



*Photo 51: With the case work done, keytops are the next project to tackle. I had neglected to get a good 'before' picture of the keys, but they do show a bit in this photo I took of the original decal. The keytops on the piano were actually replacement tops themselves that had been installed decades ago – thin, rippled and not particularly well filed or notched.*



*Photo 52: Since there is no ivory to salvage, Dave wastes no time removing the old tops by cutting them off on the table saw. The blade depth is set to remove a fraction of an inch of the wooden keystick to compensate for the thicker German-made keytop material to be installed.*



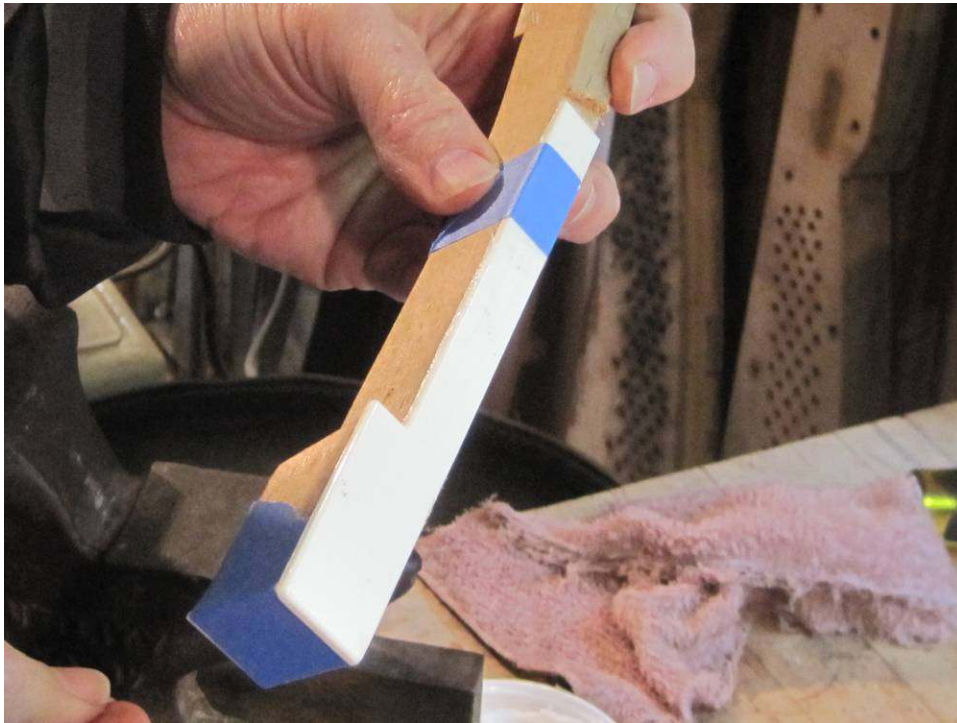
*Photo 53: Dave works his way down the line.*



