

WAPELLO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
& MUSEUM COLLECTION POLICY

Revised: 1/2019

The mission of the Wapello County Historical Society (WCHS) is to collect, preserve, and convey the history of Wapello County to showcase the County's rich and diverse past and enrich the lives of community members and visitors alike. WCHS fulfills this mission through its museum exhibitions, educational programs, and research.

- I. Purpose of the Collection Management Policy. The Wapello County Historical Society (hereafter Museum) holds its collections in trust for the public. The policy establishes the principles, procedures, and legal responsibilities for the management of the Museum's collections.
- II. Review. The collection management policy shall be reviewed yearly.
- III. Scope of the Collection. The Museum collects objects, archival materials, and media that pertain to the history of Wapello County. The permanent collections are those objects that are owned by the museum. The education/demonstration collection is those groups of objects from the permanent collection that may be handled by visitors or operated on site for the purpose of expanding the museum experience.
- IV. Ethics. All staff and board members shall follow the conflicts of interest outlined in the Bylaws. Additional restrictions related to Personal Collecting also apply.
 - A. Board members or staff must not compete with the museum, use any privileged information or use their affiliation to promote their own, their family's or their associates' personal collecting activities. Whenever a conflict develops between the desires of the employee and the need of the museum, the needs of the museum prevail.

Personal collections of board members or staff shall not be combined with the Museum's collection except for purposes of exhibit at the Museum, coincidental lending to other institutions, or if such collections are accepted for accession into the Museum's collections. Board members and staff shall not collect or acquire items deaccessioned by the Museum except by purchase, such as at public auction or another open marketplace Board members or staff are discouraged from bringing items from their personal collections into the museum for storage or other non-museum related purposes. Board members or staff will not use in their homes, or any other personal purpose, any object or item that is part of the Museum's Collection or under the Museum's guardianship.

- B. It is the policy of the Museum not to provide appraisals due to IRS guidelines outlining the inherent conflict of interest in museums issuing appraisals. The Museum

can provide sources where qualified appraisers may be located. The Museum cannot arrange for appraisals or pay for the costs associated with such an inquest.

V. Acceptance of items. The Museum may acquire objects, archives or media for the Collection via donation, purchase or transfer. The Exhibits and Education Committee shall make decisions regarding the suitability of potential donated items based upon the guidelines established by the Museum Board of Directors.

- A. Individuals or organizations wishing to donate items will leave such items with the museum staff.
- B. Temporary Receipt form shall be completed in duplicate by the museum staff. One copy shall be given to the donor and one copy retained for museum records.
- C. The museum staff shall complete a Deed of Gift form in duplicate upon the acceptance of the item by the Exhibits and Education Committee. One copy of the permanent receipt shall be given to the donor and one copy shall be retained by the Museum.
- D. Items left for evaluation and not accepted shall become the property of the Museum if not picked up 60 days after the potential donor was notified by mail to pick up the item.
- E. The museum staff shall send a thank you letter to the donor after the item has been accepted by the Exhibits and Education Committee.

VI. Conditions of acceptance. Objects will not be accepted or otherwise acquired for the Museum collection unless the following conditions are met:

- A. The object(s) are relevant to and consistent with the Museum's mission.
- B. The Museum can provide the proper storage, preservation and protection of the object.
- C. Donors have clear, legal title to the gift or can establish provenance.
- D. Title to all objects acquired for the museum collection is obtained free and clear, without restrictions as to use or future disposition.
- E. The acceptance of a donation does not in any way guarantee immediate or permanent exhibition.
- F. The Board of Directors may accept an object with restrictions, however, the conditions must be clearly stated and must be part of the accession records for object.

VII. Accession. All objects acquired for the collection must be accessioned and cataloged.

A. All objects shall be assigned three-unit accession numbers.

B. Accession Number System
Example: 2014.003.1

The first number shows the year the object was accessioned: 2014.

