

Packing and Moving Museum Collections

How to Keep Your Sanity
and Artifacts Intact

Keely Rennie-Tucker, Museum Technician
Homestead National Monument of America

- BACKGROUND ON HERITAGE CENTER
- PLANNING AND INVENTORY
- PACKING AND SUPPLIES
- RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
- CASE STUDY: Homestead National Monument of America Heritage Center Move 2007
- WHAT NOW? LIFE AFTER THE MOVE
- REFERENCES/QUESTIONS

HOMESTEAD NATIONAL MONUMENT OF AMERICA HERITAGE CENTER

The new Heritage Center will exhibit the following themes:

- *Agricultural Revolution
- *Opportunity and Displacement
- *Success and Failure
- *First and Last Homesteader

(Daniel Freeman and Kenneth Deardorff)

- *View into the Collection



- Homesteaders came from five continents
- 270,000,000 acres in 30 states – 10% of US land – distributed to homesteaders
- By 1900, 95% of American Indian lands lost to homesteading and other land policies
- Estimated 93,000,000 descendants of homesteaders in the world today
- New 10,600 square foot building
- Lower level all new exhibits and collection storage space including a larger curatorial office (twice as big!)
- Collection storage will double from current space (needed for the timeframe in our SOCS 1862-1986)
- “View into the Collection” will feature a platform with various artifacts as visitors can see in the collection space



“View into the Collection”

Curatorial office
aka “the bat cave”



- PLANNING AND INVENTORY
- PACKING AND SUPPLIES
- RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
- CASE STUDY: Homestead National Monument of America Heritage Center Move 2007
- WHAT NOW? LIFE AFTER THE MOVE
- REFERENCES/QUESTIONS

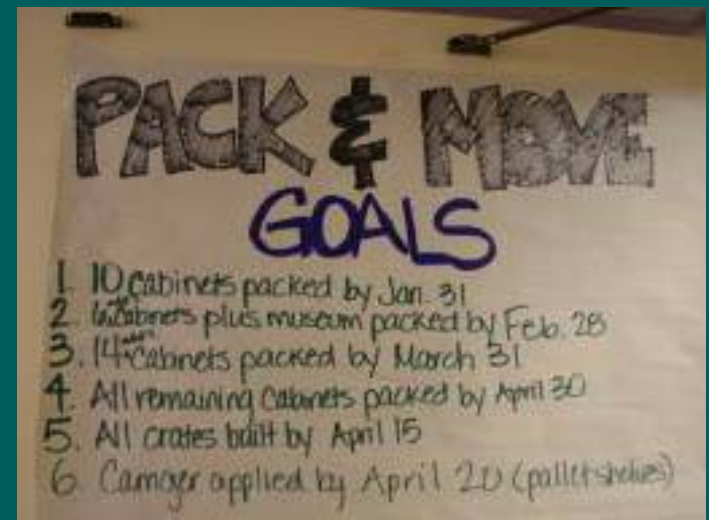
PLANNING AND INVENTORY

- **Make a list of what needs to be accomplished before you begin packing**
 - Accountability, accountability, accountability
 - 100% inventory of the collection
 - Are there any specific conservation concerns or needs? Any oversize objects needing special packaging?
 - Are any objects going on display in new exhibits?
 - Budget? What can you get for free or almost free?
 - Create a floor plan for the new space (see NPS MH)
 - Be flexible!