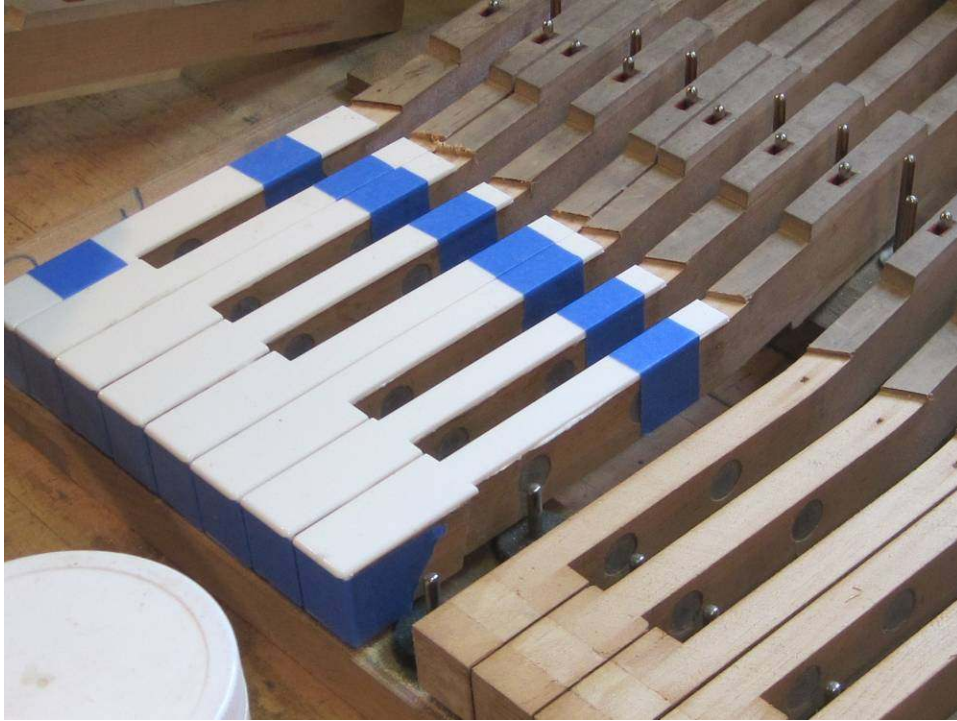
*Photo 54: Each key is put in the vise so that the front may be chiseled off.*



*Photo 55: New keytops are coated with PVC-E glue. This glue forms a solid joint without having to be clamped – amazing stuff.*



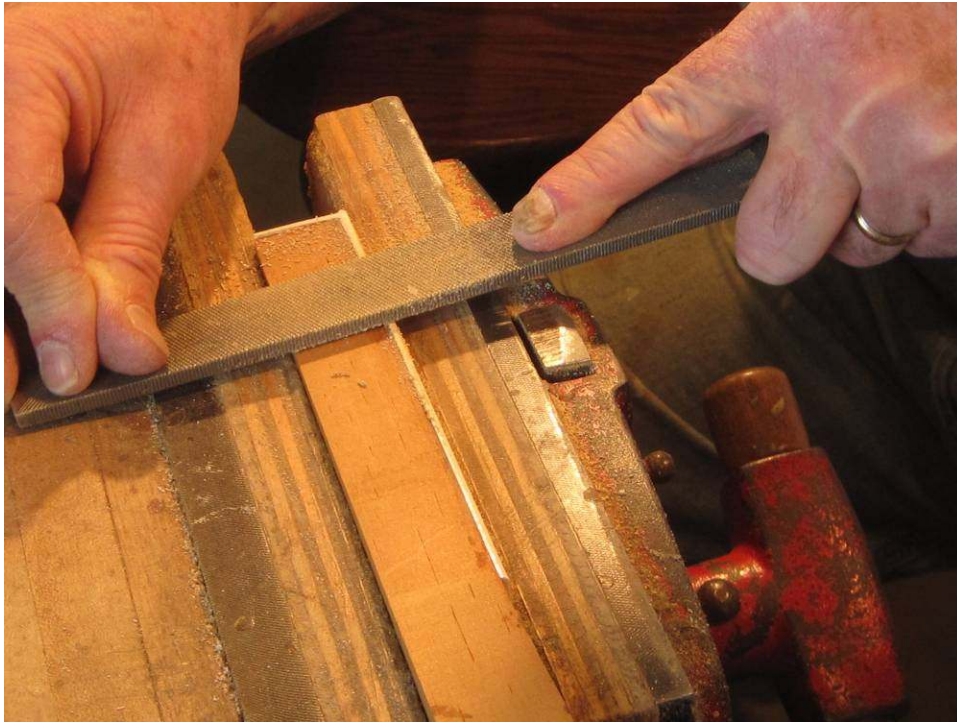
*Photo 56: The keytop is aligned on the keystick and taped into place with masking tape. The glue will draw the two surfaces together in a solid bond as it cures.*



