



## Art Conservation *and ancestral history*

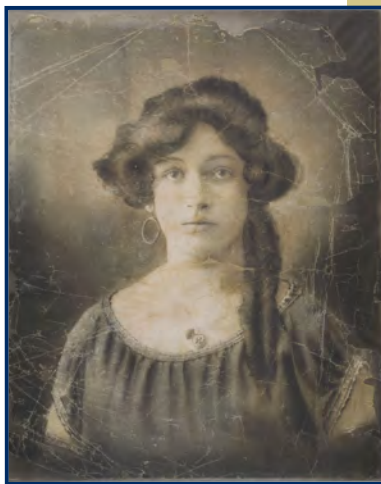
*Although the young woman in the portrait is beautiful, her image is creased and stained. Little is known about her except that her name was Josephina, and she died in childbirth. Her portrait, which is both a photograph and a painting, dates from the turn of the 20th century and likely was created after her death.*

When one of Josephina's descendants approached the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) about having the portrait treated by a student, second-year Fellow Shannon Brogdon-Grantham was drawn to the project. Similar images of her own ancestors had hung in her family's home when she was growing up, and she was curious even then about how they were created. Shannon, a photographic materials conservation major with a minor in paper conservation, welcomed the opportunity to study and treat Josephina's portrait.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, portraits like Josephina's hung in many homes and were known as crayon or charcoal enlargements. They became popular after photographers learned in the 1850s how to make enlarged, and affordable, copies of daguerreotypes and other small photographs. Often, the enlargements lacked fine detail and were therefore typically embellished with charcoal, crayon or paints to enhance the image. Most enlargements were 20 inches x 16 inches in size and stretched on a strainer to simulate paintings or hung in oval frames under a convex glass covering.

Shannon's treatment goal was to stabilize the image, which was so fragmented and fragile that it was difficult to handle. She began by carefully replacing the original linen backing with two new layers of support, one made from Japanese tissue paper and the other from a handmade wove paper. One step in this process was to place the image on a suction table to remove the adhesive holding the linen backing in place, a step that had the added advantage of also drawing out much of the staining. Shannon used toned Japanese tissue paper, applied with a reversible wheat starch paste, to create inserts to infill many areas of loss and a pastel pencil to inpaint others.

Before returning the portrait to Josephina's family, Shannon created an oval-shaped mat so that the portrait could be framed. She also created archival housing suitable for long-term storage if the family decided against framing or decided instead to frame a digitized copy. Either way, Shannon was happy to have been involved with a project that had so much value to Josephina's descendants.



### ARTC Spotlight—July 2014

*The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators who are well versed in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at [www.artcons.udel.edu](http://www.artcons.udel.edu).*

*Top: Josephina during inpainting. To best integrate the inpainting with the object, a series of layered colors were applied, starting with warm tones which were built up with complementing colors until the appropriate tone was reached. Above: WUDPAC Fellow Shannon Brogdon-Grantham using a sharpened pastel pencil to inpaint cracks in Josephina's neck. An isolating layer of gelatin was first brush applied on each crack and allowed to dry overnight. Left: Josephina before (in raking light) and after treatment. (Photos: K. Taina, S.A. Brogdon-Grantham.)*