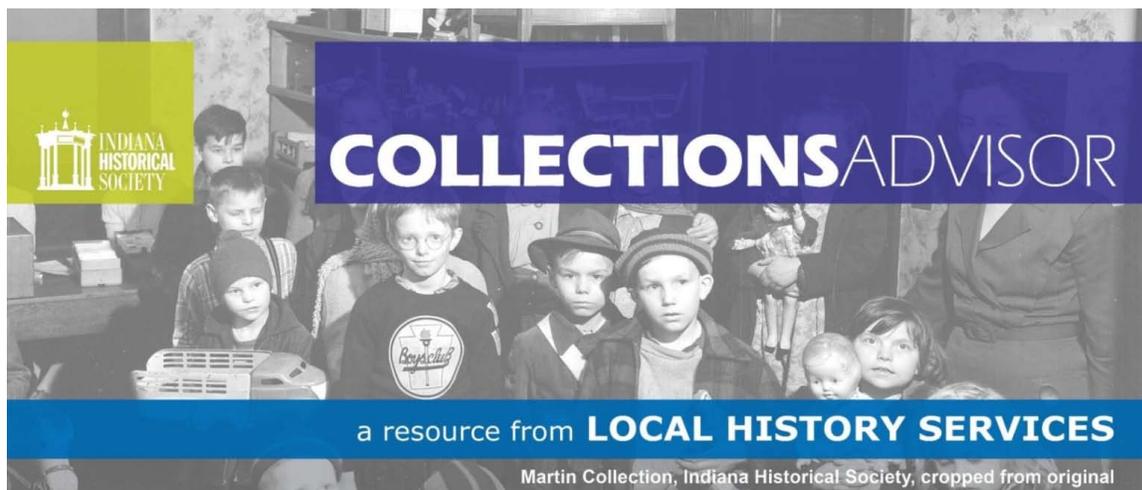




This publication is a service of the [Hoosier Heritage Alliance](#)  
Connecting to Collections project.



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## Choosing Objects for the Restored Thiebaud House

Martha Bladen, director  
[Switzerland County Historical Society](#)

The restoration of the Thiebaud house in Vevay, was a major undertaking for the Switzerland County Historical Society. The vernacular Greek Revival frame house was resurrected after sitting vacant for more than 20 years. Modern living, termites and water had caused major damage.

But to bring the house truly back to life, there needed to be a sense of the rural family life of Justi and Mary Thiebaud and their 10 children. They were the second generation to live on the family farm. Their new home was built in the late 1850s on the site where Frederick and Harriet Thiebaud had a house built for their family of eight children when they emigrated from Switzerland in 1817.

The museum collection was analyzed, with an eye on how various pieces of furniture were being utilized. A cupboard that was holding books and files in the museum office - complete with wavy glass paned doors on the top with shelves that had plate holders - was perfectly suited for the kitchen at the farmstead. The cupboard was replaced with open bookshelves that are far more accessible and fit the office space better.

A cherry table that was stacked with books in "open storage" at the museum was given a bit of tender loving care and now is in the formal parlor at the Thiebaud house. Another table that was being under-utilized is now in the parlor as well, holding a lamp under a mirror that was also in "open storage". All four pieces are not noticeably gone from the museum, but they make a statement in their new locations.

As the restoration neared completion, a call went out to members through the quarterly newsletter that furniture and household furnishings were needed. Emphasis has always focused on finding period-appropriate items.



Rope bed  
Switzerland County  
Historical Society



Rocking horse  
Switzerland County  
Historical Society



Spinning wheel  
Switzerland County  
Historical Society

A member from Tennessee with family roots in Switzerland County responded to our call with a variety of furniture and kitchenwares. He and his wife saw the perfect opportunity to clear out their attic and garage and donated a rope bed, cradle, rocking horse, doll cradles and dolls, vintage cast iron cookware, a saddle and a weathervane. The donors were happy to find a place where their treasures would be appreciated.

Board members loaned several items in preparation for opening day at the Thiebaud house. Having seen how the furnishings contributed to the sense of home, many of the items have now been donated. Other items continue on loan and serve as placeholders until replacement items become available.

In search of more rope beds, a member tried the online auction market for the first time. Using a particular auction house in Cincinnati where they could easily pick up the pieces, two rope beds, a dry sink, a desk and two sewing rockers have been acquired over the past year.

Another member who happens to be a very skilled artisan has donated handcrafted andirons and wooden buckets. He and his wife provide invaluable advice concerning lifestyle information of the past through their careers in period trades.

The above examples are just part of the story. Numerous items have been contributed by many people. Why? The Thiebaud house restoration was a long time in coming. Communication has been ongoing and members have had lots of hands-on opportunities to be part of the project. It's like helping your grown children set up housekeeping. You do what you can, when you can.

#### Resources

[American Association for State and Local History](#)

[Connecting to Collections Online Community](#)

[Indiana Historical Society Local History Services Lending Resource Center](#)



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Mirror  
Switzerland County  
Historical Society

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