the company in 1994. “Our architectural millwork components exude authenticity and a patina of the past.”

The winner of numerous awards, including the John Staub, Hull Works was a key supplier for the Lake Forest Showhouse Garden Folly that received a 2021 Palladio for residential craftsmanship.

The company has done projects at the San Antonio City Hall, the Texas State Capitol, The Pittman Hotel in Dallas, and Hotel Settles in Big Spring, Texas.

Hull Works has a specialty millwork division for historic window restoration for residential and commercial projects.

“We rebuild, replace, and replicate steel and wood windows,” Hull says. “Our adroit use of traditional materials and historic glass contribute to reviving the characters of historic hotels, heritage courthouses, and landmark depots.”

T.J. Millwork

TJARCHITECTURALWOODWORK.COM

Founded in 2002, the father-son company T.J. Millwork specializes in all types of architectural millwork for commercial and residential projects and also does replications of historic pieces.

“My dad has over 50 years in the business,” says co-owner Terence P. McGuire, adding that the company makes cabinetry, stairs, windows, doors, trim, wall units, and some furniture and does period restoration using traditional mortise and tenon joinery, zinc interlocking weather-stripping, period-accurate restoration glass and hardware.

T.J. Millwork, which is based on New York’s Long Island and works on projects in the New York City metropolitan area, recently built windows and doors made of reclaimed heart pine for a historic house in Sag Harbor, New York, and just completed a three-year project at the historic 19th-century Church of St. Luke in the Fields in Manhattan that included fabricating millwork, stairs, and handrails.

Vintage Millwork & Restoration

VINTAGE-MR.COM

Vintage Millwork & Restoration specializes in custom doors, front entryways for homes, house and barn packages, custom restoration windows, custom cupolas, farm tables, liveedge tables, tack room accessories, hammered forged-iron work, and hinges.

The Pennsylvania-based company, which is the sister company of B&D Builders, works in a variety of woods, including sapele mahogany, white oak, western red cedar, Spanish cedar, and reclaimed white oak.

B&D Builders, which was established in 2000, was one of the key suppliers for the Star Barn, which won the 2021 Palladio Award for commercial interior design.

“Our design, lead time, and the fact that everything is made in-house from start to finish set us apart,” says General Manager Amos Fisher, adding that the company also replicates old windows, millwork, and designs reclaimed white oak doors that are engineered to look original.

“Our restoration is authentic,” he says. “We are the place to go to for custom beauty that will bring your dreams to reality. We are a group of skilled builders, designers, project managers, and millworkers dedicated to quality craftsmanship and your success.”

Zepa Industries

ZEPSA.COM

A family-owned and -operated manufacturer, Zepa Industries specializes in custom architectural millwork, monumental stairs, architectural metals, flooring, yacht interiors, furniture, and interior doors.

Established in 1981, the Charlotte, North Carolina-based company has facilities in New York, Florida, and California that total 100,000 square feet of production space.

“We mix old-world craftsmanship traditions with modern technology,” says Brian Zepa, vice president of business development. “We have the mindset of a small studio shop, and we collaborate with some of the top-tier architects, designers, and contractors in the country.”

He notes that Zepa Industries has experience in all manner of custom work—everything from replicating historical staircases and interior door packages to producing private libraries and tailor-made chef’s kitchens—and works in a variety of materials, including wood, metal, glass, and stone.

The company has completed a number of high-profile projects over the years.

Most recently, for the historic Trinity Church in Manhattan, which completed construction in 1846, Zepa recreated the building’s oak interiors.

Throughout its history, the company has won a variety of awards, including the 2020 ICAA Julia Morgan Award for Craftsmanship and Artisanry, and is the recipient of six AWI Standard of Excellence Awards.

Zepa was a key supplier in G.P. Schafer Architect’s residential project “A New Residence in the South,” a home that won a 2021 Palladio Award for residential new design and construction.

“We provide a turn-key service from design through production and installation,” Zepa says. “We do not outsource our work; it is all handled in-house to ensure quality and timeliness.”

ADDITIONAL KEY SUPPLIERS

Kennebec Co.

Kolbe Windows & Doors

KSD Custom Wood Products

Parrett Windows & Doors