

~~~Policies~~~

Collections Policy

The McHenry County Historical Society recognizes that it holds its collections in the public trust and is committed to maintaining professional standards. The intent of this policy is to direct the Society in its functions. All previous collections policies are replaced by this document.

I. Mission

*The Mission of the McHenry County Historical Society is to identify, preserve, present and promote through education the history of McHenry County. The **primary collections objective** of the Society is to procure and preserve materials which improve the quality of exhibitions, research capabilities and educational objectives.*

II. Acquisitions

Criteria: Collection Parameters (General)—the Society will collect items (for purposes of this policy, the word "items" will include documentary materials and museum objects) that are relevant to its purposes which related to McHenry County history and development, providing that they meet one or more of the criteria listed below. This includes items made in, used in, or materials that reflect present day McHenry County or historic McHenry County. Items concerning, or associated with, though not made or used in McHenry County may be eligible for inclusion in the Society's collection. Acquisition of an item which does not meet the following criteria but which presents an exceptional opportunity for the Society is subject to approval of the Museum Administrator.

object(s) must be relevant to and consistent with the purposes and activities of the Society.

Acquisitions will be acquired through donation.* Artifacts being considered for acquisition through any means other than donation will be brought before the McHenry County Historical Society Board by the Museum Administrator for discussion and a 2/3 majority approval vote of the Board.

The Society can provide for the storage, protection and preservation of the object(s).

Items(s) will have permanency in the collection as long as they retain their physical integrity, their identity and their authenticity, and/or as long as they remain useful for the purposes of the Society.

All moral, legal, and ethical implications of the acquisition must have been considered.

All donations of materials are considered outright and unconditional gifts to be used at the discretion of the Society. Title to all objects acquired including copyright where applicable, shall be free and clear, without restriction to use or future disposition.

The McHenry County Historical Society does not appraise or authenticate objects offered as gifts.

Authority to acquire museum objects is delegated to the Exhibit and/or Collections Curator(s) and Museum Administrator within the confines of the collection policy.

*No materials or objects shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired when are known to have been illegally collected in the United States contrary to state and/or federal law, regulations, treaty and/or conventions. The Society shall refuse to acquire materials and objects where there is cause to believe that the circumstances of their collection involved needless destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures, habitats, districts and/or objects.

(continued) Collection Parameters (Specific)—

1. Non-McHenry County items: May be collected at discretion of the Administrator or Curator to fill a gap in an existing collection if it can be ascertained that such an item would have been used or found in McHenry County; and also providing that such a collection is a viable one which meets the goals of the Society. Such items may be deaccessioned under the provisions set forth in this policy, as appropriate McHenry County items become available.
2. Museum Quality/Historic Value: Items of historic significance will be collected regardless of aesthetic or intrinsic value. Items typical or common in their time will often be of greater historical value in the future than the unique one-of-a-kind item. Physical condition and the society's ability to care for items will be taken into consideration but may not necessarily preclude their acceptance into the collection if they are of exceptional historic importance. Items of a sentimental nature or nostalgic value to the donor should be distinguished from historically significant materials and should not be collected unless they are also of historic value.
3. Duplication of Collections: Duplicates, items similar or identical to items held by the Society, may be accepted if they contribute to the quality and scope of an existing collection and/or if they may be used to supplement a teaching or study collection.
4. Integrity of Collections: Collections of related materials consisting of both McHenry County and non-McHenry County items may be accepted upon the recommendation of the Curator or Administrator. In general, if such a collection is primarily McHenry County, it may be accepted in its entirety into the Society's collections. If the collection as a whole is more relevant to another museum, or if a collection is more valuable in its entirety and contains few McHenry County items, it may be referred to another museum by the Curator or Museum Administrator.
5. Accepting items not to be accessioned: Items not appropriate for the

Society's collection may be accepted for other purposes including, but not necessarily limited to, the Annual Heritage Fair Auction or the museum's Education Program, with the written permission of the donor and the written approval of the Curator or Museum Administrator. There should be a statement included indicating why said item(s) are inappropriate for the museum's collection. In no case should such items not to be accessioned be accepted if they would constitute an excessive burden on the Society's resources, staff, or regular collections.

6. Appropriateness of provenance: objects considered for acquisition must be transferred by the owner with clear title or by an executor with proven authority.

- a. Items must not be illegally imported into the United States or illegally collected within the United States.
- b. The Society does not condone the destruction of historic sites, buildings, habitats, districts or objects and will not accept items collected in a manner to cause such destruction. Salvaged items however, may be considered.
- c. The Society will adhere to the provisions of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.
- d. The Society may request appropriate documentation of any items and should be reasonably assured that the Society can acquire valid and legal title to those items.

Methods of Acquisition-Items may be accepted by bequest, gift, museum exchange, field collection, excavation, or any other transaction by which title to the item passes to the Society. The authority to formally accept an artifact into the museum or library collections shall be limited to the Exhibit and/or Collection Curator(s) or the Museum Administrator. A Temporary Receipt Form, which does not obligate the Society to formally accept any item, should be used by paid staff in the absence of the Curator or Museum Administrator. Consideration of restricted gifts, short-term loans, indefinite loans, and exchanges shall follow the guidelines set forth in this policy.

7. Gifts:

- a. The Society cannot appraise any items offered or given to the Society.
- b. The Society will not accept items with restrictions. Where the value or desirability of the item exceeds the burden of the restrictions, the Society at its discretion may accept the item upon recommendation by the Curator or Museum Administrator and notification and approval of the Board of Directors. In no event will the Society accept an item with restrictions that may make it liable to the donor or third persons leaving an interest in the gift.
- c. Items must be transferred to the Society with all, or as

many as feasible, pertinent literary rights, property rights, copyrights, patents, or trademarks. Any reservations will be indicated on the Deed of Gift form at the time such items accepted.

