



Winterthur/University of Delaware  
Program in Art Conservation  
Conservation Report



Fig. 1: [Ten-month-old portrait of Gladis May Kell(e?)y], Visible Light – After Treatment

**Owner:** University of Delaware Museums: “The Baltimore Collection”

**Contact:** Dr. Julie McGee, Curator of African American Art & Associate Professor of Black American Studies at the University of Delaware.

**Accession #:** 2001.0017.0025

**Title/Subject:** [Ten-month-old portrait of Gladis May Kell(e?)y]

**Object Date:** 1920-1922

**Photographer/Maker:** Unkown

**Permanent Location:** UD Museums Collections

**Materials:**

**Secondary Support (Mount):** Laminated paper board with two doors/flap and an inner mat.

**Photographic Processes:** Silver gelatin developing-out print (DOP)

**Final Image Material:** Filamentary Silver

---

### **Dimensions:**

#### **Secondary Support (Leaves):**

**Closed** - 11.6 cm (wide) by 23.5 cm (long) [4.57 x 9.25 inches]

**Open** - 25.4 cm (wide) x 23.5 centimeters (long)

[10.0 x 9.25 inches]

#### **Primary Support (Photographs):**

10.3 cm (wide) x 13.9 cm (long)

[4.06 x 5.47 inches]

### **Distinguishing Marks:** Inscriptions.

In graphite at bottom of the mount's image mat:

"Gladis May Kell(e?)y/ Born Jan. 7th 192(2?) / aged ten months/ when picture taken."

**Reason of Examination and Treatment:** Examined as part of the photograph conservation block documentation project and aimed to add to the curatorial and conservation body of knowledge.

**Examined and Treated by:** Karissa Muratore, *University of Delaware/WUDPAC student Class of 2020*

**Date of Examination and Treatment:** 01/03/2016 - 01/17/2016

### **Consulted:**

- Deborah Hess Norris, *Chair and Professor, Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation;*
- Barbara Lemmen, *Senior Photograph Conservator, Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts;*
- Dr. Julie McGee, *Curator of African American Art and Associate Professor of Black American Studies at the University of Delaware.*
- Amber Kehoe, *University of Delaware/WUDPAC student Class of 2019*
- Emily Farek, *University of Delaware/WUDPAC student Class of 2019*

### **Description:**

This filamentary silver image depicts a 10-month-old black baby in a white dress and bonnet, sitting on a wooden chair and facing forward. She seems supported by the arm of an adult seen entering the photograph from the left side. The photograph is adhered at a slight angle on a mount that has two doors/flaps that close and overlap to cover the image. The image is also framed by a front mat that bears the inscription "Gladis May Kell(e?)y/ Born Jan. 7th 192(2?) / aged ten months/ when picture taken."

### **Historical Context:**

According to the homepage WordPress site named for the collection it catalogs and researches, what is now known as "The Baltimore Collection" is an assortment of unknown photographs that was found in Maryland and donated the University of Delaware in 2001 by Neil, Reba and Jessica Porter because it was in dire need of conservation. The late nineteenth- and early

---

twentieth-century photographs seem to be portraits of Black or African American individuals, taken in the Baltimore, Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and Washington, D.C. areas. Included in the 53 objects are tintypes, albumen prints, matte collodion prints, silver gelatin printing-out prints (POP), silver gelatin developing-out prints (DOP) and one halftone (2017).

In the Fall of 2017, a graduate-level course “Curating Hidden Collections & the Black Archive” was led by Julie McGee to “study . . . the photographs as objects of material and visual culture; consideration of the sitters, photography studios, photographic portraiture, clothing, and self-fashioning trends in Black Baltimore and the Mid-Atlantic region; early African American portrait photography; and an introduction to archival and theoretical challenges in making this collection and others like it available to the public” (McGee, 2017). The course resulted in a WordPress website and digital ArtStor archive for “The Baltimore Collection.”

Bridget Killian was the student who researched and cataloged the object of this report. Unlike many of the objects in this collection, there was a handwritten inscription to aid in the research. The inscription is difficult to read, but seems to say “Gladis May Kell(e?)y/ Born Jan. 7th 192(2?)/ aged ten months/ when picture taken.” Killian was able to find a Gladis Kelley in the 1920 Pennsylvania census, listed as a 1-month old of a self-identified black family residing in North Fayette, Allegheny, PA. The parents are named Charles D. and Norene Kelley and her sister is Georgetta. Unfortunately, the date of the census does not correlate with the date and age of the inscription. It is possible that the difficult to read inscription was misread, or that the subject of this photograph is simply a different baby Gladis. Either way, according to Killian, “there is an intimacy inherent to this object that resists my attempts to identify it neatly. It retains its mystery and asserts a powerful agency through this resistance (Killian, 2017).”

