



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-245744-OMS-20
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Public Access

Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$48,255
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-245744-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Public Access

1. Project Justification

The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums are seeking \$48,255 from the IMLS Inspire! Grants for Small Museums to support a two-year project entitled Improving Collections Care and Public Access at The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums. The project will use best practices in collections stewardship as instituted by the American Alliance for Museums and improve the long-term preservation and accessibility of our collections. The project will address overcrowding, lack of organization, a backlog of uncatalogued Board accessioned artifacts, and less-than-ideal storage conditions. It will improve intellectual control of the collection to provide greater accessibility for museum staff, researchers, students, and the public. This project will advance critical work started under IMLS Museums for America (MFA) funding in 2017 (MA-31-17-0557-17 Final Report, Supportingdoc3.pdf).

This project addresses two challenges the Museums face as an institution tasked with preserving the material culture of southwestern Wisconsin's unique Upper Mississippi Valley Lead-Zinc Mining District:

1) **Physical risks:** With the help of the 2017 IMLS MFA grant the most vulnerable collections, the archives and the textiles, were moved from the unconditioned Hanmer Robbins building to the Rock School which is temperature and humidity controlled. However, over half of the total collection is still stored on the largely unconditioned third floor of the Hanmer Robbins building where artifacts are exposed to uncontrolled changes in temperature and humidity (Supportingdoc4.pdf). Storage areas are overcrowded with artifacts stored in walkways and unboxed on open wooden or metal shelves. These conditions allow the artifacts to become soiled, corroded, and otherwise degraded (Supportingdoc5.pdf). The crowding and lack of organization also creates a safety hazard and makes access and cataloging challenging.

2) **Accessibility:** While about 15% of our collections has been organized, cleaned, catalogued, and rehoused in acid free boxes, 85% of the collections remain difficult to access by staff and are effectively not accessible to researchers and the public. Existing accession records for the Mining Museum Collection are in catalog books and in a card catalog system and lack appropriate descriptions. The Rollo Jamison Trust Collection and the General Collection are entered in bound books by accession number but with limited descriptions. Since only 15% of the collection records have been entered into a searchable database, staff cannot search for objects without walking through collections storage spaces. There is also a backlog of about 300 accessioned items that have not been catalogued or numbered due to lack of focus on collections care from 2005 through 2015.

These needs were first identified in a Conservation Assessment Program review in 1991; however, collections care was not a priority in staff work plans until 2015 (See Organizationalprofile.pdf for details). Since 2015 the Museums have had a renewed focus on building organizational capacity and improving collection stewardship. In 2017 the Museums completed an Organizational Assessment through the Museum Assessment Program (MAP Summary, Supportingdoc6.pdf). The assessor's report concluded that, "the area of greatest concern in the MRJM operations is in collections stewardship." In 2018, the Museum Board with broad stakeholder support, developed and adopted a strategic plan making collections management the highest priority. Thanks to 2017 IMLS MFA funding, the Museums have made a good start on improving collections care.

Despite severe cuts to the Museum budget there has been additional progress since the 2017 grant ended. In November 2018 the paper collection was moved to the climate-controlled Rock School. In 2019 City Capital Improvement Funds were used to repair 52 windows in the Hanmer Robbins building. All window sashes and sills were restored and caulked to tighten building envelope, and UV-filtering window film and breathable solar shades were installed to curb photodegradation of artifacts. Grant funds awarded in July 2019 by the Wisconsin Historical Society with matching funds from the Friends of the Museums enabled the immediate purchase of five dehumidifiers. These changes were made to improve the collections storage environment and moderate temperature and humidity fluctuations in the short term until plans for mechanical system improvements are implemented. Furthermore, in June 2019 the City approved the reallocation of restructured Museum funding among part-time LTE positions to enable offering a minimum of 126 hours per year to Collections Manager Tracey Roberts. A

Long-Range Plan for Collections Care and Facilities Improvement has been drafted and adopted by the Friends Board (Supportingdoc2.pdf). The Museums are also applying for a Collections Assessment Preservation (CAP) Program grant through the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) as the 1991 CAP is severely outdated. The Museums are committed to completing a CAP in 2020 and will self-fund the assessment through special project funds if needed.

The three collections of The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums are a nationally significant resource spanning the areas of cultural history, natural history, and science and industry. They document the pre-historic Native American cultures that inhabited the region and the pioneer history and way of life of the Upper Mississippi Valley mining district from the 1830s to the 1970s. The presence of the Bevans Lead Mine adds significance to our Museum. First discovered in 1845, the quarter mile long mine contained valuable deposits of lead and operated as a working mine until the 1860s. The Museums provide four tours daily of the mine from May through October.

