

# Kramer's Best Antique Improver DEALER NEWS

January, 1992

Volume 1, Number 1

*Your customers ask you...*

## Why does it work so well?

"What makes it better than other products I have tried?" — a common question when we begin to tell someone about *Antique Improver*.

We know how good it is. We've seen it work. But, sad to say, most people won't just accept our word and automatically purchase the product. They've heard so many similar claims and been disappointed by actual results that they have become very skeptical.

It is, of course, good to know that the general public has become more discerning in the way they spend their money. But it now falls to us to furnish the information that will help them prove to themselves that *Antique Improver* is not "too good to be true."

### IMPORTANT FACT #1:

*Antique Improver* (or any Kramer's Best product) contains POSITIVELY NO PETROCHEMICALS.

Pick up any of the modern wood-care products. Check the ingredients. You will almost always find "contains petroleum distillates," or some other reference to petrochemicals, on the label. Petroleum is great for your car. For finishes and wood it is not even compatible—let alone beneficial. These ingredients are used so widely because they are cheap, and for product mass marketing, cheap is most important. Petrochemical products do, many times,

look good when first applied. BUT, the minute the air hits the petrochemicals, they start to evaporate back out. As they evaporate, they take with them natural oils from the finish and the wood. Gummy residues are left on the surface. In 2 or 3 weeks your furniture or paneling look worse than before you started. The common reaction is that you "...didn't do it right, after all, the ad and the label said it would work," so you apply it again—doing further damage. As time passes, your pieces get more build-up of non-beneficial residue and look more dull and lifeless. Eventually you give up, replace the piece, have it stripped, or decide to just live with it like it is.

### IMPORTANT FACT #2:

*Antique Improver* is a formulation of ALL NATURAL INGREDIENTS. Ingredients natural to wood—extracts from trees, plants, natural things. John researched the old ways, going back hundreds of years, to learn what they used that kept their finishes in beautiful condition for centuries. This formulation is the result of his research. These ingredients have been proven by hundreds of years of use to be effective when used in this way.

When applied to NEW OR STRIPPED WOOD *Antique Improver* literally replaces oils which have been

(see *WHY DOES IT WORK?* on page 2)

## "What is *Antique Improver*?" Fliers and Counter Cards Now Available

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a copy of a flier we now have available. Since brochures are just too expensive to give out freely, we now use these fliers as "giveaways" at shows. Leave them on the counter, near your *Improver* display, use them as sack stuffers or in other ways that would work best for you. There is also

a 6" x 9" counter card available that displays the same copy.

If you have not received either of these, let us know the next time you place an order and we will include 100 fliers and a counter card at no charge. Additional fliers are available at \$1.00 per hundred and counter cards are \$1.00 each.

## Welcome...

to the first (and long-promised) edition of the *Kramer's Dealer Newsletter*. We hope that by staying in better contact with all of you, sharing input from you and from our customers, we can all enjoy increased sales. Tips from John on using the products and on care and restoration of antiques will be a major focus. We need your questions, comments, suggestions and, of course, complaints. We want to help you in any way we can. Our success depends upon your success. We want you to be successful.

## Earn a FREE Case of *Antique Improver*

We are always looking for qualified dealers to sell *Kramer's Best* products. We know that as "Antiquers" you frequently meet others with similar interests—maybe in your shop, or theirs, at sales and auctions, shows, etc.

We want to encourage you to talk about *Antique Improver* and interest others in becoming dealers. As an incentive for this type of promotion of the product, we will send 1 case of 8 oz. bottles of *Antique Improver*, to any qualified dealer who puts us in touch with someone who subsequently signs up as a new dealer. (We will also pay shipping which makes this offer even more valuable.)

If you do refer someone to us, please notify us and give their name so that you will receive proper credit.

