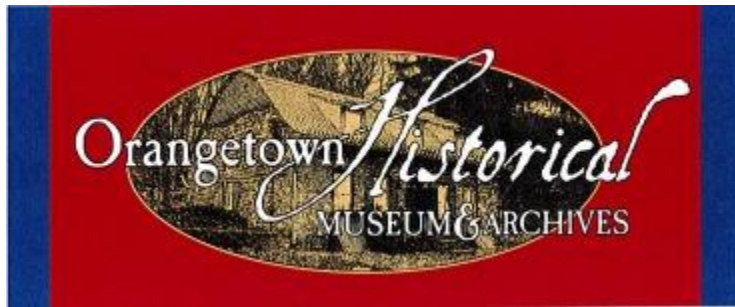


# Collections Management Policy

## Orangetown Historical Museum & Archives

Approved and Adopted on September 19, 2023



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## I. Mission Statement

The Orangetown Historical Museum & Archives was founded in 1992 in order to acquire, preserve, and exhibit objects which reflect primarily the history of the Town of Orangetown. The museum engages visitors by documenting, researching, promoting, and publicizing the rich historical heritage of the Town, as well as its present and future.

## II. Purpose of the Collections Management Policy

The Collections Management Policy (the “Policy”) documents the procedures and practices that guide the development and care of the Museum’s collections. Through the Policy, the Museum shall ensure that its collections are accounted for and documented; its collections are cared for, preserved, secure, and protected; acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that conforms to the Museum’s mission, complies with applicable law, and reflects the highest ethical standards; access to the collections in the galleries, storage and in the research room, and access to collection information is permitted and appropriately regulated; and collection-related activities/programs promote the Museum’s mission and involvement with community rather than individual financial gain.

## III. Scope of Collections

The Museum’s permanent collection consists of approximately 30,000 items dating as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and categorized into objects, textiles, archives, photographs, archaeological artifacts, and library. The collections showcase the settling of the area and Dutch Heritage, American History and its connection to the Revolutionary War, the Industrial Revolution, and its service as the largest port of embarkation for soldiers heading overseas for WWII (Camp Shanks). The collection accounts for the local history and development of all its hamlets of Blauvelt, Orangeburg, Palisades/Snedens Landing, Pearl River, Sparkill, Tappan, South Nyack, and villages of Grand View, Piermont, and Nyack. The Museum maintains two separate houses which provide storage areas for the collection: The DePew House and the Salyer House, which is on the National Registrar of Historic Places.

## IV. Definitions

**Object:** An artifact, archive, or artwork of historic or artistic importance. “Object” will be used to refer to all items in the museum’s permanent collection including (but not limited to) paintings, photographs, paper documents and books, ephemera, textiles, tools, furniture, decorative arts, and all 3-dimensional items.

**Acquisition:** An Object that has been formally and legally incorporated into the Museum’s permanent collection. The Museum is obligated to provide care for an Object at museum industry standards once it has been formally accessioned.

**Deaccession:** An Object that was at one time incorporated into the Museum’s permanent collection but has been formally and legally removed from the Museum’s permanent collection.

A deaccession man physically remain in the Museum’s custody but does not need to be handled with the same priorities.

**Loan:** Object from one collection that are entrusted into the care of the Museum or another cultural institution for exhibition purposes. Loan subsets include outgoing loans – objects sent out from the Museum to another cultural institution; incoming loans – objects brought into the Museum to support a thematic exhibition; Long Term/Permanent Loans – objects on loan for an extended or indefinite period (i.e. Tappantown Historical Society); and Traveling Exhibitions – large groups of Objects that are lent along with additional curatorial, exhibiting management, or design support.

**Found in Collections Objects:** Found in Collections (“FIC”) objects can be similar in type and quality to the Permanent Collection, but are found in collections storage areas with no museum number, nor any obvious characteristics associating them to any original documentation. FIC objects may be tracked in the collections management system, but the museum does not hold right or title to these items as an accession. These objects are under the Museum’s care and may be an object from an old loan, undocumented property, abandoned property, or an object from the Permanent Collection that has lost its museum number.

**Objects in Custody:** Objects in Custody refer to incoming objects on temporary deposit with the Museum, for examination, research, or potential acquisition. Objects in Custody are not encouraged. All Objects in Custody are documented and cared for according to standard museum practice.

