

Historical Society of Baltimore County Museum Artifact Collections Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors
March 12, 2013

Mission Statement

The Historical Society of Baltimore County collects, preserves and interprets the rich history of Baltimore County for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations.

GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

The museum collections, and their management, are controlled by the Bylaws of the Historical Society of Baltimore County. (*Attachment A.*) All staff and Board members adhere to the Historical Society's code of ethics, as specified by the professional organization: American Alliance of Museums (*Attachment B*).

INTRODUCTION

The collections of the Historical Society of Baltimore County (also "HSBC") are divided between material culture objects housed in the Almshouse and the Farm Museum. They encompass prehistoric and historic museum objects, artifacts, fine and decorative arts, as well as archival documents and photographic images, primarily from rural agrarian households.

The collections contain more than 10,000 objects that are either associated with Baltimore County history, made in Baltimore County or are items used to help tell the County's story. These include: decorative and fine arts, furniture, textiles, garments, toys, ceramics, agricultural machinery & equipment, vintage vehicles, as well as books, photographs and ephemera that were given as part of the Society's Museum collection.

COLLECTIONS POLICY

1. **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** The Historical Society of Baltimore County collects, preserves, cares for, documents, and makes accessible to the public the county's continuing heritage. The HSBC collection represents the social, political, economic, industrial, agricultural, technological, and cultural heritage of Baltimore County, including materials from outside the county that may contribute to understanding the region and its people. The Historical Society collects materials that are used by, created by or else document the people and history of Baltimore County; that specifically relates to or promotes understanding of the continuing heritage of Baltimore County.

2. **CONTROL OF COLLECTIONS**
 - A) **Authority:**
 - 1) *Authority:* The Board of Directors has designated the Collections Committee (or other person so designated by them) to oversee the museum and its collections at the HSBC, with the day-to-day administration handled by the Collections Manager.
 - 2) *Purpose:* The HSBC Collections Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the Collections Manager, who is responsible for the care and management of the Historical Society's museum artifacts, including: acquisition, disposition, care and any other processes so deemed by the Board as appropriate. The Collections Manager will recommend actions to the Collections Committee, who will in turn make a recommendation to the full Board of Directors, depending on what action is deemed necessary.
 - 3) *Procedures:* The Collections Manager follows a written, Board-approved procedures manual dealing with Museum collections. Purchases, Disposition, and Board-mandated changes are made in writing to the Executive Committee of the Board and then to the complete Board for their review and approval.

B) Acquisitions:

1) *Collections*

- a. **Statement:** Acquisition is the creation of an immediate, brief, and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collection from the same source at the same time, and for which the Historical Society has custody, right, or title. Customarily, an accession record includes, among other data, the accession number; date and nature of acquisition (gift, excavation expedition, purchase, bequest, etc.); source; brief identification and description; condition; provenance; value; location; and name of staff member recording the accession.
- b. **Categories of Acquisitions - Museum**
 1. **Museum:** objects for display or research that directly related to the Historical Society's Mission
 2. **Non-Museum:** objects that are "for use" by staff and volunteers for special events, etc.
 3. **Education:** objects received that are used as part of the educational programs
- c. **Procedures:** Objects may be acquired for the collections by gift, bequest, purchase, commission, exchange, or other means. HSBC will accept objects only after a clearly defined process of thoughtful deliberation and consideration of the Historical Society's ethical obligation to store, preserve, document, and make accessible objects accepted into the collection.

The Collections Manager initiates all acquisitions proposals. Historical Society staff shall consider the object's importance to the collections, its condition and its appropriateness in serving the Historical Society's mission. Objects may be accepted by them directly, if the object easily fits within the mission. If an object is less than appropriate, very expensive or there are issues surrounding its donation, and/or care, then the acquisition proposal will be presented to the President of the Board for submission to Executive Committee and then to the Board of Directors, if the Executive Committee deems it necessary.

