

**Five Best Kept Furniture Care Secrets  
and  
How You Can Use Them to Save Hundreds of Dollars**

By  
Michael C. Hinton



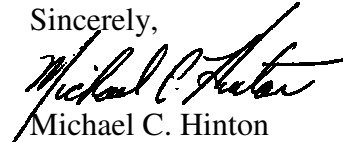
***246 West Ashland Street  
Doylestown, PA 18901  
215-345-0892  
[www.chem-clean.com](http://www.chem-clean.com)***

As an Antiques and Furniture Restorer, I am often asked “What can be done to take care of my quality furniture?”. I see people who end up paying enormous furniture restoration and refinishing bills; well up into the hundreds and even thousands of dollars from making simple errors that could have been corrected and/or prevented by taking the time to know a few key secrets to caring for one’s fine furniture and antiques at home.

As you read this booklet, you will feel good realizing the information you gain will be of great benefit to you and by and by, you will turn to this for reference. Each time you see a piece of furniture in need of restoration, think of Bucks County Art & Antiques Company and Chem-Clean Furniture Restoration and be aware that we can help.

Read through this booklet. If you have any questions or would like more information, please pick up the phone and give us a call. 215-345-0892.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael C. Hinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michael C. Hinton  
Owner

**Secret #1 - Keep Furniture Away From Direct Sunlight.**

To best maintain your furniture, keep your furniture, especially table top, away from direct sunlight. Often people will keep their dining room tables and end tables in a South or East bay window. East and South windows provide great light but are extremely hard on furniture. What happens is the sun's rays beat through the window and heat the windows and flat surfaces up to 200 degrees and that heat transfers onto the table tops finish, thus causing the damage. "Alligating", which is finish damage caused from the heat is essentially a baking of the finish. What also helps to deteriorate this is the ultra violet rays that pass through the windows, strikes the surface of the furniture and eventually "eats" the furniture finish as well, not to mention the bleaching effect of the sun on wood and fabrics.

The main way to prevent this from happening is obviously common sense. Move your furniture away from East and South facing windows. This is the cheapest way to go. If you cannot, will not, or do not want to, the next best way to go is a table pad which you can buy now, fairly inexpensively (less than \$200.00) and they come in wood grain finishes and colors to blend with your dining table.

The next best way to go to prevent this from happening, is to invest a lot of money into new ultra violet protective windows. There are windows on the market that claim to prevent 95% of the ultra violet rays from entering the living space. They also prevent heat from transferring through the window onto your table tops and furniture finishes. These are some of the best windows on the market today. These windows are also quite pricey, so you will want to consult with a window/glass company or a remodeler for information.

**Secret #2 - Protect Your Furniture From Central Heating & Air Conditioning.**

You say "What? My house has centralized air conditioning and heating. I cannot and will not rip it all out!" No, that is not what I mean. I'll explain: Good Furniture is made of wood which is originally air or kiln dried to have a moisture content of 12%-15%. To maintain this ideal level, the humidity in your home should always be between 55%-65%. During the winter, with modern efficient central heating, the humidity level in your home can drop to less than 10% (readings as low as 4% are common) which can cause a lot of damage to your furniture.

When the humidity in the air goes down, it starts to draw out moisture from your furniture - the result is the wood shrinks and cracks, veneers split, veneers lift and joints loosen in tables, and chair backs and also the finish cracks. Wood swells and shrinks in response to air moisture (relative humidity). If you turn your heat off at night, this movement is probably taking place twice a day.

Central heating and air conditioning has done more damage to antiques and quality furniture in the last 35 years than previous 200+ years before its introduction. My advice - invest in a humidifier and an inexpensive "humidity wall gauge", and always maintain

an air humidity of 55%-65% in your home. Avoid placing your furniture directly on or near air conditioning and over heating ducts. If you own precious or priceless antique furniture, you should consider investing in an automatic humidistat (which controls your room moisture content by thermostat and humidification).

During the summer in a closed house on a nice warm day you will find that when the air conditioner kicks in, the temperature in the room will drop by a good 10 degrees, if not more, within a short period of time - say 15 to 30 minutes. This plays terrible havoc with your furniture. Mother nature did not design wood to expand and contract that quickly.

This advice will save you countless repair bills when the joints start coming loose.

Centralized heating will do the same thing with respect to the expansion and contraction of the wood.

### **Secret #3 - Wood Stoves and Humidity**

Many people, especially here in the Northeast, use wood stoves. Wood stoves are a wonderful source of heat for the home. What they also do is dry out the wood of your furniture in the same way as central heat. Not only wood stoves, but what part of the country you live in also plays a key role as to the care and maintenance of your furniture. When wood dries out, the finish cracks, the glue joints crack and shrink and as a result, again, you have costly furniture damage. So, instead of investing in wood moisture meters and other expensive tricks of the trade, or resigning yourself to the fact that all of your furniture is going to fall apart, the cheapest and simplest thing to do, is to go to your local pharmacy or hardware store and invest \$ 30.00 or \$ 75.00 in a room humidifier.

If you have a wood stove in your house, keep the humidifier running during the winter months. This will balance out the humidity level and add moisture to the air, thus protecting your furniture so you won't have drastic expansion and contraction in your furniture.

