

The Kramer Letter

News and information for the friends of Kramer's Best

Issue Number Two
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It's a New Year

...with a clean slate and unlimited opportunity ahead for each of us. In spite of the "craziness" inherent in an election year, and the ever-



present chaos and crisis that

cannot be ignored, we remain confident that the greeting-card-promised "Peace & Prosperity" is always a possibility — a possibility worth working towards.

It is good to have the "fresh start" of a New Year as a reminder to stop, reflect, and purposefully renew direction and resolve.

For Kramer's, our first goal for 2008 is to finalize the new "Professional Tools & Supplies" line we have promised our customers.

This is a line made up of items appropriate for use on many restoration

and wood-working projects, and which are compatible and

...the home craftsman striving for professional results...

beneficial for use with Kramer's products. Normally part of the professional's toolbox, the home craftsman striving for professional results may find these less-commonly-used items difficult to obtain conveniently in small quantities, or of the quality that is important.

Extensive time and effort have gone into finding and

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MORE-THAN-JUST-A-PRODUCT...

It's a cause.

Many years ago — in 1995 to be exact — *The Kansas City Star* ran a very nice article, complete with color photo, about John. The headline read: "John Kramer's more-than-just-a-product". And in the body of the story reported: "Kramer's Best Antique Improver is more than a product. It's a cause."

The *Star* newswriter, after lengthy conversations with John, reached this very perceptive conclusion. And, though it had never been put into exactly those words before, anyone who knows John, or spoken with him about *Kramer's Best*, will agree.

Antique Improver is an exceptional product. It works very well. Its use yields results we often hear described as "amazing" or "miraculous".

But it is much more than a great product. It is a product with a purpose. John's goal to preserve as many of the old pieces as possible, keeping original finishes intact, and saving as much originality as possible, is an integral part of the product. Steady increase in sales of *Kramer's Best* over the past 20 years is one measure of progress toward this goal.

And the "cause" doesn't stop there. Formulation of *Kramer's Best* products — methods of production, as well as the type of ingredients used (and those NOT used) — are proof that not only do natural and compatible materials work better, but also we do not need to contaminate ourselves, and our planet, with things harmful. Nor do we need to unnecessarily deplete non-renewable resources. Hopefully this knowledge and practice will encourage progress of these philosophies and methods into other areas of our lives.

It is a cause — and it is a cause that is worthwhile and rewarding.



New product line is now available.

We have too long been talking about this new product line without revealing what is actually included. This is not because we were trying to be "secretive", but because it has been a challenge to find distributors offering quality merchandise in workable quantity and pricing.

We have grouped these items under the headings: Applicators, Shop Staples, Pigments, Shellac, Hide Glue, and Abrasives. All of these items are purchased by us, then re-packaged or additionally-labeled for resale.

It is our goal to make these items available in small quantities in an easy-to-use form for the convenience of our customers involved in small projects. We will include basic instructions, however, for accomplishing complex work such as a French Polish or intricate repairs, the customer's previous knowledge and expertise in working with traditional methods and materials is assumed. [Product listing & description on inside pages.]



establishing workable sources of supply in order to be able to offer a line of the caliber we deem essential.

Since we are not purchasing in huge quantities, our costs do not allow "Wal-Mart" pricing. We will offer these items for your convenience — if you find them elsewhere at lower cost, and you are certain that the quality is comparable, then by all means, use that source. Our goal is for you to have convenient access to tools necessary for achieving success in your projects.

In this Newsletter we will list the items and prices, plus a brief description. Most are available now. However they are not yet included on the Web Site. To order, make a note in the "Comments" section on the Order Form and we will make the addition in processing. Or, of course, tell us what you want by phone or mail.

These items will be available only directly from *Kramer Products, Inc.* and will not be sold through our dealers or retail locations. We realize that this is a line that will be of limited interest and does not warrant mass marketing or others would already be doing it.

