



# Art Conservation *and family connections*

When ten members of the Payne family of Goochland County, Virginia, sat for their portraits sometime in the early 1790s, they could not have foreseen that they would forever be linked to the otherwise unknown artist who received their generous commission. Indeed, he is now recognized as the “Payne Limner.” At the time, he was probably an itinerant painter with little formal training who was simply passing through the neighborhood looking for work. Today, though, the Payne



Limner’s distinctive style and brushwork set him apart from other late 18th-century Virginia painters, and his many Payne family portraits have given him a convenient name.

This history was especially interesting to American painting scholar and Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Kelsey Wingel when this year she began treating one of the Payne family portraits. It depicts Ann Spotswood Payne (1772-1813) sitting in a chair as she rests her right forearm on a circular table, loosely holding a fan. Her long brown hair hangs loosely to her shoulders, and a small, brown and white dog is curled up on the table. The painting was handed down through generations of Ann’s descendants before it was gifted to the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage in Orange, Virginia, and it was in poor condition when Kelsey received it. Actively flaking and loosely attached to its stretcher, the portrait showed areas of abrasion, flyspecking, and overall surface grime. Even so, Kelsey was excited to discover the original tack pattern, as the painting has never been removed from its stretcher. This rare discovery, along with research Kelsey plans to do on the pigments used by the artist, promises to offer new insights into the artist, his workmanship, and the painting itself.

Kelsey began her treatment by testing aqueous chelating solutions to remove the heavy embedded grime layer from the surface. She then conducted consolidation tests to determine which adhesive was most suitable for stabilizing the flaking paint. She plans to humidify the painting to reduce canvas distortions, and carry out an edge lining or an overall lining. She will then re-stretch and varnish the painting, and complete the treatment by inpainting losses and abrasions. When Kelsey completes both her treatment and research, the portrait will be returned to the James Madison Museum in Virginia.



## ARTC Spotlight—March 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](http://www.artcons.udel.edu).*

*Top and inset: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Kelsey Wingel cleaning embedded surface grime with an aqueous chelating solution. Above: Detail of the portrait halfway through cleaning. Left: Portrait of Ann Spotswood Payne photographed in oblique light and through X-radiography. (Photos: Diana Hartman, Kelsey Wingel.)*