

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



Warren Lasch Conservation Center – H. L. Hunley Project

Preserving history for future generations to enjoy

CHALLENGE

The Civil War-era submarine H.L. Hunley yielded many remarkable historical treasures when it was raised from the ocean floor in 2000. For a number of years, the smaller items – including textiles and wooden benches – were stored in a laboratory on the site of Clemson University's Warren Lasch Conservation Center in North Charleston, SC. Unfortunately, the southern humidity and high temperatures, combined with temperamental HVAC equipment

in the lab, put the enduring quality of those items in jeopardy.

"There was a period of about two years where the unit wasn't working. During that time, we decided that instead of trying to fix it, we'd just reimagine what our storage could be," said Johanna Rivera-Diaz, conservator and collections manager at the Center.

SOLUTION

The Center purchased a pair of refurbished 40-ft.-long intermodal, refrigerated shipping containers – one to hold organic artifacts and one for metal objects. These containers were customized with HVAC controls, lighting, entry doors and security systems for the purpose of storing and protecting these unique historical artifacts. With most of its museum pieces already counted, weighed and catalogued, the center relied on Patterson Pope to design a storage system custom-made for its artifacts.

In the container holding organic material, museum cabinets, reinforced shelving and pull-out drawers were used. A flat worktop

was added to a central cabinet, creating an additional workstation. Bi-fold doors were added to make it easy to store and access the large, eight-foot wooden benches rescued from inside the submarine. Stored items also included a variety of organic materials and textiles, including personal effects of the crew.

In the container used for storing the heavier, metal objects, Rousseau Spider Mini-Racking, reinforced shelving and modular heavy-duty drawers were employed. Here, objects included ballast blocks, the 16-foot long spar from the front of the sub, and other parts of the vessel, including hatches and pumps.



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"We have a small collection compared to other museums. Patterson Pope was able to devise a solution that perfectly accommodated our diverse artifacts and needs."

Johanna Rivera-Diaz
Conservator and Collections Manager
Warren Lasch Conservation Center

ACHIEVEMENT

The climate-controlled shipping containers holding the Patterson Pope storage solutions are located just outside public view at Clemson University's Warren Lasch Conservation Center. The new installations allow the conservators and archaeologists to work on and store the collected artifacts without fear of damage from temperature, humidity, or other exposure to contaminants.

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Thanks to the work they did, everything fits and everything's protected. We feel good knowing we made the right decision – for us and for the collection."

Added Ben McCollum, the Patterson Pope sales representative who worked on the project, "For all of us here in the Charleston office, it was special to stand that close to history. It was a very exciting project to be a part of, to be sure. You learn something from every project you work on, but the museum jobs like this one are definitely special."

A collection 136 years in the making – now protected for future generations to enjoy.



{Museum cases shown are manufactured by Delta Designs Ltd. of Topeka, KS}