

PRESS RELEASES

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Gettysburg Exhibits Take Modern Look Back

by Robert Hendricks, Robert Hendricks Communications Chesterfield, MO

The Rupp House History Center in Gettysburg, PA helps make the U.S. Civil War's Battle of Gettysburg come alive through modern materials and techniques used in its exhibits.

"The exhibits were designed, in part, to help tell the story of the Rupp family (John and Caroline and their six children), who lived in this house during the Civil War," says Phil Buettner of Formations Inc., a Portland, OR, exhibit firm. A headline, "The War Comes Home," is displayed in cut-out letters of Sintra® Material above the fireplace, flanked by Confederate and Union flags. It's an appropriate headline, for history tells of the Rupp House coming under fire from Confederate soldiers who occupied the rear of the property, and from Union troops out front. In recent years, a bed and breakfast was operated on the site before the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg acquired the property at 451 Baltimore St.

The cut-out letters were among many educational components using Sintra Material from Alcan Composites USA Inc., St. Louis, MO — components designed, fabricated and installed by Formations Inc. The plastic foamboard was used for a wide range of other applications, including doorway banners and headlines. The material was also heat bent to wrap architectural columns, and used for gun housings, interactive base pads and strapping materials. Fabrication ease was a key factor in selecting the material, according to Buettner.

Sheets of Sintra Material in colors of white and black, with thicknesses ranging from 2mm to 19mm were used for the exhibits. The cut-out letters were router cut, drilled and tapped, then mounted with "all-threads" and spacers. Banners between columns were bent with a heat gun, and the material was turned back on itself, simulating the flexibility of fabric. The span between columns was 18', so three pieces of material were seamed at the back of columns using screws and screw caps. Using table saw and router, the edges of the banners were cut for the appearance of ribbon edges. Text was applied to the fabricated material through use of vinyl letters and graphics or screen printing.

Gun mounts were made interactive through a unique design in a horizontal figure eight that allowed visitors to lift a rifle, for example, while keeping it secure. "We fabricated the material for the exhibits by cutting, drilling, tapping, sanding, and heat bending — all which left the material with a good finish," Buettner said. "The material also was used as cushioning pads at the base of the gun, to take some of the shock of setting a heavy rifle back down, while providing the durability needed over the long term."

Interactive exhibits (provided by a multimedia and Internet development group) also involve visitors in the events of July 1863, when civilians and soldiers alike were caught up in the Battle of Gettysburg.