

# A Conservation Primer: Caring for Historic Furniture

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Fallon & Wilkinson, LLC  
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Welcome!



# Talk Outline

- Introduction to Fallon & Wilkinson studio: the work we do, our capabilities, and facility
- What a Conservator does, how we examine an object, what we are looking for, and how we go about it
- Examining the surface : deciphering patina and past interventions
- Reproductions and how they can help
- Introduction to wood identification
- The “do’s and don'ts'” of furniture care, practical tips for collections maintenance

# Fallon & Wilkinson, LLC

- Founded in 2000 by Tad Fallon & Randy Wilkinson.
- Graduate degrees in Conservation from the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute (Formerly CAL)
- “Conservators in Private Practice”
- Fully Monitored, Secure and Climate Controlled Lab
- Full time Staff of 5
- Clients from a wide spectrum ranging from small and medium sized museums, insurance companies, private collectors and homeowners

# Why Call a Conservator?

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Or just what do you guys do anyways?

Intervention needs thoughtful  
consideration..



Things happen...



# How to Find a Conservator:

- American Institute for Conservation
- [www.conservation-us.org](http://www.conservation-us.org)
- The AIC Code of Ethics
- Examination / Assessment
- Discussion of Treatment Goals / Options
- Treatment Proposal
- Documentation (Level depends)
- Treatment Report

