



## Facing a Grilling

Once upon a time, in a town right on our doorstep, there was once a bank. Designed by a renowned architect R.A Lawson, it was a stately building that had the presence and formality that befitted its occupation.

The front of the building, which faced the main road, housed the bank chamber at the front, while the rear and upstairs were reserved as living quarters, usually for the resident manager.

A century and a half (thereabouts) later, and the building still stands as a stately reminder of days past. No longer a bank, it has been a museum for many years.

With great luck and considerable care, many fixtures and fittings from the bank chamber have been retained. One of these is the magnificent wooden counter, made largely from native timber, which spans the entire width of the main downstairs room. It is sited in exactly the same position it was all those years ago.

At one time the counter was topped with a 1860s-style copper finished grill, but it was taken down many years ago and subsequently dropped out of sight.

Then ...

The grill, along with its accompanying wooden panel, was found buried away in the back of a shed. All the neglect meant it was very rusty, making it hard to tell exactly what sort of condition it was in underneath.

Our research indicates the grill, the strong room door and the frame were all made prior to 1869. It seems most likely the grill was manufactured in England using hand tools and given a copper finish using skills that are long gone.



The grill before restoration work began.

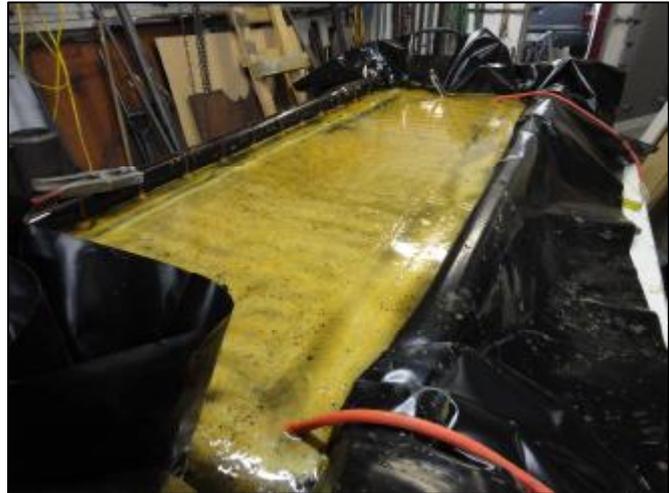
The museum's restorers began the long process of returning the grill to its original condition. Due to the corrosion, a sophisticated electrolytic rust removal technique was used. This method is commonly used by museum conservators to recover original finishes on ferrous objects.

The scum on surface of the tank is the rust, whale oil hinge lubricant, grime and the shellac coating which was used to protect the surface finish when it was first made.

Once removed from the tank the waste electrolyte material was washed off the grill and it was dried.

Time was then spent wiping the surface with fine steel wool, after which it was coated with microcrystalline wax and polished with a soft cloth.

Much to our delight around 85% of the original copper finish remained when we only expected 10%.



Once returned to its pristine condition, the grill was put back in its rightful home.

Period screws were used to attach the grill back into its original position above the bank counter. The wooden panel was cleaned and a wax polish applied before it was re-affixed to the counter, at the left hand end.



Back in the gold rush days the hinged central panel enabled bags of gold and other hefty items to be passed through the grill to be stored safely in the vault. (The original vault is also still in place.)

All this highly detailed and skilled work was undertaken by Waikouaiti Coast Heritage center volunteers using contemporary museum conservation methods.

