

STATUS REPORT

May 12, 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 Closes

The end of March 2010 marked the closure of the exhibition "Gold Fever! Untold Stories of the California Gold Rush." On view for six months, it was enjoyed by over 131,000 visitors and received many positive reviews.

After the exhibit closed, panels were crated for shipping, and all furnishings and props from the exhibit were removed to storage to make way for planned structural and environmental improvements to the West Wing.



The photo on the left shows the de-installation of exhibit cases and prop items from the exhibit gallery. The photo on the right shows one of the four crates containing "Gold Fever" exhibit panels being transported to the shipping truck that will ship the exhibition to its next destination.

2) Preparations for the New Summer Exhibit "Zorro Unmasked" Underway

In preparation for the upcoming exhibit the Museum Department has been surveying and documenting the collection since its arrival in late March and has also produced a promotional video, currently available for viewing on the webpage "YouTube" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKSZaBu9MJo>) by a direct link from the Mission's website. Additionally, the high quality, specialty museum cases order several months ago to display the sensitive Zorro memorabilia and future exhibit items are scheduled to be delivered and installed Tuesday May 4, 2010.



The photo to the left is one of the movie posters included within the Zorro collection. This and other Zorro memorabilia are planned to be placed on display.

3) Historic Painting Undergoes Conservation

Through the generous support of donors, the painting titled “The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth” has been removed from display within the Sacristy of the Serra Chapel for conservation. The painting has numerous holes within the canvas, paint loss and tears. Additionally, the animal glue used to adhere the canvas to the backing board support had lost its adhesion and is no longer firmly holding the canvas flat, which is promoting paint loss.

The extent of damage and problematic backing of the canvas meant that the painting needed to be conserved to prevent future tearing and image loss. The services of painting conservator, Aneta Zebala, were secured for this project. The painting is currently undergoing conservation and should be completed by mid June.

(See before treatment images of the painting on page 3.)



Before Treatment



Before Treatment



Before Treatment

The photo to the left shows holes, losses, poor framing support and dulled varnish. The detailed photos to the right show more specific damage. The top photo shows areas of paint loss in the dedication text at the bottom of the artwork. The bottom photo shows budging of the canvas where tape has been placed behind the canvas to stabilize a tear. The tape has distorted the canvas causing a secondary tear in it.




During Treatment

The photo to the left shows the painting during treatment after an initial cleaning to remove grime and deteriorated varnish.

4) Interpretation Signs Installed within the Gift Shop

Two new signs were created and installed for the Gift Shop. The signs were produced to inform visitors about the history of the building. Image rights for the pictures used in both signs were granted by the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society who own the original images. Universal Exhibits fabricated the signs, so they would match previously made signage installed within the South Wing museum rooms last fall.

Gift Shop Building ~North Entrance

 Completed as an extension to the South Wing in 1798, the two rooms of this building served as a living quarters for the early inhabitants of the Mission. The Mission padres originally used the southern room in this building as a parlor, or *sala*, to greet and entertain visitors, and the northern portion as a dining room and office area.

After Don Juan Forster purchased the Mission in 1845, these rooms continued their role as a living space, but this time for his family. While the other unoccupied Mission buildings fell into disrepair, the Forster family's nineteen-year occupation and maintenance of the South Wing ensured this building's survival.







Image of the South Wing extension Circa 1800s
Image courtesy of the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society

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
Gift Shop Building ~South Entrance

 In 1891, the dilapidated Serra Chapel was declared too dangerous for public use, and church services were relocated to the room where you are presently standing. To make the space suitable for chapel use, the roof was raised and a staircase added to accommodate a choir loft. In 1924, after restoration enabled the Serra Chapel to be used again, this space became part of the Mission museum and then a gift shop.

Subsequent renovations to the building resulted in the addition of two large skylights, and the removal of the choir loft staircase. Although gone, evidence of this staircase is still visible; can you find it?



Circa 1891, interior photo of the South Wing chapel
Image courtesy of the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society

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Investigating Architecture
A concrete *capadita* facade was attached to the south end of the building in 1891 to reinforce the building's new role as a chapel (see page right).

Circa 1920
Image courtesy of the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society

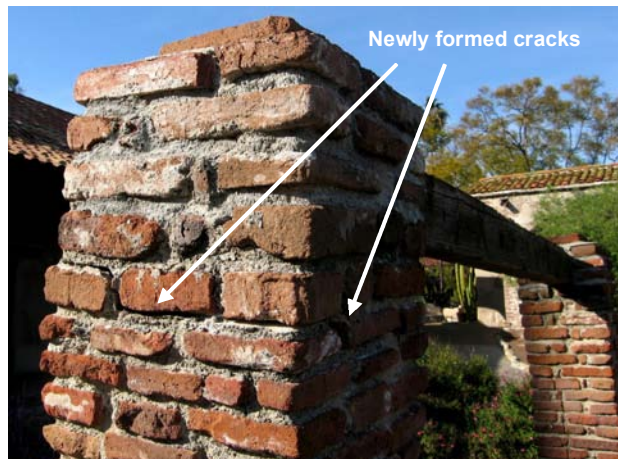
The sign on the left discusses the Gift Shop building and its previous uses. The sign on the right focuses more on the use of the southern room as a church.

5) Monitoring of the Olive Mill Site

Historical, olive crushing done here at the Mission was either done within or near the West Wing building. It was Father Mut, Mission priest from 1866 to 1886, who salvaged original Mission millstones and used them to build the olive mill presently located in the front of the Soldiers Barracks.

A condition assessment was performed in mid February when the masonry columns were found to be leaning more notably than previously witnessed. Upon inspection it became evident that entire mill site was built directly onto the ground with no foundation or gravel drainage bed. As a result, the ground on which the olive mill is situated on has experienced uneven settling over time and the pillars are visibly leaning. Settling appears to be contributed to water draining direct below the pillars and the collapse of decaying roots from a pepper tree removed years earlier.

Monitoring of the site will continue until the rain season is completed, after which, any recommendations to be made will be forwarded to Mechelle Lawrence-Adams. The next page shows images of the olive mill.



Pictured in the photo on the left is the olive mill site with the columns leaning in opposing directions due to earth compaction and settling. The photo on the right documents cracking within one of the columns.

6) Upcoming Temporary Exhibit on Lewis and Clark

A pictorial exhibition based on the journeys of Lewis and Clark rented from the California Exhibition Resources Alliance is scheduled for display within the temporary exhibit gallery this fall. Research and exhibition development has started on this exhibit and the Museum Department will be working with the Education Department to produce the exhibit, learning resources, and docent guides.

This concludes the Museum Status Report at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Hayes".

Catherine Hayes
Museum Conservator