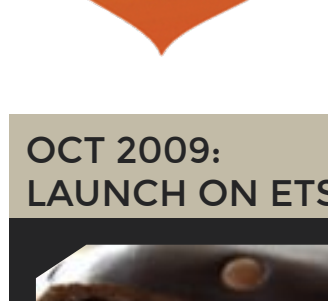


# THE HISTORY OF

# walnut

BESPOKE LEATHER DESIGNS



I powder-coated my dad's 90s era Bianchi that he rode in the STP (Seattle to Portland) ride

## OCT 2009: LAUNCH ON ETSY

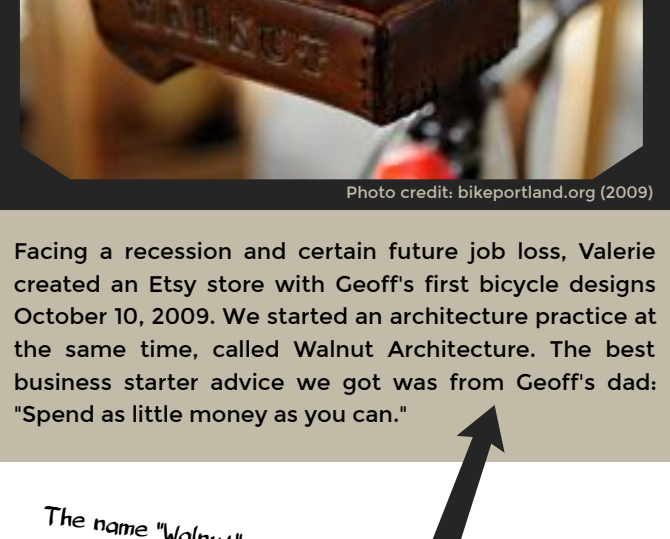


Photo credit: bikeportland.org (2009)

Facing a recession and certain future job loss, Valerie created an Etsy store with Geoff's first bicycle designs October 10, 2009. We started an architecture practice at the same time, called Walnut Architecture. The best business starter advice we got was from Geoff's dad: "Spend as little money as you can."

The name "Walnut" was inspired by the tree wood and a pun architects are "nuts" for partitions = "wall" + "nut"



## 2008-2009: PRODUCT DESIGN



Photo credit: Russ Roca / pathlesspedaled (2010)

It started with this bike. Inspired by his daily bike commute to Ankrom Moisan Architecture and photos of vintage Italian racing bicycles, Geoff dreamed of historic-quality leather bicycle accessories he couldn't find in the market. So he made them for himself in his spare time.



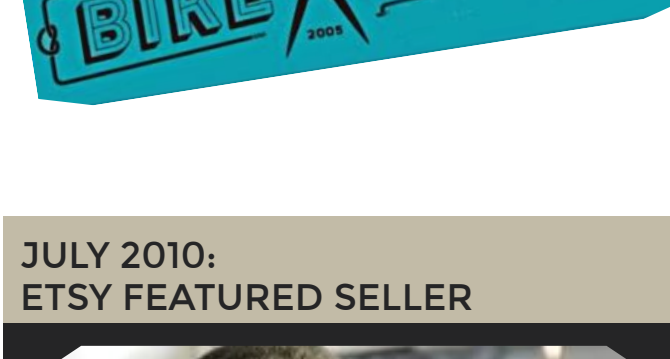
## NOV 2009: FIRST SALE!



Photo credit: dat nguyen / dontbeecreepy (2010)

Our first sale on Etsy was in November 2009, a bicycle u-lock holster to Boston, followed quickly by another to Toronto. Our first 5 star reviews followed. Thank you for taking a chance on us, Lauren and Christina!

I invented the Portage Strap because I had a permanent bruise on my shoulder from lifting and carrying my bike up the stairs to my office.

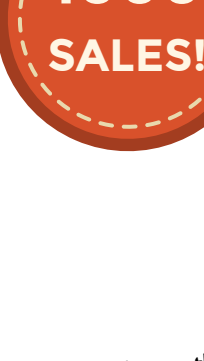


## DEC 2009: BIKECRAFT FAIR



Photo credit: bikeportland.org (2009)

We set up a card table at BikePortland's BikeCraft Fair, just two months after we opened for business, the first opportunity to talk to people about what we were making. The next day, Jonathan Maus from BikePortland.org praised us in his BikeCraft Fair wrap-up blog post ("Nice work Geoff!"). Two days later, sarcastic bicycle blogger BikeSnobNYC roasted us, calling us "dandycross". Burn! These and other articles on bicycle blogs put us on the map.



July 14, 2011

Thanks to the Great Recession, Walnut Studiolo and Walnut Architecture became my full time job in March 2010.

