



THE POWER OF ARTIFACTS TO ELEVATE THE STORY

By **CARLYN SWAIM**

The word “artifact” may conjure up a mental image of something archaic—a dusty old object that is stored away and no longer relevant. But when revealed through the right lens, artifacts become powerful tools for bringing a story to life.

The storytelling power has nothing to do with the value, age, or beauty of an object. Instead, it is about making an emotional connection by displaying an object that crossed both time and space to appear before you. Exposure to an artifact brings the visitor closer to the past in a way that words alone often cannot do. When developing exhibit content at History Associates, we often use artifacts to help a visitor better appreciate an experience or circumstance, whether on a large scale or at an individual level.

For example, standing under the massive 104-foot wingspan of a B-17 Flying Fortress, visitors at the National World War II Museum’s US Freedom

Pavilion are dwarfed by its solid frame. Paired with images of 100 planes, the visitor can begin to grasp the enormous scale of America’s wartime mobilization, and ultimately why the Allies won the war. The enormity of this



Photo courtesy the National World War II Museum

B-17 Flying Fortress planes dwarf the tables at the Grand Opening of the US Freedom Pavilion at the National World War II Museum, January 2013.

macro-artifact communicates the magnitude of an enterprise that ultimately produced nearly 13,000 B-17s by war’s end. Just one aircraft becomes the visitor’s measuring stick for the

awe-inspiring breadth of the entire war effort.

At the other end of the spectrum, objects help a visitor relate to big events on a personal level. Standing amongst hundreds of rows of graves fanned out across the Cambridge American Cemetery in Cambridge, England, visitors can be overwhelmed by what each headstone truly represents. Looking at a sea of headstones tells the story of the loss, but not necessarily enough to grasp that each grave signifies an individual sacrifice.

Images are a simple and powerful way to enhance these stories. Just by seeing someone’s likeness, we begin to form a bond. To help the American Battle Monuments Commission tell the story of individual sacrifice at their overseas cemetery visitors’ centers, History Associates researched historic photos to tell personal stories of those who served and sacrificed.

One headstone at the cemetery belongs to 2nd Lieutenant Mary Chubb of Doylestown, PA. A registered

(Continued on page 3)

CORPORATE COLLECTIONS: PRESERVE YOUR PAST, PROMOTE YOUR LEGACY

By **CAITLIN BRISTOL AND LAURA QUINN**

In recent years, History Associates has seen an increase in the interest of high-profile companies to create and/or develop corporate collections. The Levi Strauss Visitor Center, built to commemorate the company’s 150th anniversary, displays a pair of jeans from 1890 and features four decades of television ads. Visitors to the World of Coca-Cola will find an original 19th century soda fountain and a locked vault holding the secret Coke formula. These successful corporations recognize that documenting the history of their organization and its achievements not only preserves their industrial and

commercial legacy, but serves as a valuable knowledge base for future innovation.

Corporate collections are not exclusive to large consumer products companies; they are as varied and diverse in their holdings as the companies maintaining them. Typically, we find that the most effective collections are aligned with their company’s goals, and are consistently being preserved and made accessible to staff and external audiences.

Should you choose to develop a corporate collection, you are making a commitment to invest in the long-term care of your organization’s heritage. While this may seem a daunting task, History Associates recom-

mends that you start by understanding your objectives, assessing your existing collections or establishing collecting criteria, and finally, developing a collections plan. A collections plan should involve a storage strategy, inventorying and cataloging your documents and collections, and, where appropriate, preparing your collection for preservation and future use.

WHY SHOULD WE COLLECT?

Understanding the strategic objectives for your collection is a critical first step for companies both large and small. What

(Continued on page 2)



THE MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR

Join us at the American Alliance of Museums, May 19-22, at the Baltimore Convention Center

We will host a panel discussion, “Opportunities in Chaos: Get the most from moving collections,” with members of Artex Fine Art Services and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden on Sunday, May 19. Also, visit us at booth #433 in the exhibit hall!

