

BRANT MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy defines how collecting enables the Brant Museum and Archives to fulfill its Statement of Purpose to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret collections that may be of interest to the residents of our community, as well as illustrating the founding, settlement, diversity and development of the County of Brant and the surrounding area. This policy serves as a checklist when artifacts are being considered, and helps the museum maintain high collection standards.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Budget

The Brant Historical Society provides sufficient allocation of funds in its operating and capital budgets to finance the acquisition of artifacts. The annual budget includes an amount to be used for collecting.

What will be collected

The museum will acquire only artifacts that can be properly researched, documented, exhibited and maintained. Artifacts must be in reasonable condition so that they may be preserved in their original condition as much as possible. Exceptions to these points are made for rare artifacts.

The museum will collect:

- Objects that are historically significant to the County of Brant and immediate area.
- Objects that are associated with important events, periods, episodes and personalities in the County of Brant and immediate area.
- Objects that were made, used or bought in the County of Brant and immediate area.
- Objects that are useful in the museum's display, research and interpretive activities.

The museum will not collect:

- Curiosities and relics that do not contribute to a significant historical awareness for the County of Brant and immediate area.
- Duplicates unless they serve a useful purpose, such as extension program displays, travelling educational kits, etc. Any duplicate must have a specific function within the museum's program. Any duplicate which does not have a specific function should not be collected.

Any deviation from the above stipulations are subject to the discretion of the Museum & Archives Management Committee and/or the Director/Curator.

Ethics of Acquisition

The museum adheres to regulations that govern the use of various artifacts:

- The Copyright Act (1970, C.30; 1988, C.30)
- The Ontario Heritage Act (1974) and any subsequent revisions
- The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O., 1990

The museum will not acquire artifacts:

- That have questionable history of ownership

- That have been acquired illegally, or by unscrupulous salvaging of historical sites

Mode of Acquisition

The staff at the Brant Museum & Archives employ active, systematic and thorough methods of searching and also acquire suitable artifacts that are discovered by chance.

The following steps will be followed to determine if the Brant Historical Society will acquire an artifact:

- The artifact is brought to the attention of the Director/Curator
- The artifact is considered by the Acquisitions Committee. The Acquisitions Committee consists of the Director/Curator and several Museum & Archives Management Committee members. The committee will decide whether or not the artifact is to be accepted.

Artifacts are acquired by means of purchase, donation, bequest, exchange or loan. For all acquisitions, the transfer of ownership must be accompanied by a legal document.

Purchases are made in the name of the Brant Historical Society and the Society receives a bill of sale as well as the name, address and telephone number of the vendor. The Director/Curator and the Museum & Archives Management Committee must be consulted before purchases are made.

The Director/Curator or Assistant Curator fills out a gift form for a donated artifact and ensures that it is signed by the donor. A tax receipt is issued to the donor provided the donor has obtained a bona fide appraisal. If the donor does not wish to obtain an appraisal, the Brant Historical Society or Museum & Archives Management Committee or Director/Curator may arrange for an appraisal at its expense. Donations are deemed to be unconditional gifts and the museum has full discretionary power over the use of the artifact. This regulation must be agreeable to both parties (BHS and donor) or the donation agreement is null and void. Exceptions to this policy are subject to the discretion of the Museum & Archives Management Committee and the Director/Curator.

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Documentation of Artifacts

All objects collected will be well documented, such documentation should include:

- Circumstances surrounding the object's discovery and acquisition (i.e. where, when and by whom).
- The original owner and manufacturer.
- The object's original use.
- A chronological history of the object.
- Any other pertinent facts.

Such documentation must be capable of verification.

The museum may collect artifacts that have incomplete documentation as long as they contribute to a clearer understanding of significant former customs, activities, people or episodes in the County of Brant and immediate area.

There are three basic steps to recording information about new acquisitions: temporary receipt of the artifact, registration and cataloguing. The information is computerized as much as possible in order to facilitate management procedures and public access to information.

Temporary receipt

- This step applies to donations only. It is needed to give the museum time to decide if donations are suitable for the collection.
- A museum staff member fills out a temporary receipt for a donated artifact and makes a copy each for the donor and the museum records. The donor must be made aware of the conditions (i.e.

disposal of objects left at the museum) that are on the temporary receipt. The donor must sign the temporary receipt acknowledging these conditions.

- The next available number in the accession register is assigned to the deposit. Access to the accession register is restricted to the Director/Curator, the Assistant Curator and individuals authorized by resolution of the Museum & Archives Management Committee.
- A temporary tag is prepared for the artifact.
- If the artifact is not accepted into the collection, the artifact is returned to the donor or disposed of according to the terms of the temporary receipt, the temporary receipt is filed and a letter of thanks is sent to the donor. If a depositor is contacted to pick up an artifact, the date must be noted on the temporary receipt. When it is returned, both parties must sign and date the receipt. If an artifact is disposed of after 30 days, the method of disposal must be recorded, and the receipt signed and dated. The return or disposition of an artifact must be noted in the accession register.
- If the artifact is accepted, the museum sends two copies of the gift agreement form to the donor with a request to return a signed copy to the museum.

