

Steinway Upright Restoration Project

Day 2



Photo 55: It's a beautiful Saturday morning in October. The sun is shining, and the doors and windows of the shop are thrown open. Other projects can wait for the day. The Steinway upright is going to have my full attention.



Photo 56: Before the next official shop day of my chapter of the Guild, I want to remove the back of the split top, and the sides of the piano, so we can focus on the pinblock, case parts, action work and other details which are more suited to a group effort. .



Photo 57: Big projects often have simple beginnings. Here, tape is applied to help prevent damage to the veneer on the inside of the case during the sawing operation to follow.



Photo 58: Before going any further, the piano needs to be flipped, with the back side facing up.



Photo 59: Although this looks precarious, it's really not. Without the cast iron plate, the piano is relatively light and balances in this position quite easily.



Photo 60: The piano is tilted forward onto the first sawhorse. Without the plate, this is an easy job for one man.



Photo 61: A second sawhorse is set up with foam pads on the other side of the piano.



Photo 62: For this to work, the sawhorse needs to be angled away from the piano. One stands in between the piano and the sawhorse, lifts up the piano, and nudges one end of the sawhorse under the corner of the piano. From there, it's an easy job to get the rest of the sawhorse under the piano.



Photo 63: The sides are now hanging down, ready to be cut off.



Photo 64: Before that can be done, however, the top needs to come off, since it overlaps the sides.



Photo 65: Two 1/2" indexing holes are drilled in either side to facilitate replacement of the sides at the exact location from which they are removed.



Photo 66: Likewise with the top. These holes will be doweled when things go back together, and covered with plugs cut from mahogany veneer. After refinishing, they will be practically invisible.



Photo 67: Protruding hardware is removed.



Photo 68: Veneer along the top of the sides is taped off to prevent chipping.



Photo 69: To prevent the top from falling and being damaged, a set of 2 X 4's with a crossbar is constructed to catch the top when it is freed.



Photo 70: A straightedge for the saw to run along is clamped at a distance of 2 1/16" from the underside of the top.

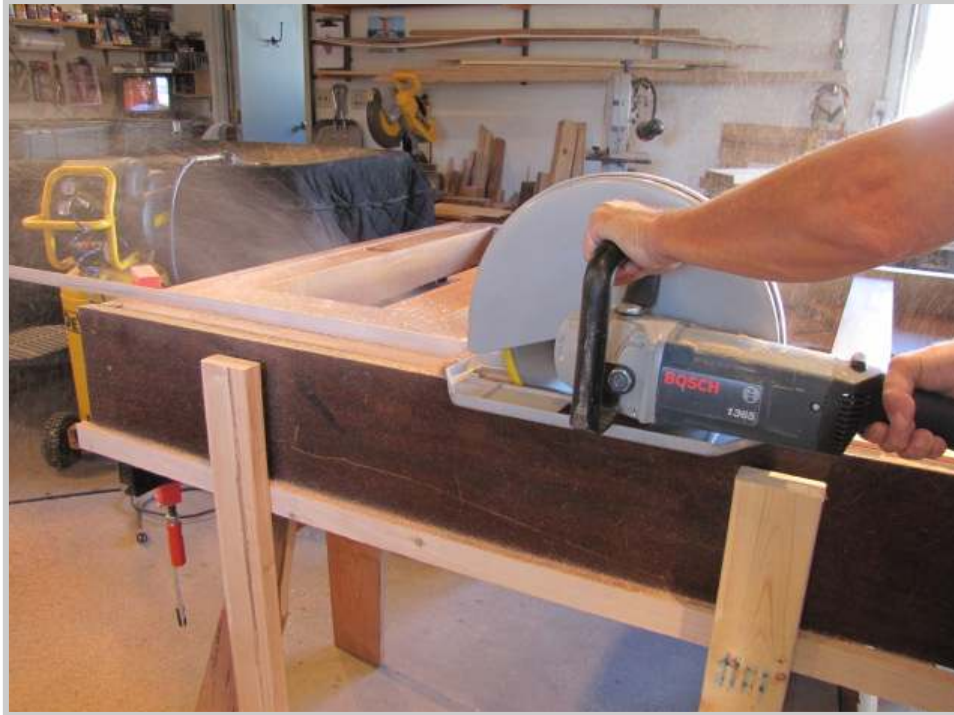


Photo 70: With a 12" blade, the cut-off saw being used has a cutting depth of 3 3/4". Instead of attempting to cut that depth all at once, several passes are made.

