

Olmsted County Historical Society

Collections Management Policy (April 2016)

- I. **Introduction to the Collections Management Policy (CMP)**
 - a. **Institutional History:** The Olmsted County Historical Society (OCHS) was established by Burt Eaton in 1926. Its primary purpose was to collect and preserve the history of Olmsted County. The OCHS members opened a museum in the basement of the Rochester Library when it was built in 1937. The OCHS remained there until 1959 when it moved into the Bethel English Lutheran Church building on Third Avenue SW in Rochester. By 1976, the organization outgrew its location in downtown Rochester and built a new facility on the George W. Stoppel farmstead. In 2006, the Historical Society began doing business as the History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC). The organization now owns and operates four historic buildings and properties, including the George W. Stoppel farmstead. Today, the HCOC actively serves Olmsted County and southeastern Minnesota by continuing to collect, preserve, and interpret the history and heritage of the region. The HCOC also continues to expand its services through varied educational and outreach programs, special events, museum exhibits, a research library, and archives.
 - b. **Mission Statement of the History Center of Olmsted County:** Give people of all ages and backgrounds access and the opportunity to learn about the past through interpretive programs and events, exhibits, research, and publications.
- II. **Purpose of the Collections Management Policy:** The History Center of Olmsted County strives to collect artifacts and documentary materials from individuals and organizations related to Olmsted County and southeastern Minnesota. This policy outlines how the HCOC manages its collections, the process by which it accepts objects into or removes objects from its collections, and how its staff and volunteers will provide responsible preservation of and public access to the HCOC collections.
- III. **Scope and Use of the Collections:** The HCOC collections consist of items that are relevant to the history of Olmsted County and its residents. HCOC uses these items to fulfill its mission to educate the public about the past.
 - a. **Collection Classification:** The HCOC collections are separated into two classifications: a permanent collection that includes artifacts in the material culture and archival collections, and non-permanent collections used for education and research.
 - i. **Permanent Collection:** The permanent collection is comprised of artifacts with significant historic value to Olmsted County and southeastern Minnesota. Artifacts are added into the permanent collection through the accession process and removed through the deaccession process (see Section IV). All artifacts in the permanent collection will be cared for by the highest museum standards of preservation, documentation, and storage that HCOC can provide, and will

require restrictions in handling and use (see Section V). The procedures for collection care are outlined in HCOC's Registration Methods and Procedure Handbook. The permanent collection is divided into the material culture collection and the archival collection.

1. **Material Culture Collection:** The material culture collection contains three-dimensional artifacts and is under the care and management of the Curator of Collections and Exhibits (Curator). The Central Museum Registrar (Registrar) is also responsible for the care of this collection.
 2. **Archival Collection:** The archival collection is made up of documentary materials and other media artifacts and is under the care and management of the Archivist. The Registrar is also responsible for the care of the archival collection.
- ii. **Non-Permanent Collection:** Items in the non-permanent collections may be used without restriction for education, programs, exhibits, and research. Acquisition of non-permanent collection items is not subject to the accession process; however, the Collection Committee must review all artifact donations for acceptance into the permanent collection. All non-permanent collection items donated to HCOC require a Deed of Gift showing legal transfer of property. It should also be made clear to donors upon donation that non-permanent collection items are consumable and may not be retained by HCOC indefinitely. All non-permanent collection items must be clearly marked and should be stored separately from the permanent collection as HCOC resources allow. The HCOC non-permanent collection consists of four sub-collections: education collection, exhibit collection, research library collection, and reference collection.
1. **Education Collection:** Education Collection items are under the management of the Education and Programs Coordinator and Registrar, and are used for education and programming purposes.
 2. **Exhibit Collection:** The Exhibit Collection is under the management of the Curator and is used for exhibits and programming.
 3. **Research Library Collection:** The Research Library Collection is under the management of the Archivist and Registrar and is available for use by researchers.
 4. **Reference Collection:** The Reference Collection is under the management of the Registrar and may be used by staff and volunteers for research.
- b. **Code of Ethics:** In the interest of maintaining appropriate museum ethical standards, the HCOC Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers shall follow these guidelines.
- i. **Personal Gains:** No HCOC Executive Director, Board of Directors member, employee, or volunteer may use their involvement with the HCOC for personal

gain or to benefit another at the expense of HCOC, its mission, reputation or the Olmsted County community.

