Introduction:

The Beloit Historical Society (BHS) was founded in 1910. "The mission of the organization shall be the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials and information relating to the history of the City of Beloit and its surrounding area."[1] The BHS manages two locations: Lincoln Center (figure 1) and the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead (figure 2). The Lincoln Center houses the society's collections, exhibits, archives and offices and is on the site of what was once the Lincoln Junior High School, 1921-1985. The Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead consists of the 1857 Hanchett-Bartlett House and associated outbuildings and the Daisy Chapin one-room school house which was moved to the site in 1969. The Hanchett House interior has been restored and furnished with historic objects roughly dating to the period 1880-1885. The historic barn (figure 3) exhibits historic farm equipment and the school (figure 4) hosts elementary school children. The Homestead has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. The 1994 MAP II assessment, carried out by Judith Payne, appears to be the last time the BHS underwent a review of their collections stewardship. The recent changes at the BHS and the fact that the Board is currently undertaking a strategic planning exercise makes this an ideal time to undertake a conservation assessment of the BHS's collections on display and in storage at both locations. The following report summarizes the results of my visit and addresses collections-related conservation concerns. My recommendations are divided into short, middle and long term goals. I feel that taking a strategic approach to collections care allows an institution to plan well for the future. It is my hope that this report will help with the development and implementation of the Society's strategic plan.

During my two day visit, I was assisted by BHS Collection Manager, Krista Barry and Sharon Welton, Executive Director, Stephenson County Historical Society Museum. Board members Rick Dexter, Mike King and Nicolette Meister also kindly shared their insights and knowledge.

Please note that concurrent with my visit, Angus-Young Associates carried out an assessment of the Lincoln Center structure and systems. Their report should be read in conjunction with mine.

Figure 1: Lincoln Center.

[1] BHS Bylaws 5/16/14

Figure 2: Hanchett-Bartlett House.

Figure :3 Hanchett-Bartlett barn.

Figure 4: Daisy Chapman school house.

Staffing:

In 1994, the BHS staff consisted of an Executive Director, Business Manager, Volunteer Coordinator and two part-time custodians. Sadly, the number of staff has been depleted significantly in the intervening years. In December 2015, the BHS's Executive Director, Paul Kerr, the only full-time employee, retired. He was not replaced. At the time of writing, the BHS has only one part-time permanent employee, Kelly Washburn, Program/Development Manager. Krista Barry's position is part-time and funded by the Bacon Bequest and restricted fund. This position is funded through December 2016. The only other staff person is David Zimdars, Administrative Assistant. This position is part-time and fully funded by the State of Wisconsin's WISE program. Clearly, the loss of staff over the last two decades has taken its toll. As essentially the last man standing, the former Executive Director was left to carry out the tasks formerly undertaken by a much larger staff. Understandably, one person cannot do all of the work. From a collections standpoint, being without collections staff has left the BHS with an unfortunate legacy. Issues include an extensive backlog (figure 5), a confusing cataloging system(s), an underused collections database, lack of policy and procedures and storage areas in need of an upgrade. The BHS is fortunate to have a number of long time dedicated volunteers. Most organizations depend heavily on volunteers and are fortunate to have their help. Having said this, volunteers do not replace professional staff and require staffs' time to train and supervise. Full time professional staff provide the continuity needed to be a viable collecting institution. My assessment points to the fact that there are far too many tasks to be done with the few people available to carry them out.

Full-time staff and/or equivalent are crucial for federal funding agencies. For example, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) require that an institution have "professional staff" and do not view volunteers as "qualified staff" unless they have been properly trained and

supervised by professional staff. In my opinion, the BHS requires a full-time professional director or curator at this point. Your collections are your strength. As such, I feel that you need an individual with a strong collections background and proven leadership ability in a comparable organization. Hiring such an individual should be a priority in the strategic plan and will indicate to the community, prospective donors, and funders that the BHS has made a long-term commitment to collections care. Without an obvious commitment to collections care you will likely not be successful in your grant applications. Alternatively, two half-time professional staff, with one dedicated to collections and exhibitions and one dedicated to administration, could be considered.

The fact that Krista has been hired to complete the inventory in the textile room indicates the Board's commitment to collections care and best practice. Although a limited-term position, it shows that the BHS recognizes the need for collections stewardship. This is an important first step and an achievement to be proud of.

When the Collections Manager position ends, the BHS will not have the staff needed to train new volunteers. As such, I recommend placing a moratorium on recruiting volunteers wishing to work with the collections until more permanent staff are in place.

Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead has always been manned by volunteer docents with little staff involvement. All the maintenance is done by a board member, Mike King. Maintenance activities such as snow removal and lawn mowing have been carried out by contractors.

Figure 5: Part of the collections backlog, an unprocessed archival collection.

Cataloguing Systems and Database:

Like many collecting institutions of comparable age, the BHS has had several cataloguing systems in place throughout its history. At least four are evident. The collections records are confusing at times and there are considerable *lacunae*. Attempts had been made to convert older systems to newer ones. For example, in figure 6 we see a catalog card associated with a sewing board. The catalog number 20,688, is linked to the older system. Here we see it converted to a newer tripartite (i.e., 3 numbers) system that clearly denotes the year the object was accessioned into the collection. I have several concerns with this object. First, it is not considered best practice to thumbtack a label to an object. Second, the catalog card resides with the object not in a central repository as it should. The Collections Manager found that in many cases objects were given new numbers but the changes were not always recorded in all pertinent locations. What this means is the BHS could potentially have multiple cards in various cataloguing systems that represent the same object. The Collections Manager also found discrepancies between different systems. For example, some objects were marked deaccessioned in one system but not in another.

The Collections Manager has been working hard to make sense of the systems used and to reconstruct a history of the BHS catalog systems. The results of her analysis will be included in her "Collections Overview" report. Her report will also include recommendations for improving the existing system. Her work has shown that record reconciliation is needed.

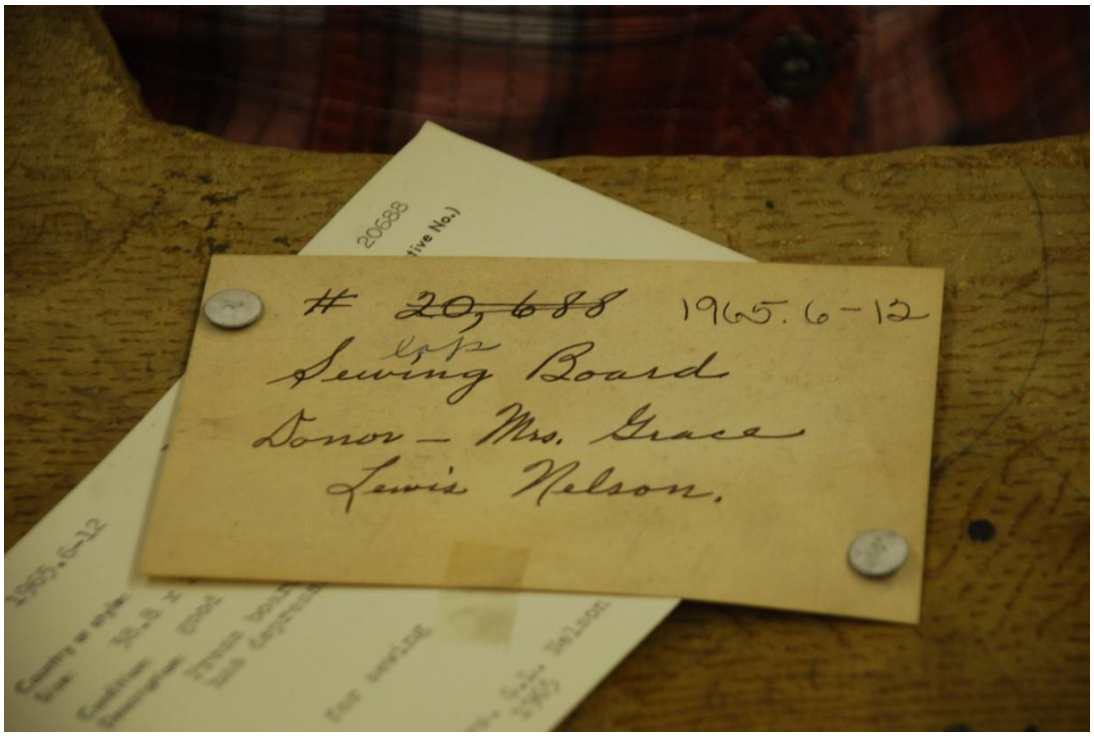

Figure 6: Sewing board with catalog card attached.

For the textile room inventory, the Collections Manager has found the original accession ledgers very helpful. The age and condition of the ledgers is such that they may not be able to withstand an inventory of the entire collection. It is recommended that the ledgers be carefully digitized and the digital copies be used for the inventory archiving the originals. Digitization would be a good volunteer task.