Kramer's Best products can be used effectively, and have for many years, without any of these additional tools. However, for those doing professional work or more complex techniques, this new line offers convenient access to necessary items previously not readily available in small quantities.

Let us know if there is some item you would like to see added to this new line.

Our goal is for you to have convenient access to tools necessary for achieving success in your projects.

KRAMER PRODUCTS, INC. Professional Products — Product Listing —

(All prices subject to change without notice.)

APPLICATORS

Sheepskin wool applicator (appx. 9 sq. in.)	\$ 1.00	
Nylon non-abrasive pad (6x9 in. pad)	\$ 2.50	
Bronze Wool (SOFT)	1 pad / \$ 2.50	3 pads / \$ 6.00
Bronze Wool (GENTLE)	1 pad / \$ 2.50	3 pads / \$ 6.00
Bronze Wool (HARSH)	1 pad / \$ 2.50	3 pads / \$ 6.00
Stainless Steel Wool (FINE)	1 pad / \$ 2.00	3 pads / \$ 5.00
Stainless Steel Wool (MEDIUM)	1 pad / \$ 2.00	3 pads / \$ 5.00
Stainless Steel Wool (COARSE)	1 pad / \$ 2.00	3 pads / \$ 5.00
2" Cotton Webbing	per foot \$.75	

SHOP STAPLES

Pure Beeswax, unbleached large block	\$ 14.00	(paper bag)
Colophony Rosin, per 1/2 pound	\$ 10.00	(paper bag)
Turpentine, per quart	\$ 12.00	(tin can)
Raw Linseed Oil, per quart	\$ 12.00	(tin can)
Pure Castile Soap, 1 bar	\$ 3.00	(paper wrapper)
Lye Soap (when available)	Market Price	

PURE NATURAL DRY PIGMENTS

Packaged in Glass Jars by volume.

Raw Umber	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Burnt Umber	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Raw Sienna	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Burnt Sienna	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Yellow Ochre	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Van Dyke Brown	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Titanium White	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Carbon Black	1 oz.	\$ 5.00
Set of 8 Pigments (1 oz. each)		\$ 36.00

SHELLAC

Packaged dry in paint cans 1/4 filled to allow use as mixing/application and temporary storage container.

	1/4 Pt.	1/2 Pt.	1 Pt.	1 Qt.
Seed Lac	\$ 5.00	\$ 9.00	\$14.00	\$20.00
AC Garnet	\$ 5.00	\$ 9.00	\$14.00	\$20.00
Orange Shellac	\$ 5.00	\$ 9.00	\$14.00	\$20.00
White Shellac	\$ 5.00	\$ 9.00	\$14.00	\$20.00

HIDE GLUE (ground)

Kit is packaged in three round tins. Two tins are suitable for use as a glue pot. Includes glue, a riser, aspirin, brushes and instruction sheet.

Kit	\$ 15.00
Refills (glue only)	\$ 5.00
Brushes	2 for \$1.00

ABRASIVES

Packaged in round, shallow tin.

Pumice - Medium Fine	2 oz.	\$ 5.00
Pumice - Medium Coarse	2 oz.	\$ 5.00
Rottenstone	2 oz.	\$ 5.00
Whiting	2 oz.	\$ 5.00

Need Rags?

Though we all laughingly say we have plenty of "rags", that isn't always necessarily true. Finding the ideal well-washed, lint-free, 100% cotton is many times a challenge.

We have found an ideal solution to be the "worn out" fabric from roll towel-dispensing machines.

Though these are not as readily available as they once were, we plan to try to have a supply available.

Since there is no way to predict cost and availability, if you are interested, ask for current details.

— Product Description —

APPLICATORS:

Sheepskin — A small piece of Sheepskin Wool is often a good applicator for *Antique Improver*. It works especially well when treating large or uneven areas. (If cleaning or smoothing is necessary, you will need a more aggressive applicator.)

