



**VAN WITT**  
FINE ART CONSERVATION

Studio:  
7323 West 79th St  
Overland Park, KS, 66204

(913) 661-9128  
vanwitt@msn.com  
www.vanwittart.com

---

**Client:** Cindy Daffron  
Executive Director Pony Express Museum  
914 Penn Street, St. Joseph, MO 64503  
**Phone:** (816) 279-5059  
**Email:** [pxdirector@ponyexpress.net](mailto:pxdirector@ponyexpress.net)

## **TREATMENT REORT # 5704**

*November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

**Subject:** *The Missouri Swamp Fox Mural*  
**Artist:** George Gray  
**Date:** ca: 1940  
**Size:** 80.5" H x 96" W  
**Medium:** Oil on canvas  
**Examined:** In person UV light



### **Examination:**

The painting was examined on site at the Pony Express Museum in St. Joseph, MO by Peggy Van Witt on 11/15/2022 with available light and raking light and 40-140X magnification for filled craquelure and irregular brushstrokes also paint and structural for stability. In addition, UV Radiation which is a non-destructive examination technique was used for the identification, characterization, and condition assessment of original and non-original paint layers. The fluorescing color ranges from purple to green with the electromagnetic charge of the atom. Conclusion: There was no previous restoration performed.

### **CONDITION REPORT: 2022**

#### **Structural Condition: POOR**

The painting was installed onto two 'L- brackets in the upper center and supported on both right and left lower side by two antique barrels. Tacking edges are covered with a 3-inch strip of brown plastic. The facing is a 1-inch quarter round plastic strip nailed into strainer covering the tacking edges. The four- member strainer is custom fabricated non-original; it has one protruding cross bar in the center that is pressing through the canvas. Canvas is a heavy cotton duck sailcloth. There are large undulations billowing and corner draws in the lower region from sagging canvas that is slack on the strainer bars.

#### **Paint Condition: FAIR**

The paint shows no previous inpainting or restoration. The heavy application of low impasto oil has heavy craquelure, cleavage, delaminating, cupping, tenting present throughout.

#### **Surface Coating: POOR**

There is no varnish present. Surface appears to be coated in a heavy layer of nicotine and grime that gives the painting a darkened, dulled, yellowish hue.

