



Frederick Williamson

Fred Williamson lives and works in Crozet, Virginia. Largely self-taught, he has been carving and turning wood since 1971. An active member of the Artisans Studio Tour, his work has been part of shows throughout the the mid-Atlantic region. Of the vessels displayed here, Fred says:

“Turning bowls straight from the log allows me to bring out the beauty of wood with much artistic spontaneity. I love to work with local trees felled by storm, disease, or old age. Most logs are from within a 30-mile radius of my home and there is a strong element of the found object. People often call me about a tree that came down at their home, perhaps wanting a bowl to preserve memories, or I notice one along the road. “Polished smooth and dried to a stabilized state, these thin arcs of wood display the character and history of a tree, bringing out the inherent beauty of figure and grain which the finish brings to life. The whole process preserves a bit of the soul of the tree. I have been much inspired by ancient Hopi, Pueblo, and Casas Grandes pottery. I find myself turning to simpler and simpler shapes, as a clean curve says it all. I consider myself a fine artisan doing artistic work.

“Each of my bowls begins as a chosen section of log, chain-sawn to rough size, and screwed onto the faceplate of my homemade lathe. Peculiar details such as grain, color, texture, knots, burls, ant holes, or spalting often determine the final shape. Those traits are my palette and my glazes, with a clear finish used to bring out the natural color of the wood. Because my bowls are turned thin, they warp rather than crack as they dry to their final state. None is perfectly round, and each is unique. Much risk is involved, since what is cut off can't be replaced. It takes concentration, strength, patience, and tolerance of showers of shavings to complete a piece and be rewarded by the bowl's glow when the oil is applied.”

Woodworking has been my passion and my profession. Much of my lifestyle is

homemade or homegrown, from the tools I use, to the house we live in, to our large blueberry patch. I work alone in my shop, surrounded by the beauty of Sugar Hollow in the foothills of the Shenandoah Mountains. We live close to the land and close to the seasons. Maple, cherry, walnut, oak, ash, apple, peach, poplar ... there is so much rich variety in our area.