



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-31-17-0557-17
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$5,000-\$25,000

City of Platteville Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$24,954
Amount of cost share:	None

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2018 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2017 applications. This year, the maximum that may be requested from IMLS is \$250,000. Be sure to use the instructions in the FY2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Abstract

The City of Platteville's Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums seek an Institute of Museum and Library Services Museums for America, Collections Stewardship non-matching grant of \$24,954 to rehouse and catalog our collection using PastPerfect Museum software.

This project addresses the problem of access and environmental risks, as identified by a 1991 Conservation Assessment. Collections records have not been entered into a searchable database that would allow scholars, staff, and volunteers the ability to search records without the need to physically be in the collections storage areas directly handling objects. Improving access to the records by creating a catalog in PastPerfect will help facilitate research while protecting the objects from excessive handling. Collections storage areas are overcrowded and expose collections to environmental risks such as UV radiation, extreme changes in temperature and humidity, dust, and debris.

The goals of this project are to: (1) rehouse the collection in closed cabinets and boxes as appropriate, to protect it from UV damage and dust; (2) transfer the existing paper catalog files to PastPerfect Museum software; and, (3) to enhance catalog records with updated locations, photographs of objects, search keywords, and descriptions. This one-year project will allow us to hire a collections manager and interns to spend 100% of their time on cataloging and rehousing from October 2017 through September 2018. We would use \$10,144 on closed cabinets, box-making supplies, and shelf lining to protect our objects.

This project to protect and conserve our collection benefits the citizens of Platteville who have funded the museums over five decades, as well as visitors, museum members, researchers, volunteers, and staff members by making our collection more accessible to all. While the lead mine rush gets little attention in our history books, in fact, it rivals the gold rush of 1849 in historical significance. The Bevans Lead Mine and the collection are irreplaceable resources that tell the story of our region's mining history. As a result of this project, collections storage areas will be cleaner and objects will be protected from dust and debris. Entering comprehensive information into the PastPerfect Museum software will result in a searchable and accessible catalog of our large collection. We will be able to measure these outcomes by tracking the number of completed PastPerfect entries.

Project Category: Collections Stewardship

1. Project Justification

Project Summary

The City of Platteville's Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums seek an Institute of Museum and Library Services Museums for America, Collections Stewardship non-matching grant of \$24,954 to rehouse and catalog our collection using PastPerfect Museum software. The goals of this project are to: (1) rehouse the collection in closed cabinets and boxes as appropriate, to protect it from UV damage and dust; (2) transfer the existing paper catalog files to PastPerfect Museum software; and, (3) to enhance catalog records with updated locations, photographs of objects, search keywords, and descriptions.

The Need and How it was Identified

This project addresses two challenges we face as an institution tasked with preserving the material culture of Southwest Wisconsin's Zinc & Lead Mining district:

- **Accessibility:** Collection records have not been entered into a searchable database that would allow scholars, staff, and volunteers the ability to search records without the need to physically be in the collection storage areas directly handling objects. Improving access to the records by creating a catalog in PastPerfect will help facilitate research while protecting the objects from excessive handling.
- **Physical risks:** Collection storage areas are overcrowded and expose the collection to environmental risks such as UV radiation, extreme changes in temperature and humidity, dust, and debris.

Accessibility Challenges

The collection catalog records have not been fully converted from paper card catalogs and bound books to a searchable database. Existing records for the Mining Museum Collection are on card catalogs with inadequate descriptions lacking notes on provenance or object significance. The Jamison Museum Trust and the Jamison Museum Collections are entered into bound books with limited descriptions.

While 20,300 of these records have been entered into a basic Microsoft Access database, the entries have only limited descriptions and the only searchable fields are item name, category, and material. The location fields in the database and catalog only include the room where the object is located, but no details about the exact shelf, storage unit, or location within the room. This makes it very difficult for staff, volunteers, and researchers to physically find objects. Without a staff member proficient in database management, using Microsoft Access has many challenges, as it can be difficult to create new queries and use the software to its fullest capability as this program requires a lot of knowledge to use correctly.

Physical Challenges

The main collections storage area of the Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums is the second floor of a 1905 former Platteville High School, the Hanmer Robbins Building, which was converted to a Museum in the early 1980s.

Currently 75% of the collection are being housed on open wooden or metal shelves lined with acid-free paper. Dust and debris regularly land on the artifacts.