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(Continued from page 1)

would you like to accomplish by developing a corporate collection? Corporate collections can serve multiple functions:

Reinforce your brand image: Many firms may wish to establish a permanent or temporary exhibit to display past achievements and milestones to potential clients and investors. Collections of fine art or memorabilia can also provide a tangible sense of a company’s inherent values and identity. Displaying your collection for stakeholders, or even consumers, is an effective way to instill confidence in your brand. How you care for and display these objects can also serve to inspire and thank your staff by preserving their efforts and showcasing their achievements.

Preserve your intellectual property: On a pragmatic level, cataloging and organizing your collections can help facilitate their use as a reference tool. By gathering together and arranging your products from prototype to final product stage, you can study your progression as a company and better evaluate your next steps. For example, Converse showcases the evolution of athletic footwear developed in their state-of-the-art design lab using an online photo archive of styles produced since the early 1900s. Cataloging your collection for research establishes your investment in making your history accessible and usable.

WHAT SHOULD WE COLLECT?

Once you have your collection objectives in place, begin to think about potential collecting themes and the types of documents and objects you wish to include. It is likely you have accumulated items over time, but what objects illustrate your organization’s brand, or document product development? Be careful not to overlook such items as tools, models, and marketing materials. Commemorative events and anniversaries are a perfect occasion to develop and promote your corporate collection. Contact your staff, clients, and stakeholders to help identify suitable additions to your corporate collection.

HOW SHOULD WE COLLECT?

The next steps involve putting your collections plan into action. It’s important to create an inventory of materials you have and where they are located.

You will also want to ensure that your irreplaceable collection is properly stored and secure. Be sure to consider donating duplicates or unrelated items to a relevant organization—such as a museum or historical society. If you’re missing an item from your collection that could help tell your company’s story, seek out donations from current and former employees or investors. With a strong foundation, your objectives in place, and a well-considered and documented collection, you’ll be in a better position to share your corporate story.

During any part of this process, you may become overwhelmed by the range and volume of material. The collections managers at History Associates can help to identify and assess your collection. We have assisted a number of museums and private institutions with object rehousing, research, documentation, and inventory of collections materials. Our team also specializes in database

administration and standardization, and in developing standard operating procedures. History Associates can also provide exhibit, audiovisual, and interactive content develop-



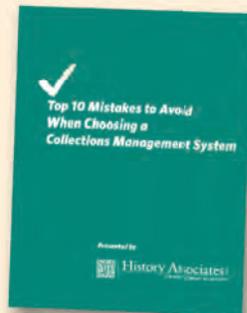
Photo courtesy The Coca-Cola Company.

Beginning in 1887, Coca-Cola offered coupons for free samples. Displaying these coupons reinforces the fact that the idea was pioneered by the company.

ment services. By discovering, documenting, and exhibiting your corporate collection, History Associates can help your company preserve its past and promote its legacy.

Collections technicians Caitlin Bristol and Laura Quinn work with a variety of clients in managing collections in their care, assisting them with cataloging, database development, and research. They are currently working on a project to relocate the collections of an extensive, nationally significant museum. Contact them at 301-279-9697 or by e-mail at cbristol@historyassociates.com or lquinn@historyassociates.com.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR COLLECTIONS INVENTORY?



When a heritage or art collection gets to a certain size, it becomes difficult to manage through a simple inventory spreadsheet. Luckily, there are specialized software products available to help you keep track of collections in your care.

