

Collection Management Policy of The Ridge Historical Society

MISSION AND COLLECTION PURPOSE

The Ridge Historical Society (RHS) is a trustee of its collections for the benefit of the public. As such, RHS's mission is to preserve and interpret the distinct history of the Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood, and Washington Heights communities of Chicago. The collection will provide related educational services for the purpose of increasing and enriching public knowledge; and which RHS can care for under the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and American Alliance of Museums (AAM) best practices and standards.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY

Collections Committee

The collections committee is a permanent committee of RHS and its primary responsibility is to administer the collections management policy.

Curator

The curator shall be an ex-officio member of the board with responsibility for ensuring the prudent management of the Collection; shall oversee activities necessary for organizing, arranging, cataloging, preserving, exhibiting, displaying and deaccessioning items within the Collection; shall be responsible for identifying, evaluating and describing donations and acquisitions for appropriateness to the Collection; shall be watchful for opportunities to acquire additional items for the Collection; and shall guide the Board of Directors in all decisions relating to the Collection.

Trained collections volunteer

These volunteers are RHS members or non-members who are trained to work within RHS's collections without compensation. Before accessing and working in collections, these volunteers are trained in handling historic items and the scope and arrangement of collections. These volunteers will also be taught the policies and procedures of RHS in terms of collections. A

trained collections volunteer assists in research requests, processing/arrangement and description, preservation measures, deaccessioning and assisting visiting researchers. Training will be provided by the collections committee chair.

Intern or practicum student

These are students trained to work with RHS's collections who receive similar training to the above-mentioned trained collections volunteer. Interns and practicum students are compensated with credit hours or assignment fulfillment for their academic program. They assist in the operation of the collections through acquisition, processing/arrangement, preservation measures, deaccessioning, and by carrying out research requests. Interns or practicum students will also be taught the policies and procedures of RHS in terms of collections. Training will be provided by the collections committee chair.

RHS BOARD MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO COLLECTIONS

RHS board members and volunteer conduct with respect to the collections shall conform to the most current edition of Museum Ethics, published by the American Alliance of Museums, or any other code of employee ethics published by that organization. **At all times, board members and volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities to preserve and protect the collection.**

Members of the public need to be accompanied by a trained collections volunteer and are not allowed access to collection areas unaccompanied.

SCOPE OF COLLECTION

A. RHS will collect, preserve, study, interpret, exhibit, and publish materials:

1. Made and/or used within the Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood, and Washington Heights communities of Chicago, Illinois
2. That are associated with a person, place, or event in these communities
3. That are typical or representative of objects made or used in these communities; and that are historical, cultural, or aesthetic in nature.

B. Topics with Particular Interest

1. The exploration and original settlement from the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries of the area now encompassed by the county; the Native Americans of this area during this period and their culture; the geographical and geological background, lifestyle, and livelihood of the settlers; and the formation and establishment of its communities.
2. Business and industry in the nineteenth century to the present day; the development of the railroads; the geographic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds and lifestyles of the inhabitants and their educational and cultural institutions.
3. The transition of the community from an agrarian area to a residential area of Chicago beginning in the late nineteenth century; the changes in transportation which contributed to this transition; the effect of this transition upon the businesses and industries, educational and cultural institutions, and lifestyles of the former communities; and the character of the new communities.
4. The changes in the physical environment, economy, and lifestyle of the Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood and Washington Heights communities as a result of their continued growth as a residential area.
5. Material from underrepresented populations in the Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood and Washington Heights communities.

C. Collection Levels

1. Primary Collections

The primary collections shall be for preservation, scholarly research, interpretation, exhibition and publication. They will consist of materials having significant historical associations with Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood and Washington Heights communities of Chicago, Illinois.

2. Education Collections

The education collections shall be a group of objects or items designated for use in educational programming. The items and objects are designated for use in public programming or teaching and may be original objects or replicas.

3. Library Collection

Books in the library collection are for reference use only. This collection is non-circulating and is not available for checkout or interlibrary loan.

4. Institutional files

Documents and materials pertaining to RHS organizational history and development.

ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

1. Access to the collections is restricted to trained collections volunteers.
2. Research conducted by the public may only take place on the first floor in public spaces; research is not to be conducted on the upper floors of the home.
3. Research can be conducted by making an appointment and from a trained collections volunteers.
4. Research completed at RHS will be documented.

ACQUISITIONS AND ACCESSIONS

The following shall apply to all materials to be acquired for the collections.

