

National Endowment for the Humanities: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

Grant Background Information:

The National Endowment for the Humanities, Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions help small and mid-sized institutions – such as libraries, museums, historical societies, archival repositories, cultural organizations, town and county records offices, and colleges and universities – improve their ability to preserve and care for their significant humanities collections.

General Preservation Assessments:

Applicants may engage a conservator, preservation librarian, archivist, or other appropriate consultant to conduct a general preservation assessment and to help draft a long-range plan of the care of humanities collection.

Smith Plantation Artifacts Background Information:

Three generations of the Smith family lived on the Smith Plantation site which was built in 1845 by Archibald Smith, one of the founders of Roswell. The site is comprised of the Archibald Smith Plantation Home, and landscaped grounds with ten original outbuildings. The Smith Plantation is an important historical and cultural resource of Roswell, and serves visitors as a representative of the American South to those who come to visit the site from throughout the state, country, and world.

The Smith Plantation site has over 20,000 artifacts, including furnishings in the Main House, and all other objects on the site, that belonged to the 3 generations of the Smith family who lived on the site.

As a largely intact collection of artifacts still located at their original location, the artifacts are extremely important to the interpretation of the Archibald Smith Plantation Home. They play a significant role in making it a unique site by preserving everyday, household items used by a middle class farm family in 19th and 20th Century North Georgia. The artifacts also represent all major decades and styles of furniture and decorative arts used in the United States from the 1840s through the mid 1960s.

The multi-generational collection of original Smith family furnishings and

artifacts, as well as the wide range of objects and time periods represented by the collection make it a valuable resource for educational programs and study, and contribute to the site's significance as one of the best examples of architectural, cultural, and historical interpretation found in the region.

Since The City of Roswell acquired the artifact collection in 2004 from the Smith family heirs, there have been numerous projects to catalog and organize the collections.

The City of Roswell has diligently maintained the Smith Plantation site, including the Main House and made improvements to the property, which it purchased from the Smith family in 1985. The Smith Plantation has been working for several years to develop an inventory of all items and develop a collections management plan (cataloging, accessing, organizing and accessioning artifacts).

The site has the Past Perfect Software Museum Management System - and information on most artifacts has been entered into this system.

The house has to the best of its ability maintained, and preserved the artifacts – examples include monitoring temperature and humidity issues for years in the Main House.

Numerous improvements, including new roof and new high efficient HVAC system, to the building known as the “Guest House,” made it a suitable place to house a lot of the more fragile artifacts, such as clothing, art work, and baskets.

The goal of all work has been to insure that art works, objects, textiles, furniture and archival documents remain in good condition for future uses in educational programs, public exhibitions, and scholarly research.

Some highlights of our artifact conservation efforts have included:

Art Work:

One of the first areas of preservation at Smith Plantation was the art work displayed in the Smith Plantation Home. Most of the art work in the Main House was in a very deteriorated condition, including the large 19th century English engravings downstairs and the 18th century hand colored bird engravings on the second floor. These pieces were being destroyed by acids found in early framing materials and by mold which obscures the image and consumes the paper.

Contributions from the Archibald Smith Plantation Home Preservationists, Inc., and The Roswell Woman's Club made it possible for Art Conservation &

Preservation Projects **which eventually led to most of the art work in the Main House being restored.**

Clothing:

The Smith Plantation has a large collection of clothing. Much of the clothing is from the Civil War era, and includes many rare and unusual items. **Most of the extensive clothing collection has been organized, cleaned, and stored in acid free tissue in archival acid free boxes.**

Tools:

Converted part of the Carriage House into an outdoor exhibit space to display tools that were brought together from the Attic and buildings all over the site and placed together along with a 19th Century horse-drawn carriage – this space is open for you to look

Baskets:

Over 200 baskets were found on the Smith site – they were located in the attic and various outbuilding. They represent everything from Cherokee Indian baskets, to slave made baskets, to high style Victorian era baskets. The majority of baskets in the Smith Plantation collections were reconditioned /cleaned and researched. They were re-housed in clean, museum-quality storage containers.

Detailed descriptions and provenance of the baskets were compiled into an exhibit Curated by Dr. Pamela Sezgin called “Garden and Hearth.” The exhibit ran from May-October, 2007. The exhibit was submitted into the Southeastern Museum Conference Curator’s Competition. You will see a small sampling of baskets in the Exhibit Room of the Main House.

Books:

The Smith Plantation book collection represents all the generations who have lived on the site. The books have been accessed, cataloged, and placed in Past Perfect.

The grant would support the preservation of these artifacts through the assessment of their current storage locations and the creation of a long-term plan for their care.