- d. **Laws and Ethics of Acquisition:** All acquisitions are reviewed to avoid possible violations of legal and ethical standards involving ownership, possession, and authenticity.
 1. The HSBC does not knowingly acquire an object unless the donor or vendor has valid title to the object in question.
 2. The HSBC will not knowingly acquire, by direct or indirect means, ethnographic and archaeological specimens which it believes have been collected in contradiction of existing laws; or which have been unethically collected or alienated from their society or place of origin (even when not in violation of the relevant laws of that place).
 3. The HSBC ratifies the principles of UNESCO's "Convention on the means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970." The HSBC attempts to verify that questionable artifacts considered for acquisition were not acquired in or exported from their country of origin (or immediate country in which they may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws and that they have been acquired in full compliance with the laws and regulations of the federal Government of the United States and of individual states within the United States.
 4. The HSBC complies with international laws as approved by the International Council on Museums (ICOM), a division of UNESCO, as well as federal laws regarding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

2) *Types of Acquisitions*

- a. **Gifts:** It is the policy of the Historical Society to request each donor to execute a written Deed of Gift form to provide documentation of the transfer in ownership, title and copyright.

Legal and ultimate responsibility for furnishing appraisals of value to governmental tax agencies rests with the donor. The Historical Society cannot provide appraisals to individuals but may supply the donor with the names of appraisers and will make the object(s) available in the Historical Society for an appraiser's inspection.

In compliance with the Federal Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993, the Historical Society does not offer any goods or services in exchange for objects given.

- b. **Promised and Partial Gifts:** The Historical Society accepts promised gifts as loans, only when a written agreement or will so stipulates said planned gift. A promised gift is only accessioned into the Collections at the time of the actual donation or bequest.

The Society does not accept partial gifts, due to potential Federal tax ramifications.

- c. **Purchases:** The Collections Manager shall present a written purchasing proposal, including funding sources, to the President for approval by the Executive Committee. If the proposed purchase is over \$500, the proposal is presented to the entire Board for their review and approval. Funds for said purchase must be approved ahead of the meeting by the Treasurer of the Board.

Should there be a special purchasing opportunity, where timely action is required (most often, but not exclusively, in auction circumstances), the President, in consultation with the Executive Committee, the Treasurer, and the Collections Manager may purchase said items. All purchases are submitted to the Executive Committee for confirmation at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and a written report submitted to the Board of Directors for notification at their next regularly schedule meeting.

Funds for purchase of historically significant objects may be derived from contributions from various donors, trusts and endowments specified for collection purchase under the authority of the HSBC Board of Directors.

A purchase agreement, bill of sale, or invoice must be submitted to the Historical Society before payment is made. It must contain an affirmation of title by the vendor and must establish what rights, including copyrights, are being transferred with the object by the vendor to the Historical Society.

- d. **Bequests:** The Historical Society accepts bequests to the collections, as long as they are appropriate to the Society's mission and fall within the collections criteria.

When a bequest is made to BCHS, legal documentation shall be reviewed by the Historical Society's legal counsel and Executive Committee to ascertain all terms of the bequest. If the Executive Committee determines that said bequest does not fall within the parameters of the Collections Policy, their recommendation shall be presented to the full Board for their review and final decision.

- e. **Transfer and Exchange:** Objects acquired through transfer and exchange are treated in the same manner as donations.

- f. **Objects Found in the Collection:** Every effort should be made to identify the source of an object found in the collections that lack documentation. If the source is identified, the object may be accessioned into the collection through regular accessioning procedures.

Objects that are not identified shall be temporarily numbered and tracked by the collections manager, and shall be maintained as part of the permanent collection.

3) *Legal Conveyance of Ownership:* A legal instrument of conveyance adequately describing the objects and the conditions of transfer that must accompany the gift, bequest, purchase, or exchange (*i.e.* a Deed of Gift or commercial invoice). Title to all objects acquired for the collection must be obtained free and clear, and generally without restrictions to its use or future disposition. Any conditions or restrictions upon a gift, bequest, exchange or sale, must be reviewed by the Collections Manager and/or Library Director and then approved by the Executive Committee. Said approval must be stated clearly on the deed.

C) Deaccessioning

1) **Statement:** Deaccessioning is the removal of an accessioned object or group of objects from the Historical Society's collection through a formal process. In deaccessioning collections objects, the Historical Society weighs carefully the interests of the public for which it holds the collection in trust, the donor's intent in the broadest sense, the interests of the scholarly and the cultural community, and the Historical Society's ability to house and care for the object(s) in question.

- 2) **Criteria:** Objects are eligible for deaccession only if they entered the collection on an unrestricted basis.

The following categories of objects have been identified by the staff as appropriate for deaccession consideration on a routine though fully procedural basis.