Testing the veracity of a collections management database is an important part of a collections assessment. Being able to find objects in your collection is key. The database was tested with the help of Krista and Sharon. Ten objects were chosen at random from the collection to be found in the database. In turn, 10 object accession numbers and locations were pulled from the database to be found in the collections. Seven out of 10 objects were found in collections storage, a success rate of 70%. It should be noted that not all of the objects were in the spot designated in the database. Finding some objects was somewhat serendipitous. The success rate going from the collections to the database was much lower finding only 4 out of 10 objects in the database. The fact that there was a higher success rate going from the database to the collections versus going from collections to the database is not too surprising. The database is a newer system and should be more accurate. With this exercise we found that several objects did not have locations recorded in the database. They were found only because one knew where to look. Other objects had locations listed in the database but were not there. In one case, an object was on the opposite side of the room. Another object, 79.82.22, had no record in the database or the card catalog and it did not match the Accession Record.

The results of this test show that the database is not adequate and needs to be upgraded. The strategic plan should address the need for reconciliation between objects, records, and the database.

Inventory & Backlog:

The status of the cataloging system and the database clearly point to the need for a complete inventory of all of the BHS holdings, both at the Lincoln Center and the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead and an assessment of the efficacy of the cataloguing system. At the Hanchett-Bartlett House I noted a set of dishes in the pantry with a label stating that they had not been accessioned into the collection (figure 7). I found dishes, from what appeared to be the same set, on the dining room table (figure 8) that clearly had accession numbers on them. This does make one wonder the status of these objects. Are they accessioned or not? Does the BHS have the documentation supporting the gift? When was the gift made and by whom?

A basic fundamental principle of collection stewardship is knowing what is in your collection and where it is. A complete inventory is also needed to develop a long term preservation plan. Quantifying and qualifying your collections is also key when applying for grants. Most preservation grants require detailed information about the number of objects in your collection and their curatorial significance. Carrying out a full inventory will allow the BHS to reconcile the numerous cataloguing systems and update the database. The catalog cards also need to be reconciled with the deaccession records. Throughout the process, some objects and/or records will be found to be missing. This is not uncommon. Recognizing weaknesses in your collections management practices allows one to strive for what is considered best practice.

I highly recommend that the BHS undertake a full inventory and upgrade the cataloguing system for your holdings and clear your catalog backlog. These next steps are crucial and should be considered a high priority. The IMLS funds cataloguing, inventorying, documenting, and registration of museum collections through their Museums for America Program under the Collections Stewardship Category (https://www.imls.gov/nofo/museums-america-fy16-notice-funding-opportunity). I feel that this grant is well suited to your situation and urge you to consider applying for it. However, be advised that IMLS eligibility criteria requires that applicants have at least one staff member, or the full-time equivalent, whether paid or unpaid, primarily engaged in the acquisition, care, or exhibition objects owned or used by the institution.

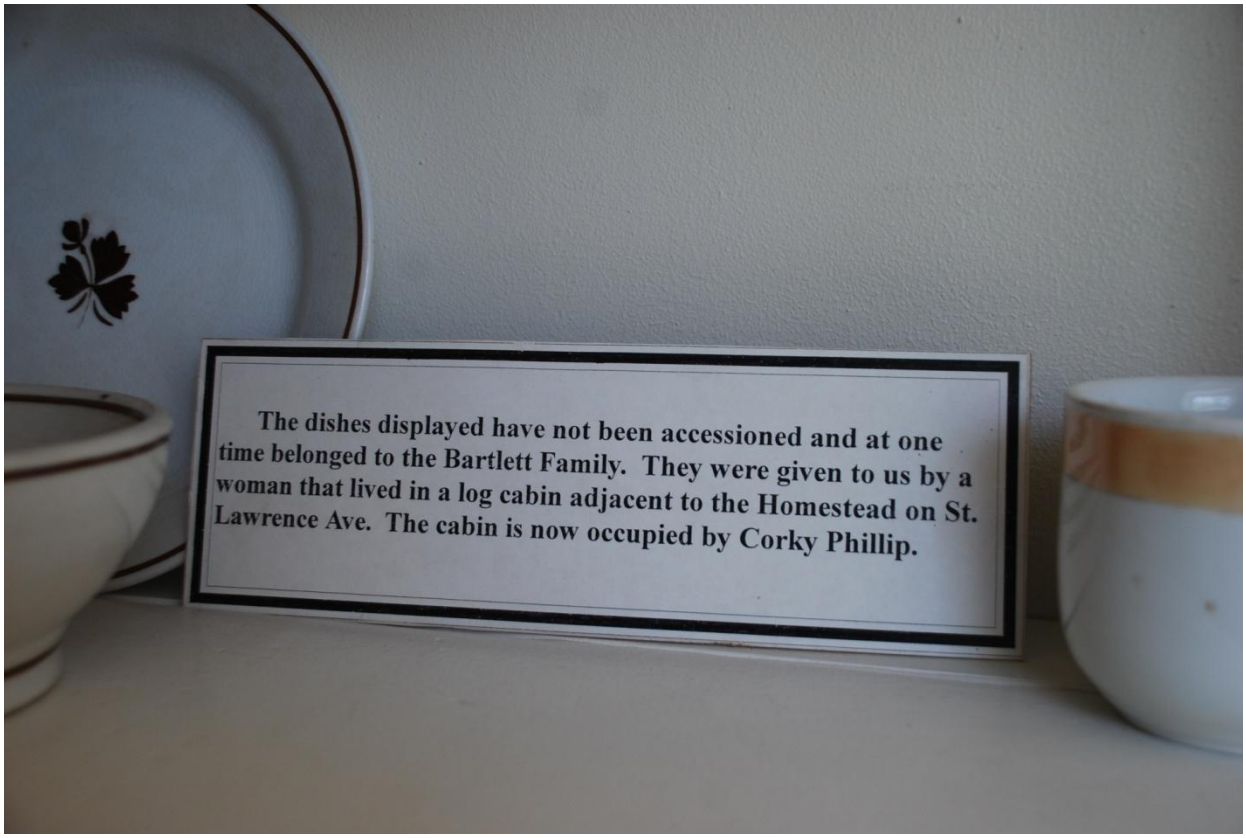

Figure 7: Unaccessioned collections?

Figure 8: Dining room, Hanchett-Bartlett house. These dishes appear to be accessioned.

Collecting Moratorium:

Given the cataloguing backlog, limited staff, and the lack of an up-to-date inventory, I feel that a moratorium on new acquisitions should be enacted. Clearly, exceptions can be made on a case by case basis by the Collections Committee. Exceptions should only be made for items that are germane to the BHS mission and mandate and are at risk of being lost if not accepted when offered.

Loans:

At the time of my assessment, the BHS had 17 objects on long-term loan from the Rock County Historical Society (RCHS). Of these, six were found at the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead and two at the Lincoln Center. Nine objects were left unaccounted for. Hopefully, they will be found at the Lincoln Center during the inventory. Recently, the BHS Collections Manager met with the RCHS Collections Manager to discuss the status of the loan and consider renegotiation of it. This is quite encouraging and long overdue. At this point, the details are currently being worked out. At the time of the meeting, the two RCHS objects found at the Lincoln Center were returned to their rightful home. Interestingly, the RCHS discovered that one of the 17 pieces loaned to the BHS had been returned to them in 1992. Unfortunately, this was not included in the BHS documentation. This now leaves eight objects unaccounted for.

Building Condition Issues:

The Lincoln Center is certainly showing its age and lack of regular maintenance. The roof clearly leaks in a number of areas putting the collections at risk. A little bit of water can go a long way and do a lot of harm. The staining on the walls and ceilings indicates that this has been going on for a considerable length of time. Buckets and trays are found throughout the building (figure 9), both in storage and the public areas (figure 10). I was pleased to see that the board recently commissioned a condition assessment of the Lincoln Center building and its systems and authorized emergency roof repairs. Repairing the leaking roof should be an immediate, high-priority activity.

Figure 9: One of many buckets found in the Lincoln Center. Note the staining on the wall.

Figure 10: Buckets, Lincoln Center back hall.

Collections Storage:

The collections are currently stored in the textile room, the old school gym and adjacent room, the BHS office and The Luebke Family Memorial Library. Collections are roughly stored by type (e.g., military collections in a dedicated room) but not entirely. I have a number of conservation concerns regarding collections storage. They are, for the most part, shared by all storage locations.

Figure 11: Textile room.

Textile Room:

By far, the highest quality of storage is in the textile room (figure 11). These collections have received a lot of care over the years. Many, but not all[2], of the hanging textiles are on padded hangers and some are in individual garment bags (figure 12). They are protected from the light and dust with cotton muslin drapes. The closets that house the hanging textiles line three out of the four walls of the room. Care was taken to ensure that the textiles hanging in the closet on the exterior wall hung several inches from the wall. This is important due to the fact that exterior walls tend to be cooler and in the winter months, particularly if they are not well insulated. The cooler surface creates a more humid microclimate that can lead to mold growth. Essentially what happens is atmospheric moisture condenses on the cold surface of the wall. This is the same phenomenon that we see with a glass of ice water. Providing a small space between the wall and the objects protects them from harm. Museum objects should be stored and/or displayed away from exterior walls. This is particularly important given Beloit's climate. The exterior wall of the textile room does have windows. Thankfully, these have all been covered with opaque blinds. This is important for two reasons. First, the blinds block out the light. Second, from a security standpoint it does not pay to advertise what is housed in the building.

[2] Those in need of upgrading to padded hangers have been identified by the Collections Manager.

Figure 12: Textile room hanging storage.

Figure 13: Textile room objects awaiting rehousing.

