

Wood Floor Restoration Summary
Patterson House – Washington, DC
Summer 2006



Rosebud Co.
Atlanta, Ga.

Overview and Explanation

The initial visit and inspection of Patterson House occurred on August 16, 2005. The meeting was between Mrs. Maribelle Moore and Mrs. Doris Scholze representing Patterson House Preservation Foundation and Michael Purser representing Rosebud Co. of Atlanta, Ga. The focus was on the wood floors on the second floor, specifically the ballroom floors. The quarter sawed white oak floors were installed in a herringbone pattern. The floors are original to the house which would have made them over one hundred years old.

The primary concern in the ballroom area was the overall condition of the floors and their appearance. Due to their age, the floors had experienced multiple sanding and substantial loss of original material. The erosion of the wood was exacerbated due the herringbone pattern. Due to this pattern much of the sanding of the floors would have



been against the grain of the wood and this would have accelerated the loss of the oak flooring. It would be safe to say the floors had been sanded a minimum of three to four times during its history and the amount of wood lost was beginning to show in structural failure along the tongue and groove of the wood. The wood was too thin to adequately support weight and was fracturing or shearing along the parallel seams of the wood.



The appearance of the floors had deteriorated primarily due to the finishes and maintenance products that had been applied to the surface over the years in an attempt to improve and protect the service. The excessive amounts of products were obscuring the color and clarity of the wood. This was further compounded by the discoloration of the finish. It had turned a dull grey and diminished the natural beauty of the wood.

The photographs accompanying this description show the floors in the condition observed on the initial visit of August 16.

During the visit, attention was also focused on the second floor foyer and the Patterson Dining Room. Of particular concern in the foyer was the damage that had occurred from caterers by applying adhesive tape to the older finish. When the tape was removed, layers of old finish were pulled up leaving clear and visible evidence of the damage.



This damage was not only visible but also added one more distraction to a floor that had been intended to be a beautiful and decorative background and compliment the interior décor of this magnificent home.

Following the visit, an estimate and work proposal was submitted to the Patterson House Preservation Foundation that reflected a course of action by Rosebud Co. (The overview and proposal are attached to this document.) In order to execute a full restoration that would involve the total removal of all surface accumulations and allow for the repair of the damaged pieces, Passive Refinishing was recommended. Developed by Rosebud Co. for these situations this process eliminated the threat of additional loss of original materials and provided the same options available with a traditional sanding. The Passive Refinishing process would remove the older coatings and maintenance products using biodegradable and non-toxic chemicals to dissolve the products so that they could be removed without the use of standard aggressive sanding. Although the original focus had been on the ballroom, the second floor foyer and the Patterson Dining Room were also included in the work proposal. The proposal was completed and submitted shortly after the on site visit.

In early January of 2006, Mrs. Maribelle Moore contacted Rosebud Co. to begin the scheduling process for the work. As president of the Patterson House Preservation Foundation, Mrs. Moore took the initiative to secure scheduling

dates that would coincide with the closing of Patterson House during a time when The Washington Club, owner of Patterson House, would either be closed or at its lowest point of activity. It was determined that this would occur in the latter part of the summer, July and August, and these dates were set aside by Rosebud Co. to insure adequate time was available. At that time, early 2006, due to budgetary constraints the only area that was scheduled for work was the ballroom.

Work began on the ballroom floors on Monday, July 10th. The work was being performed by Howard Purser from Charlotte, NC, Kate Cato from Savannah, Ga. and Michael Purser of Atlanta, Ga. and owner of Rosebud Co. Prior to the work beginning a generous donor made funds available which expanded the project to include the Patterson Dining Room.

Howard and Michael Purser began the removal of the coatings using Passive Refinishing and were able to complete the removal process in the ballroom in the five day period of the first week. Kate Cato was responsible for the repair work on the damaged pieces of wood. Her work began in the middle of the first week and required ten days to complete. Her repair work included the repair of 26 pieces of damaged wood. It is safe to say that had traditional aggressive sanding been used it is highly likely that the wood floors in the ballroom would have been weakened to the point that the potential for structural failure would have been rendered the wood floors useless for the purposes it was serving – as an area to hold formal functions.

When the preparation work in the ballroom was completed the work in the dining room began in earnest. The exact specie of wood was not clear until work began and then it was possible to identify the specie as pine. What separates the pine floors in the Patterson Dining Room from all others is the preponderance of burl wood. The boards are seven inches in width and generous in their length – twelve to fifteen feet in length. The amount of burl wood in the main field is extraordinary and would have occurred only as a result of written specifications and due to a lengthy selection process in the milling of the wood. The appearance of the dining room floors was not by accident and is a very clear reminder that during the design and construction of Patterson House,

extraordinary attention was placed upon materials and design detail. As architectural historians readily concur, this was always one of the hallmarks of Mr. Stanford White, architect for Patterson House.

In addition to the wood selection in the dining room it was discovered that the entire pine floor was a thin veneer. It is safe to assume that the original thickness was approximately three eighths of an inch, the standard thickness of veneer floors of that period. Due to the previous sanding of the room the floor had experienced over its one hundred plus years the current thickness is slightly more than one eighth of an inch. Approximately two thirds of the original wood floor had been lost to the previous sanding.

