

# Owners Guide for Fine Furniture (Long Version)

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Purchasing fine furniture is not only a privilege but an opportunity. An opportunity to be the first owner of what may become a treasured heirloom.

We have seen Stickley pieces which have aged gracefully through the years become valued far beyond their original purchase price. Interestingly, it was not the craftspeople at Stickley who were responsible for the increase in value. The value increases because of the care given by its owners. It is important to understand that small scratches and nicks as a result of normal use do not devalue furniture. A fine antique is expected to bear the characteristic evidence of time and use. Furniture loses its value because of neglect and misuse.

We trust that the care you give your furniture will result in generations of use. Stickley furniture may cost more than one can afford but it is not overpriced. It becomes overpriced if it is not cared for.

The precautions listed here **in bold type** are typical of high-end, fine quality furniture manufacturers. They are similar to the care precautions listed in most fine furniture catalogs. This guide contains more comprehensive reasons for each precaution. The information here offers a better understanding of the characteristics of fine furniture and fine furniture finishes. These expectations and precautions have been the same for decades of fine furniture making. View them as an aid to ownership, not a burden. Ultimately the value of a fine piece of quality made furniture will increase with the care you give it as the first owner.

- 1. Rubber, cork, vinyl, plastic or leather and fabrics with synthetic finishes can damage fine lacquer finishes by making the finish appear as if it has bubbled or leaving a black impression. Use caution when placing computers, telephones, clocks and radios on a finished surface, as most have rubber or plastic pads. Recently, "felt" backed items such as blotters or decorative objects made of synthetic materials, have been appearing on the market and are doing the same type of damage. In addition, many book covers have plastic coatings that can degrade a lacquer finish. To prevent damage, a protective layer between the object and the finish should be any type of cotton or linen cloth or woolen (not acrylic) felt cloth (not dots with glue or adhesive). Fabrics made of synthetic or polyester material should never be placed against a finished surface such as pillows leaning on headboards of bed.**

Why do these products affect the lacquer finish? Lacquer is essentially a very brittle substance. To create a fine, hand-rubbed lacquer finish that can expand and contract with wood, a substance known as a "plasticizer" is blended with the lacquer. When petrochemical pads like plastic, rubber, vinyl, etc. come in contact with a lacquer finish a molecular bond begins to form with the plasticizer in the lacquer. In most case an impression is formed and is usually described as the item having "melting" into the lacquer. This is known as "plasticizer migration". In other cases a black spot will be impressed into the finish and in some cases they cannot be removed.

Once this happens there is little that can be done except for refinishing. If caught quickly, re-rubbing may repair the finish. An attempt at re-rubbing is always in order since the damage will at least be less noticeable. Re-rubbing is a task reserved for a furniture finish professional.

To prevent damage, a protective layer between the object and the finish should be any type of cotton or linen cloth or woolen (not acrylic) felt cloth (not dots with glue or adhesive).

- 2. When using a glass top over a finished surface do not place felt with glue, cork, or plastic dots between the glass and the finished surface since these items can react with a finish. A plain piece of woolen (not acrylic) felt with no glue is recommended but is not necessary.**

This warning is similar to the problem explained above with plastic and lacquer finishes. The cork, plastic and certain adhesives react with the plasticizers in the lacquer to create "melted" appearance. Professional assistance is required to remove or minimize any damage.

It's best to simply place the glass directly on the furniture. The use of glass to protect a finish on a desk, coffee table or other heavily used top is fine, just don't use anything between the glass and the furniture. You might notice a shiny spot between the glass and the top. Without going into detail, this

is a phenomenon known as Newton's Rings and it will not deteriorate the finish.

#### GLASS ON EXTENSION DINING TABLES

When placing a glass top on an extension dining table expect to see a gap on the ends. Normally, this slight bow is not discernable to the naked eye (unless eying the table downward along the length). This is not a defect. However, on the rare occasion when a glass top gets placed on a table the gap on the ends will be noticeable. There is no method to fix this.

Dining extension tables are designed and engineered to have a slight upwards bow in the center. This is done because when the table leaves are inserted, the additional weight allows the table to lay flat. Dining tables with pedestals and equalizing slides have a lift on the ends when extended.