Figure 14: Rehoused textile object.

While undertaking the inventory the Collections Manager is also cleaning the space and rehousing objects (figure 13) that are stored in an inappropriate manner. The objects will be properly housed in archival quality boxes. In Figure 14 we see one of the rehoused textile objects.

Throughout the inventory process, objects that are not collection items have been pulled from collection storage and relocated to non-collection storage rooms. This is an ideal time to do this. Unfortunately, a number of objects were found to not have a catalog number making it unclear as to whether they belonged in the collection or not. These were given temporary numbers so that their records can be searched for during a full inventory of the BHS collection.

The wooden drawers (figure 15) along the east wall appear to post date the 1994 MAP report. The author had recommended such a unit be constructed in her report. The drawers house an assortment of textile objects including corsets, chemises and hand bags. A number of the drawers are quite full (figure 16) which is not ideal for the objects. Stacking multiple objects on top of one another is stressful for the objects and makes safe access difficult. Each drawer has an inventory sheet associated with it which is good. I appreciate that these items are color coded. I am concerned about the color paper in close proximity to collections. If the paper gets wet, the color could bleed. The pillow we see in Figure 17 is quite fragile. It is made from weighted silk, an inherently unstable material. Ideally, it should be stored separately in its own box. The hankies we see in Figure 18 are best stored flat rather than folded. I appreciate that someone went to quite a bit of effort to build this storage unit. Unfortunately, it is not providing the collection with the best storage environment. In the long term, I recommend replacing the unit with powder coated steel shelving and rehousing the textiles in large archival quality textile boxes to alleviate overcrowding. This approach would give you more flexibility and make access easier. The large boxes would allow textiles currently folded to be laid flat. An added advantage of these boxes is they stack quite well.

Figure 15: East wall storage unit.

Figure 16: A drawer full of chemises and petticoats. Note the green inventory sheet.

Figure 17: Fragile weighted silk object. Ideally, this should have a separate box.

Figure 18: Folded hankies. These are best stored flat.

Figure 19: Boxes of VHS cassette tapes in the textile room.

Not all of the objects stored in this room are related to textiles. The Coroplast boxes we see in Figure 19 hold VHS video cassette tapes. It is not clear whether these tapes are accessioned or not. These boxes are taking up valuable storage space and should be relocated and stored with like material. The tapes are significant because they contain interviews with prominent Beloiters. For this reason they should be accessioned if they have not been already. VHS tapes are quite sensitive and not known for their longevity. Over time these tapes can breakdown making them unreadable. I recommend playing a few of the tapes to see if they are still readable. Finding a working player is always a concern when dealing with obsolete technology. If the BHS does keep the tapes, appropriate players, ideally more than one should be acquired. Alternatively, they could be transferred to a more stable digital format which would take up considerably less space. In the short term, I recommend relocating the tapes. My long term recommendation is to determine their value and if they are worth keeping. Those that are kept should be transferred to a more stable medium.

The textile room inventory and associated tasks should become the model for the rest of the BHS collections. Clearly, these collections are finite in size and have received more care over the years. Scaling this process up to a larger scale will require a slightly different approach. For example, instead of rehousing objects in archival quality enclosures during the inventory notes should be taken as to what will be needed to do so at a later time. I recommend adding extra fields to the inventory sheets where you can keep track of this information. Once the inventory is complete, this information can be used to implement a rehousing project. Determining the amount of material (e.g., boxes, acid-free tissue, Ethafoam) needed for a large scale rehousing project is challenging keeping track of the materials needed during the inventory will make this task easier in the end. Bulk ordering of rehousing supplies rather than buying them piece meal will save the BHS money. Most archival supply houses are happy to offer a discount if asked. -- Based on policy and pre-determined criteria, potential candidates for deaccessioning should be identified as part of the inventory process.

Gym Storage:

The BHS main storage area is in the school's former gym (figures 20 & 21). Most collections related activities are carried out here, including registration. Clearly, attempts have been made to maximize the space available by installing tall shelving units and constructing a mezzanine at the east end. The shelving and storage units are a bit of a mishmash and include scavenged shelving (figure 22), repurposed storage units (figure 23) and shelving custom designed and built for the space. Most of the storage furniture is adequate but by no means museum quality. The lockers we see in Figure 24 are collection items. As such, they should not be used for storage. Much of the shelving (figure 25) and storage units are constructed of wood or wood composites (e.g., plywood) with numerous objects (figure 26) sitting directly on the wood. The unsealed wooden shelves were mentioned in the MAP report. Wood is inherently acidic and not considered safe for storing museum collections. Although it can be sealed with materials such as Marvelseal 360 – an iron-on aluminum foil commonly used by museums – the labor costs associated with installing it are considerable. One also needs to consider the disruption and risk to the collection. Installing any kind of barrier requires the shelves and/or units to be emptied. Space is at a premium making this not an attractive option. I recommend the strategic plan address buying new storage furniture as this is ultimately the best approach. Grants are available to cover the costs related to upgrading museum storage, including purchasing new furniture. The IMLS Museums for America Program also funds rehousing collections under the Collections Stewardship Category. Upgrades can be done in stages or all at once. Replacing the furniture would give you an opportunity to assess how the space is used. You may, at that time, consider reconfiguring the space for maximum efficiency.

The main gallery (figure 61) is too large for BHS staff (2,600 sq. ft.) to fill with rotating exhibits. Dividing the room in half would make curating temporary exhibits more feasible and create a dedicated collections lab and swing space. Upgrades to gym storage require considerable swing space. You will need a secure safe space where the collections can be moved temporarily while the upgrade takes place. I recommend that you permanently divide the main gallery in half; using one half for exhibits and one half for swing space. You need space to manage the collections. Swing space provides a safe area to sort collections, rehouse them, reconcile catalog/data base records, and store objects destined for deaccessiong etc. Dividing the room in two is fairly straightforward particularly given that there are two sets of doors leading into the room. However, division may impact HVAC. Both halves should have heat and air conditioning. I recommend making the swing space as flexible as possible with tables and shelving on locking casters. Metro shelving units are ideal. They are relatively inexpensive and strong (shelves can hold up to 600 pounds).

Figure 20: Gym storage room. Note the height of the shelving units.

Figure 21: Gym storage viewed from the mezzanine. Objects are not protected from dust or light.

Figure 22: Overcrowded open shelving. Safe access is difficult.

Figure 23: Repurposed storage unit.

Figure 24: These lockers are collection items.

Figure 25: Custom built storage unit, mezzanine. Unsealed wood is not safe for collections.

Figure 26: Metal objects sitting directly on wooden shelves.

Figure 27: Can these chairs be safely removed?

Safe access to collection items is also an issue. For example, safely reaching the items at the back of the shelves in the unit we see in Figure 22 is difficult. Being glass and ceramic, all of these objects are fragile. Or, consider how one safely removes large furniture items from the tall shelf we see in Figure 27. Safe access means safe for the collections as well as the handlers.

In a number of cases, the shelves are quite untidy with objects stacked haphazardly on top of one another (figure 28). This puts objects at risk of damage. In addition, human nature is such that untidy shelves do not inspire people to treat objects with care. There is a tendency to replicate the behavior. I recommend taking the time now to straighten up the objects on the shelves so they at least look neat. This would be a good volunteer task. The state of many of the shelves seems at odds with the signage (figure 29) that asks that the collections be handled with care.

Quite a few objects are stored in wooden drawers. Unfortunately, as we see in Figure 30, they are often stacked several layers deep and left loose in the drawer. Every time the drawer is opened and closed, the objects will slide back and forth in the drawer. This will cause damage. This movement is particularly a concern with delicate objects such as the hair wreaths we see in Figure 31. These objects are very brittle and delicate. Each of the wreaths in this drawer should have its own mount and enclosure.

As already noted, wood is inherently acidic and not recommended for storing museum collections. The cardboard boxes are also acidic and inappropriate.

A number of drawers are filled beyond capacity. The fan that we see in Figure 30 is at risk every time the drawer is opened or closed. The fan's feathers and painted decoration are at a high risk of physical damage.

Figure 28: Untidy shelves – objects at risk of damage. Note the cardboard boxes.

Figure 29: Sadly, this sign is not always heeded.

Figure 30: Overfilled drawer. The fan is at a high risk of damage.

Figure 31: Fragile hair wreaths loose in a drawer.

Figure 32: Dolls stored loose in a cardboard box. This is not best practice.

There is a decided lack of proper storage mounts/enclosures. The dolls and doll clothing we see in Figure 32 are stored loose in a cardboard box. The box is filled beyond capacity and none of the objects are given any support. The blue silk dress on top is particularly at risk. It is made from weighted silk which is very fragile. Like the hair wreaths, it should ideally have its own mount and enclosure. Objects stored this way are also not very accessible. One has to move the objects on top to find the ones at the bottom. Every time an object is moved it is at risk of damage. Storing collections so that they are visually accessible (i.e., you know what is in a box without having to open it) is recommended. The contents of some boxes remain a mystery until the box is opened and all the objects unwrapped.. The cardboard box we see in Figure 33 is a good example of this. It holds a number of small dolls (figure 34). The box is acidic but the wrapping paper acid-free. Unfortunately, the acid-free paper is quite stiff. Wrapping tissue should be soft and provide some cushion. In a similar box (figure 35), I found tiny objects wrapped in the same paper. Small objects like this can be easily lost in the wrapping paper. They are also taking up far more space than is necessary. This entire box could be rehoused into a box the size of a shoe box. All of these items would be much better stored in a tray or in an acid and lignin-free box with dividers. Archival supply houses[3] now stock a variety of trays and boxes equipped with dividers. Alternatively, trays and dividers can be made in house. While there I noticed a few archival quality custom boxes in the collection (figure 36) constructed by Museum Studies students from Beloit College. This is an ideal partnership. I urge you explore extending the students' involvement with the collections, both on display and in storage. The BHS offers an excellent opportunity for the students to apply their training and gain practical hands on experience. However, students must be supervised by professional staff to ensure the partnership is mutually beneficial.

