

STATUS REPORT

January 20, 2010

TO: Mechelle Lawrence-Adams, Executive Director

FROM: Catherine Hayes, Museum Conservator

SUBJECT: Museum Status Report

The following report is a status on museum related projects since the Board's last update.

1) Gold Fever Exhibition Opens

The Mission successfully opened "Gold Fever! Untold Stories of the California Gold Rush" in conjunction with the California Exhibition Resources Alliance (CERA) in October.

The exhibition consists of numerous text panels and period props, and is on display within in the West Wing through March 2010. The Museum Department augmented the exhibition with loaned, purchased props, and borrowed artifacts for use within display, and also developed an interactive gold miner's campsite for children. The exhibition is a success and has been well received by teachers, students, and guests.



The photo on the left shows the "Gold Fever" exhibit from the north end of the exhibit gallery. In the foreground, an interpreted exhibit case displays period props and artifacts to augment the text of the panels visible in the middle ground of the photo. The photo on the right shows the interactive "Miners' Campsite" that augments the display cases and text panels in the southern portion of the gallery.

2) "Ladies of Lincoln" Ready to Start Traveling

Produced in-house through the efforts of the Artifacts Council and museum staff, "The Ladies of Lincoln's Era" exhibit focuses on 12 prominent female figures of the Civil War era and their contributions to the war effort and society. The original exhibit was

displayed last February to March 2009. With no immediate plans for its use after it had closed, the exhibit was placed into storage.

The opportunity to showcase the exhibit to other small museums came when it caught the attention of the California Exhibition Resources Alliance (CERA) during one of their site assessments in preparation for the “Gold Fever” exhibition. CERA is a nonprofit organization that specializes in creating accessibility to museum quality exhibition for smaller museums that have no staff or resources to produce their own temporary exhibits in-house. With the Exhibit’s easy installation, unique historical perspective, and small linear footage requirements, CERA deemed it to be ideal for many of their clientele. The exhibition is now a part of their historic exhibition catalogue.

In preparation for travel, the Museum Department has been by gathering reference sources and exhibit support data on the women and documenting the posters themselves. The exhibit will be available to rent through CERA starting in fall 2010.



The photo to the left is a sample of one of the panels to be included in the “Ladies of Lincoln’s Era” traveling exhibition. This photo will be retained in the Mission’s catalogue files and will be relied on to assess any conditional changes to the poster over time.

3) Conserved Painting and Frame are Re-installed in the Historic Serra Chapel

Through the generous support of donors, the large painting of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and its frame have been conserved. While the painting required the preservation services of paintings conservator, Aneta Zebala to clean and stabilize it, Mission museum staff performed the necessary repairs and backing of the frame to prepare for the hanging of the newly conserved artwork.

Sometime in the 1920s the painting was framed within an ornate, gold painted, plaster frame and then embedded in the west wall of the Serra Chapel. This unique hanging style made both objects immovable and the painting inaccessible. Over 80 years of permanent display exacted a toll on the painting and made it necessary to remove the trapped artwork and frame from the wall.



Before Treatment



After Treatment

The before and after treatment photos of the painting illustrate the severity of dirt and grime accumulations present on the artwork prior to conservation. In addition to cleaning, the paintings conservator backed the historic canvas for added support, replaced the termite-damaged stretcher, leveled out bulges in the canvas, and filled and painted areas of paint loss.

The pronounced flex observed in the framework after de-installation revealed that the original designer never planned for the frame to support its own weight. This fact helps explain why builders embedded the piece within the wall of the chapel. Before re-hanging the work, the Museum Conservator designed a secondary backing frame made from lightweight non-corrosive aluminum that helped to stabilize the structure and prevent any future losses and cracks.



As shown in the photo on the left, threaded inserts were set with epoxy into the back of the frame in preparation for mounting the backing frame. As seen in the photo on the right, screws were wound through the backing frame and into the threaded inserts to provide the rigidity needed to stabilize the cracked plaster frame.



Museum staff filled areas in the frame that sustained losses during the de-installation with new plaster as seen in the photo on the left. The right photo shows the same areas painted to blend with the surrounding frame.