- ii. **Conflict of Interest:** The HCOC employees, Board of Directors, and volunteers are expected to place the interest of the HCOC in acquiring items of historical relevance to Olmsted County before their own.
 - iii. **Storage of Non-HCOC Artifacts:** The HCOC employees and volunteers are strictly prohibited from storing personal artifacts of cultural value on museum grounds unless they are used for educational purposes and approved by the Archivist or Curator, and Executive Director. Unauthorized items constitute a conflict of interest. Authorized items must be clearly marked with the owner's name. The storage of items from outside organizations or institutions on museum grounds is generally not preferred. In cases where this does occur, it is HCOC policy to require a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the responsibilities of both parties to the collection in question, and a comprehensive inventory that details each item contained within it. Collections staff should take special precaution to see that HCOC permanent collection items at the Mayowood Mansion are not mixed with any items from an outside organization or institution.
 - iv. **Appraisals:** The HCOC and its staff members will under no circumstances provide monetary appraisals for donations or objects brought in for authentication.
 - v. **Donations:** The HCOC staff will conduct donations in a manner consistent with the HCOC's Acquisitions Policy and Donor Bill of Rights.
 - vi. **Deaccessions:** No HCOC employee, board member, volunteer, or family member of the aforementioned individuals may knowingly obtain items deaccessioned from the HCOC collections.
 - vii. **Purchases:** The Curator or Archivist may recommend purchases for the Permanent Collection. Such recommendations will be made in a report that includes a description of the item, its condition and provenance, its importance to the HCOC's collection, and justifications for purchase. A conservator specializing in a related field may be consulted as needed. The HCOC Collection Committee must approve the purchase report, after which it is submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval. Purchases for the Permanent Collection will be paid for through the Collections Acquisition Fund.
- c. **Risk Management:** In order to preserve the permanent collection, HCOC provides risk management and damage prevention through fire suppression systems and environmental controls. The HCOC does not currently insure its collection but it may insure its collection selectively. At the request of lenders, HCOC will obtain insurance for incoming loans or exhibitions and will provide a certificate of insurance to the lender as proof of insurance.

- d. **Permission/Use Fees:** The HCOC may charge fees for access to the collection that include admission, reproduction fees, and use fees for publications. The HCOC retains all rights to photographs within its collection. Any request to use a collection item in publication is subject to the HCOC Conditions of Use. The requestor must submit a written request for publication and pay any related use fees prior to creation of the reproduction. The HCOC must be credited for any use of reproductions from the HCOC collection. The credit must state *Courtesy, History Center of Olmsted County*.
 - e. **Health and Safety:** The HCOC wishes to protect its visitors, staff, and volunteers from any hazardous materials and harmful items in its collections. As such, dangerous items are generally not accepted into the collections and if already in the collections, they will be stored in a safe manner as restricted items (See IV-b). Any potentially hazardous items placed on exhibit will be stored in locked cases.
- IV. **Acquisitions Policies:** Additions to the permanent collection are usually accepted as gifts, although the Archivist and Curator may purchase items for the permanent collection using the HCOC Collections Acquisition Fund. All artifacts accepted for acquisition must adhere to the collections plan and acquisition restrictions. Any potential donation that violates one of the restrictions listed in Section IV-b should be rejected for donation. In the case of a large donation that would cause HCOC to incur significant expenditures of money, time, or resources, it may be appropriate for the institution to negotiate a gift from the donor to alleviate those expenditures. Such gifts are earmarked for the Collections Preservation Fund. The HCOC staff should negotiate large artifact donations with the donor prior to transfer of the items in order to reduce the burden on HCOC staff and resources. Artifacts may leave the permanent collection through the deaccession process as outlined in Section IV-f. Non-permanent collection items do not follow the accession policy; however, they must follow the acquisition restrictions regarding hazardous materials and legality, and must support HCOC's mission.
- a. **Collections Plan:** Because all new collection items are expected to support HCOC's mission, the HCOC is currently conducting a comprehensive inventory project to assess the scope of its collections. In addition, HCOC has exhausted its material culture collection storage and has limited archival storage. Due to these factors, HCOC has slowed its collecting activities and now only accepts artifacts of major historical significance to Olmsted County. The HCOC prefers donations be made as unrestricted gifts; any restrictions or conditions made by the donor will be weighed against the significance of the item.
 - b. **Acquisition Restrictions:** New acquisition items should be in good condition, unless the deterioration is integral to the meaning of the item. The HCOC must be able to preserve and care for the acquisition item, according to HCOC's Registration Methods and Procedure Handbook, if it is being recommended to the permanent collection. Acquisitions must comply with all applicable local, state, and United

