

Discovering his roots allows local man to set sights on broadening his work-a-day life and lives of others

BY DENISE MARTIN

Maybe it has to do with his desire to promote the culture of his ancestors...maybe it has to do with his entrepreneurial ambitions, or maybe it's just because John Peterson enjoys seeing his talents enjoyed by others.

Whatever the catalyst, Peterson's 3 Celts & Company is becoming well known as a place to go to find celt-inspired things. Or, 3 Celts will come to you...Peterson travels extensively along the festival and arts circuit selling wares in the open air.

If you are someone who attends renaissance festivals or historic fairs, or likes to spend time at Irish, Scottish, or celtic celebrations, you have probably seen the 3-Celts & Company booth.

Peterson, a Lindstrom resident, said it all began as long ago as 1989, when he bought Northland Industries, where he is employed. Northland fills custom orders for silk screened T-shirts mostly. Peterson was printing up others' designs, but he had his designs inspired by his celtic roots and he needed an outlet.

At the same time he was participating in the Shakopee Minnesota Renaissance Festival.

It was there that he met the second of the "three celts."

Peterson's comrade, Robbie Lane, did fantasia sculpture; lots of dragons, fairies and subjects like that.

The two talked over a few beers and realized they wanted to sell their own things together, share the costs of festival entry and booth investment and have fun doing it.

They "test flew" a booth selling Peterson's T-shirts and Lanes's sculptures at a science fiction convention. "We were busy the whole weekend," Peterson recalled.

Along came Scott Roberts, another artist who also worked the Shakopee Renaissance Festival. Peterson explained, "We met up casually, at a picnic, and found out we all shared a Scots-Celt heritage and wanted to learn more about that and get more involved.

The involvement, deepened as the three joined a celtic heritage group, "Clann Tartan," which is sort of a living history organization and genealogic clearinghouse for that general region of ancient Europe.

The men discovered opportunities to sell their wares— but more importantly, Peterson said, they also unearthed fas-

cinating personal genealogical information.

His father's family were Petersens, who for an unknown reason switched to an "on" for the surname. His mother was a Currie. He learned that his Scots roots belonged to a subset of the McDonald Clan of the Isle of Mull. Peterson is building a website for 3 Celts & Company products

have "become less active" due to full-time professional commitments and employment responsibilities. So, the three celts at this moment are actually a duo.

The "and company" part of the name refers to the line of celtic music, jewelry, instruments, books, and clothes that Peterson markets. For example, there's jewelry made by pewter-smiths based in



John Peterson is pictured working at a recent celtic festival. 3 Celts & Company sets up shop under a decorative tent. Peterson wears his Scots attire.

Photo by Robin Bobeck

and some of the art he filed for the site includes old photos of his mother's kin, who he said settled into the New World at Cambridge, in Isanti County.

Peterson grew up in Forest Lake, where his family raised Tennessee Walking horses.

Meanwhile— things started rolling for 3- Celts & Co, and along came Brent Wold, a local blacksmith.

He'd also worked the renaissance festival circuit, and makes his creations under the name Boar's Head Blacksmithing. His primitive, accurate pieces are now an integral part of the 3 Celts & Company inventory. Wold can craft items from a replica celt hair pin to a household tool.

The original founders, Lane and Roberts,

Nova Scotia. "We hooked up with other artists who have a very good product but can't do it alone," Peterson explained.

Operating 3 Celts & Co. means lots of travel attending festivals in other states or a destination as close-by as Karl Oskar Days this July. Three Celts & Co. will also be at the Irish Festival on Harriet Island August 9 and 10.

Peterson's quite solid in his opinions on the homogenization of modern American culture.

He feels fulfilled promoting things that aren't easily found in the main-stream, declaring "...culturally we are getting

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stale...people are all afraid of offending someone." *History*, he notes, is not politically correct.

What someone brings home from 3 Celts

& Co. may or may not motivate them to get involved in their heritage, but at the very least, "...it gives them something to take home," Peterson observed.

Plus, he said, "It's neat to see my designs

on people." He'll see a shirt with something he printed long ago, and he has to suppress the urge to walk up and tell the wearer — "nice shirt."



John Peterson is to left in photo, and 3-Celts blacksmith Brent Wold can be seen in background. Peterson makes the T-shirts from designs displayed at his booth. This photo was taken during the Macalaster Festival held last month.

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www.3celts.com