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## Faircloth And Croker

Nine years ago, Phil Faircloth and Joe Croker were building cypress chairs under a shade tree. Now their cottage industry is a thriving enterprise.

Working out of a log cabin in Rising Fawn, two half brothers are attracting national attention with their rustic furniture.

By Ellen Mason Exum

**P**ulling into the dirt driveway off Highway 11, about the only sound that you hear is the loud rustle of the leaves of the oak tree outside the cabin. A hundred feet high and at least a hundred years old, the tremendous tree is a fitting symbol for both the house and the business conducted there. Phil Faircloth and Joe Croker make what is arguably the finest handmade furniture in the country, and this log cabin is their central production office. Nestled in the valley between two long ridges, the humble homestead is a tranquil spot — far from



This rustic birdhouse is modeled after a favorite Florida fishing stop.

the mayhem of factories and the hubbub of city life.

The wind blows there in great gales and gusts. You can see it cut its way across the ridges and hills in wide diagonal shafts. Its gusts blow progressively across the deciduous sea that surrounds the cabin. Empty and inviting, an oak porch swing sways in the strong breeze that blows up onto the wide porch. Yet step inside the cabin, and you'll hear the dramatically different sounds of a world in which slender willow, pliant pine and hard hickory are transformed from limb into lumber.

The shrill sounds of a power saw and a whining drill can be heard coming from both the back and side rooms. When the drills die down, you can hear voices. Someone in the workroom needs help in carrying some chairs and a custom order is being double and triple checked before it's shipped across the country. The cacophony stops intermittently, only when the phone rings or when a visitor stops in to see the showroom.

There is activity in virtually every room of the cabin, and no time is more busy than the early morning hours. Piles of wood shavings create a carpet of sorts on the cement floor of the large workroom. Skinny strips of shaved bark cascade off counters, and the walls are lined with various types of lumber, seasoned and cut into different lengths. You can't smell anything but wood. The aroma of pine mixes with

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Joe Croker cuts willow ends or twice a week.



Above: A caner creates a stark silhouette.

At Left: Patsy McCutchen constructs an Americana birdhouse.



At Right: Shelves of hardwood fill Phil's workshop.



At Right: The cabin's gorgeous showroom contains many different styles of rustic furniture.