States federal laws. The HCOC will not accept into its collections items belonging to, but not limited to the criteria listed below, although exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for items of major historical significance.

- i. **Organic/Inorganic criteria:** The HCOC will not accept items containing mold, or infested with insects or other pests, items with fur or feathers, items containing hazardous materials, such as toxic chemicals, fertilizers, radioactive material, etc, or defective or potentially deadly items, such as live ammunition or large machinery.
 - ii. **Historical criteria:** Items without relevant or significant historical connection to Olmsted County or southeastern Minnesota will not be accepted, nor will items that lack adequate provenance or anecdotal evidence. Incomplete, missing, or damaged sets of items will only be accepted if there is a significant historical, cultural, or aesthetic reason for accepting such items.
 - iii. **Legal criteria:** The HCOC will summarily reject all items obtained illegally. This includes fake, forged, or counterfeit items, items that may have been unlawfully appropriated from European countries during the Nazi/World War II era, items covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), or relating to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).
 - iv. **Financial criteria:** A large collection or items that require extraordinary means outside HCOC's ability to preserve and store in perpetuity may be rejected upon donation. Items for which the donor requests financial compensation will only be accepted if the Archivist or Curator expresses interest and receives approval for the purchase from the Collection Committee and the Board of Trustees. The purchase will be made using the Collection Acquisition Fund.
- c. **Acquisition Procedure:** The HCOC will follow this procedure when an offer of an artifact is made through any means.
- i. **Donation:** The appropriate collection manager should be notified to handle the donation. If the collection managers are unavailable for a walk-in donation, any HCOC staff member may accept it for later review by the Archivist or Curator. A Deed of Gift completed and signed by the donor and the staff member accepting the donation must accompany all artifact donations in order to transfer ownership to HCOC. Donors should communicate all information relevant to the items being donated. The collection managers may turn down donations at their discretion but must inform the Collection Committee of the offer.
 - ii. **Presentation to Collection Committee:** After an item is offered for donation or if a donation is made, the collection managers then make a recommendation for each item to the Collection Committee. The committee decides if the item is suitable for acceptance into the collection.

- iii. **Recommendation to Board of Directors:** The Collection Committee recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Directors and the Board then decides to accept or reject the recommendations.
- iv. **Accessioning:** After acceptance into the collection, the Registrar assigns the artifact an accession number and catalogs the item. If a donated item is rejected at any point, it should be returned to the donor, or disposed of through the method selected by the donor on the Deed of Gift.
- d. **Collection Committee:** The Collection Committee is responsible for reviewing donations of artifacts for acceptance into the permanent collection, considering deaccession proposals for removing items from the permanent collection, and providing comment on issues affecting the permanent collection. The committee may also give advice on non-permanent collection items. The Collection Committee must meet regularly. Approval or disapproval of an artifact donation or deaccession is determined individually and by majority vote. Decisions made by the Collection Committee are then forwarded to the HCOC Board of Directors for final approval. The Collection Committee may at times be subject to the control and direction of the Board of Directors
 - i. **Collection Committee Voting Members:** The Collection Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members who hold voting rights. Each committee member holds one vote. At least two of the members must be HCOC Board members. The remaining members of the committee should be HCOC volunteers familiar with the permanent collection. The responsibilities of the voting members include reviewing rejected donations, voting on items recommended for accession or deaccession, to provide comments and recommendations on donation or collection management policies and issues, or to recommend external expert advisors for consultations when necessary.
 - ii. **Collection Committee Advisory Members:** The advisory members consist of HCOC staff members, including the Curator of Collections and Exhibits, the Archivist, and the Central Museum Registrar. The Executive Director may serve as an administrative advisor, while the Education and Program Coordinator may advise the committee on education collection matters. The advisory members make recommendations to the committee for new donations and donation offers as well as deaccession proposals. The advisory members also make professional recommendations to the Collection Committee regarding collection policies and procedures.
 - 1. The Executive Director may provide administrative guidance to the committee.
 - 2. The Curator makes material culture and exhibit collection recommendations to the committee.