*Photo 57: Keys with new keytops are put back on the key frame to dry overnight.*



*Photo 58: Dave takes advantage of the early morning light the next day to begin filing keytops. Some shops do this with machines. In our shop, we prefer using hand files for a more precise finish.*



*Photo 59: A coarse file is used to cut off the excess keytop material, followed by a fine file to smooth out the cut lines left by the original pass. Pressure is applied on the forward stroke only to avoid chipping.*



*Photo 60: Again, Dave works from one end of the keyboard to the other as he files the sides of each of the keys, this time going from right to left. A close look at the photo reveals uneven notching around the sharps. That will be the next step.*



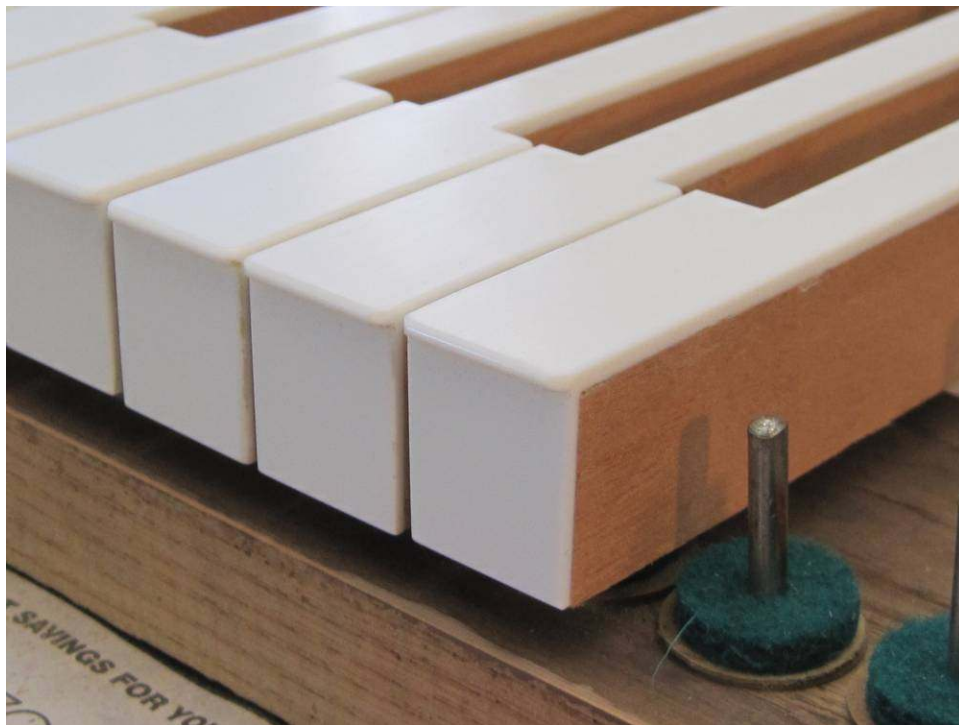
*Photo 61: With the keys on the keyframe, a straight edge is clamped down over the keys, using the traditional “dimes-thickness” between the front of the sharps and the back of the notch. An awl is used to mark the cut line, and the excess material is filed out in a two-step process – first with the edge of the file as shown.*



