

Heritage Conservation, LLC

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Conservation Report:

35 Star US Swallowtail Guidon

Carolina Collectors

Presented for conservation is a regulation US 35 star silk guidon in swallowtail pattern. This is a contract flag made in the period 1863-65. The flag is all hand sewn with flat fell seams and a selvage edge along the bottom. A two inch pole sleeve is sewn on the hoist using corresponding stripe and canton fabric. The 35 stars on each side of the canton were painted with gold paint, using a stencil, in a concentric ring with a star at each corner. The paint remains in good condition with little flaking.

The flag exhibits light use with some wear to the fly and occasional losses from subsequent fracturing. The flag is 98 % present, but the red and white fibers are fragile and would fracture with manipulation. No sewing is possible. The blue canton remains flexible and in good condition. Numerous water stains are evident from apparent outdoor exposure and red dye has bled into much of the white stripes.

Plan for Current Treatment:

Client wishes to reuse the existing pressure mount for economical reasons. Given that this mount alone will not provide sufficient pressure on the flag center, a complete re-stabilization is recommended to bond the flag to the mounting board. The combination of bonding the flag to the board with a thermoplastic polymer and a pressure mount will be adequate stabilization.

Treatment: A mylar stencil was made of the flag before removal from the frame.

The previous backing was heat tested and was found no longer thermo active, thus necessitating a new backing. This previous backing could not be removed without damaging the flag, so a new backing was applied to the old.


The flag was removed from the frame and board and flipped over.

Using the stencil, silk organza backing material of an appropriate color was cut out for each stripe and coated front and back with Lascaux 498, a thermoplastic polymer. Each backing piece, including one for the canton, was placed on its flag counterpart and the entire flag was sealed to the backing. Loose fragments were replaced where possible.

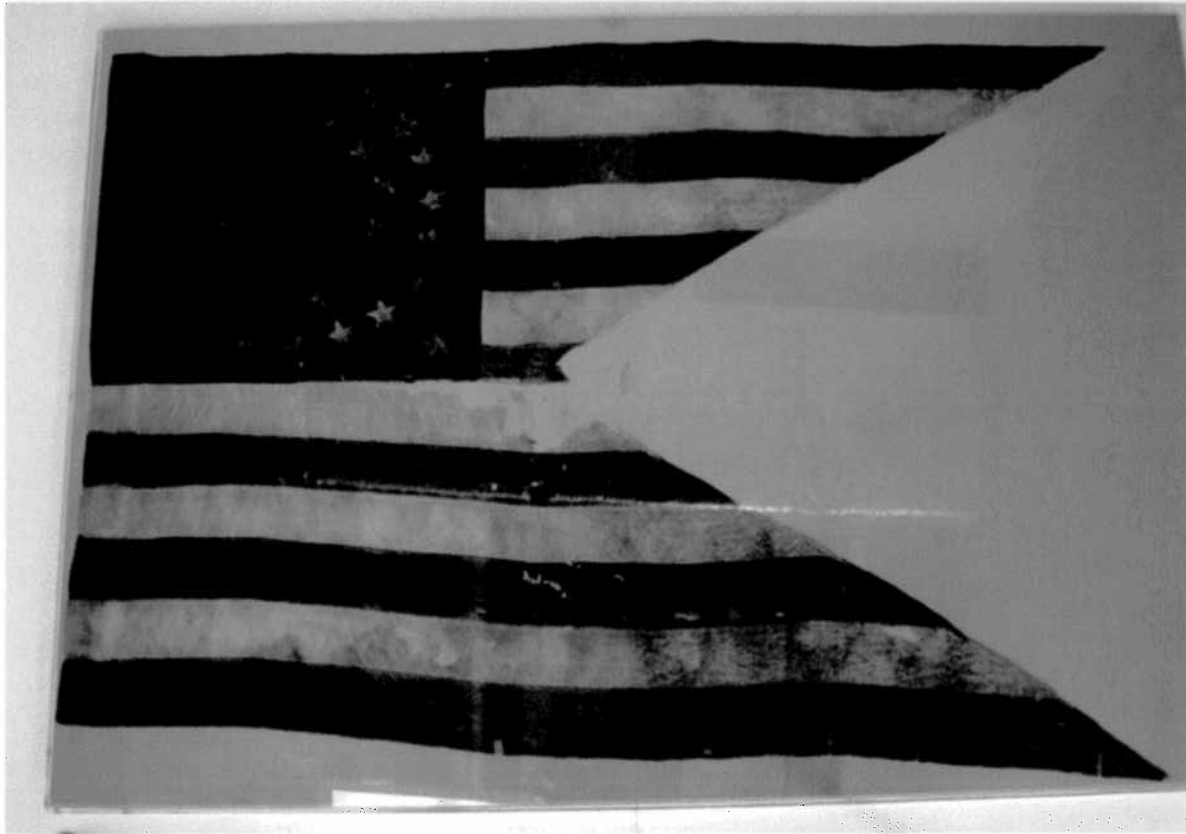
The flag was replaced upon the backing mount and heat sealed to it. The stars on the obverse side were consolidated with Lascaux Hydrosealer 750 to preserve them and prevent paint flaking. The flag was then vacuumed and the acrylic cover was replaced.