Over the years, the BHS has managed to obtain a number of second hand map cabinets. These are ideal for storing large flat objects and works of art on paper. Unfortunately, some of the drawers are filled beyond capacity (figure 37) putting the objects at risk. The posters we see in Figure 37 were never designed to last. They were printed on poor quality paper making their preservation a challenge. I recommend placing each poster in its own acid and lignin-free folder. The folder will make safe handling easier and will protect the posters from light and dust. The number of posters stored in each drawer needs to be reduced considerably.

Collections storage should be designated for storing collections only. During my visit I noticed quite a few old exhibit boards and mounted copies of archival photographs taking up valuable space in the gym. These could be found loose on the shelves in archival quality boxes (figure 38) and stored along with accessioned collections (figure 39). These do not belong in the storage area. In particular, they should not be taking up space in an archival quality box. The box should be used to store documents. I highly recommend collecting up all of these boards and photographs and moving them out of the storage space. Moving them out will free up quite a bit of space. Once removed, seriously consider whether you need these or not. You may be able to use some for educational programming. Others should simply be discarded. Noncollection items stored in the gym extends beyond old story boards and copies of archival photographs. In one drawer (figure 40), I discovered a collection of modern calendars (figure 41) mixed in with more historic ones. I find it hard to imagine that a 2003 store calendar is part of the collection. Copies of *Pioneer Beloit* (figure 42) take up valuable space in the gym. These should be boxed up and moved out of collections storage. Copies are also stored in the storage room off the kitchen.

[3] For example, Gaylord Archival carries a variety of artifact trays and specimen boxes. See Appendix C.

I am concerned that the objects on the top shelves are not protected from dust and/or light. They are also at risk if there was a major roof leak. Some also sit directly next to the air handling unit. This will make for a hot winter microclimate. This was noted in the MAP report.

Figure 33: Mystery box.

Figure 34: One of a number of dolls stored in the box we see in figure 33.

Figure 35: Tiny objects at risk of being lost.

Figure 36: Custom archival quality storage trays constructed by Beloit College students.

Figure 37: Over filled map cabinet drawer. These posters are quite fragile.

Figure 38: Archival quality box filled with old story boards – not a good use of resources.

Figure 39: Old exhibit boards stored with collections.

Figure 40: Historic calendars mixed with less than historic ones.

Figure 41: Is this 2003 Ace Hardware calendar part of the collection?

Figure 42: Extra copies of *Pioneer Beloit* in collections storage.

The paintings storage (figure 43) requires minimal work to make it safer for the paintings. I recommend placing a piece of archival cardboard or Coroplast between each painting. This will protect the canvas from damage. The puncture we see in Figure 44 most likely came from the hardware of the adjacent painting. At the same time, the carpeting should be vacuumed. This could all be done during the inventory.

Figure 43: Slotted painting storage. Paintings should not being lean upon one another.

Figure 44: Punctured canvas. This kind of damage is preventable.

Keeping collections storage areas clean is an important part of collections care. It is a key part of an integrated pest management (IPM) program. Storage should be designed and laid out so that entire space can be easily and safely cleaned. Pests are particularly attracted to secluded areas that are rarely disturbed such as under shelving and cabinets. Shelving should be four to six inches up off the floor so that the space can be cleaned easily. The dust, debris and dead bugs we see in Figure 45 is a concern. It clearly has not been cleaned for a very long time. The dead bugs act as an attractant to pests such as dermestids (i.e., carpet beetles). The current state of the gym makes it very difficult to clean. I recommend cleaning be carried out during the inventory. This will make the task – which is quite daunting – seem more manageable and will give all involved a sense of accomplishment.

Figure 45: The space below the shelving in the northeast corner is a perfect pest haven..

The lights in the gym are kept off when no one is working in the space. This is a good policy. Covering the items on the top shelves with opaque dust covers, as already noted, should be considered. During my visit I measured the lux levels and the UV levels around the room (figure 46). Lux levels were fairly high ranging from 180-1,020 lux. These readings clearly indicate the need for dust covers to be put in places sooner than later. Cotton sheets are commonly used. I recommend asking local hospitals and hotels if they have any old sheets they are willing to donate. Alternatively, thrifts shops are a low cost option. Make sure that the sheets are washed before use to remove any residual bleach. Use a detergent free of perfume and optical brighteners. Orvus WA paste is commonly use. UV levels varied quite wildly, from 15 microwatts/lumen (µw/lumen) to 229 µw/lumen. This wide range indicates to me that you likely have several different light sources in the gym. I recommend considering changing the current lamps to LED lamps. LED lamps have no UV and save on energy costs. Most LED lamps can be installed in existing fixtures. LEDs are more costly at the outset but the energy savings offset the cost in the long run. I understand that the BHS is exploring application to Alliant Energy's Focus on Energy program, which provides incentives for installing cost effective efficiency energy projects.

The gym has a mix of objects and archival collections. From a collections management standpoint, I recommend separating the two moving archival collections to archive room next to the library.

The mezzanine was noticeably hotter than the floor below. During my visit, an Onset Computer data logger, MX1101 (figure 46) was placed in this space. The logger records temperature and relative humidity (RH). The downloaded data can be saved as an Excel spread sheet and a graph. In Figure 47 we see a sample graph. The logger was run for three two week periods. As one would expect, the temperature and RH went up from the first to the third logging cycle. Figure 46 shows the ambient temperature and RH on May 5 as well as the lux level. By the last logging cycle, the average temperature was over 80 degrees and the RH around 60%. The RH level is a concern as 70% RH is what is needed for mold to grow. I know that the RH will go higher as the summer progresses. The temperature is also a concern. Collections last longer at lower temperatures. 80 degrees is too hot for collections and human comfort. The mezzanine should not be used for collection storage. .

Figure 46: Light meter and Onset Computer data logger, mezzanine.

In the past a dehumidifier was run in this space. An elaborate system of hoses attached to a large bucket allowed the dehumidifier to run constantly. Unfortunately, this is a system that relies on the bucket being emptied on a regular basis. From a conservation standpoint, this is not advisable. The bucket will fill up and overflow if left untended. This is a disaster waiting to happen. Air conditioning within this space will help lower the RH. Alternatively, Munters HC series Desiccant Dehumidifier (see Appendix A for technical literature) is a dehumidifier that uses desiccant and heat coils to remove moisture from the air. There is no condensate (i.e., the water in the dehumidifier) to worry about. However, the cost of such a system maybe a

deterrent. Although I did not see evidence of objects being adversely affected by high RH levels, the Collections Manager reported finding mold on some objects.