*Photo 62: The flat side of the file is then used to complete the process.*



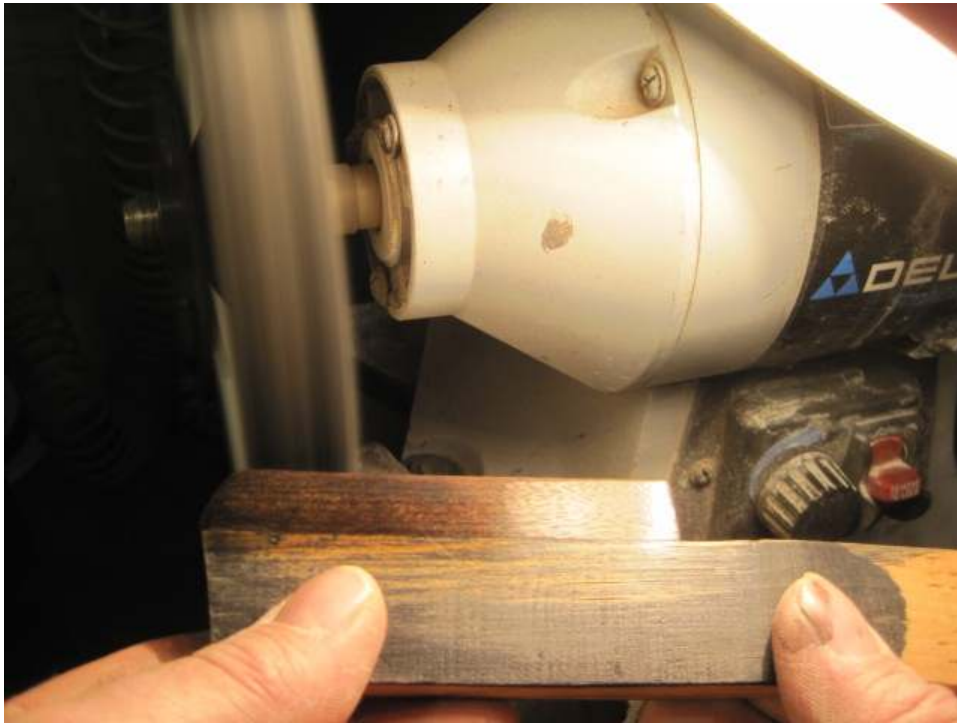
*Photo 63: Each key is buffed with 0000 steel wool for a satin finish.*



*Photo 64: Keys that have been filed and buffed.*



*Photo 65: The old lacquer on the sharps is stripped of with commercial stripper. The sharps are hung upside-down in the racks to avoid having the stripper find its way into the bushings on the bottom of the keys.*



*Photo 66: With the old finish removed, the sharps are lightly buffed, then polished with a cloth wheel impregnated with ebony polish.*





*Photo 67: The keybed is an eyesore that has been bothering me – I decide to spend a bit of time cleaning it up. Dave's work on the piano is now essentially done. I'll be finishing up work on brass-rail action and doing the reassembly and regulation work that is left. But first, I'll attend to this.*



*Photo 68: A little time with a hand sander, using 100 grit followed by 150, does wonders.*



*Photo 69: Much easier to look at.*



*Photo 70: The keyframe is due for refelting and a little clean-up also.*



*Photo 71: The front rail felts are removed first, using a small flat-bladed screwdriver to lever them off.*



*Photo 72: Next come the center rail felts, along with the original leveling papers. By going down to the bare wood, and starting from scratch, a more reliable result will be obtained when the keys are leveled.*



