

Furniture Refinishing "CLEANING WOOD FINISHES"

Jan Slabaugh*

Furniture eventually reaches a point where it needs more than dusting or polishing. Many pieces need only to be cleaned to restore their finish since removing the finish of a valuable piece of furniture can destroy its value and character. The following information is for those pieces of furniture which simply need cleaning and not refinishing.

FURNITURE CLEANSER-CONDITIONER

Use

- to restore natural grain and color of wood
- to conceal scratches
- to retard crazing or checking
- to remove cloudiness caused by smoke, grease and dust
- to recondition dry woods caused from overheated atmosphere of rooms (should be done approximately every 6 months)

CAUTION: *USE CLEANSER CONDITIONER SPARINGLY ON SHELLAC FINISH. To determine if finish is shellac, rub alcohol on an underside spot. The finish will soften and peel off if it is shellac.*

Equipment

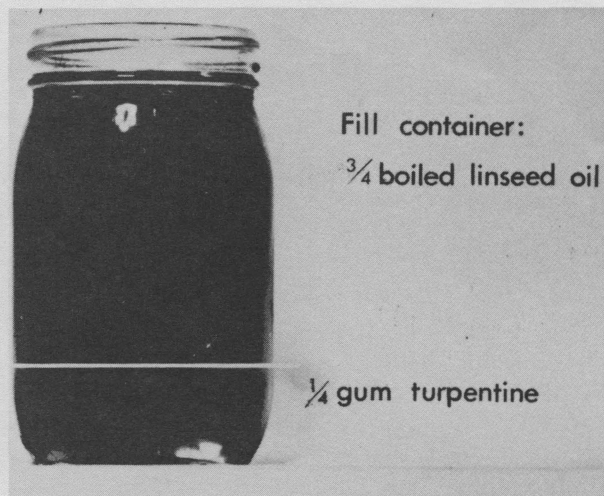
- glass container with tight fitting lid
- gum turpentine (pure spirits is best)
- boiled linseed oil
- dish or small flat can
- saucer or small pie tin
- 3/0 steel wool pad

*Former Extension housing and home furnishings specialist, Texas A&M University.

- old toothbrush
- old cloths
- newspapers

Preparation and Application of Cleanser-Conditioner

- Mix in bottle, 1 part of gum turpentine with 3 parts of boiled linseed oil.



- Cover tightly and shake well. (Mixture keeps indefinitely.)
- Spread thick layer of newspapers on floor.
- Heat some water and pour into dish. Set dish on saucer.
- Shake cleanser-conditioner and pour enough into dish to cover surface of water. DO NOT STIR.

CAUTION: *Cleanser-conditioner is FLAMMABLE — KEEP AWAY FROM HOT SURFACES OR OPEN FLAMES.*



- Dip cloth into floating oil mixture.
- Apply on small area. Avoid getting excess moisture in joints or glued areas. (Glue will soften.)
- Rub surface with oil mixture. Use toothbrush on carved areas and grooves.
- If there is a buildup of dirt, dip 3/0 steel wool into mixture and rub lightly.
- Wring out clean cloth with clear warm water and wipe furniture surface. (Wring dry for shellac surfaces.)

NOTE: Discard mixture when water becomes cold. DO NOT REHEAT—MIXTURE IS FLAMMABLE; also becomes gummy.

- Go to final rub if luster needs restoring. (See "WOOD FINISHES" — "Final Rub: Pumice and Oil," Fact Sheet # 1023.)

Regular and Occasional Care of Furniture

Use a tack rag (treated cloth which removes fine dust) for regular dusting. This may be purchased at a hardware store. Since occasional polishing helps to restore the finish, the following furniture polish can be applied:

FURNITURE POLISH

Equal parts of:

- denatured alcohol or denatured alcohol solvent
- fresh strained lemon juice (not canned or frozen juice)

- olive oil
- gum turpentine

Preparation:

- Mix equal parts of the above liquids.
- Shake each time before using. (Polish keeps indefinitely.)

Application:

- Dampen a clean, absorbent, lintless cloth with polish.
- Rub furniture.
- Polish with dry, woolen cloth.
- Discard used cloths or store in covered jar — They are FLAMMABLE.

References

Agricultural Extension Service, Louisiana State University; "Refinishing Furniture — Using Oil Stains and Penetrating Seals;" Publication 1409; November 1964.

Agricultural Extension Service, University of Arkansas; Fayetteville, Arkansas; "Refinishing Furniture;" Circular 478; Revised October 1967.

Cooperative Extension Service, New York College of Home Economics, Cornell University; Ithaca, New York; "Furniture Restoration," Gena Thames; Bulletin 23; Reprinted October 1966.

Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University; Columbus, Ohio. "Finishing Furniture — Old and New;" Bulletin 456; October 1965.

Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri; Columbia, Missouri; "Cleaning May Restore Furniture;" May 1970.

Acknowledgment

Photos courtesy of New Jersey Cooperative Extension Service, New Brunswick, N.J.