*Be sure to stamp your name and address information where spaces are provided on brochures and fliers. If we receive any mail orders on forms bearing your name we will credit you with 20% of the order. This credit will be applied towards your future orders. We will notify you of orders received.*

# Why does it work? (continued from page one)

leaving the wood since the day the tree was cut. It restores the natural color and beauty to the wood, enhances the grain and gives a natural luster to the surface. If stripping a piece is necessary, because someone has sadly chosen to cover a beautiful finish with paint, *Antique Improver* is even more beneficial as it replaces the natural oils and helps reverse the damage caused by stripping. Applied with fine steel wool, sanding most times becomes unnecessary as beauty and color are restored to the dry, damaged wood. It is an ideal total final finish.

Applied to an EXISTING FINISH *Antique Improver* restores the finish. This is possible because the old finishes (paint, varnish, laquer, shellac) were natural-oil based. Over time these oils have begun to leave the finish. This has caused shrinking, and subsequently cracking, checking and flaking. The natural oils that are in *Antique Improver* are many of the same oils used in these old natural-oil-based finishes. When these oils are replaced, the deterioration is stopped. Color and beauty are restored. And the improvement doesn't stop there. In future weeks or months, you will see continued improvement, as the oils

continue to absorb into the finish, through the finish into the wood, re-bonding and restoring.

Of course, each finish and wood is different. Amount of deterioration and damage received is different. And results will be different on each piece. But all pieces show improvement. We hear words ranging from "looks a lot better" to "amazing, unbelievable". [See "We Get Letters" elsewhere in this newsletter].

## OTHER IMPORTANT USES:

*Antique Improver* is also the ideal way to clean off the surface build-up found on so many of the old pieces—furnace residue, lamp smoke, kitchen cooking grease. It does this gently, reconditioning, but not damaging, the original finish as it cleans.

Also use it to clean the metal on old tools—stops rust and oxidation. The paint on tins and old toys is restored in the same way as the finishes on wood—natural oils are restored and cracking, flaking is stopped.

After polishing metals such as brass and copper, wipe with a very light coat of *Antique Improver*. This protects the metal from the air which slows down retarnishing—but allows a natural (not coated and artificial) look.

There are many special problems encountered in dealing with restoration of valuable old pieces. Many, many times, solutions to these problems can be found in the use of *Antique Improver* and other *Kramer's Best* products. The important thing is to RESTORE whenever possible—not strip indiscriminately, which sacrifices the irreplaceable beauty and value of the old pieces.

Most people aren't aware that there is such a product available. We constantly have customers describing pieces they have stripped because they didn't know what else to do, which they now know could have been spared the damage by using *Improver*.

SHARE THIS INFORMATION with your customers. Display before and after samples. Maybe even have a piece available where you can demonstrate. Let them try it (a lady at a show asked to take my cloth and try it herself and was amazed that *even she* could make it work—she bought a bottle). This will not only convince customers that it works, but educate them on how to use it. They will be satisfied customers. They will come back for more—and they will send their friends.

## May I introduce myself...

My name is Marian Blades. I work with John on sales and marketing of the products. I have now been designated editor [TRANSLATED: *Doer of the work*] for this newsletter. I may have met some of you at shows. Others I may have spoken with on the phone or been in touch by letter.

Since our main objective is to market through dealers, my focus is towards helping the dealers by developing point-of-purchase and sales materials, making supplies and information readily available—giving assistance in any way needed. It is our hope that this newsletter will be a very effective tool in communicating information, answering questions, and offering encouragement.

We have decided to have it 3-hole punched. Hopefully, the content can serve as a reference if issues are kept together and handy.

We are using a recycled stock which is in keeping with our philosophy.

The intention is to publish bi-monthly. If possible, and whenever there is reason for communication, it will be more often. If necessary, it may be less often. We will do our best.

Among other features, we will share with you some of the many letters we receive from customers. And we receive many. Totally unsolicited. We not only appreciate the kind words, but learn much from comments about ways they use *Kramer's Best* and results they have achieved.