*Photo 73: The original back rail felt is first peeled off.*



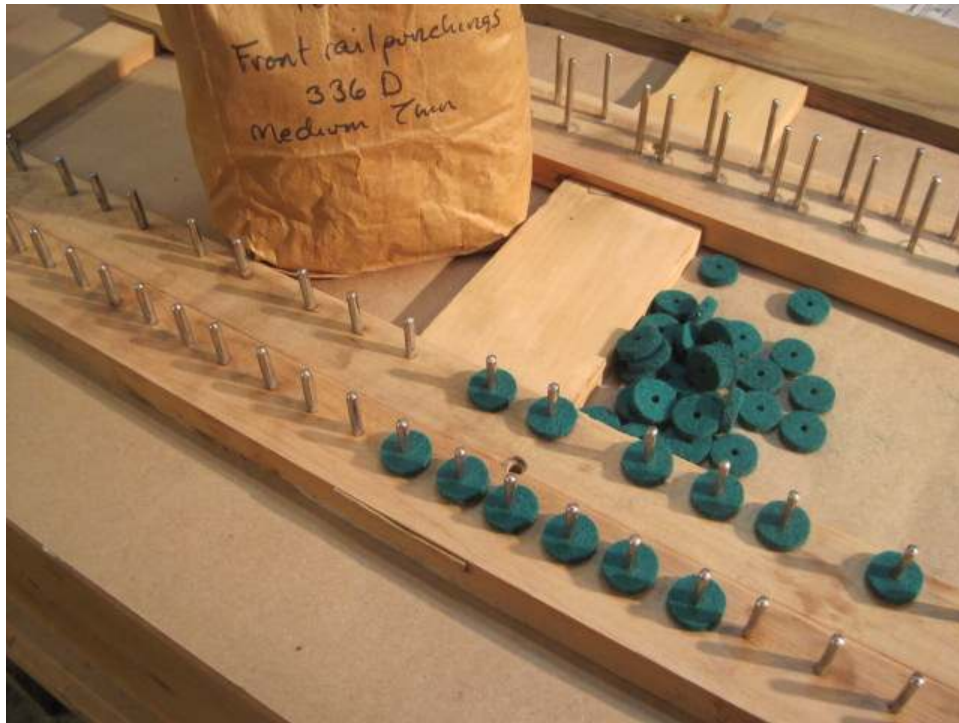
*Photo 74: A sharp chisel is then used to scrape off excess glue and felt.*



