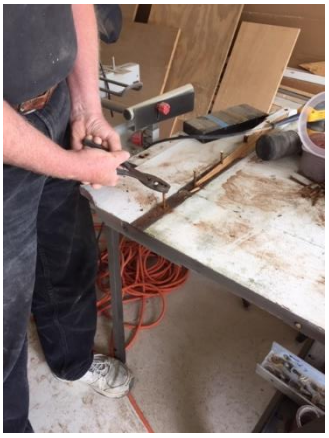
Title: **Linthicum Community Sign – Progress Report #04**
By: Dan Woomer

News from our secret restoration facility “DWG.”

The existing battens holding the sign planks together were removed by breaking them in half. All of the battens are deeply rotted and broke apart easily. The wood rot present allowed water to penetrate into the batten causing deep corrosion of the zinc plated steel screws holding the battens and sign planks together.

Virtually all of the flat blade wood screws were so weakened by the rust, the heads stripped with each attempt to remove them. Breaking the battens apart allowed the careful removal of the screws employing plyers and vice grips. Luckily only one screw sheared off. The residual part of the screw was ground down flush to the back side of the plank.



The backs of the separated planks were belt sanded to remove most of the original paint, and then sanded with a random orbiter sander to smooth.

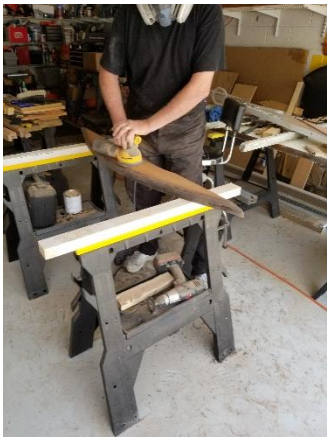
All of the screw holes in the planks holding the original battens in place show signs of minor water penetration and decay. Each of these holes were drilled out employing a 1/4" diameter forstner bit. Each hole was vacuumed out, then a 1/4” poplar diameter dowel was glued and hammered into the hole then trimmed off flush with the surface of the plank.

Employing dowel plugs, glue, and where needed, an exterior rated wood filler, the original screw holes will be sealed. Once the glue cured, the plugs were sanded off smooth to the back surface of the planks. Any remaining voids will be filled and sanded once the sign is reassembled.

Work to disassemble the planks from one

another continued. Planks #6 and #7 came apart from plank #5. Planks #6 and #7 appear to be glued together, so the attempt to separate these planks from on another was stopped. Also, planks #3 and #4 also appeared to be glued together so again the attempt to separate these planks from one another stopped. These two sections of the sign will be cleaned as if they are one piece.

The back of plank #2, disassembled from the sign, shows the initial belt sanding and the marks where the original battens were located. The residual finish was belt sanded off and the plank was smoothed with a random orbital sander. The sign frame portion of this plank was also belt sanded, and finished with a random orbital sander. Now begins the slow removal of the sign's background finish employing hand chisels. As seen in the photo to the right, Suzzie Schuyler is engaged in the tedious work to carefully hand chisel off the rough background finish and partly rotted wood off of the sign. Again, we estimate the removal of the background finish and the smoothing of the area behind the lettering will take 200 or more hours to complete.

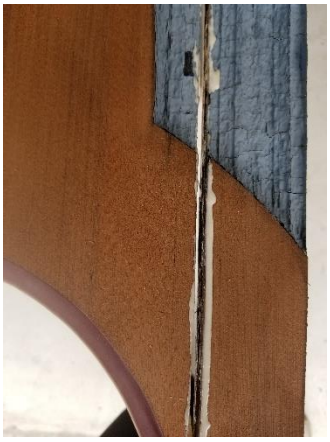


As seen in the photo to the left, Dan Woomer is sanding off plank #1. This first and smallest plank is now cleaned. The next task for this plank will be to mortise out the large area of rot that has penetrated from the top edge of the sign, through Plank #1 and well into plank #2.