In the photo on the left, Mission San Juan Capistrano staff makes final adjustments to level the frame and ensure all is secure. Pictured in the right photo is the newly conserved painting and frame installed within the Sanctuary of the Serra Chapel.

4) Mission Patent of Title to be Loaned to the Orange County Archives

A color reproduction of Mission San Juan Capistrano's Patent of Title signed by Abraham Lincoln and formerly displayed within the West Wing, is to be loaned to the Orange County Archives for a temporary exhibit they are hosting on President Lincoln. The exhibit titled "Abraham Lincoln: Self Made in America" focuses on Lincoln's life and presidency and the document provides a local connection between Orange County and Lincoln's administration.

In preparation for the loan, the Mission's reproduction and its display case were cleaned. The numerous scratches and abrasions in the Plexiglas display case were polished out by hand to increase the clarity of the case. In preparation for transport to the display gallery at the end of the month, the document and case was wrapped and packaged after cleaning.

The exhibit debuts at the end of January and will be on display in the temporary exhibit gallery on the third floor of the Old County Court House in Santa Ana until the end of February. Staff is pleased to be able to facilitate the item's loan and to assist in delivering a unique piece of Orange County's and the Mission's history to the public.



To the left, the reproduction of Mission San Juan Capistrano's Patent of Title signed by then President Abraham Lincoln. The photo documents the existing condition of the object and will be added to the catalogue record.

5) Historic Processional Silver Receive a Cleaning before Christmas

Prior to the Christmas season each year, the historic processional silver items displayed within the Serra Chapel are removed for cleaning and polishing. The cleaning is needed to remove dirt and fingerprints that are acquired due to their open display. A mild polishing was performed to return some of the luster to the metal. A synthetic paste wax was also applied to cleaned surfaces to seal and protect the silver.



Before cleaning



After cleaning

6) Unmasking Zorro Exhibit: Coming Soon

Planning and designing for a temporary summer exhibit titled, "Unmasking Zorro" will explore the public's fascination with the Zorro character through movie props, memorabilia, and costumes dated from the 1920s to the present. The exhibit is set to debut on June 1, 2010 and will run until August 31, 2010. The exhibit will be hosted in the West Wing where "Gold Fever" presently resides.

7) New Museum Cases Ordered

In preparation for hosting future traveling exhibits of higher caliber and value, the Museum Department has completed its competitive bid for the fabrication of ten custom designed, archival museum display cases for use within the temporary exhibit gallery in the West Wing. The museum grade cases will allow the Mission to host highly valued artifact exhibits that have stringent environmental requirements (which at present we do not have the capability to meet).

These new cases will replace the old wooden pedestal and Plexiglas display cases that the Mission is currently using. The old cases are problematic because they produce corrosive wood acid vapors, offer minimal security to the collection inside as they cannot be locked, and they cannot be sealed to regulate the internal environment. Furthermore, all cases have water damage, which has ruined the finish and opened joints in the woodwork.

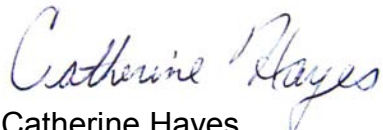
The contract was awarded to Universal Exhibits (UE) located in South El Monte, California. UE has 60 years of experience in museum case design and fabrication. UE has fabricated museum cases for such institutions as The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art in Santa Ana and The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Fabrication will begin in earnest and the cases are to be ready by Wednesday April 7, 2010 and will be used as part of the Zorro exhibition.

8) New Painting Commissioned for the Serra Chapel

Monsignor Holquin has commissioned Granda Liturgical Arts to create a painting of the Blessed Junipero Serra for the Serra Chapel. The large oil on canvas painting is to depict a heavenly gazing Father Serra on a path between two churches- a basilica in his homeland in Majorca and the Great Stone Church of Mission San Juan Capistrano, his adopted home. The painting is to be hung over a set of exit doors in the east wall of the Chapel when it is completed in the summer of 2010.

This concludes the Museum Status Report at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Hayes
Museum Conservator