3. The Archivist makes archival and research library collection recommendations to the committee.
 4. The Education and Programs Coordinator may explain education collection decisions to the committee.
 5. The Registrar will, when necessary, present recommendations to the committee in lieu of the other advisory members. The Registrar also acts as secretary to the committee. As secretary, the Registrar creates the Collection Committee meeting agenda, the new acquisitions report, and the deaccessions report and distributes those to the committee members before meetings. The Registrar also creates and sends the Collection Committee Report containing the committee's decisions and the minutes to the Board of Directors. The Registrar shall record and archive Collection Committee recommendations and voting decisions on collection matters.
- iii. **Board of Directors:** The Board of Directors shall review and discuss collection recommendations from the Collection Committee, and shall approve or deny Collection Committee recommendations at Board meetings when necessary.
- e. **Documentation of the Collections:** To ensure the preservation of the collection and to promote its interpretation, catalog records will be kept for every object in the permanent collection. These records will include donor information, provenance, historical significance, and a complete description of appearance and condition. The HCOC will create and maintain physical and electronic copies of each record. The physical records will be stored in the Archives, while electronic records are kept in PastPerfect Collection Management Software and stored on the HCOC server. Both physical and electronic records will be updated when the objects are loaned, deaccessioned, or inventoried.
- i. **Registration:** A Deed of Gift is used to transfer ownership of any donated item into the possession of the HCOC and must be completed before it can be accessioned or used in the non-permanent collection. After final approval of a donation by the Board of Directors, the donation will be assigned a permanent collection accession number. Each item will be cataloged into PastPerfect before being placed into permanent storage. The Registrar will maintain records of all donations, which will be stored in the accession file cabinets in the Archives storage vault. All donation records must be kept by the HCOC indefinitely. All specific aspects of registration procedures are outlined in the HCOC Registration Methods Manual. The Archivist, Curator, and Registrar will review or update the manual regularly to maintain relevance and consistency.
 - ii. **Found in Collection (FIC) Items:** Occasionally objects may be found in the collection that do not have an accession number or object identification number. If such objects cannot be connected to an accession, they will be cataloged as an

FIC item into the Permanent Collection. When FIC items can be matched to their original accession number, they will be cataloged under the original accession. During collection inventories, volunteers and staff will make every attempt to determine the original donation for FIC items.

- f. **Deaccessions:** The deaccession process is the removal of an artifact from the HCOC permanent collection and its disposal by transfer, sale, or an acceptable destruction method. Artifacts in the permanent collection are expected to be kept by HCOC in perpetuity; however, over time, artifacts may deteriorate so that they are no longer usable or they may no longer be relevant to HCOC's mission. Consequently, it may become necessary to deaccession artifacts from the permanent collection. The HCOC will honor any restrictions attached to the donation of the collection item and will abide by all local, state, and federal regulations regarding museum and archive deaccessions. The HCOC should carry out deaccessions with caution to protect its best interests since certain artifacts may be irreplaceable. A deaccession process should only be undertaken as the result of an inventory, rather than a lack of collection storage space, private requests, or for financial benefits. If HCOC does not deaccession permanent collection items solely because of an item's individual merits, then HCOC risks losing the community's trust as stewards of those items.
 - i. **Deaccession Criteria:** Deaccessions are determined by, but not limited to, the criteria listed below:
 1. **Authenticity:** The artifact demonstrates a lack of authenticity regarding its stated origin or it has been altered to such an extent that its historical significance has been lost.
 2. **Condition:** An artifact's physical integrity has degraded so that HCOC cannot effectively use the item, it is not stable enough for long-term storage, or it presents a hazard to HCOC collections, personnel, or visitors.
 3. **Cost of Care:** Due to an artifact's condition, size, or storage requirements, it will require excessive conservation costs in materials, labor, and expertise that are not within the means of the HCOC to provide in the long term.
 4. **Mission:** Due to its provenance and individual history, an artifact fails to meet the CMP guidelines and the HCOC Mission.
 5. **Redundancy:** An artifact is redundant or a duplicate and does not contribute to the HCOC Mission.
 6. **Repatriation:** An artifact determined to fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and is determined to require repatriation accordingly or it was illegally obtained.
 7. **Documentation:** An artifact is missing basic background history or accession paperwork, including a Deed of Gift. This criterion should be used along with one or more other criteria. If no accession paperwork can