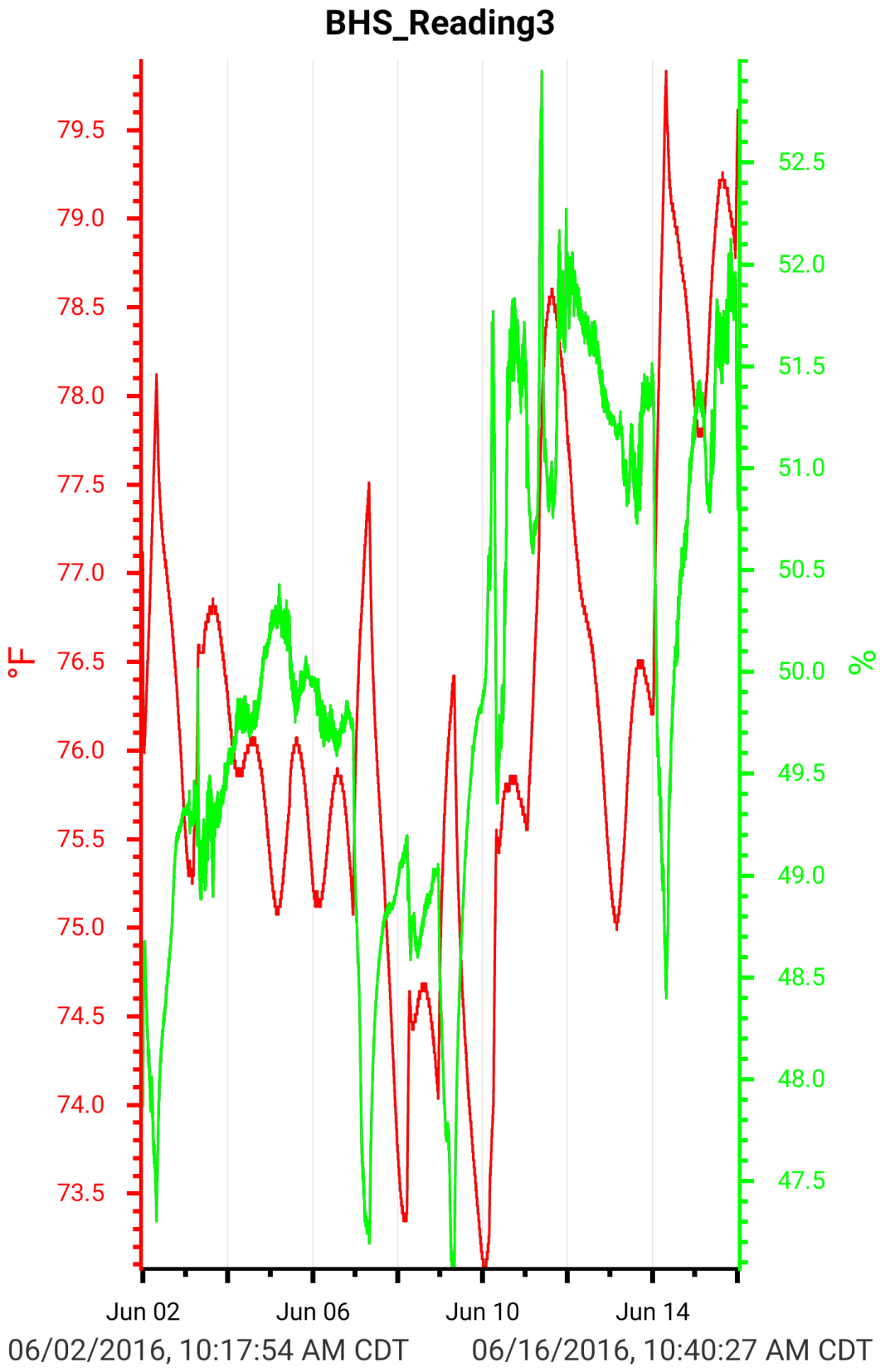

Figure 47: Data logger graph.

Military Collections Storage:

A small room off the gym houses military objects including uniforms, equipment, archival documents, weapons and souvenirs. This space shares a lot of the same problems as the gym. The majority of the storage furniture is not archival quality. Objects sit on unsealed wooden shelves (figure 48) or in unsealed wooden drawers (figure 49). Most storage boxes are acidic cardboard with a few exceptions. Most of the collections are not protected from the light and/or dust. Roof leaks (figure) are also clearly an issue here. The room is tidier than the gym. Unfortunately, the collection shares the space with the electrical breaker boxes. This is less than ideal.

Like the gym, I recommend upgrading the shelving, storage units and enclosures.

Figure 48: Military collections storage. Objects sit on open wooden shelves.

The hanging textiles (figure 50) hang on unpadded wooden hangers. Ideally, these hangers should be padded to better support the objects. The fluorescent light (figure 51) in this closet is a real concern. Unfiltered fluorescent lights emit a considerable amount of UV light. The UV readings in this space were high, 102 µw/lumen. The visible light levels were also high, 175 lux. Placing the jackets in garment bags similar to those in the textile room would protect them from the light and any dust.

Most of the objects in the bottom of the closet sit on or near the floor level. This is not ideal. Here, they are at greater risk of being kicked and if there is a major roof leak, they will get wet and likely damaged. The closet is also not very accessible with objects being stored several levels deep.

Figure 49: Wooden storage units. Note aluminum drip trays on top.

Figure 50: Storage closet. Note objects on or close to floor level.

Figure 51: Uniforms are exposed to unfiltered fluorescent lights.

Photographic Collection, BHS Office:

The majority of the photographic collection is stored in the BHS office with the remainder stored at the mezzanine level of the gym. Most of the photographs are in archival quality envelopes (figure 52) in plywood filing cabinets. Unfortunately, the wooden cabinets are not ideal for these collections. The fact that they do not lock is a security concern. These cabinets should be replaced with locking powder coated steel cabinets. The case photographs (e.g., Ambrotypes, Daggerotypes) (figure 53) are kept in several closets in the office. Most are in archival quality boxes (figure 54). Unfortunately, the enclosures (e.g., envelopes) (figure 55) are not archival quality. In addition to being acidic, the envelopes do not provide much physical protection for the photographs. In Figure 56 we see a box of historic photographs poorly stored. The box is overstuffed and the enclosures provide little protection. The case photographs would be best stored individually in either an archival quality enclosure such as a four flap or in an archival quality box. Clamshell boxes are ideal for these photographs. They are readily available from archival supply houses and reasonably inexpensive. The housing for the banker's box of negatives we see in Figure 57 should ultimately be upgraded. Neither the box nor the glassine enclosures are archival quality. As one can see, some of the enclosures have turned brown and are becoming brittle. Eventually, they will disintegrate. These negatives are currently not safely accessible. After sorting and organizing them in a systematic manner, the negatives should be transferred to archival quality photo sleeves and placed in archival boxes designed to fit the negatives.

I found several examples of cellulose acetate film (also called "safety film") in the collection. Acetate film is inherently unstable and will, over time, degrade giving off acetic acid (i.e., vinegar). This phenomenon is referred to as "Vinegar Syndrome." The rate of this reaction depends on ambient temperature and humidity. The lower the temperature and RH the slower the reaction. So far, none of the acetate I found has a strong smell. This is good. Ideally, acetate objects should be stored separately as they pose a risk to the rest of the collection. In your case, I recommend monitoring the condition of the acetate using IPI AD strips (see Appendix C). The strips could be installed during the inventory.

Figure 52: Photograph storage, BHS office.

Figure 53: Case photograph labelled "ambrotype, cat."

Figure 54: Case photograph storage.

Figure 55: Contents of box seen in Figure 54. These enclosures are not archival quality.

Figure 56: Although the box is archival, the enclosures are not.

Figure 57: Photographic negatives storage. Neither the box nor the enclosures are archival.

The Luebke Family Memorial Library:

Figure 58: Library reading room.

The library consists of two rooms, a reading room (figure 58) and an archives room (figure 59). I have concerns about both of these spaces. The archives room has clearly had leaks in the past. Water is a considerable risk to archival material. Keeping items off the top shelf will help reduce this risk. The storage furniture in this room appears to be repurposed. Its current configuration leaves a lot of wasted space which could be better used to house collections. Although a small room, the space could be used much more efficiently. The large, deep unit on the east wall is particularly inefficient. Some shelves do not have enough head room for books and binders to stand up straight and others have too much head room. Although a convenient, the desk on the west side also wastes a lot of space. This space would be better used for shelving and/or storage cabinets. The reading room table could be used instead. This room is currently a bit of a jumble. Like the gym, tidying up the shelves would go a long way. I recommend sorting through the material in this room to determine exactly what is there. I am certain that there is some material that is not archival and could be stored elsewhere or, possibly, discarded. In the long term I recommend replacing the current storage furniture and reconfiguring the space to its maximum potential. Installing a locking door between this room and the reading room would make this a secure storage area, something it currently is not. Unattended visitors to the library reading room have easy access to the materials stored here. This is a security concern. During my visit, a Civil War ledger book (figure 60) was one of three ledgers found on one of the shelves in the reading room. These are quite collectible and could easily be stolen. The proximity of the library to the east door makes this even more of a possibility. Without an up-to-date inventory, it would be impossible to know that such an object were even missing; which would be most unfortunate. The ledger was moved to a secure storage area. For security reasons, library visitors should be accompanied.

Figure 59: Archives room. Note staining on ceiling from previous roof leak.

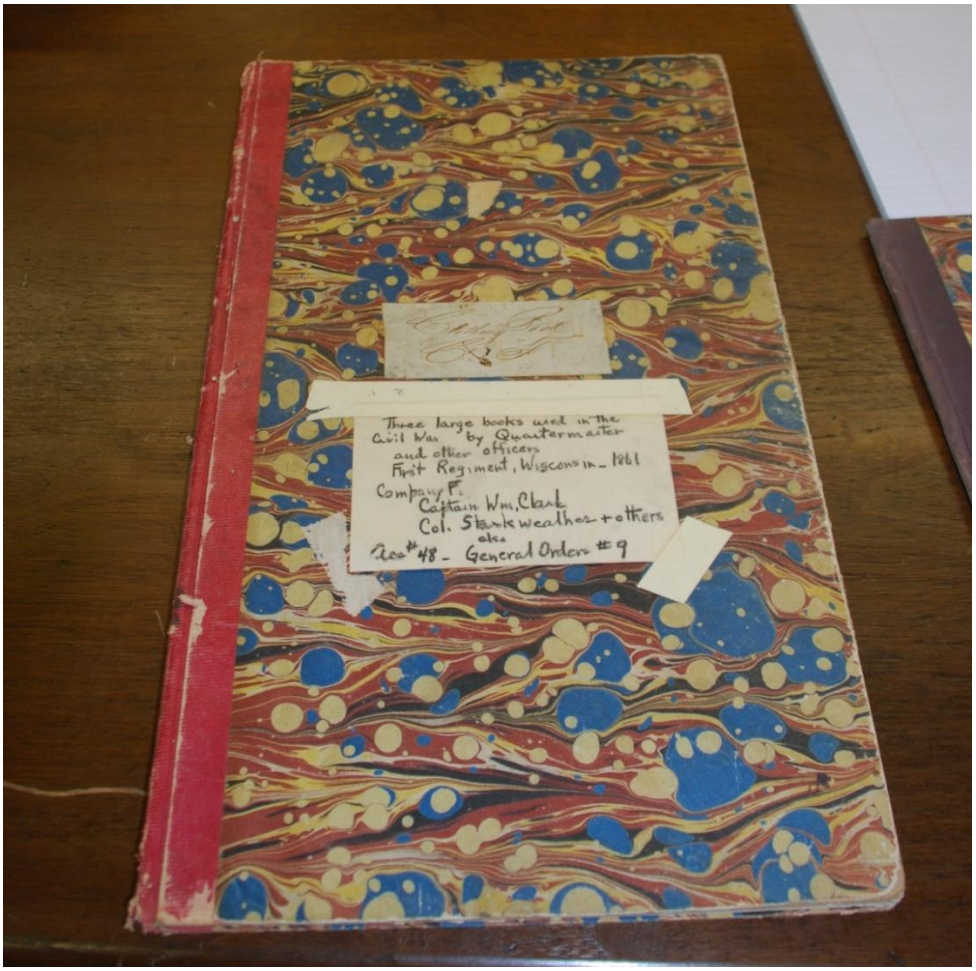

Figure 60: Civil War ledger book found in the library reading room.