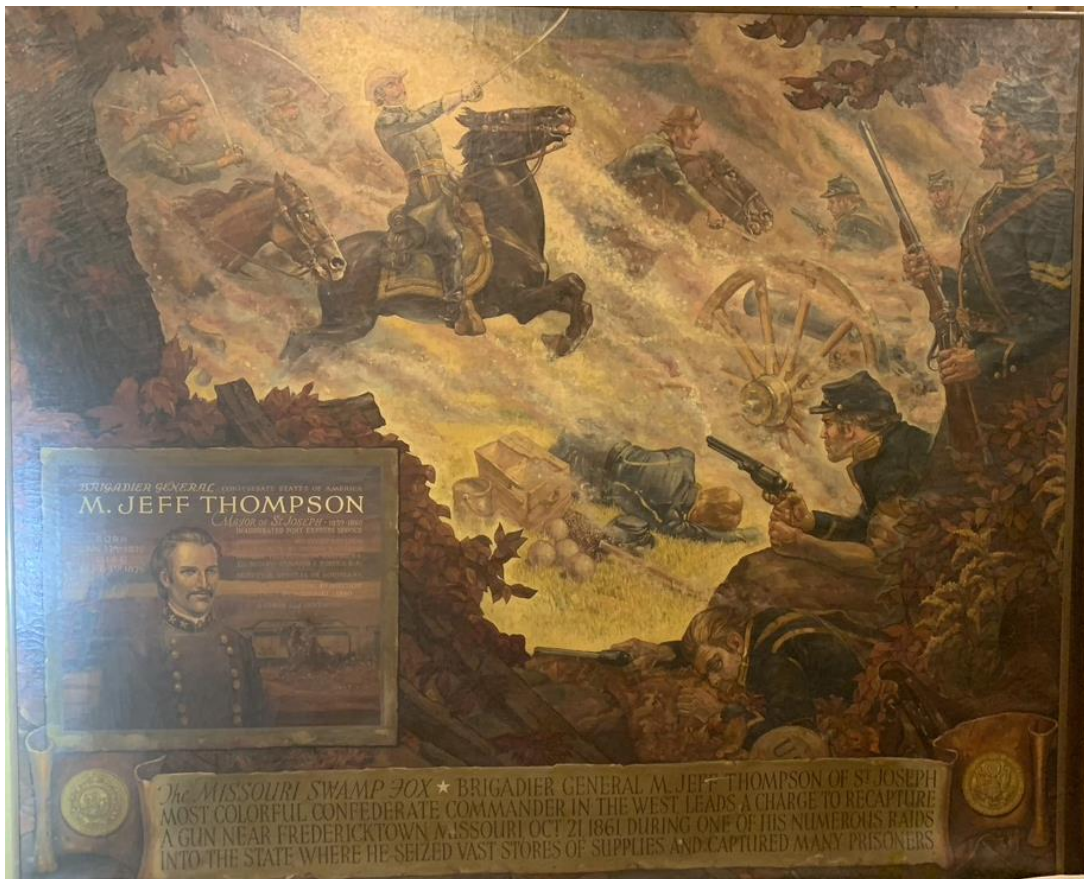
**Standards of Practice:**

Van Witt Fine Art Conservation abides by the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic Works (AIC) *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*. Treatment includes before-and-after photography (digital images) with other photos as necessary. A treatment record and photos will be provided with the completed project. Conservation materials are selected for their performance and reversibility.

**TREATMENT REPORT**

- Documented front and verso of painting
- Examined under ultraviolet fluorescence for evidence of previous inpainting
- Performed tests on the paint layer to determine the precise blend of solvents or enzymes, which will successfully remove the varnish (clean the painting) without also removing paint
- Tested painting cleaners of pH 5.5 MES /Sodium Hydroxide, pH 6.5 Bis-tris / hydrochloric acid, Polar Solvents
- Cleaned painting in a vertical orientation to avoid seepage of cleaning materials into the intestacies
- Cleaned painting with Naphtha Oil, (Oleate Acid, Petroleum Distillates, Triethylamine, Methyl Salicylate) and cleared with OMS and Polar solvents by blotting and swabbing
- Removed painting from the wall and laid it flat in conference room
- Removed edging and one inch strip from the face and protruding cross bar
- Released painting from the stretcher bars to re-stretch the canvas
- Cleaned the verso of dust and airborne grime with mild and OMS, a non-residual surfactant
- Squared up the stretcher bars
- Returned painting to squared strainer bars s for optimal tensile capacity
- Brought the canvas back into plane and pulled the deformations into plane with stretcher pliers
- Stapled stretched painting to strainers
- Inpainted minor losses with reversible conservation paints in raw pigments in Aquazol and MSA Golden conservation paints which were most prominent around the perimeter
- Brushed protective varnish layer of UV stable, colorless, reversible varnish of hydrogenated hydrocarbon resins plus a wax-based matting agent dissolved in pure, low-aromatic hydrocarbon solvents and a 292 Tinuvin stabilizer
- Adhered the covering strips of stained black wood to sides and perimeter to cover the tacking edges
- Reinstalled painting on the museum wall, supported with barrels
- This entire treatment can be reversed with alcohol or aliphatic solvents
- After treatment, the painting will be stable and ready for public exhibition