A. Acquisition Criteria

1. All materials must be within the purpose and scope of the collections.
2. The materials shall be legally acquirable and their acquisition consistent with the principles of historical preservation observed in the museum and archival profession.
3. All legal and equitable rights to the materials shall be acquirable, or, if not acquirable, the materials shall not be encumbered so as to impair their usefulness for any of the purposes of the collections.
4. Appropriate documents of transfer shall be obtainable at the time of acquisition.
5. If the acquisition is to be by purchase, funding shall be arranged prior to acquisition and be reviewed by the proper members of the committees and the board members.
6. RHS must be able to adequately preserve, document, exhibit, and interpret the materials according to standards prevailing among institutions of its size and kind.
7. Material can be properly stored, preserved and cared for within the resources available at RHS.
8. RHS has no obligation to exhibit or display any donated items either temporarily or permanently.
9. RHS will not accept material that was unlawfully obtained.

B. Procedures

1. The Collections Chair of RHS in consultation with the Curator and collections committee shall determine whether the materials proposed for acquisition meet current collections' objectives. All materials which are judged to meet these objectives shall be evaluated by the committee, board, and collections committee on the following factors:

- Condition
- Integrity
- Aesthetic desirability
- Educational and historical value
- Duplication of materials currently in the collections
- Relationship to materials currently in the collections
- Storability
- Provenance
- Title obtainable

2. Transfer of ownership of donated material will be documented in order to obtain criteria listed above.

3. The practice of leaving items at the door of RHS will be discouraged with a note on the door indicating to prospective donors to reach out to RHS to schedule a donation of item(s).

4. Consistent use of the custody receipt will indicate what procedures to follow if RHS declines acquisition.

5. Only the Curator and trained collections volunteers will handle, assess and go through donations.

6. Donations awaiting accessioning decisions shall be stored in an appropriate area that is out of the public view.

DEACCESSIONS

A. Criteria

Materials may be deaccessioned if:

1. The object is no longer within the objectives of any of the RHS's collections.
2. They lack physical integrity or have deteriorated to the extent that they are no longer useable for any of the RHS's purposes.
3. There are duplicates of other materials in equal or better condition.

4. The object has been determined not to be authentic.
5. The object is determined to be more appropriate or better housed and stored in the collection of another institution.
6. They may be used to obtain materials more appropriate to the collection's objectives of RHS.
7. They can no longer be preserved or adequately stored by the RHS.
8. There is a need to improve or strengthen another area of the collections in order to further the goals of RHS.
9. Object is found to be of sacred or ritual significance which are requested for return under the terms of conditions or any state or federal laws or statutes.
10. Undocumented or unclaimed property will be recorded as such in RHS records and if objects remained unclaimed, they may be deaccessioned per Illinois' unclaimed property laws.

B. Procedures

1. The collections committee of RHS, together with trained collections volunteers and outside professional consultants, shall determine and list which materials qualify for deaccessioning. Materials on the deaccessioning list shall be considered as qualifying for deaccessioning. An itemization of materials considered for deaccessioning will be submitted to the RHS Board for approval as to deaccessioning.
2. All records pertaining to materials which are approved for deaccessioning shall be marked "Withdrawn", with the date of authorization. Information regarding the final disposition of, date of disposition of, and value or consideration received for such materials shall be noted on the registration record.
3. Deaccessioned materials shall be removed by the following means in the order indicated:
 - a. By donating to another institution where the item is better suited or a charitable organization
 - b. By exchange, either in whole or part, for materials which are needed for the collections
 - c. By private sale or transfer
 - d. By disposal if the item is deteriorated to such a degree that the item poses a health or environmental hazard. The item may be discarded appropriately following local laws on disposing of hazardous material.

The RHS Board shall provide for the disposal of any materials which are not disposed of or for which it is not feasible to dispose of by any of the above means. The collection committee or committee chair shall make a recommendation for the disposal of such materials based upon the following considerations:

- Restrictions. Legal restrictions limiting disposal

- Desirability of maintaining in the public domain materials which have historical value
- Amount to be realized from the sale of the materials
- Maintenance of the RHS's reputation

C. Restrictions

1. Funds realized from the disposal of deaccessioned materials shall be used ONLY for purchases for and conservation of the collections.
2. No deaccessioned materials shall be given, sold, or otherwise transferred to RHS volunteers, members of the collections committee or to members of RHS board or to the families of these individuals.
3. Materials shall be deaccessioned, consistent with any donor-imposed restrictions.

