

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS POLICY FOR ST. LOUIS COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION HISTORIC SITES
ADOPTED BY THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS COMMISSION / 30 OCTOBER 2001

In the effort to provide excellence in the interpretation of the historic sites operated by the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, it is a primary function of the Historic Buildings Commission and the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation to continue in the search for and the acquisition of artifacts suitable for display in the museums. To ensure that the material acquired is of museum quality and relevant, this policy statement is hereby enacted by the Historic Buildings Commission and the Director of Parks and Recreation.

I. PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTING:

The dominating principle involved in the collecting process is to increase the stature of the historic sites and museums of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. This depends upon the quality of the publications, manuscripts and objects that it keeps as well as the historical completeness of its collections. A prospective addition to the historical collections is to be judged from the standpoint of its quality, relevance, and interpretive value. The goal shall be definitive excellence in historical and cultural range of the collections as they relate to the history and culture of St. Louis County historic sites. This process will be guided by a written statement of Collecting Standards to be prepared by the staff of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation and appended to this statement of policy.

II. STAFF FUNCTION:

- A. Since the functions of the Historic Buildings Commission and the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation include the acquisition, preservation, exhibition and interpretation of historical publications, manuscripts and objects, the staff should devote time to all of these functions.
- B. A spirit of cooperation should exist between the staff and the Historic Buildings Commission in order to contribute to an orderly acquisition process. Staff shall be focused on the following areas:
 - 1. Maintaining an alert and up-to-date knowledge of the subject area of each site's scope of interpretation.
 - 2. Conducting an ongoing survey of the current museum collection to determine needs and strengths.

3. Conducting research and consulting the best available authorities on potential additions to the museum collection.

III. ACCESSIONS: ACQUISITION BY PURCHASE, GIFT, BEQUEST OR LOAN:

- A. The staff of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation will present a report of recommended accessions to the Collections Committee of the Historic Buildings Commission for approval.
- B. In the absence of emergencies, the designated staff will not recommend accession until:
 1. There is furnished available documentation relating to the artist, artificer, the origin of the object, the reasons for its value; and an evaluation by the staff, including available proof of authenticity and ownership.
 2. There is presented by the staff the reasons for the acquisition, including the object's importance to the period, school, style or subject it will define, why objects already in the museum collection do not provide such definition.
 3. In the event of on-the-spot acquisitions, the foregoing documentation and supporting reasons shall be furnished and presented to the Historic Buildings Commission Collections Committee at the first meeting of the committee following the acquisition.
- C. There is no way of predicting when the most desirable objects will be discovered or made available. The most successful collection is always to a large degree opportunistic. When possible, acquisition funds should be placed in each year's budget for this purpose.
- D. Except in unusual circumstances, all gifts must include not only the object, but also all rights including copyrights, when applicable. The exceptions would only be a unique object of extreme value in the interpretation of a site.
- E. Gifts and bequests are generally accepted only if the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation is left completely free, by acceptance, from any guarantees in perpetuity concerning the attribution, exhibition, exchange, or sale of such donations.
- F. The staff of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation will not supply individual consultations or appraisals to members of the public.
- G. Short and long-term loans may be entertained, but with comparable standards to those which apply to donations and purchases.

IV. DEACCESSIONS:

It may be advisable at times for the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation to remove an object from the museum collections. The process of deaccessioning is an integral part of collections maintenance and must be practiced only with much forethought and consideration. The department will adhere to the highest standards of professional museum collections management in the conduct of its deaccessioning process.

- A. The staff of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation will present a report of recommended deaccessions to the Collections Committee of the Historic Buildings Commission for approval.
- B. The staff will consider recommending deaccessions in the following cases:
 - 1. The material has been determined to be irrelevant or inappropriate to the historic site's mission.
 - 2. The material has been damaged or has deteriorated beyond interpretive value or poses a safety hazard to staff or the public.
 - 3. The material is duplicated in the museum collection.
- C. Before recommending deaccessioning, the staff will review all documentation concerning the acquisition of the material. When necessary, staff may consult outside authorities on the material and/or obtain appraisals on the material.

V. DISPOSITION OF DEACCESSIONED MATERIAL:

- A. Once an item has been officially deaccessioned, the Collections Committee of the Historic Buildings Commission recommends a method of disposal. In keeping with the principle of holding museum collections in trust for the public, the preferred method of disposition is by gift to another institution. Deaccessioned artifacts may also be offered for exchange, sold or destroyed.
- B. In all cases, the sale, trade, gift or exchange of collection materials shall be reported to the next meeting of the Historic Buildings Commission following receipt of all funds or the completion of the exchange.
- C. Any proceeds from the disposition of deaccessioned material are to be placed in a designated fund used only for the acquisition, preservation, conservation and restoration of objects for or in the museum collection.