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Touch Ups for WOOD FURNITURE

MYRTLE CARTER, Home Furnishings Specialist

Furnishings and equipment are expensive, so the average homemaker desires to keep them in good condition.

Most homemakers can, with imagination, initiative, and effort improve the appearance of present furniture and add to its life through care, repair, and refinishing.

Many pieces should have the original finish removed, then a new finish applied. Others need only to be touched up and the result is satisfactory. It is with these simpler methods and processes that this publication is concerned.

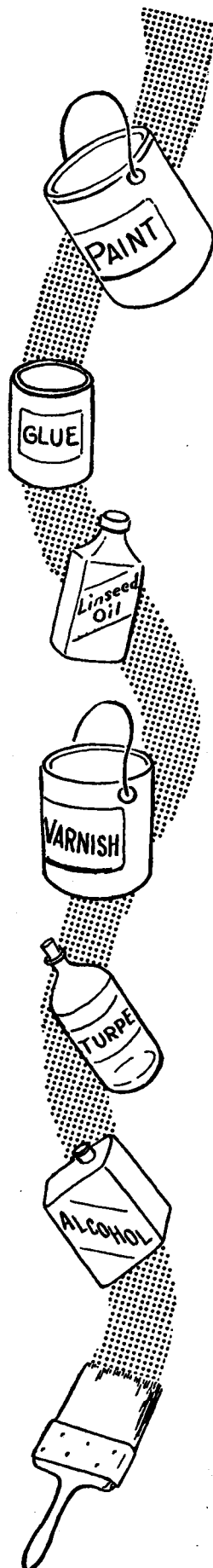
DISCARD

Clean furniture wears longer and gives greater satisfaction. Furniture woods should be cleaned regularly to avoid a cloudy, dull appearance. After a thorough cleaning, a protective coat of wax will keep the piece in good condition. Dusting with a cloth treated to use on waxed surfaces is important.

Method

Wash wood furniture with a soft cloth wrung dry from warm, mild soap suds. Rub the furniture in the direction of the grain. When the film of dirt has been removed, dry with a clean soft cloth. A soap jelly whipped to a dry lather may be used in the same way. Rinse well and dry. Work rapidly to prevent moisture from raising the grain or softening the glue. Never wash a shellac or cheap varnish finish, for water may turn it white.

Another furniture wash especially good for varnish finishes is made from 3 tablespoons of linseed oil, 1 tablespoon of turpentine, and 1 quart of hot water. Mix this thoroughly and keep it hot in a double boiler. Dip a soft cloth into this solution and wring it dry. Wash a small area and dry immediately with a soft cloth. Clean entire surface in this manner. Polish by rubbing with the grain of the wood. This often will remove the blurred or foggy appearance which is sometimes called "bloom" on highly polished furniture. Old wax may be removed by applying a generous coat of liquid wax and wiping it off while it is still wet.



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The fresh wax dissolves the old wax and both can be rubbed off at the same time. This process may need to be repeated. This is the only treatment that most wood pieces will need because the

hot water and turpentine remove the grease and dirt from the surface, and the oil polishes the finish.

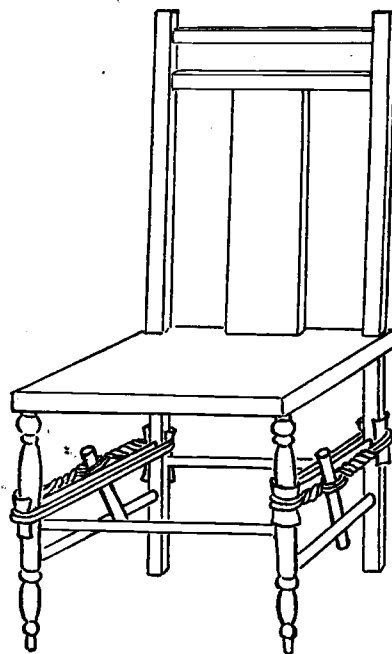
Dullness usually cannot be removed from varnish or enamel of poor quality.

Glueing

Furniture will shrink if subjected to conditions that cause it to dry. The glue weakens and joints loosen unless the room in which it is used is provided with some moisture and fresh air.

Method

To restore loose furniture, take the pieces apart and remove old glue by sandpapering. Both glue and wood should be warm when the glue is applied. The glue is applied to both surfaces and allowed to dry until it is tacky, the pieces put together, then the pressure applied. A home-made clamp is made easily by protecting the furniture surface with cloth pads, and then applying a rope tourniquet. Remove the rope when the glue is thoroughly



dry—at least 24 hours should elapse before it is loosened.