LOANS

If the institution receives loans or loans items to other institutions the following shall apply to all materials:

A. Conditions

1. The loan shall advance RHS's purposes and not any private or commercial gain or for decorative purposes.
2. The loan period under any loan agreement shall not exceed six months without approval of RHS board members.
3. The materials shall be capable of being transported and used in the manner contemplated by the borrower.
4. Material deemed too fragile or rare to RHS will be not be available to go out on loan.

B. Procedures

Requests for loans of materials shall be evaluated by the committees, curator, board, and appropriate volunteers on the following criteria:

1. Consistent use of the loan agreement form
2. Benefit of the proposed loan to RHS.
2. Potential impairment of RHS's activities from the proposed loan
3. Contemplated use by the borrower
4. Transportability
5. Borrower's commitment to current professional standards in the use of the materials

The Curator or collection committee under the advice of RHS board members may make the loan under such conditions as are necessary to preserve the materials and protect the community's property rights.

DOCUMENTATION AND CARE

All legal and administrative records documenting accessioning, deaccessioning, incoming and outgoing loans are maintained by the Curator and collections committee. All known provenance and other relevant information related to the materials will be documented by the Curator and collections committee. Objects and archival collections shall be catalogued in Past Perfect according to professional standards. All catalog records shall be maintained which document locations for all materials, legal status of materials, movement from assigned locations, missing, stolen or damaged objects, and condition of objects. The following information is considered privileged and will not be shared with third parties:

1. Information requested by donors or lenders to remain anonymous
2. Personal contact information for all donors and lenders
3. Collection storage locations
4. Appraised or estimated values for collection and loan materials

COLLECTION PROCESSING

New acquisitions shall be processed as soon as possible after accessioning, and collection materials will be marked with their accession number to always ensure proper identification. Objects and Library holdings will be managed at the item level, meaning all items will be assigned their own unique number. Archival collections may be processed to the item or folder level depending on the size and other contributing factors of the individual collection. Archival collections managed at the folder level will be processed according to best practices for archival management.

STORAGE AND HOUSING

RHS shall provide safe and appropriate storage of collection materials, and materials on loan. Storage areas must provide adequate space for orderly and safe arrangement of objects. Storage solutions will aim to minimize physical stress and exposure to harmful materials and environmental conditions for objects to support the long-term preservation of materials. RHS board members and trained volunteers will seek to limit handling and moving collections whenever possible to avoid the risk of damage. Proper methods of handling materials will be followed.

A. Inventory Control

1. To prevent any inventory issues, the collections committee shall track collection movement using collections management software to ensure that home and temporary object locations are recorded accurately when objects are placed on display, used for educational purposes, placed on loan, or sent off-site for conservation purposes.

B. Environmental Control

1. RHS shall make every effort to provide a safe and secure environment to ensure long-term preservation of the collection.

2. Material, whether in use or in storage, shall be protected from life shortening forces such as excessive heat, cold, humidity, dryness, dust, UV light, and pests. RHS board members and trained volunteers will coordinate all requests for admittance into the RHS collection storage areas including:

- Visiting museum professionals and/or historical agencies
- RHS interns or volunteers
- Potential donors
- Media coverage related to museum standards, the collection, collection storage, etc.

C. Conservation

Preventative care is the first step in maintaining the collection for long-term preservation. However, an object's condition, value, or anticipated use may justify conservation treatment. Because conservation can be costly and time-consuming it is necessary to prioritize conservation activity to utilize RHS's resources in a manner that best serves the public interest.

Collection materials to be considered for conservation must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Material is actively deteriorating, despite proper storage and housing
2. Material has been requested for exhibition, photography, or other use that will advance the institution's mission
3. Material is determined to be particularly significant or unique in relation to RHS's mission. When conservation is deemed necessary, stabilization of materials will be highlighted, and minimal intervention to original materials will be prioritized over more

invasive techniques to ensure as little alteration as possible. Treatment of any collection material shall be performed by a professionally trained conservator.

REVISION OF POLICY

The Collections Committee shall review the collection policy annually and revise as needed to ensure that it is equipped to meet the needs of researchers and the community.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective immediately upon its being adopted by the RHS Board and may be amended at any time by appropriate action of that Board.

Policy approved by the RHS BOD on August 13, 2025

Policy to be revised August of 2027