

Again ... "No longer made in the USA"

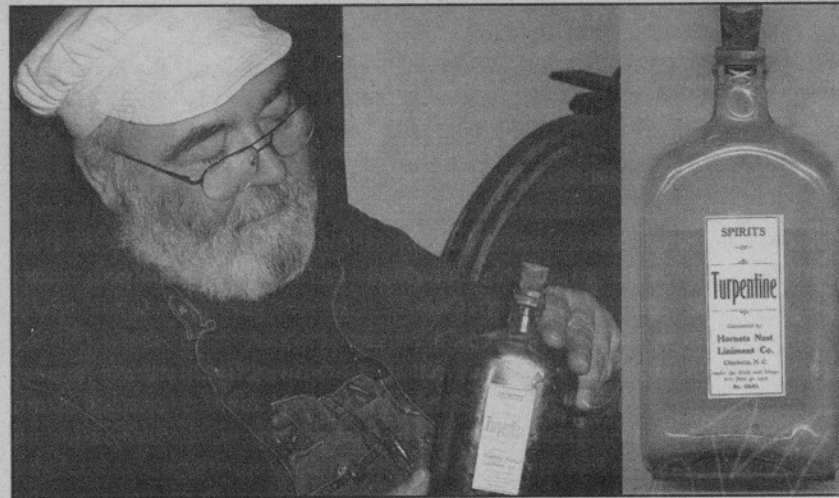
SUGAR CREEK, Mo. was dwindling and had — Yes, another precious commodity has disappeared from our national product! And a few Americans even know. But John Kramer, Sugar Creek, Mo., wood conservator, is determined not to let the passing of this long-valued precious commodity go unnoticed.

Kramer, who makes the popular antique restoration product, *Kramer's Best Antique Improver*, was notified in January that Turpentine, one of the 14 essential ingredients that he uses, is no longer being commercially harvested, or processed, in this country.

"It was a shock," Kramer says. "I knew that domestic production was dwindling and had been in survival mode for some time, but it still caught me by surprise."

"Turpentine was once as commonly used as vinegar and baking soda. It originated as part of the naval stores, our first colonial industry. It has served us as a medicine, a solvent, a disinfectant, an insect repellent, a laundry bleach — and the list goes on and on. But, like many other products that built our nation, it has been replaced with cheaper synthetic substitutes.

"Of course, in addition to the lowered demand for Turpentine and other products of the Longleaf Pine, shrinking forests and difficulty of harvest



JOHN KRAMER SHOWS a bottle from his growing collection of Turpentine memorabilia. The bottle reads: "Spirits Of Turpentine, Guaranteed by Hornets Nest Liniment Co., Charlotte, N.C. Under the Foods and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906. No. 12640." — photo courtesy of John Kramer

have combined to cause the export of this labor-intensive industry to countries with much lower labor cost.

"This isn't a new dilemma for me," Kramer reports. "Since my products are based entirely on the old recipes, using only the ingredients of the past, it is a constant challenge to maintain supply and cope with the rising costs that always accompany scarcity.

"But it is worth it, and I will continue as long as I am able. My products are dramatic evidence that newer is not always better. By using ingredients natural to the purpose (such as Turpentine — a wood derivative — instead of commonly used petrochemicals) my customers are able to achieve amazing results simply and effectively," says Kramer.

Is a substitute ingredient a possibility?

"Absolutely not!" says Kramer. "I know changing the recipe will

result in a less effective product. My customers have my word — I will never change the recipe and still call it *Kramer's Best Antique Improver*."

And how will he cope with the current Turpentine crisis?

"It has always been my goal to produce an all-American product," Kramer says, "but I have no choice now but to once again look offshore. The world supply is rapidly shrinking. Rumor suggests the Chinese have ceased Turpentine exports, which leaves Brazil as the next largest producer.

"Our shipment from Brazil is supposedly on its way to us, but we are not looking forward to what the pricing news might be. When there are shortages the price always goes up. Prices are going up so fast you can only get a price quote after the supplier ships. We know it will mean a price increase on our products, and we feel bad about our customers so far has been very supportive," says Kramer.

Kramer is doing what he can to raise awareness of the disappearance of this piece of our heritage. He has added a "Turpentine Story" page to his web site, www.kramerize.com. On this page he is posting updates about developments in the supply situation, as well as other information about Turpentine.

"At one time there were many kinds of Turpentine. Different parts of the world with differing evergreen specie would produce specialty Turpentines. One of the most revered was Venetian Turpentine, which for a great deal of money is still available and for certain uses (like violin varnish) remains unexcelled," Kramer says.

"On the web site we are sharing some of that

history, and there is a link to a state-funded site in Valdosta, Ga., that presents the complete Turpentine story with video and audio, including documentation of the harvest of the last barrel of Turpentine in this country. You can even listen to a 'turpentine' performing his musical rendition of 'Turpentine Blues'. It is an amazing site that anyone who has an interest in the history of our country should be aware of," said Kramer. "We can't let this treasured part of our past pass away unnoticed."

"A 93-year-old lady friend, when told of the Turpentine loss, gasped 'Oh, what will the farmers do?'" Kramer says. "I realize that many of our younger generation don't have any idea how the farmers, or anyone else, used Turpentine, or even what it is, or where it comes from. I would like to change that."

Kramer's Best products are available at many antique shops and malls. For further information: Kramer Products, Inc., John Kramer, P.O. Box 8715, Sugar Creek, MO 64054; 816-252-9512; Kramer@kramerize.com; www.kramerize.com.