

Planing and Molding

SOLID STOCK OR VENEER?

It seldom makes any very material difference to the builder whether some of the work is veneered or solid, so long as the face work shows the proper wood and the construction is such that the various members will stay in place when completed and placed in their permanent positions. The primary idea in facing up jambs, casings and mouldings with the finish wood is to save material, but this is often accomplished at a positive financial loss when the important item of labor is figured in. If there are a great many pieces of the same size so that the clamps may be filled to advantage as well as an economical run on the cores and veneers beforehand, it may pay even to veneer $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch stock. It sometimes occurs that the stock of the finishing wood is so low that veneering is the only way out of the dilemma; but, of course, this has nothing to do with the general run of planing mill economics, and it is for general results that we are constantly striving. It is the habit of work that tells if we allow ourselves to form one, which I maintain we should not, but rather conduct every separate job so as to require the least material and labor to turn out a first-class product.

One class of details often furnished by architects call for the veneering of one side of a solid piece of lumber, such as panels, jambs, wide casings, base-boards and the like. To the operator of little or no experience in this kind of work the construction is liable to prove an expensive and exceedingly annoying experiment, for it is only with the greatest care and precaution that a good job can be turned off in this manner. In the first place it is very difficult to get the cores and veneers of the same condition of dryness, and even if they are, it is nearly always true that one or the other will absorb more water from the glue than the other, and so warp the piece out of flat.

The most common trouble is that the expensive woods are nearly always bone dry, while the cores are usually brought in from the yard a short time before the job is to be put up, and if they show dampness are put through the kiln, if the mill has one. If the job is to be put up with the one veneer, the stock should be stacked up with the veneers in place between the cores and the pile weighted down and left for a time sufficient to distribute the moisture equally between the veneers and cores, a time usually not less than three days, depending upon the thickness of the veneers, which in this class of work is usually not less than $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. Then, after gluing, if it is convenient to let them stay in the press for a considerable time, the stack should be taken out as soon as the glue will permit and a caul or piece of common board placed on each side and the whole bunch held with hand-screws until the moisture from the glue has been diffused throughout the cores and veneers alike. In case the stock is good and dry to start with, the small amount of water in the glue will not make the pieces very damp, so that the subsequent drying will not spring the pieces if they are kept on edge until it has been effected.

Work of this kind should be coated on each side as soon as possible after coming out of the clamps, and if there is a suspicion that the cores are not as dry as they

should be, at least two coats of lead and oil should be given the backs wherever the subsequent work will permit.

Some foremen will allow enough thickness on this class of work to permit of straightening after the warping has stopped, but there is no question but that it is an expensive practice, and it is cheapest even in mahogany finish to make the work solid.

It is pleasing to note that there is a better way if we have the temerity to use some of our own judgment in the matter—let the architect take a hint if he will—for it is a simple thing to put a cheap hardwood veneer on the back of the work. It is also easy to have both front and back veneers of the same humidity, and so insure a straight piece, whether thick or thin.

Some other workmen do not know that staving up a core will not insure it staying straight when veneered only on one side, but that it will act very much the same as a solid piece of wood; so that in counter tops, for instance, where they are long and two feet or more in width, it is folly to try and stave up the backing and glue a veneer on the top. If it is impossible to get these tops already plied up from a panel factory, by all means make them solid if the lumber can be procured in one-inch stuff.

However, a contingency might arise under which it would be impossible to buy a plied-up top, and at the same time the kind of wood required could be had only in veneers. Then the workman would be confronted by a condition and not a theory. The former suggestion of veneering both sides of the core with woods as nearly similar in texture as possible will apply here, and the top can then be put together the same as in the case of solid lumber.

It is a common sight in details to find interior sash and transoms to be veneered, and this is usually a senseless and puttering job, for which there is no call outside of the architect's habit. They are exactly as good made solid, and the details will not permit the use of very thin veneers on account of the sticking, while if they have to be different woods on each side it is an easy matter to glue them up two ply.

The veneering of outside sash and windows should be of one detail, and that should bring the joint inside of the glass, and even then it is better to make the bottom rails solid, if such a thing is possible, for the sweat or frost will sometimes run down the best-kept windows, and the glue joints which are perfectly covered when the house is first painted will not always remain so; therefore, knowing as we do what water does to glue, the only permanently safe method is to not have any glue joints in the lower check or the bottom rail.

The making of wide, flat panels is a proposition of another character entirely, and whether or not they should be made solid depends more upon the character of the wood texture than upon its cost, for it is frequently more expensive to ply up panels from cheap woods than to make them solid from the more expensive ones. Take red gum, for instance, where a selected figure is to imitate the interwoven grain of mahogany. It would be impossible to put up a solid panel so that it would stay straight unless it was quite narrow; that is 12 inches or less. So that, while the wood itself is comparatively cheap, the cost of plying up is