- Objects that do not fit the Society's Mission and Collections Scope statement
- Objects which are duplicates of other items in the collection
- Objects of decidedly undistinguished quality
- Objects of historically insignificant study material
- Forgeries/historically insignificant copies
- Objects in irretrievably deteriorated condition
- Objects where comparable or better example(s) are in the collections
- Objects deaccessioned through collection refinement or upgrading
- Objects which are from non-collecting or non-strength areas
- Objects which are identified and claimed by persons identified under the law as appropriate representatives of their Native groups on the behalf of NAGPRA

- 3) **Authority:** All recommendations for sale, exchange, trade or transfer, will be made by the Collections Manager with the approval by the Executive Committee. The full Board shall then make the final decision as to disposition method, rationale and reasoning.

The Historical Society may choose not to accession every object that comes into its possession. Before any sale or exchange of non-accessioned objects of known origin, the staff reviews the objects under consideration and advises the Executive Committee on their suitability as acquisitions for the collection. Objects acquired without tax implications (bequests, purchases), may be disposed of immediately.

4) **Types of Disposal:**

Disposal of objects through sale, trade, donation or transfer to other institutions are solely for the advancement of the Historical Society's mission, and the use of proceeds from the sale of the collection objects is restricted solely to acquisition. Revenues from the sale or exchange of deaccessioned objects will be used to make purchases of objects that raise the quality or otherwise enhance the collection, with a preference for that part of the collection from which the sales or exchanges were generated. No funds from sale or exchange of collections objects will be used for operating expenses.

a. **Destruction:** If an object is beyond reasonable conservation efforts and/or could present a health hazard to staff or a threat to other objects in the collection, disposal through supervised destruction may be considered as an option. Objects will be documented through photographs before destruction.

b. **Transfer of Objects to Sister Institutions:** In certain instances, in recognition of its role as a caretaker of collections for the benefit of the public good, the Historical Society may choose to deaccession objects and transfer them to sister institutions rather than sell or exchange them.

A sister institution is defined as an organization determined to be exempt from Federal Income taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that responsibly collects and preserves objects, and whose mission makes it an appropriate recipient of the deaccessioned material. Local Maryland and regional Mid-Atlantic institutions are preferred recipients. The policies and procedures for the transfer of objects to sister institutions are the same as those in force for the sale and exchange of deaccessioned objects.

c. **Sale of Accessioned Objects:** Museum objects in the collections shall be disposed of through public auction in accordance with ethical standards of the American Alliance of Museums;

d. **Sale of Non-Accessioned Objects:** Objects acquired for use or educational purposes shall be disposed of according to standard museum procedures, as objects not accessioned into the collection. Said objects may be sold or transferred, as recommended by the Collections

Committee. Any monies received shall be used for acquisition of other non-accessioned artifacts.

- 5) **Records:** Records of all deaccessioned objects shall be maintained in perpetuity by the Collections Manager.

D) Loans

1) *Outgoing Loans*

- a. Purpose: The Historical Society encourages loans from the permanent collection for exhibition at other Historical Societies or similar institutions in order to promote research and to increase and extend the knowledge and appreciation of the collection locally, nationally, and internationally.
- b. Authority: The Collections Manager must approve loans of objects to other institutions in consultation with the Collections Committee, with final approval of the Executive Committee, as appropriate.
- c. Terms of Outgoing Loans: Loans from the HSBC will be considered on the following basis: condition of the object(s) to withstand the normal rigors of transportation and exhibition; role of the HSBC in the exhibit; security of the borrowing institution; stature and responsibility of the borrowing institution; importance of the exhibition; whether a publication is planned; impact on HSBC financial and human resources; public relations or extenuating circumstances. The Historical Society abides by any legal restrictions on a gift that would require, limit or prohibit its loan. The borrowing institution will be responsible for all packing and shipping costs required to send the object to the institution and for its return to the Historical Society.
- d. Legal: The Historical Society does not approve loans to individuals, except in the case of partial gifts, where the individual is also the owner.
- e. Procedures: Loans are processed through the Collections Manager's office, where all conservation, mounting, handling, packing, and shipping arrangements are coordinated. All current and past loan records are compiled and maintained by the Collections Manager's office.
- f. Insurance: Insurance coverage and/or indemnity (whether U.S. or a foreign government) coverage of the loan of HSBC property must be provided by the borrower. The coverage and/or indemnity must be appropriate as determined by the HSBC's Collections Manager. When the Historical Society staff transports objects in their personal vehicle, the Historical Society holds harmless such drivers in the event of loss except in the case of gross negligence, fraud, or illegal conduct. The Historical Society establishes values for objects that are to be lent.