The collection has not been a priority in museum staff work plans until recently. From 1981 to May of 2015, the museum director position was filled by an individual with an interest in history, but no background in museum studies or conservation. The former director did not understand the importance of collections management and didn't prioritize collections care in staff work plans. The museums did have a full-time curator during this time; but she was tasked with exhibit development, administrative work, and customer service, not collections management. Unfortunately, as a result, the museums' collection was neglected.

Some steps were taken to improve collections, including a conservation assessment in 1991 (Supporting Document #1). This project aims to address the needs of the collections as identified in a January 1991 conservation assessment done by Alexandra Allardt-O'Donnell, a conservator specializing in the conservation of historic and archaeological materials. The collection was examined for the purpose of defining the conservation needs and priorities.

The following is a list of recommendations from the 1991 Collections Assessment and what has been accomplished in the past twenty-five years:

Recommendation	Action Taken or Planned
Develop a long-range plan	Strategic Planning done in 2006 and 2015. The 2015 plan lists collections improvements as top level priority.
Develop a Collections policy to establish the policies, procedures, and responsibilities for acquisition, deaccession, care and use of the objects in the collection of the museum.	Policy written and approved by Museum Board in May 1992. The policy was revised and approved by board in October 2015.
Investigate the feasibility of installing a central HVAC system to maintain consistent temperature and humidity levels.	Deemed unfeasible due to budget prior to 2015. A 2016 environmental assessment deemed installing HVAC system unfeasible as part of ensured energy savings plan due to costs and implementation complications.
Purchase recording thermohydrographs to document the ambient conditions.	Purchased in 1991. Stopped using sometime in early 2000s. Starting using again in November 2015.
Clean, seal and paint individual storage rooms.	Planned for Winter 2017.
Add a full time registrar position	Deemed not feasible due to budget constraints in 1990s. Hiring a temporary part time collections manager is addressed by this project.
Line shelves with polyethylene expanded micro-foam liner	Addressed by this project.
Seal windows to protect from light and environmental fluctuations	Grant written and awarded to purchase supplies in 2016. One storage room finished in November 2016, the others scheduled to be finished in January 2017.
Replace open shelving with enclosed powder coated modular metal cabinets or appropriate boxes	Addressed by this project.

Investigate feasibility of compactor storage in the Rollo Jamison Museum storage areas	Addressed by 1991 IMS funded CAP Architectural assessment and determined unfeasible due to weight restrictions.
Cover textile collection with dust covers	Completed in 1993.
Deaccession of natural history specimens	Natural history collection inventoried in January 2016. Board approved recommendations for deaccession in February 2016. Objects deaccessioned and disposed of in March 2016.
Implement regular maintenance program	November 2016.
Implement pest management plan and purchase the standard reference: <i>A Guide to Museum Pest Control</i>	Resource text along with Pest Management kit and insect traps purchased and implemented in November 2016.
Remove all objects from storage aisles or store them on padded dollies or hand carts.	Planned for Winter 2017.

Since the June 2015 hiring of Director Diana Bolander, who holds professional degrees in museum studies, staff work plans have included collections management and efforts are underway to educate the Museum Board about proper preservation methods and organizational conservation needs. Finishing the work recommended in the 1991 Collections Assessment has been a high priority. Progress to date is detailed above and in the attached Strategic Plan Summary.

The museums were poised to continue in this trajectory until the City of Platteville announced upcoming budget cuts for 2017 and 2018. The Museums face a budget reduction of \$20,000 for 2017 and a \$105,000 reduction for 2018. These reductions will require the elimination of the Museum Curator and Museum Education Coordinator positions. Funding from the IMLS grant will allow us to continue with our current momentum on collections management improvements despite these staffing cuts. We project that we will catalog 25% of the collection during the grant year. We will also address the following from the 1991 assessment:

- Hire staff dedicated solely to collections management.
- Line shelves with polyethylene expanded micro-foam liner.
- Replace open shelving with enclosed powder coated modular metal cabinets or appropriate boxes.

Significance of the Collection

The Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums collection is a significant resource used to interpret the history of mining and daily life in Southwest Wisconsin and the region. The Mining Museum opened in 1968 to preserve and interpret the region's mining heritage. It contains 5,100 objects making it the largest collection of lead and zinc mining artifacts in the Upper Midwest. The collection includes everything from early 19th century mining tools to the industrial equipment used in the 1970s at the end of the mining era. The collection is nationally significant.

The most significant aspect of our site is the Bevans Lead Mine, first discovered in 1845, which is open and interpreted for the public. The mine is one-quarter mile long and contained valuable deposits of lead ore and remains of early lead mining activity. The Museum also offers visitors the opportunity to ride on a working historic

mine train on our acre and half of property. The 1931 Whitcomb locomotive is an example of early zinc mine transportation and provides visitors a first-person experience of mine operations.