# Structural Repairs, Loss Compensation









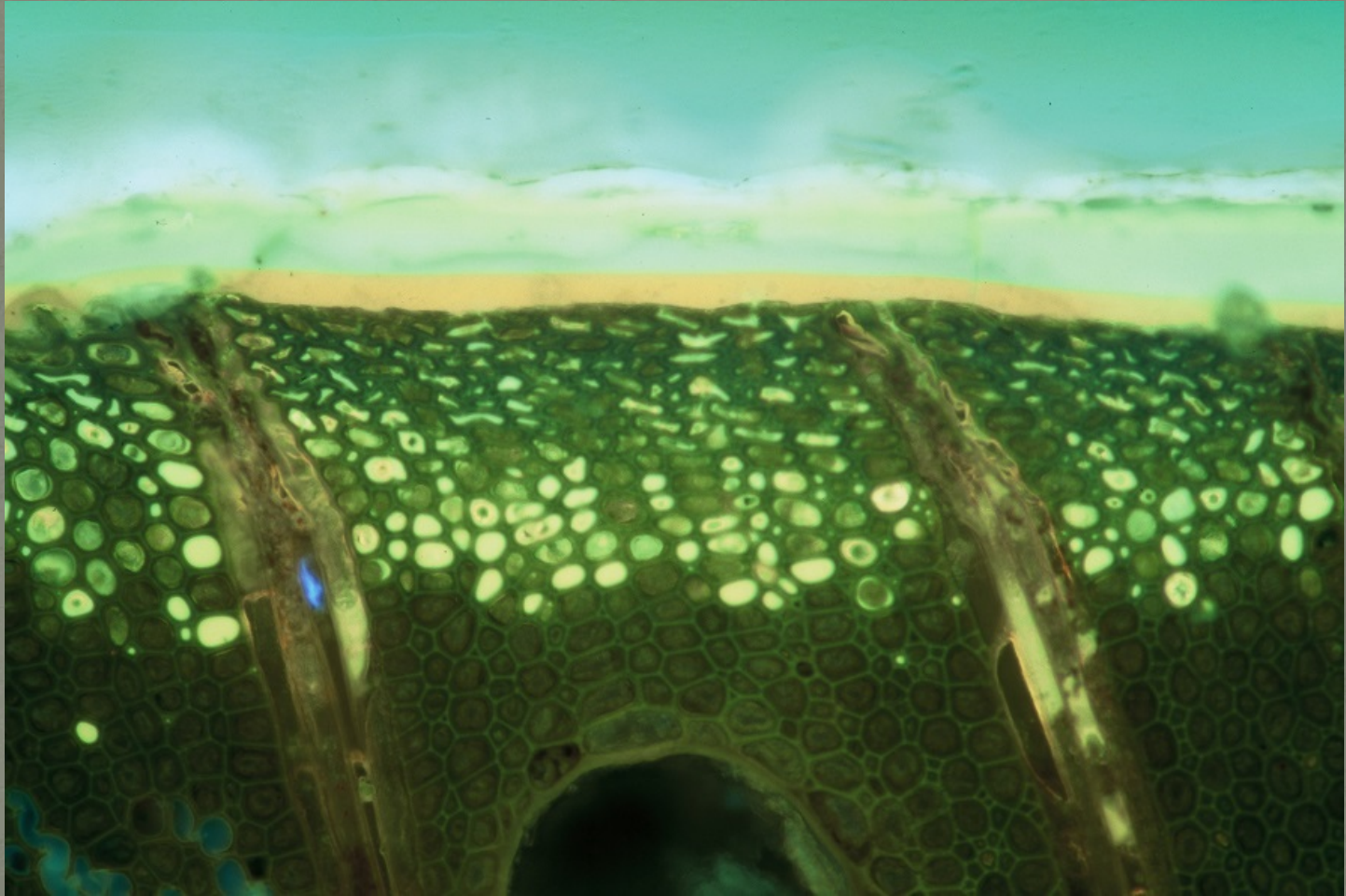




# Coatings / Finish Conservation



# Technical Analysis: Finish Microscopy







# Research, Analysis and Treatment







# Severe color loss, in a short time...

2006



2013