This project to maximize the long-term preservation of the collections benefits a range of stakeholders interested in interpreting the region's way of life. These include the Museum and Collections themselves, the Museum Board and staff; residents of Platteville who have funded the museums over five decades, museum visitors, and researchers. Since 2015 the Museums have increased collaboration with University of Wisconsin-Platteville students and faculty. This collaboration has led to new understandings of the cultural diversity of the mineral district and resulted in a collaborative museum exhibit on African American lead miners, which was awarded the Beselme-Orrell Mining Heritage Award from the Mining History Association in 2019 and highlighted on Wisconsin Public Radio (<https://www.wpr.org/uw-platteville-students-document-african-american-mining-history>). The unique, historic map and drawing collection, which will be a priority for this project, are a significant resource for researchers around the world interested in MVTs.

The City of Platteville Museum Board, Friends of the Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums Board, staff, and community stakeholders drafted strategic plans in 2015 and 2018 that identified Collections Stewardship as central to the vision to be the premiere mining and regional history institution in the Upper Midwest. As part of the Strategic Plan's collections stewardship goal, the Museums are charged with exploring grant funding for collections care. The team is anxious to increase the Collections Manager's hours and to move forward with this collections care project (Supportingdoc7.pdf). This project also supports our goal to develop new and more interactive exhibits and will help inform facilities space-use decisions and future master planning as directed by the strategic plan.

The project will address IMLS and Inspire! Program goals of strengthening collections care and expanding access to collections and associated resources. Collections stewardship work undertaken since 2015 has already led to new insights about how the Museums can help to define the character of our region, provide rich learning experiences, and to better share history with the public. Better intellectual control of our collections will help the Museums reevaluate how to make our assets more accessible and interpretations more relevant to individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances. New exhibit concepts are being developed as objects are discovered, cleaned and cataloged, providing fresh inspiration for the stories they tell.

2. Project Work Plan

Improving Collections Care and Public Access at The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums will continue work started in 2017 under IMLS MFA funding. The 2017 project served as a pilot. Funding from an Inspire! grant will enable the Museums to scale up work based on what was learned in 2017 regarding the challenges of and the resources required to accomplish our preservation goals.

The overall goals of the project are to organize, assess, clean, inventory, digitally catalog in PastPerfect, and to rehouse at least 7,000 objects—20% of our approximately 35,000-piece collections, bringing the total cataloged to 35%. The PastPerfect catalog entries will include improved descriptions, keywords, quality photographs, and updated location information (Sample entry, Supportingdoc8.pdf). As items are evaluated, any that are inconsistent with our Collections Policy (Supportingdoc9.pdf) or are broken or damaged beyond repair will be recommended for deaccessioning, thus helping deal with overcrowding and organization. This will also allow the Museums to begin

increasing public access to our collection by displaying more of the stored artifacts with accurate interpretive signage and providing a PastPerfect workstation at the Museums for researchers and the public.

In order to facilitate the most efficient and functional storage plan, the first task will be to refine and digitize the finding diagrams for the collections storage areas. Current paper finding diagrams were made before the archival and textile collections were moved to the Rock School. With the removal of these collections, the use of space in the Hanmer Robbins building needs to be reevaluated. This process will include 1) estimating the linear and square footage space requirements of each category of artifact, i.e. tools, household, mining equipment, etc.; 2) determining space available in each room; and 3) deciding the best use of each space based on environmental conditions and the needs of the various categories of artifacts.

Collections care work will proceed based on the following priorities: vulnerability of the artifact, alignment with the Collections Policy, and usefulness to researchers. Based on these criteria, items will be addressed in the following order (see Long-Range Plan, Supportingdoc2.pdf and Logic Model, Supportingdoc10.pdf for additional details).

