

Southwest Seattle Historical Society  
C/o Log House Museum  
3003 - 61<sup>st</sup> Avenue Southwest  
Seattle, WA 98116

**Adopted by the Board of Trustees, February 2003**  
**COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND MISSION STATEMENT**

The Southwest Seattle Historical Society (SWSHS) is a nonprofit corporation, formed pursuant to the provisions of the State of Washington Nonprofit Corporation Act (RCW 24.03) on March 27, 1985. This corporation is organized exclusively for educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, the objectives being the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge of the history of the Southwest Seattle Peninsula (hereafter defined as the Duwamish Peninsula), as well as the State of Washington, and other related activities not prohibited by law and within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

The affairs of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society shall be governed by an Executive Board consisting of its elected officers and nine (9) Trustees or such other number as may be established by the membership.

**1. Role of the Collections Committee**

The Collections Committee shall be composed of a minimum of five members: the Museum Director (hereafter referred to as the Director), who shall serve as Collections Committee Chair, the Collections Manager, one member of the Executive Board of the SWSHS, and two or more additional members. The President of the SWSHS Executive Board appoints members. The Collections Committee shall meet quarterly, keep minutes of its proceedings, and present a report at each board meeting.

The Collections Committee works under the guidance of the Director and Collections Manager. They shall examine, identify and evaluate all materials that may be offered to the Society, to determine the historical relevance of the material and financial feasibility of accessioning and storing such material. The Collections Committee will strive to meet current professional museum standards for collection care.

**2. Mission Statement**

The mission of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society is to advocate the collection, protection and preservation of historic artifacts and sites, and to sponsor programs and events that enhance our community's heritage.

### 3. Scope of Collections Statement

Definition: Defines the purpose of the collection, and sets agreed upon limits such as subject, geographical location, and time period to which each object or archive must relate. The statement also may consider the uses of a collection and state the types of objects that will be acquired to fulfill the purposes of that collection.

The collection objectives of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society are:

- To acquire cultural materials from the Duwamish Peninsula for the purposes of public education, research and exhibits.
- To acquire and preserve archival materials from the Duwamish Peninsula such as photographs, manuscripts, personal papers, business and organization documents, and oral histories.
- To acquire published materials pertaining to the Duwamish Peninsula as an aid to interpreting the history of the area. The Duwamish Peninsula is defined with the following borders: the Burien city limits to the south (SW 116<sup>th</sup> Street, SW 128<sup>th</sup> Street), Elliott Bay to the north, Puget Sound on the west, and the Duwamish River to the east.
- To acquire materials dating from the arrival of the first non-indigenous settlers to the Duwamish Peninsula to the present.

The SWSHS has two types of collections: the primary collections and the secondary collections.

The primary research collections consist of rare and unique artifacts, archival and manuscript materials, and original photographic materials significant to the history of the Duwamish Peninsula. The museum acquires this diverse collection of objects as primary documentation of regional material culture and social history.

The secondary research collections consist of two types of materials: the published, printed and visual materials and the commonly found, easily replaceable artifacts and reproductions used for education and interpretation.

The secondary collections are selected to encourage better understanding of historical concepts and ideas by offering an opportunity for hands-on interaction with objects from the past. This interaction takes place as part of programs offered by the museum.

The primary collections are accessioned and catalogued.\* The secondary collections are inventoried and may be catalogued. As a result of continued assessment of the historical significance of the collections, objects from the primary collections may be deaccessioned to the secondary collections.

\*Accessioning: The creation of an immediate, brief and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collections from the same source at the same time, and for which the museum has custody, right, or title.

\*Cataloguing: The creation of a full record, in complete descriptive detail, of all information about an object, assembly, or lot, cross-referenced to other records and files, and sometimes containing a photograph, sketch, film sound recording, or other electronic data.

## ACQUISITION POLICY

### 1. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, acquisition is defined as the discovery and preliminary evaluation, negotiation for, taking custody of, documenting title to, and acknowledging receipt of materials and objects, or negotiating for and recording information about borrowed objects.

### 2. Acquisition Criteria

Southwest Seattle Historical Society cultural materials must meet all of the following tests of acquisition before being acquired by the SWSHS by any means.