**Examination Goals and Rationale:** To assess condition of object so as to establish conservation needs that will lead to an appropriate treatment solution.

**Condition Before Treatment:**

**Secondary Support:**

The mount is in overall fair and unstable condition. It is covered in surface dirt. The black color is a dark grey, but may have faded from black over time. In addition, small areas of localized fading are found throughout. The paper board has become friable, especially at abraded edges, and actively delaminating, especially at the corners. As a result, small losses and creasing of varying degrees have already occurred along the edges and corners. In addition, there are vertical creases the stretch the length of the mount on each of the door/flaps, near where it hinges to the body of the mount. The more severe damages to the mount are: a crunched area measuring about 6.0 cm long on the proper left edge of the proper left door/flap; the complete separation of the image mat from the back board; the complete separation of the proper left door/flap from the body of the mount; and the near separation of the proper of the right door/flap from the body of the mount.

**Photographs:**

Overall the photograph is in fair and unstable condition. The imagery is visible, but seems faded, perhaps due to natural aging, contact with acidic materials, or bad processing. There is surface dirt on a majority of the photograph, with the most significant amount of accumulation found near the edges of the photograph and the face of the figure. There is also some abrasion and loss of the binder layer along all four edges of the photograph and in small areas near the top proper left corner, and bottom proper right corner of the photograph.



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Damage to image, binder, and/or lacquer due to loss, abrasion, flaking, cracking, crazing, and planar distortion |  Iron corrosion                                                     |
|  Mechanical damage to primary or secondary support resulting in tears, folds, creases, and planar distortions     |  Tape and/or tape adhesive                                          |
|  Discoloration due to material off-set, acid migration localized discoloration and staining, and tide lines       |  Accretions and localized surface dirt                              |
|  Silver Image deterioration such as localized fading, mirroring, and yellowing                                    |  Mold and/or mold damage                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  Complete loss of primary and secondary supports, binder, and image |

**Fig. 2: [Ten-month-old portrait of Gladis May Kell(e?)y], Visible Light – Visual Condition Diagram**

---

**Treatment Proposal:**

1. To take photographic and written documentation of album leaf before and after treatment.
2. To test both dry cleaning (brushes, sponges, and/or erasers) and/or wet cleaning (1:1 ethanol and DI water and/a mild enzymatic solution/DI water) methods and materials before selecting an appropriate one for cleaning of the leaves and photographs.
3. To surface clean the photograph and its mount.
4. To inpaint small losses in the gelatin binder with appropriate materials (dry or wet watercolor or graphite over a separation layer of methyl cellulose or Klucel G).
5. To mend tears and consolidate with appropriate Japanese paper and adhesives (Wheat starch, methyl cellulose or Klucel G).
6. To returned in its polyester L-sleeves and returned to Julie McGee and the University of Delaware.

**Treatment Goals and Rationale:** To stabilize and clean the photograph and its mount so they are more stable for handling and accessible for research.

**Treatment Report:**

1. Photographic and written documentation was taken before and after treatment.
2. Both dry cleaning (brushes, sponges, and/or erasers) and/or wet cleaning (1:1 ethanol and DI water and/a mild enzymatic solution/DI water) methods and materials were tested before selecting an appropriate one for cleaning the photograph and its mount.
3. The mount and the photograph were surface cleaned using a soft bristled brush and a cosmetic sponge.
4. Friable areas of the photograph's gelatin were consolidated using 1% methyl cellulose in DI water using a fine brush under a Wild Heerbrug stereoscope at 500x.
5. The photograph was wet cleaned gently with 1:1 ethanol and DI water and cotton swabs by eye and under a stereoscope at 200x.
6. Small areas of loss in the gelatin were inpainted using Senneliier watercolors after a barrier layer of 1% methyl cellulose was applied.
7. The most severe folds and disrupted fibers were humidified and flattened. All treated areas were allowed to dry under nonwoven polyester, blotter, and weights.
8. The tears in the hinge of the (proper right) mount door/flap and the completely separated (proper left) mount door flap were consolidated and mended, with toned Japanese paper and 1% methyl cellulose.
9. Leaf was returned in its polyester L-sleeves and returned to Julie McGee and the University of Delaware.



**Fig. 3: Detail of dirt on figure's face – before treatment**



**Fig. 4: Detail of cleaner surface (dust still visible) – after treatment**

---

### **Preventive Care Recommendations:**

Maintaining good storage and display conditions will extend the life of the images in this collection, which contains multiple photographic processes, including tintypes, albumen prints, matte collodion prints, silver gelatin printing-out prints (POP), silver gelatin developing-out prints (DOP) and one halftone. In storage, this collection should be housed in the dark, in protective boxes and appropriate/safe enclosures. The images have already been rehoused in polyester L-sleeves, but should also be stored in acid-free folders or boxes. The boxes and sleeves should protect these pages from airborne pollutants and dust. In addition, maintaining a relative humidity of 40-50% at room temperature with minimal fluctuations will help preserve the photographs of this collection.

