

Woodworking Hobby Keeps Man Busy Refurbishing Antique, Discarded Furniture

A new heating system and a persistent housewife were the leading factors which caused Fred Dawkins, 30 Brock Street, to take up refurbishing furniture as a fascinating hobby. Today, he and his wife have many beautiful pieces of fine old furniture completed in a natural wood and walnut finish throughout their home.

Little did Mr. Dawkins think installation of a new gas furnace would lead to his starting a woodworking hobby! A sheet register was installed in the kitchen directly underneath a window where a square kitchen table sat. Mrs. Dawkins decided to replace this table with a round one.

After the purchase of an old round extension table for \$2.00, he used a horde of broken glass and sandpaper scraping off layer after layer of blackened paint before reaching the natural wood. Once he saw the beauty of the wood, he decided to complete the table in a natural blonde finish.

After the hours of hard work scraping by hand, the finished product turned out to be beautiful and from this time on, his hobby was cut out for him—refurbishing old and discarded pieces of furniture. Since he first started his hobby eight years ago, many pieces of furniture have been refurbished and decorate the couple's home.

Old Chairs Next
After the round table was completed, Mr. Dawkins went out and purchased several chicken coop style kitchen chairs. They were in bad condition, covered with numerous coats of paint and some full of cracks. After burning the midnight oil for several weeks, he finally completed the chairs, now finished in the same way as the table. The chairs are estimated to be around 100 years old, now they appear bright and smooth, as though they had just been manufactured, but have the charm of antiques.

Next piece of broken furniture slated for the Dawkins cellar for repair was a 125-year-old tub chair which was finally finished to match the rest of the kitchen furniture. After a Boston rocker and old eight-day wind alarm clock had been refurbished by hand, there was no stopping the woodworker.

Counted Hours
Through a friend he acquired an old saloon chair which had

wound up in a one-room C.P.R. station. Before this was made presentable, Mr. Dawkins spent about 75 hours scraping, sanding, filling cracks and finishing. This chair now sits in the hall way inside the front door.

At present, he is finishing up an old chest of drawers. Legs have been cut down, fill used on large cracks and the entire piece of furniture is being modernized. One of his pet projects just now is refurbishing an old spool table.

If anyone thinks this hobby is an easy one, imagine taking a spool table all apart, scraping off layer after layer of paint with pieces of broken glass and other tools fashioned for the job, staining the wood with a natural finish and restoring the pieces to normal again!

Next In Line
In a store room in his cellar, several antique pieces of furniture will be built up again, wood on slats rebuilt, paint scraped and varnish applied.

Destined for an upstairs bedroom when they are refurbished are a pair of oval picture frames. In this bedroom at present is one of the couple's prize possessions, an old four poster bed which originally had a canopy. The rope spring has been replaced with a modern bed spring to hold the mattress, but the original design has not been marred one bit.

Although many substitutes for the late president John F. Kennedy's rocking chair are flooding the market, few people can boast a similar antique. In the Dawkins living room is a J. I. K. rocker completely refurbished and put to much use by the family.

Another rare piece installed in the spare bedroom is a nursing rocker which has been refurbished to match the four poster bed and other furniture.

A piece of beauty now is an old bend end table which was purchased for 25 cents. Now it sits in the living room waiting to be refurbished. Next in line is a 135-year-old Boston rocker with the rockers worn down to the legs through continued use by its original owner.

Once this piece of furniture has undergone the same treatment as others, present flaws will never be recognized. Rock in another upstairs bedroom and its value can't be estimated.

Mr. Dawkins is a native of Bracebridge, Ontario, and since

coming to Acton in 1940 has never lost touch with his old haunts. He owns a cottage on Lake Muskoka and every summer, wearing his favorite pair of overalls, is rebuilding or repairing the building. Several pieces of furniture inside the cottage were built by him.

Prior to coming to town, he worked for the Anglo-Canadian Tannery in Bracebridge and is in his 4th year with Beardmore and Co. Ltd. here. In 1937, he married and the couple have lived in the same home on Brock Street most of the time since.

With a hobby such as his, Mrs. Dawkins is always certain to find her husband in the cellar with his old furniture, pieces of glass, paint brushes and sandpaper.

