

# Brooklyn Craftsman Turns Antique Warehouse Timbers into Heirloom Tables

**BROOKLYN, N.Y.** – Ralph Gorham is building heirloom furniture from antique New York City warehouse timbers.

Gorham, the owner and founder of Brooklyn Farm Table, handcrafts custom tables with lumber he mills from antique Mississippi Heart Pine beams.

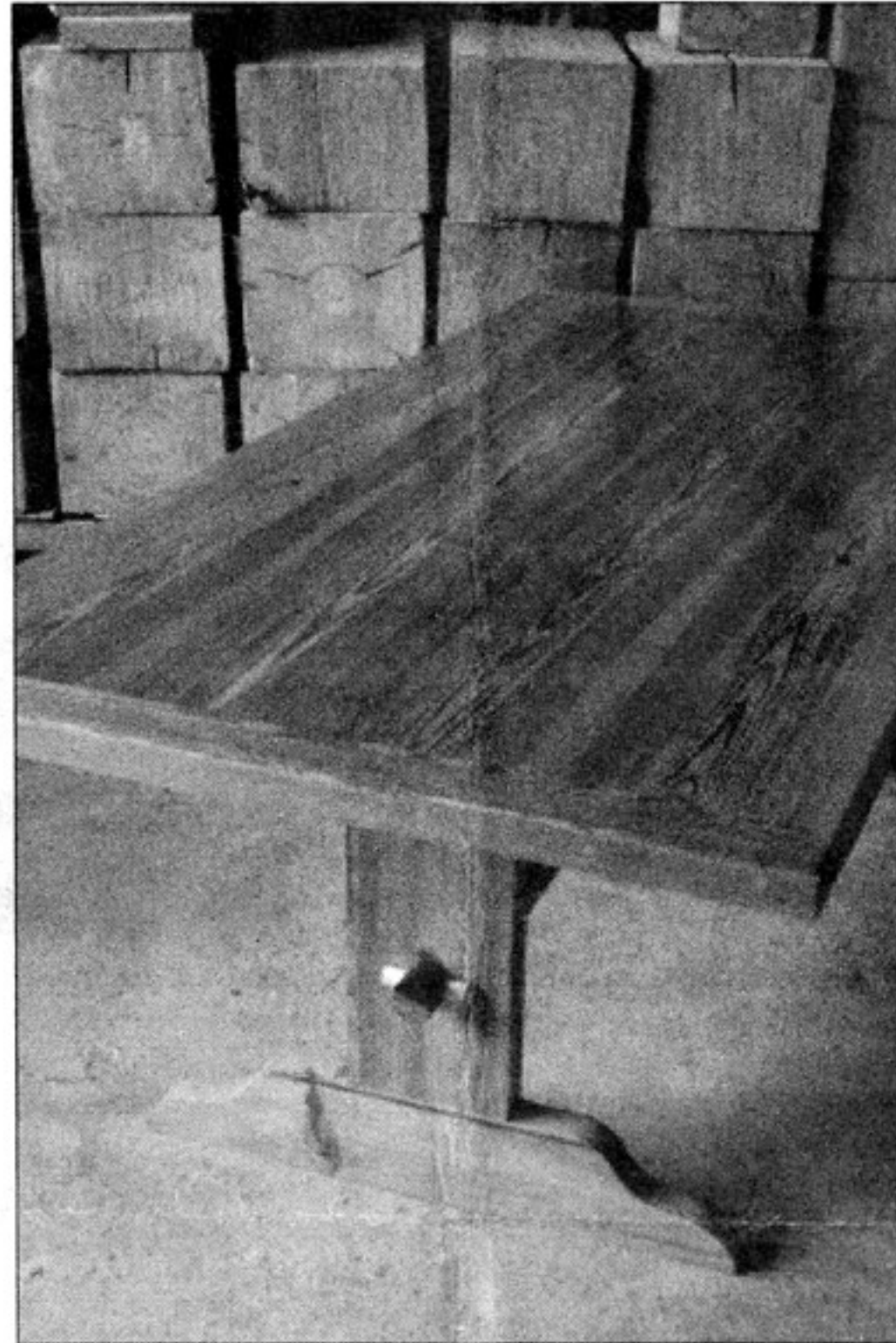
Looking for a change from the pressures associated with his profession as a contractor in New York City, Gorham began building custom dining tables for friends using standard furniture grade pine.

“Through my connections in construction, a guy called me up one day and said, ‘Ralph, I’ve got all these beams that we have to take out. I don’t know what they are. Come down and take a look at them, but you have to take them all out,’” Gorham remembered.

It turns out those timbers were actually 10 to 22-foot, 10-inch by 10-inch and 10-inch by 16-inch structural beams, each weighing nearly 2,000 lbs. and made of Heart Pine. Gorham took as many timbers as he could back to his Brooklyn shop and began crafting classic trestle-style tables of 100 percent antique wood with two-inch thick tops, breadboard peg ends and butterfly matches.

The custom tables can sell for \$7,000, with an eight-foot table weighing between 300 and 400 lbs. The largest table he’s made to date measures 18 feet long and 54 inches wide.

“The tables aren’t perfect because the wood’s not perfect,” Gorham said. “We stain them and we use tung oil. They’re not cheap – they’re just amazingly beautiful.”



**One of Ralph Gorman’s Brooklyn Farm Tables along with remnants of the antique timbers used to create the tables.**

Gorham said that because of the disposable society we live in, people aren’t investing in furniture that they’ll pass on to their children.

“I make family heirlooms. That’s what I make,” Gorham said.

Just getting the wood prepared to work with is a job. Nails, hardware, bolts, and lead-based paint are often found on the timbers and must be removed before remilling begins. Despite all the hazards the beams might contain, Gorham said the beams he once removed for free are now in demand and would sell for between \$500 and \$1,000, in part because the salvage business has become so popular in New York City.

“One person’s junk, I see what it could be.”

Gorham works in other materials as well, such as marble, but said that the tables crafted from antique wood are by far the most popular. That popularity is also evident in the architectural salvage industry overall, which makes finding the wood a growing problem for Gorham. As a result, nothing is wasted. Scraps are fashioned into small benches and cutoffs from the timbers have even been turned into clothing display cases for retailers.

Gorham said he’s worked with a wide variety of woods, and really doesn’t have a preference for the type of wood he works with. “As long as it’s old or exotic.”

Brooklyn Farm Table can be reached at 718-797-2679 or [www.brooklynfarmtable.com](http://www.brooklynfarmtable.com)