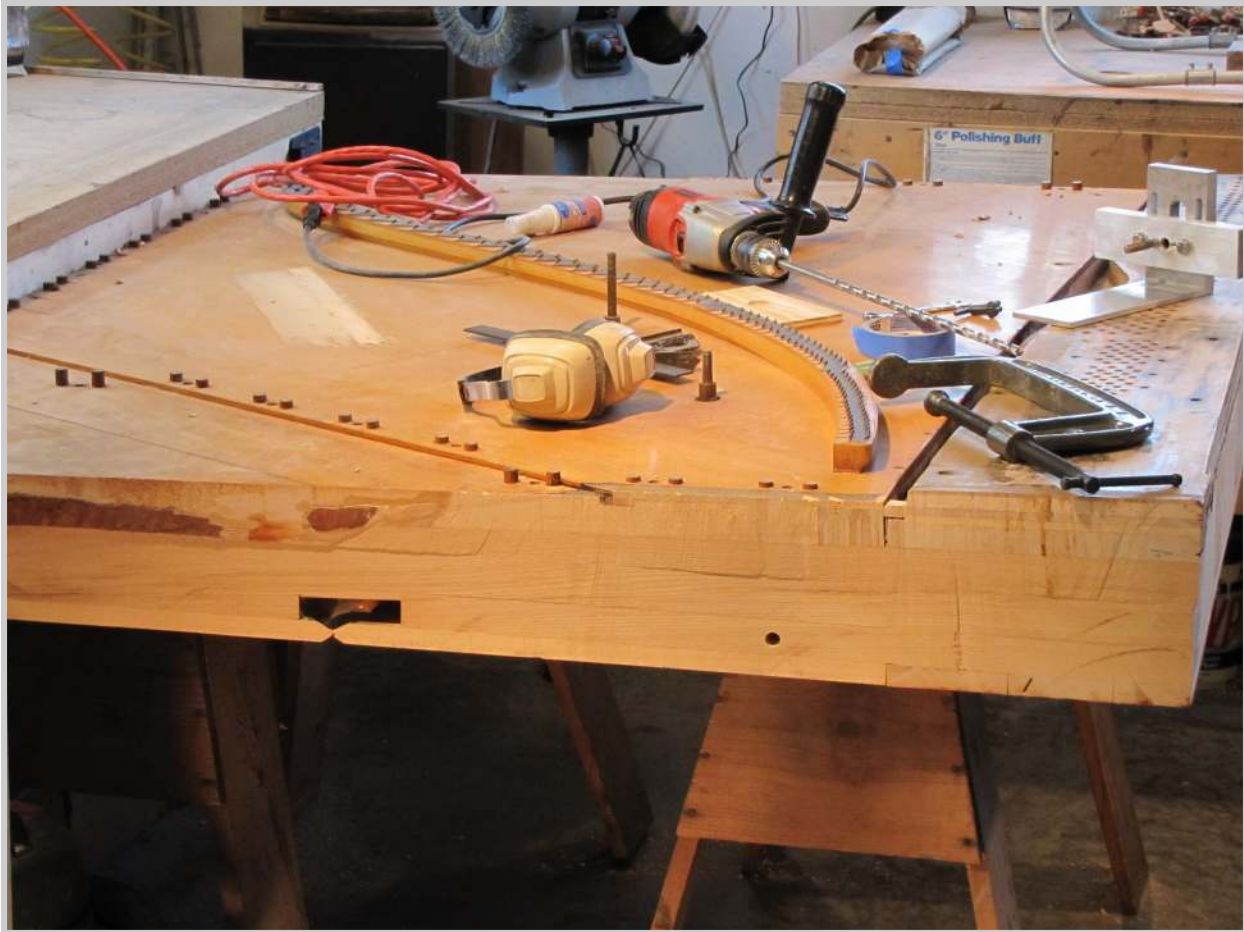


Steinway Upright Restoration Project

Day 5



At the February get-together of members of the Central Iowa chapter of the PTG, we picked up where we left off last time. I've dedicated the room in my shop in which the Steinway is currently located to just this single project, so that the piano and the tools involved may be left undisturbed in between work days. Progress would take place more quickly if I worked on things myself in between get-togethers, but this is to remain a group project, not an individual one.