- 1) **Mining maps and drawings.** These maps and drawings define our Lead-Zinc Mining District; many are hand-drawn and singular. Many are tightly rolled or folded, and some are coated in dirt and debris. The maps will be hydrated and flattened using preservation best practices, cleaned, cataloged and re-housed in our five large archivally safe map drawer units. Approximately 375 of these artifacts, about half of the collection, have been preserved and cataloged.
- 2) **Bound regional newspaper collection.** This collection includes around 225 bound volumes which have never been fully accessioned or numbered. They need to be documented, labeled, cleaned, and catalogued. These publications are not widely available on microfilm and are a valuable regional resource. Our oldest bound volume is from 1845, the era marked by the height of the lead mining rush.
- 3) **Mining and regional photo and postcard collection.** The collection includes about 500 photos and 300 postcards; of which about 100 have been catalogued and rehoused. The remaining photos and postcards will be catalogued and rehoused in acid-free sleeves and stored in acid-free boxes. The mining photos are particularly valuable to our collection and are used in exhibits to tell the story of lead and zinc mining.
- 4) **Textile collection.** Almost all the textiles have been moved to the climate-controlled Rock School and about 200 items have been rehoused and catalogued. About 500 more items need to be catalogued and rehoused. Sturdy items that are safe to hang are hung on padded hangers. More fragile items are housed in appropriate acid-free tissue and boxes. Items that still need to be moved to the Rock School include large shelving units that hold rolled carpets and large textiles and fur blankets. Once these are moved, they will be evaluated, cleaned, catalogued, and rehoused.
- 5) **Bound book collection** (including mining, history, and government publications). All books have been moved to the Rock School, organized, and sorted. Duplicates or severely damaged items were deaccessioned by the Board per policy. About 20% has been cataloged and rehoused, starting with books related to mining and local history; but 80% remains in boxes. Books will be organized according to the Library of Congress system; cleaned, cataloged, and housed upright in acid free archival boxes. Storage for heavy and large books will be constructed from acid free archivally safe materials.
- 6) **Accessioned artifacts from 2009-2015.** The former curator did not process approximately 300 artifacts accessioned in 2009-2015. Of these, about 50 have now been processed. The remaining boxed items will be sorted and evaluated to determine their usefulness to the collections. Staff will then research their provenance; complete deed of gift forms and artifact worksheets; assign accession numbers and label, tag, or mark artifacts with the accession number; and clean, catalog, and rehouse the objects.
- 7) **Paintings on canvas and wood, framed and unframed.** The Museum has a small collection of large paintings. Based on accession records it appears the paintings are a mix of landscapes, portraits, and mid-20th century paintings of Civil War soldiers. Most appear to be oils. Their value to our collection is not known at this time. Paintings will be located, evaluated for relevance and conservation needs, cleaned or scheduled for conservation as needed, cataloged, and rehoused in archivally safe storage units.

- 8) **Paper Ephemera.** Some of the paper ephemera has been catalogued but several boxes have not been processed. The collection includes several local labels and advertisements related to clothing businesses and regional breweries which are generally very interesting to local residents and can shed light on life in this region over the past 100 years. Paper ephemera will need to be located, sorted, evaluated (with damaged or irrelevant objects recommended for deaccession), cataloged, and rehoused in poly sleeves.
- 1) **Furniture collection, upholstered and un-upholstered.** Furniture will first need to be located and sorted by type and/or preservation needs. It will then be evaluated, with items that are broken beyond repair or outside the collections policy recommended for deaccession. Furniture will be cleaned, repaired if needed; cataloged; and rehoused covered with clean cotton sheets.

Over the two-year project period starting in October 2020 this project will increase the hours of the part-time Collections Manager and hire interns; purchase archival supplies; clean, inventory, photograph, and catalog objects using PastPerfect; rehouse objects according to best practices; and create a PastPerfect workstation at the Museums (See Logic Model, Supportingdoc10.pdf and Budgetjustification.pdf for details).

Following are some potential risks to the project along with how these risks will be addressed.

1. The 2020 CAP could take longer than anticipated or could identify different priorities than those planned. Staff will work with the CAP assessors to complete the CAP in a timely manner and make any necessary adjustments to the current work plan and priorities, and will work closely with IMLS on any such changes.
2. Differing levels of project staff familiarity with PastPerfect could impact consistency of data entry and time it takes to complete entry. The Collections Manager will ensure that collections staff are trained in using PastPerfect and handling artifacts. All project personnel will use our in-house PastPerfect best practices manual (Supportingdoc11.pdf) to reduce inaccuracies and incorrect processes in cataloging and handling objects. The Collections Manager will oversee staff training and perform quality control checks on data entry.
3. Finding funds to complete the project could be challenging, but the Museums are determined to secure funding from multiple sources for this strategic goal. The Friends of the Museum are already allocating \$2,000 per year to collections stewardship in support of the Collections Manager position beyond their other commitments towards general operating expenses, and are now working towards a capital campaign per the Long-Range Plan for Collections Care and Facilities Improvement. The Museums have had success with grant funding from multiple sources and will continue to seek grants and donations to fulfill short-term needs while securing long-range funding.

