

MCHS Collections Acquisition Policy and Procedures

The Madison County Historical Society, Inc. (MCHS), as agent acting for the Madison County Historical Museum & Archival Library, holds title and all property rights in all tangible property acquired as part of its collections. All collections acquired by MCHS are accepted without conditions or restriction. The tangible property of MCHS, Inc., a corporation existing under the laws of the State of Illinois, holds all right, title, and interest in that property free of restrictions and encumbrances. There may be times when it will be necessary to make other suitable disposition of museum property, including donated items, as approved by the Board of Directors of the MCHS. Collections to be acquired by MCHS must first be approved by the Collections/Acquisitions Committee and subsequently a majority vote of the MCHS Board of Directors.

SECTION I: Scope of Collections

A) Composition

The Madison County Historical Society's (MCHS) collections are comprised of prehistoric and historic archaeological items, historical objects, local and regional archives, books, and manuscripts and some natural history specimens. The collections are curated in the Archival Library, Museum, and the Helms Collections Storage Building at the MCHS Museum Campus on North Main Street in Edwardsville, Illinois.

The MCHS collections contain several thousand specimens largely from Madison County, Illinois and surrounding areas. These collections also include associated documentation, maps, and photographic images. Because the museum's collecting began nearly 100 years ago without a collecting policy, collections currently include items from all over the United States, as well as several foreign countries.

B) Types of Collections at MCHS

The MCHS collections are grouped into three types: 1) Permanent Collections, 2) Study/Educational Collections, and 3) those we hold with Temporary Receipts. The types of records which accompany these types of collections will be discussed in Section III.

1) Permanent Collections

Permanent Collections are defined as those which have been accepted by the MCHS Board and assigned an accession number and cataloged into the collections database. It is important that the MCHS is able to prove clear legal title of ownership of the items comprising the permanent collections. These types of collections are used both for exhibit and research purposes.

2) Study/Educational Collections

Study/Educational Collections are defined as those that the Collections/Acquisitions Committee, Madison County Historical Museum & Archival Library (MCHM & AL) staff and the MCHS Board does not feel fit with our Collections policy, and/or are duplicates or triplicates of items already in the permanent collections. These items are not accepted into the permanent collections as agreed to by the donor. Such items are used most often for programs, for hands-on educational purposes or as exhibit props.

3) Collections held with Temporary Receipt

Objects temporarily deposited at the museum for identification, potential donation, loan or other reasons are held with a Temporary Receipt. The Temporary Receipt records the contact information of the person leaving it with the Museum, a list of what is being left, provenance information of where the object(s) was found, a short history of the object(s), and whether the object(s) is being left for identification, potential donation, loan, or other reason. The form is signed by the owner and by the staff person receiving the item. This is to be a duplicate form, so each party receives a copy of it.

SECTION II: Current Collecting Plan

Because the museum was started over 100 years ago, the collections include items from all over the United States, as well as several foreign countries. This has resulted in undertaking the responsibility for caring for items unrelated to the museum's mission, that are not used for exhibit or research purposes, and yet require staff time and money to care for.

Therefore, the MCHS current collecting plan is one that is not so broad in scope as it was when founded. We accept donations of archives, manuscripts, historical, and archaeological objects and associated documentation that are from Madison County, Illinois or related objects. Even though our title is "Madison County Historical Society", we are not a repository for all objects in the above categories. Objects we accept must have scientific/ historical/archaeological value to Madison County or the immediate vicinity or be specific to the history of the Madison County Historical Society. It is imperative that we have the resources and ability to care for the objects that are considered for acquisition. If we do not, it is our policy not to accept the object(s), but to recommend them to another facility. Specimens shall only be acquired for which there is good title.

A) Acceptance - Museum Collections and Acquisitions Committee

The MCHS Collections/Acquisitions Committee, a permanent committee of the MCHS Board, in cooperation with MCHM & AL staff, provide advice and counsel to the MCHS Board regarding overall policies, priorities, plans, and documentation, as well the preservation of MCHS collections. Additionally, the Museum Collections/Acquisitions Committee develops and recommends to the Staff and MCHS Board specific policies and actions governing loans to (and from), acquisitions for, and deaccessions from the MCHS collections.

The MCHS Collections/Acquisitions Committee is comprised of several members of the MCHS Board interested in and/or experienced with collections issues and MCHM & AL staff.

No donated collections will be accepted into the permanent collections before approval from the Museum Collections/Acquisitions Committee and approval of the MCHS Board.

The MCHS only accepts unrestricted collections without any encumbrance or condition on clear title.