# Cederquist Studio Visit, San Clemente, CA. March 2013





Examining the surface :  
deciphering patina and past  
interventions

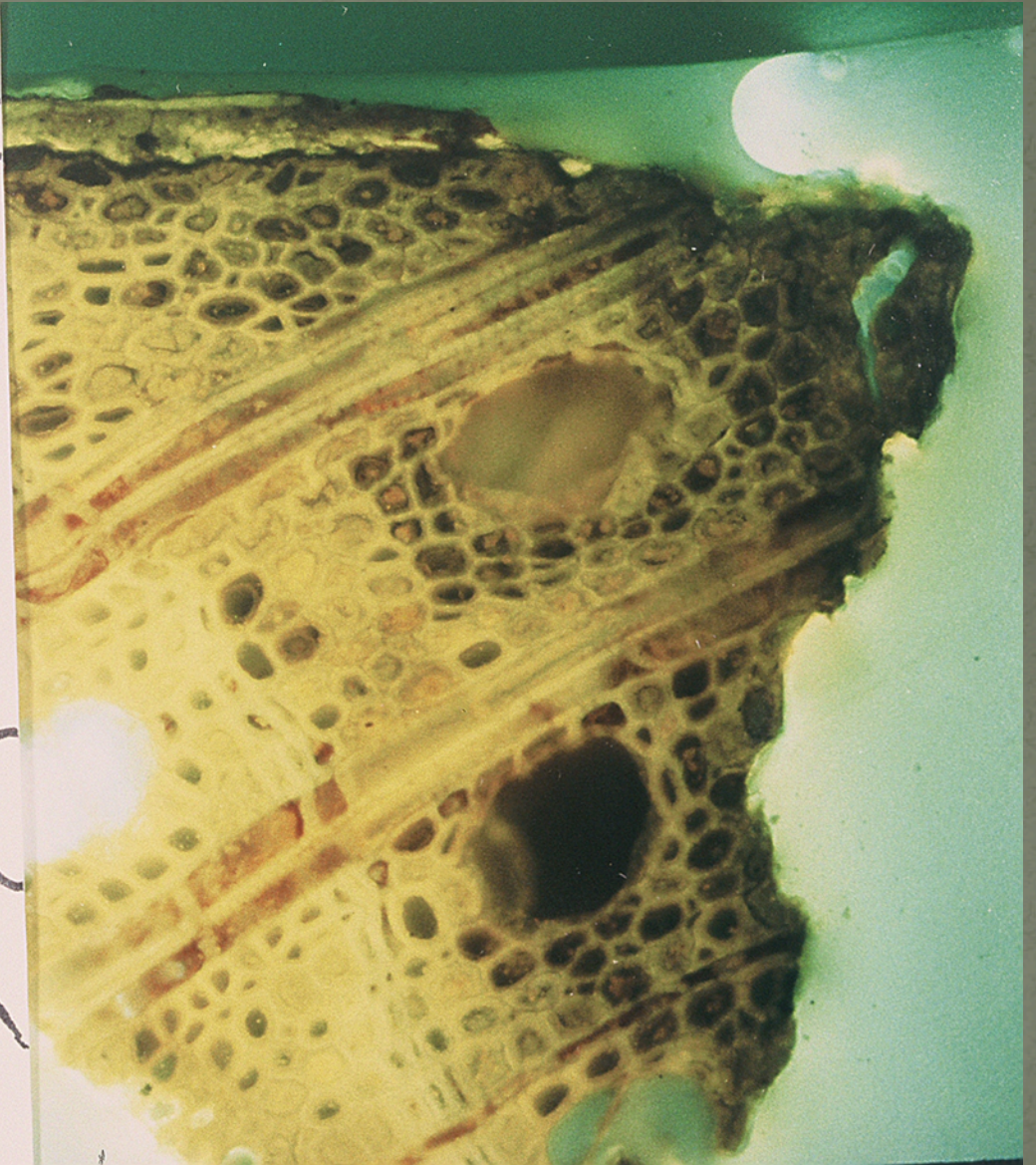
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# An 18th Century Rush Seat Side Chair, New England