■ Make a timeline

– Dependent on numerous factors:

- **Your time** (what other projects are you trying to complete simultaneously or prior to packing? How much time are you allowed to devote to packing/moving?)
- When is **space available** to move in?
- **Conservation** needs
- **Volunteer** availability



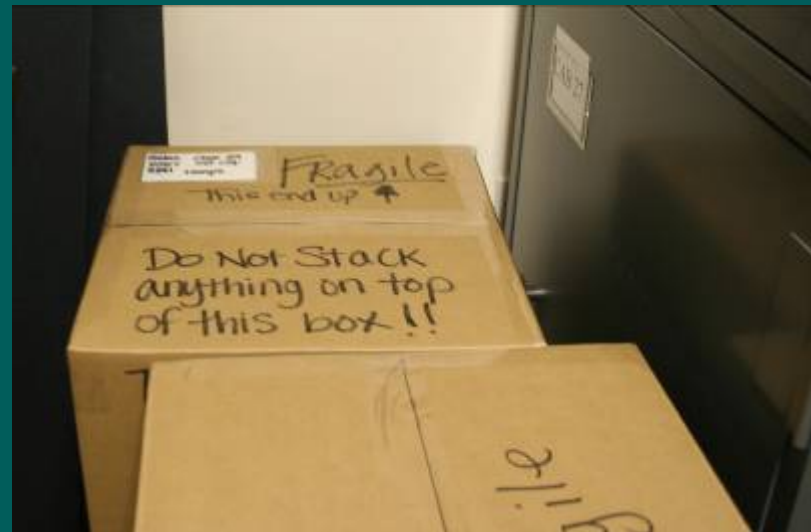
■ Turn this list into a working document

- Create a report (see Homestead Heritage Center Move Report handout)
- Update with any major changes to timeline, budget, etc.
- Reference it often – this will help keep you focused



PACKING

- Prioritize objects by material type
- Prioritize by what objects need to go into the storage space first



Packing DOs

- Safety of people first then artifacts
- Use proper handling methods
- Utilize large tables for workspace if possible, this makes handling easier
- Use proper size boxes for packing – don't overpack!
- Label EVERYTHING
- Use common sense
- Document any damage
- Document the move process

SUPPLIES



- Boxes
- Tape
- Crates
- Packing materials such as polyethylene foam, unprinted newspaper, acid-free tissue paper
- Index cards for labeling boxes
- Vinyl envelopes for holding labels
- Inventory lists of each cabinet/storage unit
- Pencils
- Markers
- Additional storage unit?



RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

- Begin with current volunteers
- Recruit in the community
- Recruit other museum professionals to volunteer



- Schedule training sessions to train a group of volunteers
- Give them overall goals for the project and how they can contribute
- Match people with jobs they would enjoy doing



CASE STUDY: Homestead National Monument of America



Please refer to "Heritage Center Collection Move Report" for more information

Timeline for Heritage Center Collection Move

December 2005 (17 months prior to Grand Opening)

Artifact conservation begins at Harper's Ferry Center;
packing and shipping materials planned in the months prior

March 2006 (14 months prior)

Conservation of artifacts begins at Homestead National
Monument by Museum Technician;
began 100% inventory of collection

Summer/Fall 2006

Update PMIS projects; began to digitally photograph
controlled property artifacts; ordered supplies needed for
collection move in spring 2007; began "test" packing;
Contact vendors for possible high-density mobile
storage unit

Winter 2006:

Prepare PMIS project statements;

Organize packing supplies and creating new orders for needed materials; update Housekeeping Plan, IPM Plan, Museum Disaster Preparedness Plan, and any related SOPs and EOP

January 2007: begin packing cabinets

February 2007: rent storage container for empty cabinets and shelving units

March 2007: pack all artifacts in current exhibit space and prepare for temporary exhibit to be installed (IQSC)

April 2007: continue to pack and move cabinets to storage container; April 23 is the first day of exhibit installation

Due to construction schedules, the slated grand opening date and other factors, the timeline has become more compressed. However, as we all well know, flexibility is key to working in museum collections, especially during times when other major projects are simultaneously impacting the museum collection.