Registration

- The artifact's transfer of ownership is processed. The gift form is signed and , in the case of a purchase, the bill of sale is filed in the Accession File.
- The artifact is recorded in the Accession Register.
- A three-part number is assigned to the artifact. The first part represents the year of acquisition, the second part represents the accession's order of entry, and the third represents the artifact's order in respect to its accession (i.e. 2000.16.4). Once recorded, the accession number is physically marked on the artifact in a conservationally approved method.
- No artifact shall be loaned or exhibited before accession numbers are affixed and registration procedures are completed.

Cataloguing

- A series of files are developed for each artifact in the collection. These files minimize the number of times an artifact must be handled.
- A master catalogue sheet and condition report are prepared.
- The master catalogue sheet, donor/source card, location card, subject card, and classification card are prepared and filed in the appropriate locations.
- Files are maintained and updated to the best of the staff's resources.
- A back up copy of all signed gift forms and master catalogue records shall be made and kept securely at a second location.

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning is the process of removing an artifact from the collection. Occasional deaccessioning helps maintain the quality and relevance of the collection.

Artifacts are deaccessioned upon the request of the Director/Curator and the approval of the Museum & Archives Management Committee.

An artifact is deaccessioned when:

- It no longer fits in with exhibition themes.
- It does not fit the mandated time period of the museum.
- Sufficient information or provenance cannot be obtained for it.
- It is in poor condition.
- A mutual agreement of the treatment or handling of the donation cannot be met with the donor.
- A superior duplicate artifact is acquired.

Deaccessioning Procedure

- A reasonable effort must be made to contact the donor as a gesture of courtesy.
- All museum markings are removed from the artifact.
- The deaccession is noted in the artifact's record, along with the deaccession date (i.e. when the committee approved the deaccession and where the artifact has gone).
- All records of the deaccessioned material shall be retained, as well as all correspondence and a copy of the advertisement and a record of the receipts if sold at public auction.
- Revenue from the sale of deaccessioned artifacts must be directed to the Reserve Fund for Acquisitions.
- When a new artifact is purchased with funds obtained through the public auction of a donated artifact, the name of the original donor must be noted in the collection records for the new acquisition under the method of acquisition.

Where the Deaccessioned Artifact Goes:

When a deaccession involves transfer of ownership, appropriate forms are completed. Due to conflict of interest, museum committee and staff members may not purchase an artifact which is to be deaccessioned.

A deaccessioned artifact might be:

- Returned to the donor or the donor's family if the donor is deceased. If a tax receipt was issued the artifact cannot be returned to the donor.
- Offered to another museum or educational or cultural institution.
- Sold by public auction or tender. Items for disposal will not be sold on the site of the museum. On no occasion will staff members at the museum or members of the Board of Directors be permitted to purchase any such items.
- Destroyed, if badly damaged or deteriorated. A Conservator may be consulted to determine whether the artifact should be destroyed, and if so, how to do it safely and ethically. This is at the discretion of the Director/Curator and the Museum & Archives Management Committee. The object will be photographed prior to destruction.

When an artifact is deaccessioned due to theft or destruction, this shall be recorded on all collection records along with the date the loss was discovered.

The museum will deaccession collections for the purpose of repatriation, when it can be shown that other bodies or governments have a right to the material. The museum will proceed with repatriation only when it has assurances that the collections will be preserved in accordance with the highest standards of the museum profession.

LOANS

Objects may be borrowed for temporary exhibition with specified time lengths according to the loan conditions established by the Museum & Archives Management Committee and the Director/Curator and detailed on the reverse of the loan form used for such purposes.

A loan form shall be completed for all loans. The Director/Curator and Assistant Curator are authorized by the Museum & Archives Management Committee to sign these forms. Two copies shall be made of the loan agreement, one for the borrower or lender and one for the Museum.

Condition reports shall be updated before and after an artifact is loaned. The artifacts shall be inspected upon its return to the museum before the Director/Curator or Assistant Curator signs and dates the loan agreement.

The museum may loan objects for temporary displays or educational purposes off-site. Such off-site locations must offer reasonable security and environmental conditions.

Objects borrowed or loaned on a long-term basis must be reviewed and renewed annually, if such renewal is desirable. A condition report must be completed as a condition of the renewal.

A lender must specify how he or she wishes an artifact borrowed for an exhibit is to be credited, otherwise it shall be listed as belonging to an anonymous donor.

INSURANCE

The permanent collection of the Brant Museum & Archives is insured against loss by fire, theft and damage. Every year, the Director/Curator provides updates of the insurance records to the Treasurer. New acquisitions are appraised for insurance purposes.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Brant Museum & Archives' Collection Management Policy is recommended by the Museum & Archives Management Committee to the Board of Directors for approval. The Collection Management Policy is reviewed and amended as required.

Approved by the Museum & Archives Management Committee

Chair _____
Calvin Diegel

Date January 25, 2001

Approved by the Brant Historical Society Board of Directors

President _____
John Wyatt

Date September 11, 2001