

# Great Northern Art: Hand Crafted Birdseye Maple now sold at the Lodge

written by Annika Carter | June 27, 2019

We are now selling hand crafted birdseye maple in our Lodge Life Shop here at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge. These products are made by Keweenaw local Frank Kastelic from Gay, Michigan. Frank is born and raised in the area, but after a number of years away, he has retired back in the area. Frank and his family have some background with the Lodge, with his grandfather serving as groundskeeper in the 1950s. He remembers coming to visit the Lodge with his family as a child and holds on to the fond memories he has associated with the building and its grounds.



Frank is a tool maker by trade, so when he retired he decided to combine his love for birdseye maple and making tools into his own business, Great Northern Art. He could have chosen anywhere to establish his business, but Frank decided to return home to the Keweenaw to be in an area that he loves, doing something that he enjoys on a daily basis.

For the uninitiated, birdseye is a distinctive pattern that resembles small swirling eyes disrupting the smooth lines of grain, usually in maple trees. The cause of this has not been discovered, but Frank believes that it is caused from stress caused by trees that surround a birdseye tree. Birdseye is very uncommon, with only 1 in every 400 maple trees having birdseye patterns. Of those trees, over 70% of all birdseye is grown in the UP, which makes it a very distinct product of the UP.





There is no way to know whether a maple tree has birdseye until it is cut down and is then separated into a different pile than common maple wood. Frank finds birdseye maple by finding a supplier and bidding of the wood. After receiving the wood, he lets it dry for 2 years before ever making anything products. When it's ready, Frank makes many different tools and products that you can use daily. Here at the Lodge, we sell a few of his products, including an ice cream scoop, butter spreader, wine bottle stopper, candle holders, and a cheese cutting board.

Frank even goes a step further in his products and incorporates another element the Keweenaw is known for; copper. A souvenir that combines birdseye and copper that can be used as a paperweight, or just be displayed in your home or office to remind you of your trip to the Keweenaw. This product is made of a piece of birdseye that Frank has electrified to make a beautiful design on the wood, with copper on top and a locally made plaque that states it is Keweenaw copper.

Although Frank does not sell his products online or have a website, you can visit him at his shop located at 1490 Gay- Lac La Belle Rd. Gay, Michigan or by calling him at 906-296-9926.