

The Kramer Letter

News and information for the friends of Kramer's Best

Issue Number Three
SPRING/SUMMER 2008

Antiques Are Green!

We have a new "cause". Concern for our history and our environment has always, of course, been an integral part of John Kramer's personal and business values



and goals. That has not changed. However, a recent article in the *New England Antiques Journal*, by Editor-In-Chief John Fiske, has added a new "slant".

Yes, we want to preserve our history. And, yes, we want to preserve our environment. And Mr. Fiske's article has caused us to realize that these goals complement each other.

The slogan "don't buy new unless you have to",

not only
Antiques are Green — encourages valuing and
don't buy preserving
new unless the ir-
you have to! replaceable
treasures

from our past, but also results in conserving our resources — and in the case of our special interest — saves trees.

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Antique Improver on a Lewis & Clark keelboat?

NO, probably not on one of the originals, but it is the only finish used on the half-scale version pictured here (3 views).

We were totally unaware of the existence of this amazing piece of craftsmanship until we were contacted by Blake Asher, maintenance supervisor of the *Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center*, where this reduced-size keelboat, is on display. In fact, we were not aware of the existence of this *Discovery Center*, located right here in the heart of Kansas City, just a 10-minute walk from the historic Country Club Plaza shopping area.

Mr. Asher shared with us that when the Center opened in 2002 *Antique Improver* was used on their antique pine display stands, the 1/2 scale Lewis and Clark keelboat, and "a long list of other wooden items". He was now "looking to buy a gallon of *Improver* to go over all the displays

again (having done so occasionally these past 6 years)". The inquiry resulted in our visit to this amazing facility and a personal tour guided by Mr. Asher.



Butch Bouvier, Onawa, IA, [www.keelboat.com] built this half-scale 'Lewis & Clark' keelboat for the Missouri Conservation Department.

The *Discovery Center* building and surrounding 10 acres of gardens, wetlands, walkways and wildlife, are described on their Web Site as "environmentally friendly", but that sounds very understated to us. Their alternative energy sources include a geothermal heat pump, active and passive solar features, "the Living Machine that mimics nature as it cleans wastewater on-site before sending it to the indoor and outdoor marshes". And, the facility was designed to "rely on natural light rather than electrical power". The list of ecological marvels they have incorporated goes on and on.

And where does *Antique Improver* fit into all of this? One of the important "Green" features in the building construction and furnishing includes reuse of building materials . . . masonry and lumber artifacts salvaged from

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And, of course, the natural ingredients of *Kramer's Best Antique Improver* and other *Kramer's* products are critical to the preservation process and appropriate to the cause. They are as Green as it gets. We know of no other product that offers completely natural ingredients — proven effective from hundreds of years of use by our ancestors — and that do not require use and depletion of non-renewable resources. Our simple processes of manufacture offer little hazard to our Earth.

And, best of all, *our products work* — and as those of you who have used them know, they work better than anything else you've tried.

In his article, Mr. Fiske suggests making antiques-are-green "part of American common-sense" — a 'cause' we can definitely get behind.

To support his idea, Mr. Fiske, and the *New England Antiques Journal*, have provided the "Antiques Are Green" Logo shown on the previous page. Anyone who is interested is invited to use the logo in their antiques- or environmentally-related endeavors.

[Links to the Logo and to Mr. Fiske's excellent article, are available on our Web Site, on the "News & Blog" page. In the Blog, scroll down to the 2/4/2008 entry.]

We can all continue with our antiquing and collecting without guilt — saving, preserving, restoring, reusing — those are all *good* things. We can pursue our "passions" while also continuing to contribute to the good of our economy, and our planet.

Kansas City buildings. This "recycled" wood was used to build display stands, roof decking in the lobby, and several other areas in the building. And, it is *Antique Improver* that was chosen as the *natural* finish for that magnificent, irreplaceable old wood, as well as the keelboat. *Improver* is, of course, the perfect obvious choice to preserve the wood and maintain natural color and beauty.