Figure 61: The main gallery has lots of space but few exhibits.

Exhibits:

Although the BHS currently has a lot of space dedicated to exhibits, there are very few exhibits. The main gallery (figure 61) has a few objects in it but looks more like a work in progress than an exhibit. The community room and the military room (figure 62) are the two existing exhibit spaces.

Military Room:

I have a number of conservation concerns with this room. First, is security. The objects in this room are completely accessible to the visitor. Second, complete access allows visitors to touch and handle the objects; something we do not recommend. Third, the majority of the uniform jackets are currently all displayed on unpadded wooden hangers (figure 63). This is less than ideal. The jackets would be much better supported if the hangers were padded. The one exception to this is the uniform we see in Figure 64. The mannequin fits the uniform well and gives it good support. This is ideal. From an interpretive standpoint it helps bring the object to life. Finally, placing interpretive labels (e.g., figure 63) directly on top of light sensitive collections can lead to differential light damage as the area below the label is protected from the light. These should be moved off the objects. I have health and safety concerns regarding the cross (figure 64). It appears to be merely propped up against the wall with no other means of support. This object is heavy and at risk of being pulled over by a visitor. I am particularly concerned about children who may not understand the risk it poses. The cross should be safely secured for exhibit.

Figure 62: Military room exhibit.

Figure 63: Civil War era jacket on an unpadded wooden hanger.

Figure 64: This uniform is properly supported on a mannequin.

Figure 64: Object at risk.

Community Room:

Although the display panels that currently line the walls of the community room are old and in poor condition, they do demonstrate how effective this kind of display can be. Text panels with reproductions of archival photographs lend themselves well to this space. Consideration should be given to updating these panels. Perhaps the exhibit design class at Beloit College could be tasked with developing and installing a new exhibit in this space? This would only be possible if the BHS hired professional staff.

More Exhibits:

Many of the board spoke of wanting more exhibits at the Lincoln Center. I understand this desire but current staffing makes this unrealistic as there is currently no one on staff whose job it is to curate exhibits. I feel that undertaking the inventory should be a high priority. Given the time and resources required to do the inventory, I feel that developing new exhibits should come after the inventory is finished. In the interim you may wish to consider applying for one of the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibits (SITES). The SITES shows are reasonably low cost and are designed so that the borrowing institution can augment the exhibit with material from their own collection. Having a Smithsonian exhibit may also help attract new visitors to the BHS.

Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead:

During my visit I had access to the house, school house and barn. The Hanchett-Bartlett house is a lovely welcoming site. Guided tours allow the visitor access to the house and its furnishings. From a conservation standpoint this access is a concern (figures 65 & 66). With full access comes a higher risk of damage and theft. Visitors should, if not already asked to do so, check bags and backpacks before embarking on a tour. No food or drink should be allowed inside the house. Visitors should be given guidelines at the beginning of every tour (e.g., no touching/handling, stay with the group, parents are responsible for their children….)? If this is not included in the tour, I recommend including these dictates in the script. Having been a docent in an historic house museum myself I understand how difficult it can be to be both interpreter and security personnel. Ideally, each tour should have two docents, one to lead and one to sweep. Noticing a theft can be difficult particularly in rooms with many small objects. A full inventory of the collections, as already noted, is recommended. In the meantime, a quick and easy way to monitor the collections is to take representative photographs of each room. These should then be printed and either mounted on mat board or put in a binder. Docents should check these photographs against the contents of the room at the end of each day. It is not always easy to remember what was where in each room; the inventory photographs will make this task easier and be less stressful for the docents.

Figure 65: Hanchett-Bartlett house dining room. Visitors have full access.

Light, both the visible and UV part of the spectrum, is a big concern. This was noted in the MAP report. The large windows let in considerable amounts of light. Light levels throughout the house were measured and found to be quite high. For example, the readings for green chair (figure 67) in the corner of the parlor were 575 lux and 1,820 µw/lumen. It is important to remember that light damage is cumulative and not reversible. Light should be excluded except when there is a tour. This can be done a variety of ways probably the easiest would be to install pull blinds in every window. The many of the windows do have shutters and/or shutter hardware. Unfortunately, the extant shutters have been fastened to the house making them inoperable. A long term goal may be to make the existing shutters operable and restore the missing ones. The Grant House in Galena, Illinois uses both blinds and shutters effectively to control light in the house. During the off season, opaque dust covers should be used to protect the collection. Consideration should be given to installing blinds throughout the house.

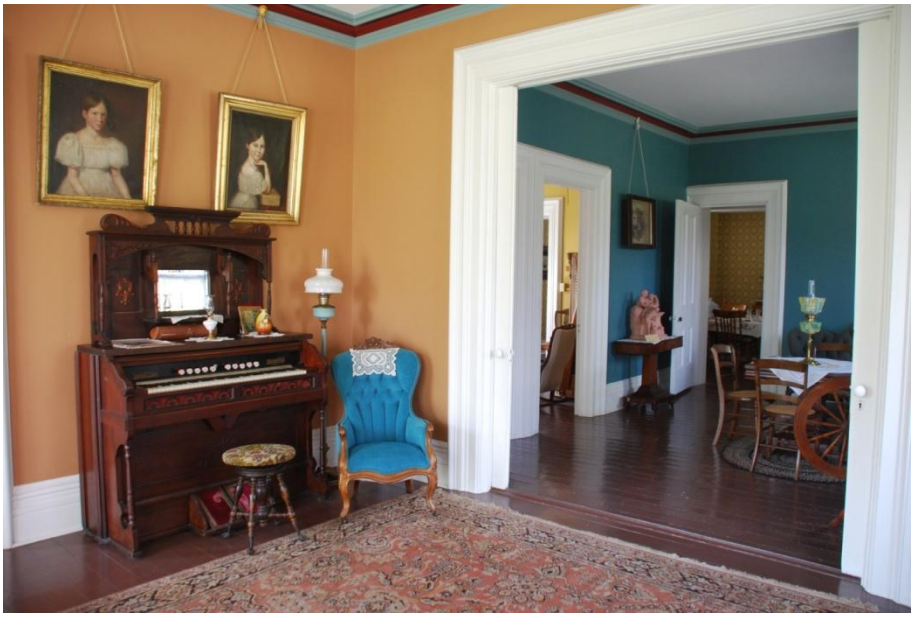

Figure 66: Parlor. Is this carpet part of the collection?

Figure 67: Although charming and part of the house, these large windows let in a lot of light.

Although not a conservation concern, the back half of the second floor space is underutilized. The current Dr. Mary exhibit (figure 68) tells an interesting part of the site's history but leaves me wanting to know more about the homestead. I am not certain how the toy collection in this part of the house is interpreted. Is this space meant to be a playroom? I do question what the large dollhouse has to do with the site.

Figure 68: Dr. Mary exhibit, second floor.

Given that it is used only for educational programing, I am assuming that the objects in the school house (figure 69) are not part of the permanent collection. This should be confirmed. The window blinds we see in Figure 69 should be used when the school house is not open to visitors. School programs in this space run only during the month of May. The space and the objects in it should be mothballed for the rest of the year. The room should cleaned at the beginning of May and at the end of the month in preparation for the winter.

The remoteness of the Homestead makes it a target for vandals. The barn (figure 70) clearly has been hit. Dealing with vandalism is a big challenge. Installing security lighting with motion detectors may help detour them. The current vandalism should be removed or covered over to prevent attracting more. It is not clear whether the barn walls had been historically whitewashed with a lime wash. Lime wash is an effective antigraffiti coating due to the fact that its pH is so high. Paint simply does not stick to it. If vandalism continues to be a problem, you may wish to consider whitewashing the exterior walls.

