

History Center Sells Building, Invites Public to Nov. 29 Final Open Day at Current Location

Packing begins next week in preparation of moving 50,000 artifacts to offsite storage

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa, Nov. 26, 2014—Families are invited to take a break from holiday shopping this Saturday, Nov. 29, to visit the Carl & Mary Koehler History Center on the final day the museum will be open to the public at its current location. The History Center has sold its property at 615 First Avenue SE and on Dec. 1 will begin the process of packing and moving its collection of 50,000 artifacts. In September the History Center purchased the historic Douglas Mansion at 800 Second Ave. SE.

“We’re excited to take this step towards making the Douglas Mansion our permanent home,” says Caitlin Treece, director of the History Center. As part of the move, the History Center’s collections will be stored offsite in a warehouse. Staff will have temporary offices at that location beginning Jan. 5. The museum’s archives, photo collection and revolving pieces of the collection will eventually move to the Douglas Mansion. According to Treece, the museum’s board of directors will soon be selecting an architect for renovation of the Douglas Mansion with the goal of a proposed architectural plan in hand within the next few months.

A local moving company with expertise in handling detailed and fragile cargo will begin shrink wrapping items next week under the supervision of Mike Crist, the History Center’s director of facilities and exhibits. “We have a very precise method for inventorying and accessing artifacts in the storage area at our current location,” says Crist. The museum’s thousands of items are stored in a database that provides the coordinates for finding each piece. “Each artifact has a row, rack and shelf number,” explains Crist. “Once everything is moved, the inventory system at our new storage facility will mirror the system we have now. The sheer number of items makes this a very detail-intense job.”

“Although the History Center will temporarily be without a home base, we will fulfill our mission of sharing and interpreting local history by bringing programs to the public,” says Treece. The museum will continue to offer bus tours, school programs, public forums and the museum’s popular walking tours with historian Mark Stoffer Hunter. “We’re also exploring the possibility of turning our presidential exhibit into a local traveling exhibit,” says Treece. The History Center will continue to provide up-to-date program information at historycenter.org.

Fundraising and Farewell

The History Center will host its final event at the First Avenue location on Saturday, Dec. 13, when it presents “Holidays with the Presidents,” from 5:00-8:00 p.m. “We think it is fitting that our annual fundraiser is our grand finale at this location,” says Treece. The festivities kick off with hors d’oeuvres and holiday treats from 5:00-6:00 p.m. and a walk through the “Presidential Honor, Educational Legacy” exhibit, which highlights the 37 schools in Cedar Rapids and Linn County that carry the names of U.S. presidents, from George Washington to Richard Nixon. Patrons will have the chance to chat with presidents Franklin Pierce, Warren Harding and Benjamin Harrison, brought to life by local actors. From 6:00-7:30 p.m., Mark Stoffer Hunter will host memories of White House Christmases. Traffic Jam, a local jazz trio, will provide Christmas jazz. Reservations are available online or by phone at (319) 362-1501. Tickets are \$45.

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