Coating



*Chest of Drawers, 1705-25. Saybrook or  
Guilford, CT. Oak, Tulip Poplar, Pine,  
Paint*



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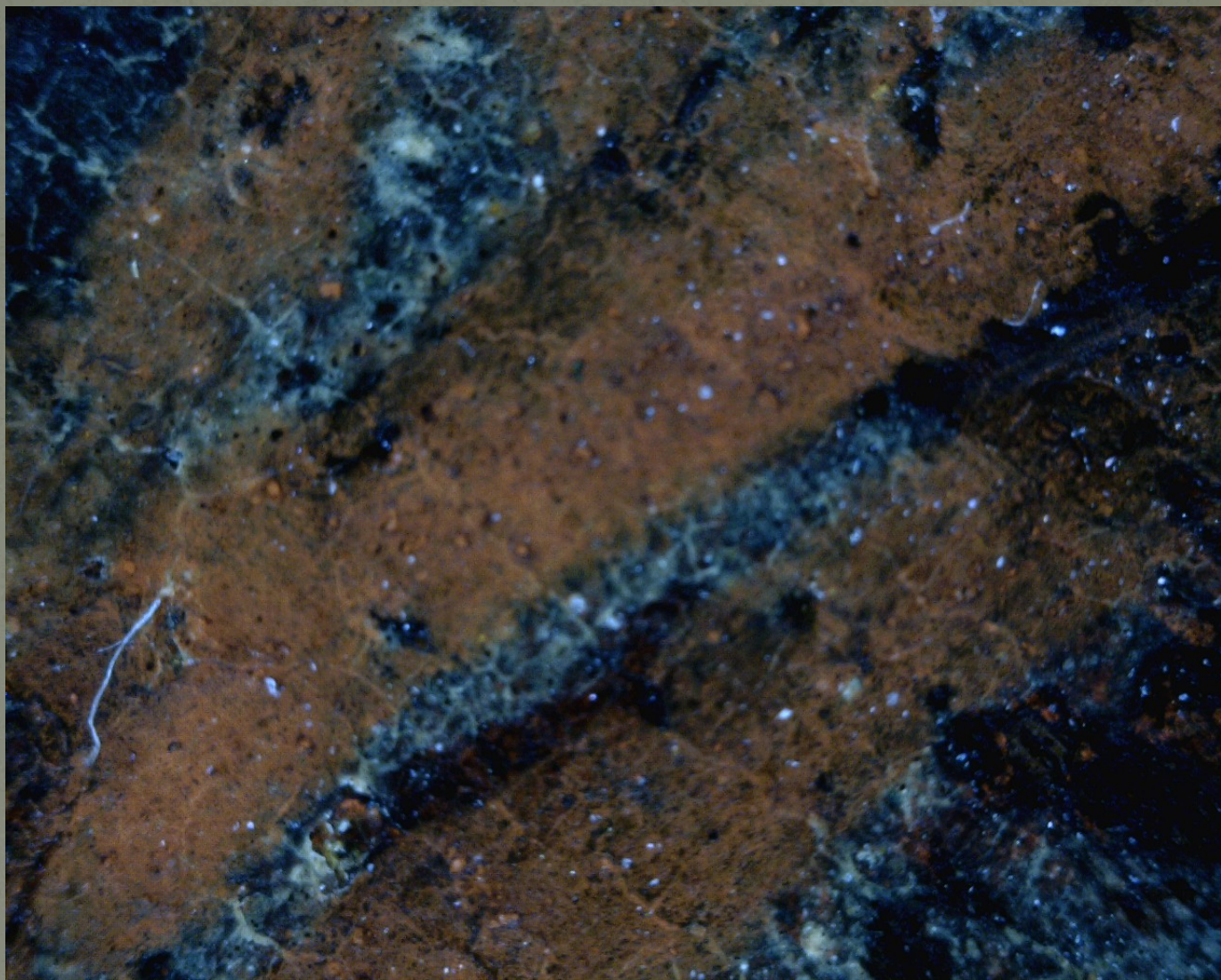