Total treatment time: 7 hrs

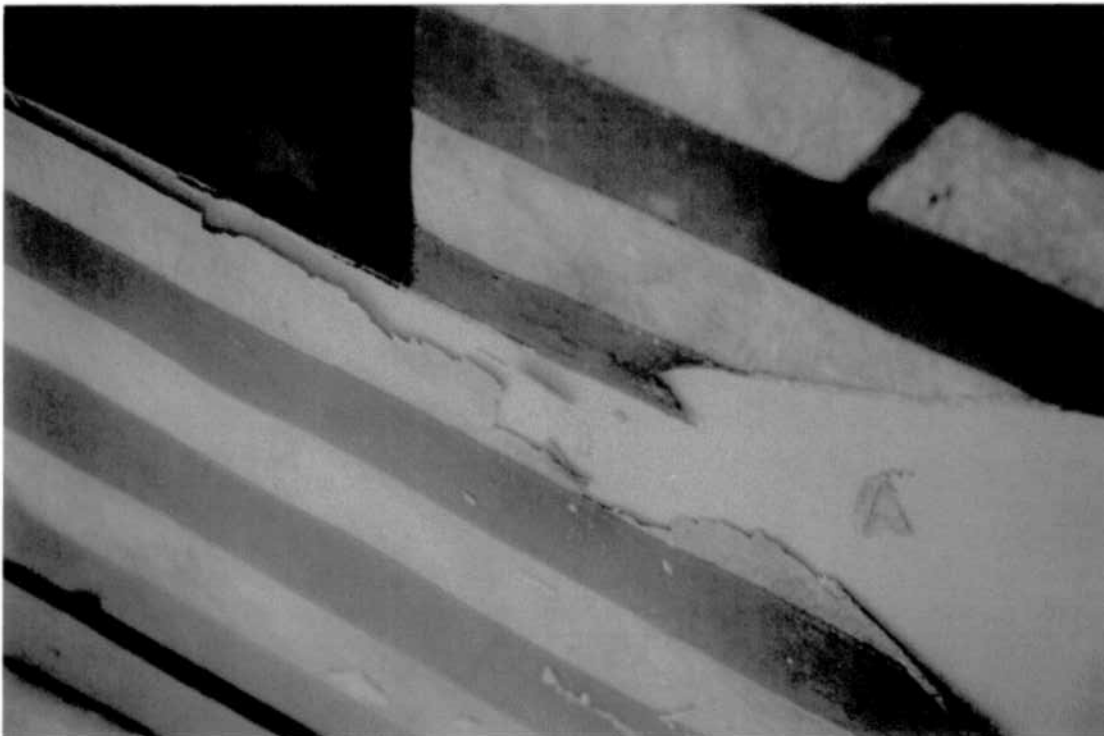
Note for future framers: Should it ever be necessary to reframe the flag because of damaged acrylic or other reasons, the flag can be removed from the backing board by very gently prying a spatula underneath an inch or so at a time to release it.

