

CASE STUDY REDUCING GLARE AND PRESERVING EXHIBITS

WINDOW SHADES



Product: Clutch XD FlexShade

- The Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site in Fountain City, Indiana, had a sunlight problem.

“The story of Levi and Catharine Coffin is one of the best documented in the United States when it comes to Underground Railroad history in Indiana,” Joanna Hahn, site manager said. To better tell that story, in December the state opened a new interpretive center on the existing historic property. “The interpretive center serves as a way to help put the story of Levi and Catharine Coffin in perspective to the much larger history related to the Underground Railroad in the United States.”

Draper wanted to help ensure the tools used to tell that story were preserved, and that visitors would have a good and memorable experience while touring the museum.

The Underground Railroad was a secret network of abolitionists and safe houses used by escaping African American slaves trying to make it to Canada or some free states. By around 1850 it’s been estimated that as many as 100,000 escaped slaves had made their way to freedom along the Railroad.

The Coffin house in Fountain City—at that time called Newport—was a main stop along one of the secret railroad routes, and the historic site is designed to give a picture of

what that experience would have been like. As “conductors” the Coffins helped more than 1,000 freedom seekers find their way to safety.

The interpretive center includes an exhibit area and store on the building’s southern exposure, so a lot of light can potentially enter through windows on that side of the building.

“Light can be an enemy for any museum,” Hahn said, “especially those that contain artifacts that can degrade due to too much light exposure.”

With this in mind, Lynda Anderson, R.I.D., LEED-AP, sought a shading solution to combat the heat buildup and glare, and help preserve the exhibits.

“Our shade design goal was to not detract from the historical character of the building or exhibits,” said Anderson, an interior designer of architectural design solutions for Synthesis Incorporated of Indianapolis. “We wanted to provide sun/glare control for exhibits, patrons, and staff. The shade design is very clean and non-obtrusive.”

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Since the shades do not need to be operated often, Draper's heavy duty XD Clutch FlexShades were chosen. Anderson went with an Alabaster shade color to coordinate with the wall color, which complemented the exhibits and the historical character of the building.

According to Hahn, the shades—which have a 1% openness factor—control the light levels and offered the right solution. “The shades also allow us to use our lighting system more effectively to properly showcase the exhibition panels and objects. The shades will also be instrumental in assisting the building to maintain a consistent temperature without impacting our guests or exhibition.”

In addition to the glare and heat buildup issues on the southern exposure, windows located behind exhibits on the west side of the building created a problem. To avoid readability issues from light spilling in behind the exhibits, shades had to be in the windows. And there was another possible problem.

“Some of the windows were salvaged from the original 1836 home and others built to match the original windows, which had side casings,” Anderson said. “We specified an extended valance to span gaps left by the shade header, which was mounted close to the window.”

Draper delivered what the designer wanted, creating a uniform and cohesive design.

“The shades blend well with the aesthetic of the architecture, which blends historical details with modern touches,” Hahn said. “The shades are easy to operate and seem very durable. A site like ours depends on durable materials that will last for years and we expect the window shades will only be a benefit!”

For more information on Draper's window shade products and fabric choices, click here: draperinc.com/go/Flexshades.htm

To learn more about the Live and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site, click here: indianamuseum.org/levi-coffin-state-historic-site

To reach Synthesis Inc. and explore their offerings, click here: synthinc.com

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