*Chest of Drawers, 1705-25. Saybrook or  
Guilford, CT. Oak, Tulip Poplar, Pine,  
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# Reproductions make sense, for a variety of reasons

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Replica, or Reproduction?

# Furniture Reproductions: Hamilton Grange, NYC



# 26 Pieces of Federal Furniture in two years...











# Introduction to Wood Identification

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# How a Conservator Approaches Identifying Wood

- Keen sense of pattern recognition
- Low magnification
- Higher magnification
- Big picture

# The Decision Process

## What wood is it?

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- What is your first impression?
- Is it a hardwood or softwood?
- Color
- Density
- Hazard a guess
- Do the cellular features support your guess?

## Other important considerations

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- Does it follow craft tradition?
- Given the geographic origin of the object, is it possible?
- Do the trade routes support the conclusion?
- Are you looking at original material?

# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

1705-1725



# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

From the accession records

- Chest of Drawers
- 1705-1725
- Saybrook or Guilford
- Oak, tulip poplar, pine

# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

1705-1725



# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

1705-1725

- Drawer sides , back and fronts: poplar???

End grain of dovetail



# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

1705-1725

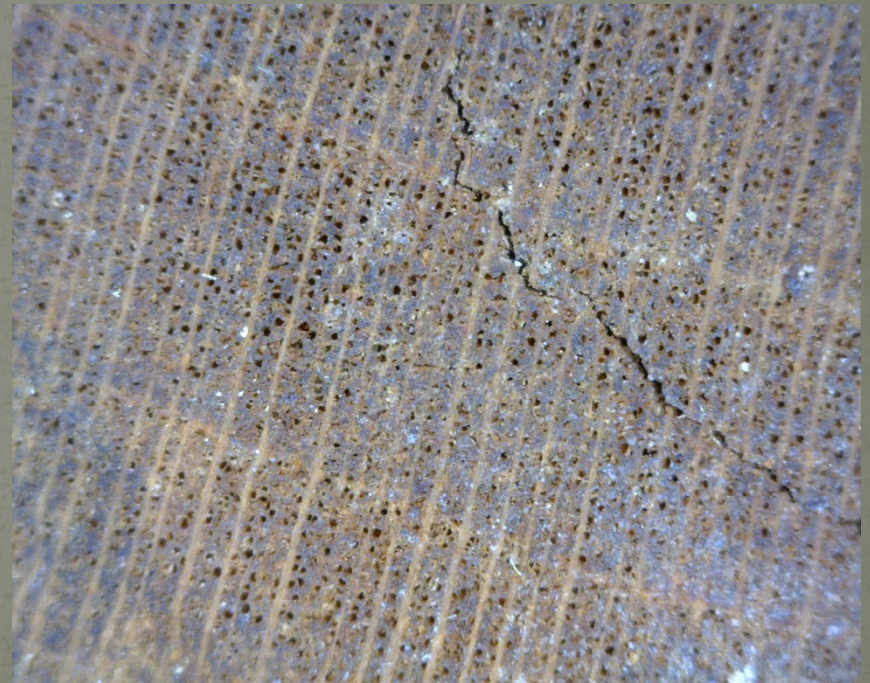
**Detail of End Grain of  
dovetail**

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**Magnified 25x**

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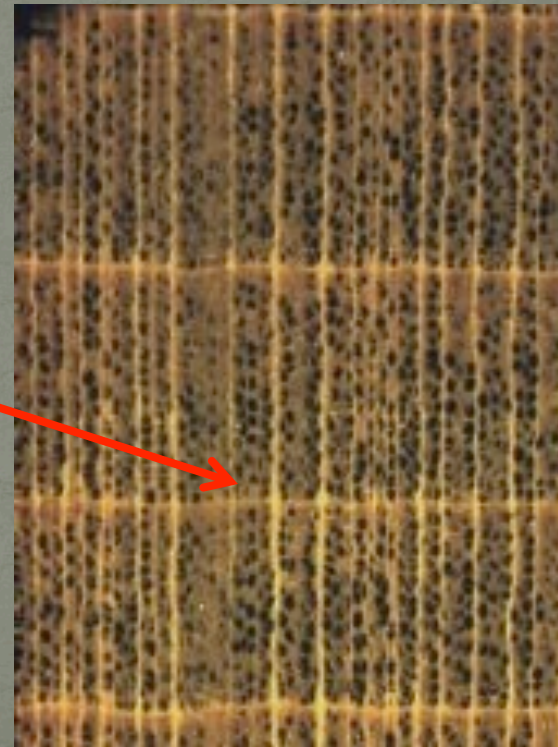
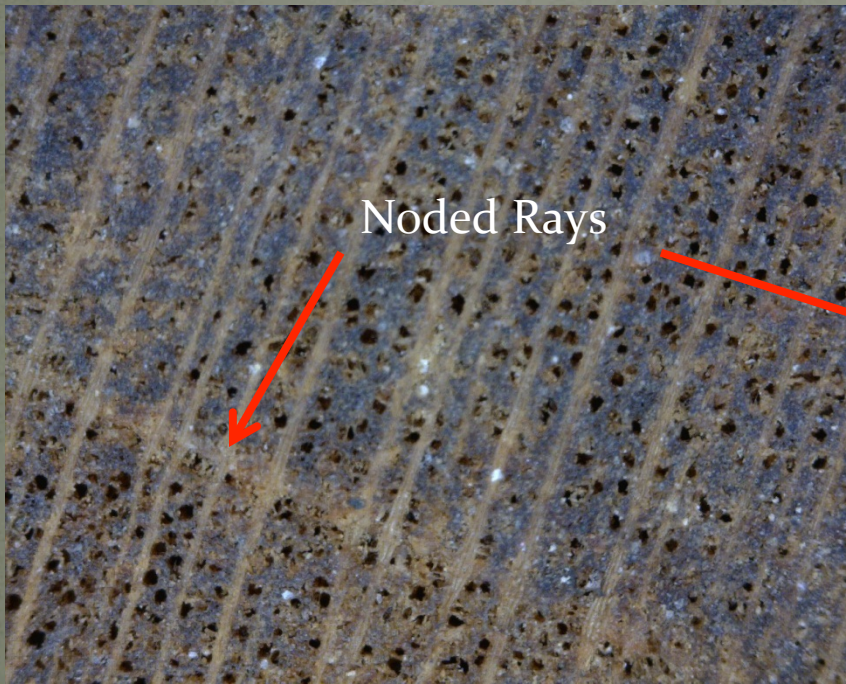


# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

## 1705-1725

Magnified 50x

Poplar reference sample



# Chest of Drawers Saybrook or Guilford

1705-1725

## Conclusion

- Oak stiles and rails
- Pine panels
- Drawers sides and back - poplar

# Identifying Wood Workshop

TBA, Fall 2016

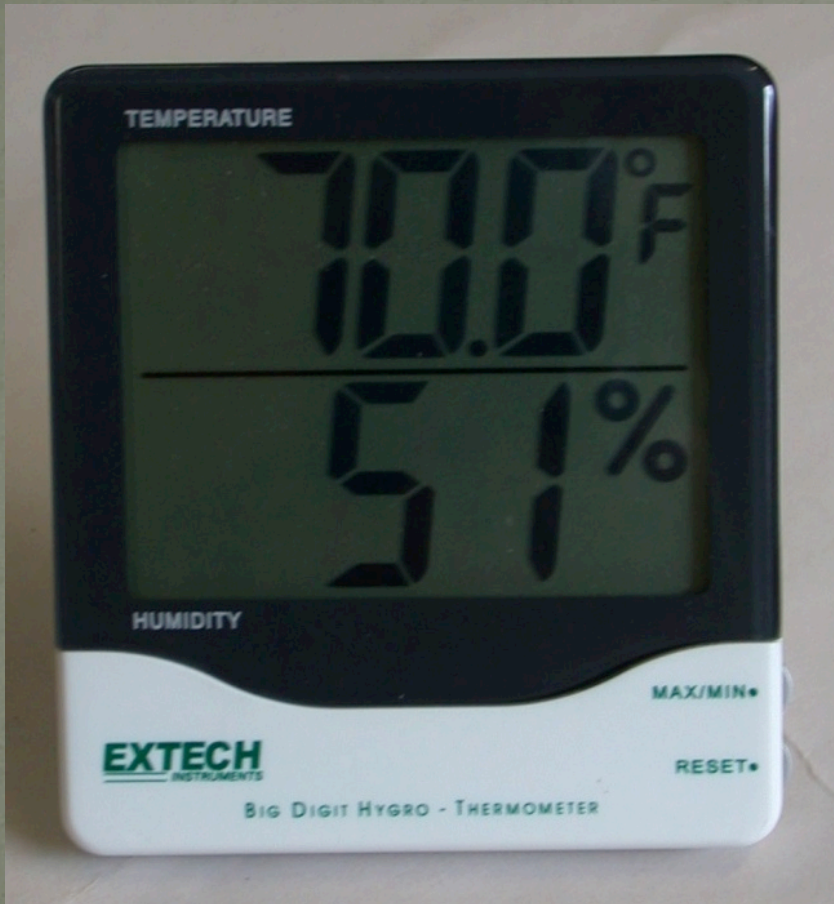


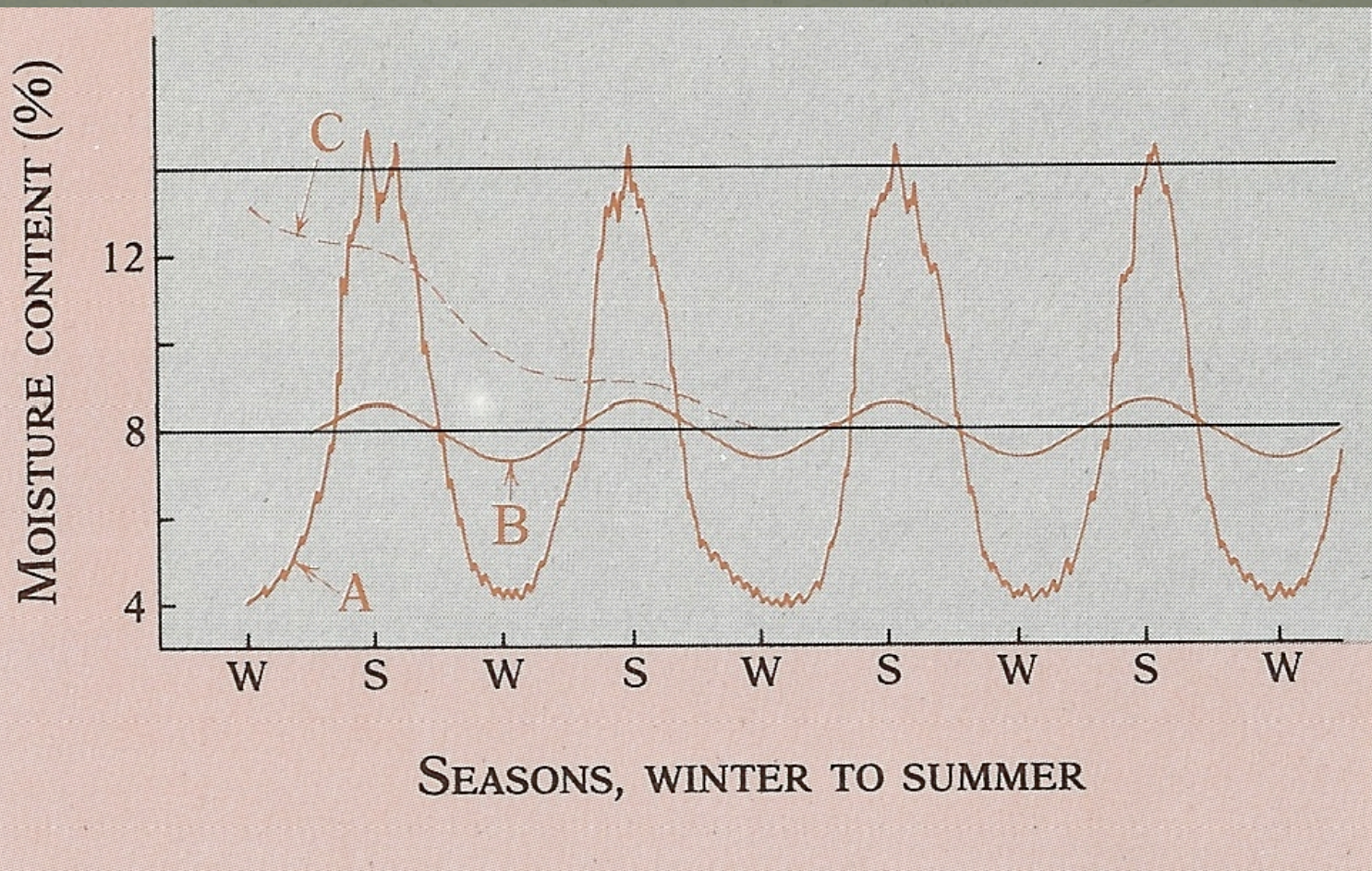
# The “Do’s and Don’ts” of Furniture Care

