

MARENGO COUNTY HISTORY AND ARCHIVES MUSEUM

ACQUISITION POLICY

It is the Museum's policy to acquire objects for the purpose of promoting its mission through gifts, bequests, transfers, purchases, and loans. The Museum Foundation and the Museum Board seek to promote and develop relationships with donors toward this goal. The Foundation is the recipient of appraised gifts of significant value as determined by the Foundation. For such gifts, the Foundation staff will correspond with donors, negotiate gift processing, and complete the Deeds of Gift form. The Museum staff may also receive gifts on behalf of the Museum or acquire items through purchase. It is, however, the responsibility of the Registrar, to ensure that the appropriate acquisition policies and procedures are followed and documented for all objects acquired by the Museum from the time the Registrar is informed of a potential or active acquisition.

Until such a time that a Museum Director is selected, the Collections/Acquisitions Committee is responsible for all acquisitions. The Museum staff works in assisting and supporting the Collections/Acquisitions Committee. The acquisition responsibilities are divided as follows:

- Has the primary responsibility for collecting acquisitions and notifies the Board of those acquisitions.
- Corresponding with donors and completing all required paperwork; and cataloging and physical processing of acquisitions to the Museum's artifact collection.
- Assigning Accession numbers to the artifact collection.

GLOSSARY

Accession is the legal process used to accept title of objects into a Museum's collection by completing a Deed of Gift or Memorandum of Understanding and recording the object through the creation of an immediate and permanent record utilizing a unique identifier.

Acquisition is the addition of objects to any of a Museum's collections either permanently (such as purchase, gift, or transfer) or temporarily (such as a loan).

Acquisition Processing refers to the steps required for a transfer transaction from the preparation of a potential acquisition for acquisition review through the transfer of ownership to the Museum and all associated paperwork or from the initiation of a loan through implementation of the loan and all associated paperwork. If the object is declined, acquisition processing is completed when the object is returned to the owner and all associated paperwork and change of location is completed.

This process includes preparing Acquisition Reports, corresponding with donors, distributing and filing Collections/Acquisitions Committee Recommendations, recording the Collections/Acquisitions Committee recommendations in the appropriate database records, implementing Deeds of Gift, and initiating gift transmittal forms. It does not include physical processing or cataloguing; see definition below.

The terms **Physical Processing** and **Cataloging** refer to steps used to assign an accession number and document an object. This generally takes place when an object comes into the possession of the Museum and is assigned an incoming number for tracking purposes and when accessioning objects into a given collection as determined by the Collections/Acquisitions Committee and after the signing of the Deed of Gift.

This process includes assigning either incoming numbers or accession numbers, registering objects in the appropriate ledgers, physically labeling objects, creating or editing database records for each object in the appropriate database, photographing, measuring and weighing, writing visual descriptions and transferring any known information about the origins, source, acquisition, date, or other curatorial information about objects into the objects' database records. The process also includes recording the location of objects.

TYPES OF ACQUISITIONS

Gift is a voluntary transfer of property free of encumbrances that occurs while the donor is alive. The Foundation is the legal recipient of all appraised gifts of significant value as determined by the Foundation. A Deed of Gift documents the transfer of title.

Bequest is a gift of personal property donated by the deceased under the terms of a will.

Deferred Gift is a gift of personal property in which the transfer of title is postponed to a date later than the physical transfer of property. Property accepted into the Museum's collections as deferred gifts shall be considered a loan that becomes a gift in the year the title is transferred.

Deferred gifts may be formalized with a written agreement documenting the donor's intention to transfer the property to the Museum at a future date. The deferred gift may be made informally with the donor's intentions indicated only through correspondence between Museum staff and the donor.

Deferred gifts with documentation of the donor's intention to gift the objects are assigned an accession number in the year the objects are physically transferred to the Museum, but the objects retain the loan status. When title is transferred the status is changed to gift, and the object retains the same accession number. If there is a possibility that the gift will not be completed, the object is not assigned an accession number and maintains its incoming number only.

Loan in, or Incoming Loan, is the temporary physical transfer of property from a lender to the Museum according to the terms specified in a legally binding loan agreement. It does not involve transfer of ownership.

Loan Out, or Outgoing Loan, is the temporary physical transfer of property from the Museum's collections to a borrower according to the terms specified in a legally binding loan agreement. It does not involve transfer of ownership.

Purchase, is the transfer of property in exchange for monetary compensation.

Transfer, is the transfer of property from one institution to another institution. A Memorandum of Understanding or Record of Transfer Receipt is used to document the transfer of title. The term "transfer" is also used informally to refer to the movement of objects between collections in the Museum; such a move should be processed as a deaccession from one collection and an acquisition into the other collection.