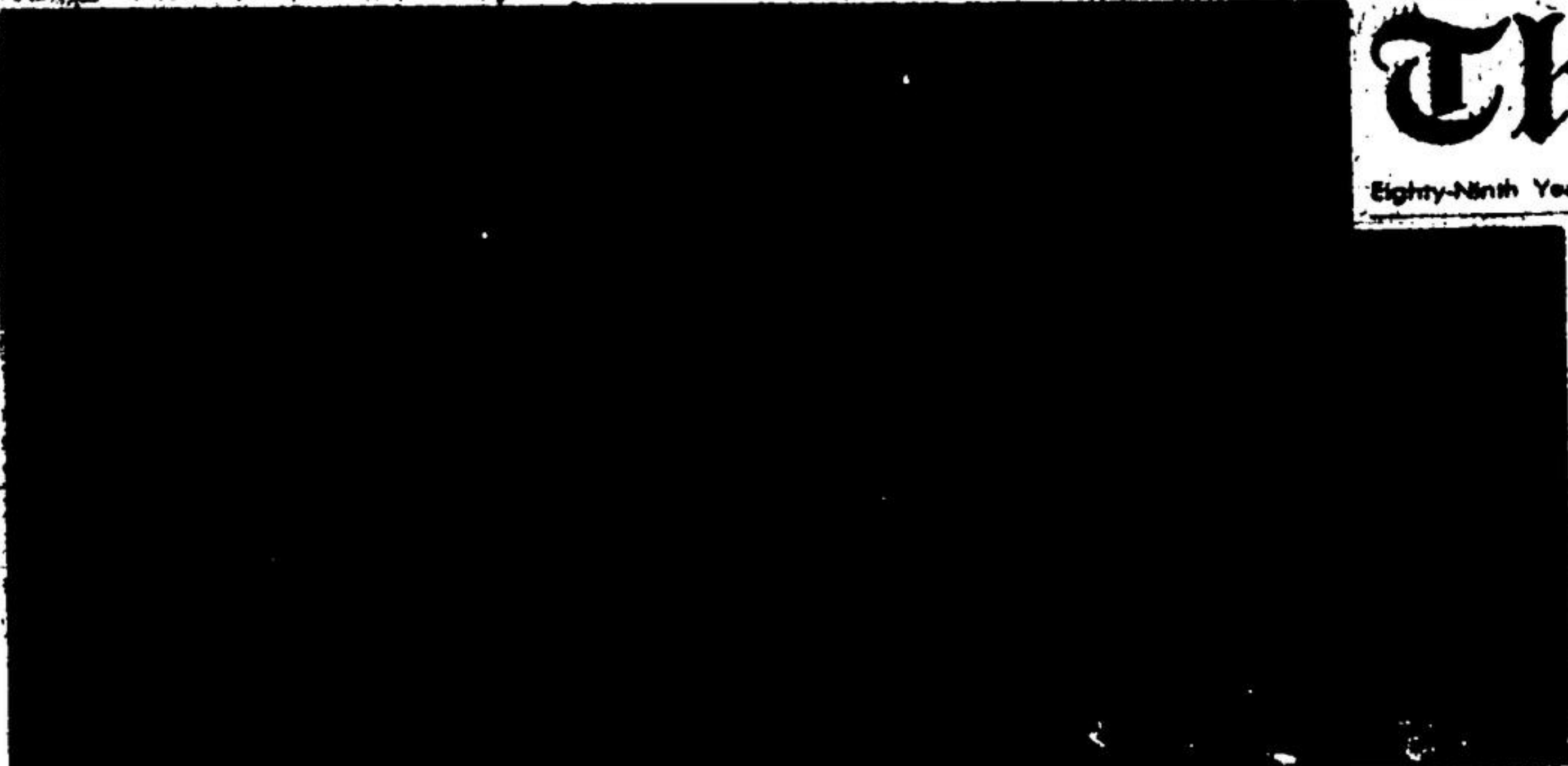
In his spare time to refurbish antique furniture, Fred is an ardent gardener and raises some of the best crops in the neighborhood. He is familiar with all most every type of plant life and to a neighbor with a slip from a plant of a strawberry bush.