From a conservation standpoint, my concerns regarding the objects exhibited in the barn (figures 71 & 72) are handling, security and the fact that it is an unheated structure. As with the house, the collections are accessible and easy for the public to handle. A docent should be posted in the barn when it is open to the public. The case on the back wall (figure 72) does not lock. This is a security concern. Installing locks would reduce this risk. Storing/exhibiting metal objects in a building without winter heat creates a condensing environment which leads to corrosion (i.e., atmospheric moisture condenses on the surface of the cold metal). The corrosion we see on the tools in Figure 73 may well be due to this. Conservation heating (i.e., keeping the ambient temperature above the dew point preventing condensation) is likely too expensive to consider.

Figure 69: School house interior. Are these objects part of the collection?

Figure 70: The barn is a target for vandals.

Figure 71: Barn interior.

Figure 72: Exhibits are open to the public. The cabinet on the left does not lock.

Figure 73: Objects in the unlocked case. These are vulnerable.

From a curatorial standpoint, I am not certain how the barn is interpreted. Are the objects there because they reflect the Homestead over time or are they there because they are agricultural in nature and old? Is there a link between the house and the barn? A curatorial review of this space is recommended.

It seems a shame to me that the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead is open for such a short period of time every year and has only a few events per year. One of the things that strategic planning allows an organization to do is to assess and examine how they are interpreting and using a site. I urge the board to consider what their vision is for the Homestead and how the interpretation of this site and its use can be integrated into the broader goals of the BHS.

Labelling:

There are clearly legacy issues regarding inappropriate labelling techniques. For example, the football that we see in Figure 74 was labelled with an indelible ink directly on the object without a base barrier coat. Good practice states that accession numbers should be fully reversible and the materials used suitable to the object being labelled. This number is not reversible. The historic photograph we see in Figure 75 was labelled with a felt tip marker. This too is inappropriate. Pencil should be used to label paper based objects. Finally, self adhesive tape, such as masking tape (figure 76) is not an appropriate material for labelling objects. Over time the tape degrades and adhesive stains the substrate. I recommend that a clear labelling procedure be developed and implemented. The "marking" chapter in the AAM publication *Museum Registration Methods* (5th Edition) is an excellent resource. I recommend that the BHS adopt these procedures.

Figure 74: Accession number applied directly to an object. This is not best practice.

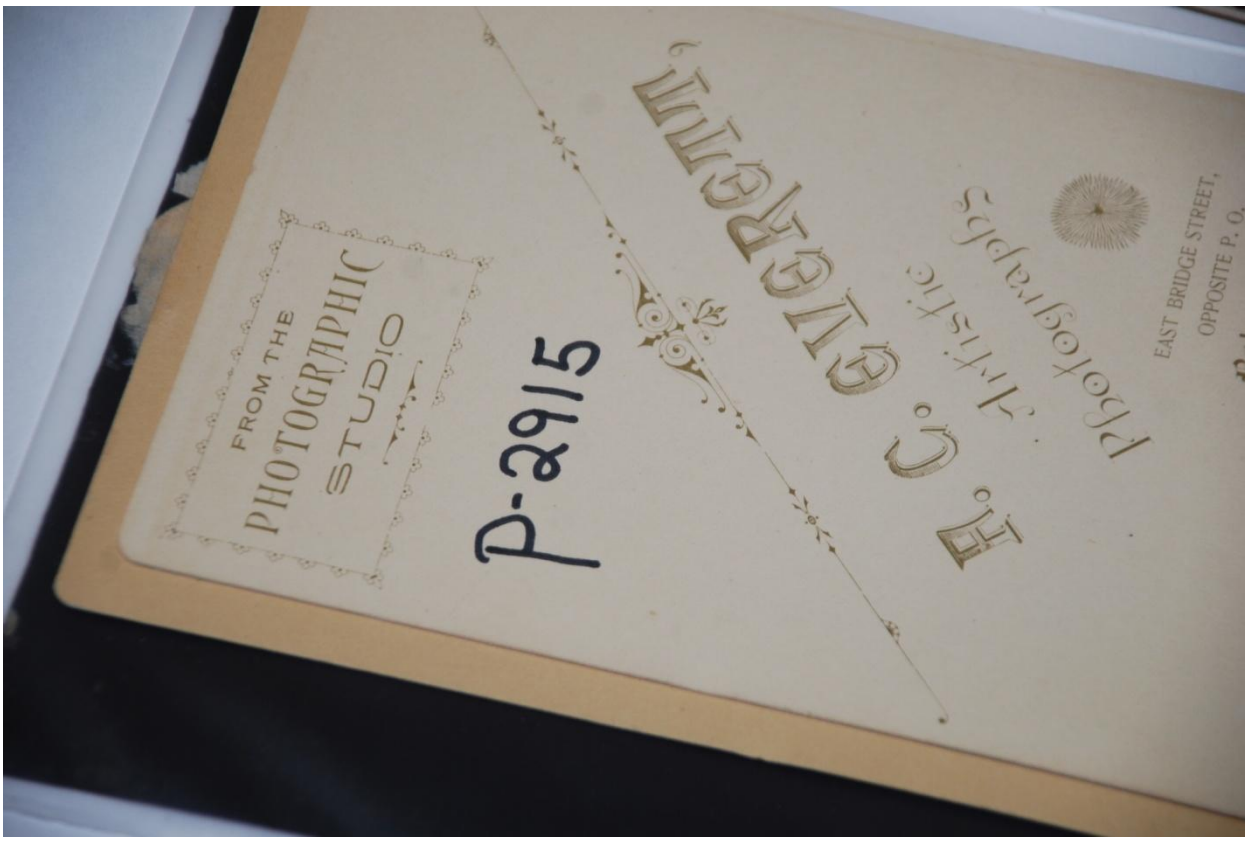

Figure 75: Historic photograph labelled with a felt tip marker. This is not reversible.

Figure 76: Masking tape label, Hanchett-Bartlett barn.

Environmental Monitoring:

The BHS currently does not monitor the temperature and RH at either of its sites. Although you have limited control over the environment with your current systems, knowing what the conditions are year round can be beneficial. The results of environmental monitoring can be used to make important decisions. As we have already seen, the brief monitoring that took place in the Lincoln Center gym, mezzanine level, clearly demonstrated that this is not an ideal environment for collections. If, in the future, the BHS plans on borrowing objects from other museums, you will be required to submit environmental monitoring data. I recommend the BHS consider purchasing at least two loggers, one for each site. Onset Computer's UX100-011 would suit your needs quite well. The UX100-011 records temperature and RH and has a LCD screen allowing one to see the readings at any time. HOBOware Pro software package is required to run the loggers and interpret and export the data. A technical data sheet for this equipment can be found in Appendix B. All equipment and software is available from directly from Onset Computer Corporation (www.onsetcomp.com).

Integrated Pest Management:

The BHS currently does not have an integrated pest management (IPM) program in place. The bait trap (figure 77) for mice I found in the basement of the Hanchett-Bartlett house indicates that the BHS has retained the services of an outside pest management company, Wil Kil. Wil-Kil provides monthly inspection reports. I urge you to develop an IPM program and a pest policy and procedures rather than relying on an outside contractor. IPM integrates pest management into the day to day operations of a museum. Pest management should be routine and ongoing rather than crisis driven and extraordinary. IPM makes pest management the responsibility of everyone, not just collections staff. IPM has five steps: avoid, block, detect, respond and recover. It takes a risk management approach to dealing with pests. For example, it is better to

avoid and block pests than to have to respond to an infestation. The earlier steps are far less expensive than the later ones. Unfortunately, avoiding pests is difficult as they are attracted to the collections. In general the pests we are dealing with are rodents who see the collections as nesting material and insects (e.g., clothes moths, carpet beetles) who see the collection as a suitable nursery and food source for their offspring. Insect damage occurs when the insects are in the larval stage. Once they become adults they live only long enough to mate and lay eggs. Protein based materials such as wool and feathers are an attractant. Although I saw no signs of insect activity during my visit, the amount of wool in your collection is a concern. IPM stresses reducing attractants. The popcorn machine in the Lincoln Center kitchen is a huge attractant (figure 78). Rodents see it as a food source. The popcorn machine should be completely cleaned out after use. Leaving the popcorn in the machine is inviting trouble. Garbage containing food should be disposed of regularly. Many museums do so daily. A cluttered environment is a perfect haven for pests (figure 79). Undisturbed areas that are rarely cleaned create an ideal environment. Unfortunately, there are examples at both sites. Storage and exhibit areas should be designed so that they can be easily cleaned. A well sealed building is important from a pest management standpoint. Mice can get through a hole the size of a dime and a rat the size of a quarter. Old buildings often have numerous points of access (figure 80). Both sites would benefit from sealing holes in the walls and foundations blocking access. Insects are much smaller. Window screens and door sweeps help keep them out. Unfortunately, many of the insects come in with an object. As such, developing a quarantine procedure for new acquisitions should be considered. During the inventory objects should be examined looking for evidence, old or new, of pest activity. If evidence of pest activity is found, the object should be bagged and set aside for treatment. IPM is based on using respond (i.e., the kill step) techniques that are effective but safe for humans. Freezing is a common approach to treating an insect infestation. For rodents, we do not recommend using poison baits as the animals often die inside the museum becoming an attractant for other pests. The bait box we see in Figure 77 contains poisoned bait. Instead, I recommend using snap traps. Snap traps need to be checked on a regular basis or they too become an attractant.

Figure 77: Bait trap set by a pest management contractor.

