

# Interior



# Shelves

## Basket Brigade

Baskets are used for transport, storage, and other household activities. They have commercial and artistic value and are used as items of trade and travel between neighboring groups. The Gibson and Colburn collection at the DOI Interior Museum is made up of over 700 baskets that were acquired by the museum in the 1930s. The collection is made up of objects that were specifically created to sell and trade and were in daily use. Study of the baskets can help researchers understand the economic impact of commerce between Native Americans and Western Americans in the 1930s.

The baskets were the first collection acquired by the Interior Museum; Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes bought approximately 300 baskets from Helen Gibson in 1936. In 1939 the museum accepted approximately 400 baskets from Mrs. Frederick Henry Colburn. Both women were from San Francisco, CA and had a collector's perspective on Native American art. The collection includes a variety of sizes, styles, and weaving techniques. The basket collection was the beginning of the DOI Interior's collection, which now numbers over 6,000 items.

The museum hopes to place the baskets on display in the future. To ensure that the baskets will be able to handle the stress of being on display, the museum enlisted the help of professional conservators to clean and craft a storage strategy. Spicer Art Conservation was brought in from New York to do this work. The conservators sorted the baskets and identified common elements and materials. An established procedure ensured that that each item was carefully handled and all information recorded. If cleaning was needed, the basket was gently vacuumed to remove the surface dirt and debris. Each received personalized care and attention based on its size and shape. Once secured, the baskets were placed in archival trays and boxes and further protected by being placed on standard sized supports. The picture below shows an oversized basket that needed customized supports including an outer protective box. It will be stored by itself instead of on trays with the others. Currently, the Interior Museum is undergoing renovations and is not open for tours.



## Everything but the Kitchen Sink

Dr. David Love was a man who dedicated his life to the West. As a USGS Geologist, he was instrumental in gathering information about his birth state of Wyoming. He became a member of the Minerals Deposits Branch in 1942, and began mapping the state. His research led to the discovery of rare minerals in the state, including uranium. Knowing that he would be in the field for an extended period of time, Dr. Love brought many of the comforts of home with him to the camps sites, such as a writing desk and a portable, full-sized stove. He also had a string of pack horses tasked with moving camping equipment from site to site.



The Love collection was originally housed in Denver, CO. It was moved to Reston in 2009 to consolidate the USGS collection and to be more accessible for public use. The tools Dr. Love used were crafted and maintained with care. Sixty-eight years later, many of them are still in working order and researchers can use them to study the evolution of the technology used in field geology and mapping.

Pieces often join the USGS collection in their original condition. If the objects come in from someone other than the scientists who used them, USGS Museum Property Specialist Jennifer Stafford has the daunting task of identifying unknown objects decades old. Luckily, the Love collection came with detailed records and all items had been previously identified. The collection is now available for study and viewing. Ms. Stafford has already received requests to work with the collection.

## Right Beneath Your Feet



Visitors are often extra sets of eyes and ears and find important treasures that may otherwise be overlooked. In 2009, a visitor to Olympic National Park in Washington made a significant discovery as she walked along the bluff on Beach Four--a fossil of a Sea Star never before seen on that part of the coastline. The

visitor knew not to disturb the find, and took a photo to show park staff. Its discovery not only excited park rangers, but also paleontologists at museums in Washington and Denver who were contacted about the find. The fossil was extracted from the rock and dated to between 5-24 million years ago. Scientists will study it to learn more about deep sea ocean life, sea temperature, mineral content, and environmental changes in the past. The fossil has been put on display at Burke Museum at the University of Washington. A cast of the fossil is available for public viewing at Olympic National Park.

## Ask A Curator

I'm part time. Is there a way to use volunteers to help with the inventory/catalog process?

Volunteers are a valuable resource. They give their time and energy to the collections, helping DOI accomplish its goals. The roles volunteers can play in a museum depend on their availability, skills, and interests. Volunteers working with the inventory/catalog process will need basic training to understand the story behind the collections, the inventory and catalog process, and ways DOI staff keeps track of the collections. Volunteers used for collection care should be a group that can commit themselves to volunteering for a set period of time. Once they have completed training, volunteers should be placed in areas where they will have the greatest impact on the collection.

What is the number one rule of curating?

Objects and archives in DOI museum collections are held in trust for the American Public. Curators are the custodians of these materials and they accordingly have many responsibilities. Curators preserve, conserve, exhibit, and account for the material in the collections they curate. Of these responsibilities, perhaps the number one rule is to "preserve" the museum collection. The ultimate values of museum collections lie in their research, educational, heritage, and interpretive potential. Therefore, they must be cared for and protected by curators over the long term. Without proper preservation, the objects and archives may ultimately deteriorate and not be available for research, heritage uses, and exhibit in our museums.

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