Reviving Foggy, Cloudy, Milky, or Faded Finishes

No one method can be recommended for these conditions. If the furniture wash does not correct these faults, try experimenting with the following methods:*

► Varnish finishes usually can be revived with a mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ raw linseed oil and $\frac{1}{2}$ turpentine. For a mild case, apply this mixture and rub with a cloth. Use a pad of grade "000" steel wool for extreme cases, always rubbing with the grain of the wood. Wipe dry with a clean cloth.

- Shellac finishes often may be revived with a mixture of 2 parts paraffin oil and 1 part white shellac. Apply as indicated for varnish finishes.
- A milky effect on varnished pieces often is due to an inferior grade of varnish. Try rubbing with a mixture of 50 per cent raw linseed oil and 50 per cent turpentine. This may improve or entirely remove the trouble. Rub with a cloth of hard texture. You will need to re-finish the piece if this does not improve it.

* See page 4, "Test for Determining Type of Old Finish."

- Treat a foggy appearance with a mixture of 1 quart of clear water to which has been added 1 to 2 tablespoons of vinegar. Apply this mix-

ture to a clean cloth and rub with the grain of the wood.

- Commercial preparations are available to revive old finishes.

Removing Scratches

Avoid scratches on furniture by using care to prevent them. Always use small pads under vases and other accessories placed on tables, mantles, chests, pianos, etc. Felt or moleskin glued to the bottom of such pieces will help to eliminate scratches. A coat of wax also acts as a protection when scratches are not deep.

Methods

For light scratches:

- These often may be made less noticeable by rubbing them with a little linseed oil, furniture polish, or liquid wax.
- Rub the scratch with a commercial scratch remover, selecting one that matches the color of the finish.
- For scratches on natural-colored woods that have not been stained (mahogany, walnut, cherry, and oak), rub with the cut end of an oily nut meat such as a pecan or walnut.

For moderately deep scratches:

- For walnut or light mahogany stains, filling the scratch with iodine may give sufficient color.
- Potassium permanganate solution (a few crystals of potassium permanganate to 1 teaspoon of water) may be used to touch up mahogany. Apply with a toothpick or small brush.
- Apply a matching oil stain to the scratch. Use a very small brush or a toothpick tipped with cotton to apply the stain. Wipe off the surface and let dry for 24 hours. Now

apply one or more coats to more than fill the crack with the same kind of finish material as used originally. Allow this material to dry completely; then rub the spot with powdered pumice stone and oil (paraffin, linseed, sewing machine, or a thin mineral oil may be used) until it is very smooth. Clean off the pumice and oil, and give the entire surface a coat of wax or furniture polish. Rub down well.

For deep scratches:

- Apply a matching stain as suggested for moderately deep scratches. The stain may be slightly darker than the original one, as it may become lighter in the refinishing process. Now fill the groove with white shellac. A mixture of half denatured alcohol and half white shellac may be preferred. Any surplus is wiped off and the filling allowed to dry thoroughly. If it leaves a rough spot when dried, work down with powdered pumice and oil. Wipe the wood clean and finish the entire surface with wax or furniture polish.
- Fill the groove with stick shellac of a color shade that matches the original finish. Fill the damaged area slightly above the wood surface. Rub down as above or with a fine steel wool pad dipped in a thick paste of powdered rottenstone and paraffin oil. Rub until the filled area is even with the entire surface. Clean and polish as desired.

- ▶ Gouges may be filled with plastic wood which has been stained to a matching color. When set, this is smoothed down with No. 8-0 sandpaper dipped in oil. Go over the surface with pumice and oil, clean, then finish with wax or furniture polish. Drawer pulls which have become loosened may be made tight by removing the pull and filling the hole with plastic wood. Replace the pull and its screw and allow it to dry several hours before using.
- ▶ Small holes, gouges, and cracks may

be filled with a thick paste of powdered pumice and varnish. Work this paste in, then wipe it off until level with the surface, and smooth the edges with a finger so that they do not show. Let the paste harden, then rub it smooth with fine steel wool or garnet paper. Paint over the dried paste with a quick-drying varnish mixed with a little oil paint to match the color of the finish. Thin it out around the edges with a finger until it blends with the old finish without leaving a hard ring.