The Jamison Museum collection consists of thousands of items that reflect the material culture of Southwest Wisconsin. The collection began as a one-man museum by Rollo Jamison of Beetown, Wisconsin in 1952. The collection includes the following large categories:

- Clothing, accessories, personal gear, adornment: 1,210 objects
- Sound communications (phonograph & cylinder records, piano rolls, 2 player pianos): 2,298 objects
- Toys: 715 objects
- Food processing & service: 856 objects
- Armaments (equipment, accessories): 535 objects

The Museums' archive includes 10,800 items including mining maps, photographs, and books.

Who Will Benefit

This project to protect and conserve our collection benefits the citizens of Platteville who have funded the museums over five decades, as well as visitors, museum members, researchers, volunteers, and staff members by making our collection more accessible to all. Almost 10,000 people visit the museum each year, including 3,000 local school children. Of our general visitors, 49% come from Wisconsin, 28% from the bordering states of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota, and 23% coming from beyond our immediate geographic region.

While the lead mine rush gets little attention in our history books, in fact, it rivals the gold rush of 1849 in historical significance. The Bevans Lead Mine and the collection are irreplaceable resources that tell the story of our region's mining history. Over the past two decades, the region has lost two of the four mining sites open to the public and now it is more important than ever to preserve the mining heritage for future generations.

How this Advances our Strategic Plan

This project would help us achieve two of the highest priority goals of our strategic plan:

- Update the collections storage areas to create safe and accessible spaces for our collections according to museum best practices.
- Complete (or make significant progress) on cataloging and digitizing the collection with Past Perfect Museum software.

This IMLS funded project will allow us to achieve these goals and protect the important historic collections of Southwest Wisconsin and the Upper Mississippi Zinc-Lead Mining District.

How the Project Addresses the Goals of the Museums for America Collections Stewardship Program?

This project aligns with goal three of the IMLS strategic plan for 2012-2016, Creating a Nation of Learners: *IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.* This project contributes to the long-term preservation of artifacts and materials; works to build

staff and volunteer knowledge and capacity as it relates to conservation; and catalogues artifacts to create a database that will facilitate research and improve engagement with the collection.

2. Project Work Plan

What specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out?

This project aims to address the highest priority identified by the materials conservator from the 1991 conservation assessment – to improve storage area conditions and accessibility to protect the collection from extreme environmental conditions and excessive overcrowding.

The goals of this project are to: (1) rehouse the collection in closed cabinets and boxes as appropriate, to protect it from UV damage and dust; (2) transfer the existing paper catalog files to PastPerfect Museum software; and, (3) enhance catalog records with updated locations, photographs of objects, search keywords, and descriptions. To accomplish this, we will:

- Hire a part-time collections manager (one-year appointment).
- Purchase powder-coated metal cabinets to replace existing open wood shelves.
- Purchase supplies to line shelves and create acid-free boxes that will protect objects from environmental fluctuations and dust.
- Use PastPerfect Museum software to inventory and catalog the collection as we move artifacts into the new cabinets.
- Clean, inventory, catalog, photograph, and rehouse objects in new storage spaces.
- Hire two collections interns to assist with the above.
- Generate reports in PastPerfect Museum software to track the number of artifacts inventoried, the number of objects cleaned, and the number of condition reports, photographs, and catalog sheets entered.

What are the risks to the project and are they accounted for in the work plan?

The risks to this project are: (1) Inconsistent and inaccurate data entry; (2) Staff are untrained in PastPerfect; and, (3) That the project will not be complete within the project year and not continue after grant funds are gone. The following actions will be undertaken to address these risks:

- We will develop a comprehensive manual for university student interns, staff, and volunteers so that everyone understands the best practices for use of PastPerfect at the Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums. This will prevent inaccuracies and incorrect processes in cataloging and handling objects.
- The collections manager will be required to view current PastPerfect training materials and attend either online or in-person training to ensure they use the system correctly and to its fullest capacity.
- We acknowledge that we cannot catalog, rehouse, inventory, and clean the entire collection in one year with three part-time staff members. We recognize that after the funding year we must sustain our progress on this strategic and essential project. We are applying for the American Alliance for Museums Assessment Program for 2017 and are planning to apply in 2019 or 2020 again for a specific collections assessment. We also plan to apply for funding for this collections management project through the National Endowment for

the Humanities, the Wisconsin Humanities Council, local foundations and private donors. We are determined to see this project through to preserve our heritage for future generations.