## JULY 2010: ETSY FEATURED SELLER



Photo credit: bikeportland.org (2009)

After less than a year, Etsy gave us a spotlight feature and put us on the front page - which was a really big deal! Sales were trickling in, and we were making almost every sale "to-order" as soon as it came in.

## 2011: FIRST BESTSELLER GETS BIG PRESS



Photo credit Erin Berzel for Bear West Magazine (2011)

We marketed this top tube cinch as a "Bike Polo Mallet Holder" for over a year before Geoff realized it worked perfectly for 6-packs. Once we renamed it the "6-Pack Frame Cinch", it sold like hotcakes. It earned us big press mentions in Gizmodo, Cool Material, Apartment Therapy, Grist, Bicycling Magazine, and more.

This is when we met our long-time photographer, Erin Berzel. She took this photo for Bear West Magazine. We've collaborated with Erin on almost all our product photography since then.



Valerie's company went through a round of layoffs in November 2011, and she began working on Walnut full-time in January 2012.

## 2012: GOING FULL-TIME

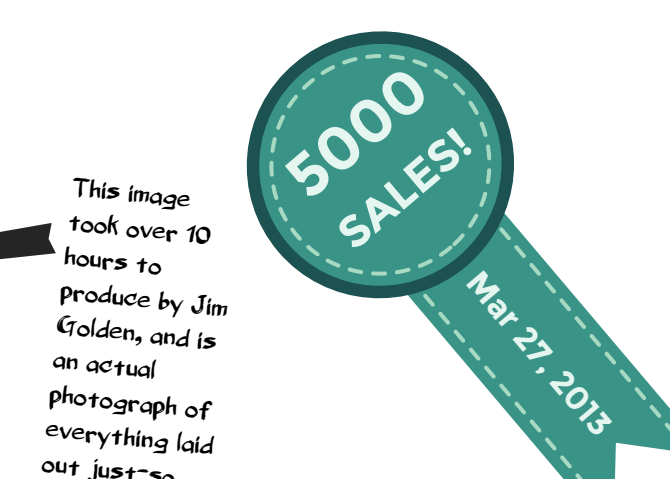
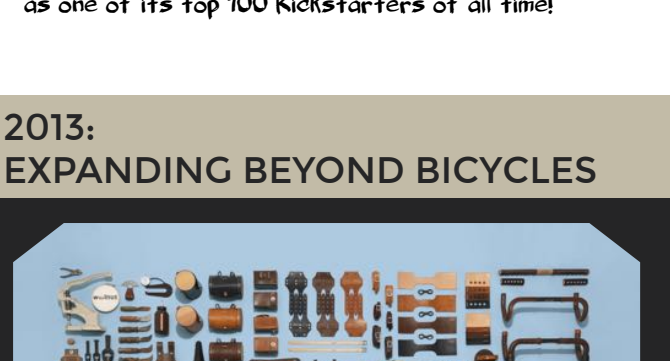


Photo credit: Erin Berzel (2011)

By 2012, we were both working on Walnut Studiolo full-time, which allowed us the time to design more products, table event booths, launch a Kickstarter, get national press coverage, and start our own website using the Shopify platform, walnutstudiolo.com.



In 2012, we launched the Bicycle Frame Handle on Kickstarter, which was chosen by MoMA Design Store as one of its top 100 Kickstarters of all time!

## 2013: EXPANDING BEYOND BICYCLES



Photo credit Jim Golden (2013)

In 2013, we began designing products beyond the bicycle but we took a moment to photograph our entire collection with renowned photographer Jim Golden - anchored by the bicycle that started it all, of course.

This image took over 10 hours to produce by Jim Golden, and is an actual photograph of everything laid out just so.



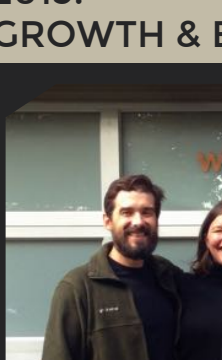
Mar 27, 2013

## 2014: AMBITIOUS YEAR, BIG CHANGES



Video still, credit Michael Ward Media (2014)

Our 5th year in business! We celebrated by hiring staff, doing a "Gimme 5!" campaign with a pledge to design 5 new products, launching our first leather drawer pulls in collaboration with Rejuvenation Hardware, and going on a Trade Mission to Japan with the best of Portland. One of the 5 designs became our 3rd Bestseller, The Travel Cribbage Board.



Sept 24, 2014

The Travel Cribbage Board was designed when fair-trade shoe maker Oliberte approached us about recycling their old shoes into a new product. It was too much labor time to take apart each shoe, but the tiny pieces of leather from the shoes was what inspired the board.



