

Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

Antiques On The Cheap

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BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) The love of hunting and refinishing antiques led James W. McKenzie of 649 South Juliana Street to write a book. "Antiques on the Cheap," featured by the Doubleday Book Club.

Retired from Bell Atlantic, McKenzie is an experienced technical writer. He and his wife, Wanda, became interested in antiques when residing in Sheperdstown, West Virginia.

"Antiques are very expensive," says McKenzie. "I began buying those that were in bad shape and refinishing them. Then, I could either sell them for a nice profit or keep them for my own collection."

The McKenzies found Bedford while attending an Indian Pow Wow at Old Bedford Village.

"We drove around the streets and fell in love with the town," Wanda remembers. "Jim checked out retirement in Pennsylvania and found it to be one of the best."

Jim and Wanda bought a circa 1912 house, which they have been remodeling. Built during the arts and crafts movement, the house had turned dark and dreary. Now, the woodwork is in a lighter hue and blends beautifully with the glistening light fixtures all refinished by Jim. Lovely pieces of Stickley "mission style furniture" add to the timely decor. Chandeliers are in brass and German silver. Both have been polished and lacquered to retard oxidation. "Some people prefer the dull "patina" look that develops over the years, but we prefer the shine," Jim says.

Some of his secrets for refinishing or restoring are revealed in his book. "I believe in getting supplies where they cost the least," McKenzie admits. "Wal-Mart probably has everything you will need to refinish an antique."

His formula for cleaning almost any kind of wood is one part white vinegar, one part boiled linseed oil, and one part turpentine. Put it in a jar and shake. The mixture creates a clean smell, not overpowering like many commercial products.

After going over the furniture with the best steel wool you can find, go over it with the above mixture, let set for five minutes and wipe off. If the wood is not extremely dirty, it may take less time.

"I usually don't completely strip good antiques," McKenzie says. "Roadshows tell us you can ruin a \$100,000 piece of furniture. Truth is, there are very few \$100,000 pieces of furniture so use your own judgement."

"To bring out the colors in a room, you might want to marbleize," McKenzie continues. "Colors are always up to the individual." In his book, he suggests, acrylic paints use a wet sponge and a dry sponge.

"Dry sponge the object first, then wet sponge. You can make an inexpensive item look as though it is solid marble. If it is the look you want to achieve rather than an investment, it can be done with a few dollars. Veining is done with a feather. Turkey feathers are particularly good for this."

McKenzie also recommends marbleizing for bathrooms, powder rooms, or mantles.

"Remember, if you get into antiques to make money," he adds. "The less you pay, the more profit!"

The same cleaning concoction used on the wood can also be used on most metals.

McKenize also restores lighting fixtures, pottery,

frames, and paper collectibles." You might find a chipped piece of Roseville or McCoy pottery and restore for a few pennies a little labor."

He uses epoxy putty and acrylic paints. "You have to mix a lot of paints to get the correct shade, but use your eyes and work in good light," he said.

For those who want to try restoration themselves, Jim suggests haunting yard sales, flea markets, and checking out the trash barrels at auctions.

While showing off a lovely wood frame, he admits, it was a throwaway from an auction. He took the discarded frame home to restore.

"The hunt can be the most fun!"

Sometimes you have to buy two or three light fixtures in order to get one good one. Look closely at the throwaways, give aways, or inexpensive items.

"Is there a part that is usable? A good drawer pull, sturdy legs on an otherwise worn out table? The hunt is the fun, make the most of it!"

"Making antiques whole again is both a great hobby and good way to make some extra money," affirms McKenzie.

McKenzie pursues his love of antiques by restoring them for dealers or individuals, speaking about them, giving demonstrations, or writing.

His book, "Antiques on the Cheap," can be bought at most bookstores.

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The taller piece of pottery that was restored by McKenzie is a McCoy. The smaller one awaiting a chip repair is Roseville.

McKenzie sometimes buys two fixtures and creates one good one, then polishes and lacquers them to retard oxidation.

At left, two frames, one finished, one unfinished. Both bought at an auction for a few dollars.



While marbleizing a wooden stand at a demonstration, McKenzie puts on the finishing touches. At his feet is a finished magazine rack.

