

CURTAINS WITHOUT BORDERS

Preserving Historic Painted Scenery
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SURVEY AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL

Location: Town House, New Hampton, NH

Date of Survey: June 13, 2012

Surveyor: Chris Hadsel

Date of Conservation: May 27, 2014

Conservator: Mary Jo Davis

Location: Dana Hill Road, New Hampton, NH

Contact Person: Barbara Lucas, Town of New Hampton

Address: 6 Pinnacle Hill Rd, New Hampton, NH 03256

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Description of Curtain: Grand Drape with Image of the New Hampton Town House



Artist: George Thompson, Holderness, NH Not signed but based on information from town records and his daughter.

Overall Dimensions: 9'1" H x 16' 4" W (roller is approximately 19'L)

Date of Manufacture: 1940

Place of Manufacture: Holderness, NH

Inscriptions: none

Iconography: view of the still-used town hall.



Location: on stage

Use of Building: actively used for town meetings, social and cultural events

Present Use and Condition of Stage: used to store voting booths, clean

Overall Condition of Curtain: good, with overall dust and minor damage from water stains, creasing and several small tears

Primary Support (Fabric):

Number of Panels: 2 large pieces of fabric 78" and 32" in height.

Fiber: cotton muslin

Use of Adhesives: yes

Previous Repairs: no

Overall Condition of Fabric: good, with average amount of wear for its age



Fabric Condition Notes:

Top Edge: secured between original top board with tacks

Side Edges: raw, small amount of fraying

Bottom Edge: secured to bottom metal roller with adhesive. Heavy glue line (construction adhesive) which has become separated from the roller in places

Stains: several old water stains

Other: the curtain seems to be square



Secondary Support (Framework):

Roller: original galvanized aluminum downspout roller in good condition. Can be reused when padded. It needs to be riveted to improve its strength in the middle

Top Support: original double wooden sandwich in good condition. Can be reused.

Method of attachment to roller and top support: old animal hide glue along bottom that will need to be reduced. Tacks and nails at the top.

Pulleys and Ropes: the pulleys are very small and are installed on the ceiling. They need to be replaced for safety reasons. The ropes are clothesline that need to be replaced. There is no wall cleat.

Overall Condition of Secondary Support: good, but the roller needs to be padded to prevent damage to the paint layer and the entire system of raising and lowering the curtain needs to be updated.

Paint Layer

Medium: water soluble distemper paint

Mechanical Damage: minor loss from small tears Abrasion: minor, along edges

Insecure Paint: no Paint Loss: minor Accretions: no

Heat Damage: no Water Damage: several water stains in upper third of the fabric

Retouching: no Previous Repairs: no

Ground Layer: yes

Underdrawing Observed: no

Varnish Layer: no

Overall Condition of Media: good, overall dusty, with concentration of dirt in upper third of the fabric. Some minor damage from small tears and water stains.

Pre-Treatment Photos

Overall front and town house detail

Water Stain

Creases

Pre-Treatment Solvent Testing: not performed at this time

Installation Notes (concerns and need for materials):

Top Sandwich removal/installation concerns: Assuming the top boards are not damaged when removed for treatment, they can be reused. A strip of muslin will be attached to the top of the curtain with BEVA film to provide an isolating layer.

Bottom Roller reuse/replacement/concerns: the galvanized downspout roller appears to be in good, reusable condition. It needs to be padded with a layer of polyester batting covered with cotton stockinette and finished off with black tape.

Ropes and Pulleys reuse/replacement/concerns: the pulleys are too small. The ropes are clothesline. Install a cleat.

Environmental Concerns:

Building/Room is heated: yes, but not on a regular basis in the winter

Air-conditioning: no

Light: small windows Presence of Pests/Bugs: none observed

Other: the curtain is left in the down position. The town officials will be educated about the value of leaving it up rather than down when the building is not in use.

Treatment Proposal:

Reduce surface dirt and soiling by vacuuming entire front and reverse of curtain, and dry erasing front painted surface.

Repair rips and tears throughout, with appropriate support materials. The tears are small.

Stabilize raw edges at top, bottom and side edges as needed, to prevent vertical or horizontal rips.

Remove adhesive residues and glue as necessary. There must be animal hide glue along the bottom, but it was not observed. The glue layer will be reduced either by sanding or the application of Lapinite.

Prepare top wooden support with muslin/BEVA strips for ease of reinstallation and emergency removal. Prepare existing bottom roller with polyester batting and cotton stockinette. Curtain will be hand stitched to the padded roller.

Selectively tone mended areas and disfiguring stains using appropriate paints.

Provide new pulleys, ropes and a cleat (if necessary).

Install the curtain with the assistance of local volunteers and carpenters.

Document the conservation process and provide the owners with written reports and a CD with all photos and reports.

Treatment Report: Town Meeting House Grand Drape
MJ Davis, Project Conservator

1. A large work surface was prepared and the rolled curtain was placed at the edge of the table and slowly scrolled out. During this process, surface dirt and soiling was reduced by vacuuming the entire reverse of curtain, and gently brushing loose dirt on the front into the nozzle of the HEPA vacuum with a natural bristled brush.
2. During step 1, the small rips and tears present in the primary support were stabilized with 100% cotton muslin patches secured locally with BEVA 371 (Bi-ethylene vinyl acetate TALAS) at a temperature of 140 degrees F using a tacking iron.
3. As in Step 2, the raw edges at the left and right margins were stabilized on the verso in a similar manner to prevent horizontal rips and tears that might occur with casual use. All margins were dry-erased with soot sponges to insure a better bond between the original fabric and the BEVA film.



4. A 4" wide band of construction adhesive was present along the bottom margin applied several years ago in an attempt to attach the curtain to its drain pipe roller. The adhesive was reduced using a Dremel sanding tool, heavy grit sand paper, and mechanical action.



5. A 3" wide strip of BEVA 371 was applied with heat to the bottom verso margin and a new muslin curtain tail 18" in width was adhered to help with reattachment to its original drain pipe roller.
6. The galvanized drain pipe roller was reinforced with self-tapping rivets at the pipe join. The roller was wrapped with 100% polyester batting (Jo-Ann Fabrics) to pad out the pipe and the batting was secured in place with a length of cotton stockinette. Each end of the stockinette was secured to the roller using heavy-duty wire ties. The ends of

the roller were wrapped with heavy black duct tape and a hole drilled to accept the new hanging ropes which were secured with a single knot.



7. The curtain was left attached to the verso set of original top boards. (It was previously secured to those boards with carpet tacks). The old wooden support boards were isolated from the curtain with a strip of 100% cotton muslin and the two sets of boards were secured together using wood screws at 15” intervals in a zigzag pattern. New ropes and pulleys were attached with the appropriate hardware.

8. The disfiguring stains and paint losses were selectively inpainted using matte acrylic Flasche paints.



9. The curtain was installed at the back of the proscenium arch in its original location using 4” drywall screws placed every two feet through the top boards for easier removal in the future if necessary.

Final in-painting was left to be finished in the next couple of weeks by Conservation Assistant Wylie Garcia.

A lock was provided to secure the ropes. Several local volunteers were shown how to handle the ropes and watch for creases.