## 2015: GROWTH & EXPANSION



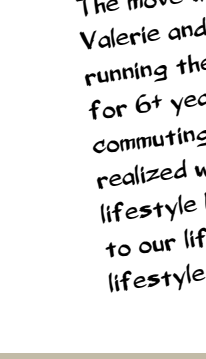
Photo credit Walnut Studiolo

By 2015, Walnut Studiolo had three part-time employees and the footprint of the business had grown into every corner of our modest home in Southeast Portland. We enrolled as one of 11 growing companies in the Portland Business Alliance / Small Business Administration "cohort" of 2015, got our bookkeeping in order, installed a yurt in our backyard as a workshop expansion and began looking for commercial space.

The search for commercial space went on hold when DK / Penguin Random House approached us to write a new book about Leather Crafting for their Idiot's Guide series!



Those are my hands pictured throughout the book, the photos were taken in our yurt expansion.



Jan 2, 2016

The move was an interesting personal choice Valerie and I made together. We had been running the business out of our home together for 6+ years, and we didn't want to start commuting or taking on high-pressure loans. We realized we wanted to keep Walnut as a family lifestyle business. So we adapted the business to our lifestyle rather than adopting our lifestyle to the business.

## 2016: MOVE TO THE COAST



Photo Credit: Ayleen Crotty

Walnut made an interesting choice in 2016. After two years of searching, we found no affordable, long-term commercial space for artists like us in SE Portland. The other options were to commute out to cheaper space or take out a loan/financing to lease a space. We decided to "zig" instead of "zag", and moved our home and business to our dream location: the Oregon Coast. We found a house with a big workshop on-site (2800sqft!) for the same cost as our home in Portland, enabling us to keep our lifestyle - and our prices - unchanged.

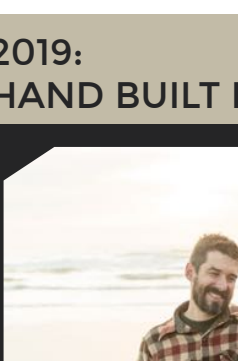
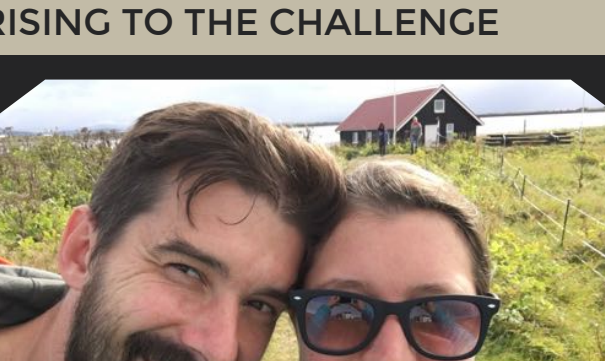
## 2017: RE-FINDING OUR ROOTS



Photo Credit: Broken Banjo Photography

Life slowed down a little when we moved from the city to the country, again: no employees. But we rebuilt our workshop from scratch, created more efficient workflows with more space, and designed new products inspired by our surroundings, like one-of-a-kind driftwood cribbage boards.

We use our live-edge walnut wood dining table in several of our product photos! See if you can spot it.



June 1, 2017

I invested in new tools and insulated the workshop to make my dream "mad scientist" design lab. The possibilities are endless!

## 2018: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE



Selfie in Reykjavik, Iceland!

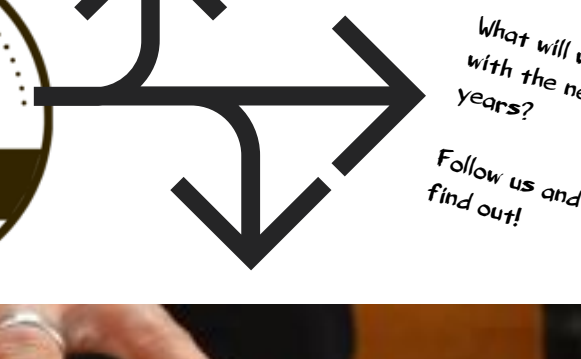
2018 was not an easy year, for personal reasons and professional reasons. We lost Geoff's dad, one of our biggest supporters. We took our first international vacation in years. We spent time with family. Being at the coast, working from home, staying small & nimble is a source of strength for our business.

## 2019: HAND BUILT FOR THE LONG HAUL



Photo credit: Broken Banjo Photography

Our 10th year in business! Our first motto for the business (written by our friend Lael in 2012) was "Hand Built for the Long Haul". That takes on a special meaning now: not just the literal meaning that our leather and wood goods are hand-built for longevity and durability, but also that our business was built from scratch to provide for our family in the long-term.



Dec 6, 2018

"Aging gracefully" is another part of our motto that we intend our business to do as well - by staying the same small and approachable company, with the same dedication to quality and design.



What will we do with the next 10 years?  
Follow us and find out!

walnut HAND BUILT FOR THE LONG HAUL

<https://walnutstudiolo.com>