

This publication is a service of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance Connecting to Collections project.

# COLLECTIONS

## Advisor



Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

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## Taking Care of Your Building: The First Line of Defense for Your Collections

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Indiana Landmarks, [www.indianalandmarks.org](http://www.indianalandmarks.org)

If your collection is housed in a historic building, it just may be your most important artifact. It is important to care for the structure through preventive maintenance and good housekeeping. The building is also the first line of defense in caring for your collections. Without a weather-tight facility, collections are vulnerable to deterioration from moisture, pests or temperature fluctuations. Even if you have a small budget, basic preventative care will help protect your collections and eliminate expensive repairs due to deferred maintenance.

Don't wait for a disaster to make repairs. Simply eliminating areas where dirt and water enter the building provides a first defense against damage. Check for gaps around windows and under doors. Inspect attics and basements for dampness and standing water. Stains on floors and walls can indicate that water is entering the building.

Create a regular housekeeping schedule. Walk through the building and determine what needs to be done, and review what is already being done. Divide the housekeeping schedule into daily, weekly, monthly and, annual tasks. A comprehensive schedule, including a thorough cleaning of interior and exterior



Image provided by Indiana Landmarks



Image provided by Indiana Landmarks

floor mats, window sills, and air grilles, will remove much of the surface dirt that can damage floor finishes or settle on artifacts.

For those bigger jobs, know when it's best to call in a professional. A well-intentioned staff member or volunteer may wind up causing further damage. Indiana Landmarks' regional office staff can assist in finding a qualified professional to evaluate or repair maintenance issues. Indiana Landmarks staff can also help identify professionals who will train museum staff and volunteers to address basic maintenance issues.

Create a cyclical maintenance checklist to ensure your building operates efficiently and effectively. A cyclical maintenance program provides consistency from year to year. In order to establish a successful program, it is advisable to talk to a professional to evaluate existing needs and outline regular tasks. Talk to your equipment service providers to determine appropriate maintenance schedules. The schedule should include:

- Emergency contact information
- History of the building and a review of its current physical condition
- Catalog of documents associated with the building such as blueprints, reports, photographs, etc.
- Schedules and checklists for inspections
- Current list of contractors who have helped or can help with repairs
- Written procedures for care including housekeeping, as well as routine and preventative measures
- Records of work completed including warranties and receipts
- Instructions and booklets that accompany equipment

It is a good idea to keep this information in a digital file or database, but, a good, old-fashioned three-ring binder in an obvious location within the office serves as a quick back-up and provides easy access during times of transition.

Resources:

- The Heritage Preservation Services division of the National Park Service offers a free Preservation Brief on Maintaining the Exteriors of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings. Included is a helpful frequency chart for building inspections and tips on examining major building components such as roofs, chimneys, exterior walls, openings, foundations and projections like dormers, porches and balconies. A free copy of the Brief may be found at [www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief47](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief47).

[htm.](#)

- Managing Maintenance by preservation consultant John Leeke provides a guide to the development of a cyclical maintenance program including sample checklists. Visit John's website at [www.historichomeworks.com](http://www.historichomeworks.com) to purchase this or other helpful restoration reports.
- For a list of Indiana Landmarks' regional offices, visit [www.indianalandmarks.org](http://www.indianalandmarks.org). The staff is available for consultation and can provide information on our Endangered Places Grants that provide up to \$2500 to nonprofit organizations for professional architectural and engineering feasibility studies and other preservation consulting services, as well as organizational development.
- Connecting to Collections Online community [www.connectingtocollections.org](http://www.connectingtocollections.org)
- Indiana History Society Lending Resources Center [www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/lending-resources](http://www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/lending-resources)

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For more information about the Hoosier Heritage Alliance, please visit [www.indianahistory.org/hha](http://www.indianahistory.org/hha).



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