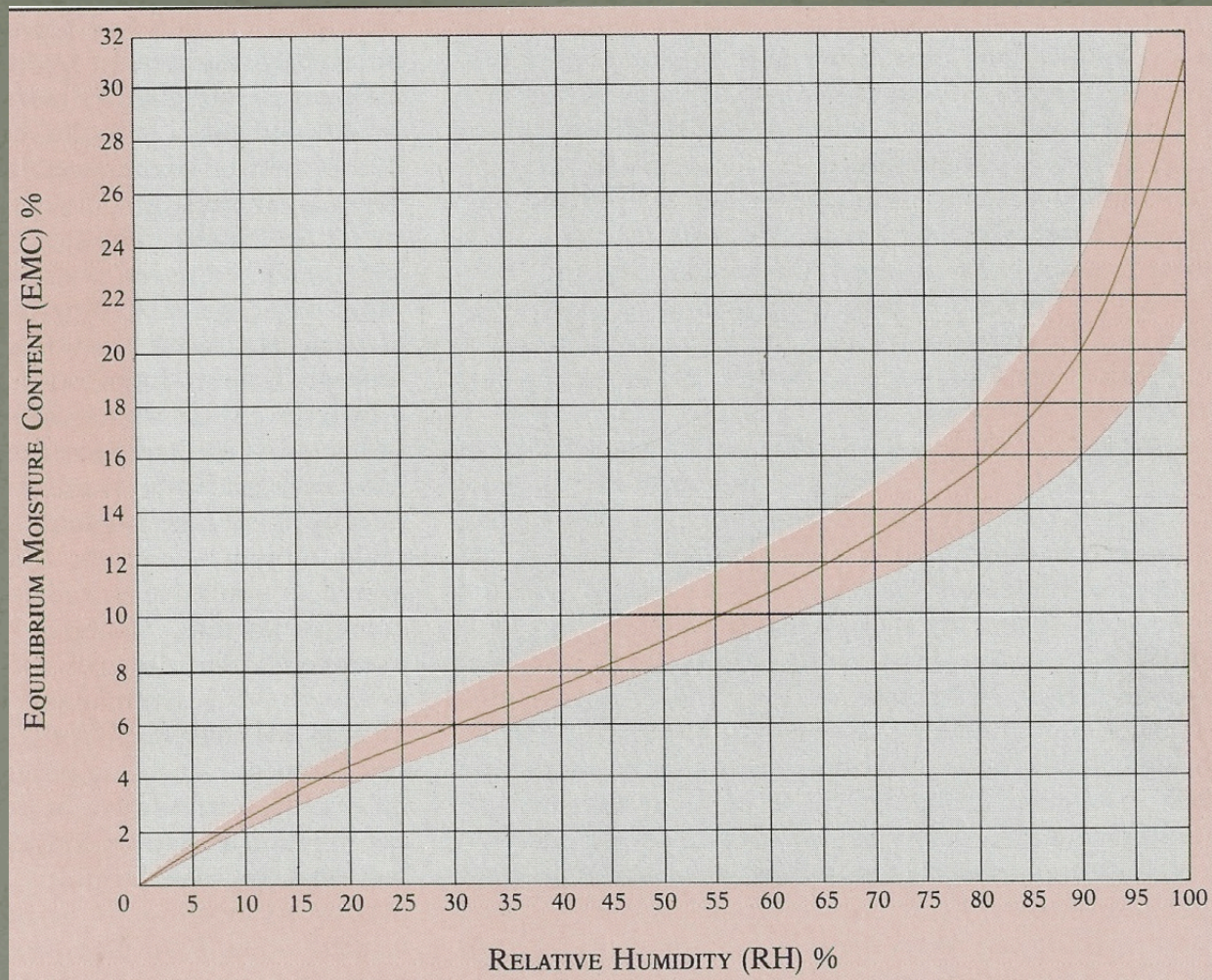
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# Do's: Low tech humidity control







