

# The Alchemy of Flood Finishes

Perhaps no image might irk nationally renowned wood finish myth-debunker Bob Flexner more than a pair of alchemists stooped over a large vessel and cooking up a mysterious superfinish that would outperform the off-the-shelf products in circulation during the mid 19th century.

But according to Pat Coughlin, product development manager at The Flood Company in Hudson, Ohio, this is the legend of how the company germinated. In fact, Flood's basis has always been partially rooted in rising to coatings challenges. The company began in 1841 as a family contracting business that had a reputation for excelling at the painting challenges of that time.

"The Floods were kind of alchemists – they had their own open cooking vats for paints and things like that – contractors and alchemists to boot," explained Coughlin. And who better to currently hold the reigns of development than a student cut from a similar mold. Pat himself has an eclectic background in liberal arts, chemistry,

and pre-med that was acquired prior to the start of his 25-year tenure in the paint and coatings business.

For decades, Flood staked its reputation on its unique and multi-faceted oil Penetrol, and upon additives that favorably changed the handling characteristics of other manufacturers' products. The foundation of the company rests upon the proprietary technology engineered into its once flagship product, Penetrol, which was introduced commercially in 1934. Although Penetrol sales have been eclipsed by CWF/UV (Clear Wood Finish/UV) the uniting theme at Flood is that the technology engineered into Penetrol is disbursed throughout the product line. That is, other core products such as Emulsa-Bond or EB, and CWF contain Penetrol.

Coughlin resisted disclosing any specific information about the chemistry of any of Flood's products. The farthest that he would go was to say that Penetrol was a "soufflé made from a blend of oils and synthetic alkyds."

**As a contractor conversant** with the vicissitudes of sites, substrates, and customer preferences, all of which place wide-ranging demands on finishes (and occasionally on finishers), I have relied on Flood's products for decades to achieve specific – and I believe superior – results. And I believe this to be true for both clears and solids on interior and exterior surfaces.

To take matters further, it isn't necessary to think of any of Flood's products as problem-solvers. I'm certain that Penetrol, EB, Flotrol, and Seasonite (which is not an additive) can actually create a superior finishing system even under optimal conditions.

How do I know this is true? By careful study, longstanding experimentation, and by virtue of having lived in one spot throughout my contracting career so that I have been able to monitor my work over long periods of time (in some cases decades). The results I'm alluding to are extended durability, enhanced visual appeal, and even a more kinesthetically pleasing surface.

Coatings manufacturers must create and tweak product lines for specific audiences and tasks. It's a daunting and rigorous feat to offer any system of coatings that excels in its targeted market. I am not advocating the wholesale

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adulteration of any manufacturer's products or systems. Neither does Flood. But as master finisher George Frank remarked, the best finishes often don't come right out of a can.

To state this another way, to assemble the best possible finishing system on a substrate can involve a knowledge base of how the products of different manufacturers can actually complement one another synergistically. The interior and exterior of any home or business can be treated like a sacred canvas and optimized for effect and longevity.

To draw an analogy from the field of medical herbalism – which is the system of health care that has sustained (and continues to sustain) the overwhelming majority of humans throughout history – a combination of a few herbs can produce results that no one herb can effect if administered singly.

My thinking and methodology over the course of two-and-a-half decades have been partly shaped by the resiliency of the Flood vision. Today, the Flood company is still family-owned and prides itself on a tradition of outstanding tech support. But it is also aggressively forging ahead with new products. Their Solid Color Deck & Siding Stain offers an admirable guarantee: no peeling for 15 years on siding and 5 years on decks. Likewise, their new Spa-N-Deck 100% Acrylic Wood Finish is a wet-on-wet system designed for single-day application. And with the increasing proliferation of composite wood products, EB technology may be more relevant than ever. At Flood, it seems, the alchemical vision is still alive and well. For more information call Flood at 800-321-3444 or visit them on the web: [www.floodco.com](http://www.floodco.com).

Michael Fallarino has over two decades of full-time experience as a contractor and finisher, and over double that as an inquiring mind who wants to know. You can download samples of his book *Contemporary Relationships between Wood & Finish* at [www.woodandfinish.com](http://www.woodandfinish.com).

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