Photo 1: Our new project arrives at the shop – all bundled up. A Schiller upright, circa 1900.

Photo 2: My favorite movers muscle the piano into the shop. I've been looking forward to its arrival for quite some time. When I first laid eyes on this piano, it was love at first sight!

Photo 3: A separate room in the shop has been readied for the piano's arrival. This will be its home for the next few months.

Photo 4: Off of the 4 wheel dolly, the piano looks right at home.

Photo 5: The decal is a keeper. No duplicate is readily available, so I will be preserving this and blending it in with the new finish we'll be putting on.

Photo 6: The case presents some challenges. This scroll work will need to be replicated. Time consuming, yes, but really fun work to do! The highly visible pattern is a lucky break. Also, the scroll work on the opposite leg is completely intact, which will take the guess work out of the duplication process.

Photo 7: The rest of the case been banged up from frequent moves in its lifetime. Some veneer patching and replacement will be in order, but nothing too difficult.

Photo 8: Dave (Richardson's) job on this piano will be to refinish the case, and do the repinning and restringing. Mine end will involve the keyset (keytop replacement and rebushing), hammer head replacement, regulation, etc. Dave starts removing and disassembling case parts and gets a bench set up to begin stripping and sanding.

Photo 9: Ivory keyset restoration, often an option with vintage pianos, is not really practical in this case. The ebony sharps are another matter, however. Those will clean up nicely

Photo 10: Hard to say what happened here, but nevertheless, there's work to be done to make things right.

Photo 11: With the lid off of the top of the piano, I become concerned about the condition of the maple cap covering the top of the pinblock and the back posts. The cap is glued in place, and my guess is that the cracks signal a separation between the pinblock and the back posts and framework.

Photo 12: Dave thinks he can chisel the top off (obviously not in one piece – we'll have to make a new maple cap later down the road). The going is slow, however, and I set up the router to mill the top off.

Photo 13: With chips flying at me at eye level, the regular goggles by themselves don't cut it. The rails on the front and back of the piano keep the cutter at an even level. The rectangle of plywood attached to the router and serving as its faceplate is wide enough to span the two rails.

Photo 14: This works much better than the chisel. I take off 1/8" at a time, and get down to the source of the problem.

Photo 15: A separation of glue joints from one side to the other will require attention. When the strings and pins have been removed, we will glue, clamp and bolt the back together before putting on a new maple cap.

Photo 16: As I use the router up above, Dave removes the keys from the keyframe. The arms and keybed will eventually come off for easier stripping and refinishing.

Photo 17: A dime in the dust. No youngster itself, with a date of 1940 showing.

Photo 18: With the keys removed, and the keyframe on a bench, Dave removes the keybed felts.

Photo 19: Back rail felt matching the thickness of the old felt is glued in place. Titebond is applied to the front of the felt, but not the back so that the transmission of sound when the keys fall back into place is kept to a minimum.