## V. Acquisitions

### *Authority & Criteria of Acquisitions*

The authority to accept and acquire objects for the Museum collections rests with the Director and Curator of Collections/Collections Manager. Only Objects that significantly enhance the Museum’s mission should be considered to be included in the permanent collection. The criteria for determining whether an Object should be accessioned include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) All Objects considered for acquisition must meet the criteria stated in the Museum’s mission statement and relate to the Town of Orangetown/Rockland County.
- 2) The Objects must have a clear or identifiable provenance
- 3) All Objects should be in, and or capable of being returned to, acceptable and stable exhibition condition, safe for long term preservation, unless the deteriorated physical condition is integral to the significance of the Object.
- 4) The Museum must be able to house and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practices.
- 5) All Objects should have identifiable relevance and significance to the collection for supporting potential exhibitions
- 6) Objects that are irreparably damaged, molded, and/or infested with pests should NOT be accepted.

7) All Objects should be accepted without debt or favor.

### *Means of Acquisition*

The Museum is not required to accept any collections, whether or not they meet its Mission. Objects may be added to the collections by means of donation/gifts, bequests, transfers, purchases, and field collections.

### *Provenance of Acquisition*

The Museum shall research the provenance of an Object prior to acquisition to determine that the Museum can obtain clear title. Such research should include, but is not limited to, determining: the ownership history of the Object; the countries in which the Object has been located and when; the exhibition history of the Object; the publication history of the Object; whether any claims to ownership of the Object have been made; the circumstances under which the Object is being offered to the Museum.

For all acquisitions, the Museum shall make a rigorous effort to obtain from donors and sellers all available information accurate written documentation with respect to the ownership history of the Object.

### *Title and Right of Acquisition*

For donations/gifts, bequests, and transfers, full title and all rights shall be transferred free and clear, with no restrictions or preconditions.

All donations/gifts must be documented by a Deed of Gift signed by donor/executer. All bequests and transfers must be documented by an Accessions Receiving Report (see Appendix A) and Deed of Gift (see Appendix B). All Museum Purchases must be documented by an Accessions Receiving Report, Receipt for Property (see Appendix C), and a copy of billing/payment record. Field Collections, or Objects found on Museum property, must be documented with an Accessions Receiving Report and Receipt for Property. Archaeological collections considered for acquisition must be accompanied by all appropriate permits, letters of consent from property owners, and necessary documentation to establish that materials were collected in accord with local, state, federal, and international law. Copies of Museum Forms should be sent to donor/giving institution.

The Museum will not knowingly accept or acquire Objects illegally obtained, imported, or collected; or that were recovered in a way that would support or encourage illegal or irresponsible collection, or that would damage or cause destruction of natural or cultural objects, resources, or sites.

## *Unsolicited Donations/Abandoned Property*

Generally, the Museum will not accept unsolicited donations through the mail or in person. The Museum Director or Curator of Collections/Collections Manager may approve such a donation if the Object exhibits exceptional cultural, artistic, or historic value and meets the criteria of the Mission. Rejected objects will be returned to sender, if known. Otherwise the rejected objects will be considered abandoned property. Pursuant to Section 10 of the New York State Education Law 233-AA, the museum reserves the right to claim ownership and/or title of any and all undocumented properties abandoned at the museum and/or site on or after January 1, 2009, if the owner does not claim the property within 90 days of the date of abandonment (see Appendix D).

## VI. Accessioning

When an acquisition is approved and accepted into the permanent collection, it may then be accessioned and entered into the Museum's Accession Book, the Collections software system (PastPerfect), and all documentation/Museum Forms regarding the acquisition will be filed in the Accession Binders by the Curator. The approved acquisition should be placed on the Curator's Shelf accompanied by the required Museum Forms (as noted in *Title & Right of Acquisitions*). Each acquisition will be assigned a unique two-part accession number starting with the year of the accession followed by the number of total accessions to of the year date (ex. 2023.03 – third accession made in 2023).

## VII. Deaccessioning

The Museum may deaccession an object from the collection solely for the advancement of its mission. The criteria for determining whether an Object should be deaccessioned include, but are not limited to, the following

1. The Object does not further the mission of the Museum and/or has little value in the collection.
2. The Object is redundant or is a duplicate and is not necessary for research or study purposes.
3. The Object is of lesser quality than other objects of the same type in the collection or about to be acquired.
4. The Object lacks sufficient historical significance, merit, or importance to warrant retention.
5. The Museum is ordered to return an object to its original and rightful owner by a court of law; the Museum determines that another entity is the rightful owner of the Object; the Museum determines that the return of the object is in the best interest to the Museum
6. The Museum is unable to preserve the Object in a responsible manner.
7. The Object is unduly difficult or impossible to care for or store properly.

