

Immigrant enriches America with his Irish furniture

He may be one of thousands of Irish immigrants who reluctantly left the Holy Ground in the early 90's to find himself happily settling in the States 10 years later. But Gabriel McKeagney's adventurous - and sometimes tumultuous - journey from Northern Ireland to Southern California brought him culturally closer to his roots as he moved geographically further from home.

Ironically, here in the land of pop and plastics, Gabriel McKeagney, a fifth-generation village carpenter and woodcarver who hails from Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, rediscovered the Ireland of his ancestors and founded Irish Furniture, LLC. Gabriel is a true master of his craft and has chosen to use his talents to recreate a lost element of Irish history: its artistry in woodwork.

Working in the vein of the medieval village carpenter who created work specially commissioned by the local Irish Chieftain, Gabriel's work allows people to touch and feel something that had been destroyed by the ravages of time, weather and foreign invaders. With an innate knowledge of the Book of Kells and Celtic Oral

Tradition, Irish furniture embodies the beauty and humor that distinguishes Irish culture. Very little ancient Celtic furniture has survived the ages, but by incorporating carved designs from the Book of Kells, Irish Furniture has intuitively recreated a thousand year old history.

Gabriel's passion for things Celtic is not limited to woodwork. His knowledge of Irish history, trades work and traditional music is equaled only by his anthology of entertaining gypsy and fairy stories.

Arising from his love of Irish culture, Gabriel was naturally enchanted by the haunting tones of Uilleann pipes, and has been playing the in-

strument for several years. He is one of only 2,000 worldwide, and founder of the Southern Californian Uilleann Pipers Club, which now boasts over 30 members and hosts an annual Tionol.

Gabriel grew up surrounded by old tools, artifacts, and stories of cartwheel construction. He spent his apprenticeship in Ireland making custom furniture and constructing new homes. He then spent three years in London, England, specializing in architectural reproductions of historical woodwork in many of London's preserved buildings.

Gabriel permanently moved to southern California in 1996, and in

1998, founded Tempo Carpentry & Design, Inc. By providing its clients with exceptionally artistic and architecturally pure woodwork, TCD has become the foremost designer and maker of European woodwork in Orange County, California. He lives with his wife and three children in San Juan Capistrano, California.

For more information, please visit their website at www.irishfurniture.com.