**Antique Improver
...the perfect,
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and beauty.**

It is hard to describe how pleased we are to know that our product has been chosen to be a part of this extraordinary facility. For us it is a constant struggle — upholding promises and ideals and not changing "the recipe" to fit modern trends and economy — and still to be able to stay in business. To know that those involved in an ecological marvel such as *The Discovery Center*, do realize just what *Kramer's Best Antique Improver* is, and what it represents, makes it all worthwhile.

If you live in the Kansas City area and haven't yet visited *The Discovery Center*, this is a great day-trip to consider — without a mega \$\$\$ fuel investment. And if you are a visitor to the area, add it to your list of "things to *experience*". You won't be disappointed.



— Photo from Discovery Center Web Site

We have barely touched on all that *The Center* has available. For complete information about displays, events, classes, etc., visit their Web Site: mdc.mo.gov/areas/kcmetro/discovery/, or just "Google" *Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center*.

SEARCHING FOR A KRAMERS DEALER?

Check the new 'Blog' on our Find-A-Dealer page.

Connecting *Kramer's Best* customers with sales locations in their area can be a real challenge. We frequently get a call from someone who has picked up the product while traveling, or has had it recommended to them by a friend. They want to be able to purchase it locally.

We have always done our best to maintain a data base of Sales Locations of our dealers, and when customers inquire we refer to that list. As Internet use has grown, customers, and dealers, have wished for a listing on our Web Site. Keeping our data current is an almost impossible task, let alone keeping an accurate list of locations and current inventory on the Internet. And we certainly don't want to disappoint a customer with inaccurate information.

As a partial solution, some time ago, we established a "Master Dealer" program that includes dealers willing to make the commitment to maintain a stock of all products in all sizes. We then added the "Find-A-Dealer" page on the Web Site where these locations are available in a "searchable" format.

We still wanted to somehow share information about our other dealers. As a way to at least be able to mention them, we have added a "Blog" to the "Find-A-Dealer" page, where we add notes about current Dealer activity. When a Dealer orders, we mention their Shop Name, City, State, Zip and Phone Number. We cannot guarantee information about stock-on-hand, but prospective customers can contact the shop to check on availability.

Entries in this Blog began January 1, 2008. As time goes by, the list will become quite lengthy and a "search", using the computer's "Find On This Page" function will be helpful. You can search on City, State (2-letter abbreviation), or on the Zip Code.

We hope this will be helpful, but remember, do not hesitate to contact us and we will be glad to check our records for complete information.

HOW DO YOU USE ANTIQUE IMPROVER?

We recently received a call from an excited first-time user of *Antique Improver*. He wanted to become a dealer



PAINTED TINS

and have the product available for customers in his hardware store. A friend had given him a sample that he had used in the cleaning of an old stove. He reported that it had amazingly restored the rusty chrome handles.

While talking about the product we mentioned using it on wood — he then asked “What does it do for wood?” He didn’t realize it was for anything but metal.

While sharing that conversation with another



OLD BASKETS

customer, they responded “Metal? What does it do for metal?” They were a long-time user of the product but had never used it in restoring and preserving metal.

Yes, there are many ways to use our products — and it’s not unusual for us to hear of some new use from a customer. [One customer recently told us he uses it on the crocks of his collection to restore the patina and shine.]

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Antique Improver for sale in a quilt shop?



“Cloth and Quilts” Turlock, California

IN early February of 2005 we received the first Dealer order from “Cloth and Quilts” with the notation “need ASAP”. Since then they have continued to be a regular customer.

We thought they were, undoubtedly, also in the antiques business, accounting for sales of the product. Not so, we have discovered — their shop is all about fabrics and supplies and quilting and classes.

Antique Improver entered the picture when one of their customers ran across the product on a trip to Texas. She brought her bottle into the shop and demonstrated what it did for her antique treadle sewing machine.

It turns out that this very active shop is home base for a group of ladies who collect and use these glorious old machines. They love *Antique Improver!* They gather once a year on President’s Day weekend, bringing their machines with them, for their own special “sewing circle”. And it is this group that has realized just how much their cherished machines can benefit from being cared for with *Kramer’s Best Antique Improver*.