MAY 2007:

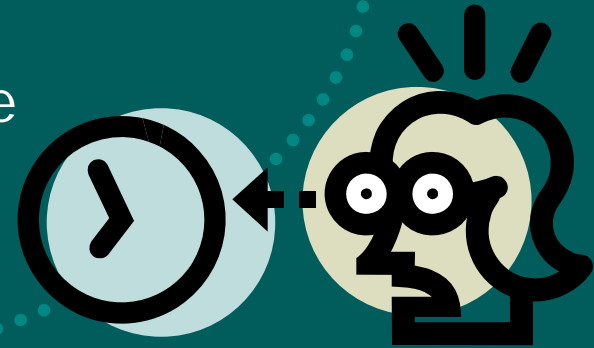
April 23-May 14 Exhibit Installation

April 30 – May 6 Possible installation of high-density mobile storage unit; install existing cabinets

May 7-19 Move the collection; begin unpacking immediately after all artifacts are in the new storage area;

May 14-25 ELEDP participant will be conducting a detail at the park in the museum collection

MAY 20 GRAND OPENING



WHAT NOW? PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- Future projects
 - Complete any revisions to the Housekeeping Plan, IPM Plan, Museum Disaster Preparedness Plan
 - Develop a long-term conservation treatment program based on the collection condition surveys of farm implements and tools
 - Replace acidic folders in herbarium collection
 - Preservation work on artifacts previously stored on open display now in the collection
 - Digitally photograph entire collection for use in ANCS
 - Roll oversize textiles to prevent creasing and create more storage space in current cabinets
 - Conduct park-wide archives assessment and catalog any materials not yet in the collection
 - Develop a finding aid for oral history tapes
 - Continue to work on Land Records Project
 - Continue to collect objects that fall under the Scope of Collection

REFERENCES

* ArtWorks of Kansas City – professional art/museum movers
www.artworkskc.com or Phone: 1-800-481-9856
Mike Otto, Owner, mike@artworkskc.com

* Delta Designs Ltd. – custom museum cabinets
www.deltadesignsltd.com or Phone: 1-800-656-7426
sales@deltadesignsltd.com
info@deltadesignsltd.com

* Formaspace Technical Furniture
<http://formaspace.com/index.php>

* Spacesaver – High-density Mobile Shelving
www.spacesaver.com

* ULINE products – very reliable company with great customer service
www.uline.com or Phone: 1-800-958-5463

Friends and neighbors always have items shipped to their work or homes. Ask for boxes and the packaging that came in them. This is a great way for them to be a part of the project and you get packing supplies for FREE. My coworkers have been generous with their extra boxes and have saved the park money.

Local shipping supply stores will have rolls of bubble wrap and the shipping is less than if you order from a company such as ULINE. If you order this, be aware that shipping can be expensive. Save money by ordering your supplies all at once – the one time shipping fee, although large, will save you in the long run. If you have unusually heavy objects, this is a great material for wrapping over the archival materials.

Local industry warehouses, etc. – we received our crates and pallets for FREE; sometimes they have to pay to have someone haul them away so they are more than willing to give them to someone who will take them away.

Local newspaper – they can give or sell you rolls of unprinted paper inexpensively; this makes great padding for boxes after wrapping all artifacts in archival safe materials.

Moving museum collection websites:

National Park Service Museum Management Program Museum Handbook

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/index.htm>

Parts I and II contain the most information relevant to packing and moving a museum collection.

National Museum of the American Indian

<http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=collections&second=moving>

Smithsonian Institution, Museum Conservation Institute on moving, packing and shipping furniture

http://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/movefurn.html

Packing, Art Handling, and Crating Information Network Publications page

<http://www.pacin.org/publications.html>

Northern States Conservation Center

<http://www.collectioncare.org/cci/cciextr.html>

Checklist for Museum Move Plan

- Packing plan (includes exhibit and non-exhibit artifacts)
- Conservation plan for exhibit artifacts (includes conservation work timeline)
- Timeline (put EVERYTHING on this)
- Floor plan
- Volunteers (recruitment and scheduling)
- Installation of exhibits and storage equipment
- Budget
- Supply list and vendors
- After-the-move plan (what now?)
 - Unpacking, re-inventory for accountability, preservation projects, etc.

QUESTIONS?/NOTES