Nylon non-abrasive pad — This "Teflon-safe" pad is more aggressive, but can be safely used, without scratching, when you need extra cleaning power on a delicate surface. Use with either *Antique Improver* or *Blemish Clarifier*.

Bronze Wool is not as harsh or cutting as the commonly-used Steel Wool, making it appropriate for the most delicate work. Also, small bits of the Bronze material are not as problematic when they inevitably become lodged in the wood grain. Even the finest flakes of Steel Wool might cause dark spotting — especially in oak. Bronze Wool is not impregnated with petrochemical oils as is Steel Wool.

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WE ARE NOT EXEMPT!

Though we wish we could “choose not to participate” in current unbridled escalation of costs and pricing overwhelming all areas of our lives, in the real world that just isn’t possible.

Barely 30 days into our new Turpentine arrangement in 2006 there was a rate increase — and there have been more, not just on Turpentine but all ingredients and necessary materials.

Due to fuel costs, shipping rates are increasing rapidly. In spite of a newly-negotiated UPS rate, our cost — shipping only — to send one 8-oz. bottle 2 states away, is \$7.47. That leaves 3¢ of our \$7.50-per-order S&H to cover packing materials and labor. And, of course, the cost increases on larger orders to farther destinations.

It seems that almost daily there is some new cost to be “absorbed”. This *is* the real world — for a company to remain in business, facts have to be faced.

Don’t get alarmed — this is not a dreaded notice-of-price-increase. We simply want our customers to be aware that this is a constant concern for us and that we are doing all that we can to deal with rising costs and expenses by operating in a frugal and efficient manner — without ever sacrificing quality or changing our products in any way.

When the time comes that we need to make pricing changes we will, as always, make the announcement as soon as possible and hope that you will, as in the past, be understanding.

In the meantime, it is business-as-usual. We look forward to your orders — and don’t forget to tell your friends — it all helps!

Stainless Steel Wool, is the opposite of Bronze Wool — and is *more* abrasive and *sharper* cutting than Steel Wool — making it beneficial on projects needing more aggressive cleaning and smoothing. As with the Bronze Wool, there is not the concern of darkening from embedded flecks, nor is it oil impregnated.

Cotton Webbing is used in upholstery, but can also be used as a non-abrasive furniture sling, as a protective wrap, or for many other uses in working with furniture restoration or in moving and storage. Very strong, 2-inch width.

SHOP STAPLES:

Beeswax, Rosin, Turpentine, Raw Linseed Oil, Castile Soap, Lye Soap, are all familiar materials. We offer them for your convenience in workable quantities and to ensure that you will be using products of the highest quality available.

PURE NATURAL DRY PIGMENTS:

Staining wood, as practiced today most often flows synthetic pigment in a synthetic carrier onto the wood surface as a thin paint wash — many times hiding the grain and leaving a “plastic”, or artificial, look. Natural pigments, in natural carriers, work best when a change of color is necessary. Our pigments are of highest quality and can be used in conjunction with *Antique Improver* or *Blemish Clarifier*. They can also be mixed with other materials such as water, turpentine, alcohol, wax, hard stopping, putty, filler, etc. Any standard cabinet wood color can be matched with combinations of these eight colors: **Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Yellow Ochre, Van Dyke Brown, Titanium White, Carbon Black**.

SHELLAC:

Shellac, though it has lost popularity in recent years, is a very effective natural finish with many advantages. However, liquid shellac has a very limited shelf life — about a week. To obtain optimum results with shellac, it must be mixed from the flake (dry ground). Purchase in small amounts is many times difficult. We have packaged quantities of flake shellac in cans large enough to enable alcohol, in the necessary amount, to be added and the container then used for application and short-term storage. Choose from **Seed Lac, AC Garnet, Orange, or White**. Container sizes are 1/4 pt., 1/2 pt., 1 pt., 1 qt.