be located, then ownership must be clearly determined as required by Minnesota state property statutes (see §345.70-345.74).

- ii. **Deaccession Process:** The Archivist, Curator, and Registrar will carry out the deaccession process. Other HCOC staff or volunteers may recommend items for deaccession. Items deemed an immediate threat to the permanent collection or to the health of staff, volunteers, or visitors may be preemptively disposed of before formal deaccessioning by the appropriate legal means.
 1. **Recommendation:** Before recommending an item for deaccession, the Archivist or Curator must prove it legal property of HCOC, and establish clear title to the item.
 2. **Presentation to Collection Committee:** The appropriate collection manager will present their argument before the Collection Committee. When making their recommendation, the staff should utilize all applicable criteria for deaccessioning the artifact while also pointing out reasons to keep the item in the collection. The committee will review all artifacts considered for deaccession individually using the criteria listed above.
 3. **Board of Directors:** If the Collection Committee accepts the deaccession proposal, it will be submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval.
 4. **Disposal:** Before an artifact can be disposed of, the Archivist, Curator, or Registrar must create a deaccession report that contains the item's accession information, description, the reason for deaccession, and the suggested disposal method. The deaccession report must be signed by a Collection Committee member and the President of the Board of Directors to complete the deaccession.
- iii. **Methods of Disposal:** The Archivist, Curator, or Registrar will dispose of deaccessioned permanent collection items through one of the following methods depending on the condition of the artifact.
 1. **Non-Permanent Collection:** Deaccessioned items will first be considered for the non-permanent collection if they can be utilized in the Education, Research Library, Exhibit, or Reference Collections.
 2. **Transfer:** Deaccessioned items not added to the non-permanent collection may be offered to other museums, archives, or similar non-profit organizations. This is the most desirable method of disposal.
 3. **Public Sale:** If no offers of transfer to a museum, archives, or like institution are accepted, then a deaccessioned item can be sold through a public sale. Due to Internal Revenue Service regulations, proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned items must be added to the HCOC Collections Acquisition Fund and may only be used to purchase items for the HCOC permanent collection.

4. **Destruction:** Deaccessioned items not disposed of in one of the above ways may be destroyed or recycled at the discretion of HCOC staff.
 - iv. **Request for Return of Items:** If HCOC is contacted with a request to return Permanent Collection items, such requests will be considered by the Collection Committee and the Board of Directors.
- V. **Collections Care:** The HCOC strives to care for and manage the Permanent Collection according to the practices outlined in HCOC's Registration Methods and Procedure Handbook. Collections care will also take the resources available to HCOC into consideration. The HCOC staff periodically monitors permanent collection artifacts for stability and usability while in storage and will protect artifacts on display from deterioration due to excessive light, inadequate exhibition practices, and visitor contact.
 - a. **Conservation:** The appropriate collection manager (Archivist or Curator) will be responsible for completing or arranging conservation of permanent collection artifacts. If an artifact requires conservation care provided by professional services, the collection managers will bring their recommendation for conservation to the Collection Committee for approval. Any conservation will be subject to the availability of HCOC resources. Professional services requiring transport of items will be handled in accordance with the Temporary Custody for Professional Services in Section VI-d of this policy.
 - b. **Collection Inventories:** A collection inventory is a systematic review of the permanent collection that includes verifying the locations of artifacts and inspecting them while updating their individual catalog records with any changes or additional information. During an inventory, artifacts may be evaluated for possible deaccession. Found in Collection items will be cataloged after making all attempts to discover accession provenance.
 - i. **Collection Inventory:** The permanent collection is currently undergoing a complete inventory, which began in 2011. When finished, this will be the first comprehensive inventory of the collection.
 - ii. **Period of Inventories:** After completion of the comprehensive inventory, small-scale inventories should be carried out regularly in order to maintain good collections care.
 - c. **Security and Access to the Collections:** The HCOC will take precautions to provide security for the permanent collection and prevent damage or loss while in storage, on display, or during research. In order to preserve the permanent collection for future generations, access to the storage vaults and archives is limited to staff and volunteers of HCOC. The HCOC provides access to its Permanent Collection through the research library, exhibits, programs, and loans to other like institutions. Additional access to the Permanent Collection for research purposes may be granted with permission from the HCOC collections department staff.