If you are in the process of evaluating collections management system (CMS) software, we have a free report that can help. Download “Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Museum Collections Management System” on our website today! Click on the report cover image on our home page.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS: JEN GIAMBRONE

Since joining History Associates last summer, Jen’s skill in creating engaging historical narratives has come to light in a wide variety of projects and formats, from writing copy for smartphone apps to creating animated Flash maps for museum clients. She has enjoyed reading historical fiction since childhood—even writing her own stories about life in colonial America or on the Oregon Trail. This lifelong interest in history as lived through personal experience led her to major in both history and sociology as an undergraduate at Gettysburg College and then to a variety of projects, including interpretive planning at the Genesee Country Village and managing documentary content at the National Museum of Play. Her current work to develop interpretive signage for Gettysburg College has a special meaning, as her illustrative text will be on campus signs for years to come. “I have a chance to make an impact on my alma mater in a way that most people don’t get to do.”

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(Continued from page 1)



Photo courtesy Nick Chubbs

nurse, Mary served on an evacuation aircraft in England during World War II. As the Allies prepared to invade Normandy, Mary’s brother Donald, a B-17 co-pilot, received a post nearby. The siblings jumped at the chance to see one another, but neither could predict it would be for the last time. Just weeks later, Donald’s bomber went down over the English Channel. The following month, Mary died in a plane crash near Coventry. She is buried in Plot F Row 3 Grave 53. Donald is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Normandy American Cemetery.

Two of seven children, Donald and Mary Chubb relished each other’s company in the Spring of 1944 after years apart. Within months, both would be listed among World War II’s fallen.

The story alone is heartbreaking. But we found a picture, showing the two smiling siblings flanked by friends during their final meeting that provides shattering authenticity. Despite their uniforms and the heavy bomber looming in the background, this is an intimate image of friendship and family, made striking by the tragic events that would soon transpire.

A simple artifact represents a powerful connection to history large and small,

whether it is a copy of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln’s handwriting or a simple lock of hair from a family ancestor. By knowing the historical context and the story that needs to be told, selecting the proper artifact can make a story transcend time.

Historian Carlyn Swaim conducts history

and litigation-related research at History Associates. Projects have included researching slavery in the United States on behalf of financial institutions, conducting photographic and content research for a number of military museums, and investigating the histories of former industrial sites for litigation clients.

THE BEST CLIENTS IN HISTORY

ARCHSTONE INC.

completed the research and writing, and supervised print production of Archstone’s illustrated history book

D&H DISTRIBUTING

completed the research and writing of the company’s 95th anniversary history book

UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS

completed the photographing and cataloging of UBC’s collection of antique woodworking tools

GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

began the development of an interpretive plan for the Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area in Western Maryland

LITIGATION RESEARCH

continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Washington state, and Wisconsin.



For more than thirty years, clients have turned to History Associates to tell their stories, preserve and manage their records and artifacts, and answer their historical questions.

Histories

Books, websites, and oral history projects

Exhibits

Multimedia content development, image and artifact research, and scriptwriting

Interpretive Planning

Planning, research, writing, and mapping for any historic site

Historical Research

Research and analysis for litigation, regulatory compliance, and public relations

Archival Services

Appraisal, organization, description, and management of historical materials

Records Management

Records inventories, surveys, files management, and retention schedules

Collections Management

Assessment, inventory, cataloging, and management of art and artifact collections

History Associates serves clients nationwide and around the world.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF SILLY TAX HISTORY

- In 1705, Russian Tsar Peter the Great imposed a beard tax. What other country had famously enacted a beard tax?
 - Spain
 - England
 - Portugal
- In 1696, England began taxing homes based on the number of windows they had. When was this tax repealed?
 - 1851
 - 1751
 - 1951
- In 1712, what tax was imposed in England that caused homeowners to start decorating their walls by painting them by hand with stencils?
 - Wallpaper Tax
 - Picture Tax
 - Tapestry Tax



Those who paid the Russian "Beard Tax" were required to carry a "beard token" as proof of payment.



Photos courtesy Wikimedia Commons

English architecture modified as a result of the "Window Tax."

E-mail your answers along with your contact information to Anne Strong at astrong@historyassociates.com by May 24, 2013. Correct responses will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card!

See past quiz questions and answers online at www.historyassociates.com/newsletter

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