We want to hear from you. We want to know what helps you sell the product or what your problems are. If we can't help, maybe another dealer has advice or a solution. What would you like to see included? Would you like contests for top sales? What sales tools or point-of-purchase materials would be helpful to you? We know about sales at shows—that's what we do. But you are the ones who know about the challenges of selling in a shop or a mall. We want you to tell us what you need. This is your newsletter—we want to hear from you—often!

**Try Blemish Clarifier...** on Printer's Ink. Works great! We were asked by a customer what would clean the ink off an old type drawer. We tried it on an old, very black, galley tray and found a beautiful brass bottom and walnut wooden sides hidden under the ink.

### **Kramer's Best Antique Improver DEALER NEWS**

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# The World according to John Kramer

BY JOHN T. KRAMER

Antiques Doctor & Apothecary  
Traditional Wood Conservator

[Editor's Note: While trying to determine how this newsletter can be of most help, it occurred to me that in order for you to best use, and interest others in using, Kramer's best products, you must first understand John's philosophies, goals, and intent for use of his products. Those of you who have been involved with Improver since the early years of the company, purchased the product directly from him and maybe attended one of his seminars or at least spent some time getting acquainted. This is no longer always the case. Some of you have dealt only with me at shows that I do, or have ordered directly by mail. John's philosophy of preservation and restoration is an integral part of the products. And his philosophies are, of course, not limited to antiques and wood (as those of you who have heard him speak well know). Hence I have named this page as you see above, and have prevailed upon John to record, for this first issue, some of his basic philosophy and concerns. In future issues, this page (and as much of the newsletter as necessary) will be devoted to his writings on matters of interest in many areas: conservation, preservation, restoration, or... (?) Send your questions. Share your problems and concerns as you work with antiques and with wood or in any area where John's knowledge and expertise may be of assistance. Others can also benefit from the answers. If there are subjects you would like to see discussed, let John know. If he doesn't already know the answers, he has exceptional resource materials available. We want to hear from you.]

**"From our past we can learn the answers to survival of a future. We can learn to tread gently upon the earth which nurtures us. We can limit the scars. We can find much of value already available that when combined with the knowledge of today, can provide some of the answers, in simple formulae, to an ever increasing complexity of problems in the world around us."**

— From *Shepherds' Compleat Early Nineteenth Century Woodworker*, 1981, Preface by J. Thomas Kramer

Antiques are the tangible historic record. They are the physical embodiment of our ancestors real blood, sweat and tears. If they are changed in any way they are diminished. Not only is monetary value being damaged by modern refinishing but, more importantly, the historic value is destroyed. When properly preserved we can "read" or learn from our precious old pieces much as we do from books. If we change them it is like random tearing and burning of pages from a book; knowledge is lost. Unlike books, of which there are usually other copies with identical information, every antique is a unique one-of-a kind entry into the historic record.

The original finish is the signature of the craftsman. When removed, it is lost forever and we can never again be certain of what was originally intended. When sanded, the work is made smaller than original, patina is cut away, all evidence of age, and the makers toolmarks are removed. When a modern stain and finish is applied the past is gone.

Antiques of today will be of incalculable value to the future—all that is known is of the past. The future is only a guess. We cannot presume to know what knowledge will be of value to resolving the problems of the future. If we freely obfuscate the past we cannot imagine what risk that holds.

There are rare occasions when stripping is unavoidable, yet we can refinish with natural and compatible materials, eliminate sanding and preserve as much integrity as possible. The better choice is to recondition and rejuvenate the original buttermilk paint, shellac or varnish . . . preserving what is left for the children and their children's children, ad infinitum.

These are the some of the purposes I address with my products. They are compatible with the earth and are not only reversible but renewable. I have chosen to use materials that have been proven to work over the long term by

centuries of use. I have chosen the very best materials ever known. There are no substitutes for the real thing.

When you recondition the original finish of an antique with my *Antique Improver* you are helping preserve the whole fiber of our heritage. Our only legacy to the future which is of true substance is knowledge of the whole past.

