
Museum Moves, Past and Present

by *Mary W. Madden and
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IN 1914, when the Historical Society moved from its overcrowded quarters in the Capitol to the Memorial Building, staff members hand carried and carted the collection across the street. In 1983 and 1984, trucks and cranes transported the collection across town from the Memorial Building to the new Kansas Museum of History. Both moves represented the culmination of years of planning and preparation, and the contrasts between them illustrate the changes that seventy years have made.

Before the 1914 move staff members spent nearly eighteen months working to complete the job of packing the objects. Thomas Sneed, a statehouse janitor, was employed to transport the collection when the necessary funds to hire a transfer company did not materialize. Between June 27 and the end of August, Sneed and his horse and express wagon made thirty or forty trips a day between the two buildings. The final cost of the move was \$727.42.

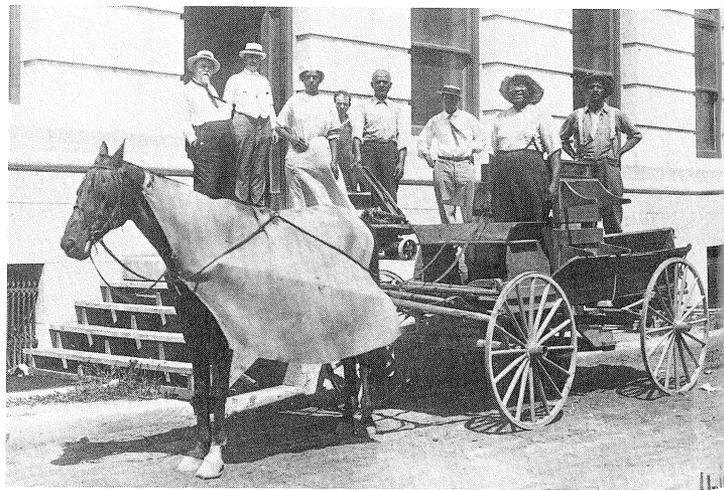
Overcrowding was once again the catalyst for the construction of a new facility and the ensuing move of the Museum Department beginning in 1983. Unlike the 1914 experience, however, funds were appropriated in advance by the Kansas legislature to employ additional staff, purchase quality packing materials, and hire a professional moving company.

In early January 1983 museum staff packing crews, numbering up to fourteen people at times, methodically began packing the seventy-seven thousand museum artifacts in the Memorial Building. For the next fourteen months, everything from hat pins to horn chairs was prepared for the move. To accomplish this task, the staff used over 130,000 feet of foam padding, 3 tons of unprinted newsprint, 68,000 yards of tape, 25,500 feet of acid-free tissue, over 10,000 plastic zip-lock bags, and nearly 4,700 boxes.

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While the packing was done by the museum staff, the actual transporting of the collection was contracted to Capital City Moving and Storage of Topeka at a cost of \$24,057.00. From December 8, 1983, through the end of February 1984 the firm moved portions of the collection two days a week, weather permitting. Seventy-three large artifacts, including the 1910 Thomas Town Car and the 1908 Great Smith automobile, required special attention. Formerly exhibited on the fourth floor of the Memorial Building, these artifacts were craned out through a skylight opening in the roof. The procedure involved one and one-half days' work and was by far the most spectacular event in the lengthy and arduous job of moving the collection to the Kansas Museum of History.

Even though the scope and the methods of the two moves differed greatly, both realized the same goal. The Museum Department and its most precious possessions were moved safely into a new home. KH



Statehouse janitor Tom Sneed, shown here standing in his wagon, was hired to transport the Society's collections from the Capitol to the Memorial Building in 1914.



With modern equipment and professionally trained movers, Capital City Moving and Storage of Topeka secured the bid in 1983 to move the collections to the Kansas Museum of History.

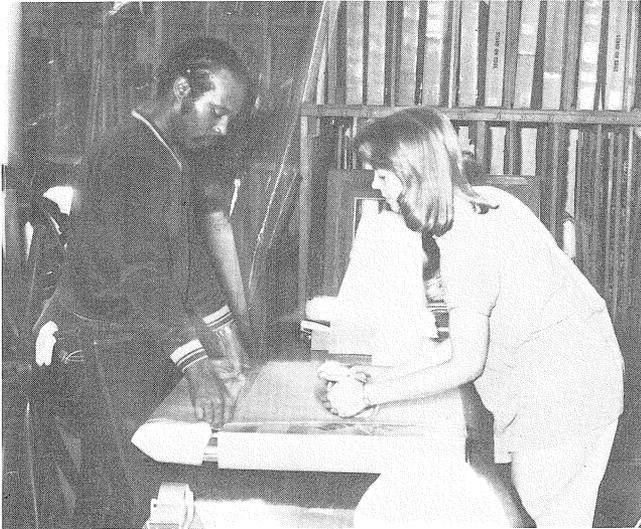
The museum staff prepared each object carefully for the move. They packed the first box on January 6, 1983; over the next fourteen months 6,800 box numbers were assigned.



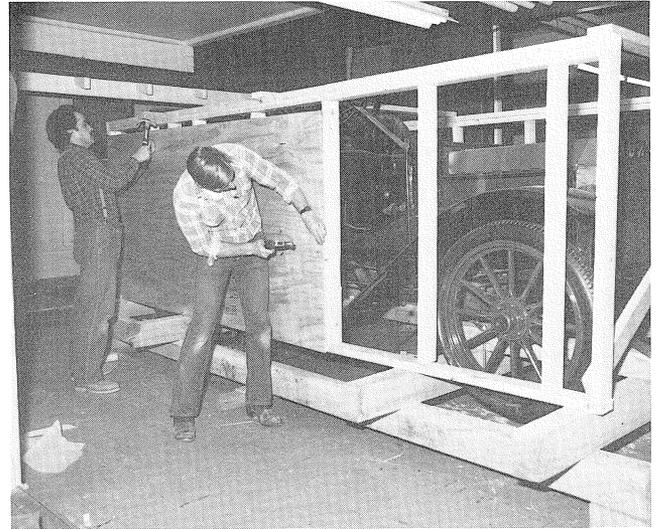
Space for packing stations and storage was provided when the fourth-floor galleries were closed to the public on March 31, 1983.