Some people tell me - "I don't have to worry about such things, I have cheap hand me down furniture anyway". Keep two things in mind, First, non-antique furniture from the 1920's- thru the 1960's is of far higher quality than anything that you are going to buy new in the 2000's. Second, that "cheap" furniture becomes "expensive" furniture real fast when you have to start replacing it every few years because it's falling apart. Keep that in mind.

### **Secret #4- Throw Away Your Furniture Polishes.**

This is not going to make me very popular with the manufacturers of Pledge, Endust, or any of the other big polish makers. My advice is to throw away all of your polishes that claim to "Cut Wax Build Up". If it claims to cut wax build up, then it is not good for your

furniture, as it contains abrasives. Can you imagine taking a handful of ground up glass and “dusting” your furniture with it? Many of us are doing just that when we use some of these polishes.

There are certain polishes on the market that are fine and will not harm your furniture. On the contrary, some use ground up glass and some use ground up pumice. I can look across some people’s table tops and see how they dust. If one can see very fine scratches, you can almost tell which polish they used just by looking across their table tops. So look on the backs of the cans and avoid “cuts wax build up”.

You also want to avoid polishes that contain silicone. Silicone, once it gets into the wood through the pores of the surface finish, creates havoc for your wood and will cause a contamination problem when it is time to refinish. Eventually, the silicone will eat away at the finish too, again, causing you to pay hundreds of dollars to have a furniture restorer to refinish the damage. So, if many furniture polishes are not so good, what are some good ways to dust and polish? Well, let me try to help.

The very best way to dust your furniture is the tried and true way that has been used for centuries, a damp cloth and water. A tee shirt, a terry cloth or other toweling dampened with water will not hurt your oil finish, lacquer finish, or varnish finish - and it will take the dust off. If you want to clean your furniture, one of the best and safest ways to clean it is warm water with a mild detergent, such as dish washing liquid soap. These are two of the best ways to clean your furniture.

If you want to polish (and many of us have grown up using a polish of some kind), look for a safe polish to use that will give you a shine ,but does not have the harsh ingredients in it. Lemon oils are another thing that people swear to me that they use religiously on their furniture. Lemon oils do nothing but add a shine to it, they do no harm, but they do not add all important moisture to your furniture. There is really nothing pro or con about lemon oils. Just realize that the lemon oils generally do nothing much for your furniture, other than adding a nice shine.

Some people still wax their furniture. Again, there is nothing wrong with waxing. The wax buildup is good. The basis behind waxing furniture is to protect the furniture from minor scratches and dings. A lot of people now days will still wax their furniture and any normal paste wax will work fine for that.

There are also some furniture rejuvenators on the market as well. Some of these can work very well, such as a product called “ Howard’s Restore-A-Finish ”, to cover up stains and dings. This has an oil base that revitalizes the furniture finish. You have to be very careful of furniture rejuvenators and other off the shelf furniture refinishers. You don’t want to buy something that is a “refinisher” that may have some harsh chemicals and may actually strip the finish from the furniture. If you do buy something like this, always test the chemical on an area that is not easily seen.

**Secret #5- How To Store Your Furniture Without Deterioration.**

Some of my best, and most expensive, restoration work has been done on restoring pieces that have been discarded from daily service and stored in barns, garages, basements and attics. All of us make detrimental errors when it comes to storing the furniture that we don't need. We hurriedly place it in the barn, garage, attic or stick it in one of the new mini-storage facilities.

Bad News!! Again the big culprit of air moisture content reappears. How can we protect our furniture from expansion and contraction in any storage location - we can't unless we can heat and cool the entire storage facility - always maintaining a constant humidity of 55%-65% and a room temperature of about 70 degrees. Rapid heat exchange such as occurs in any storage facility, no matter how well insulated, will only add to the expansion/contraction of the wood - thus increasing the deterioration of the furniture.

If you store fine antiques, no matter where - protect them in a well insulated, environmentally controlled room. If you store anything in the barn, garage, basement or attic - just know you will probably be paying to have it repaired when you finally decide to pull it out of storage and return it to daily usage.

Barns - Never store furniture in barns, sheds or outdoors. This is the second ultimate sin. They will deteriorate fast. (The first ultimate sin is trying to repair your own furniture. A Bonus Secret - Most Furniture Repairmen will charge you extra, sometimes double, if they have to repair a piece of furniture you have tried to fix yourself).

Rented Storage Units - If you store your furniture in a rented "mini-storage" facility - you will probably be concerned about security. Most people completely forget about heat/cold. So ask. Rent a unit that is heated or climate controlled. The extra money you spend will save you a lot of \$\$ in the long run.

These are some of the best kept furniture care secrets available and how to use them to save yourself hundreds and even thousands of dollars. By using these on a regular basis, you can save yourself a lot of money in furniture refinishing costs over the years by simply taking care of your antique and quality furniture.

Thank you for reading this booklet.

I hope I've been able to add some value to your life by giving you a new outlook on your antiques and furniture and how to care for them.

As you think about what you have read, and will continue to read, you will realize the value of caring for your antiques and fine furniture.

As many of us do, you may have furniture that has experienced some of the tragedies in this booklet. Don't despair.

**EXPERT, COMPETENT, PROFESSIONAL help is only a phone call away.**



**246 West Ashland Street  
Doylestown, PA 18901  
215-345-0892  
[www.chem-clean.com](http://www.chem-clean.com)**