Test for Determining Type of Old Finish

- ▶ Apply denatured alcohol with a rag to a small inconspicuous section which is free from wax. If the finish softens or rubs off shellac was used for the original finish.
- ▶ Treat a small area, free from wax,

with lacquer thinner. Lacquer will soften or rub off with this material while varnish will not be affected. As a rule a heavy lacquer finish tends to be almost crystal hard as compared to a varnish finish.

Removing White Spots

White spots on furniture usually are caused by water, hot dishes, or alcohol. They are easier to remove when they are fresh. Old marks are sometimes difficult to remove. The method to use depends more on the depth of the damage than on using a particular method for various types of finishes. When the finish is very thin, a less severe method always should be used.

Methods

- ▶ Rub with rottenstone and a light oil (paraffin, linseed, or sewing machine oil) on a cloth.
- ▶ Rub quickly over the spot with a cloth wrung nearly dry from a solution of 1 pint of warm water containing 2 tablespoons of household am-

monia. Follow this immediately with a vigorous rubbing with an oil-treated dust cloth to restore polish. Repeat process if necessary.

- ▶ Rub with a nonlinting cloth dampened with spirits of camphor or essence of peppermint. Pat this on the spot and allow to dry. Polish with the grain of the wood. This method is a good one for a varnished surface.
- ▶ Moisten a pad with denatured alcohol and squeeze almost dry. Pat gently on the white place. Do not leave on long as alcohol will soften the finish. Follow the application of alcohol with a cloth saturated with linseed oil, olive oil, or furniture polish. Speed is very important.

- ▶ Rub with salt and oil (salad, mineral, or light machine oil). If the white spot is old or very deep, it may take considerable rubbing with this mixture to get it off. Do not mix the salt in the oil because it will dissolve. Have a dish of salt and one of oil. Dip the finger in the oil, then in the salt and rub. Repeat as needed.
- ▶ If the above methods are not successful, rub the spot with a thick paste made of grade FFF pumice stone and linseed oil. Use a small rag pad and rub with the grain of the wood. Check the surface frequently using turpentine on a rag, if necessary. Rub only until spot has been

removed. Clean off the surface and polish as desired.

Shellac finishes

For white spots on shellac, let the finish dry thoroughly and the spot may disappear. If it remains, then remove the wax with a cloth dampened with turpentine or a noninflammable dry-cleaning fluid; then rewax. Or remove the wax and rub down the white spot as for a varnish finish, then shellac spots if they need it and rewax. NEVER wash a shellac finish with water or alcohol.

When a white spot cannot be removed you will need to refinish the surface or the entire piece.

Removing Dents

Layers of the wood are often packed down by impact with some sharp, heavy instrument causing a depression or a bruise. If the fibers have not been broken, it is possible to remove these by the application of moisture and heat.

Methods

- ▶ Moisten in hot water several thicknesses of brown paper or blotting paper. Place these over the dent and carefully apply heat with a heated iron. The warm moisture causes the wood to swell and to raise to its normal position. Extreme care must be taken to be sure that the iron is not too hot. Repeat the process, if necessary. Work slowly and watch carefully.
- ▶ Place a drop of water in a depression once a day and over a period of time the wood will return to its original position.

- ▶ For deep dents, scars, or scratches, the best filler is stick shellac, which may be purchased in a wide variety of wood tones at hardware or paint stores. Select shellac sticks that match the color of the desired finish. To apply shellac, heat the blade of an old table knife or kitchen spatula over a flame. Rub the heated blade over a cloth to remove the soot. Touch the heated blade to the stick shellac to melt, and then fill the depression carefully.

- ▶ Remove excess shellac with knife until level with surrounding surface. If desired, scratches imitating the grain of the wood may be made in the surface with a needle to make it blend more nearly with the wood. Stick shellac may be applied after the finish is on the wood, but is simpler to apply before refinishing since it can be more easily sanded to a smooth surface.