So on February 17th, myself and two members (Bev Ohm and Steve Haag) who took the day from their busy schedules to pitch in tackled the project at the precise spot where we left off last time. The piano had been positioned previously as shown above, with the lower end of the back butted up against a workbench. This allow us to lean into the drilling operation going on at the top end of the piano with as much effort as necessary. It was ready to go, and so were we. I was chompin' at the bit to get going on this all month.

My goal for this day was to finish removing the old pinblock, and to begin fitting the new sample blocks to the flange on the cast iron plate. (Plus, go to Jimmy's Bar-B-Que for lunch, of course.)

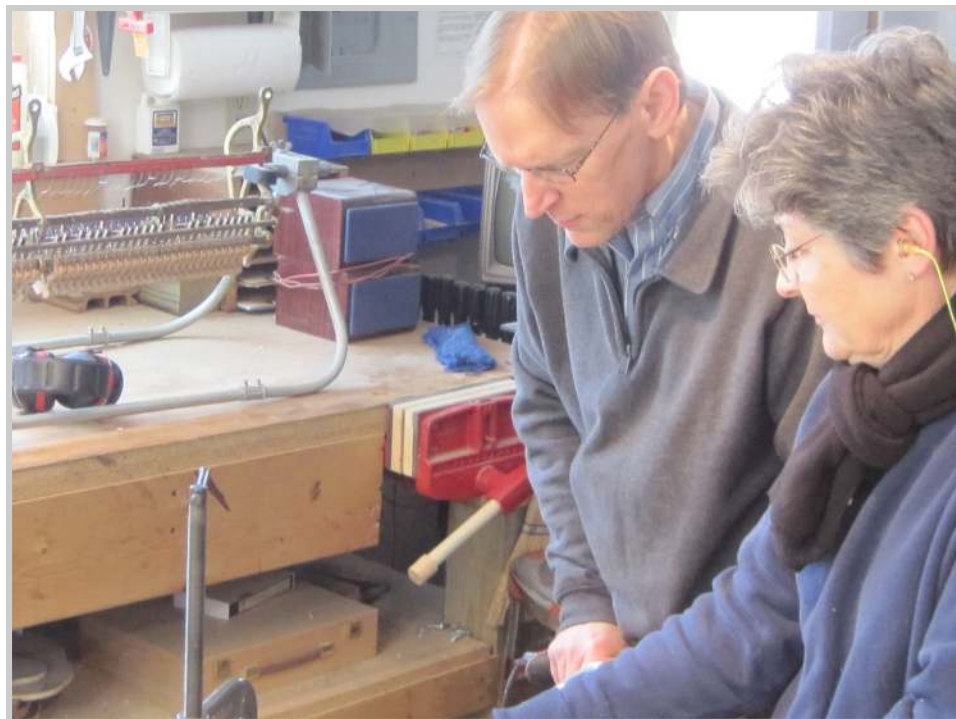


Photo 125: With a late morning start, and an 18" stretch of holes left to drill, Steve gets going on drilling the remaining holes. Bev holds the compressed air stream aimed at the bit to keep it as cool as possible. .



Photo 126: The jig from Bolduc is just a great tool for this job. After each hole is drilled, the clamp is loosened, the jig is moved over one place with the guide pin being inserted into the new hole, and drilling commences once again. Keeping the bit cool and sharp proved to be very important.



Photo 127: After lunch we get back at it, and before long the entire length of the pinblock is undercut with holes..



Photo 128: Using a chisel and a ball peen hammer, I take the first step in breaking apart the pinblock from its wooden backing.



Photo 129: With a little effort on my part, the separation of the pinblock from the wooden framework of the piano begins. The line of holes are not quite touching, but are separated by a thin wall of wood. Just under the holes, the seam between the pinblock and the framework can be seen in the above photo.



Photo 130: With the blade of the chisel driven in as far as it will go, I lift up, and a cracking sound fills the room.



Photo 131: Bev uses the chisel and hammer to extend the split near the treble end of the pinblock.



Photo 132: Bev then goes around the corner, to complete the break from the opposite end from which we started. .



Photo 133: Voila! The pinblock comes off in one complete piece!



Photo 134: Using this method, probably 95% of the old pinblock is now removed from the back assembly. To finish the job, the remaining layer of old pinblock will be removed. (The split-off chunk of wood seen near the top is from a separate runner of wood that was butted up to the pinblock.)