- a) The present owner must have a clear title of ownership.
- b) The acquisition must conform to the SWSHS objectives as stated in the Mission Statement and Scope of Collection.
- c) The SWSHS must be in a position to care properly for the proposed acquisition.
- d) The significance of the material or objects must be determined.
- e) The materials or objects must, if possible, be documented as to provenance.\*
- f) All moral, legal, and ethical implications of the acquisition must have been considered.
- g) If possible, full literary rights, property rights, copyright, patents or trademarks will accompany acquisitions. Exceptions must be specified and must be approved by the Director.
- h) Acquisition must, in general, be free from donor-imposed restrictions. Exceptions must be specified and must be approved by the Director. The SWSHS will not agree to conditions requiring permanent retention or exhibition, or that are closed to public access in perpetuity.
- i) Prior to acquisition, it must be determined whether acquisitions are offered for accessioning into primary collections, for use in the secondary collection, or for some other legitimate institutional use, such as fund raising purposes of the SWSHS.
- j) If the acquisition is to be purchased by SWSHS, the staff must arrange full funding before purchase.
- k) A fair market value must be determined between the parties for all acquisitions other than unencumbered donations.

\* Place or source of origin

### 3. Means of Acquisition

Materials and objects may be acquired by purchase, commission, bequest, gift, specified purpose or loan or deposit, exchange, field collection, excavation, levy by creditors, abandonment, reversionary clause, and adverse possession.

The Southwest Seattle Historical Society subscribes to the provisions of the UNESCO Convention of 1970 on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Nothing shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired which is known to have been illegally imported into, or illegally collected in, the United States contrary to state law; and federal law, regulation, treaty, and convention.

The SWSHS shall refuse to acquire materials and objects where there is cause to believe that the circumstances of their collection involve destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures, habitats, districts, and objects. The SWSHS will not collect objects known or suspected to have been removed from private lands without permission, from public lands without permit, from a gravesite, or otherwise obtained illegally or unethically. In accordance with its policy on the repatriation, acquisition, care and exhibition of Native American collections, the SWSHS will not accept human remains, burial goods, or objects known to be sacred to American Indian or Hawaiian tribes.

All right, title, and interest shall be obtained by the SWSHS for all potential acquisitions, without restrictions or limiting conditions if possible, or shall have the potential of being converted to free and clear title under appropriate law.

The Southwest Seattle Historical Society subscribes to the provisions of the American Library Association's Freedom to Read statement: It is in the public interest that the Society makes available a diversity of views and expressions whether or not the staff or board endorses the ideas presented.

Although restrictions imposed on access or use of collections by a donor are discouraged, the museum and its staff will observe faithfully all agreements made at the time of transfer or acquisition.

#### **4. Acquisition Procedure**

Authority to acquire materials for the SWSHS's primary and secondary collections is delegated to the Director when the value is less than \$200.00 and if the annual budget for acquisitions is greater than \$200.00. Acquisitions shall be made within the confines of the annual budget approved by the SWSHS Board of Trustees.

The acquisition of materials having an estimated market value of \$200.00 or more shall be approved formally or informally by the SWSHS Board of Trustees prior to acceptance or purchase.

No SWSHS Board Member, volunteer or staff member may obligate the SWSHS to the acceptance of any material or object not consonant with the intent or spirit of the acquisitions policy without approval of the Collections Committee. No Collections Committee, board

member, volunteer or staff member shall offer appraisals of the monetary value of materials or objects to donors, or reveal the Society's insurance coverage value, for the purpose of establishing a fair market value of gifts offered to the Society. Donors desiring to take an income tax deduction must obtain an independent appraisal at their own expense. Collections Committee or Museum staff members may assist a donor in locating a qualified appraiser from a list of appraisers maintained by the Society. Collections Committee or Museum staff members will not appraise or otherwise place a monetary value on objects casually brought to the SWSHS.

As a public service, Collections Committee or Museum staff members may attempt to attribute, identify, or authenticate items brought to the Society by the public as time allows. All objects or materials deposited with the Society for these purposes shall have identification of ownership. Insurance coverage shall be the responsibility and expense of the owner. Such objects are not to be deposited on Society premises longer than thirty days. It remains the owner's responsibility to notify the SWSHS in writing of any change of ownership, and to monitor their property. Items not claimed within ninety days of deposit are considered abandoned property and as such are subject to state law pertaining to same. Abandoned property of negligible value may be disposed of by the Collections Committee. Property of greater than a negligible value may be disposed of under law by decision of the Board of Trustees.

