



Artist Jackie Triplett works on a chair back at Southwood Furniture Corp. The company made furniture for the renovated Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.

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The laser-cut Ford's Theatre logo is hand-painted at Southwood Furniture.

Local furniture in spotlight

Company helps furnish renovated Ford's Theatre in nation's capital

BY JOHN DAYBERRY

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HICKORY

As thousands of people celebrated at other inaugural events in the nation's capital Tuesday, a small group attended an exclusive function on the third floor of Ford's Theatre, the site of President Abraham Lincoln's assassi-

nation and one of Washington's premier tourist stops.

Guests sat on chairs and sofas made at Hickory's Southwood Furniture Corp.

"It's rewarding that designers turn to us for quality, custom furniture," said Jerry Robb, Southwood's contract sales manager.

"And that's exactly what they want-

ed for Ford's Theatre," Robb said.

The 144-year-old theater, which has been closed for 18 months as it got an \$8.5 million renovation, will not re-open to the public until February.

Tuesday night's banquet was for members of the Ford's Theatre Foundation. The group raised money for the theater upgrades, and wanted the new third-floor dining room furnished

in time for an Inauguration Day celebration.

Designers in charge of the project turned to Southwood for much of the dining room's upholstered furniture, including 18 stacking armchairs, each bearing a laser-cut, hand-painted Ford's Theatre logo.

SEE FURNITURE, B8

FURNITURE: Company helps furnish Ford's Theatre

FROM PAGE B1

It is not the first time Southwood has customized its stacking armchairs for clients. It has created similar "logo chairs" for the U.S. Army, the Marine Corps and various country clubs.

Neither is Southwood a newcomer to the Washington, D.C., scene.

It has helped to furnish the U.S. Senate, federal court buildings, various embassies and the offices of Sen. Ted Kennedy, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

"Our primary business is high-end, traditional residential furniture, but we also do quite a few high-end contract jobs," Robb said.

Among the company's well-known residential customers are President George H.W. and Barbara Bush. The couple purchased Southwood pieces to help furnish their family summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

DETAILS

Company: Southwood Furniture Corp.

Type: Manufacturer of high-end, traditional residential and contract furniture

Founded: 1973

Partners: Rocky Holscher, Lee Lyerly, Joe Rowe and Howard Pruitt

Facilities: Three plants in Hickory, stand-alone showroom in High Point

Employees: 125

Web: www.southwoodfurn.com

Southwood, founded in Hickory in 1973, originally specialized in 18th century upholstery reproductions. The company has since expanded its offering to include an extensive line of skirted and leather upholstery complimenting style periods drawn from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

The company has three plants in the Hickory metro and a stand-alone showroom in High Point. It employs approxi-

mately 125 people.

Dan W. Coulter, Southwood's director of manufacturing, said the company takes pride in being able to turn out most orders in about five weeks while maintaining high quality standards.

Of the 50 to 75 pieces of furniture the company produces on a typical day, 10 may be alike. The others are made singularly or in pairs.

"We've developed a system here that works for us," Coulter said.

"There are not many companies that can produce the quality, customized, high-end furniture that we offer at the prices we charge."

The furniture for the Ford's Theatre dining room was ordered in October, but by the time a logo was approved for the stacking armchairs, Southwood only had about three weeks to deliver the goods.

"They gave us a deadline and we met it," Robb said.

"Maybe with some consternation and some long days, but we met it."