



Conservation Documentary

Circa 1850 Jelley Cupboard

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Piece: Circa 1850 Cupboard

Style: Country

Material: Southern Yellow Pine

Region of Origin: Shenandoah Valley

Finish: Colored Shellac

Condition of Finish: Fair, previously refinished, complete refinish required

Structure: Sound, restoration feasible

Dimensions: The unit measures 51" long by 44½" height with a depth of 21½"



This 19th Century piece shows signs of excellent craftsmanship for a country style unit. The piece appears to have been the base of a hutch cupboard, now missing it's top shelving unit. This is not an original "Jelly" cupboard style piece. This is indicated by three cutoff dowels in the top surface, and a replacement yellow pine strip in the back of the top surface.

The unit contains two 23" drawers, two knobs are missing or broken. One lockbox missing. There are two 23" flat panel doors, with mortis and tenon joints, lockboxes intact. There are three existing shelves on the right side, and one on the left side. Unit is paneled on both sides. All existing hardware appears original. Cut nails throughout indicate early 19th century.

Condition Evaluation:

Very sound overall structure, right doorframe is completely loose, door came apart with ease when stressed. Right door molding is loose, left is detached but present in the piece.

Drawer bottoms appear hand plained, evidence of early 19th century workmanship. Modern nails found throughout drawers for support.

Significant dryness cracking appears in top surface, penetrating through finish and into the structure of the top. Significant finish damage on lower end of unit, possible water damage. Much of the finish is missing. Unit shows many signs of being refinished, including fragments of red paint. In addition, modern plastic filler is in the top-surface nail holes under the existing shellac finish. Existing finish is extremely thick, inappropriate to the period.

Previous repairs are also indicated by new wood drawer slides on both drawers.

Bottom shelves show signs of separation and cracking from front lower frame.



Artisans of the Valley, LLC

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Conservation Plan:

The majority of the finish will be removed and replaced with appropriate techniques. This unit may have been originally painted, signs of tiny red paint flakes were under the existing finish. The existing finish is over modern wood filler in several nail holes on the top surface. This indicates refinishing possibly early to mid 20th century. Prior refinishing negates the value of having an original finish, and full finish restoration is permissible. Original patina will be maintained, including all significant scratches, dents, and chipping. Finish depth scratches and stains will be removed.

The right side doorframe will be separated and re-glued, minor repairs to the left side by the injection of glue without separation will be completed as a precaution.

Door moldings will be removed and re-glued, and secured with brads.

Drawer pulls will be replaced with antique wooden pulls; exact match to existing two could not be located.

Inside of unit will be cleaned and very lightly coated with moisturizing chemicals to condition the exposed wood where unfinished.

Modern nails will be removed, and drawers glued or restructured as appropriate.

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Appraisal:

Artisans of the Valley provides appraisals for the purposes of insurance only. Actual value can only be determined by sale of the piece. In original condition, unit was estimated with a value of \$500. Restored value is estimated at \$2,000.

Appraisal is based on careful physical inspection of the piece, and comparison to descriptions of pieces recently sold at auction. The full range of similar units found was between \$500 and \$12,000. Considerations when valuing this unit include that the finish is not original, the unit is a bottom hutch cabinet missing its top-shelving unit, and there is no documented history confirming previous historic ownership. Positive factors are that the unit is in very good structural condition.



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Photo by Frank Jacobs Stanley (left) & Eric Saperstein

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