75% RH = 14% MC in summer  
20% RH = 4.5% MC in winter

# Cleaning Brasses: Don'ts



# Maintaining Brasses: Do's



# When to Call a Conservator



Watering the Plants?  
Please Don't



# Consider Minimally Invasive Upholstery Treatments



We Don't Recommend This!



# Care and Maintenance Tips

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You can do it!

# Basic Furniture Care: Housekeeping

- Dusting basics: use clean white cotton cloths and soft artists brushes
- Avoid “friable” surfaces (consult with a conservator)
- Waxing once per year on well varnished furniture
- Consider implementing a removable coatings program for metal hardware

# Select Waxes



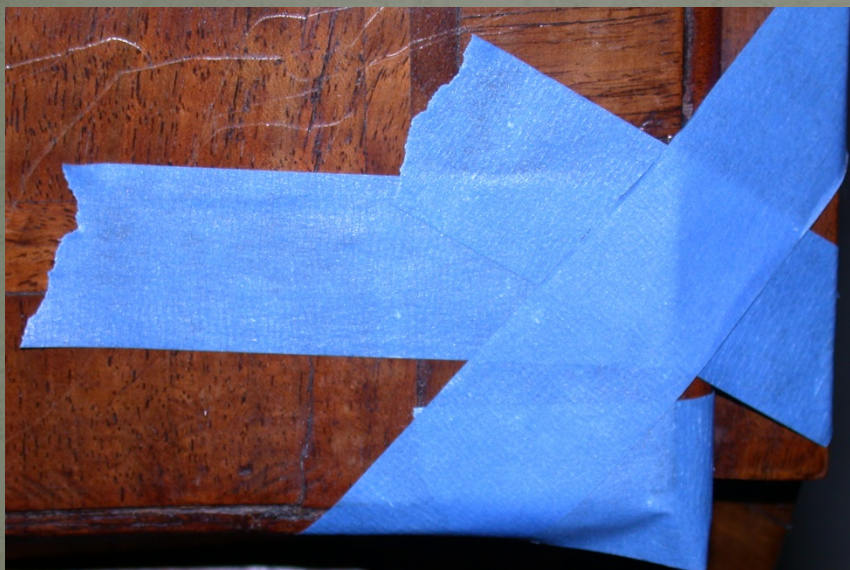
Please avoid....



# Recognizing an easy fix







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Veneer  
O-Gee Hall mirror







# Thank You!

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Questions?