This project plan was developed by Museum Director Erik Flesch and Collections Manager Tracey Roberts. Mr. Flesch is experienced in historic preservation and fund development. Ms. Roberts is an experienced curator and collections manager (Resumes.pdf). Flesch will manage the project, meet at least bi-weekly with Roberts to discuss progress, problems, and needs; adhere to the schedule of completion; and adjust the plan as needed. Flesch will report on project progress to the Museum Board at monthly board meetings, and to the Platteville City Manager and City Council in progress reports. Flesch and Roberts will recruit interns to assist Roberts with completing the project. Roberts will supervise all interns and volunteers to ensure artifacts are handled properly and that cataloging is done correctly. See Schedule of Completion Plan and Logic Model for timeline and work plan details.

The bulk of the financial resources will be applied to staff. This includes a part-time Collections Manager, who will work 1,360 hours during the project (\$27,200 plus fringe) and interns, who will work 1,360 hours (\$14,960 plus fringe). Interns will be recruited from regional undergraduate and graduate programs specializing in history or public history. In addition, it is anticipated the project will engage at least four University of Wisconsin-Platteville History students as volunteers or work-study participants to assist in this project. Dean Melissa Gormley of the College of Liberal Arts and Education is committed to partnering with the Museums and has written in support of this project (Supportingdoc12.pdf). Funds will also be used for archival supplies and a portable photo studio to ensure proper storage of artifacts and quality photographs (\$2,869).

Progress will be measured by tracking the number and overall percentage of artifacts cleaned and inventoried; and the number of artifact worksheets entered into PastPerfect. The percentage of the storage areas organized will be another measurement of progress. Progress will be reported monthly to the Museum Board, Friends of the Museums Board, City Manager, and City Council. The Museums will use the results of the pending 2020 CAP to adjust priorities and modify the work plan if needed.

3. Project Results

The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums are commissioned to be a custodian of the past; to interpret the rich lead and zinc mining heritage of the region, as well as to preserve, interpret, and display the artifacts that define Southwest Wisconsin. This project to improve collections care and public access will move our institution a step closer to our strategic goals of caring for our collections according to professional standards and providing a fun and enjoyable Museum experience.

The project will help address the physical risks to the collections and improve accessibility. The physical risks will be addressed by organizing objects and storage spaces so that the needs of the artifact are balanced with the environmental conditions of the space, cleaning and rehousing objects in proper storage materials based on museum best practices. The project will prioritize collections based on their vulnerability; importance to our mission, and usefulness to researchers. Public access will be improved through better organization with like items places together; creating digital catalog records in PastPerfect which will include detailed descriptions, keywords, photos, and location; and providing a workstation at the Museums for research. Cataloging the collection will also greatly improve intellectual control of the Museum collections.

Given the current precarious and inaccessible state of the collections, the key outcomes of this project are collections preservation and profoundly improved access. Success will be measured against the following four measurable outcomes using the evaluation methods indicated. Additional detail in attached Logic Model, Supportingdoc10.pdf.

- 1) Collections are preserved for future generations according to museum best practices. The extent to which collections are preserved will be measured by the number of objects processed (accessed, cleaned, cataloged, and rehoused) with a goal of 20% of the collection or approximately 7,000 objects.
- 2) Museum staff have a clear understanding of the breadth and scope of the collection (intellectual control) to enable interpretation, exhibit development, and programming. Intellectual control of the collection will be measured quantitatively by the number of PastPerfect entries completed and qualitatively by asking staff to assess how much their knowledge of the collection improved.
- 3) Staff, researchers, and the public can access the collection records through a searchable database. Public access will be measured by the number of PastPerfect entries completed and the creation of a workstation at the Museums that is available to the public.
- 4) Museum visitors enjoy fun, engaging exhibits and programming and learn about the history of the region through improved interpretation and exhibits. This long-term goal will be measured through visitor surveys at regular intervals from 1-3 years post-project.

As noted previously, the Museums are committed to fulfilling its strategic goal to improve collections stewardship. The Long-Range Collections Care and Facilities Plan outlines key goals and funding sources. The City remains a major supporter, but staff must rely on grants and donations to fund collections stewardship to deal with the backlog created by decades of inattention to the collection. The Friends of the Museums provide an annual stipend for collections care and are working towards a capital campaign that will positively impact the collections. Funding from an IMLS Inspire! Grant for Improving Collections Care and Public Access at The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museum will help us leap forward with stewardship work, starting with protecting the most vulnerable paper and textile objects in our collections. Artifacts will be cleaned, inventoried, catalogued, and properly rehoused to protect against deterioration. A growing PastPerfect database with detailed descriptions of provenance and significance will facilitate research, exhibits, and programs while protecting the objects from excessive handling.