The second number shows the sequence of donations entering the museum for that year. The example above shows that this item was the third group of items to be accessioned in 2014. This number is NOT based on individual objects but the group of items brought in by a specific donor.

The third number in the accession number is the object ID. This number is specific to each individual item. This number may be different based on if the object has parts, is one in a series, or came in as a group.

If the object is donated as a single item:

2014.003.1

If the donation is a pair of objects (i.e. Shoes)

2014.003.1a; 2014.003.1b

If an item has multiple parts (i.e. teapot with lid, pot, and tray)

2014.003.1a-c

Group of similar objects brought in by one donor (i.e. photographs)

2014.003.1-6

If the donor has brought in several different types of items, make sure all the objects have a separate number. For example, six photos can have object IDs of:

2014.003.1-6

*Also see pg. 86-88 of the Past Perfect User Guide.

- C. Collection records, including donor cards, catalogue cards and accession files shall be kept in accordance with accepted professional standards as determined by the Board.
- D. Collection materials shall be stored in a manner to provide optimum security, accessibility and preservation.
- E. Materials in need of restoration shall be restored as soon as possible.
- F. Only approved techniques and substances shall be used in restoration.
- G. Materials, whether in use or in storage, shall be protected from life shortening forces such as excessive heat, cold, humidity, dryness, dust, ultra-violet light, vermin or improper handling.

VIII. Documentation.

The proper documentation of the acquisition, deaccession, loan and care of objects is fundamental to collections care at the Museum. The following physical, paper and electronic sources are utilized to document collections at the Museum:

- A. Physical Documentation: Every attempt is made, when safe for the object, to

physically label an artifact, document or piece of media. This attempt is done in accordance with current best museum practices.

- B. Paper Documentation: The documents below are generated and retained in the physical object file during the course of collections accessioning, deaccessioning, loan and care of artifacts. Not all documents will be represented in each file but will be created and maintained as necessary.
- C. Condition Report: An Incoming Condition Report is performed on all objects accessioned into the Collection and stored in the digital records. In addition, an Outgoing Condition Report is performed before returning the object to the lender.
- D. Deed of Gift: The Deed of Gift is the legal document by which an object donated or transferred to the Museum is officially transmitted to the Museum. The Deed signifies the intent to give on behalf of the donor, acceptance on the part of the Museum and the physical transference of the donation. The Deed is signed by the donor and the Board Chair. The original copy is retained in the Museum's paper files and is scanned for the digital file, while another copy is returned to the donor.
- E. Loan Agreement: A Loan Agreement is issued by the Museum for incoming and outgoing loans. This document supplies the lending/borrowing institution or individual's contact information, insurance values and loan duration. The Loan Agreement also notifies the lender of the temporary loan number applied to the object(s) while at the Museum.
- F. Other: Documents such as appraisals, correspondence, biographies or any number of supporting paper work will be included in the object's paper file.
- G. Digital Documentation: The Museum will make efforts to create an electronic record of the Museum collections, accessions, loans. An inventory of collection items will be conducted on a yearly basis by the Collections Committee.

IX. Incoming loan of objects. The Exhibits and Education Committee may accept items on loan to the Museum for up to a one-year period providing insurance covers the value of the item and proper care of the item can be provided. An incoming loan acquired form shall be on file for each transaction.

- A. It is the Museum's policy not to accept permanent loans. It is the responsibility of the Lender to notify the Museum of changes in contact information. Objects and documents left at the Museum for longer than five (5) years will be considered abandoned property. At that time, steps will be taken to acquire title to the property. Items deemed too unstable to withstand transit or display will not be accepted as a loan. The Lender should have clear title and ownership of the object before signing loan agreements with the Museum.
- B. Procedures: If an item is selected for loan, a letter or email of intent will be sent to the potential lender or lending institution. All items presented to the Museum for loan should be submitted through the Exhibits and Education Committee. An official Incoming Loan Agreement with object description, insurance value and loan dates will be signed by the lender and the requesting curator once an item has been identified for loan. The museum staff will work with the lender to coordinate shipping. The loan's arrival at the Museum will be documented with a Receipt.