- VI. **Loans:** The HCOC will not accept incoming loans or authorize outgoing loans for longer than a one-year period. Loans may be considered for renewal at the end of each loan period. The HCOC adheres to all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to museum loans, and will adhere to all agreed-upon restrictions as documented in the loan contract. The HCOC may deny any loan based on the condition of the loan items, the cost of care of the loan items, or its relation to HCOC's mission. The appropriate collection manager and the Collection Committee must approve any exceptions to these policies. The Registrar will monitor all loan contracts and record them into PastPerfect Museum Software.
- a. **Incoming Loans:** The HCOC will consider borrowing items from individuals or organizations of good standing for exhibits or research purposes. Conditions of incoming loans will be stated in an Incoming Loan Agreement form. The HCOC reserves the right to return loaned items prior to the loan due date after submitting a seven day written notice to the lender. The lender must submit a thirty day written notice to HCOC to request the return of loaned items if prior to the loan due date. The appropriate collection manager will sign and approve all loan forms and terms. Loans accepted prior to January 1, 2010 will be reviewed and be either returned to the lender or converted to gifts for the permanent collection.
 - b. **Outgoing Loans:** The HCOC will consider lending items to museums or like institutions in good standing on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions may be approved for special events, but an appropriate HCOC staff member must be present or must ensure that appropriate security measures are met.
 - i. **Outgoing Loan Requirements:** The appropriate collection manager and the Registrar must approve all outgoing loans. Loan requirements will be stated in an Outgoing Loan Agreement form, and the loaned objects must be cataloged prior to the transfer of outgoing loan items. The Registrar will arrange transportation of the loan. The HCOC may require the borrower to insure any loaned items at its discretion. Any costs incurred for insurance will be the responsibility of the borrower.
 - ii. **Artifacts Borrowed by HCOC Staff:** Permanent collection items may be removed from HCOC property by staff for purposes that include presentations, displays, exhibits, or digitization service. The Registrar and the appropriate collection manager must approve items removed for these purposes.
 - c. **Temporary Custody:** Items may be loaned to HCOC on a temporary basis, up to one year, for purposes that include presentations, digitization service, or consideration for the permanent collection, that do not constitute a formal loan or transfer of ownership. Such items must be documented with a Temporary Custody form.
 - d. **Professional Services:** The HCOC may lend items on a temporary basis to authorized individuals, such as conservators and framers, for the purposes of

conservation, identification, research, or other services. Such custody must be documented on a Temporary Custody for Professional Services Form. The appropriate collection manager, the Registrar, and the executive director must approve the service. The Registrar will arrange for transportation of the items and retain a record of the service.

- e. **Co-Stewardship Contracts and Agreements:** The HCOC may enter into co-stewardship agreements with other organizations or institutions for the long-term management and stewardship of the HCOC collections. Co-stewardship contracts and agreements must adhere to the HCOC mission, clearly identify the ownership, management, care, conservation, use conditions, and presiding authority over the collection. If the collection requires excessive expenditures of effort, space, or money, adequate financial resources for processing, management, and care, should accompany the contract or agreement.

VII. **Policy Review and Revision:** This policy should be reviewed annually, to ensure continued compliance with current federal, state, and local requirements and regulations. The policy will also be reviewed to maintain relevancy and consistency with the mission of the HCOC, institutional direction, and available resources.

This policy was voted on and approved by the HCOC Board of Directors at the board meeting on

Date

President of the OCHS Board of Directors (signature)

President of the OCHS Board of Directors (printed)