When a glass top is placed on a non-extension table top the gap should not be present. However, if the top is large enough, especially over 48" round, the natural expansion and contraction of the top will likely create a gap between the glass and top.

Normally, slight expansion and contractions of table tops are not seen. Placing the glass on a top reveals the natural movement but it does not mean the table is built wrong. No exchange or warranty issue is applicable.

#### 3. **Nail polish remover, hair spray or perfume and potpourri, dyed candles, aromatic diffusers, plug-in room fresheners are products that contain solvents are detrimental to fine finishes.**

The solvents in these products will react with the lacquer and cause the sheen to deteriorate. Caught early, the finish may be restored. Potpourri either by itself, in cloth bags or in plastic bags is to be avoided. Dyed candles directly on a finish can lose their color into the finish. Plug-in room fresheners should never be placed on a finished surface as they can leak. Professional assistance is required to restore finishes damages by these products.

#### 4. **Table leaves: Flat storage or upright storage?**

Storing solid wood table leaves in attics or basements will result in extreme expansion or contraction. The argument about storing leaves upright or flat is not as important as storing them in the correct environment. For instance, most experts agree on flat storage, apron side up. But flat on the basement floor is bad. Flat under the bed in your bedroom is good (as long as your bedroom is not in the basement on a concrete floor).

Experts agree upright storage leads to warpage. Upright in the attic or basement will surely result in warpage but upright in the closet may not. Most closets have room to stand leaves upright but not flat. If you have space in your closet for either method most experts would say flat but that could lead to damage if you place anything on them. If you have to use a closet the best solution is to place them on edge with the dowel pins facing up.

**Aging and Color Variations.** When table leaves are stored in any area where sun and ambient light are not as strong as on the table top, expect to see color variations. Sunlight will act differently between wood species and finishes. Since most aging and mellowing of wood and finishes occur during the first 6-8 months, try to put leaves in the table and alternate them once in a while during that time to reduce the variation.

**Storage Bags.** Various manufacturers design and sell table leaf storage bags. If the bag has a plastic or vinyl exterior be sure the flap does not come in contact with the finish as it can react with it due to plastizer migration.

#### 5. **Avoid exposure to strong sunlight. Ultraviolet (UV) rays can discolor wood, furniture finishes, fabrics, leather and carpet.**

It is normal and natural for wood to mellow or darken when exposed to the ultra-violet rays of sunlight and daylight-type florescent lighting. This natural mellowing process contributes to the aging characteristics so desirable in fine antique furniture.

However, this process can be disrupted if the UV rays are too strong. Fading of the wood and the

finish are possible if exposed to bright, strong sunlight. This fading is impossible to reverse. Popular low E glass does not filter out all harmful sunlight rays so do not rely on it to prevent sun damage.

You can expect that an object placed on a table surface shielding the area from sunlight exposure will remain the same color while the rest of the surface will fade. The degree of fading is dependent upon wood species, finish and length of exposure.

With fabrics and leather, the damage affects the dyes permanently and cannot be reversed. In extreme cases some materials can even begin to disintegrate.

#### **6. Relative humidity is important to the long-term life of fine furniture. But expect evidence of wood movement to appear.**

Most temperature control systems in today's homes are designed to keep a home at comfortable relative humidity levels between 40%-60%. Solid wood furniture is constructed in such a manner as to allow for natural fluctuations of temperature and humidity. However some type of movement is inevitable.

Fine solid wood furniture is designed and built to allow for this type of movement to occur. For instance, tabletops will expand in the summer and contract in the winter without any negative effects. The evidence of this type of movement is not considered defective. If the table was constructed in such a way as to constrict the natural movement it would result in a crack or twist. If your furniture is in a second home, vacation home, camp, condo, etc. you need to be even more aware of the following precautions.

The response to relative humidity changes begins with determining the annual average RH for your particular climate. Then try to keep the RH in the space where your furniture is as close to that average as possible, generally within about 10% up or down.