2) *Incoming Loans*

- a. Purpose: The Historical Society will accept temporary in-coming (borrowed) loans that fulfill specific needs, such as mounting temporary exhibitions or enhancing long-term installations, or that support the Historical Society's educational mission. Loans of said objects to the Historical Society will be accorded the same care extended to the Historical Society's own collection.
- b. Authority: The Collections Manager must approve loans of objects from other institutions or private owners in consultation with the Collections Committee, with final approval of the Executive Committee, as appropriate.
- c. Terms of Incoming Loans: The Collections Manager, approves all incoming loans of objects, in consultation with the Collections Committee, and then by the President and/or Executive Committee. Duration of extended loans to the Historical Society will be requested in three year installments or less, depending on the type of loan, and may be recalled by the lender at any time with the appropriate written notice to the Historical Society. The Historical Society may discontinue the loan at any time with appropriate written notice to the lender. The Historical Society will not clean, restore, or otherwise alter the work without written

permission from the owner. The Historical Society is responsible for all packing and shipping costs to bring the object to the Society and to return it to the Lender.

- d. **Insurance of Loans:** All incoming loans will be insured by the lender or covered under the Society's insurance policy if so directed by the lender. While in the HSBC's possession (including transit), objects lent to the Historical Society will be insured for the value stated by the lender. If the lender states no valuation, the Historical Society will insure the loan at fair market value. If the lender continues his/her own insurance for the period of the loan, the lender will indicate this on the loan agreement. The lender will provide the Historical Society with a Certificate of Insurance, naming the Society as "additional insured". The lender (not the Historical Society) will be responsible for errors or deficiency in claims procedure or other information furnished to the lender's insurers and for lapses in insurance coverage.

E) CARE OF THE COLLECTIONS

- 1) **Records:** The Historical Society has an established system for the preservation of data concerning collection and library objects and all activities pertaining to those objects. The Historical Society records document the legal status, handling requirements, care and movement, location, and histories of collection objects. Receipts, title transfers, research, and other papers concerning the legal status of objects are compiled, housed, and maintained by the Collections Manager. Collection records are made in a timely fashion and are currently secured by written and electronic means. Duplicate copies of computerized collection records are housed off-site. Loan and exhibition records are compiled and maintained by the Collections Manager. Records are made available to collections and library staff, as well as researchers and, as appropriate, to the public.
- 2) **Inventories:** Collection inventory spot-checks are performed by randomly checking all areas of the collections. The Almshouse and Farm Museum collections are being entered into the PastPerfect database and digital images are captured and attached to the object files. The Collections Manager completes documentation of inventories and full disclosure of inventory results is made available, as necessary to the Executive Committee. Permanent collections, exhibition galleries, and collections storage areas are inspected daily by staff.
- 3) **Conservation:** The Historical Society is committed to meeting its legal and ethical responsibilities to provide prudent care and protection for its collections. Objects identified as requiring assessing and conservation treatment will be sought by qualified American Institute for Conservation (AIC) conservators.
- 4) **Risk Management:** The Society is self-insured and will maintain a complete accounting of all parts of the collections through regularly scheduled inventories. The Historic Society's buildings are all protected by security systems. The Historical Society shall strive to provide adequate security of its collections at all times, not only in public areas, but in the storage facilities as well.
- 5) **Reports:** Reports by the collections staff are made annually to the President of the Historical Society, as well as the Executive Committee. These include: results of inventories, the status of gifts and loans, the state of the collections, its condition, and conservation efforts.
- 6) **Disaster Plan:** A Disaster Preparedness Plan for the protection of the Historical Society buildings, its staff and collections has been prepared. This plan covers the actions to be taken if faced with a disaster that could impact the Historical Society, including but not limited to fire, flood, power outage, serious weather threats, and acts of terrorism.

F) ACCESS TO AND USE OF THE COLLECTIONS

Access to the collection is made possible to the public through exhibitions, research, publications, teaching, and educational programs. Access to and use of the collections and collection information are consistent with professional standards of safety and protection and are subject to reasonable but specific conditions. All uses of the collection are subject to the consideration and approval of the Collections Manager. Certain information pertaining to the collection, such as appraisal values and donor information are considered privileged and confidential and are not made available to the public.