



The Allure of the Bittners Bourbon Table

A conversation with Bittners President & COO Douglas Riddle to learn more about its history and how it's made

By **JANICE CARTER LEVITCH HUMPHREY** | Photos by **ROBERT BURGE**

Douglas Riddle is a true visionary who has reinvented Bittners into a legendary brand known throughout the country. He envisions space without limits. His natural instinct for what works in design

is the key to creating a cosmopolitan look that transcends the usual borders of design while maintaining the balance of timeless tradition. His creative drive and leadership will propel Bittners into its next 165 years. I sat down with Douglas recently to discuss the bourbon issue and the inspiration

behind the Bittners Bourbon Table. “Yes, it’s been exciting. Many are already spoken for, no advertising for the table had hit yet when we first began sharing images of the table with our designers. The orders came in quickly with just our designers placing them because they have talked about the

table with our longtime and new customers alike,” said Riddle. About three months ago, Douglas shared a photo of the table with me and explained the significance of creating a piece with deep roots in bourbon country. Of course, I immediately ordered two without hesitation. Read on to learn more about this custom, alluring and limited edition 1854 Bourbon Table designed by Bittners (Bittners was founded in 1854).

Tell us about the inspiration for the Bittners Bourbon Table.

In less than 10 years, Bittners will celebrate a major milestone anniversary. Gustave Bittner was such a visionary so we wanted to begin celebrating his legacy. When we celebrated 150 years at the Frazier History Museum, curators from New York began to research our history and found that Gustave loved bourbon. I’m not sure if that is why he chose Kentucky, but I’m sure it didn’t hurt.

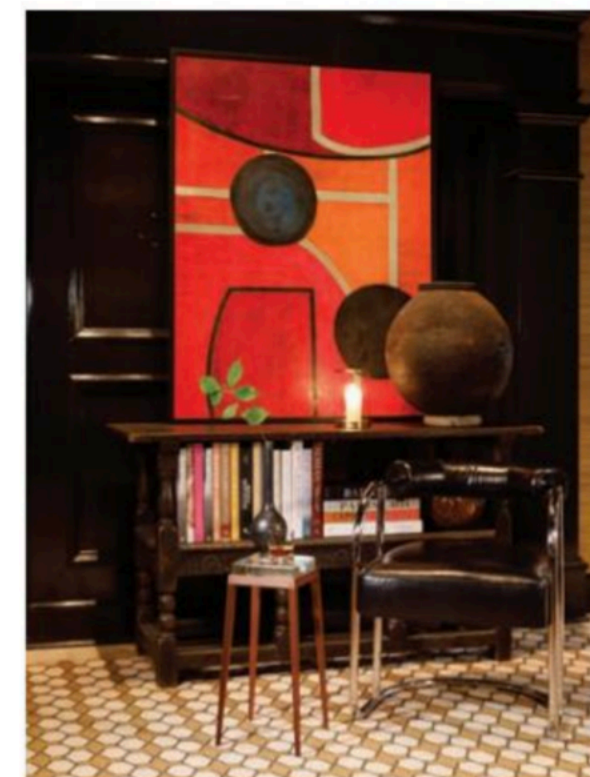
The history of Bittners is intriguing, could you share the highlights?

Gustave Bittner was born in Pratzan,

Germany in 1829. He learned cabinet making as a young man and later escaped the chaos and deprivations of Central Europe caused by the Continental Revolutions of 1848 by emigrating to the United States aboard a Bremen Liner Steamship named Copernicus. He then traveled to Kentucky, briefly settled in Frankfort and then moved to Louisville where he became one of the foremost cabinetmakers in Kentucky. He achieved acclaim in the competitive, tight-knit and affluent society of Victorian Louisville. Bittner was an unassuming man who was dedicated to family, business and community. He is heralded to this day by generations of first Kentucky families as the finest cabinetmaker and designer of his era.

I love the glass added to the table. Is there a story behind it?

Yes, we wanted to design a modern piece and we had this great Mash Tank Cypress wood that we felt would be wonderful juxtaposed with the hand-blown glass top. Once we had the design completed, we commissioned Kentucky Artisan Casey Hyland to do the glass for us. Casey is a neighbor to Bittners and we always try to support Kentucky Artisans.



How did you source the wood?

The wood has been in our wood library for several years. Our Master Craftsman Brian Keenan sources wood from all over the country, not only from distilleries but from some of our historic local farms like Ashbourne Farm, Hermitage Farm and Woodland Farm.

What other uses could you suggest for this beautiful bourbon table?

The sexiness of this table is the way the color of the wood and the color of the bourbon reflect from the glass and creates a very romantic moodiness. I like keeping things authentic and would hope that this becomes everyone’s favorite bourbon table that sits next to your favorite chair while you enjoy the simplicity of the design and bourbon.

Is this a limited edition, and if so, do you have plans to expand into a bourbon furniture line?

Yes, it is a limited edition, we are only creating 50 of the 1854 bourbon tables this year. Each piece will have our signature Bittners burn and will be numbered. We have always done custom pieces with bourbon influence in mind and will continue to do so. **V**

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Douglas Riddle.