**In the winter months (or dry, arid climates)** when the air in your home is dry it is important to monitor the amount of moisture in the air. If the relative humidity in your home drops below 40% you need to take action. Without a barometer you can judge the relative humidity in the air by the way your body reacts to the conditions in your home. If your skin feels dry or your lips are chapped, you need to add moisture to the air. Just like your body, wood is a cellular material and will also be affected. Dry air can make some finishes appear dull and lackluster. Dry air can also accelerate deterioration of furniture joinery and glue joints. Dry air can also affect fabrics causing them to become brittle. Dry air can pull moisture from solid wood causing noticeable shrinkage of door panels and tabletops. A humidifier may be necessary but in most cases, simply placing water-filled, decorative pots in each room usually will suffice. To prevent damage, place furniture in areas of minimum temperature and humidity extremes, thereby avoiding active fireplaces and heating vents. If placing furniture near a heating vent or wood stove is unavoidable simply place a decorative pot filled with water near the furniture. The air will absorb moisture from the pot and won't pull moisture from the wood.

NOTE: Polishing or oiling the finish will not increase the humidity level of the room. It may make the finish look better for a short period of time but it will only mask the true problem. Nor does oil add moisture to the wood. Using oil to bring "moisture" into the wood is a myth.

**In the summer months (or moist, humid climates)** the air can be too moisture laden. If the relative humidity in your home rises above 60% you need to take action. Without a barometer you can judge the relative humidity in the air by the way your body reacts to conditions in the home. If you are uncomfortable and sweating you may need to reduce the amount of moisture in the air. Moisture laden air can affect solid wood causing extension tabletops to swell creating noticeable gaps on the center. Drawers and doors will be more prone to sticking. Moisture can affect some finishes causing them to be more prone to having airborne dirt and grease cling to it making the finish "sticky". A prolonged high humidity environment will also promote the possibility of mold growth and insect infestation. To prevent damage, place furniture in areas of minimum temperature and humidity extremes, thereby avoiding attics and basements.

Leather will absorb the moisture preventing you from feeling cool and comfortable while seated. You can reduce the amount of moisture in the air with an air conditioner or dehumidifier.

NOTE: Fans may keep a room more tolerable but will not reduce the humidity level. Monitoring

temperature and relative humidity in an environment can be done with small, inexpensive thermometers and hygrometers purchased at electronic or hardware stores. When necessary, the relative humidity can be modified to stay within acceptable ranges through the use of humidifiers and dehumidifiers

Remember:

Summer = High humidity = swells wood.

Winter = Low humidity = shrinks wood.

### 7. Avoid exposure to extreme temperature changes.

The key word here is "extreme". For instance, tabletops will expand in the summer and contract in the winter without any negative effects. The evidence of this type of movement such as a gap in the middle or the ends of a large table top is not considered defective.

Expect table leaf aprons not to butt tightly against each other because there needs to be a gap to allow the table leaves to expand and contract.

The thing to avoid is quick, sudden changes in temperature or humidity. For instance, moving a solid wood table from an air conditioned home into a steamy moving van or vice-versa can be too much change for a table top to handle naturally and can result in a split or warp.

A weekend camp is another difficult place for solid wood furniture to live in. When the air conditioner goes on in the summer or the fire is lit in the winter, the drastic change in temperature and humidity can bring unfortunate results.

Damp storage units or basements can be a very tough place for solid wood furniture to exist. When moved quickly into a controlled environment the furniture may be forced to expand and contract too quickly.

The general rule of thumb is to move solid wood furniture gradually from one temperature/humidity zone to another. Be aware that raising the temperature lowers the humidity and vice versa. Thus, modern heating systems, which can drive down interior RH in the winter, almost invariably cause problems for furniture.

To counteract their effect, you can modify the RH by keeping furniture-containing spaces cooler in the wintertime. A humidistat automatically adjusts temperature to maintain a stable relative humidity.

## Furniture Polishes and Finish Care

It is helpful to know that fine furniture care is actually a lot easier than you think. There are many myths associated with furniture care that can be detrimental to fine new furniture.

Most misinformation is a result of confusing furniture restoration with furniture care. This guide is intended for the care of new furniture finishes. Restoration of old finishes is another matter.

