

Spring Fling Shocco Springs, Alabama

March 23-27 2026

On March 23 through March 27, 2026, the IWCS Spring Fling was again held at the Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama. The meeting was, by all accounts, a very successful fun, educational and interactive event. A special thanks to Patti Dickherber and Elaine Hunt who stepped in and hosted the meeting when Gary Roux was taken ill. Well planned, well executed and job well done! Thanks!



Figure 2 Members at the Bagley Conference Building

The Shocco Springs Conference Center is an amazing place and the staff are absolutely superb. From the moment you arrive until departure they make you feel like family and work hard to meet our needs. Could not have asked for a nicer venue for the event.

This year the meeting started out with a Bang! Literally! A few members arrived early on Sunday to do coordination with the facility and start setting up the conference. About 3 in the afternoon Jim Dominick was standing on the balcony near his accommodation looking at a very large, old White Oak (*Quercus alba*) that has been on the property a long time before the facilities were built here. He

noticed the tree seemed to be leaning out toward the road at a much steeper angle than in past years. Jim noted he was thinking that tree is going to fall sometime in the near future. As Jim walked away there was a loud Crack! Bang! As he turned around the tree started to slowly fall with tremendous noise

as the rotted base of the tree cracked and snapped and then collected the power lines with transformers popping, sparks flying and finally came to rest across the road. Jim swears he and IWCS had nothing to do with the tree falling even though IWCS did benefit from some beautiful wood.



Figure 4 The stately Oak after falling



Figure 3 Ground crews cleaning up the down tree

Later Grounds and power crews worked through the night

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and into Monday morning to restore power and clear the roads. Setup continued Monday morning with members arriving throughout the day.

First silent auction was set up by noon and was closed at 8 PM. As usual members and corporate sponsors were generous and the donations allowed us to run 6 different auctions over the 4 days. Each silent Auction included some amazing and beautiful wood specimens as well as power tools, glue, finishes, sealer, hand tools, and Wood literature.



Figure 6 Irony to say the least



Figure 5 Bootjack Blanks waiting to be assembled and finished

Tuesday started off with puzzles and crafts which continued throughout the meeting for something to do in participants' spare time. This year one craft was beadwork. Good eyesight and a lot of patience was certainly required to do that. I doubt I would be very successful.

The first workshop was an excellent idea. Bootjacks. Something so simple and useful and done with beautiful woods. Eric and Violet Oman provided boot jack blanks that had been premade along with necessary parts and hardware. Members did all final sanding, assembly and finishes. The end product looked more like a work of art than a household tool.

Joe Sanders once again showed his skill in turning small intricate objects from some beautiful wood specimens. This year he demonstrated turning a Birdhouse Ornament. The finished ornament looks quite simple but certainly takes some skill to make such a delicate object.

Robert Brulotte did something different with his craft workshop. Instead of a strictly wooden project, he showed and help members make their own tree branch necklace. This is made from a small slice of a beautiful tree branch along with a leather chain to make an elegant piece of Jewelry.

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Figure 10 Making a Tree Branch Necklace



Figure 9 Tree Branch Necklace

Jim Dominick provided a presentation which included a brief on the events of the IWCS Meeting held in Porto, Portugal in September 2025. This provided some eye opening information and details on how wonderful the meeting was both from a wood and also from a cultural perspective. Several of our members have not attended one of the international events and realized that they really need to go to one. A very enjoyable trip and great learning experience. Jim Also gave an overview of a jig he designed that bolts onto his sawmill to allow him to mill large pieces of logs that are short in length. Pieces that are too short to be properly dogged onto the mill. The jig allows Him to safely cut pieces that might otherwise become firewood. These pieces can produce some amazing pieces such as crotch wood.