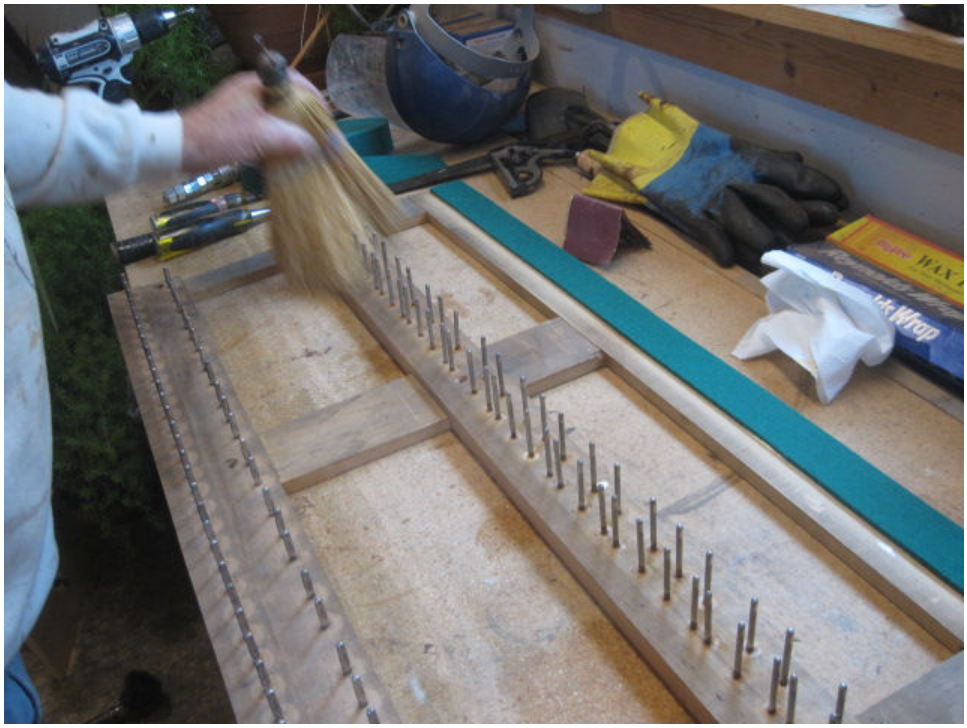

Photo 20: The keyframe just requires a cleaning – no mouse damage or corrosion of the keypins. Ahh!

Photo 21: One piece at a time, Dave begins stripping parts. Multi-tasking works well at this stage, in that the stripper needs time to do its work. With several pieces coated with stripper, Dave will return to refelting the keybed, or a task in progress on another bench.

Photo 22: Each part progresses from the stripping bench to the sanding bench where the original beauty of the case begins to be revealed.

Photo 23: Hand sanding takes a lot of time and patience. The process we use is to go from 100 grit paper to 150 and finish with 220 on each piece. While we use palm sanders on large flat surfaces, such as the kneeboard and sides, many pieces are done strictly by hand.

Photo 24: At a convenient break in the action, we put the piano on its back so that the casters, legs, arms and keybed might be removed. The more the case is disassembled, the easier the job of stripping and refinishing becomes, and the better the results.

Photo 25: Dave presses on with the sanding, here working on one of the arms of the piano. Breaking the case down to its individual parts eliminates many of the tight corners which cause problems when sanding and buffing.

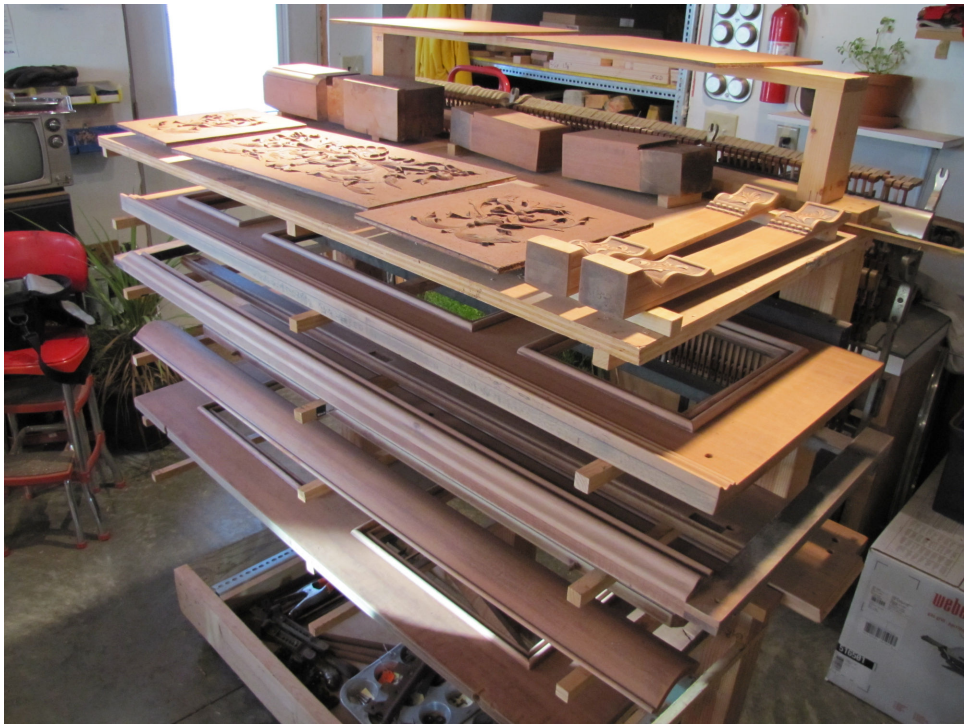

Photo 26: By the end of the second morning, all the individual case parts (except for the legs with the missing scrollwork, which I've volunteered to do) have been sanded and are stored on a parts trolley.

Photo 27: The main body is now all that remains of the case work Dave is responsible for. The missing scrollwork on the leg will keep me busy for some time. Once everything is completely prepped, the client will be consulted to help pick out the stain color.

Next up: Before going much further, the bass strings and sample hammers will be sent to Schaff Piano Supply for duplication. All other materials to be used will be taken from supplies on hand, so as soon as we've completed the preliminary work on the case, we'll be ready to tackle the other projects involved with the restoration. Fun days ahead!