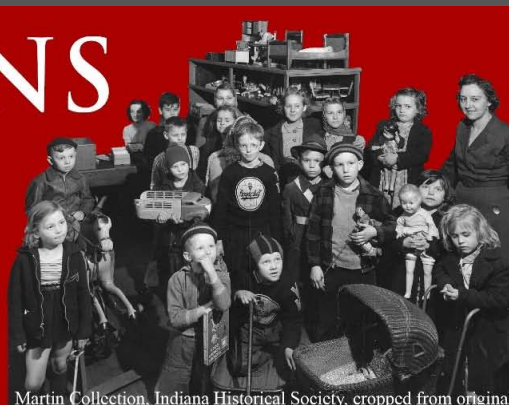


This publication is a service of the [Hoosier Heritage Alliance](#) Connecting to Collections project.

COLLECTIONS

Advisor



Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

Issue 21, July 2013

Effective Use of Awkward Wall Space

Sarah Schmidt, museum director

Huntington Historical Museum, www.huntingtonhistoricalmuseum.com

Recently, the Huntington County Historical Museum removed a massive mural from its collection that had little to do with Huntington County. While it was removed for practical purposes, and for its lack of relativity to the County, removing it created the major problem of a vast amount of “museum white space” that sat directly along a staircase, making it prime real estate for an excellent display. The board and staff surveyed the area and needed to find a display that fit three simple qualifications for their vision of preserving and sharing Huntington County History:

1. **Relevance:** Because of the large space that the wall offered, the museum needed to display Huntington in the best way possible. Relevance to the community’s past was vital for such a huge portion of the museum’s valuable room.
2. **Readability:** Small objects or pictures would cause confusion and annoyance to visitors reading about the county’s past. Any display would need to be sizable for a guest to view at least half way across a 2,800–square-foot space. It also would need to be readable from the steps as a person descended and ascended the stairs.
3. **Uniformity:** With such a large space, differing picture frames or diverse objects would be overwhelming and distracting from the exhibit. With large amounts of items, homogeneity is extremely important to focus the eye of the guest.

Fortunately for the museum, (we realize it is not always *this* easy), the board was able to obtain pictures it had loaned to a different site that no longer required them.

The 44” x 23” photographs of various scenes from the late 1800s and early 1900s of Huntington are glued on black foam board, which measures 48”x 32”. The foam board makes them lightweight and easy to mount with Command Strips™. Green tape outlines the picture and board to give the photos a clean, even border. The short description, with the date of the picture is printed in bold, ¾” letters with a white background. The bold print is easy to read from most of the room.

Lowell Richardson, past board president and volunteer at the museum, along with board member Jim Taylor and other museum volunteers, staggered the photos along the wall to fit eye level of visitors as they



Huntington Historical Museum photo wall

descend or ascend the stairs. The exhibit will be completed in the next month with museum quality lighting that shines to highlight the display.

Small museums looking to fill a large amount of museum space should look for consistent, full-size items that are relevant to the museum's vision and mission. Creative use of existing materials in awkward and unusual spaces adds to the visitor experience and allows the museum to better highlight community history.

Resources:

Canadian Conservation Institute notes

www.cci-icc.gc.ca/publications/notes/index-eng.aspx

Connecting to Collections Online Community

www.connectingtocollections.org

Conservograms

<http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservogram/conserv.html>

Indiana History Society Lending Resources Center

www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/lending-resources

Collections Advisor is getting a makeover! The August 1 issue will have a new look.

If you have any questions about the new look or have trouble receiving *Collections Advisor*, email collectionsadvisor@indianahistory.org.

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