Criteria for Acquisitions

All objects acquired into the Museum's collection are subject to the following criteria:

1. Objects must be of value in promoting and supporting the objectives and purposes of the Marengo County History and Archives Museum as set forth in the Museum's mission statement;
2. Objects must be consistent with the Museum's Collecting Policy or be compelling, clearly articulated, and documented exception;

3. Objects must be authentic, or if an object is a reproduction, mass-produced object, or fake, it must have value for the Museum's purposes as such;
4. The cost and expenditure of staff time and other resources in acquiring, researching, transporting, processing, and storing the objects must fit within the Museum's available resources;
5. Condition of the objects must be such that the Marengo County History and Archives Museum can adequately care for and preserve them, in keeping with current professional standards, to the best of its ability and within the standards appropriate to the type of collection;
6. Objects must be of an appropriate size and physical state for which the Marengo County History and Archives Museum can provide adequate storage space and security;
7. Objects must be deemed to pose no health risk or other hazard for staff, visitors, the Museum building and grounds, or Museum collections that is beyond the ability of staff and facilities to contain;
8. Objects must be the legal property of the donor, seller, or lender and he/she/it must have legal authority to transfer ownership, sell or lend the objects.
9. Objects must have documentation of origin, provenance, previous ownership, and circumstances of acquisition by owner or adequate accounting of such as determined by the Collections/Acquisitions Committee. The objects will be accompanied by as much information as possible regarding the history and cultural context;
10. Objects consisting of human remains and sacred materials will not be acquired if it is known by Collections/Acquisitions Committee at the time of acquisition that their presence and use in Museum collections, programs, and/or exhibits is considered to be offensive or inappropriate by the relevant cultural group, whether or not they are governed by public law;
11. Objects subject to copyright must be accompanied by documentation of the transfer of named copyrights or by documentation identifying copyright status as long as such status is acceptable for the Museum's purpose in acquisition;
12. Objects must be free of any restrictions or conditions, and exceptions to this criterion will be made only in extraordinary circumstances and in consultation with legal counsel.

PRESERVATION OF DISPLAYED COLLECTIONS POLICY

It is the policy of the Museum to promote and preserve the physical integrity of exhibited objects as appropriate given and type, purpose, and priorities of each Museum collection: Artifact, Library, Props and Furnishings.

The Collections/Acquisitions Committee is responsible for the exhibition of all Museum collections and all collections-type objects. The Committee advises the staff involved in exhibiting Museum collections about developing, planning, and implementing appropriate practices.

The **Artifact Collection** is the Museum's core collection and consists of objects of historic value as documents of the history and cultural heritage of Marengo County, Alabama. The objects in this collection are considered valuable and irreplaceable. Preservation is of the utmost priority in any decision regarding stewardship. Objects in the Artifact Collection are primarily acquired through the generosity of donors. Purchases are limited to available funding.

The **Documentary Multimedia Collection** consists of catalogued images and media containing images. The subjects of the images include:

1. Objects in the Museum's collections
2. Museum activities, exhibits, people, staff and visitors
3. Collectors and donors of the objects in the Museum's collection
4. Acquisition of objects in the Museum's collection
5. Research on objects and collections
6. Other subjects of cultural, historical or technological significance directly relating to the Museum's collections
7. Techniques and processes relevant to the Museum's collection

The contents of the Documentary Multimedia Collection exist in various formats including but not limited to: color prints, black and white prints, glass plate negatives, slides, transparencies, digital images, CDs DVDs, audio tapes, film and video tapes. The objects are considered valuable and irreplaceable records of the history and cultural heritage of the people of Marengo County, Alabama and the Museum Collections. Preservation of the images or recordings is considered to be the utmost priority when making any decision regarding stewardship. Copying through scanning, duplicating of digital files and photocopying is emphasized to allow the Collection to be used extensively with minimal impact to the originals. The Documentary

Multimedia Collection is always expanding with the incorporation of new images taken in-house or those acquired as gifts.

The **Teaching Collection** consists of cultural objects, relevant natural history specimens, books, audio and data CDs, DVDs, audio and video tapes, posters, and other media of educational value in teaching about the county's cultures and cultural heritage. Each object in the collection is assigned to a category, depending upon intended and/or assigned use. These categories define preservation levels and therefore the type and amount of handling permitted. Objects are used for in-house and outreach programs and events.

The **Library Collection** consists of books and printed materials used as reference and research material by the Museum's staff, volunteers, curators and other Museum associates involved in includes books, journals, manuscripts, catalogues, and other printed materials. They cover topics relating to the objects in the Museum Collections; to the preservation and conservation of artifacts; to the registration of collections; to legal issues affecting museums; to exhibition production and design, to museum interpretation and education; to the administration of museums; and to the museum references to the Museum's history, collections, events, staff, or volunteers.

The **Props and Furnishings Collection** consists of objects including paintings, prints, textiles, decorative arts, and other objects used in the Museum is temporary, depending on their intended use. Given the type of objects and their potential artistic, cultural or historic characteristics and/or monetary value, identification as part of the Props and Furnishings Collection clarifies each object's status and avoids confusion as to whether the object is part of one of the Museum's permanent collections.