When you stabilize the wood, helping it naturally resist the elements which would cause deterioration, you ensure that the far distant future will enjoy direct knowledge and contact with their distant past.

We are exiting the longest historic period our kind has known: The Age of Wood.

We have a unique opportunity in the annuals of history. We can, on exit, preserve—not destroy—that which has gone before. In all past history the great body of evidence has been lost, converted or destroyed. We have little from the Bronze Age or even the Renaissance. What we have today will be of immeasurable value a thousand years from now. That from a hundred years before, greater value yet.

The past hundred years or so have encompassed the most dynamic growth of knowledge ever known. So rapid, we have in many ways endangered ourselves by lack of maturity in knowledge. Knowledge will continue to expand exponentially. This expansion will require some grounding in the wisdom of a mature culture which existed before our recent mad dash to the future. This wisdom, derived through maturity of knowledge, still holds great value and should be given weight in measure equal to current wisdoms.

The culture which could give us a Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Adams, Franklin, and the many more who came together for a great and noble purpose, and then executed their charge with such alacrity, was one of great maturity. Maturity which is only developed by a deep understanding of the world it inhabited.

I have gone back to that time of wisdom. I have searched out things which were mature knowledge in their time. Wisdom lost in a search for new knowledge.

It was a time when men truly understood the working, finishing and preservation of wood. Wood is the most important material of all time. Up until this century it was used for everything (transportation, shelter, fuel, utensils, tools, etc.). Every element of life was directly affected by wood. It is the material our kind has used the longest. Some would argue that a rock was man's first tool. If so, he picked it up to break a piece of wood. I'm betting he picked up a piece of wood first. Either way, the working of wood has been the longest lived of man's manual endeavors.

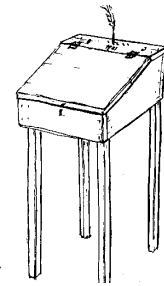
Our forefathers weren't dumb enough to buy into a concept of disposable commodity. They had to work hard (real blood, sweat and tears) to make the necessities of a comfortable life. They were well interested in seeing it last as long as possible.

Great-great grandpa didn't apply a finish to everything. Some things weren't meant to be finished and some were too large to justify the expense of a good finish, which has always required hand labor to gather and process.

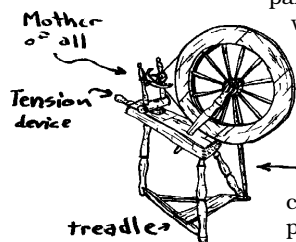
Over a great many years of careful observation and the passing of knowledge from master to apprentice, they found the things that worked, and figured out pretty much why they worked.

I have brought these things forward and found them to mostly resolve the hazards posed by their modern so-called equivalents. Their use cannot endanger all life for eons to come.

I have found the simplest, easiest thing we can ever do. It does not need to be done often. It does more than you could have



Ca 1840  
Writing  
Desk  
(simple  
country  
style)



possibly imagined. And it keeps on getting better.

It is hard to make a mistake when you work with mature products in the old way. It is even hard to make a mess. It's surprising how simple life becomes when we choose the best thing to each purpose.

We are now passing through one of the shortest yet most significant periods of history. The Age of Industry. Into a still faster learning period now called: The Age of Information. No one knows what lies ahead; it will be interesting. We will need full knowledge of our past; it will be more important than ever. As history teaches, many will find the transition difficult and painful as the familiar fades away.

Consider the plight of mid-eighteenth century craftsmen caught in the much slower transition to the Age of Industry. All they had known was for naught. The last apprentices trained found little work. Today the highly skilled factory worker has seen his industry nearly disappear in a very few years. Change is always painful; the trick is to make the change worth the pain.

Those who can learn from the past will survive and prosper.