So, if you're wondering what to do, save that old broken

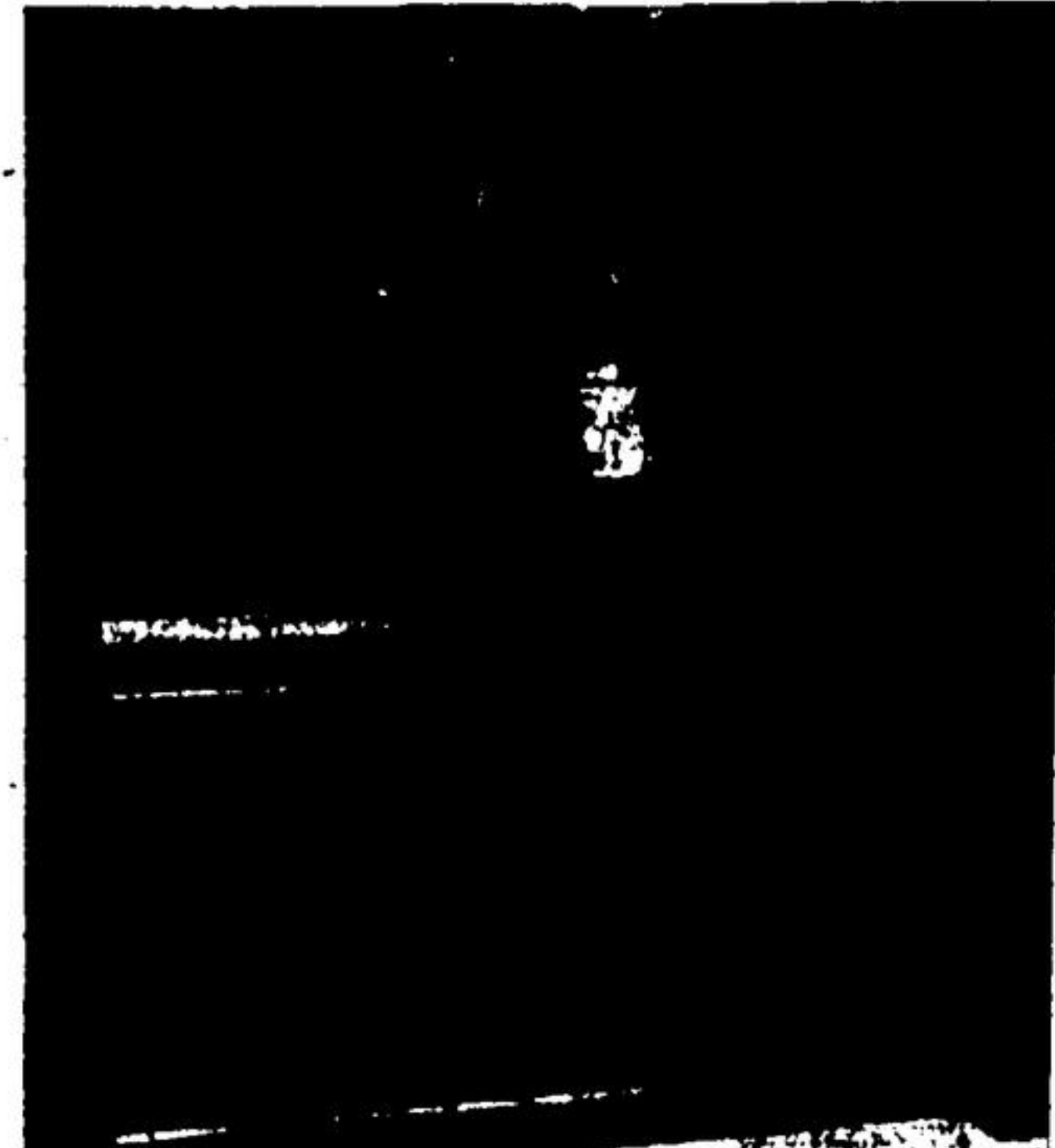
glass, buy a few pieces of sandpaper, pick up old discarded furniture and hibernate to the basement workshop. In a short time, you will have a start in refurbishing your home with attractive, modernized, antique furniture.

If a person ever wondered what happens to former firefighters and baseball executives, Fred is a classic example and is active as ever in his job at Beardmore and Co. and filling his leisure time with his hobby.

He was a member of Acton Fire Brigade for 16 years, president of the Acton Athletic Association for four years and followed the Intermediate baseball team through to a Intermediate C Championship in 1947. Both he and Corporal Ray Mason of the Acton O.P.P. Detachment kept the baseball field in perfect condition and were "Johnnies on the spot" at all times during a game. Fred was also president of the Intermediate hockey team. Through his many activities, he has made a host of friends.