These old machines in “found” condition are usually very dry — especially the tops. Those of us who can remember (or will admit to remembering) will recall that the sewing machine always sat in front of a window. This location was chosen so that there was good light while sewing. And, since it was “good light”, it also made the ideal place to set potted plants when the machine was not in use (remember the beautiful African Violets?).

The result — lots of dryness of the wood and the finish. And, as many have already discovered, *Antique Improver* is the absolute most effective product available to restore and preserve those crusty old dry finishes.



Antique Improver restores and preserves the ornate metalwork.



Marian learned to sew on this treadle Singer that belonged to her Mother. It has benefitted from 20 years of occasional ‘Kramerizing’.



*The wrapped veneer of old machine covers benefits greatly from the “as-good-as-old” *Antique Improver*.*

Also, in addition to the wood, be sure to use *Improver* on the metal of the machine base as well. It will stop any rust that might have started, then brighten and stabilize the black painted surface.

You will discover just how good your treasured machine can really look — as have the ladies at “Cloth and Quilts”.

Shown here are some uses you might not have considered. Also, take a look at our Web Site. There are lots of “before/after” photos



WEATHERED DOORS

— and, keep an eye on the “News” Blog for new uses we are just hearing about.

For instance, in that Blog you will find a link to the “Woodworkers of North Carolina” Web Site, where the solid-walnut, 17” Bear Carving (finished with *Im-prover*), shown here, is



WOODCARVING

included in their Gallery. Rodger Barrow, proprietor of East Wake Hardwoods and founder of the WWNC organization and Gallery for master woodworkers, reports that use of *Antique Improver* is growing among the woodworkers and carvers he works with. He has become a *Kramer’s* dealer to keep them supplied.

We would like to hear how *you* use the products.

(Remember to always work carefully and TEST FIRST when experimenting with a new use.)

Many an old tool is a thing of beauty...

BUT, even our ancestors would have been quick to recognize the benefit of many of our “modern” implements!

An upgraded air-conditioning system at John’s workshop has made it a much more pleasant place to be, and consequently, some long-delayed projects are being completed. One project, a bentwood chair, became almost unrecognizable due to all the clamps necessary for the gluing process.



This bentwood chair from our kitchen was in need of serious overhaul. Today’s modern clamps would have been readily approved by our ancestors.



There was great contrast between the bentwood and an old child’s rocker used by John as demonstration in seminars he used to do on the “old ways of working with wood”. He had “clamped” the old rocker using sticks and strings in windlass fashion.

We don’t want to totally go back to the old ways. But we don’t want to forget them, either.



When there was a job to be done, our ancestors worked with what was at hand — and a lot of ingenuity.

Something New...

COLOR PHOTOS IN ‘THE KRAMER LETTER’?

Yes, if you are viewing this *Kramer Letter* on your computer you will, for the first time, be seeing the photos in color.

In previous issues we did not use color because of the fact that we would be producing the printed version in black-and-white — no color. However, while we were preparing the Lewis & Clark keelboat photos we thought it was such a shame that we couldn’t show you the beautiful color of the wood (thanks to *Antique Improver*). Then it was one of those “*duuhhh*” moments — we realized that since most of you will be reading the Newsletter on-line, it *could* be color, with only the “paper” version in black-and-white.

So, if you are reading this *Kramer Letter* from a printed version, and you would like to see the photos in “Living Color”, go to the News & Blog page on our Web Site and “click” on the icon for this issue. This, and future issues, will use color photos. The first two issues that are available on the Web Site will remain black-and-white. We wish we had thought of it sooner!

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Previous issues of this KRAMER LETTER are available on our Web Site on the ‘NEWS’ page.

Also on the “NEWS” page, watch our “Latest News” blog for recent postings.

Customer Satisfaction — We want happy customers! Whether you purchase directly from us, or from one of our dealers, if you have any questions or concerns, CONTACT US. If you need advice about a project or use of the products, CONTACT US. We want you to use our products SUCCESSFULLY!