The 2nd batten is unclamped and finish sanded. Now ready for final sizing and finishing. There will be a total of five (5) new battens made from red oak that will be glued up and sanded in the same manner as battens #1 and #2. As seen in the photo to the right the red oak boards are now glued and clamped together to form the 3rd batten. Also seen is plank #1 now stripped, sanded and waiting for the rotted area to be mortised out and repaired.

What follows is the result of the next couple months of labor.

As the sign planks were being disassembled, plank #6 was found to be cracked and split nearly one-half of its length. To repair this, Dan carefully inserted wood shims to separate the split and injected wood glue into the split. The glue was worked onto the split surfaces with a 2" flat blade putty knife. Once all of the surface area on the two sides of the split was covered with wood glue, plank #6 was clamped to close and bond the split together.



As the chiseling of the original and now failed finish continues, and the areas where the underlying rotted red is removed, several areas of the raised lettering were found to have rot and needed to be stabilized, repaired or rebuilt. Each small bit of the damaged lettering was carefully cleaned then repaired, with each repair being allowed to sit for 24 to 48 hours to make sure the glue or wood filler had ample time to fully cure.

Looking closely at the photo above and to the left. Note the rough background surface behind the lettering. Look closely at the area between to two gold colored letters. Note the dark areas where the underlying red wood was exposed to the weather. This is rot. Also see how the original finish has cracked apart into small pieces. All of this failed finish and wood rot will be removed.

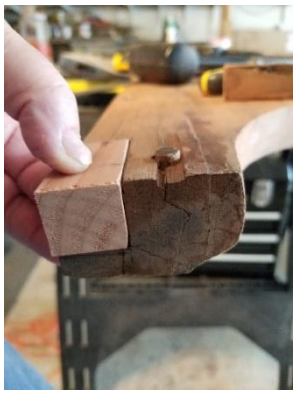
Now look at the photo to the right and again note the background behind the lettering now that most of the original finish is removed. The gray color on the surface of the red wood is rot. All of this rot will be removed, mostly by hand, to expose the sound red wood underneath. Also, the entire background behind the lettering will be smoothed to enhance the restored sign's water runoff and reduce moisture collection. All of this work to further extend the sign's life.

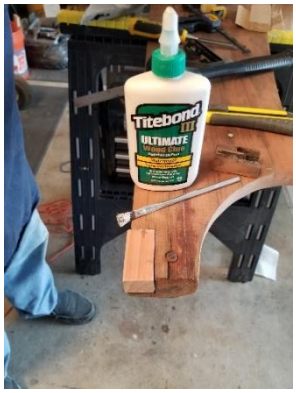
The back side left and right edges of the sign had several areas where the red wood was broken out and water had wicked into the end grain, penetrating deep into the wood rotting larger areas pf the sign's planks. The following series of photos shows how each of the larger areas of damaged were mortised out until sound red wood was found, and a new piece of red wood was fitted, glued and clamped into the mortised area. Over the next few months, Dan Woomer will repeat this process again and again until all of the sign's planks are made whole.









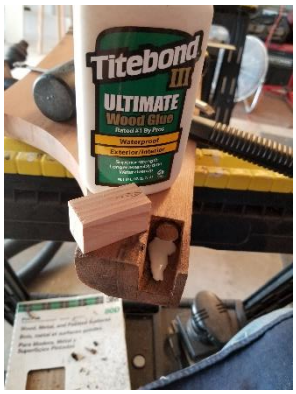



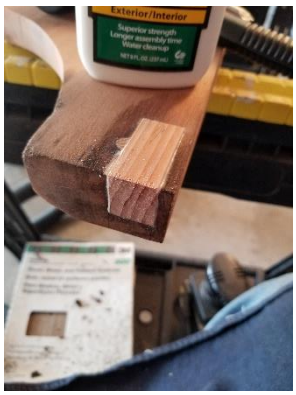
The photos starting with the upper left. The original sign mounting hole is plugged with wood dowel, the hole where a lag bolt was later used to hold the sign to its mounting bracket is visible. Using zinc plated steel lag bolts to hold red wood was not a good idea for the long term. Water has penetrated along the margin of the lag bolt, deep into the red wood, and rotted the wood. All of this rot needs to be removed. Dan Woomer lays out the area to be mortised. The clamp is holding a guide to cut a straight line into the plank. That straight cut is used to align the wood chisel to begin the mortising (removal of the rotted wood). With the rot mortised out of the plank, a new piece of red wood is cut and shaped. The new piece of red wood is fitted, shaped, fitted, and shaped repeatedly until it fits tight into the mortised area. Once a tight fit is

achieved, the new piece of red wood is glued in place and clamped. The clamp will stay in place for at least 24 hours to allow the glue to fully cure.