After arrival the Collections Department will perform a detailed condition report documenting the object(s). Copies of the Loan Agreement, Receipt and Condition Report will be mailed to the Lender. All loaned objects will be tracked in the Museum's collections database utilizing an internally generated loan number.

- X. Outgoing loan of objects. The Board of Directors may loan objects to other institutions for exhibit purposes for a period of one year or less, providing a guarantee of proper care, insurance and safe transportation is obtained from the institution. Under no circumstances will objects be loaned to individuals or members of the Society.
- A. Procedure: To request an object for loan, a letter on the requesting museum's letterhead should be directed to the Board of Directors. This letter must mention the item being requested, purpose, length of loan and guarantee the coverage of costs associated with crating, shipping, insurance and any damage or wear incurred during the period of the loan. The borrowing museum should send a Loan Agreement to the Board of Directors along with the formal request letter. The Museum has the right to request a Standard Facility Report to be reviewed by the Exhibits and Education Committee, along with the Loan Agreement. If approved, the borrowing institution's loan form will be signed by the Board Chair. The borrower will also sign and the Museum Board Chair will countersign an Outgoing Loan Agreement provided by the Exhibits and Education Committee. Costs associated with an agreed upon shipping method will be paid for by the borrowing institution. The Museum also requests a Condition Report from the borrowing museum upon the arrival of the shipment. Any damage to an object lent by the Museum must be reported to the Exhibits and Education Committee when discovered, and the lending museum will be responsible for all conservation costs. An outgoing loan form shall be on file for each transaction.
- B. Any object removed from the museum for any reason, e.g., restoration, copy enlarged, etc., must be checked out by the museum staff. Information about the object on loan must include description, catalogue number, expected date of return and signed by the person accepting the object on loan.
- XI. Inventory of the Permanent Collection. The Museum shall maintain an inventory of its collections and shall routinely check its collections for verification of records, condition, and missing or lost artifacts.
- A. A comprehensive inventory of the Museum's collections will be conducted by museum staff on a rotating cycle of every three years.
- B. If during the course of an inventory, if an artifact appears to be missing and presumable lost or stolen, the Exhibits and Education Committee should be notified. If the artifact cannot be located, records for artifacts determined to be missing shall be marked as such. After two years the missing or lost artifacts may be recommended for deaccessioning.

XII. Deaccession. The Museum has the right to deaccession items from the Collection. Items considered for deaccession are done so with extensive consideration with regards to the criteria below.

- A. Objects in the collection will be deaccessioned only by approval of the Board of Directors.
- B. A record of the conditions and circumstances under which objects are deaccessioned and disposed of will be made by the Exhibits and Education Committee and retained as part of the Museum collection records.
- C. Consideration will be given to the disposal of the deaccessioned object:
 - 1. is outside the scope of the mission and activities of the museum
 - 2. when objects have been lost or stolen and remain lost for longer than two years
 - 3. is a duplicate
 - 4. is unable to be preserved properly
 - 5. is deteriorated beyond usefulness
 - 6. has doubtful potential utilization in the foreseeable future, or has accidentally been accessioned twice
 - 7. lacks physical integrity
- D. Materials and object shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred, publicly or privately to museum employees or board members or their families or representatives.
- E. The recommended means of disposal may include exchange, sale (negotiated, private, public auction, sealed bid, or open bid), or transfer to another museum or library. Items which are in poor condition may be transferred to the education/demonstration collection or discarded.
- F. All proceeds resulting from deaccession of objects from the permanent collections of the Museum shall be deposited to the credit of the acquisitions fund.

XIII. Access to the collection. Access to the collection should be limited to employees and committee members doing designated museum work. An individual wishing permission to do research work within the collection must have the permission of the Exhibits and Education Committee and supervised by museum staff.