

A Carriage Conservation Success Story

By Anna Carneal, Collections Assistant

The Winmill Carriage Museum (WCM) boasts 45 carriages from Europe and the United States, ranging from 120 to 200 years old. The vehicles are routinely monitored by collections staff to ensure that they can remain on display for visitors who have an appreciation for, or would like to learn more about, a charming bygone era. Due to their age, the carriages often require various repairs for their long-term conservation.

For example, in 2016, Morven Park hired B.R. Howard and Associates to conduct a conservation survey to determine the reason for two years of active paint flaking on the Skeleton Break, one of the more unique carriages in our collection. Morven Park staff had tried to determine the cause by reviewing data collected on temperature and humidity levels within the museum and checking the lighting, but none of these environmental factors seemed to be creating the issue. Cleaning of the carriage had to cease because the paint would flake with the lightest touch of a dusting cloth. Historic paint contains a wealth of information and can be examined to determine age, previous color schemes, and amount of use of the item. For these reasons, Morven Park staff try to conserve historic paint whenever possible.

When the B.R. Howard conservators arrived, they determined the embrittlement of the paint was due to its age. The recommended solution was to apply a reversible adhesive called B-72 over the entire piece, which would halt any further flaking and conserve the historic paint in place. Due to this conservation effort, the paint flaking has ceased and the carriage can once again be properly cleaned and kept in the active collection.

Another WCM piece currently in need of conservation is the Goat Cart. Like the Skeleton Break, the Goat Cart's paint is flaking due to its age. A two-day application of B-72 on every surface of the Goat Cart is required to keep it from deteriorating further.

As a nonprofit organization, Morven Park relies on contributions from history enthusiasts and our other dedicated donors to maintain the thousands of fascinating items in both the WCM and throughout the Davis Mansion. Please help us preserve the Goat Cart and keep your favorite collection items on display by making a donation today at www.MorvenPark.org/CarriageCollection.