

Finish Restoration For Doors With Stain And Clear Finish

There Are Several Aspects Of Restoring The Finish On A Door That Are Difficult To Assess Just By Inspection Alone

Please read this completely and feel free to discuss any of the conditions within. It is our intention to execute every project with the highest level of professional care.

Perfection is generally not a condition of restoration, compromise in small degrees is a much more accurate feature of even the best of outcomes. Beyond the clear finish and through the stain, the door has aged and may or may not regain the original vibrant qualities that it had when it was new, regardless of how much sanding is done to the wood. If the expectation is that the door will look brand new you will most likely be disappointed. Restoration of doors that have been exposed to ultra violet light and wet weather conditions over many years typically retain some character or odd quality that has been acquired over time. One persons charming patina is another persons unacceptable flaw. It is impossible for us to determine exactly which quality would be charming to one customer and not another. All brand new doors look the same. All restored doors are unique in their appearance.

Most estimates are submitted based on how much time it takes to complete the work; yet most of what we need to see, in order to provide a proper assessment of time, is hidden. A fixed price for a project whose entire scope cannot be fully assessed is not entirely fair to either the customer nor the contractor.

- 1. It is impossible to predict how the raw wood door will look after sanding. Each door has had its own unique aging experience. The restoration process is much more of a continuous experiment than repetitive process with the same results each time.**
- 2. It is difficult to determine the thickness and quality of the veneers until after the sanding has been completed and whether the adhesives holding the veneers are still vigorous.**
- 3. Problems like: lifting veneer, darkened grain, previous repairs, often do not become apparent until after the sanding has been completed.**
- 4. If a substantial amount of bleaching is required this can lead to additional expenses because of the necessary return trips involved.**
- 5. Vintage unique or specialized hardware may require a professional locksmith to remove and replace. It may be necessary to leave a specialized handset in place and mask it off.**
- 6. We are not door installing mechanics. We do not have the expertise required to hang the door or adjust the hardware at the handset or the hinges. This type of work will require another contractor.**

1. Though we have a tremendous amount of experience we do not have Xray vision. Will the grain be perfectly uniform in pattern and color before re-staining? The answer is - probably not, due mostly to its age and exposure to the elements. After the door has been sanded there will most likely be some degree of blotchiness or lack of uniformity which may or may not require

some type of bleaching or toning to regain control over the staining process and the final look. In general the darker the final color, the easier it is to deal with the unevenness in staining and to help mask repairs.

2. Because most doors are veneered the time spent sanding must be carefully monitored. It is often not known if the door has been refinished in the past, or how thick the veneer is even if this is its first restoration. Sanding alone does not always remove all of the scratches, dents, marks or discoloration. Bleaching, staining, and/or glazing may be needed to build up the color over several applications. Many customers are misled by the terms Solid Wood Door and Solid Core Door which are often used interchangeably. A solid core door is an all wood door that is made up of many pieces of real wood laminated together and is veneered. This is the most common type of door because it is far more stable and less prone to warping. Unfortunately some of these veneers can be quite thin.

3. My preference would be to establish the price after the door has been sanded. That way most of the variables have been exposed making it easier to control the finishing process. Since most projects go fairly smoothly and most problems can be dealt with under the estimated price, we tend not to do projects on a Time and Materials basis. But if we do run into unforeseen issues that require extra time, the customer will be notified immediately of any unique condition and informed of any additional expense.

4. An additional or unpredictable expense would be if the door was simply too blotchy after sanding and needed a liquid bleach to acquire a consistent and uniform look across the door before staining. This would require a return trip because of the amount of time needed for the bleach to dry thoroughly. Another example would be peeling or lifting veneer that was not seen prior to sanding that may need replacement.

*A variation of Murphy's Law as it applies to woodwork restoration: Any place on the door chosen as an experimental sample will not have any of the problems that will occur on other parts of the door.

5. We would prefer to remove the handset and lock hardware. If we cannot remove these pieces it may be difficult to get a uniform color and finish around them if they are left in place. This is an example of compromise. We are not locksmiths and we may not have the proper tools for the removal of the handsets. You may need another professional to remove and replace this hardware. Some handsets are too fragile to be removed and have long since been out of production. There may not be any replacement parts for vintage hardware. If you are considering new hardware, all of those pieces must be installed before the restoration of finish begins. New hardware may not have the same footprint as the one it replaces.

What to expect

Most of what we offer is done in one day by one or two people with water based products and brush applied. A door removed for sanding is put back in place the same day. Some doors can be left on the hinges and refinished in place, though most doors are removed and placed horizontally for stippling. Some additional technique to control the lack of uniformity in grain pattern is assumed in the initial estimate. We also assume there will be dents to fill and marks to be touched up.

One coat of stain gets applied and after it is dry a sealer is added. This is where the customer's input is most greatly appreciated. Now that we have some color on the door we can tell how much more work might be needed to match the chosen color. Clear coats of finish with some pigment added, toner coat, can be used to regain a uniform color across all of the rails and panels of the door. Generally speaking it is easier to go darker as these coats are applied. Therefore the initial application of stain is often deliberately light to give us some latitude in trying to hide imperfections and balance minor unevenness.

Prep

- 1) Place drop cloths to protect floors.
- 2) Remove hardware if recommended.
- 3) Remove damaged finish and sand until smooth to #120 grit.
- 4) Fill any nail holes, voids, gaps or damage with appropriate putty or filler.
- 5) Prepare a color sample for customer approval.

Finishing

- 1) Apply the pre-approved water based stain to a small section of the door for approval.
- 2) Apply the first coat of acrylic urethane.
- 3) Sand the surfaces with 220 grit and dust after sanding.
- 4) Apply any additional stain or toner coat to blend colors if necessary.
- 5) Apply the final coats of acrylic urethane for maximum durability, no less than three coats.

Detail

- 1) Replace hardware if previously removed.
- 2) Clean any stain or finish residue from glass.

Signed _____

Date _____