

Conclusion (pp. 49-50):

The cross-section paint evidence found in the woodwork samples examined for this study suggests most of the first floor rooms at Menokin were consistently painted cream color in the first period of the house [c. 1769—1800]. The painter used three coatings of cream colored paint to complete the first generation coating in the dining room compared to applying only one layer of the same paint to the woodwork in the study and main stair hall. This subtle difference in paint coatings may reinforce the hierarchy in importance between the formal dining room and the smaller study and main stair hall. The paint treatment in the formal dining room was considerably more costly in terms of time and materials. The comparative paint cross-sections do not suggest there are two periods of moldings in the dining room. All the dining room elements appear to have initially been painted at the same time. Future paint analysis should include additional woodwork from other first floor rooms to help clarify the comparative paint chronologies and hierarchies from room to room and to determine if the first floor was originally uniformly painted cream color.

The dull pink paint identified as the second generation of paint in the dining room and parlor may relate to the nine-year occupation of John Tayloe Lomax from 1809 to 1818. Limited sampling of the first floor woodwork suggests the dining room and parlor were painted dull pink during this period with selected elements (such as soffits) picked out in light gray. The stair elements may have been light gray, and the study may have been light gray as well. Further sampling of other identified woodwork fragments should help to more fully understand the variations in paint colors on the first and second floor during the second paint generation.

The third generation of paint may have been applied after the house was purchased in 1823 by Benjamin Boughton and his wife. Oak graining was considered quite stylish by that time, but the graining figure in the wainscoting in the dining room is quite loose and naïve, suggesting the grain-painter was working freehand to create the oak figures, not working from a pattern book. Additionally, the combination of the oak graining with the other areas decorated blue-painted woodwork and deep green soffits is an unusual, imaginative scheme. This type of decoration is more consistent with a local decorative painter than a sophisticated urban painter. An oil-resin varnish was later applied to freshen the decoratively painted surfaces, perhaps by Richard Harwood [Menokin owner from 1836 to 1872].

Analysis of the accumulation of white coatings on the first and second floor plaster walls suggests the walls were consistently painted with unpigmented limewashes. The absence of dirt trapped between limewash layers indicates the walls in the primary rooms were recoated on a regular basis. In particular, the first floor passage and second floor northeast bedchamber, were painted nine times. The number of washes found in specific rooms does not completely correlate with the importance of each space as the closet

between the chamber and parlor was also limewashed nine times. However, it is also possible that some limewash layers may be missing or inconsistent in the areas that have been exposed for decades to the weather.

The presence of only two extremely degraded paint layers on the exterior of the four-light transom [over the south, or back, entry door that enters directly into the dining room] is curious as exterior elements are typically repainted more often than interior elements because of the damage created by sun, rain, and snow. The fragmentary paint evidence suggests the initial coating on the sash was left in place for many, many years before being repainted. The composition of the green paint cannot help date this layer as Prussian blue was available in the Colonies by the first quarter of the eighteenth century and the other pigments have been in use since antiquity. It is possible the green exterior sash paint was applied at the same time that the dining room was grain-painted with blue woodwork and green-painted soffits. The interior of this sash was also only painted twice, first with ubiquitous cream colored oilbound paint, and then with the same blue paint found as the third generation in the dining room and parlor.