

Volunteer archivists hard at work

By JOAN LIVINGSTON
Staff Writer

WORTHINGTON — Though their subject matter may be interesting, it is still a tedious chore organizing the Historical Society's many old photographs that have been stored in the town library's attic for years.

But every Wednesday morning, Barbara Shea and Lyn Horton, who volunteered to be the society's archivists, come here to identify, then record each one as they ready its collection for its eventual move to the Worthington Museum.

The society already has a recording of when each artifact was acquired, a project undertaken years ago by the late Elizabeth Payne. But Shea, who assisted Payne in that volunteer effort, and Horton said the new catalog system will make it easier to locate an artifact within the society's archives.

Horton said the objects are identified then grouped into such categories as tools, maps, furniture and photographs. Each is assigned a number and letter.

Wearing white gloves, Horton, who worked as an assistant to the preparator of the Williams College Museum of Art for five years, handles the artifacts while Shea carefully records the information on paper. There are also notations made if the object can be found elsewhere in the collection, such as a photograph that also might appear in a scrapbook.

From their close scrutiny of the society's photographs, the

two volunteers say they have developed a strong impression of the town's earlier life as a popular seasonal resort.

"It was really a place where wealthy people came for the summer," Shea said.

The Worthington Museum, which began construction a year ago, was the longtime goal of the society to finally have a permanent place to exhibit and preserve its collection.

However, the project didn't go forward until the late Marvis "Peg" Rolland, who died in 1989, left the society \$100,000 to build a historical museum. Then the late Arlene Packard, who died this spring, gave land in the Four Corners section for a building site.

Edward Claydon, society president, said the building's interior is ready to be plastered, and its septic system and water line installed. He said he hopes the museum will be opened later this summer.

Claydon said the work by Horton and Shea is typical of the efforts of numerous residents who have volunteered their services or worked at a reduced rate so the museum could be built.

Claydon said he was thankful when Horton and Shea volunteered to organize the society's collection, because it is such a demanding task.

Moreover, he said he is impressed by their dedication to see the work is completed. "They've been very faithful," he said.

Shea and Horton began their work last year, but stopped for the winter. Already they have registered the collection's larg-



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Lyn Horton, left, and Barbara Shea, archivists for the Worthington Museum, register some of the Historical Society's vast collection of photographs stored in the town's library. The two volunteered to organize the society's collection in preparation for its move to the new museum.

er artifacts, such as furniture and tools that are stored in the homes and barns of society members.

About a month ago, they resumed working in the library's attic, where much of the society's collection of albums, letters, maps and other

memorabilia are located. They expect their work to take several more months.

"We're the archivists," Horton said. "We're the people who nurture and take care of these things."

Horton said once the mu-

seum is completed the artifacts can be properly stored and preserved. She said they have been consulting with area museums and a textile conservation group about their methods to see what will be appropriate for the Worthington Museum.