- The Museum Director and Museum Board are determined to see this project through after the grant project is over. They will recruit volunteers to be overseen by the Director in order to make sure that the cataloging project continues. There are other resources we can tap into, such as the local community foundation, the University of Wisconsin-Platteville PAACE program that provides paid internships for students, and support from individual donors and our Friends group to ensure our success. Given that the Museums plan to close seasonally due to budget cuts, the Director will have more time to spend on collections when our doors are closed and anticipates spending 25% of her time from November through April in collections.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

This project plan was created by the Director and project manager, Diana Bolander, and the Museums' Board President, Tracey Roberts. Ms. Bolander holds a MA in Arts Management and has over a decade of experience planning, and developing museum projects. Ms. Roberts is currently the Museum Board President and volunteers several hours a week cleaning, cataloging, and organizing the collection. She has a MA in History with graduate credits in public history. She was the curator at the Galena, Illinois History Museum for nine years and taught American History courses at University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Please see the resumes section for more information.

This project will be managed by Diana Bolander, Museum Director, who will be responsible for adhering to the schedule of completion and adjusting the plan as needed. The Museum Board led by Ms. Roberts will continually review the progress of this project at monthly board meetings. The City Manager and City Council are anxious to see progress made on this project and the museum director will report to them monthly.

The proposed collections manager and interns will be responsible for doing the work required to fulfill this project.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

- October 2017
 - Project Begins.
 - Recruit and hire a part-time collections manager.
- November 2017
 - Train collections manager.
 - Purchase supplies and equipment.
 - Begin cataloging and inventorying using PastPerfect.
- December 2017
 - Install new cabinets.
- Begin lining shelves and making storage boxes.
- Begin to rehouse objects.
- April 2018
 - Recruit and hire summer interns.
- May 2018
 - Train interns.
 - Interns begin work.
- Ongoing
 - Generate reports and disseminate them to Museum board, City Council, and City Manager.

What financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

This project requires considerable financial and personnel resources. The bulk of the financial resources (\$14,810) will be applied to hiring a part-time collections manager who will work 624 hours during the project year. Stipends

for two full-time summer student interns are also included in the request. We will recruit these interns from regional graduate programs specializing in public history. In addition, we anticipate engaging at least four University of Wisconsin-Platteville History students as volunteers to assist in this project. Professor Eugene Tesdahl is committed to providing his students with work experience at the museum and has indicated his support for the project (see Supporting Document #2).

We also require closed metal storage cabinets and supplies for creating safe environments for artifacts. Of the total budget, \$8,647 will go towards 5 closed storage cabinets that will replace wooden shelving units. Box-making and shelf-lining materials will cost \$1,503 and give the museum director, collections manager, and the interns the materials they need to be successful in their tasks.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

Progress will be measured by tracking the number of artifacts inventoried, the number of objects cleaned, and the number of condition reports, photographs, and catalog sheets entered into PastPerfect. Actual installation of the new storage units and rehousing of the artifacts will be another measurement of progress. As stated previously, the Museum Board, city manager, and city council members will oversee the general progress through monthly reports.

How and with whom will you share your project's results?

We will share our results with city residents, the Platteville Regional Chamber of Commerce and other local stakeholders through our website, membership newsletter, and social media outlets. We will share our project results with local and state press at the beginning and completion of the project. We want to generate excitement about this project in the hopes of engaging volunteers and donors.

3. Project Results

This project will result in a greatly improved collections storage space at the Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums that will house the unique historic artifacts of the Upper Mississippi Zinc-Lead Mining region and the artifacts that define Southwest Wisconsin. As a result of this project, collections storage areas will be cleaner and objects will be protected from dust and debris. Entering comprehensive information into the PastPerfect Museum software will result in a searchable and accessible catalog of our large collection. With that improved access, museum staff can develop exhibits that fully utilize the extent of the collection, which is currently not possible. In addition, researchers will have increased access to primary sources which will facilitate discovery and scholarship about regional mining history.

As the Museum Board and staff recognize the importance of collections stewardship as a highest priority in our 2016-2018 strategic plan, going forward collections management is a measure on which staff evaluations will be based. The Director will be responsible for ensuring that the regular and ongoing collections maintenance is done according to museum standards. Museum Board members will tour collections storage areas annually to ensure that standards are being met.

City of Platteville, The Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums

IMLS Museums for America

The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums Collection Stewardship Project

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