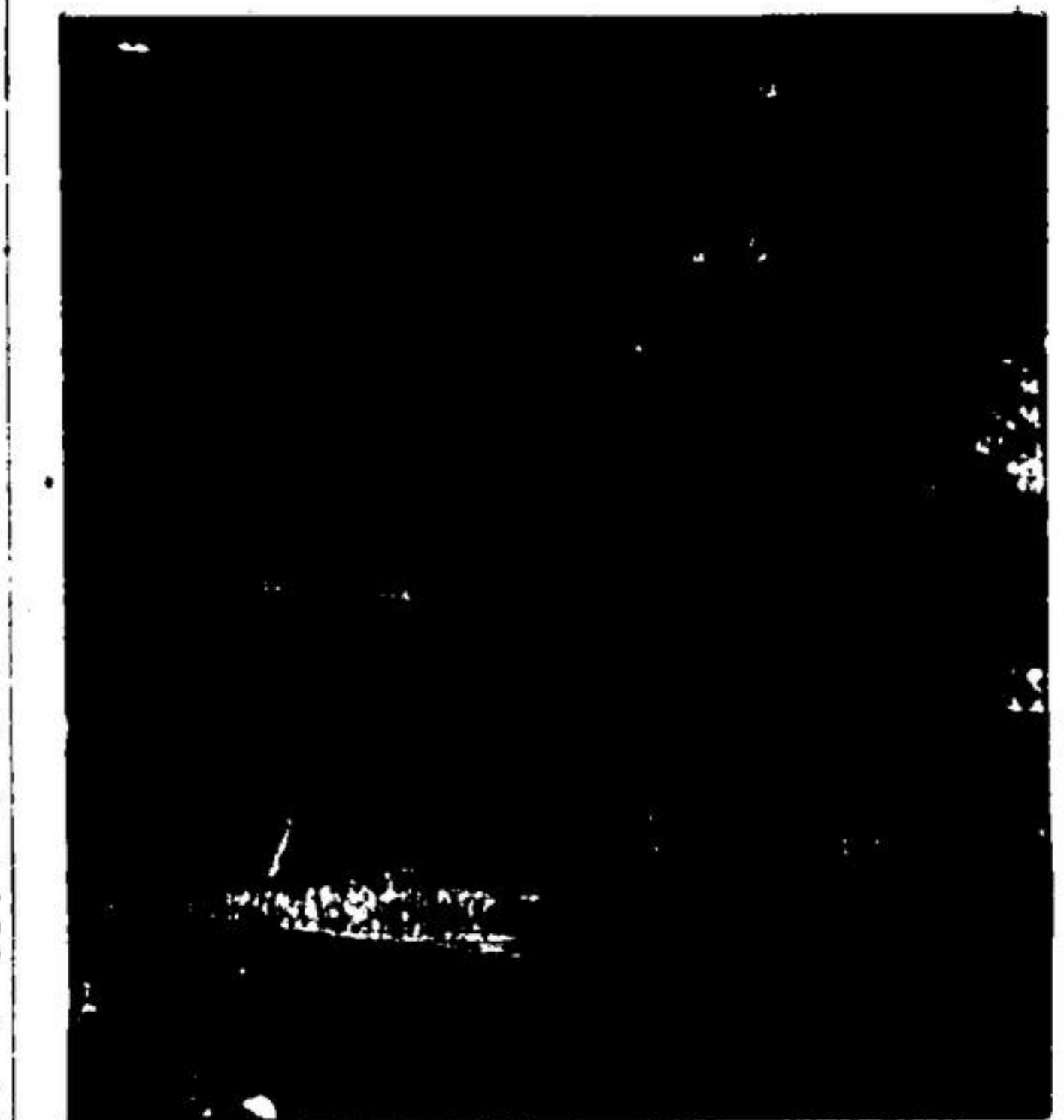
FRED DAWKINS dons overalls, smokes his pipe and scrapes old paint in his spare time as he re-finishes old pieces of discarded furniture. Above he starts a spool table after it has been dismantled. What started out as a hobby eight years ago could easily develop into a full-time occupation if he wished.



THE ANSWER to keeping young and occupied is to find a hobby. Fred Dawkins, Brock Street, found his eight years ago when he first re-finished a round kitchen extension table. Above he adds finishing touches to a chest of drawers.



HICKORY, DICKORY, DOCK! This is no nursery rhyme for craftsman Fred Dawkins but a full-time hobby. The eight-day alarm clock was retrieved from a neighbor's garbage can and after minor repairs and a facelift is part of kitchen furnishings. It keeps perfect time.



"WHAY NEX?" seems to be the thought running through Fred's mind as he checks over an old captain's chair, spool end table and Boston rocker still to be re-finished in his workshop. The spare-time hobby keeps him quite busy.

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CHAIRS GALORE are spotted throughout the Fred Dawkins home. Some are in terrible condition but these are still in the cellar to be finished. Fred sits on a refurbished captain's chair as he admires a completed Boston rocker with chicken coop chair and a round extension table in the foreground, all given new life.

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