d. The Society shall not accept items that are hazardous to people or property and fall under any of the following hazardous categories: explosive, carcinogenic, flammable, corrosive, teratogenic.

8. Exchanges: Exchanges of items may be conducted under the following provisions:

a. Exchanges may be made only with museums, libraries, archives or other public institutions whose basic interests parallel those of the Society. Exchanges will not be conducted with individuals.

b. Exchanges must be approved by the Museum Administrator. A proposed exchange involving an item of significant value is subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. Board members having a separate interest or stake in the outcome of a proposed exchange beyond that of the McHenry County Historical Society shall not vote on or participate in deliberations regarding the exchange, except to provide information.

c. The society may require full and documented provenance and history on any item involved in an exchange.

III. Revision and Approval Process

The responsibility and authority of establishment and review of the Collections Management Policy Manual of the McHenry County Historical Society are as follows:

Board of Directors – The Board of Directors has sole and final approval of collections management policies and has the responsibility to ensure that these policies and practices are administered in a fair and equitable manner.

Museum Administrator – The Museum Administrator has the authority and responsibility for the administration of all policies and practices.

Employees and Volunteers – All employees and volunteers are responsible for adherence to all collections management policies and practices of the Society.

The Museum Administrator has the authority and responsibility for instigating revisions to the existing collections policy whenever it is deemed necessary so as to remain in accordance with standard accepted museum collections practice. A review of the existing collections policy will otherwise be conducted every five years by the Museum Administrator in conjunction with the Exhibits and/or collection Curator(s). Any changes or revisions suggested by said parties during this process will again be subject to the

approval of the Society's Board of Directors.

IV Ethics

The McHenry County Historical Society's Collections Policy has been derived in accordance with the American Association of Museums 1994 "Code of Ethics for Museums," subsection Collections, contained herein. See Appendix.

Approved: May 2001

Statement of Professional Ethics

Introduction

The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum is a membership organization acting in the public trust, engaged in the practice of history, especially the history of McHenry County. The Society expects its member and volunteers to abide by the ethical and performance standards adopted by the appropriate discipline-based and professional organizations of which the historical society is a member. In addition the McHenry County Historical Society and Museum shall meet the following ethical standards.

Collections

Historical collections, including structures, are the bedrock upon which the practice of history rests. McHenry County Historical Society and Museum members shall always act to preserve the physical and intellectual integrity of its collections.

The McHenry County Historical Society shall maintain and abide by comprehensive collections policies officially adopted by its governing authority.

Priority shall be given to the care and management of collections.

Collections shall not be capitalized or treated as financial assets.

Collections shall not be deaccessioned or disposed of in order to provide financial support for institutional operations, facilities maintenance, or any reason other than the preservation or acquisition of collections.

Collections shall be acquired, cared for, and interpreted with sensitivity to their cultural origins.

Interpretation

Historical interpretation may be presented in a variety of formats.

All interpretation must be based upon sound scholarship and must accurately reflect the facts as they have been documented.

Interpretation must take special care not to dilute or ignore historical accuracy and inclusiveness for the sake of public entertainment and popularity.

Interpretation must accurately reflect the cultural context of the subject matter.

No interpretation shall use collections in a consumptive manner except as specifically allowed within the collections policy.

Management

The primary responsibility for governance, institutional policies, financial stability, and legal accountability of the McHenry County Historical Society and Museum

rests with the Board of Directors. Operational responsibility rests with the staff. Individuals employed in the practice of history deserve respect, pay, and benefits commensurate to their training, dedication, and contribution to society. Volunteers deserve the same consideration as their paid colleagues.

The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum must have a personnel policy, adopted by the governing authority, which is distributed to all staff, documenting the terms of employment.

The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum has the responsibility to engage personnel, including volunteers, who have appropriate training and expertise to provide them with opportunities for additional training necessary to continue to meet their responsibilities.

The administrator is responsible for the employment, discipline, and release of all other staff, subject to established personnel policies.

The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum shall maintain financial records from which accurate information can be generated to manage the organization in a fiscally sound manner as a matter of public trust.

Revenue Producing Activities

Activities that involve the marketing and sale of products, programs, services, and facilities are acceptable ways to produce support revenues and increase public awareness of and participation in historical activities. No such activities shall be undertaken that violate or compromise the integrity of an institution's mission, the ability of an institution or individual to meet professional standards, or an institution's not-for-profit status. Control of a product (e.g., exhibition, publication, program) shall neither be delegated nor abrogated to outside parties in order to obtain financial support.

Conflict of Interest

The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum exists to serve the public interest and must always act in such a way as to maintain public confidence and trust.

All governing authority members, the administrator, staff members, and volunteers, shall avoid carefully the reality and the appearance of using their positions or the information and access gained from their positions for personal gain.

Board members, staff, and volunteers shall refrain from personal collecting in any manner that conflicts with the interest or credibility of the institution.

Collections shall not be made available to any individual on any basis for personal use, either on or off the premises, or for any other purpose contrary to the adopted collections policies.

Social Responsibility

All members of the McHenry County Historical Society and Museum shall ensure actively that the variety of American cultural experiences in all programmatic and operational activities is represented accurately. The McHenry County Historical Society and Museum expects its members to assist the field in becoming more representative of our diverse society through equity in staffing, training, collecting, programming, and marketing. All professional activities, programs, products, and services shall be provided in such a way as to maximize access to all people.

Intellectual Freedom

Historical scholarship and interpretation demand intellectual freedom with no qualification. Members shall refrain from any activity that willfully restricts or discredits free and open exploration and interpretation of the human experience.

Adopted: January 22, 2007.