*John T. Kramer*

## We get letters...

"We refinished a dresser and an antique chair with your ANTIQUE IMPROVER. They look terrific!" BEDFORD, VA

"... Let me tell you it is the best." SEDALIA, MO

"I purchased a bottle of Antique Improver. Wow!!! We have furniture that has been handed down to us from both sides of our family, plus furniture we purchased when we were married 30 years ago. And—after treating our beautiful furniture everything is even more beautiful now. My wife is very pleased with the outcome of your wonderful product." LAGUNA HILLS, CA

"... We used the oil on our burned kitchen cabinets — it worked wonders." KANSAS CITY, MO

I applied it to my beautiful mahogany finish piano to try to remove multiple cat paw print stains — 48 hours later same stains are 98% removed. I expect more applications will result in 100% removal of stains I have fought for 5+ years." CHICAGO, IL

"We purchased your product at another antique shop and have been very satisfied with it. How can we purchase it wholesale to sell in our shop?" KIMBERLING CITY, MO

"As it has been my experience that your product worked for me where others failed, I would like to offer it to my customers." RAYTOWN, MO

"I have decided to order 2 cases of your ANTIQUE IMPROVER. I still say it's the best thing ever for restoring new color to old hardwood floors, and we are gradually getting others to see the picture, too." HALLSVILLE, MO

"I purchased a quart of your ANTIQUE IMPROVER to finish a new cherry cabinet. It is beautiful! Send me some more." FARGO, ND

"... several instances where people have asked me to refinish a piece of furniture and I know right away that the piece doesn't really need refinishing, it just needs your ANTIQUE IMPROVER. Everyone is really amazed and happy..." GRANITE CITY, IL

"... I am a collector of antique tools. I tried it on old levels and planes. It works great." COLUMBUS, OH

"I have tried it on a 100-year-old, 60-inch oak rolltop desk and had terrific results. It's the best natural way to repair antiques I've seen. So send me 1 gallon ASAP!" CLEVELAND, OH

"I can't tell you how impressed I've been. I've used it to finish several of my woodcarvings and it is great stuff. I've used it with all kinds of wood, walnut, cherry, cocobolo, mahogany, etc. and all have come out beautifully..." HARRISBURG, PA

**Try using Antique Improver** on craft projects. Use it as the only finish on your wood creations to bring out the natural grain and beauty of the wood. Use it over paints you now use, to give a natural patina. Or, for a totally new effect, add small quantities of regular artist's oil paints (any color) to *Improver* to achieve unique soft colors. Just wipe or brush on then wipe off excess after achieving desired results. Great on very white new pine. We will be experimenting with this and have more information to share next issue.

**A new brochure** is in the works. All instructions and information will be included in one brochure and the format will include more pages. It is intended to be very informational and will contain valuable help for working with *Kramer's Best* products.

**Shipping expenses** are of great concern to us. The unreasonable rate increases instituted by UPS last year have created a hardship for all of us. Since we must ship "Hazardous Materials" class, there is now a \$5.00 charge PER PACKAGE in addition to the regular increased rates. We are searching for alternative shipping options. In the meantime, check with us when your supplies are beginning to run low. If we will be in your area, you can pick them up at a show or make some arrangement that will help avoid high shipping charges.

**A new dealer** is adding to sales by using *Antique Improver* on furniture he receives on consignment to his auctions. By treating each piece with *Improver* (simple wipe-on, wipe-off), he feels he increases sale prices 15% to 20%. Then, when the people who consigned the pieces come to the sale, they want to know what he did to their furniture. He then sells them a bottle. Everybody wins!

**Is there a good show** in your area we should know about? We want to help promote *Improver* in your area.

## Remember:

If you USE *Antique Improver*  
you can't help but talk about *Antique Improver*.

If you TALK ABOUT *Antique Improver*  
you will sell *Antique Improver*.

If you SELL *Antique Improver*  
customers come back for more  
(you get another chance to sell them something else).

They then tell their friends who come to buy  
*Antique Improver* and often leave with much more,  
to return yet again...

It all starts with USING *Antique Improver*.

The success of our top dealers  
is because they USE the product,  
TALK ABOUT the product  
and SELL the product !