

MAKING IT BETTER!

Notes from June 2025 International Training

We have great appreciation for all of the camps and companies caring for our pioneer artifacts and historical objects. Your work is not going unnoticed. That being said, we are always looking for ways to improve our museum expertise and to be more professional. We are all amateurs, but we can learn and do more to make our collections and museums more professional, and still keep the DUP guidelines.

Reviewing the basics:

1. Inventories are technically never "done." They can be mostly done, but may still need to be brought up to date with new acquisitions. They may need to be improved. Remember the following information should be part of your inventory :
 - a. The object with an identifying number. Every object should have an inventory number either on the object or attached with a tag. Last year we learned proper labeling techniques. If you need a review on this, let me know and I will send you that information.
 - b. Who it belonged to
 - c. Who donated it and when (if known)
 - d. Where it is located in the museum
 - e. Any provenance that is known about the object.
2. Finances - we are always looking for ways to bring funds in for our museums. Gifts shop sales, members' contributions, gifts from outside the organization, etc., are always possibilities. Do all you can to keep current, good relations with your city mayor and/or council. When they know you are active, interested and open, they will be more willing to contribute the help you may need. Remember that your camp/company members may be requested to donate to the museum along with their dues, but they are not required to donate.
3. Legal Agreements - It is a good idea to check your lease agreements (if you have leases) to see that they are up to date. Many were originally given 20 year or more leases and they may be reaching their time and need to be renegotiated. Make sure you have proper legal papers.

This year we focused on ways to improve our displays, primarily on our labeling. Some of our museums have done a great job of this. It's good to take a fresh look at how we have labeled our displays. Take a look at your artifact labels—are they fresh, clean and easy to read? Or are they yellowing, dusty, curling or faded. This one thing can make a big difference in the general appearance of your museum as visitors come.

Some things to consider in making your labels:

EFFECTIVE LABELING

There are two kinds of labels: a small label with just the basic information, and a label that may give information about the provenance or use of the object—the story behind it.

Font style and size – It should be clear and easy to read. Stick with only 2 or possibly 3 fonts styles. Be consistent. Make sure it is large enough to be read as a visitor is looking at it.

Color draws interested and makes a display come alive.



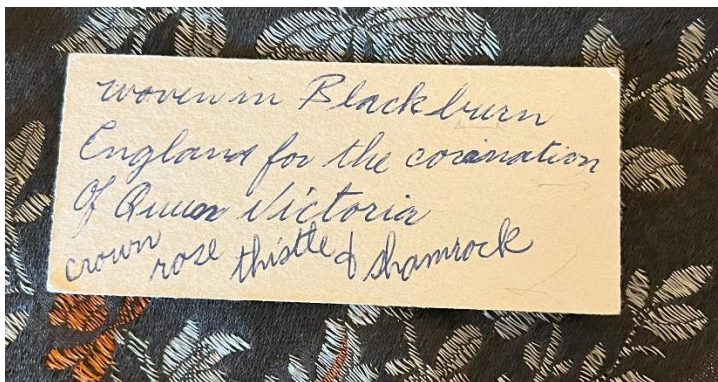
Formatting - Don't print too close to the edge or try to put too much information on the size of paper you are using. Allow white space around the writing or a simple line border can make a positive statement.

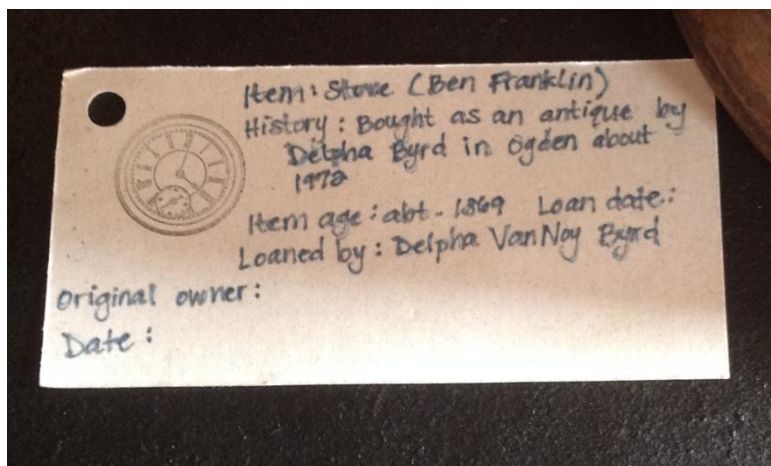
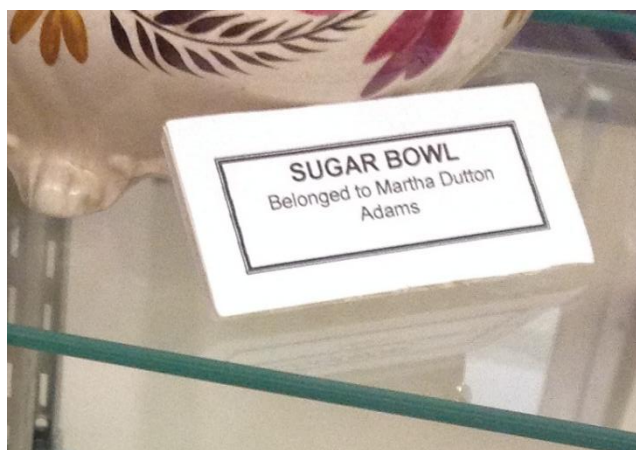
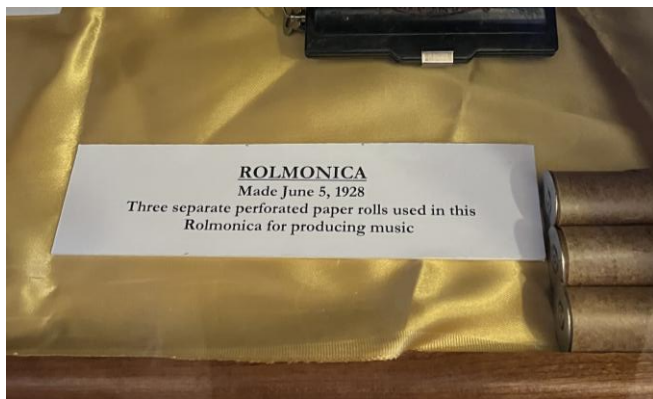
Material – Use a good heavy, acid free card stock, foam board or mat board. If you use foam board, it is best to print the information on an acid-free paper, attach it to the foam board and then cut it with an X-acto knife or cutter to make neat, even edges. A good scrapbooking, double stick tape is adequate to attach the paper to the board. Your labels are not artifacts, so you can use this kind of adhesive.

