

# Mint Edition

Newsletter of the Nevada State Museum, Carson City  
Nevada Department of Tourism & Cultural Affairs

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## A Spectacular Garment

by Jan Loverin, Curator of Clothing & Textiles

As you can imagine, I look at a lot of clothes. Our collection here at the Marjorie Russell Clothing and Textile Center has garments from various design periods, beginning primarily in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our existing collection is extensive, so when I look at a potential donation, I am usually looking for something we don't already have. I may also consider an artifact that fills a void in our collection or a sensational piece based on the designer, construction, artistry, or provenience. With our current storage problem, I am even more selective. Many people have asked me exactly, WHAT I'm looking for. That really is hard to answer, because although we have collecting criteria, my decision is also quite subjective.

Last week NSM Friend, Margee McCafferty, brought in a small group of clothes for me to review. As I looked at each piece, I separated out garments in poor condition, garments which had been altered, and garments which are already represented in our

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*Title bar: Desert Peach in bloom. Photo: Pat King*

collections. I try to explain to each potential donor the reasoning for my decisions as I divide the offerings into categories: those which are not really suitable and those which are. In Margee's case, the last one we looked at was this two piece crazy quilt ensemble. It was sensational! It was in good condition—only a couple of split patches in the silk—which can be stabilized. Margee's grandmother MADE the garment and her mother wore it...

This piece is a great example of leisurewear with a wonderful geometric design, both fashionable in the 1930s. But the interesting aspect was the garment's construction: CRAZY QUILTING. Crazy quilts were popular in the later quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so this garment incorporated an older technique to create a new



fashion. The selection of 30s fabrics and the detailed stitchery on each piece makes this jacket and pants set quite intriguing. We don't have anything like it in our collections! The pants themselves are trend setting for their time. Margee was thrilled when I asked her what her plans were for this garment. It really is a

museum quality artifact that will enhance our collections. Thank you, Margee, and other potential donors for understanding our decisions on what to collect and what not to include in our collections. We aim to preserve that which is truly significant while respecting all objects which are offered.

## Editor's Note

by Deborah Stevenson



Ah, spring! I feel change in the air—sometimes as sweet as birdsong and pink blossoms—sometimes turbulent and unsettling like storms that blow in, noisy and uninvited. As the museum shifts its focus to saving the collections (see page 3), it's important to note that our educational programming remains as strong as ever. A museum, after all, is not a warehouse, but a place of learning and enrichment.

An example I am proud of is our *Explorations for Young Naturalists* program. This collection of experiential, hands-on learning activities has expanded to encompass tours during regular school hours, after-school enrichment, Family Fun Saturdays, and outreach to schools without bussing. We currently host 17 different programs that use our Discovery Lab for

scientific exploration and our classroom for art-based activities. Needless to say, when kids and families are having fun, they easily develop problem solving skills through investigation and natural curiosity.

Our Frances Humphrey Lecture Series, offered the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, is becoming ever more popular. From Peruvian archaeology to Latinos in the movies, we offer something for everyone. Coin Press No. 1 operates the last Friday of the month, stamping out commemorative medallions with the famous CC Mint Mark. Behind-the-Scenes Tours in Natural History are also offered the last Friday of the month. With collections care as our core value and education as the heart of our museum home, the Nevada State Museum will endure.



Thirteen volunteers toured the Indian Hills Curatorial Center with Curator of History, Bob Nylen, March 3, 2015. Having previously toured the Marjorie Russell Clothing and Textile Research Center with Jan Loverin and the museum's basketry vault with Gene Hattori, they were aware of curation standards for storing collections. Witnessing the substandard conditions at Indian Hills motivated eight volunteers to tour the NDOT storage facility March 19, where conditions are worse.

# Message from the Director

by Jim Barmore

The museum was created to preserve Nevada's heritage for the benefit of people today and for generations to come. Artifacts and specimens entrusted to the museum are extensive. Most were donated with the assurance of long-term care, security, and public benefit. The vast majority are not on exhibit but in storage at off-site locations. The museum presents exhibits and education programs, but first it must assure long-term preservation of collections.

