

The Old Turnscrew Looked Pretty Sad Text and Photos by William Johnston

The old turnscrew looked pretty sad sitting on the ground at the drive-in theater Sunday flea market.. The blade was rusty and bent, in two directions ... no doubt from prying open paint cans. The brass ferrule was split on one side. The beech handle was dry, dirty, with rough spots to the feel. Just like we always find tools at flea markets. But it was just a dollar.



The ferrule fell off first. I removed the rust from the blade with a wire brush, down to the pits that actually contributed to the blade looking blacksmith made. I straightened the blade with a few hammer taps on the anvil.

Rough areas on a turnscrew or a saw handle are hard on the hands. I lightly sanded the rough spots on the beech with course sandpaper to simulate smooth ware over the years rather than abuse and followed up with finer paper to a smooth finish.



I cleaned the handle with mineral spirits and steel wool. Just in case there was some lacquer left I wiped with acetone. The patina quickly spread to the sanded spots. I finished with Minwax Woodsheen, a gel rubbing oil finish. As I usually do with tool handles, just when the finish goes from oily to dry I apply a coat of Kiwi Camp Dry beeswax and lanolin (uses for leather waterproofing). Beeswax and lanolin really makes tool handles look and especially feel good to the touch.

To make a replacement ferrule, I (5/8 inch) center drilled a piece of 3/4 in brass rod. The hole was just a bit small. I heated the brass with a torch and pressed the expanded brass ferrule over the blade and drove it onto the wood. Cooling allowed it to contract and fit tight.

The wire brushed blade was cleaned with mineral spirits and steel wool followed by soap and water. I blued the blade with black oxide (from a gunsmith shop), washed it again, dried it and finished it with a bit of synthetic motor oil.

I have not done any reshaping to the tip of the blade, which may be necessary.



Questions and comments are invited and may be submitted to:

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