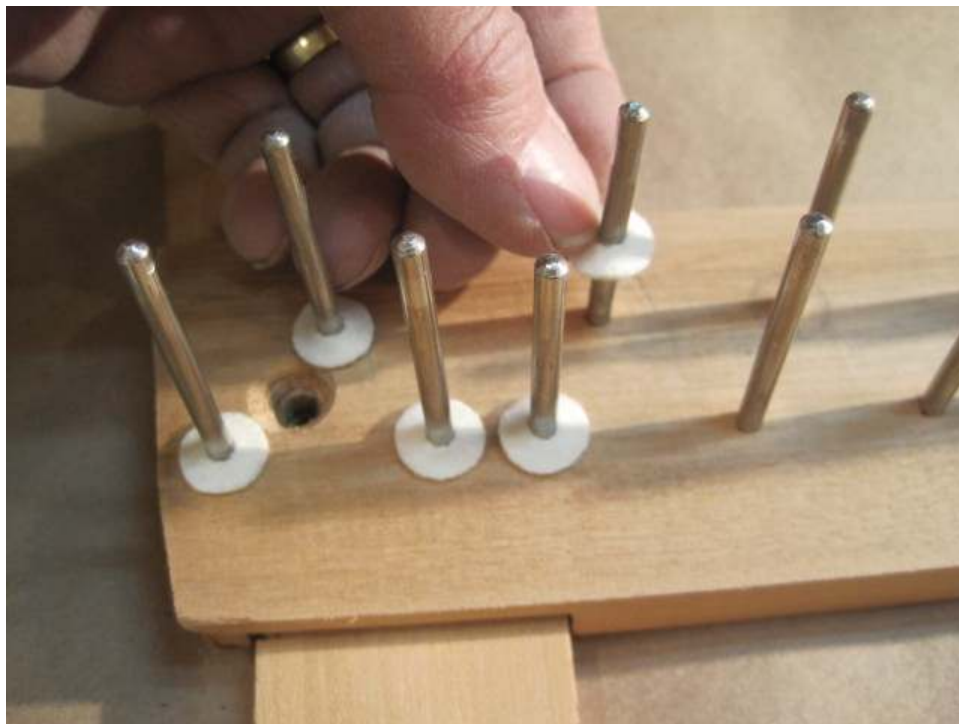
*Photo 75: The heap of old felt.*



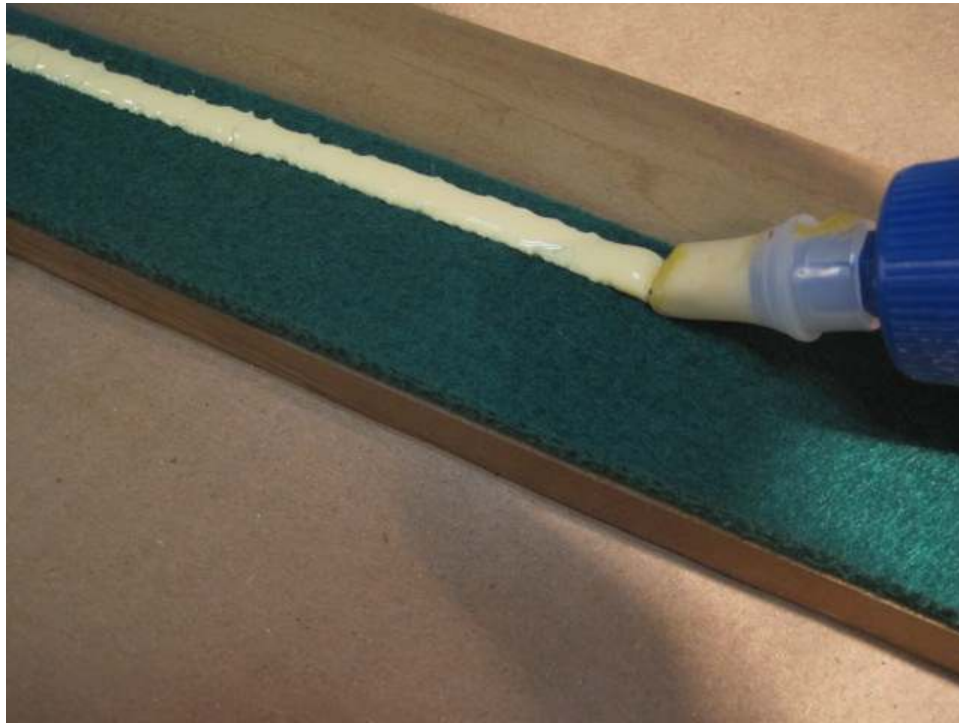
*Photo 76: I still do this type of clean-up work by hand – haven't bought my media-blaster yet, although it's on my list I sent to Santa! He (or should I say 'she') has hinted that it won't fit in the sleigh this year. Dang! Santa needs a bigger sleigh!*



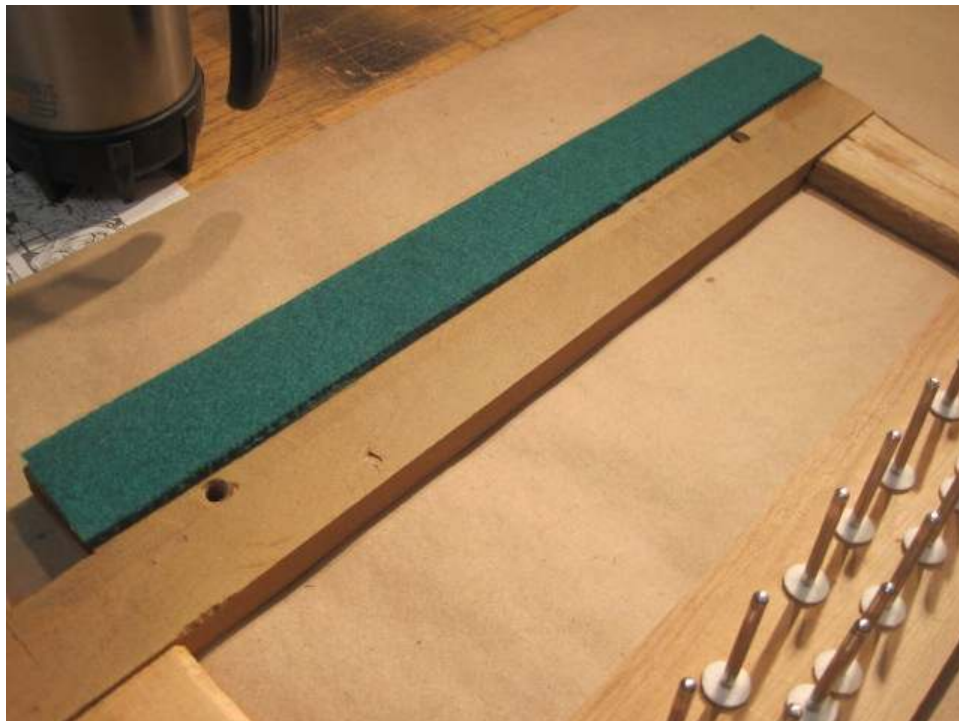
*Photo 77: New front rail punchings are installed.*