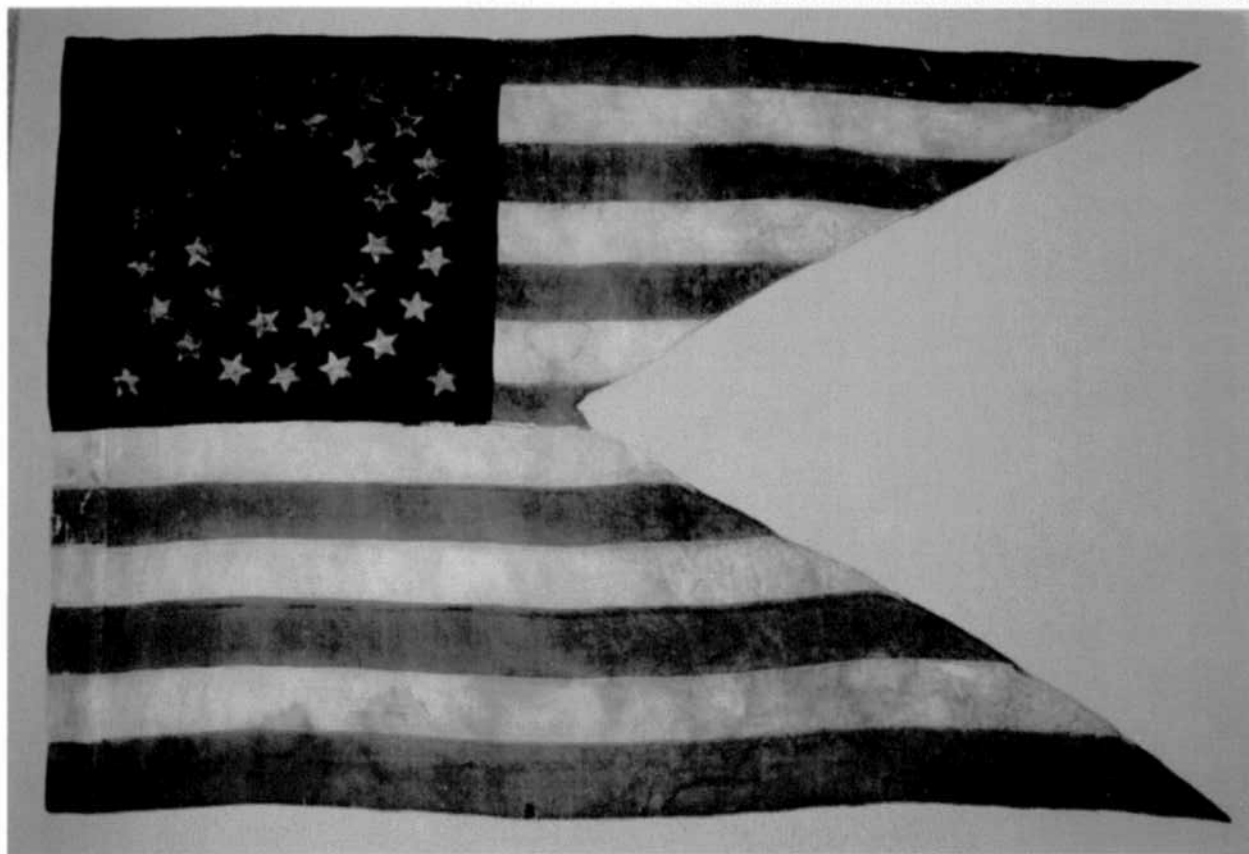
Signed:  Date: 2-18-14

Josh Phillips, Director, Heritage Conservation, LLC



Guidon before removal from the TCW mount, fractured at the center





Guidon after treatment





RARE
CIVIL WAR GUIDON
1863-1864

GUTHMAN AMERICANA

35 GOLD STARS
PAINTED ONTO BLUE
SILK UNION WITH
13 RED AND CREAM
SILK STRIPES.

FOUND IN NEW MEXICO,
WITH POSSIBLE INDIAN WAR
ASSOCIATION. CONSERVED AND
MOUNTED AT THE TEXTILE CON-
SERVATION WORKSHOP.

The flag measures 27 ½" at the hoist and 42 on the fly (18 1/2" hoist to the fork). The canton is hand sewn in and measures 14 1/2" by 15 ¾" including the pole sleeve.

Sewing thread is 2ply white (now tan) S-twist silk, expertly sewn throughout at an average of 10 stitches per inch.

All materials are plain woven silk with the following thread counts per inch:

Blue: 208 warp/112 weft

Red: 240 warp/128 weft

White: 224 warp/144 weft

Previous Treatments:

According to a label affixed to the frame back, the flag was previously treated and framed by "Textile Conservation Workshop." The reason for the current treatment is a failure of the pressure mount by TCW. Upon inspection, the 1/8" thick acrylic glazing was too flexible and there was no pressure on the center of the flag, with approximately ¼" of gap between the acrylic and the flag. The lower half of the flag separated at the line of the canton and dropped, scissor fashion, about two inches. The resulting tear did considerable damage to the center white stripe, with numerous fragments dislodged about the frame or lost.

Upon removal from the pressure mount, it was discovered that most of the stripes had been backed by stabilizing silk fabric coated with an unknown adhesive, as would be appropriate for a deteriorating, fragile flag. For some inexplicable reason, however, the center white bar running below the canton and the second white bar from the top were not backed/stabilized. This is where the tear occurred.

Additionally, no batting was used on the back board to create a cushioning tension. All of these oversights led to the failed pressure mount resulting in the described flag damage.

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Sunday, November 7, 2010

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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