

# Carriage Clock Case Restoration

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Carriage clocks are works of art and a dirty, ugly case is more than a distraction. These can be easily restored to their former luster resulting in an increase of their appeal and value. Shown above are the effects of several hours of cleaning, polishing, and lacquering. The effort is well worth it!



This example is one of the dirtiest carriage clock cases I've ever seen. This case will obviously benefit from the restoration process and is a good example of the drastic, and exciting change that can happen.

The first step is to completely disassemble the case.



Turn the case over and remove the base plate, if present, and the four screws in the corners. (This case doesn't have a base plate.) Removing the four screws will separate the base from the four pillars. Care should be taken so that none of the glass panels will get damaged.



Remove the door and glass panels being careful not to drop them! The two side panels will be the same size while the door and front panel will be unique in size. It isn't generally necessary to identify right or left panels.

Remove the movement from the base plate.



The two screws visible underneath the top hold the handle and top plate to the rest of the case. These will need to be removed in order to access the four screws holding the pillars to the top. Notice, the upper glass has been poorly replaced in this example and the case would need a proper piece installed even if it wasn't broken. The original would have been oval and beveled.



Once the handle and top plate are removed, the four pillars can be removed from the top. Unlike the glass, these pillars will need to go back into the same positions from which they originated. Many carriage clock case pillars are marked for position and careful notes should be taken to avoid confusion and to identify any markings. The method I employ is to return the top screw to the top of each pillar to aid in identifying the top of the pillars. There will be more discussion of identifying pillar position during the assembly section.





Once the case has been disassembled, it is time to remove the glass from the door frame. This example has the glass sandwiched between two brass frames. Removing the screws frees the glass panel. Some carriage clock doors have two screws holding the bottom part of the door frame in place. Removing these two screws allows the bottom of the frame to be slid out of position and the glass slid free.



Removing the door knob will aid in the polishing process but be careful not to damage the door frame or the knob. Chucking up on the knob in the lathe and turning it out by hand is the safest method. However, if the restorer is reticent to remove the knob, it may be left in place.



At this point, the case is fully disassembled and the metal components are ready for the ultrasonic cleaner. Place the parts in a basket to avoid loss of small components.



While the case is going through the ultrasonic cleaning process, the glass panels may be cleaned with glass cleaner. Be careful of any chipped edges which may cut flesh!



The ultrasonic cleaner will remove much of the debris, and brighten the brass, but the components will still need more attention.



The scaling on the brass can be removed on the buffer-polisher with a wire brass brush but take care that the piece isn't grabbed by the machine! Following the de-scaling process, the pieces will need to be polished with a polishing compound like Simichrome. This step will take the most time since the metal should be polished to its final luster. Polish until the brown blemishes are gone. Some deep scratches or imperfections might have to be left as-is since removing them would require removing too much metal.





Polish all of the brass components until the desired luster is achieved.



The components are run through the ultrasonics once more to remove any polishing compound. Care must be taken at this point to avoid leaving any fingerprints or otherwise marring the brass.



The parts are now ready for the final step! The brass will tarnish over time unless it is sealed with lacquer.



There are two lacquers for brass that may be used. One is a clear coat and the other is a gold colored lacquer. I prefer the gold colored lacquer as that gives the case a richness and antique look. The parts are taken to a spray "booth" which can be made from a cardboard box.





Elevate the parts so the tops and sides are easily accessed. The parts will need to be rotated in order to lacquer all sides. It isn't necessary to lacquer the underside of the base or the areas which aren't exposed when the case is assembled.



Some parts are more easily hung for spraying. If possible, avoid laying parts flat as it makes it difficult to evenly coat all sides.



Once the lacquer is dry, the parts may be handled freely and the case reassembled. Install the pillar posts and be sure to get them in their proper positions. The two for the back will have a flat side, rather than a slot, to accommodate the door. The pillar posts have pins on their ends and, if a pillar doesn't properly fit, it may be in the wrong position.



Install the handle and top and then install the glass. The glass panels will typically have a narrow end which slides in towards the top. If the glass seems to wedge as it is slid into place, flip it over and check for a better fit. It is advantageous to hold the glass in place with a rubber band but the case finish must be protected from the rubber band with a soft cloth.

Slip the assembled door into place, install the movement on the base and the movement/base assembly into the case. When tightening the screws which hold the base in place, squeeze the pillar posts against the glass to help tighten the glass in the post slots.



The finished result! Ready for a new top glass and awaiting the restoration of the movement.