B) Criteria

The Collections/Acquisitions Committee considers the object(s) for accession into the permanent museum collections based on the following guidelines:

- 1) The object has aesthetic merit, possesses potential for research and education, and/or has regional historical/cultural significance.

- 2) The object is useful for exhibit purposes.
- 3) The authenticity and provenance of an object must be satisfactory to the appropriate MCHM & AL staff, and the Collections/Acquisitions Committee.
- 4) The object can be properly cared for and conserved within the resources of the Society or is being received with a monetary donation specifically for its perpetual care. No object shall be acquired for the collection if the museum cannot give it proper storage, protection, and preservation.
- 5) The MCHS will not actively collect objects associated with Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or items defined as objects of cultural patrimony by Public Law 101-601, the "Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act." The MCHS has met all required NAGPRA reporting requirements.

C) Restrictions

No object will be acquired with restrictions as to perpetual exhibition or retention.

Objects promised to the Museum as future gifts or bequests will not be presented to the Collections/Acquisitions Committee unless the intent of the donor is expressed in a written instrument that is irrevocable and binding.

The MCHS shall retain the right under the terms of the gift, bequest, transfer, exchange, or purchase to accession the collection into its permanent collection either in whole or in part. If only part of a collection is accepted into the permanent collection, the other will be returned to the donor, or with the donor's permission, be used in our Study/Educational Collections if applicable.

The MCHS will not enter into illicit trade in collections specimens or knowingly acquire specimens collected or imported illegally, unless such material is legally deposited with the Museum by an oversight or enforcement agency.

The MCHS will not knowingly accept objects that are unethically collected or removed from their society of origin as described by UNESCO's *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970).

SECTION III: Documentation

Documentation has to be managed carefully. If the link between the object and the documentation is lost, both will lose their value and significance. The MCHM & AL staff are responsible for properly managing all collections-related documentation, both written and electronic. MCHM & AL staff must maintain a complete and permanent record of acquisitions, accessions, deaccessions, incoming and outgoing loans, locations of all objects in its custody, and documentation of use of collections.

MCHM & AL staff divides its records into two categories: 1) registration functions, and 2) curatorial functions.

A) Registration

Those records with registration functions include records primarily documenting the legal status of an object within the museum or on loan from the museum and that object's movement and care while under the control of the museum. This type of document includes Deeds of Gift, Loan forms, and Temporary Receipts.

- 1) Deed of Gift form includes contact information of the donor, signature of the donor, and date of the donation, description of the object(s) being donated, and signature and date of the MCHS Board President upon acceptance, as well as terms regarding acceptance of gift.
- 2) Loan form information includes contact information for the party borrowing the object(s), the Loan number, date the loan was checked out and date it is to be returned, a list or description of the object(s) being borrowed that includes specific accession numbers, description of the piece, and current storage location, signature of borrower and date borrowed, as well as the signature of the member of the MCHM & AL staff who checked out the loan.
- 3) Temporary Receipt form includes contact information of the person dropping off the object(s) at the museum, date, a description of the object(s) being left, any useful historical information about the object (e.g. location found, previous owner, date found, etc.), whether the object is being left for identification, potential donation, loan, or other purpose, and the signature of person leaving the object at the MCHM & AL, as well as person receiving the object and the date.

B) Curatorial

Those records with curatorial functions provide a broad body of information that establishes the object's place and importance within its cultural, educational, historical and/or scientific sphere. This type of documentation includes the Accession Register, Loan Register, Source file, inventory/catalog records, and Research Request Form, currently being maintained in computer files generated using PastPerfect computer software as of 2019.

- 1) Accession Record information is listed in an Accession Register for all collections. The accession register information required for collections includes the accession number assigned to a particular object and/or collection, the date it was assigned, whether it is a collection/gift/fee curation, Deed of Gift if it is a Donated collection, folders of records, and number of negative/transparency/digital images are included in the collection, storage location, source/donor information, and date the accession number was assigned.
- 2) Loan Register information is the same for the archaeology, history, cultural and natural history collections, and includes loan number that cross references the loan form, type of loan (outgoing loan, incoming loan, temporary loan), purpose of loan, loan date, date loan is to be returned, and comments section for things, such as the accession number or general description of the material.
- 3) Inventory/Catalog Records include accession number information, provenance information, object description, cross reference collections file, and storage location.

MCHM & AL staff is responsible for assigning accession numbers, recording appropriate information in the collections and loan registers, completing Deed of Gift and Loan forms in a timely manner.

