

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY REVISED COLLECTIONS POLICY

COLLECTIONS POLICY

The Olmsted County History Society (OCHS) seeks to collect items from individuals or organizations relating to Olmsted County. To perform the task of “Olmsted County’s Storyteller”, OCHS seeks objects and archival materials from Olmsted County and related areas.

THE COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

The Collections Committee meets regularly (preferably on a monthly or bi-monthly basis) to process objects. The two main functions of the Collections Committee are:

1. To approve or disapprove recent donations recommended for accession by the curator or archivist, formally accessioning them into the History Center collections.
2. To approve/disapprove objects recommended for de-accession by the curator or archivist.

The Collections Committee will have representatives from Board and Staff. The Committee will ask expert advisors to attend if necessary. The Collections Committee will include:

- The Curator of Collections – for three-dimensional (3D) objects.
- The Archivist/Librarian – for archival and paper objects.
- The Educator – for objects in the Education Department.
- The Executive Director
- Board member(s)

The Collections Committee must make decisions regarding approval/disapproval of objects recommended for accession/de-accession. Approval/disapproval will be on a case-by-case basis. Approval/disapproval will be through a majority.

DONATIONS

Donations given to the History Center must include a Deed of Gift signed by the donor relinquishing all claims to the object. All tax matters dealing with donations will be handled by the donor. The curator or archivist will be responsible for the completion of all appropriate paper work. The Curator of Collections and Archivist are responsible for recommending objects to the Collections Committee.

Restrictions on Donations

The History Center will not accept certain objects because of its Mission. These include:

The History Center will have the option of accepting any/all donated item(s).

1. Organic criteria:
 - Natural history specimens.¹
 - Infested objects (mold, insects, etc.).
 - No textiles with fur or feathers.
 - Objects containing hazardous materials (fertilizers, radioactive material, etc.)
 - Defective or potentially harmful objects.²
2. Historical criteria:
 - Objects/archival materials having no connection with Olmsted County and surrounding region.
 - Objects/archival materials lacking adequate provenance and/or anecdotal evidence.
 - Incomplete, missing, or damaged sets of objects and/or archival materials unless there is an overriding historical, cultural, or aesthetic reason. (If exceptionally rare or archival, then consideration may apply.)³
3. Legal criteria:
 - Native American objects not properly vetted by NAGPRA.
 - No human remains (bones, skeletons, etc.).⁴ [Certain objects may violate NAGPRA.]
 - Looted or stolen cultural or fine art objects.
 - No fake, forged, or counterfeit objects and/or archival materials.⁵
 - Object subject to CITES enforcement will require written proof of antiquity.⁶

Archival objects determined on a case-by-case basis.

Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

Attempts will be made to follow all known laws.

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LOANS

¹ The History Center has no natural history programming. Within Olmsted County, the best place to send natural history specimens would be Quarry Hill Nature Center, 701 Silver Creek Road NE, Rochester, MN.

² Ammunition must be de-activated and explosive material emptied. Mechanical devices will be inspected to determine ability to cause bodily harm.

³ The History Center may also accept partial sets when potential donations can fill out gaps in the collection. Complete sets may take precedence over place of origin.

⁴ Exceptions include: skeletons donated to science by the consent of the deceased; hair sculpture.

⁵ Exceptions can be made to accession object for educational use.

⁶ These include African art, skin and fur products, feathers, claws of mammals or raptors, primate parts (hands, feet, tails), tortoise shell, coral, rhinoceros horn, hardwood, and rosewood.

Loans for temporary exhibits: The History Center will accept objects on loan from organizations of good standing. The History Center will take responsibility for the loaned objects for the allotted time indicated in the temporary exhibit contract. The History Center has the right to refuse temporary exhibits for reasons of: cost, risk, and/or other factors that may be detrimental to the History Center and the public trust. (See Loan Conditions below.)

Loans: The History Center will not accept objects as long term loans from individuals. These items must be given to the History Center either as donations or not at all.

Loan Conditions

The History Center will accept loans no longer than one (1) year in length. Loans will have a clear start and end date, the end date being no longer than one (1) year after loan form is signed.

Any loan items left at the museum after written notification of this loan's expiration and attempts to return the items listed on the form, and after a period of thirty (30) days, shall become the property of the History Center.

The History Center may terminate the agreement of the loan upon written notice. (Loans can be updated on an annual basis.)

DE-ACCESSION POLICY

Changes in collection management policies and practices mean the History Center will de-accession objects in its collection. The de-accession policy will give the Curator of Collections, the Archivist, the Executive Director, and the Collections Committee the flexibility to accept other potential objects more relevant to both the community and the mission of the History Center. A better de-accession policy today will give the History Center the opportunity to collect items for tomorrow.

Once an object is de-accessioned it can be transferred to a historical society that wants the object. Smaller historical societies in southeastern Minnesota will get preference. If no historical society or like institution wants the de-accessioned objects, it is ethical to publicly sell the object at fair market value to potential buyers. The monies collected from these sales will be put into a Preservation & Acquisitions Fund. (PAF). The PAF will give the History Center the opportunity to preserve objects or purchase objects relevant to the History Center's collections.

Criteria for De-accessioning⁷

De-accessioning objects can be justified with one or more of the following criteria:

- Authenticity

⁷ Based on John E. Simmons, *Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006), 59.

- Condition
- Cost of care
- Documentation
- Mission
- Program strength
- Restitution and repatriation

Ethical and Legal Consideration for De-accession

- No de-accessioned object may be acquired by any Museum employee, member of the Board, volunteer, or by their representatives except through public sale.
- Before de-accessioning an object, the Collections Committee shall be responsible to verify that the History Center has legal ownership to the item and that there are no restrictions or title questions that would impede de-accessioning.
- If documented restrictions have been placed on the disposal of an item, they should, except in the case of hazardous material, be strictly observed.
- When necessary, the Collections Committee will seek legal advice in actions involving restrictions and de-accessions.
- No act of de-accessioning shall conflict with county, state or federal laws, or with the ethical principles established for the Museum in this or any other official document.⁸

Methods of De-accession

Methods of de-accession will depend on the condition of the object. Objects deemed a threat to the collection or the health of staff and volunteers will be pre-emptively de-accessioned.

During the de-accession process, staff will determine possible venues to de-accession the object. Museum listservs and historical societies in the vicinity of Olmsted County will be potential places to transfer the objects.

Objects for use and consumption in the Education Collection will be determined in the Collections Committee.

Following a period of sixty (60) days if there are no offers of transfer to a like institution, the History Center may offer the de-accessioned objects for public sale. The monies from such sales will be placed in a Preservation & Acquisition Fund to help build and preserve the History Center collections.

⁸ For legislation regarding abandoned property as it pertains to de-accessioning see 2004 Minnesota Statute Chapter 213, Sections 1-5, 345.70 – 74 and 2006 Minnesota Statute 524.2-103.