For exhibition, light levels should not exceed 50 lux, with a total maximum annual light exposure of 50,000 lux hours per year (3 months display). Ultraviolet light exposure should be as close as possible to zero milliwatts per square meter. There should be at least 3 years between exhibitions. If these pages are framed, they should be matted with good quality materials that pass the Photographic Activity Test and ultraviolet filtering glazing should be used. If the digitized images are not adequate for research, the photographs and their mounts should be handled carefully. Visiting scholars and staff should be encouraged to keep the pages in the sleeves whenever possible, to wash their hands just before handling or to use gloves, and to handle the objects carefully on a rigid support to prevent breakage.

The University of Delaware should ensure that a disaster plan is in place and well-communicated throughout the institution, as these materials are especially vulnerable to water-related emergencies and have gone through such an event already.

### **References:**

- Artstor, Inc. 2018. UD Museums: The Baltimore Collection: 19th and 20th century Portrait Photographs - [Ten-month-old portrait of Gladis May Kell(e?)y]. Online Collection, University of Delaware. Accessed January 2018. [http://library.artstor.org.udel.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SS36618\\_36618\\_39810829](http://library.artstor.org.udel.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SS36618_36618_39810829).
- Contributors to AIC Wiki. March 2010. PMG Section 1.4.1 Standards, Guidelines, and Recommendations for Light Levels During Exhibition. In Photographic materials conservation catalog wiki. Accessed January 2018. [http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/PMG\\_Section\\_1.4.1\\_Standards,\\_Guidelines,\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_for\\_Light\\_Levels\\_During\\_Exhibition](http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/PMG_Section_1.4.1_Standards,_Guidelines,_and_Recommendations_for_Light_Levels_During_Exhibition).
- Farek, E. 2018. Personal Communication. University of Delaware/WUDPAC student Class of 2019. Winterthur Museum Research Building, Winterthur, DE.
- Kehoe, A. 2018. Personal Communication. University of Delaware/WUDPAC student Class of 2019. Winterthur Museum Research Building, Winterthur, DE.

- 
- Killian, B. 2017. "The temptation of the handwritten inscription." The Baltimore Collection Wordpress Online Site. <http://sites.udel.edu/baltimorecollection/2017/12/06/the-temptation-of-the-handwritten-inscription/>.
  - Lavédrine, B., J. P. Gandolfo, J. McElhone, and S. Monod. 2009. *Photographs of the past: process and preservation*. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.
  - Lemmen, B. 2017. Personal Communication. Senior Photograph Conservator, Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts. Winterthur Museum Research Building, Winterthur, DE. January 11, 2018.
  - McGee, J. L. 2017. "The Baltimore Collection." Homepage of the *WordPress* website by the graduate-level course *Curating Hidden Collections & the Black Archive*. Accessed January 2018. <http://sites.udel.edu/baltimorecollection/about-the-baltimore-collection-wordpress-site/#>.
  - McGee, J. L. 2017. "Curating Hidden Collections & the Black Archive." In the *Baltimore Collection* WordPress website. Accessed January 2018. <http://sites.udel.edu/baltimorecollection/2017/12/10/curating-hidden-collections-the-black-archive/>.
  - McGee, J. L. 2018. Personal Communication. Curator of African American Art & Associate Professor of Black American Studies at the University of Delaware. Winterthur Museum Research Building, Winterthur, DE.
  - Norris, D. H. 2017. Photographic materials conservation block notes. Unpublished Manuscript, Winterthur Museum/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation.
  - Norris, D. H. 2018. Personal Communication. Chair and Professor, Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. Winterthur Museum Research Building, Winterthur, DE.
  - Wagner, Sarah S., Constance McCabe, and Barbara Lemmen. 2010. Guidelines for exhibition light levels for photographs. In *Issues in the conservation of photographs*. Norris, Debra Hess., and Jennifer Jae Gutierrez, eds. Los Angeles, California: The Getty Conservation Institute. 684-689.

**Appendix I:** Photographic documentation, Nikon D800, 24mm



**Fig. 5: Open Mat, Normal Light – Before Treatment**



**Fig. 6: Open Mat, Normal Light – After Treatment**



Fig. 7: Open Mat, Raking Light – Before Treatment





solution of 50/50 DI water/ethanol on a cotton swab.

Fig. 9: Closed Mat, Normal Light – Before Treatment



Fig. 10: Closed Mat, Normal Light – After Treatment



Fig. 11: Closed Mat, Raking Light – Before Treatment



Fig. 12: Closed Mat, Raking Light – After Treatment