Collections are not receiving adequate care and security, particularly at off-site storage facilities. The level of care does not meet national accreditation standards. Conditions are serious enough to warrant immediate action. Three exhibit galleries must provide space for at-risk collections. No other space is available. Unfortunately, this means deferring production of new changing exhibits. But, saving collections comes first. This is a fundamental responsibility and priority. Occasional small exhibits will open in limited space available in other parts of the museum.

Since the museum opened in 1941, natural history exhibits have held a central role in the mission. The museum has the finest collection of Nevada animal specimens in the state. No other museum in Northern Nevada fully conveys the state's natural history. For years the museum planned development of new exhibits. Now galleries must provide space for storage of collections. Even so, the museum remains committed to the eventual development of new natural history exhibits.

Moving collections into galleries will continue through next fall. Once secure, visible storage will open for public viewing. Visitors will see collections not seen before. Tour guides will use collections to tell new Nevada stories.

You can help save Nevada's heritage. Please contribute to the museum's collection conservation fund. For more information or questions, contact me at 775-687-4810 ext. 226 or [jbarmore@nevadaculture.org](mailto:jbarmore@nevadaculture.org).



Left: Before rehousing.  
Above: After!



Left:  
Stegomastadon  
bones.  
Below:  
Gomphotherium  
and other  
elephant bones.



## Rehousing Archaeological Collections

by Rachel Malloy,  
Anthropology Collections Manager

In the spring of 2014, the Department of the Interior approved a proposal to rehouse the Nevada State Museum's paleontological, archaeological fauna, and osteological collections. Funding for the project covers the cost of museum quality cabinets, an open-shelving storage system, miscellaneous storage supplies, and interns. Museum quality storage cabinets are essential for protection of rare and fragile specimens from dust, dirt, and pest damage. They also buffer extremes in temperature and relative humidity. The open-shelving storage units allow us to customize shelves to accommodate

various boxes and bins as well as maximize the height of the storage area. This is an essential feature as the museum is critically short on curation space. Interns Chenay Pointer-Buelteel and Evan Pellegrini are assisting us with our rehousing effort. We've rehoused the fossils and bones into standardized boxes, bins, and custom cabinets, resulting in a considerable reduction in the collections' overall footprint. We'd like to offer a special thank you to the Nevada Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bryan Hockett, BLM State Archaeologist, who provided the Museum with this opportunity.



Above: A peek inside one of the drawers that now houses the fossilized bones of a Pleistocene camel found at Pyramid Lake.

# Why is Accreditation Important?

by Jim Barmore, Museum Director

The Nevada State Museum was honored as the first museum in the state to achieve accreditation in 1972. This status has continued to the present. The museum is taking steps to maintain accreditation in the future.

Accreditation requires an independent and comprehensive audit of all museum functions every ten years. Assessment is based on standards established by the American Alliance of Museums, the leading professional organization for all museums in the country. Preparations are already underway for the museum's next accreditation review in 2019. Most of our attention focuses on improving the long-term care, security, and use of extensive collections entrusted to the museum for safekeeping. Staff are moving collections stored in substandard off-site warehouses to galleries at the museum for optimal care and security. If collection storage improvements are not made, the museum will lose accreditation.

Maintaining accreditation is critical. We are in the public trust business. Accreditation certifies trustworthiness and high standards. It's a seal of approval. Most collections are donated. Accreditation assures donors their valuable possessions will receive long-term care, security, and public benefit.

The museum must raise funds for collections, exhibits, and



educational programs. Accreditation encourages financial contributions by certifying good management and public benefit. We site accreditation in funding letters, sponsor solicitations, membership promotions, and bequest inquiries.

Accreditation gives the museum an edge when applying for competitive grants. Granting organizations have confidence the museum is a good investment. State officials are assured when appropriating public funds. The museum is upholding public service standards and minimizing liabilities.

Accreditation is an effective marketing tool. It encourages attendance. Visitors become members, volunteers, contributors, and advocates. People support a winner. Accreditation is a major selling point for recruiting top professional staff. Museum professionals place a high value on accreditation and the credential it adds to their resumes.