Figure 8 Jim Dominick Briefing Porto, Portugal



Figure 7 Jim by a Sapele Log waiting to get milled in Porto

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Jon Minerich brought a different perspective for his demonstration. Instead of just turning wood a piece of wood into a beautiful object, he provided some very interesting information and how to on finishing your turned project. Jon's demonstration and information was of particular interest to all. He covered texturing, dyes, stains, and the various final finishes. He also demonstrated the newer Nano technology for finishes with UV lighting cure. Along with the demonstration Jon provided a nicely done handout with the various products available and sources for all. Thanks Jon!



Figure 12 Some of the art and eye catching finishes of Jon Minerich



Figure 11 Fluorescent Wood demonstration

While other demonstrations, crafts and workshops were happening Violet Oman set up a demonstration table with various wood specimens that have fluorescent properties when put under a black light. This demonstration was left in place for the full day so members could test and look at the various specimens at their leisure.

Art Lee provided a very interesting brief on Nobel Prize proceedings, and another great workshop. Art was fortunate to actually attend the Nobel Award ceremonies in Stockholm Sweden as his brother in law was awarded a Noble prize! The brief was excellent and very informative for something that most members had probably not known about before. Art's workshop was a simple but beautiful project.



Figure 13 Mark Hauser and Beth Senne Duff crafting their letter openers.



Figure 14 Sample letter openers

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Taking beautiful samples of wood and carving / making a letter opener. Several of the attendees crafted one or more letter openers. Great Idea Art!

As usual with the IWCS meetings, lumber sales were a big hit. Once again, Ben Trickett and his crew volunteered their time and sawmill to mill several logs that been donated by himself, Shocco Springs and Mother Nature. Ben owns a local tree service in Talladega and during the year sets aside some logs he thinks might be of interest to our members. He and his crew work for 3 days donating their time and equipment to provide the lumber that makes up the largest part of our wood sales each year. Thank you



Figure 16 Some of the many logs donated for milling and lumber sales



Figure 15 Gary Green and Beth Senne Duff discussing the price of the lumber

so much Ben! Also a very big thanks to Gary Green, John Roper and John Burris for donating much of their time at the meeting to coordinate and sell the lumber. Of course we all know they do it because they just love the smell of the freshly cut wood and sawdust everywhere! Something we can all relate to!

The craft auction was held Wednesday evening. Again our generous members donated some very nice pieces of their work, wood books, homemade candy, walking sticks, and some beautiful specimens of exotic wood. It was a very good auction with Bob Chastain as the auctioneer with help from Jim



Figure 18 Some of the items donated for the craft auction



Figure 17 Members reminiscing before the craft auction

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Dominick and Art Lee. The jokes, the lies, the laughter and camaraderie made for a very fun evening with generous donations from our members.

The last event of the week was the wood auction. There were significant donations of domestic woods and some very nice pieces of exotic and hard to find woods. Mark Hauser was our auctioneer again this year. He was assisted by Gary Green, John Roper and others. The auction started out slow but picked up in intensity as some of the more desirable pieces came to the block. There was also wood from the logs that were milled over the past few days. Although generous in bidding, members still got real bargains on the wood compared to retail sales. Trucks were loaded and some had to relinquish some pieces to others as their enthusiasm for the beautiful wood was greater than the vehicle capacity they had to carry it home.



Figure 20 Very nice pieces of Texas Mesquite



Figure 19 The Auction is underway

Some other photos of the Meeting:



Figure 22 Bingo was very popular



Figure 21 Dave Munger and Mark Hauser Making a letter opener

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Figure 26 Members displaying their craft / art



Figure 25 More member crafts



Figure 24 One beautiful Boot Jack



Figure 23 The beautiful work/art of Bob Dickherber

After an amazing week of sharing our passion for wood, renewing and making new friendships, enjoying the camaraderie, and the sheer fun we had, the Spring Fling 2026 came to a close. Everyone loaded up their bounty of wood and other items and said good byes until the next meeting in Shipshewana, Indiana September 8 – 13, 2026.

James Dominick Member # 10070.