Using the correct polish is important but it is not as important as learning and using the correct polishing techniques. As a general rule, any polish, used correctly will be fine for any furniture finish. However, there are situations where we have seen consumers use the correct polish and still spoil a fine finish. How does this happen? There are three main reasons. Polishing too frequently, using multiple polishes, polishing to remove dust and body oils. Some common polishing errors are listed here.

### 1. Always wax, polish or dust WITH the grain.

If you do not polish with the grain of the wood, you can expect to see fine surface scratches. Here's why. A fine quality, hand-rubbed lacquer finish is created by rubbing the lacquer with very fine abrasive dusts and oil. The finisher always rubs these compounds in the same direction of the grain. This creates what is known as a scratch pattern.

When you dust or polish, fine dust particles can act the same way as the abrasive rubbing compound and scratch the finish. If you are rubbing in the direction of the grain you will not see the scratches. If you are rubbing in a haphazard way back and forth across the grain or in a circular

motion, you can create a scratch pattern running contrary to the intended pattern. Light reflects off this new pattern resulting in an unsightly scratch.

Consumers often think the finish is soft but this is not the case. The finish is quite hard. But the surface of the finish has been rubbed extremely fine and many things can scratch it. Paper, newsprint, book binder covers, drywall dust are just a few of the many culprits. Even if an object such as a table pad must be dragged, it is better to drag in the direction of the grain.

## 2. **Objects should be lifted rather than dragged across a finished surface.**

Hand rubbed lacquer finishes are actually created by rubbing the dried lacquer with fine abrasive dusts. To smooth the finish, the finisher actually creates a controlled scratch pattern by hand-rubbing with the direction of the grain.

If an object is dragged across a table surface it acts as a rubbing agent and can create a scratch pattern contrary to the one created by the finisher.

Accessory or decorative items should always be lifted. If you've ever had a paper cut you'll understand how dangerous a piece of carelessly flung paper can be to a finely rubbed executive desk. Would you throw razor blades across the surface of your desk?

## 3. **Expect surface scratches to appear on finely hand-rubbed finishes.**

All finishes are not created equal. Fine, hand rubbed finishes are created by rubbing the lacquer with a series of abrasive products such as sandpaper, steel wool and fine compounds like pumice and rottenstone powders. This is the old-fashioned way of creating fine finishes. The scratch pattern created after the final rubbing is noticeable on a new piece of hand-rubbed furniture.

Depending on the finish ordered the scratches might be more noticeable on one finish than another. Use of table-pads, tablecloths or glass can be used to protect the finish from scratches due to use.

Dusty cleaning cloths, dust from drywall, carpets or airborne contaminants can create scratches too. But those scratches are likely to be haphazard and random not controlled, as they are when being rubbed by the finisher. Those types of scratches are common.

Use of proper care products can lay a surface of protection over the finish to protect the finish from scratches.

## 4. **Avoid exposing the furniture finish to extreme hot and cold or prolonged moisture.**

The key words here are "extreme" and "prolonged". For hot and cold items, the rule of thumb is "if you can hold it comfortably in your hand, it should be alright for the finish."

Prolonged moisture refers to a problem similar to what occurs after you've stood in the shower for longer than you should. Your skin wrinkles and turns whitish. A little water is fine for cleaning a finish but too much for too long can wrinkle or blush a finish. Professional assistance is required to minimize or reverse the damage.

Be careful of placing appliances that may radiate heat on furniture. As an example, the Bose Wave Radio can raise the surface temperature of a wood finish 20 degrees and prolonged use without protection can severely damage a finish.

Be careful placing a vase with water that may sweat onto the finish. Be cautious of sweating vaporizers. Condensation can cause a white blush. Removal of white blushes is a task that should be undertaken by a furniture finish professional.

## 5. **Paste waxing.**

Paste wax continues to be the care product of choice by the finest furniture makers. Paste waxing gets a bad reputation because in most cases when a build-up of wax is being described as a problem, the problem lies not with a wax *build-up* but a wax *mix-up*. Paste wax used alone provides an excellent barrier of protection for a fine furniture finish.

