

# Pillows for Supporting Blankets and Dresses

2018

Ford Conservation Center

## Acknowledgements



Storage conditions have long been recognized by museum professionals as important factors in the long-term survival of artifacts. Although all materials deteriorate over time, stable environment, controlled lighting, careful handling, and the use of appropriate housing materials are strategies developed to slow the rate of degradation.

The housings found within this packet were developed by Jessica Waite and Tina Koeppel with assistance from the staff of the Ford Conservation Center, a division of

History Nebraska as part of a larger project, funded in part with a Save America's Treasures grant, to improve the storage conditions for the History Nebraska Native American collection.

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The collection of more than 3000 Native American objects was at risk due to inadequate storage space that caused ongoing damage to objects; space constraints that made safe access to artifacts nearly impossible; and toxic pesticide contamination. Staff members developed a project to remove or reduce these threats by increasing storage space and accessibility through the addition of safe, high-density compactor storage units; testing for harmful residues; cleaning and conserving each artifact; and rehousing each artifact in a protective archival housing. At the same time, each artifact was cataloged, photographed, and entered in to the collections management database. This greatly improved access to information and artifact images for staff, researchers, and the public.

## Tyvek Pillows for Dresses and Blankets



These Tyvek pillows were developed to provide adequate support and handling of the fabric and

leather dresses of the Native American collection at the Nebraska History Museum. The dresses were stored in inert storage drawers in a mobile shelving unit and piled atop each other. This storage system led to bead loss, torn leather, and creases. The technicians created a two-pillow support system for support and space allocation.

The pillows are made from soft-structure Tyvek sewn together and filled with loose polyester batting. The pillows are designed to fit standardized textile storage boxes.

### Directions

- 1) Determine the inside dimensions of the storage box. (length, width, height).
- 2) Cut out two pieces of Tyvek using the length and width of the box.
- 3) Place the two pieces of Tyvek with slick sides together.
- 4) Using 100% white cotton thread, sew the pieces of Tyvek together on three sides with a 1/4in seam.
- 5) Turn the pillow inside out.
- 6) Fill the pillow with loose polyester batting. Be careful to not overstuff the pillow.
- 7) Sew the fourth side together, finishing the pillow.
- 8) Repeat steps 2-7 for the second pillow.
- 9) If two objects will be stored in one box, cut out a piece of Tyvek big enough to wrap around the object. Place the long piece of Tyvek in the bottom of the box with equal amounts on each side of the box.
- 10) Using the diagram in Fig. 1, place the object in the box using an 'S-Curve' method.
- 11) Place the bottom 1/3 of the object in the box.
- 12) Place one pillow in the box.
- 13) Carefully wrap the object around the edge of the pillow making sure there are no folds or creases.

- 14) Place the second pillow in the box.
- 15) Carefully wrap the object around the edge of the second pillow making sure there are no folds or creases.
- 16) If the object is a dress, carefully tuck the sleeves around the edge of the second pillow.
- 17) Wrap the extra amount of Tyvek around the object. Tie the Tyvek together with cotton twill tape.

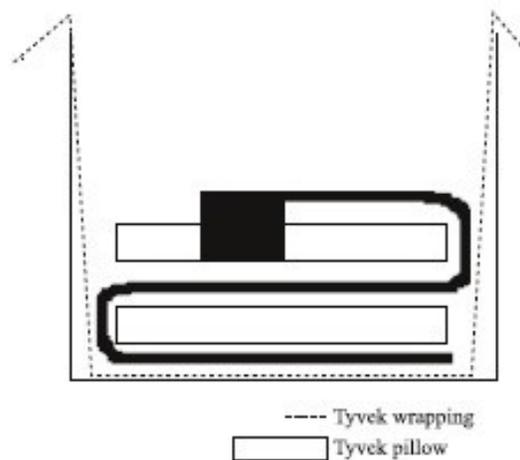


Fig. 1

**Materials Needed:**

- Metal straight edge
- Soft-structure Tyvek, cut to size
- 100% white cotton thread
- Loose polyester batting
- Cotton twill tape
- Utility knife

**Additional Information**

The pillows were used in the rehousing of the Native American dresses made of leather or textile and heavily decorated with pony beads, glass seed beads, elk teeth, silk ribbons, and metal cones. The pillows are also used to rehouse the blankets and hides of the Nebraska History Museum’s ethnographic collection. The dresses and blan-

kets were stored in standardized textile boxes of 28in x 40in x 15in. Due to the limited availability of space, two objects were stored in the same box with the heaviest placed on the bottom. To protect the glass beads, pony beads, or other decorations, it is advised to add a third pillow between the two dresses for further protection.

## Consulting a Conservator

If you have any concerns about the care of your object, consult a conservator in your area for further guidance. A conservator will be able to assess all the issues relating to its condition and long-term care. Conservators can also provide structural repairs, aesthetic compensation, and protective coatings for a range of materials.

## Additional Resources and References

Minnesota State Historical Society, <http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation/index/html>

National Park Service, Conserv-O-Grams, [http://www.nps.org/museum/publications/conservation/cons\\_toc.html](http://www.nps.org/museum/publications/conservation/cons_toc.html)

Odegaard, Nancy and Alyce Sodongei, eds. *Old Poisons New Problems<sup>8</sup>Information and Resource Guide for Contaminated Cultural Materials in Museum Collections*– Altamira Press[<sub>9772</sub>–

Odegaard, N., S. Carroll, and W. Zimmet. *Material Characterization Tests for Objects of Art and Archaeology*. London}Archetype Publications[<sub>9777</sub>

Ogden, Sherelyn, ed. *Caring for American Indian Objects<sup>7</sup>A Practical and Cultural Guide*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004.

Rose, C.L. and de Torres, A.R., editors. *Storage of Natural History Collections<sup>7</sup>Ideas and Practical Solutions<sup>3</sup>* Society for the Preservation of Natural History, 1992 (reprint 2002)

## Conservation Suppliers

### Conservation Resources International

5532 Port Royal Road  
Springfield, VA 22151

Toll free: (800) 634-6932

[www.conservationresources.com](http://www.conservationresources.com)

*Archival housing/storage supplies, photographic supplies, general*

### Gaylord Archival

P. O. Box 4901  
Syracuse, NY 13221-4901  
Toll Free: (800) 448-6160

[www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)

*General conservation supplies, housing supplies*

### Hollinger Metal Edge, Inc.

6340 Bandini Blvd  
Commerce, CA 90040  
Toll Free: (800)-862-2228

[www.hollingermetaledge.com](http://www.hollingermetaledge.com)

*Archival housing/storage supplies*

### Light Impressions

100 Carlson Road  
Rochester, NY 14610

Toll Free: (800) 975-6429

[www.lightimpressionsdirect.com](http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com)

*Photographic supplies, housing, matting and framing supplies*

### University Products

517 Main Street  
P. O. Box 101  
Holyoke, MA 01041  
Toll Free: (800) 628-1912

[www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)

*General conservation supplies, housing and matting supplies*

### Talas

330 Morgan Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11211  
Telephone: (212) 219-0770

[www.talasonline.com](http://www.talasonline.com)

*Conservation supplies, photographic supplies, general*



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