Upon the completion of the preparation work in both the ballroom and dining room, Danish oil manufactured by Trip Trap Inc. was buffed into the wood. The process included the initial application of the Master Oil followed by and application of the Maintenance Paste. All finish applications were made per the instructions of the manufacturer. The materials for maintaining the floor and the equipment needed were left with the director of The Washington Club and instructions and demonstrations were made to insure they would be knowledgeable in the long term care and maintenance of the floors.

All work on the ballroom and dining room were completed on time and on budget. Upon completion of the work the Patterson House Preservation Foundation determined that the second floor foyer had to be included in the work. Due to scheduling conflicts, Rosebud Co. had to return to Atlanta and the work was set to start in late August.

Prior to the work beginning on the second floor foyer, it was determined that the seven inch wide quarter sawed white oak flooring was a veneer comparable to the pine floor in the dining room. And like the wood floor in the dining room, the foyer floors had lost the majority of their wood due to previous sanding. Like the other floors, all surface coatings were removed and the application of the Trip Trap Oils was made to the floors.

(It should be pointed out that the selection of finishes was based upon current and future use of the floors as well as an eye toward their continued

maintenance. The selection of an oil product eliminated the possibility of future damage comparable to the damage experienced from the application of tape to



hold materials and objects in place. This had resulted in damage to the finish that the members found highly objectionable. The lack of film formation that would have occurred had a finish been applied to the floors minimized the possibility of this recurring. Furthermore, the maintenance of the Trip Trap products involved mopping to clean off food and beverage from banquets and actually helped replenish the oil in the cleaning process. The cleaning solution for the floors contains small amounts of oil that were deposited on the surface

with each cleaning. In addition, the facility has the option of reapplication of both the Master Oil and/or the Maintenance Paste. It was felt that this approach offered The Washington Club the most reasonable long term maintenance approach and more options to avoid the accumulation of maintenance products comparable to the materials used over the last twenty years. It was the use of the maintenance products over the last two decades that had led to the demise of the appearance of the floors and posed the greatest threat considering the traditional sanding methods used in the past. To help insure proper maintenance of the floors, Rosebud Co. instructed the staff of The Washington Club and donated a Clarke 1500 buffer to help with the periodic buffing of the floors.)

Photo Documentation

The following photographs and explanations provide a visual description and brief explanation of the work performed on the restoration work executed at Patterson House during the summer of 2006.



This sequence shows the ballroom floors in the “during” phase. Note the grey color of the old finish against the stark white of the oak.



On the left, the ballroom floors have been completely stripped. On the right, the Danish Oil is being buffed into the wood.



Before pictures of the pine floors in the Patterson Dining Room. Note lack of color and definition of distinguishing graining pattern.





Here we see the distinctive graining patterns of the yellow pine in the dining room after the restoration was completed. The burl'd texture of the wood is very unique and would have required considerable time and effort in the selection and installation process. In checking with suppliers of replacement materials it is obvious that this would be a very difficult floor to duplicate today. The wood is a veneer over an oak backing. This is the finest example of burl'd aged yellow pine I have ever seen.



A more direct photo of the floor shows the rich and detailed color of the pine as well as its dimensions. Although the overall condition of the wood in this room was good, it is at risk from the high heels of women's shoes and rolling the tables into the rooms on their sides. Care must be taken to prevent further damage.



This photo shows the contrast in the old finish, in the foreground, compared to the restored floors in the background. This photo was shot at the entrance to the ballroom through the French doors from the foyer. The flooring in the foreground shows the foyer prior to its restoration against the freshly restored wood floors in the ballroom. The color variation is almost totally due to the color deterioration of the older finish.



Here we are able to see the condition of the ballroom floor before the start of the restoration work. The aged finish gave the floors a dull grey color that also blocked the color of the natural wood. It was also prone to chipping and cracking due to the use it was exposed to.

In this photo we see the ballroom floor after the restoration work was completed. The two photos here, the before and after, have not been altered in any way. The color tones of the 104 year old oak floors are the color achieved from aging. The rich color tones achieved here are the result of the wood making contact with an oil product.





This photo was taken in the foyer in front of the French parlor doors leading into the ballroom. The right side of the photo shows the effect of acrylic maintenance products over an extended period of time. The darker color tones are due entirely to the maintenance products and how they age. The lighter section is where the wood was covered by the area rug.



As the older coatings are removed we now see the bright white of the oak flooring. Fortunately it is not showing any adverse effects of the discolored finishes in front of the French doors. Note the contrast of the inlay strip of mahogany.



This third photo in the series shows the finish with all of the old finishes removed. Note that all the color variations in the old finish were not found in the wood. After the Trip Trap finish was applied, there were no visible traces of original discolorations.



In this series of photos we see the progression of the finish as it is applied to the foyer floors. Please note the uniformity of color and the lack of distortion that was in the original finish prior to its removal.



Finally we have the documentation of the removal of a source of frustration and embarrassment for members of the Patterson House Preservation Foundation. As noted previously, damage had occurred to the foyer floors outside the sitting room doors. The damage was apparent from the stripes left in the floor when masking tape was pulled up after an event. As the tape was pulled up, it removed several layers of old finish. The resulting contrast proved to be very visible and beyond repair.



Here we see the damaged area prior to any restoration work. Note the contrast.

When work was completed, there were no visible color variations from the previous damage to the finish. By using an oil finish and products that do not result in the formation of any film forming products on the surface, we hope that this is the last of this particular problem.



This report was compiled by Michael Purser and submitted to the President of Patterson House Preservation Foundation.

October 4, 2006