All materials and objects acquired for accessioning to the collections shall be processed under procedures and policies adopted by the SWSHS Board of Trustees.

After the criteria for accessioning has been met and an object is accepted, the object will be assigned an accession number and an additional information worksheet will be generated. The donor must sign a Deed of Gift, a bill of sale must be obtained in the case of a purchase, or other transfer documentation must be procured. The Collection Manager will process all acquisition paperwork. The SWSHS shall maintain permanent acquisition (transfer documentation) files which shall contain all legal instruments and conveyances pertaining to each acquisition or source.

## **DEACCESSION POLICY**

### **1. Definition**

Deaccession is the process of removing permanently from the collection accessioned materials. One element of the Society's mandate as a public trust is to re-evaluate the relevance of its collections to its mission on a regular basis. The deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, and scrupulous.

### **2. Deaccession Criteria**

Cultural materials to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a) The material or object is outside the scope of the Mission Statement and Scope of Collection of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society and its acquisition policy.
- b) The material or object is irrelevant to the purposes of the SWSHS.
- c) The material or object lacks physical integrity.
- d) The material or object has failed to retain its identity or authenticity, or has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than two years.
- e) The material or object is redundant to the collections, and the cost of its preservation jeopardizes the SWSHS's ability to care for better examples in the collection.
- f) The SWSHS is unable to care for it properly.
- g) The object's accessioning is determined to have been a human error. Such errors include but are not limited to, the accessioning of objects lent to the museum and the accessioning of secondary material.
- h) The material or object is deteriorated beyond conserving.
- i) The material has accidentally been accessioned twice.

### **3. Application of Criteria**

The Collections Committee is authorized to apply the above deaccession criteria jointly or singly.

### **4. Restrictions**

Before any material or object is recommended for deaccessioning, or is deaccessioned, reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that the Society is legally free to do so. Where restrictions to the disposition of the material or object are found, the following procedure shall be utilized:

- a) Mandatory conditions of acquisition will be strictly observed unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- b) In an event of a question concerning intent or force of restrictions, the staff shall seek the advice of legal counsel.
- c) If the Southwest Seattle Historical Society lacks clear title, it will follow procedures defined by Title 63.26 revised Code of Washington, the State's Abandoned Property Law.

### **5. Procedure**

The Collections Committee may recommend deaccessioning material if, in its best judgment, one or more criteria for deaccession have been met. The Collections Committee will make the recommendation in writing to the Director as chair of the Collections Committee. Such recommendations will specify the source and/or provenance of the material or object, the reasons for deaccessioning, the estimated market value if known, and the recommended means of disposal. These may include exchange, sale (negotiated, private, public auction, sealed bid, or open bid), transfer (to the secondary collection, to another museum or library, or repatriation); or destruction.

Any single accession having an estimated market value of less than \$300.00 may be deaccessioned with the approval of the Collections Committee, which shall submit a complete report of all such deaccessions to the SWSHS Board of Trustees.

Any single deaccession having an estimated value of \$300.00 or more recommended by the Collections Committee shall be deaccessioned only with the approval of the SWSHS Board of Trustees.

## **6. Ethics of Sale**

Materials and objects shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred, publicly or privately, to Society employees, officers, trustees, or their immediate families or representatives. No deaccessioned material will be sold through the Log House Museum Gift Shop.

## **7. Proceeds**

All proceeds resulting from the deaccession of objects from the permanent collections of the Society shall be recorded in the Restricted Fund for Acquisitions. Use of deaccession revenue is restricted to the acquisition or conservation\* of primary collection materials owned by the SWSHS. Deaccession revenue is not to be used as general operating support. Authority to approve expenditure of deaccession revenue rests with the Executive Board of Trustees.

\*Conservation: Examination (action take to determine the nature or properties of materials and the causes of their deterioration and alteration), restoration (action taken to correct deterioration and alteration), and preservation (action taken to prevent, stop or retard deterioration).

## **8. Public Disclosure**

All materials or objects subject to precatory\* restrictions shall not be deaccessioned until the Collections Committee has made an effort to:

- a) Comply with the restrictions.
- b) Notify the donor, if alive, or his heirs or assigns, if the material or object were accessioned within 10 years.

\*Precatory language: Places a moral rather than a legal obligation on the museum. For example: "It is my hope but not my command that..." Court approval is not needed to deviate from precatory language.