Used exclusively it will never get built up because multiple applications have the inherent function of removing the old wax and accumulated dirt and grease off while laying a new layer of fresh wax down. However, a problem will occur when any other furniture care product is applied over paste wax. Since paste wax was not formulated to blend with these products, they repel each other and cause the dreaded wax mix-up. A true wax build-up is desirable; a wax mix-up is to be avoided.

Over-waxing, applying the wax too thick and combining with other polishes are probably the most frequent problems associated with paste wax.

**Stickley Dressing** is a suitable alternative to paste wax, as its main ingredient is wax. The formula is simply thinned out making application easier.

#### 6. **Cream based polishes.**

When using a concentrated form of cream polish follow the manufacturers mixing instructions exactly. We have seen examples where concentrated cream polishes were used out of the can with no dilution. This can create an unsightly build up of oil. Fortunately it can be washed off but, if not done correctly, it can ruin a finish.

If using a premixed or spray cream polish be sure to shake the bottle well to mix the ingredients. As with any furniture polish, creams have their place and can be used successfully but be sure to follow the other instructions regarding frequency of use and precautions in this guide before using them.

Over polishing and combining with other polishes are probably the most frequent problems associated with cream polishes.

#### 7. **Silicone-based polishes.**

Though there is really no major problem with using silicone based polishes, fine furniture manufacturers rarely advise using them on fine finishes. The reason is because the silicone causes problems in the finishing room and in any kind of restoration work. But used sparingly and without combining with other polishes, they can be used successfully.

You will see silicone-based polishes being recommended for lower end, mass production merchandise simply because the finishing materials and processes are vastly different from higher quality furniture makers. Once silicone polish has been applied to lacquer based finishes it cannot be removed without professional refinishing.

Though there are many schools of thought on this subject the consensus among high-end manufacturers is that silicone based polishes are not the best choice. However they can be used successfully if you choose to do so.

Over polishing and combining with other polishes are probably the most frequent problems associated with silicone polishes. So, if you are using silicone products simply don't use it too often and don't combine any other polish product with it. For general dusting use water, a soft cloth and dry thoroughly. Silicone is a great water repellent so using water for general dusting is fine.

There is no home cure for finishes which have had combined polishes or over application. If silicone polishes have already been used then continued use of the silicone-based product is the only choice left since the existing silicone will repel any other wax or polishes.

NOTE: Johnson's Pledge current MSDS specification sheet lists silicone as one of its main ingredients.

#### 8. **Never pour liquid polish directly on a furniture finish.**

All furniture polishes contain solvents that can disrupt the appearance of the finish if it is not applied in a careful, uniform method. The solvents are there to act as a blending agent for the solids, to clean old polish off and to slightly soften the finish to help create a bond between the polish and the finish.

Splashing polishes on a finished surface is to be avoided. Pour the polish onto a cloth and then carefully wipe the polish on in long, uniform, overlapping strokes with the grain.

**9. Allow polishes to dry completely before replacing objects.**

The natural result of polishing with any solvent-based polish is that a slight, temporary softening of the finish occurs allowing a chemical bond to be created. If an object is immediately placed on a freshly polished surface an impression can occur. Accessory items, magazines and books can trap the solvents and keep them from dissipating. If this has happened professional assistance will be required to rub out the finish and the damage, depending on the severity may be eliminated.

**10. Furniture care products should never be used in combination.**

This is the number one cause of finish deterioration. Care products were not formulated to blend with each other. Combining various care products will more than likely cause a fine finish to appear cloudy, lackluster and sticky in short order. This is the reason why most finishes appear dull over time. When your new furniture arrives, have a care plan in place and follow it.

For care instructions on specific finishes contact your salesperson or designer. In general, a care product such a wax or dressing should only be applied sparingly a few times a year. General dusting can be accomplished with water on a soft cloth.

**11. "Lemon oil" or "orange oil" type polishes are not needed for the care of fine, new furniture.**

Furniture oils are not recommended for maintenance. Many of them contain linseed oil or other drying oils, and when used repeatedly will create a gummy, insoluble surface coating that darkens and obscures the grain of the wood. They can visually improve surfaces on dried out antiques; however, oils overused as polishes or cleaners on fine, new finishes can be very damaging. The idea that furniture needs to be oiled for maintenance is a myth, especially in the case of new furniture with fine finishes.

