

Interpretive Plan/Progress Report



Tread of Pioneers MUSEUM

Tread of Pioneers Museum
Native Arts Re-imagined Exhibit



by
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Interpretive Plan Report for the Native Arts Exhibit

Tread of Pioneers Museum

February 16, 2024

Introduction

The Tread of Pioneers Museum in Steamboat Springs has a unique collection of historic Native American Southwest artifacts and local pre-contact materials originating from the surrounding Routt County and beyond. The majority of the historic Native American artifacts comprise the H.B. Pleasant collection. H.B. Pleasant was a resident of Maybell, Colorado and he collected many indigenous items from the Southwest United States. He also collected photogravures taken by the well-known early twentieth century Native American photographer Edward S. Curtis. Throughout the history of ownership by the Tread of Pioneers Museum the collection and associated pre-contact indigenous artifacts have been exhibited in the Zimmerman House, local traveling exhibitions and most recently as part of a temporary exhibit (2022-2023) focused on Southwest ceramics, basketry and the history of how the collection came to be assembled and donated to the Museum.

The Zimmerman House has for many years had a former bedroom on the second floor that has highlighted this collection (the Native Arts room), along with several other pre-contact artifact collections donated to the Museum over many years. Currently one periodically rotating Edward S. Curtis photogravure is also on display in the room. The Museum contacted Interpret Site L.L.C. in 2023 to propose a plan to re-imagine the Native Arts exhibit space for permanent display of the collection using effective interpretive techniques. This brief report outlines the basic structure guiding the interpretive strategies for the newly re-imagined space. For further details please refer to the Goals/Objectives, Themes and Audiences January 24-25, 2024 Minutes and Decision Item document dated Feb 12, 2024.



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Focus of the Exhibit

The re-imagined exhibit will focus on the H.B. Pleasant Collections. Artifacts that have a tie to the Ute Tribe (at least from the Ute perspective) will be told near the entry to History of Steamboat space. Non-tribal specific indigenous stone tools will not be included in the new space. The Edward Curtis prints will likely be moved out to a Hallway (changed on a rotating basis).

A Definition of Interpretation

Interpreters connect visitors to important natural, cultural, and historical resources at parks, nature centers, historical sites, aquariums, zoos, and anywhere that people come to learn about places. NAI (the National Association for Interpretation) defines interpretation as "a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us."

Plan Goal Structure

The goal hierarchy for the exhibit reflects the following structure:

Tread of the Pioneers Museum (Mission Goals/Aims)



Interpretive Goals



Objectives (Outcomes)



Overall Management Goal

- ✓ Mission and Aim (specific to this exhibit)

To preserve, share and celebrate the history and heritage of Steamboat Springs and Routt County (including the indigenous cultures of the West featuring artifacts from the H.B. Pleasant collection) through quality and engaging exhibits, programs, and education.

[>] **Interpretive Goals** (cognitive objectives) of the exhibit are:

Objective: To tell the story of the H.B. Pleasant family and their desire to collect these artifacts.

Objective: To explain the craft and manufacturing process of the pottery, basketry and textiles.

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Objective: To rotate pieces and develop a rotating schedule to highlight different pieces and properly preserve items through rest/storage and rotation schedule.

Objective: To offer more in-depth information on the collection on the museum's website audio visual, QR codes and with "flip books" in the exhibit area.



Indicators of Success

Indicator: The exhibit will aim to create a feedback wall or section (as space allows). Participation in the feedback section will indicate cognitive understanding of some of



the key objectives listed above.

Indicator: Encourage membership and support for the collection (upon exiting the exhibit area or elsewhere). Success will be seen with increased interest in membership and financial support to the museum and this collection.



Themes

Each artifact collection type (e.g. pottery, basketry, textiles) will focus the interpretive message with these three themes (answering as a “take-home” cognitive understanding).



Theme A: What is the process of creation for the collection?



Theme B: How did these items play a role culturally and functionally for the indigenous community?



Theme C: Who are the artists, their environments, and their lifeways?

Sub-themes:

Each of the stated themes may also explore one or more of the following sub-themes:

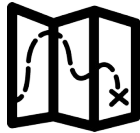
Sub-theme 1: Landscape tie-in – where do the materials for the items originate and how does this shapes the process?

Sub-theme 2: Iconography – what does some of the iconography represent?

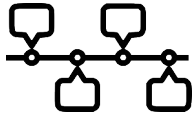


Sub-theme 3: Generational knowledge – What are the individual artistic expression(s) and the artisans themselves/tribes.

Supporting communication tools that can aid the theme messages:



Use of an orientation map showing the location of all the Pueblo Tribes and others (re-use of the map from the previous exhibition).



Use of a timeline perhaps.



Use historic or contemporary photos showing the manufacturing process of each craft category.

Target Audiences (public that would likely be engaged)

(Please note: The targeted groups are not meant to exclude general visitors or other groups.)

The museum would like to target the following groups with this exhibit:



Art enthusiast visitors



Native Americans visitors



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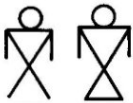
School Groups (K-12) and post-secondary

Preliminary Strategies (The strategies will likely grow as the exhibit develops.)



For Art enthusiasts

- Outreach to known art lovers groups (promotion of the exhibit).
- Explore and encourage “back jacket” reviews of the exhibit.
- Try to promote the exhibit with the Steamboat Art Museum events and other community events if relevant.



For Native Americans

- Send invitations to the Tribes associated with the exhibit offering free admission throughout the year.
- Build on any consultation partnerships to promote visitation.
- Jointly promote any events within the Steamboat community that may attract Tribal interest.



For School Groups (K-12) and post-secondary

- Continue existing outreach to local schools.
- Promote events incorporating the visitation of the museum (especially home-schooled children).
- Possibly develop one or two curriculum guides
- Possibly develop a gallery guide with challenges such as search and find activities for children.
- Possibly explore events that would attract young college students (meetups?).





Audience Tools



For all groups – seek speakers for lectures and events throughout the year that would tie-in to the exhibit.



Explore the use of Audio-visual media enhancements (video) and soft music (if appropriate). Needs to be easy to maintain and operate.

Native American Consultation/Input

Depending on the results of Native American engagement, the exhibit may include additional perspective narratives. This brief report and interpretive plan will likely change as a result.



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