HIDE GLUE:

Ground (dry) Hide Glue is the best choice for furniture repair and many other uses. We offer a convenient kit that provides what you need to make the glue needed for your project. All you need to add is a heat source. (See story on Page 4).

ABRASIVES:

Pumice, Rottenstone, Whiting — in that order — are used for buffing, burnishing and adding lustre to wood and finishes. They are also used in making gesso, putty, filler, and more. We have included two grades of Pumice to add to flexibility.

Basic instructions for use are included with most items and more inclusive description and instructions will be available later on our Web Site. Some previous customer knowledge and expertise in working with traditional methods and materials is assumed.

Another Happy ‘Kramerizer’...

“I was looking for something to restore 100-year-old oak and maple which make up my floors, extensive woodwork and built-ins in our recently purchased home. After some trial and error and some research, I found Kramer’s on the internet. I ordered the Improver and Clarifier, and was just so impressed with the results, the ingredients, the ease of use, and it smells lovely.”

After trying small amounts of the products, this customer consulted with John at great length about use of Kramer’s to restore and maintain her newly-purchased (built in 1911) New Mexico home. The message above was included with her order for 3 gallons of *Antique Improver*. Of course we wanted to know more and asked for photos.

What an amazing and unusual find for the area . . . a beautiful home that will “glow” with the use of *Antique Improver*.



A New Mexico adobe with interior hardwoods...even more beautiful with Kramer’s.

Here's Leo...

If you have looked at the "Photo Album" page on our Web Site, you have seen pictures of Kate, the Bull Mastif that has been part of our family for 13 years.

It is with regret that we report that Kate is no longer with us. It is very sad, but 13 happy years for a 140-lb. dog is more than can usually be hoped for.



Leo joined us in time to have Kate train him for several months in the ways of our family, and he has now assumed position as "top dog". Leo is part Chow and part Sharpei (plus?). This strange mixture has turned out to be the makings of an exceptionally good and lovable dog.

The excess Sharpei skin is most evident in his "voluminous" jowls where much of the contents of his water bowl remains until he walks across the kitchen. But that is just one of those little quirks that brings smiles for all of us animal lovers — and what makes it all worthwhile.

THE 'OTHER' KRAMER WEB SITE...

More about glue(ing) than you probably ever wanted to know.

Many years ago, when we were all very young, John Kramer wrote prolifically about subjects for which he was very passionate. Foremost in his interests, as it still is today, was his devotion to preserving our antiques — "our tangible historic record".

These days, the passion is still there, but the fervor has mellowed and the writing has become less prolific. However, much of the information he gathered and what he composed and recorded at that time is still available for those who might be interested.

When web page technology first became a possibility, John built a page for his "Kramer Museum of Tools and Technology", which he describes as "a source of obscure information as relates to pre-industrial revolution tools & technology". The site is still

pretty much in its original format, and when first opened doesn't look like much, but if you follow the links you will find volumes of information. The "Keeping It All Together" link leads to good instruction on the correct care of your antique furniture, focusing on gluing which we have mentioned in this Newsletter. Also, click on "Traditional Receipts" ('recipes' in modern terminology), then on "Sticky and Slippery", to find more on the subject than you probably ever wanted to know.

Though some of it is pretty much in as-written (un-proofread or edited) stage, those of you with similar interests might find the site, and the articles, a comfortable place to spend some long winter hours.

THE KRAMER GLUE POT

John Kramer has long advocated hot Hide Glue as the absolute best choice when working in antique care and restoration. We have hesitated about offering it to our customers because its use would require the customer to obtain a glue pot, which for only occasional use on small projects, might



not be justified. As a solution, John has devised a very workable unit using three round metal tins. Two of the tins are used as the pot and the third contains the glue granules. Also included in the kit are a brush for application and aspirins to retard spoilage — plus an instruction sheet. All you need to supply is a heat source. The 'pot' can be re-used many times and glue refills are available.



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