

BEHIND THE SCENES: CURATING PUBLIC ACCESS

Worked with Edmonds Historical Museum

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INTRODUCTION

This project with the Edmonds Historical Museum focused on making its collections space accessible to the public through guided tours and interpretive materials. In this initiative, accessibility specifically refers to cognitive and physical inclusion. Removing barriers such as navigating complex layouts or reading texts ensures the space is legible for the public. By bringing unseen artifacts onto the public view, the initiative creates more engagement while supporting research and community learning. Ultimately this aims the space to be discovered and have interactions.

ANALYSIS

Evaluation of the soft opening data reveals that while visitors express high curiosity about behind-the-scenes space operations, a significant lack of familiarity with collections management persists. To overcome the physical limitations of the Edmonds storage facility alongside immediate staffing constraints, the museum will transition to a controlled system of appointment-based tours and dedicated research visits. This strategic planning ensures the newly unveiled Harbor Square space delivers structured, accessible, and high-impact educational experiences without compromising artifact security or institutional capacity.

CONCLUSION

Data shows visitors highly desire behind-the-scenes insight, yet remain entirely unfamiliar with the core mechanisms of collections management. Opening the Edmonds collection space at Harbor Square for targeted tours directly bridges this gap, transforming hidden backend preservation and object curation into active public educational assets. Supported by the external, public-facing harbor history display case, this unified model matters because transparent stewardship unveils institutional authority, advances spatial accessibility, and provides a deeply engaging, sustainable community connection.

OBJECTIVE

Evaluate, design and create a space for the public to come to the collections space to learn local history and museum practices.

PROJECT

To transition the Edmonds Historical Museum's collection facility into an accessible public space, my specific contributions focused on turning closed storage workflows into visible, public-facing interpretive assets. I designed the physical safety rule posters and spatial artifact signage needed to safely navigate tour groups through the aisles, while also helping coordinate visitor logistics during the facility's soft opening. Finally, I independently curated, designed, and mounted a custom mini-exhibit inside the Harbor Square complex display case to serve as an outward-facing visual hook that draws the community directly into the main collections tour.

RESULTS

The implementation of custom artifact signage and safety rule posters successfully converted the closed Harbor Square storage facility into an open tour route, making the behind-the-scenes workflows of object selection and preservation care visible to the public. Feedback from the soft opening proved highly informative, revealing intense visitor curiosity and a strong desire to learn more about the mechanics of collections management. Furthermore, the satellite mini-exhibit case outside, which highlights the history of the Edmonds harbor, expanded community access to diverse museum artifacts, serving as a critical interactive bridge that connects public passersby directly to the main museum collections.

LITERATURE

Stone (2018) – highlights how underutilized collections limit research potential.
Cerdán Chiscano & Jiménez-Zarco (2021) – advocate for accessibility that addresses physical, cognitive, and programmatic needs.
Crona (2024) and Dawes (2016) – show that visible storage increases engagement and understanding of museum processes.

Sample artifacts below
Few artifacts to have a description due to high interest



Currently the space is only taking appointments. This QR code will allow you to make the appointments.

Handling Objects

Guidelines

1. Only handle objects with staff permission or assistance- with the exception of library books
2. Always use clean and dry hands or provided gloves
3. Support objects fully by using both hands or leave resting on the table
4. Keep objects over tables
5. Report any damages or instability immediately to staff
6. Please do not rearrange objects yourself
7. Do not remove photographs or archives from plastic sleeves
8. Training is required to use scanning equipment
9. We offer research assistance as able based on staff availability, more in-depth research may be delayed
10. Please take care when using museum laptops to research our collection and only use them as is relevant to your goals

Code of Conduct

Guidelines

1. No food or drinks beyond the entry desk - Please leave with attendant
2. Please ask an attendant to retrieve artifacts
3. Do not remove items or place items on shelves yourself
4. Please do not handle artifacts without permission or guidance
5. Please wash hands or wear gloves before handling artifacts
6. When in doubt or have questions or concerns please pause and ask a staff member for help

Guidelines to protect staff, visitors and more!