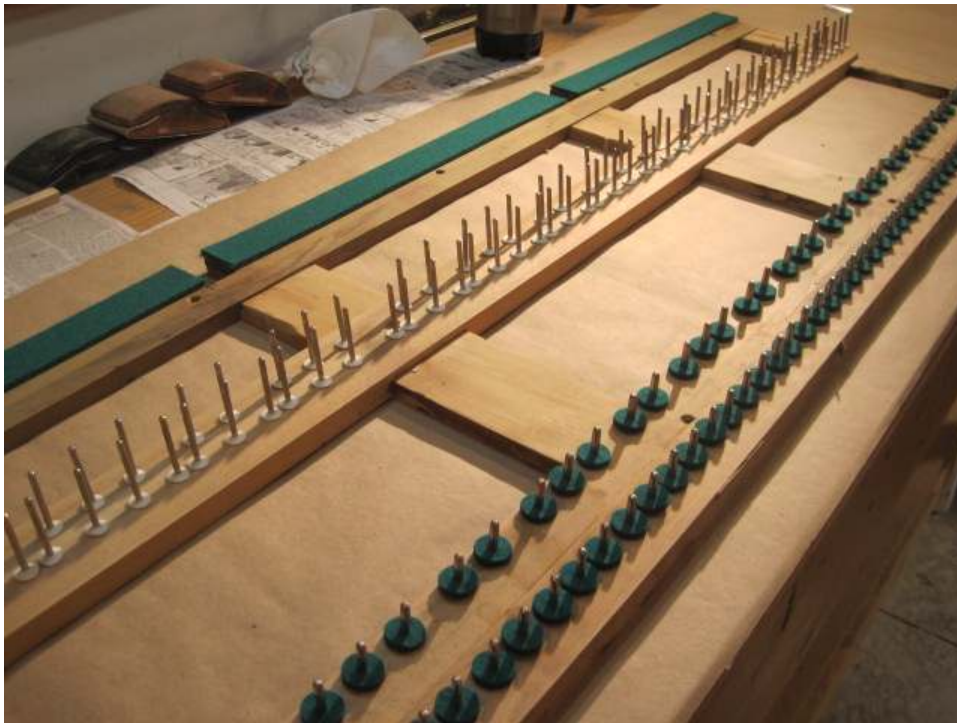
*Photo 78: Follow that with new balance rail punchings.*



*Photo 79: Back rail cloth is cut, and glued on the leading edge.*



*Photo 80: The new cloth is flipped, so that it's glued in front, but left loose in the back to transmit less sound from the falling keys.*



*Photo 81: The keyframe is now cleaned, refelted and ready for the keys.*



*Photo 82: The keys, both naturals and sharps, are returned. One more job to cross off the list.*

Next up – The case still needs to be reassembled. The brass rails have been removed from the action and sent off to Schaff for duplication – until they arrive back at the shop, further work on the action will have to wait. In the meantime, maybe I should build that sleigh!