*Before Conservation*



*Darkend and yellowed before treatment*

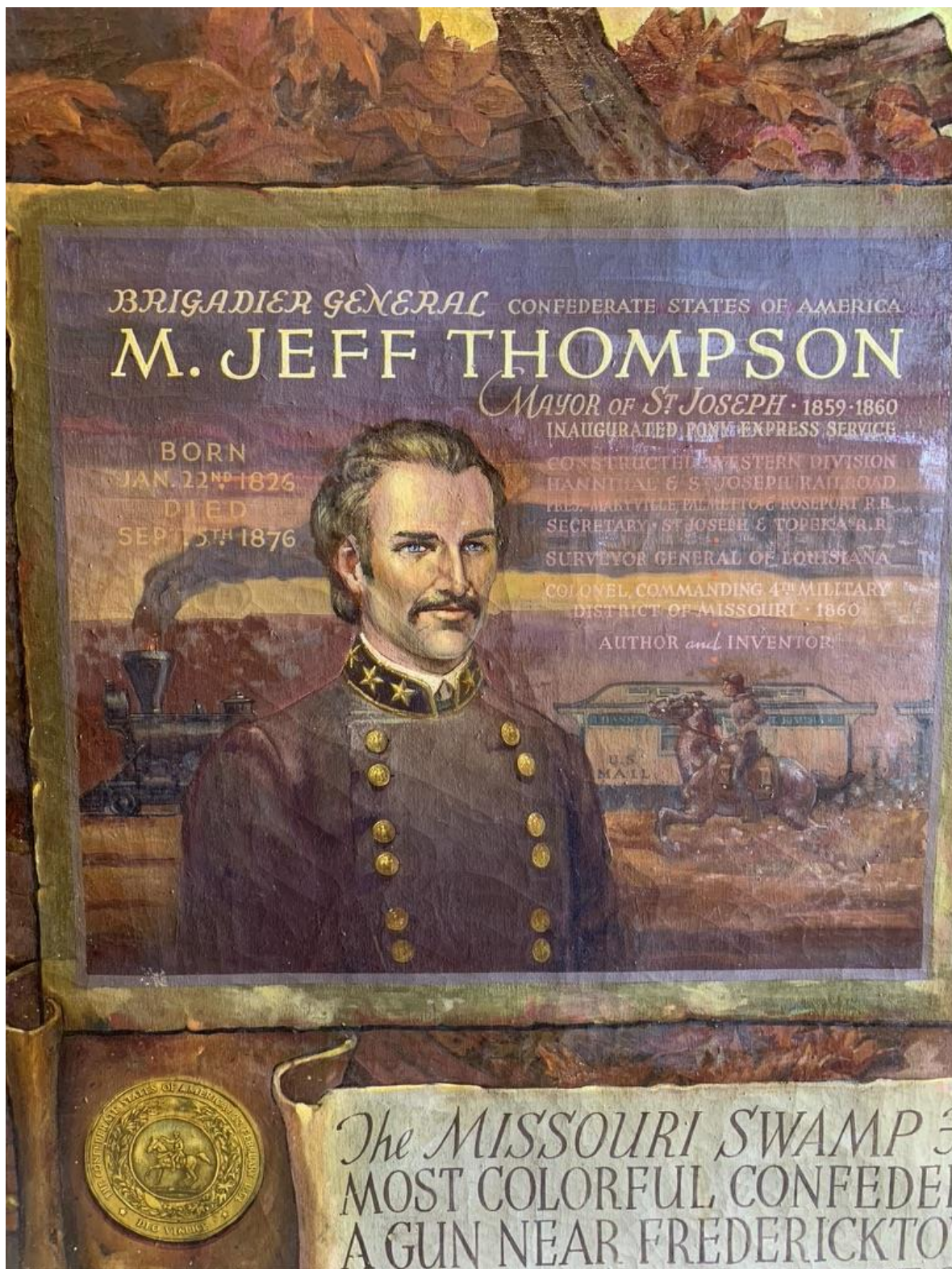


Top: before cleaning. Bottom: After cleaning



See protruding center support and sagging after cleaning





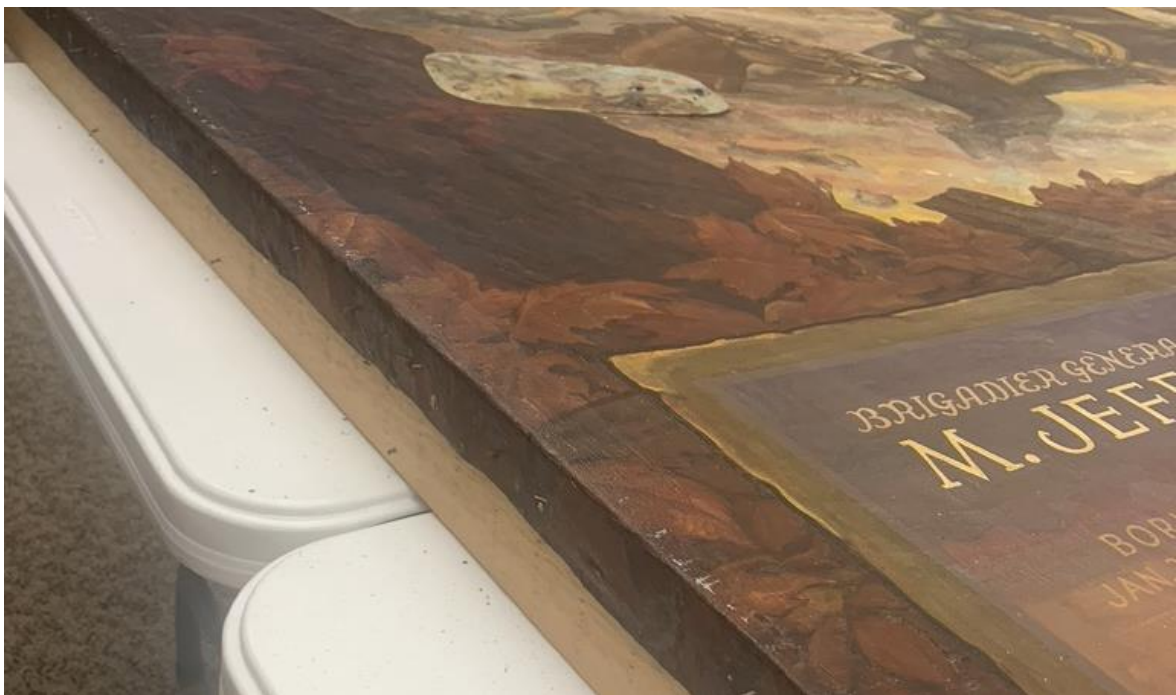
*After Cleaning detail*



*Front and Verso of canvas*









*Painting after installation with new frame installed*