Writing - Be aware of the amount of writing you include on a label. If there is a story to be told, it may be better to make a separate board for that. No INK pens or handwriting allowed. Only pencils if needed.

Display method - No PINS, staples or paper clips, thumbtacks, etc. Small easels, tent cards or stands look best, or even just lay the label flat on the shelf in some cases. Make sure all your labels are laying the same direction! This is very important to a clean, organized appearance.

FOLLOWING ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF LABELING - Some are good, and others have problems. Look at each one and determine if it is pleasing to the eye, easy to read, and attractive in the display. What makes some better than others? (Please don't worry if you recognize something from your museum. None of these are identified and there is no judgement here. We are just learning.)







A better way to attach this label would be to put fishing line attached to the corners and hang it around the neck. Can you think of another way?



This is a good example of "Grouping" a number of related items. Notice the way all the labels are laid evenly and in the same direction.

In most of our museums, space is a big issue. We may have many more items that we really have space to display well. That requires some creativity and sometimes we just have to do the best we can.

As you study these examples, try to identify what makes one better than another. Can you think of alternate ways to display the items?



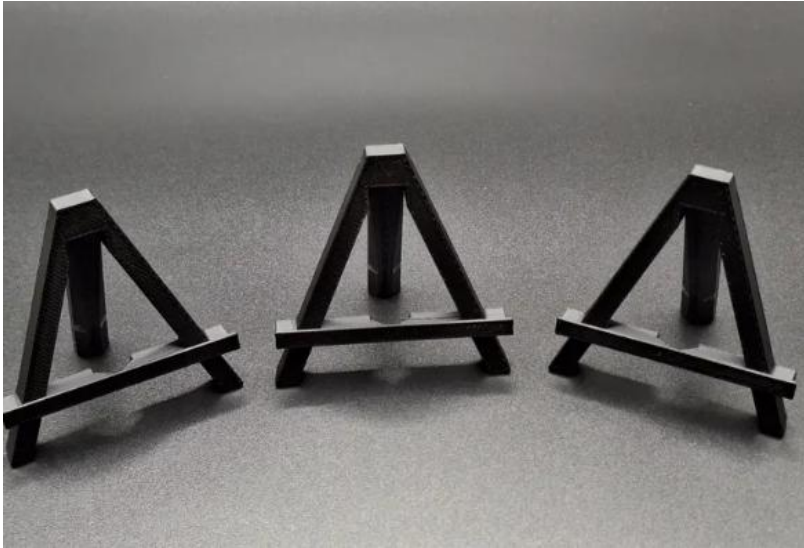
This display stand was made in one of our museums. The pages show on one side how an item was used and on the facing side, how it might be done today. It was an interesting way to teach children about pioneer objects.

Most of our museums have groups of school children who come to visit. We want to think of ways that we can help them learn and understand how the pioneers did their daily tasks. Questions, games and interactive displays are a good way to do this.



Delicate items may be displayed on a black or dark brushed nylon background. Cut a piece of acid free mat board, cover it with acid free tissue or unbleached muslin and then place the brushed nylon over it and attach on the back. This is an inexpensive and easy way to make a professional-looking display.

Many types of inexpensive, acrylic stands—large and small—are available on Amazon and Etsy.



Etsy pack of 3 \$5.00



Etsy 2 for \$2.00



Acrylic risers and boxes are available on Amazon and also in local stores.



Keep your eyes open for ideas that may be less expensive alternatives.



All this being said, don't get overwhelmed! You don't have to do everything all at once. Look around at your museum. See if you can spot one display, or one case or one artifact that you can improve. Involve your board and teach them the correct principles.

Look at other museums. Look on line at big museums and see what you can learn.

Gaylord Archival.com and others have museum quality materials. They are not cheap, but if you need them, they are good. They also have training videos on their website that are very helpful.

Finally, please feel free to call me any time with any questions you may have. If I don't know the answer, I will find out and let you know. Let me know how I can help you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO DUP AND TO THE PIONEER ANCESTORS WE HONOR.

Shortly after the founding of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Annie Taylor Hyde said,

"The future of our country will be safe in the hands of those to whom the past is dear."

That is US!