**What about Endust?** Outside of the propellants and hydrocarbon solvents the only thing in Endust that has anything to do with making furniture look good is that it is 25% Parrafinic Oil. We think it's great for gathering dust-bunnies from under furniture on wood floors.

But if Endust or oil polishes are products you are comfortable using then they should certainly not be used daily or weekly. Once every six months is the most a fine furniture maker would ever recommend. Between applications it is best to simply dust with a damp cloth. As already mentioned it is very important not to combine these with other products. For instance, do not put paste wax or other polishes over it. The oils will repel it and make a mess. If you start with it, stay with it. That's the rule of thumb.

**12. Body oils can strip wood finishes.**

Common to all fine furniture finishes, the slow accumulation of natural oils, acids, body lotions and moisture produced by the skin can build up and eventually strip a fine finish right off the wood. Add food particles and residue, newsprint ink etc. and the process is intensified. The degree of damage is not a known factor because everyone's Ph level is different.

The wood arms of chairs are the most likely areas of deterioration but it is also seen on headboard panels, edges of tables and fabric or leather chair head cushions and arm panels as the result of a build up of hair oil and perspiration.

Do not try to use furniture polish to remove this accumulation as the contaminants will simply blend with the polish and remain on the finish. And as long as you don't allow a build-up, there is no need for aggressive oil soaps to remove the oil.

When you receive your new furniture it is your responsibility to prevent this from happening. To prevent this deterioration it is essential to clean these areas using a cloth (never a sponge) dampened with water and then wipe dry. How often depends on how frequently the item is used. It is up to you to pay attention to what might be happening.

A helpful hint is that the use of furniture polish or wax can act as a barrier for the finish and prevent the oils from bonding with the finish. A single coat of properly cured polish or wax on the arms of a wooden chair will prevent the oil from affecting the finish and it can be easily wiped off using water. An occasional reapplication of polish or wax will be required as needed.

**13. Never use oil soaps for frequent cleaning.**

When you see oil soaps mentioned in furniture care and restoration articles they are usually referring to the need to clean finishes that have already seen years of abuse or neglect, not for new furniture finishes. Oil soaps can be successful in removing airborne grease and oils that collect most often on kitchen cabinets. However, it is not recommended that oils soaps be used as an aid to caring for fine new furniture.

The proper use of occasional polishing and dusting with water should be all that is required. Cared for correctly, your new furniture should never accumulate much grease and dirt.

**Wood is a natural material.**

Solid wood furniture bears natural characteristics, marks and grain patterns that are consistent with the overall appearance of the wood.

Furniture makers understand these characteristics and their standards will be exhibited in samples from the maker on a showroom floor.

Consumers should examine showroom pieces before buying to determine the standards set by the furniture makers. If a consumer has personal standards above those of the manufacturer it is best to address those issues before purchase rather than afterward.

Do not expect more from the wood than what nature has given.

Here are a few characteristics you can expect to find when buying solid wood furniture. There are others but these are characteristics which most often raise questions.

- **Wood changes color over time. Uniform aging is quite pleasant and desirable. An owner must be responsible for being sure a piece of furniture ages uniformly.**

As wood ages, it mellows. Heartwood, being the darker or deeper colored wood and sapwood being the lighter or whiter colored wood. Since trees are comprised of both heartwood and sapwood you can expect your furniture to reflect the same combination. Both heartwood and sapwood and every color tone in between will be part of any piece of solid wood furniture. A fine furniture maker will do their best to blend the various color tones of the woods to create a reasonable balance of natural color.

As the wood ages various factors will contribute to the amount of color change the wood exhibits. For instance, if a tabletop is exposed to sunlight it will age differently than its table leaf that may have been placed in a dark closet.

This is normal and to be expected if wood furniture is not protected from sunlight. The use of a tablecloth and/or room darkening shades has always been advised to prevent this type of aging.

This type of situation is the responsibility of the furniture owner. Uniform aging is quite pleasant and desirable. An owner must be responsible for being sure a piece of furniture ages uniformly. In a dining room with a large window, moving chairs around the table is a good idea. For a large piece such as a china cabinet where one side is facing a window it is impractical to move the piece therefore room darkening window shades or a screen or plant to shield the furniture from the sun may be required.

