

Little Rick and Wuddoc: Just clean, not refinish

Recently we were brought a carved box that was dark and dingy. The individual who owned the box wished to have it refinished and wondered where they could take it. After seeing the box it was determined that possible a good cleaning was the only requirement to make the carved box look brighter.

Little Rick and Wuddoc thought this would be a great training aid for the Wood Technology students at the Franklin County Career Tech Center under the supervision of their teacher Richard "Rick" Graben. Several students volunteered to learn about when to refinish versus cleaning the finish. The box was delivered along with the following items found at the local Dollar Store to the FCCTC:

One jar of Ivory liquid dish soap (any liquid dish soap will do).

One tooth brush (toothbrush has soft plastic bristles, wire bristles will scratch the finish).

Small plastic bowl. (Do not use for food preparation after

using for finish removal).

Clean cotton cloth (old but clean T-shirt or cotton towel).

Refinishing requires removing the finish and, in some cases where carvings exist, they may be just glued on to the box. Stripping might attack the glue and cause the carvings to fall off. Usually old finishes, unless cracked or crazed (when the finish looks like dried-out, cracked mud after a long dry spell), only need to have the years of grime removed so the finish returns to a near original look. The grime may be normal accumulation from years of waxing but not cleaning.

Individuals have gotten into the habit over the years of waxing and then more waxing. Wax protects a finish. A simple finish is composed of a stain for color, a sealer to cover the stain, and finally a top coat to give the shine. Wax then is applied over the dried finish to protect the look. The wax protects against pollutants in the air, animal saliva or hair, and human perspiration. Additional waxing over

the old wax encases the grime and the finish begins to grow dark.

Properly waxing a piece of furniture first requires removing the old wax. Wax remover or mineral spirits found at your local hardware store will remove the old wax. Then a fresh coat of furniture wax may be applied. Normally it is suggested that this wax removal and re-waxing occur twice a year.

Here are the steps the wood tech students took at FCCTC to determine if all that was needed was a good cleaning of the finish. They collected the purchased items in an area that the water would not damage and could be wiped up immediately if a spill occurred. The dish soap was poured into the bowl and a small amount of lukewarm water was added as a thick soupy mixture similar to a thick milkshake is needed. The toothbrush was used to rub or brush the mixture onto the finish. This begins to loosen the grime from the finish. The soupy mixture



Pictured from left, Richard Graben (Instructor), Stevie Jones, Josh Burcham and Jacob Wright of the Franklin County Career Technical Center, Wood Technology Program.

in the bowl was replaced with cool clean water. The clean water and a clean cloth were used to remove the soapy mixture. Repeated rinsing occurred until all the soap was removed and then the box was thoroughly dried.

Water will not damage a finish as long as it is not left to just evaporate. The grime was now

removed and a clean looking box with the original finish was returned to the owner.

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