The galleries and period rooms were filled quickly as packing continued. Clothing was hung on specially constructed racks, and furniture, statues, and other large artifacts were protected with padding.



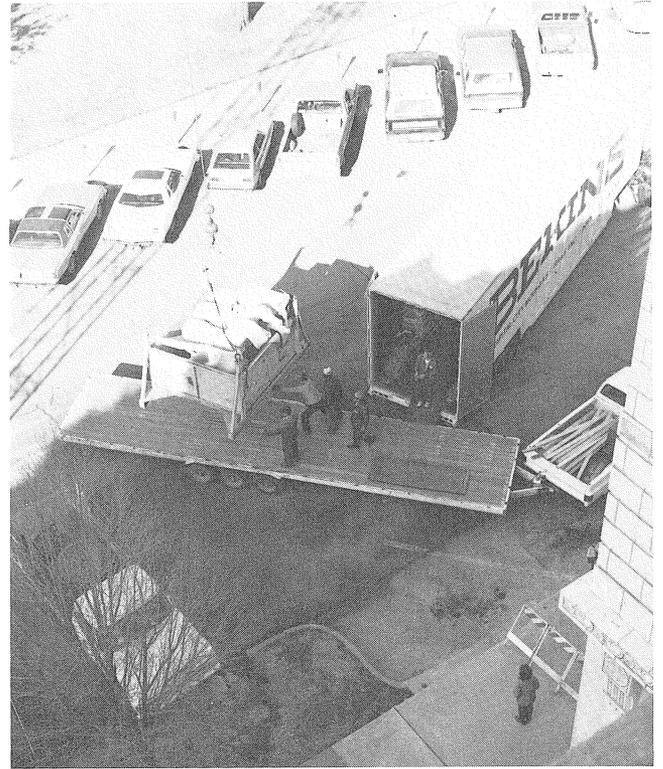
Small or delicate artifacts were wrapped and boxed. Here, packers use foam padding to protect a painting.



Months before the large artifacts were craned through the roof of the Memorial Building, museum carpenters built custom crates designed to withstand the strain of the procedure. Here they are shown encasing the Thomas Town Car.



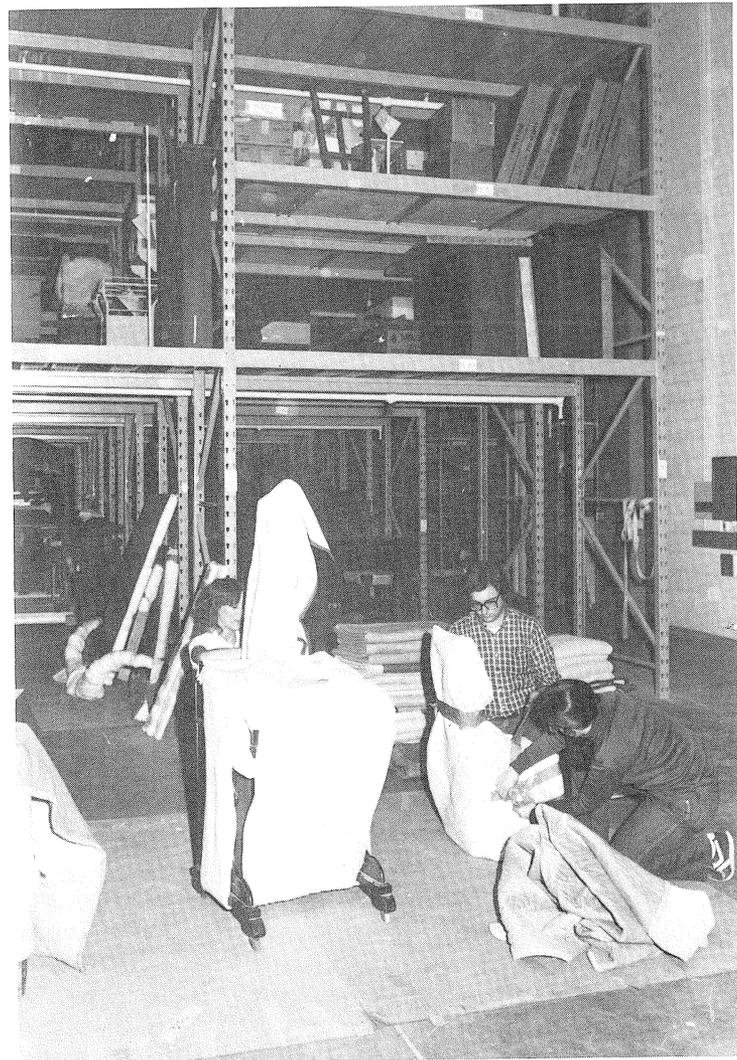
Silhouetted against the Capitol, the Thomas Town Car was the first artifact craned out of the Memorial Building on January 31, 1984, by the Noble Corporation of Topeka.



A bucket was used to lift some large artifacts through the roof and load them into the waiting truck.



Moving continued throughout February 1984.



As soon as the artifacts arrived, museum staff began unpacking them in the new storage area so they would be available for research and exhibits.