**Common natural wood characteristics.**



## Cherry

**Cherry** will have sap pockets or twig starts that may appear unseemly to the uneducated eye but are natural and to be expected in any piece of solid cherry wood furniture. Small sap pockets, twig starts and mineral deposits are a characteristic of cherry wood. Expect them to be found in any piece of furniture made of solid cherry.

The furniture in the showroom is representative of the product that you can expect to receive and you can see these characteristics clearly in the store.

It is not reasonable to expect a solid wood furniture maker to produce a piece of cherry furniture devoid of these characteristics. A quick examination of any piece of solid cherry furniture from any era or any maker will produce many examples of sap pockets.

If a furniture manufacturer makes the claim that no sap pockets will be found in their furniture check to see how wide the boards are in the tops and the sides. They will probably be very narrow because when they cut the sap pockets out you end up with narrow lumber. Wider boards, which are more desirable for their interesting figure, are sure to have more sap pockets in them. In our opinion it is more desirable to have wider boards than to have many narrow boards with the sap pockets cut out.

Another characteristic of cherry is its broad color spectrum from white wood to deep red heartwood and every color tone in between. Expect your cherry furniture to exhibit various color tones. An effort is made to blend all the color tones together throughout the piece to make a pleasing combination of color tones.

Sapwood (white tone) is held to a minimum but is to be expected that a modest amount of sapwood will be evident when buying any piece of solid cherry furniture.

In addition, cherry wood will change in color depending upon the amount of light it is exposed to. Expect new pieces to vary slightly from older ones even when ordering the same finish.

## White Oak

**White Oak** has prominent wavy lines are known as medullary rays. The more common name is ray flake. In some areas of the country the rays are called tiger stripes.

In essence, the rays are the fibrous materials holding the cellular structure of the tree together. All woods have rays but the white oak rays are more prominent than many other woods like cherry or maple.

The amount of ray flake varies from board to board. Though it may be desirable to have highly figured ray flake in each board in a piece of furniture it is not likely to happen. Just as in the original pieces from the turn of the century, the new furniture has varying amounts of ray flake.

Contrary to what some imaginative minds would have us think Gustav and Leopold Stickley were not users of "old growth" oak. Though most early Stickley pieces used solid white oak, the use of oak veneer was quite prominent in many of the pieces of Gustav Stickley's work which exhibit wide ray flake patterns. And many astute collectors of the early pieces must readily admit that the use white oak veneer and of less expensive flat sawn white oak was very common in Gustav Stickley's production pieces.

Today, Stickley makes every effort to create a pleasant visual quality to each piece we make but we are constrained by the availability of this naturally occurring feature.

## Mahogany

**Mahogany** has an open grain pattern that may or may not be filled with finish depending upon the finish applied to it. If you are contemplating a filled finish expect the grain to be filled with lacquer, handrubbed to the expected sheen level. If an unfilled finish is what is being contemplated the finish

will not fill the grain completely.

Surface scratches on filled finishes will be more evident than on unfilled finishes.

When ordering a piece with crotch mahogany veneer it is important to understand the characteristics of this unusual wood. Crotch Mahogany veneers have been used in furniture design and decoration for thousands of years. The only way this rare wood can be used is in a veneer form since solid Crotch Mahogany would twist and crack due to its resistance to lie flat.

Therefore it is to be expected that the surface grain of Crotch Mahogany veneer will have a natural tendency to raise shortly after finishing. This characteristic is not a defect. It is normal and to be expected. The slight raising of the grain is often described as crazing. It is commonly seen on antique crotch mahogany furniture but it does not take decades for the effect to materialize.

Usually within a few months on a new piece of furniture there will be visual evidence of crazing and it will increase as the piece gets older. Some manufacturers even attempt to duplicate the crazing in finishing rooms in an effort to obtain the aged appearance more quickly.

Please do not expect any piece of Crotch Mahogany veneer to act any differently than what can be seen on the show room floor. This natural effect is considered normal.

For questions on any of these guidelines feel free to contact us at [care@stickley.com](mailto:care@stickley.com)

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