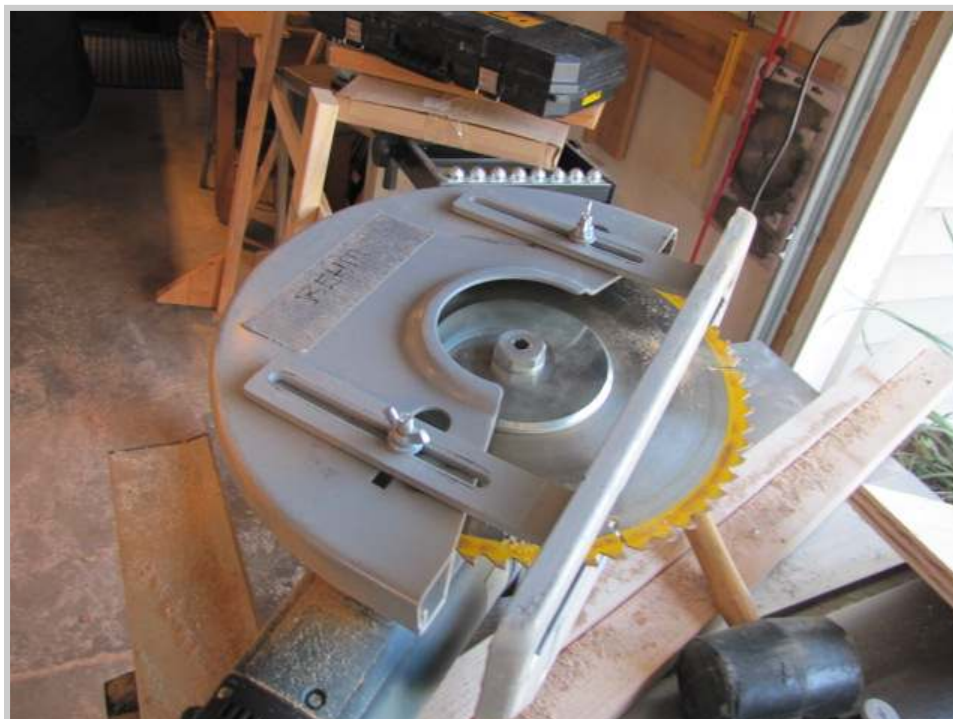


Photo 71: The depth adjustment for this saw. Notice that there's no blade guard as with a smaller circle saw. Count your fingers!



Photo 72: With the cut from the backside completed, the piano is turned over so that a cut may be made from the front side. Even going at it from both sides, the top is not completely removed.



Photo 73: A final quick pass with a reciprocating saw completes the job.



Photo 74: The exposed wood of the frame and pinblock. The wood is a bit uneven from the sawing process.



Photo 75: The underside of the lid - looking much better than if it had been removed with a mallet and chisel. I tried that once. It wasn't pretty.

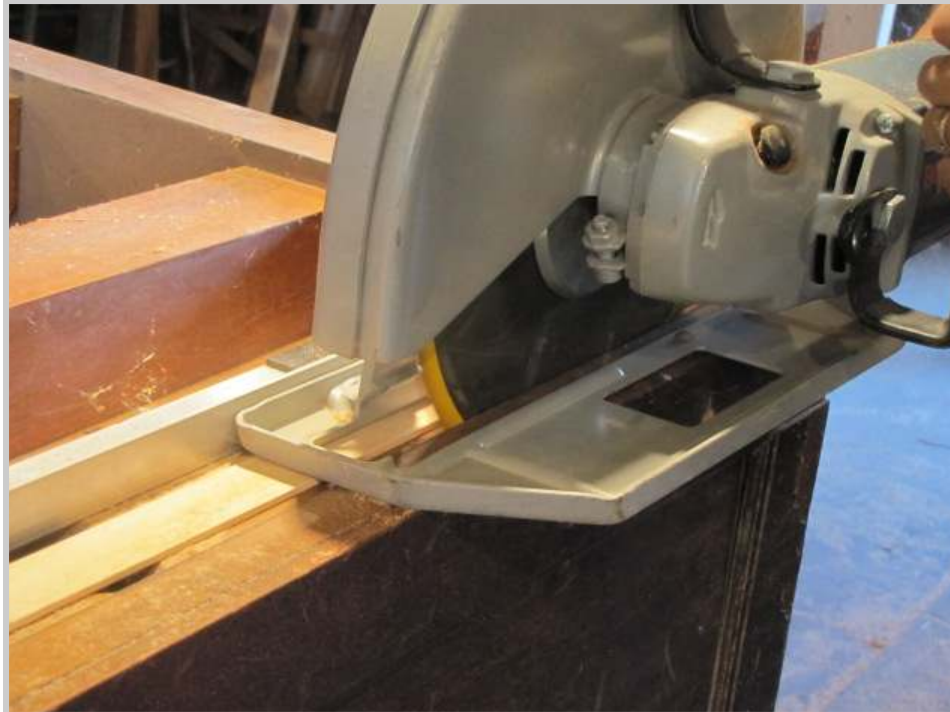


Photo 76: With the top off, attention may now be turned to the sides of the piano. A similar set-up with the straightedge is used, and the initial cut with the cut-off saw is made.



Photo 77: Using a smaller, easier to handle saw, the cut is extended around the corner.



Photo 78: Additional sawing is necessary, but because of the width of the sides, using the cut-off saw is not possible. After briefly using the reciprocating saw, I settle on a sharp hand saw with its stiffer blade. As the cut progresses, wedges pry the side away from the post. I occasionally test to see if the glue joint will crack.



Photo 79: Finally, with most of the glue joint cut apart, I am able to break the side free. A little veneer from the inside of the case adheres to the framework, but not bad.



Photo 80: I then go to work on the opposite side. Besides prying, I attempt to break the glue joint with some sharp raps of a ball peen hammer. The joint finally gives way.



Photo 81: The bare essentials..



Photo 82: The side of the pinblock exposed. Five unequal layers totaling 2" in thickness.



Photo 83: The width of the pinblock. The old block will be routed out from side to side.



Photo 84: A hammer shank is used as a depth gauge.



Photo 85: The old pinholes extend to the full 2" depth of the original pinblock.



Next up: I'll be working personally on the keytops. When the members of the chapter get together next week, we will be taking measurements for rescaling (with the kind help of Joe Garrett). We will then begin the cutting out of the old pinblock material, leaving a fitting bead, but removing the rest of the pinblock stock..

I must say that this project is beginning to take on a life of its own. So many people have asked to be included in the mailings of the photo sets, and so many have wished us well, I feel that we are working on a project that will eventually touch many individuals. The fact that in the end, the piano will be sold for charity makes our efforts worthwhile.

Chuck Behm