Removing Dark Spots

Methods

- ▶ Dark spots usually are removed by bleaching with saturated solution of oxalic acid (see page 7 for formula). The solution is applied with a brush or medicine dropper and is allowed to stand on the spots from 10 to 20 minutes. The process may be repeated if necessary. The spots then are washed with weak ammonia water. This method of bleaching is most effective on the bare wood before a finish is applied. If finished, try the solution on an inconspicuous part to determine what effect it will have on the finish.
- ▶ Ink spots are frequently difficult to remove. If the ink has penetrated into the wood try minimizing the stain with an application of pure household ammonia, or a strong solution of oxalic acid. When the ink stain is on the surface only, remove it with a mixture of pumice stone and light oil made into a paste. Rub with the grain of the wood.
- ▶ Cigarette burns may be removed by the pumice and oil treatment, if the burn has not penetrated through the finish.
- ▶ If objectionable spots cannot be removed by bleaching, the wood may need sanding or scraping slightly. Too much sanding, planing, or scraping injures the surface which has achieved a mellowness and richness of color and texture from age and usage. Also, the new wood beneath will not be of the same color as the rest of the piece which has not been scraped.

Hairline Checking in Varnish

Checking in varnish finishes often is caused by the exposure of the surface to sunlight, a hot radiator, or other kinds of heat followed by sudden coldness or by repeated changes in temperature. It also may be caused by too much or too little moisture in the wood before the finish was applied. Another cause could be the way the veneer was cut and which side was used for the outside surface.

To improve the appearance of checked varnish, first wash the finish with linseed oil, turpentine, and water wash. When it is thoroughly dry, rub the surface with the following heavy-mixture furniture polish:

For a small area mix together two tablespoons of boiled linseed oil and

one tablespoon of turpentine. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of clear varnish. Double amounts for a large surface.

This mixture also is good for repolishing very dull finishes and for building up worn or damaged places.

Warm this mixture before you use it by placing the uncorked bottle, or other container, in a pan of hot water. Apply the warm liquid to only a small part of the furniture at a time, rub it hard, using the palm of your bare hand. As the polish sets it begins to stiffen and your hand drags. Then rub off at once the polish that remains, using several clean cloths. If you do not take off this extra polish, the furniture will remain sticky. Repeat the treatment until the checking shows less.

Home-made Formulas for the Care of Furniture

Oxalic acid solutions

(for removing dark stains)

Dissolve as many of the crystals (about 2 tablespoons) of the acid as possible in a pint of very hot water. Put into a bottle; cork tightly; use as needed. Apply this solution to the stain with a medicine dropper or glass rod, and after allowing it to remain for a few minutes, rinse thoroughly in clean water. Neutralize with a solution of ammonia. This is best used on wood that has not been finished. Check the effect of the solution on an under part of the furniture if a finish has been applied. Oxalic acid is poisonous and should be used carefully. The bottle in which it is stored must be marked "Poison" and kept out of the reach of children. (See HE 6-503, Refinishing Furniture.)

Soap jelly

Shave a cake of neutral soap in thin pieces and cook in 1 quart of water until thoroughly dissolved. Store in jar until needed. Let it set overnight to form a jelly. Place 2 tablespoons of this jelly in a mixing bowl, add 2 tablespoons warm water, and whip to a dry suds with a rotary egg beater.

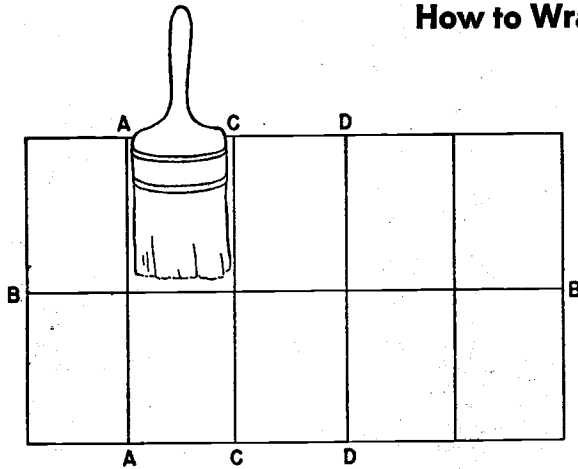
Furniture polish

Mix thoroughly 1 cup of turpentine, 1 cup of raw linseed oil, and 1 tablespoon vinegar. Use a little on a soft cloth for polishing varnished or shellacked surfaces.

Dust cloths

See HE 5-112 for suggestions on treating dust cloths for nonwaxed and waxed surfaces.

How to Wrap a Paint Brush



Place the clean brush on heavy paper as shown, then fold the short end over the brush on the line A-A. Next, fold the lower half of the paper up, creasing on the line B-B. Then keep folding on the lines C-C, D-D, etc. By this simple practice, the brush is held in proper shape overnight or between paint jobs. Keep plenty of oil in the brush.

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