Education is the fundamental purpose of the museum. In a state struggling with its national ranking in education, this is significant. Only about 800 museums out of 18,000 museums in the nation are accredited. Having the museum accredited places the State of Nevada in a select group excelling in education. Accreditation is a source of pride for all of us.



Rayas Section I, detail of Moché panel.  
Photo by Hal Starratt

## May Lecture: Andean Prehistory: The Archaeology of Ancient Civilizations in Peru

When we think about the prehistory of ancient South America, the Inca civilization immediately comes to mind—but we don't go any further. That's because the Inca of Peru was the pre-columbian civilization dominant at the time of the Spanish arrival in the sixteenth century, so it's the one we know most about. When Pizarro landed in 1532, the Incan empire stretched over 3,000 miles from Columbia in the north to Argentina in the south, with marvelous stone cities connected by thousands of miles of roads. But what is surprising to most of us is the fact that the Inca represented only the last 200 years or so of a deep archaeological past stretching back nearly 5,000 years! The Inca were situated at the apex of a long string of civilizations and cultures that all contributed to their greatness. An important example of one of these, among many others, was the Moché. This civilization flourished for 800 years in the first millennium AD, and stretched for five hundred miles, encompassing several river systems and many large cities in the arid coastal plain along the Pacific Ocean.

To learn more about this fascinating topic, plan to attend the May 28 lecture by Hal Starratt, Ph.D. Starratt began his archaeological career working at Classic Mayan sites in Mexico and Honduras.

In 2002 he was invited to work at the Moché site of El Brujo on the northern coast of Peru, and spent the next six years immersed in the study of ancient Andean civilizations. Starratt's work included recording and photographing several delicate murals adorning the Moché pyramids and excavating a sacred well site at El Brujo. In 2005 Dr. Starratt participated in a National Endowment for the Humanities' six-week study tour of sites all over Peru and Bolivia. Today he teaches anthropology at Western Nevada College.

# Frémont Returns to Oregon

by Deborah Stevenson, Curator of Education



Above: Curator of Anthropology Gene Hattori takes some cannon measurements.

Above right: Exhibits Manager Ray Geiser packing up Finding Frémont.



Photos: Jeanette McGregor

The exhibit, *Finding Frémont: Pathfinder of the West*, is on its way “back” to the Des Chutes Historical Museum (DCHM) in Bend, Oregon, where it is scheduled to open May 1. I have mixed feelings about seeing it go, especially since the completion of the timeline and addition of Frémont’s pistol and books, which pulled it all together in a beautiful way. I wondered if Curator of Anthropology Gene Hattori, who worked tirelessly to bring the exhibit to the Nevada State Museum, felt the same way:

***It was your dream to create this exhibit. How did it come to be?***

John C. Frémont is a lifelong interest of mine. When I heard about the success of the 2009 Frémont symposium at the DCHM, I regretted not attending. The museum’s director, Kelly Cannon-Miller constructed a small Frémont exhibit with a grant from the Lakeview (OR) Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Bill Cannon, Kelly’s father and BLM archaeologist, stopped by our museum in 2010 for a visit (Bill brought the *Rock Art Perspectives* exhibit to NSM in 2009). Before Bill left, Bob Nysten and Jim Barmore agreed to loan our mountain howitzer to the DCHM with the idea that the exhibit could later be loaned to us.

***That sounds like an ideal partnership. What happened next?***

I presented a proposal to our exhibits committee to assist the DCHM and then borrow their Frémont exhibit as our Sesquicentennial Exhibit. After proposing a similar idea to Bryan Hockett,

Nevada BLM State Archaeologist, he also agreed that this exhibit would be an excellent educational opportunity. Nevada BLM added additional funding for our blockbuster exhibit. Because of our Sesquicentennial, the DCHM graciously allowed us to open the exhibit here before it traveled to Oregon. The exhibit took us over two years to complete.