Photo 135: Steve tries removing the remnants of pinblock material with the chisel. The corner is loose, but further in the glue still holds tight.



Photo 136: A damp rag and steam iron are brought into action to help soften the glue joint.



Photo 137: Bev works away at the job with the hammer and chisel. With the steam and heat, the remaining layer of pinblock material begins to come off. Although we weren't able to finish the job on this day, we made considerable headway - on our next work day we should have the surface completely prepared for the new pinblock.



Photo 138: In another room of the shop, the cast iron plate is on sawhorses, ready to fit the new pinblocks. This will have to wait until next time as well - time is always shorter than you would like. The advantage of this method of pinblock removal is that the surface of the old pinblock is untouched, leaving it available to refer to.

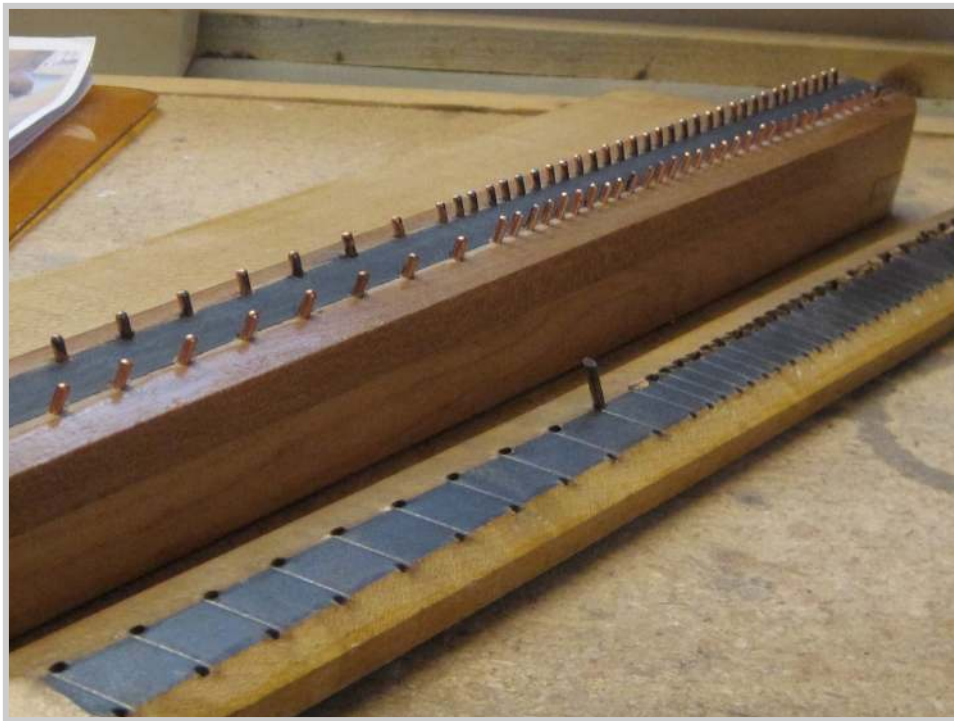


Photo 139: Thanks to Harold Marling, we now have a new bass bridge for the piano. (Refer back to . Photo set # 3, photo # 93 to see Harold removing the old bridge). Harold did a great job on the bridge! (I do have photos to share, but need to discuss captions with Harold before I include them.)

Next up: Next time, hopefully, we will be able to fit the three sample pinblocks to the plate. The pinblocks will then be ready to attach to the back assembly of the piano. We will screw each block to the back, put the plate into position, and use the roll-around drill press (which I will build on my own to expedite the process) to practice drilling on 2/3's of each block. We will leave one section of each block undrilled, so that once everyone has practiced drilling, we can cut the pinblocks into thirds, and join the undrilled portion of each block into a continuous whole. We will then glue the splice pinblock into place, and drill the entire block.

Obviously, this is not how the process would be done ordinarily. One block would be glued into place and drilled, and that would be that. However, for the purpose of researching the process and writing up the results (and also allowing for trial and error), we are taking this approach. Everyone (including myself) is learning new things and when we get done, we will have a truly unique piano. How many other pianos have not just one, but three premium pinblocks used in their construction?

Thanks to all for your patience in waiting for this photo set. I'll be sending more shots along as soon as they're available.

Chuck Behm