

Refinish your musket stock

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I recently refinished my musket stock, and thought I'd share my experience with the group. The idea is to give the stock the appearance of an original. Originals were made of black walnut, whereas our repros are made of a lighter Asian hardwood. Additionally, originals had an oil finish, while the repros are coated with plastic. Here's what I did.



Repro musket before refinishing

1. Remove all the metal fittings from the stock. This can be done with a flat-blade screwdriver, and a 1/8" punch. First, dismount the barrel. Unscrew the upper sling swivel and the breech tang screw; this will release the tension on the barrel retaining pins (thanks to Les for this pointer). The barrel, the brass ramrod pipes, and the butt plate are secured by pins; push the pin gently with the punch to get it started, then pull it out from the opposite side with pliers or visegrips.



Remove the upper sling swivel and breech tang screws



Push pins with 1/8" punch



Remove pins with pliers or vise grips

Note that the pins are different sizes; I recommend placing the ones for the barrel and the pipes in separate containers to make reassembly easier. After all the pins are removed, the barrel will lift off. Similarly, two wood screws and one pin also secure the butt plate. The trigger guard has two wood screws; remove them, lift up the guard, and the trigger assembly will lift out. Clean, polish, and oil all metal parts before reassembling.

2. Sand the stock by hand to remove the urethane finish. I used 150 grit to take off the plastic, then 220 grit to finish. Be sure to remove all the plastic. My unfinished stock was a light honey color. Took me about an hour.

3. Stain with dark brown **leather dye**. This is a trick I learned from the ACW campaigners. I used Fiebing's leather dye, which is commonly available from shoe repair guys.

4. Finish with multiple coats of danish oil. The oil will penetrate into the wood (probably pretty dry from being sealed in plastic) to restore resilience and make it water resistant. Let dry between coats of oil (use this time to clean and polish the metal parts). Don't rush this part; eventually you will get a glossy finish. (The gloss gets rubbed down pretty quickly from normal hand friction.) The oil finish can be touched up later on as needed.



Refinished stock

5. When the stock is completely dry, replace the metal parts.



Reassembled refinished musket

A word about oil finish. Period stocks were immersed in a vat of warm linseed oil for a period of time. Modern linseed oil is different from what was used then, and requires some tweaking to work; danish oil is actually closer to the older linseed oil and can be used right out of the can.



Which is the repro?

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