

# CARE & CLEANING OF TINS

The care and cleaning of your ribbon tins is very important. Some collectors may wish do nothing about cleaning, which is OK. All collectors should at least take good care of their tins so that when they are eventually passed on to others to enjoy, they will be in as good condition as when they were acquired. Cleaning, if done properly, will enhance the looks of your tins, preserve them and increase their value.

---

## TIN CARE

1) **WATER** is one of the biggest enemies of tins. Be sure you do not let water get on or in your tins. Do not store them in a damp basement. If you live in a damp climate, consider using a dehumidifier. We are all familiar with the rusted tins that have been left out in rain on flea market tables.

2) **SUNSHINE** is another foe of tins and, a more insidious one, as most collectors do not notice the gradual fading of their tins. The best way to prevent fading is to store your collection in drawers or an inner room of your home where sunlight is not a factor. Often there is a conflict between displaying your tins and keeping them tucked away. If you display them on your walls, on shelves or table tops be sure that no direct sun hits them during the day. Remember, when you are away at work, the sunshine will hit different parts of your display room and, of course, there are seasonal changes. If your tins are openly displayed, be sure your shades or drapes are closed. Another solution I have heard about is a plastic that you can cut to fit your window panes, it sticks to the glass and will filter out the ultra violet rays. I do not know the name of this product but perhaps one of you who does, will let me know.

3) **LACQUER**--In the early days of advertising tin collecting, an occasional dealer or collector would lacquer his tins to preserve them and make them unnaturally shiny. Such tins that are now sold are deeply devalued. Do not lacquer ribbon tins as the effect is obvious and detrimental.

---

## CLEANING YOUR TINS

1) **EXAMINE** the tin carefully for dents, fading and rust.

2) **DENTS**--I first try to push out reachable dents. Never use a sharp object as you may create more dents or even pierce the tin. The best tool I have found for this purpose is the common wooden kitchen spoon. Open the tin up and work on the inside of the tin by rubbing the wooden spoon back and forth over the dent. The tin should be placed on a hard, smooth surface to do this work. A good job can be done this way on practically any dents. *Caution*: if you have an old tin where the paint is already flaking off, pushing out a dent may cause more flaking--this tin should be left alone.

3) **CLEANING**--a) If a tin is already faded or badly oxidized, its paint has been weakened and damaged by sun or water. Cleaning may quickly remove the weakened paint--do not do anything with these tins. b) If a tin is in fairly good shape with little or no fading, I use a car polish made by Armor All Products Corp. called "No.7 White Polishing Compound." It sells for \$2. per tin in auto supply stores. Other tin collectors have used a product called Sani Wax. Use a soft rag and experiment on the sides or bottom of your tin first. Be very careful and at the first signs of color removal either stop altogether or proceed with caution. Blues may be the first colors to go. Surface dirt and small scratches should easily be removed. However, never rub too hard or long in one area,

---

as the paint may disappear quickly. It is best to use a white rag so you can tell whether you are removing paint from your tin or just dirt. At this point you have to decide whether or not to leave the stamped on name of the typewriter the ribbon was made for and the "Black Record" or "Red Copy" ink designations. I feel it is important to leave the typewriter name as it may be of some help in dating the tin. Not as important is the inking designation and if it obscures the graphics, I take it off--stamped ink comes off very quickly but if it is to remain, clean carefully around those spaces. After the dirt removal process is completed, take a clean section of your rag or an old towel and polish your ribbon tin. I wipe but do not use the polish inside tins except for the inside, side lips where the tops and bottoms surfaces contact each other. I pay particular attention here so that a tin may be easily opened and closed.

4) **RUST** once started cannot be reversed but you can protect your tins from further damage by providing a dry environment. Rust on the inner lips should be dealt with so the tin will be openable and not rusted closed. In these rare instances, I scrape the rust off the contacting lip surfaces and then polish these surfaces. Other interior and exterior rust I generally leave alone.

5) **PAINT SPOTS**--Occasionally you will find a tin that has paint spots. The choices are to do nothing or very carefully scrape the spot off before cleaning. Sometimes you can reduce the thickness of the spot by careful knife shaving; however, sometimes the removal may take the tin's paint off, too. If you can shave down the spot, your subsequent cleaning may completely remove the spot. *Caution:*: too much rubbing in one spot may remove surrounding paint.

6) **PRICE STICKERS, ADHESIVE & CELLOPHANE TAPE**--Before cleaning, remove price stickers and if one is hard to remove, a drop of water may soften up the paper which can then be scraped off with your fingernail. Be sure to dry thoroughly and then the polish should easily remove the glue. Old scotch tape--the shiny top layer can be scraped off with your fingernails and again the polish will dissolve the sticky substance. Old, hardened adhesive tape residue is the worst removal problem of all as there is usually a lot of it on the tin and it is hard as a rock. Best to leave it alone as hard polishing will destroy your tin's paint. I have heard of a product called "Goo Gone" which is particularly effective but have not been able to find a bottle and try it out.

7) **ROUGH SURFACES & WHITE PAINT**--Practically all tins were lithographed with a smooth surface and so are usually easily cleaned if not damaged but, there are two brands: Stafford's Superfine & Panama Standard (with purple edges) that were painted with a paint that left a pimply surface. You should not try to clean these tins as the paint colors disappear very quickly. Sometimes, white tins will not clean up (especially if sun damaged) and cleaning will give them a smeared look--proceed carefully on the sides or bottom first.

All in all, try practicing first on common duplicates or common tins that are so far gone that their loss is not important. I have made mistakes while cleaning several thousand tins and you may make one but, that is how you learn--just do not make a mistake on a Sailing Ship or a Jerry Boy!

Ken Gladstone recently wrote to me describing how he cleans his collection and you may want to try his method as described below. **I welcome any other suggestions, tips or your own methods of cleaning and they will be quoted in the Letters to the Editor section.**

"I've found that Fantastik spray household cleaner applied to a soft paper towel works wonders. Fantastik doesn't contain any petroleum distillates and it's really pretty gentle. After cleaning, I polish my tins with one of several waxes that I've found work well. I use either Kit Creme Auto Wax or Pall Mall All-In-One Polish. Pall Mall is a liquid polish used by some typewriter collectors/repairmen to shine up the faded black paint on old machines. It creates a very brilliant sheen but doesn't leave metal with that slick, slippery feeling you get from car wax. It just depends on what you prefer".