Figure 78: The Lincoln Center popcorn machine and left over popcorn is a huge attractant.

Figure 79: The summer kitchen provides an ideal environment for pests.

Figure 80: Summer kitchen, Hanchett-Bartlett house. Not well sealed. Garbage, particularly food garbage, should be emptied on a regular basis.

Disaster Preparedness:

The BHS does not currently have a disaster preparedness plan. This is most unfortunate give the number of leaks that have occurred at the Lincoln Center. Drafting such a plan can seem like a daunting task. The legacy of hurricanes Katrina and Rita is a wealth of resources for disaster planning, including DPlan^{tm}. DPlan^{tm} is an on-line disaster planning tool developed by the North East Document Conservation Center and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. It is available free of charge to any museum that registers. DPlan^{tm} provides a template to develop and maintain an up-to-date disaster plan. When writing the plan, involve Beloit's first responders (e.g., firefighters, police). They can be incredibly helpful and prefer to help prevent a disaster rather than having to respond to one. Invite them in, give them a tour. An important component of any disaster plan is training for staff and volunteers. The board should recognize this and allocate funds for accordingly.

Policy and Procedures:

Currently, the only extant BHS policy is a collections-related policy. It is not clear to me when the policy was last reviewed as it is not dated. It is highly likely it has not been revised for some considerable time. Writing policies and procedures is important for any collecting institution. In addition to the fact that it is considered best practice it is expected by most granting agencies. Policies contain the principles and broad directions that will help an institution meet its long-term goals. Once established, policies should be reviewed on a regular basis to insure that they still reflect your museum's mission. I strongly recommend that the BHS commit to writing policies and associated procedures. Accepting and implementing collections policies and procedures shows that the BHS recognizes the importance of collections care and preservation. The board is currently going through a strategic planning exercise. This is a good time to make the commitment to revising the existing policy and developing new policies and procedures. Policies to consider developing include loans, care and handling, food and drink and pest management. Procedures could include accession/deaccessioning and security/theft. The Collections Policy should include policy on preventive care, loans, acquisitions, accessions, deaccessions, use of deaccession proceeds, and security. A Collections Access policy should address access guidelines and procedures for access BHS collections.

The Collections Manager has made great strides developing and upgrading the collections management documentation. Forms include "Deed of Gift" and "Temporary Receipt." The only change I would recommend making to the temporary receipt form is the section asking if the potential donor would like to have the item returned to them or not. I personally would not give the donor the option. If the donor does not want the object back the BHS is left with the task of placing the object elsewhere or discarding it. I believe the BHS has enough collections related issues to deal with without being responsible for donations not accepted by the Collections Committee.

Strategic Planning:

I am pleased to see that the BHS board is planning on developing a strategic plan. Now is a really good time for this particularly given the recent retirement of the Executive Director. Strategic planning allows the board to carefully assess your mission and mandate and develop short, middle and long term goals. It allows you to reflect on your collections-based assets and to reconsider how best to manage them. I recommend the board make the commitment to start this process as soon as possible. There are several resources available to help with what may seem a daunting task. The AAM collections stewardship fundamentals (http://www.aam-

us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/collections-stewardship) is a good resource as is The American Association for State and Local History's (AASLH) Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) program (http://tools.aaslh.org/what-is-steps/). The StEPs program is ideally suited to the BHS. As institutional members of the AASLH the BHS has free access to this program. The program is described as follows:

> AASLH's self-study standards program designed specifically for small- to mid-sized *history* organizations, including volunteer run institutions. Using a workbook, an online community, and a three-tiered achievement system with certificates, StEPs enables even the smallest organizations to assess policies and practices, manage daily operations, and plan for the future—all at your own pace![4]

As previously stated, your collection is your biggest strength. The mission, vision, and strategic plan should address how BHS can use its collection to best serve its community. Community needs to be defined and the board needs to seriously consider whether staying at the Lincoln Center is the best way to realize its goals. The Lincoln Center has a leaky roof, poor lighting, environmental issues and is located in a residential area not near downtown. Long-term investments in the Lincoln Center should be contingent on remaining at that site.

Finding the time to start a strategic plan can be difficult. I recommend that the board set aside a day for a retreat. The retreat should deal only with the strategic plan. Whether or not you bring in an outside facilitator is a decision I leave to the board. The Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead would be an ideal venue. I recommend that the retreat be designated a cell phone free event. Phones can be accessed at break time or lunch; otherwise they should remain off.

Defining your mission is really important. With that in hand you can seriously look at your collections and determine if they fit the mission. Deaccessioning is a healthy activity for any organization. If objects do not fit the mission they do not belong in the collection. The BHS currently has a collection of Beloit College year books. I question their presence. Clearly, the college must have copies in its archive and the local library likely has some too. Frankly, these books are taking up valuable space. The framed Beloit needlework (figure 81) is an exquisite object. To me, it would be better appreciated at the college. The collection includes copies of the *Beloit Daily Free Press* (figure 82). Although an interesting resource, do they belong in your collection? Are there digital copies of the newspapers available elsewhere? If so, consideration should be given to deaccessioning them. Like the yearbooks, they take up a considerable amount of space. I also question whether the military collections would not be better placed in a museum dedicated to military history. It wasn't clear to me whether any of the military objects had ties to Beloit. If they do, you could consider retaining them provided they were covered under your mission.

The Collections Committee should use the conservation assessment to develop a preservation plan for the collections. The preservation plan should incorporate the short and long term recommendations identified in this report and be included in the strategic plan. Federal funds require that preservation activities directly relate to goals identified in an institution's strategic plan.

[4] http://tools.aaslh.org/what-is-steps/ accessed July 22, 2016.

Figure 81: Beloit College needlework in the exhibits room. Sadly, few get to see it.

Figure 82: *Beloit Daily Free Press*.

Comparable Organizations:

During my visit I was continually struck by how comparable the BHS is to the Stephenson County Historical Society Museum in Freeport, Illinois. Three years ago I undertook a ReCAP study there in association with David Arbogast. Many of my findings were similar to what I am outlining in this report. I returned to the museum this May. I was so pleased to see the progress that has been made in the three years since my last visit. Visiting comparable museums can help the board put things in perspective and give hope for the future. I urge the board to take Sharon Welton up on her offer of hosting the BHS board. It is my understanding that the BHS has recently been in touch with the Rock County Historical Society to discuss the opportunities for partnering. This is very good news. Both institutions can benefit from this partnership. Opportunities include bulk ordering of supplies, reciprocal membership benefits and raising the profile of both organizations.

Conclusion & Strategic Recommendations:

The following summarizes my recommendations. I have divided these into immediate, short and long-term recommendations. Immediate actions should be taken within the next year, short-term within one to two years and long-term actions over the next three to five years. It is my hope that itemizing these actions will help you to address them in a strategic manner.

If during the strategic planning process the BHS board decides that moving to a new location is a strategic priority, long-term goals will need to be adjusted accordingly. Collections will need to be inventoried before relocation. Deaccessioning should take place in advance of a move. Finally, objects should be safely rehoused and new storage hardware purchased and installed in the new facility in advance of moving the collection.

a) Immediate:

- tidy up the gym
- box up & move the *Beloit Pioneer* copies from the gym and the storeroom
- move any objects currently stored on the mezzanine level down to the ground level
- clean floors and carpeted areas
- remove items from top shelf in archive room
- institute a moratorium on new acquisitions for a least a year
- remove VHS tapes from textile room
- visit the Stephenson County Historical Society Museum
- finish strategic plan
- finish preservation plan based on CAP recommendations

b) Short-term (1-2 years):

- undertake and complete the inventory - catalog backlog of accessioned objects
- install a locking door between the archives room and the library
- discard the current archive room desk and shelving & replace with shelving designed to fit the space & the collection
- hire collections staff
- update and draft policies & procedures (i.e., collections policy, collections access policy, disaster plan, and IPM program)
- apply for an IMLS Museums for America grant to support inventory
- institute standardized data entry procedures for collections management database

- replace cardboard boxes with archival boxes
- rehouse posters in acid and lignin free enclosures
- separate archival documents from object collection
- place archival cardboard or coroplast between paintings
- rehouse negatives in archival box and store separately from the collections
- monitor the status of the acetate film by placing IPI AD strips in each box
- implement environmental monitoring devises (i.e., dataloggers)
- identify objects slated for deaccessioning
- begin deaccessioning process
- install window coverings at Hanchett Bartlett homestead to be used when the home is not in use
- increase security at the Hanchett Bartlett site (barn in particular)

c) Long-term (3-5 years):

- digitize original accession ledgers and archive the originals
- apply for funding to support rehousing collection & shelving upgrades
- upgrade shelving/housing in the gym, textile, and military storage
- rehouse collections to alleviate overcrowding and promote visual accessibility
- rehouse photographs in locking powder coated steel enamel file cabinets
- develop a plan for cold storage of negatives and/or transfer to more stable media
- develop exhibit plan & educational programming
- divide main exhibit gallery into two spaces; collections lab swing space and temporary exhibition space
- upgrade military room exhibits to address conservation and security concerns
- develop an interpretive plan for Hanchett-Bartlett homestead
- consider making extant shutters on the Hanchett-Bartlett homestead operable

Sincerely,

Susan L. Maltby, Conservator