The following series of photos show what appeared to be a minor amount of wood rot that again penetrated into the sign plank along the edges of a lag bolt. As you can see, the appearance was deceiving. Rot penetrated deep into the plank as water wicked into the end grain of the plank.



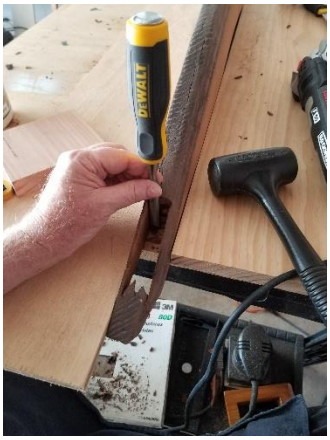





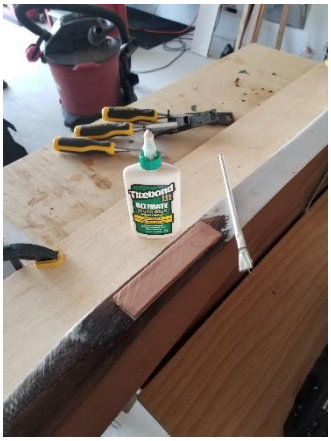
Starting with the upper left photo, this rotted area appears pretty small and easily repaired. I'll just plug the original mounting hole with wood dowel and mortise in a new piece of red wood. I started chiseling out the rot, which kept going and going. As can be seen, a pretty large area turned out to be rotted. All of this was removed. The rot penetrated deep into the plank following the planks end grain. Using a 1/2-inch forstner bit, the rot was drilled out and a 1/2-inch dowel was glued and driven into the hole, then trimmed off flush to the rear face of the mortise. A new piece of red wood was shaped, fitted, glued and clamped into place. Again, this clamped up repair sat for over 24 hours to allow the glue to fully cure.

Now for the most challenging repair. In the prior Progress Reports, the large rotted area that went through the top edge of the top plank and into the second plank was called out. Now came the time to make these repairs. The rotted wood not only extends through the top plank, but nearly to the outer edges of the rear and face sides of the plank. The rotted wood was very slowly and carefully removed.

The next series of photos capture the process of Dan Woomer repairing both Plank #1 and #2.



As can be seen in the far-left photo, by the time the rotted wood was removed from the top plank of the sign, there wasn't much left of the original wood plank. Note how thin the remaining wood is on the rear and front faces. The next photo shows how deep the wood rot penetrated into the top edge of the second sign plank. Again, note how thin the wood is on the rear and face sides of the plank.



Once the removal of the rotted wood is completed, and the mortises are squared up, new pieces of red wood are shaped, fitted and glued into place, making for a strong repair and restoring the integrity of the planks. Theses repairs stayed clamped up and sat for 72 hours to make sure the glue had fully cured.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

(1) If you are a mason, would you volunteer to repair a few cracked mortar joints on the brick columns? Please email me at woomer.dan@gmail.com if you can help.

(2) And to all, here's a way you can help our community - We are raising the funds to cover the expenses of restoring our community sign. If you can, please make a donation to the Save-Our-Sign Campaign. Any amount you and your family can afford is appreciated. Please send your donation to:

Save-Our-Sign Campaign
c/o Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association (LSIA)
PO Box 143
Linthicum, MD 21090

Make out your check to:
"The Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association" and in the note filed please add "Save-Our-Sign Campaign". Note – Your donation is not tax deductible.

Thanks for your help and support!

Stay tune for more on-going updates as our community sign goes from weathered and worn to restored and new.