MCHM & AL staff are responsible for compiling inventory/catalog information and entering that data into the collections database. All computer data relating to MCHS Collections will back up the electronic records inventories, with a copy stored off-site as well as one kept in "Cloud storage." Hard (paper) copies of inventory/catalog information are retained in the temporary and accession records:

- Original accession records are stored in the Helms Collection Center with temporary custody and donation forms.
- One hard copy is maintained in Archival Library file cabinet.

C) General Procedures

- 1) All potential donation objects deposited for consideration shall be registered with a Temporary Receipt, a copy kept with the object(s) and one given to the potential donor.
- 2) Once an object is accepted by the Collections/Acquisitions Committee and MCHS Board, MCHS President is responsible for sending a Deed of Gift to the potential donor for signature.
- 3) MCHM & AL staff are responsible for creating a permanent Source file and Collection file, assigning an accession number to this object/collection, properly storing the object/collection, and entering the inventory/catalog information into the Collections database.

Section IV: Deaccessions and Disposal Policy and Procedures

Collections accepted into the permanent museum collections are held in public trust. However, periodic reevaluation of those collections is as important as acquisition, and deaccession, if properly carried out, can be a means toward growth. Deaccessioning should not be taken lightly and the procedures for doing so should reflect the peculiarities of a museum and its collections, should clearly lay out the final decision-making structure, should preserve the integrity of the collections, and should require the maintenance of complete records of actions taken.

A) Conditions for Deaccession

Each object being considered for deaccession must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) The object is no longer relevant to and consistent with the purposes and activity of the Madison County Historical Society, such as research, education, and exhibit.
- 2) The object has failed to retain its authenticity or documentation, or the item has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than 3 years.
- 3) The object unnecessarily duplicates other objects in the MCHS collections.
- 4) The object requires storage and/or conservation resources that cannot be provided by MCHS.
- 5) The object is damaged or has deteriorated beyond repair.
- 6) The object/collection has been requested for repatriation through the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) process by a federally recognized Native American tribe.

B) Restrictions

- 1) Any object considered for deaccession should possess clear legal title. However, if an object does not possess clear legal title, and has little or no provenance or donor information associated with it and has been sitting in the collections for over 10 years not being used (e.g identified as “found in collections”), it may be considered for deaccession upon consultation of legal counsel.
- 2) Any object acquired with restrictions made by the donor will not be disposed of until reasonable efforts are made to comply with the restricting conditions and until legal counsel is sought.
- 3) No deaccessioned item will be returned to a previous owner, unless that restriction is stipulated on the Deed of Gift.
- 4) The portions of the MCHS Collections Policy with respect to the acquisition and disposal of collections materials will be made available to donors upon request.

C) General Procedures

- 1) Recommendations for deaccession will be made in writing by appropriate Madison County Historical Museum & Archival Library (MCHM & AL) staff to the MCHS Collections/Acquisitions Committee.
- 2) A vote will be taken by the Collections/Acquisitions Committee, and this information, as well as the written recommendation for deaccession, will be forwarded to the MCHS Board for a final decision.
- 3) The MCHS Board President will respond to the Collections/Acquisitions Committee in writing with his/her decision and designating the means of disposal.
- 4) The MCHS will contact legal counsel for the best way to proceed if the object has restrictions associated with it or has been found in collections.
- 5) The MCHS Collections/Acquisitions Committee in consultation with appropriate MCHM & AL staff is responsible for completing and filing accurate deaccession records stating exactly why this object was deaccessioned and how. A deaccessioned object’s accession/collection number cannot be reused as they are part of this object’s permanent record.

D) Methods of Disposal

Objects approved for deaccessioning will be disposed of in one of the following manners:

- 1) Transferred without compensation or exchanged for other objects with a state, municipal, or a public educational institution within or outside of the general Illinois museum system, whose mission is relevant to the deaccessioned item, that will adequately care for the object and that can assure public access.
- 2) There shall be no private sales of collections or other property of the MCHS. In the event of any public sale authorized in accord with MCHS policies, any individuals other than MCHM &

AL staff and relatives of staff, shall be eligible to bid on offered items. Any funds resulting from this type of sale will be put into a collections maintenance endowment in accordance with American Alliance of Museum guidelines.

- 3) Returned to appropriate federally recognized tribal authorities in accordance with NAGPRA.
- 4) Destruction of the object may be permissible as a final option. If this option is chosen, any museum identification numbers should be removed from the object(s) prior to destruction and the method of destruction should be such that no one will be able to reconstruct or use this object(s) again.