



Airon Shoemaker and Dick Patch with the old truck.

all photos: Jay Conley

Executive Summary:

"Antiques Road Show" experts often tell those with antiques to have their prizes carefully restored. Here's a shop that can do it for you.

By Jay Conley

Low tech for the old stuff >

Dick Patch's job is proof that the devil really is in the details. As owner of Astonish Antique Restoration, he has to be both a sleuth and a historian when he's repairing an antique table or undertaking an architectural restoration in older homes in Raleigh Court or South Roanoke. And the results are often, well, astonishing.

A tour of his shop on Old Cave Spring Road near Cave Spring Corners reveals an assortment of stains, glues, lacquers and hardware needed to tackle furniture dating back hundreds of years. Patch takes pride in restoring furniture in a manner that won't alter the integrity of the piece. He follows the guidelines of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and routinely consults with contacts at the Smithsonian Institution.

If you call Patch with a Civil War-era table that's falling apart, he has the nails that were used back then to repair it. Or maybe there is peeling veneer or a blemish on your dining room table that's been in the family for generations. Patch can match up the veneer and the color of the stain for a seamless transformation.

What's clearly exciting to him is the next job, solving the mystery of how an artifact was cared for, where it came from, who made it. "This is the best job in the world," Patch says. "You get to work with beautiful wood. You get instant gratification when you make it look nice. You make somebody happy. And they pay you real American money."

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—Dick Patch


Patch also fixes the mistakes made by weekend warriors, the ones who overdo it on the glue to repair broken chair legs and spindles, but never seem to get them quite right.

But his work doesn't stop at tables, chairs and dressers. Patch will come to your home, often in his vintage 1950s Chevy truck, to pick those things up and quote a price.

He uses his three-man crew to strip the paint from banisters and restore them to their original wooden glory. He'll touch up the stain on your cabinetry and built-ins, or restore your weather-beaten oak door to its original luster. They're the kinds of jobs most people don't want to tackle on their own.

"Part of what I do is that I'm the Mohawk finishing products distributor for this area," he says. "So I've got a machine where I can fix thousands of different colors." That service can be a good resource for businesses that hire Patch to maintain their furniture. He's done touch up work for law offices, hotels, even a synagogue.

"Eventually, the wooden counters get scratched and marred. We can save thousands of dollars by sending my touch up man on site," Patch says.

"In general, the people that come to me value the furniture and it either needs fixing or its time for us to refinish it. A lot of the stuff that they have is so much better than what you can buy now." 



Newly-repaired ornate drawers.



Dick Patch works on a chair.



A door frame is laid out and ready for work.

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