## **LOANS**

Definition: A loan involves the delivery of personal property by one person or organization to another in trust for a specific purpose, with a contract, expressed or implied, that the trust shall be faithfully executed and the property returned or duly accounted for when the specific purpose

is accomplished or kept until the lender claims it. A loan involves the transfer of responsibility for an object from the lender to the borrower, but not the transfer of ownership.

In general, requests to borrow artifacts from the primary or secondary collections of the SWSHS for exhibition, research, and study purposes will be considered when received from established non-profit institutions with verifiable experience in the proper care, handling and exhibition of museum artifacts and archival materials and if the public purpose of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society is furthered thereby. No loans from the primary collection will be made to individuals. Each institutional request and each artifact requested will be considered individually with regard to the following factors:

- a) The loan shall not conflict with projected use by the SWSHS.
- b) The artifacts must be in sound condition, having structural stability and being suitable for transport.
- c) The duration of the loan shall be no more than one year, but may be reviewed for extension at the end of that period.
- d) The nature of the proposed exhibition or research shall also be considered.
- e) The SWSHS must have clear title of ownership to an object. That object must not be encumbered by any restrictions inhibiting such a loan.
- f) The SWSHS will accept incoming loans for exhibition, research, or consideration for permanent acquisition only. No loan will be accepted except for a specific purpose.
- g) The borrowing institution will be responsible for all costs incurred, including, but not limited to, packaging materials, shipping, and insurance.
- h) Loan to and from the SWSHS will be the responsibility of and will be supervised by the Collections Manager, who will maintain all documentation and will oversee and monitor the loan.

The Director will be responsible for and will supervise all loans of artifacts to and from the SWSHS collections. If the lender cannot be located or refuses to accept the return of lent material, the loan will be deemed abandoned property, subject to the procedures of Title 63 of the Revised Code of Washington relating to unclaimed property in museums and historical societies.

#### 1. **Traveling Exhibitions**

From time to time, the SWSHS may decide to organize and tour exhibitions containing collection materials. The considerations that determine whether an exhibition should travel are the same as those described above for individual artifacts from the SWSHS collections: the borrower be an established non-profit institution, able to meet the collection requirements of safe shipping, storage, and exhibition, including but not limited to, proper environmental conditions and security.

## **CARE OF COLLECTIONS**

The American Association of Museums defines a museum as: an organized and permanent non-profit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on a regular schedule.

Collecting represents a long-term allocation of a museum's resources. Every time a museum accepts cultural materials, whether on loan or in the permanent collection, it makes a commitment of time, space, and money to manage that material effectively. Collecting goals should be realistic and should be made in consideration of their impact on the museum's ability to fulfill the rest of its mission.

### **1. Documentation**

SWSHS collections are held in trust for the public. The Washington State Attorney General represents the public in enforcing the trust by mandating that we keep complete and contemporaneous records of all collection objects and materials and that we maintain the collection in proper condition.

The appropriate staff members are responsible for achieving and maintaining intellectual and physical control of the artifacts in the primary collection. SWSHS is responsible for maintaining accession and deaccession records on all owned primary collections materials, and appropriate documentation of all loans, in a timely manner following acquisition. The appropriate staff member is responsible for documenting the collection material in their care and retaining the documents in an orderly and retrievable manner.

## **ETHICS**

All SWSHS and Log House Museum staff and Trustees are expected to follow the professional standards of ethical behavior regarding the care of the museum's collections, as established by the American Association of Museums, the American Association for State and Local History, and the International Council of Museums.

Staff members of the SWSHS Collections arrange transfers of artifacts and materials of historical significance in accordance with SWSHS purposes, policies, and resources. The SWSHS will cooperate to ensure the preservation of the material culture in repositories where they will be adequately processed and effectively used.

Museum professionals share knowledge and experience with other museum professionals through professional associations and cooperative activities and assist the professional growth of others with less training or experience. Staff members are obligated by professional ethics to keep informed of the standards of good practice and to follow the highest level possible in the

administration of the museum and its collections. Staff members have a professional responsibility to recognize the need for cooperative efforts and to support the development and dissemination of professional standards and practices.

*This policy is ordered printed by the SWSHS Board of Trustees and a reference to it shall be imprinted on all form deeds of gift of the Society. A copy shall be made available to any donor or prospective donor upon request.*

*Further, a list of all materials from the primary collections, which have been deaccessioned from the permanent collections within the past five years, shall be kept current and may be distributed in response to any responsible inquiry.*