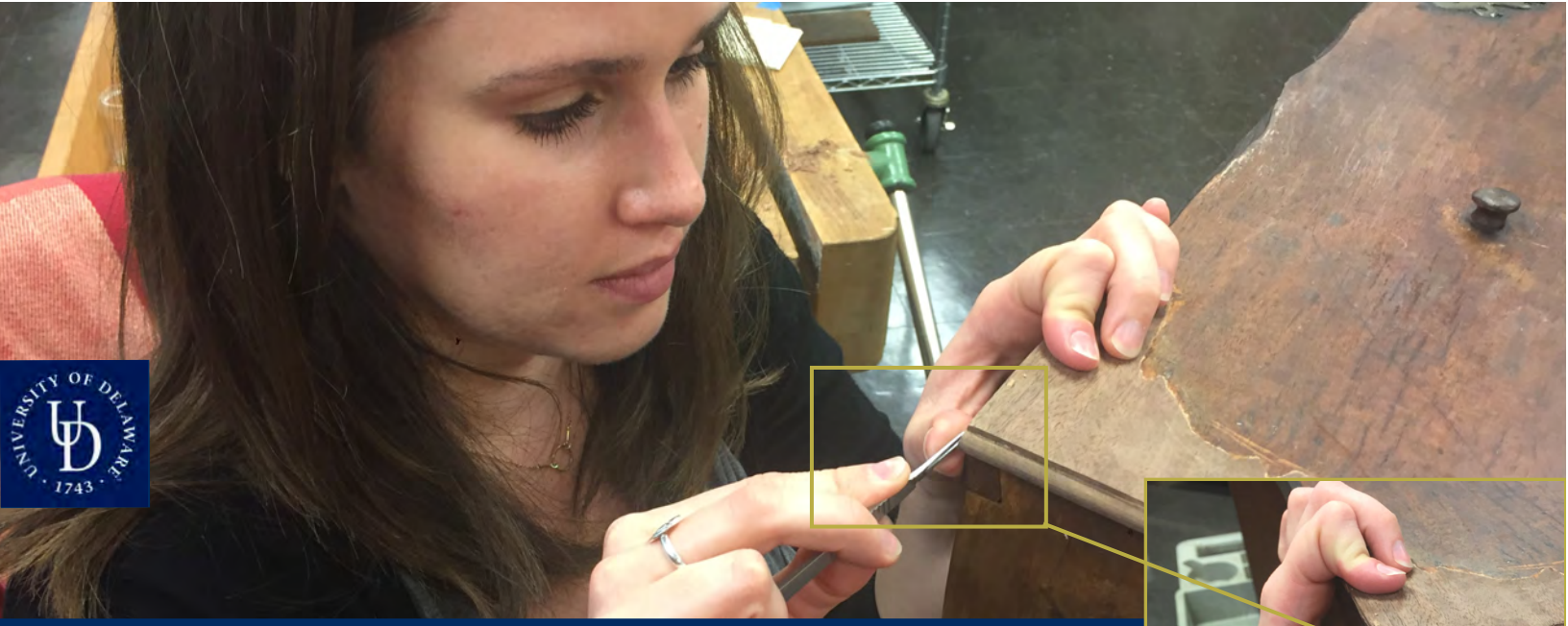
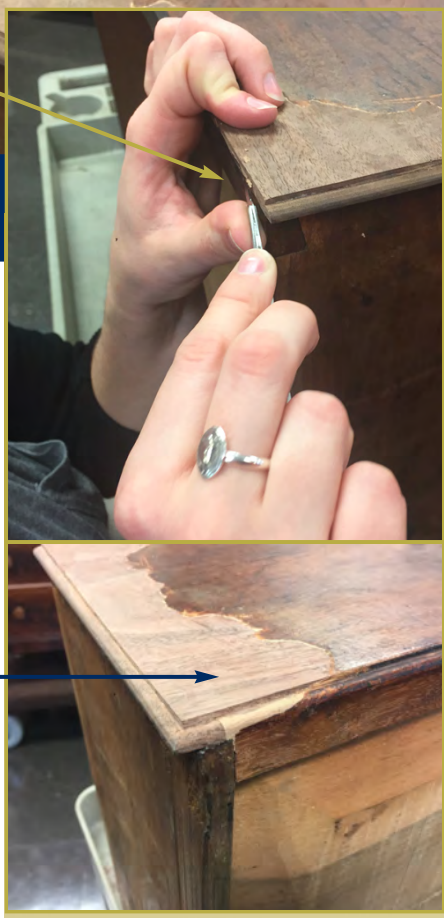


Art Conservation *and family craftsmanship*

Tall, sturdy and more than 200 years old, the chest of drawers did not have to travel far to become a treatment project for Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow and furniture major Caitlin Sofield. Indeed, it has only ever stood in one other location, a Pennsylvania farmhouse about 30 miles from the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library. The museum received the chest in 2011 from descendants of Jacob Brown, a Quaker cabinetmaker thought to have made it in the late 18th century.

The chest is made of black walnut, tulip poplar, hickory and ash, likely cut from trees that grew in a southeastern Pennsylvania forest, and has many design elements unique to that region. These include its relatively tall Octoraro-style legs, the proportionally small, round pulls on its eight drawers, and the way in which the sides extend to the floor behind its feet. The chest also has many nicks and losses that help tell the story of its use over the past two centuries, and Caite's goal was to preserve as many of them as possible. Discussions with furniture curator Josh Lane led Caite to focus her treatment on filling a disfiguring loss on the front of one of the lower drawers, where a piece had broken away along the wood grain, exposing the joinery.



Caite began by using an aqueous gel to remove as much hide glue residue as possible along the surface of the loss, where the broken piece had apparently once been reattached. She then created a pattern of the loss area, used it to cut a piece of wood veneer to fit up to the break edge, and beveled the veneer's back so that it would fit as closely as possible. After covering gaps in the joinery with Japanese tissue paper, Caite added a reversible isolating layer of hide glue to the drawer and attached the veneer with a bulked, two-part epoxy adhesive. This technique of combining hide glue with the epoxy forms a strong bond. The joined pieces were clamped overnight before Caite planed down the fill so that it was flush with the drawer front. Her final steps included removing cobwebs and surface dust, applying a protective wax coat, and coloring the fill to blend with the patina on the rest of the chest. Now that Caite's treatment of the chest is complete, the break edge is visible but not distracting, and a place will be found for it in Winterthur's collection spaces.

Above: Image, before treatment, of the chest of drawers; the damaged drawer is the middle, full-width drawer.

ARTC Spotlight—February 2017

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.

Top and inset: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Caitlin Sofield using a scalpel to pare down the fill to match the profile of the drawer front. Above and detail: The pattern used and the fill created, and the fill in place after adhering and planing flush with the drawer front. (Photos: Jim Schneck, Jackie Chi, Caitlin Sofield.)