

Keyword Machinery

Title Cleaning Old Machinery

Author Dr. John Lovett Jr.

In my experience, the best thing is simply warm water and mild detergent, rubbed gently over any surfaces bearing old paint. Old black stenciling is very durable, and it's not likely you will rub it off. Most pin striping is also pretty durable. I've seen old metal machinery that was terribly rusted on the surface (all paint gone), but incredibly the stenciling and striping could still faintly be seen! Follow the mild soap scrub with damp cloths, and then towel dry everything immediately, particularly if you're working on wood. Start on a portion of the equipment that would be out of sight, and if you see any paint coming off on your cloth as you wipe, stop and just try to clean with a dry cloth and perhaps Endust. If the surface is greasy, you may need more than soap. Try a little paint thinner (mineral spirits) on a cloth, and again start with an obscure location. Generally, a little water won't hurt wood if it is not allowed to soak in or stay on too long. After the cleaning, while the surfaces are still damp, you will be able to see the striping and lettering more plainly. They will fade as the water dries, so you may want to copy what you see, particularly if you have model numbers, patent dates, and the like.