***How do you feel now that it is leaving? Are you sad?***

It was a joy and honor to work on the exhibit. I was especially pleased that the Forest Service allowed us to display the Fremont Howitzer Recovery Team's remarkable discovery of Frémont's cannon carriage parts. It also gave me the chance to delve into Frémont's expeditions and to discover Frémont's

*Right: Exhibits Preparator Dave Shipman cuts archival packing materials to protect the exhibit during shipment.*



personality—his strengths and his short-comings. Research for exhibits and programs is one of a curator's greatest rewards. I miss the exhibition, but I plan to continue my research and to assist the DCHS with their exhibit. I made a number of new friends through this exhibit.

***What's next?***

I plan to attend the opening at DCHM May 1. Soon there will be another Frémont Symposium in Bend similar to the one we hosted here last July. We plan on publishing selected papers from these symposia. And, I am still giving Frémont lectures to various groups.

*Left: Registrar Sue Ann Monteleone and Curatorial Assistant Taygan Byrns carefully compile condition reports for every artifact in the exhibit.*



# Refining Perceptions: Empowering Museums to Thrive and Prosper

by Deborah Stevenson, Curator of Education

Please plan to attend the Nevada Museums Association's annual conference, September 30 – October 2, 2015, at the Convention Center in historic Tonopah. Building upon the success of our 2013 conference, we'll once again offer great workshops and sessions, plus food, fun, and field trips to museums and historic sites. Now that museums have "shifted into high gear (our 2013 theme)," we have the opportunity to "refine perceptions" about who we are and what we do. Tonopah offers wonderful networking opportunities, uniting museums across the state.

Tonopah and nearby Goldfield were centers of mining production in the early 20th Century. From the Historic Mining Park and Central Nevada Museum to the nearby Belmont Courthouse, there are lots of great places to visit and enrich your stay. We have reserved 20 rooms each at the historic Mizpah Hotel and the Best Western High Desert Inn, so you have choices in regard to lodging. Many of the meals will be included and we'll allow free time for exploring as well. We hope to complete the program in July, with a final registration deadline of September 15. Two scholarships that cover the cost of registration will be offered; please check the website



([www.nevadamuseums.org](http://www.nevadamuseums.org)) periodically for updates and look for registration details in the next newsletter.

You have until June 1 to submit your proposal if you'd like to give a session or propose a topic. On behalf of the program committee, Crystal Van Dee, Samantha Szesciorcka, Garrett Barmore, Shery Hayes-Zorn, and I, we look forward to seeing you in Tonopah!

A crowd gathers in front of the Nye County Mercantile Co. (built 1905). A closer look reveals musicians with drums and trumpets in the lower left car. The rear drum appears to read: TONOPAH BRASS BAND. This scene takes place just to the north of the historic Mizpah Hotel. (NSM History Collections)



## Store Spotlight: Volunteer Judy Berg

"The best part about volunteering in the museum store is that I get to help people from all over the world find unique souvenirs of their Nevada adventure."

NSM needs you! Come volunteer in the museum store for half-day shifts.

Contact Store Manager Charmain Phillips at (775) 687-4810 ext. 244

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## Visit the Museum

600 North Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4004

Open 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Tuesday through Sunday  
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years

Members	Free	Memberships:	\$20 senior
Children (17 & under)	Free		\$35 individual
Adults	\$ 8.00		\$60 family



[www.nevadaculture.org](http://www.nevadaculture.org)

The Nevada State Museum in Carson City is an agency of the Division of Museums and History within the Nevada Department of Tourism & Cultural Affairs. The museum engages diverse audiences in understanding and celebrating Nevada's natural and cultural heritage.

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Museum Director

The Friends of the Nevada State Museum, a 501(c)(3) private nonprofit organization, supports the museum through volunteer assistance, fundraising, and advocacy. For information contact Tina Davis-Hersey, Chair at 775/671-2364.

The Nevada State Museum publishes the *Mint Edition* newsletter for the purpose of highlighting museum exhibits, education programs, special events, and collection activities.

The publication is available online at [www.nevadaculture.org](http://www.nevadaculture.org).

Museum members receive the *Mint Edition* as a benefit of membership if they provide an email address.

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