Grant helping furniture museum build item database

By Betty Taylor New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung | Posted: Thursday, September 4, 2014 8:37 pm

NEW BRAUNFELS — As part of a grant award, students with the Center for Texas Public History at Texas State University are busy archiving pieces at the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture to create an inventory database.

About a dozen students, under the direction of Dr. Kelli Shapiro, began the process in January and could complete the database by the end of the year.

“We are numbering everything and labeling everything. We are also looking for makers marks,” said Shapiro, who serves as a grant specialist at the Center for Texas Public History.

Shapiro also serves as the new weekend manager and events assistant at the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture at Heritage Village.

The project was made possible through a special grant from the Summerlee Foundation. Texas State University interns are paid through the grant, and the teams work three-hour shifts, four days a week at the museum.

Kathy Nichols, executive director of the Heritage Society of New Braunfels, said she was excited about the project that follows best practices for museums.

“We will know exactly what we have,” Nichols said. “They are taking inventory, including photos, of everything from the smallest thimble to the kleiderschranks, which are these large bureaus.”

On Thursday, Shapiro and intern Nathan Jones took the measurements on one of the museum’s latest acquisitions — a table built by early New Braunfels furniture maker Heinrich Scholl Jr.

“The mariner’s star is a Scholl feature. This one is a six-pointed star,” Nichols said, referencing the star inlay in the center of the table top. “The skirt also is a unique feature to Scholl. The skirt pieces are individual pieces that are doweled together.”
Heinrich Scholl Sr. and his family immigrated from Germany and settled in New Braunfels in 1846. Heinrich Scholl Jr. followed in his father’s footsteps, making tables and armoires.


Jones assigned an accession number to the table before he and Shapiro moved to another room to take inventory of a Rococo-style fixture.

“I’m really interested in material culture, or stuff,” said Jones, who is studying toward a master’s degree in public history.

He also attended a seminar at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C., this past summer.

“Everybody owns something. I am interested in the stuff they leave behind,” he said, adding the pieces of furniture and other items served as another means for uncovering history.

Nichols said she was expecting three pieces of Jahn furniture from a collection in Houston to arrive at the museum before the end of the year.

The Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture is at Heritage Village, 1370 Church Hill Drive. For information, call (830) 629-6504 or visit www.nbheritagevillage.com.
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Museum Inventory

Nathan Jones, master's candidate at Texas State University, assigns an accession number to a table built by Heinrich Scholl Jr. while working Thursday at the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture at Heritage Village.
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Museum Inventory

Kelli Shapiro, Ph.D. and Nathan Jones work inside a bedroom at the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture at Heritage Village while taking inventory of items on Thursday.
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Museum Inventory

Kelli Shapiro, Ph.D. and Nathan Jones work on taking inventory of items inside the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture at Heritage Village on Thursday.