

Vintage Home renovation tips column *by Marjorie Lewis*



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Restoration and Cleaning Tips for Your Home

For the new year I thought some tips on stripping paint, restoring and cleaning vintage house parts would be helpful. Following are some of my favorites including suggestions for some products you may not have heard of before. Brand name cleaners that are excellent for regular cleaning are often too harsh for restoration cleaning. When it comes to old surfaces, gentle cleaners are key. Some **old-time favorites** are **Bar Keeper's Friend** (great for removing rust and cleaning stainless steel) and **Bon Ami** (cleans delicate surfaces without scratching). Always start with the gentlest method; always do a patch test.

Cleaning Porcelain fixtures

Porcelain fixtures streaked with green stain drips from old copper plumbing can be turned white again with a mixture of equal parts of **Bon Ami** and **cream of tartar** that is moistened to a paste with hydrogen peroxide. Let this paste sit on the stain for 30 minutes before rinsing it off. You can also buy a stain removal product that contains phosphoric acid which is available at good plumbing supply houses.

For rust stains in porcelain sinks or tubs, a product such as **Zud** works very well.



Cleaning Walls and Woodwork

Win a prize! Details on back

For dirty walls and painted woodwork, soap-and-water washing works best with Ivory Liquid. You'll need drop cloths or newspaper, a soapy-water bucket, a rinse bucket, two sponges (natural sponges work better than cellulose), a ladder, and lots of paper towels. Test first an inconspicuous area. Then clean 3 x 3 sections at a time. **Contrary to apparent logic, start washing at the bottom of the wall, not at the top.** If dirty wash water is allowed to run down over uncleaned sections of the wall, you'll get streaks that will be difficult or even impossible to remove by cleaning.

To revive wood finishes, mix a tablespoon of Ivory Liquid soap to a quart of warm water and whip it to create a lot of suds, then dip an old washcloth into the suds (not the water) and vigorously rub the wood. Then wipe the wood with a dry cloth to remove any dampness. This method will remove surface grime without harming the patina.

Fireplace Hearths

Sooty fireplace hearths are best cleaned with a hard-surface cleaner such as one containing sodium metasilicate. **MEX** is one widely used brand.

Cleaning Marble

Marble is porous and prone to stains. **The good news is many stains may be removed** by applying certain cleaners or solvents in an absorbent poultice preparation typically composed of whiting (**powered limestone**) which is sold at hardware stores. Make a poultice from white absorbent material such as a napkin, blotter, paper towel or facial tissue, dampened with the **chemical rec-**

ommended below to dissolve that stain; **OR** mix whiting with that chemical to make a soft paste to cover the stain. The poultice should be left on the stain from 1 hour up to 48 hours, depending on the age and depth of the stain. Plastic wrap, held in place by masking tape, can be put over the poultice to keep it damp; otherwise it will have to be re-dampened with the chemical periodically. Mix only enough poultice for immediate use; mix a second batch later if another application is needed. **Organic Stains:** Tea, coffee, colors bleached from paper, textiles or soft drinks. Make poultice soaked with 20 percent peroxide (hair bleaching strength) and a few drops of ammonia.

Oil Stains: Oil stains may include butter, hand cream or lotion. As soon as possible, spread surface with an absorbent fine powder such as whiting or even corn starch. After short time brush to remove and reapply more powder. Let stand 24 hours. To remove: Scrub with hot, sudsy (detergent) solution and stiff brush. Or wipe with ammonia-dampened cloth. In either case, then rinse and wipe dry. If these alkaline solutions don't remove all the oil, you can try a solvent. Make a poultice dampened with acetone or amyl acetate (available at drug stores), or with home dry cleaning fluid. Use good ventilation with windows open to remove fumes, do not use near spark or flame, and do not leave on too long.

For basic cleaning, only wash marble surfaces with lukewarm water and wipe dry with a clean cloth. Occasionally use a mild detergent solution, rinse and wipe dry. Instead of waxing,

use a marble sealer to protect it from staining.

Stripping Paint

If you can't get the last flecks of paint out of the wood pores, brush on shellac cut with denatured alcohol. Let it dry a few days, and then strip with a thin layer of stripper. That usually pulls the paint out of the pores.

Scraping tools should be sharp. Touch up the edges every hour or so. It will be easier to scrape, and you won't mar the wood.

Some paint strippers say they are water rinsable on the label, but be aware that flooding a wood surface with water will raise grain, open glue joints, and loosen veneers. Better to do a solvent rinse (lacquer thinner, denatured alcohol, or mineral spirits).

And when you're ready to re-paint, a time honored technique to **improve a new paint job on even severely dried out, weathered wood is to treat it with linseed oil before priming.** Mix boiled linseed oil and turpentine 50/50 and liberally brush into wood. Allow it to dry for 24 hours and repeat the process. Allow 3 days for the oil to dry before sanding and priming.

LISTED PRODUCTS

MEX: Purchase at Dave's Paint store, Redlands

ZUD: Purchase at Ace Hardware, Yucaipa

Bon Ami: Also purchase at Ace Hardware, Yucaipa

Bar Keepers Friend: Purchase at Home Depot or Lowes.

References: OHJ, online and www.doityourself.com

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Old house repair tip newsletter

Newsletter for vintage homeowners

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**Vintage homes, hats and
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cleaning and Restoration Tips for your

*Win a Prize!

New Rules for more winners! Call in with the correct address of the Redlands home featured below by Feb. 25th, 2009 to be entered into a drawing. There will be two prizes awarded, **1st place is a \$25 gift card** and **2nd place is a \$15 gift card**. Drawing will take place on Feb. 27th. The gift card will be for a local merchant of the winner's choice.



Good Luck!

Last Month's winner-

Congratulations to Pris Garcia

He is the winner of the last contest. The correct address was 324 W. Olive Avenue. He chose a \$25.00 gift certificate to the **Olive Avenue Market** as his prize. Be sure to call in with the address of the property to the left to be entered into the drawing for the next contest!

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