The Museum shall honor legal restrictions attaching to the gift or bequest of any image of Object. In addition, requests which do not impose any legal obligation accompanying the bequest or gift of any Object will be respected to the extent feasible.

### *Procedures for deaccessioning*

When an Object has been approved for deaccession by the Museum Director, the Curator will complete a Deaccession Form (see Appendix E) noting the description of the Object, its condition, any known publication or exhibition history, and justification for deaccession. The Curator will file this Museum Form in the Deaccession Binder, enter the deaccession in the Museum's Accession Book, and the Collections software system (PastPerfect). The Curator will also update the original Deed of Gift, filed in the Accession Binders, by writing the date and purpose for deaccession.

### *Dispersal*

Following the approval and documentation of a deaccessioned Object, the Museum Director and Curator will initiate the method of dispersal. The options for dispersal include:

1. Transfer to another appropriate cultural institution
2. Exchange with another appropriate cultural institution
3. Responsible destruction/disposal

When Transferring and/or Exchanging an Object to another institution, the Curator will complete and sign a Transfer Form (see Appendix F), indicating the transition of legal right, title, and ownership of the Object. In the instance where the condition of the Object is beyond restoration, the museum may seek methods of responsible destruction including but not limited to: transfer to a conservator for treatment research or donation to an education program. For Objects that no longer serve the Museum's mission and place an undue burden on the Museum may be disposed through proper sanitation/recycling standards.

## VIII. Care for Collections

### *General*

The Museum shall provide a safe and appropriate environment for the collections, with effective security and environmental control, for the benefit of present and future generations. The museum shall maintain an Emergency/Disaster Plan. The Museum's preservation standards shall be maintained with Objects on Loan to the Museum or borrowed from the Museum. The Museum is charged with the long-term preservation of the collection through conservation treatment and shall maintain exact documentation on all examination and treatment work (see Appendices G & H).

The Museum shall allow the use of funds for direct care of the collection. The Curator may make recommendations for the use of funds for direct care of the collection, collection storage areas, and exhibition area. Upon approval from the Museum Director, funds can be used for special limited projects, including, but not limited to, collections assessment, conservation, rehousing, and storage equipment for Objects in the collection.

### *Storage*

The Museum's Objects are housed in collections storage areas within two facilities:

- 1) The DePew House  
196 Chief Bill Harris Way  
Orangeburg, NY 10962
  
- 2) The Salyer House – National Registrar of Historic Places  
213 Blue Hill Road  
Pearl River, NY 10965

### *Transit*

The transport of Objects between storage facilities can only be arranged and/or executed by the Museum Director, Museum Curators, or Building Maintainer. The Museum staff is responsible for the proper handling, packing, and unpacking of Objects before and after transit. Museum staff will be required to use personal vehicles for transport and will be subject to the Town of Orangetown's Insurance Policy. A third-party art-handling company may be hired to transport Objects upon review and approval from the Museum Director.

### *Insurance*

The Museum's buildings, collections, and exhibition areas are insured under the Town of Orangetown's Umbrella Insurance Policy. The Fine Arts Coverage is a blanket policy up to a certain dollar value and loss, which protects multiple locations and while objects are in transit. The Insurance Broker, Jim Wymimko, of Bauer-Crowley, Inc. may be contacted at (845)359-4114 (x22) or [jimw@bauercrowley.com](mailto:jimw@bauercrowley.com).

## **IX. Records and Inventories**

### *Records Management & Cataloging*

The Museum, through its Collections department shall create and maintain accurate, up-to-date records on the catalog, identification, location and condition of all Objects as they are accessioned into the collection, as well as of ongoing activities such as exhibitions, research and correspondence with donors, artists and scholars. The records should be recorded in the Museum's collections management database (PastPerfect) and supported by hard copy records arranged in a filing system as appropriate. The Curator maintains coherent, organized records on accessioned, non-accessioned and deaccessioned Objects and Loans brought into the Museum for possible purchase, gift, or exchange.

The Curator is responsible for updating and maintaining PastPerfect records for their collections and for administering rights to ensure limited and appropriate access to confidential records. The Curator is responsible ensuring that each accession is assigned a catalog number, condition



assessment, and is provided with supporting descriptive metadata to be entered into PastPerfect upon being cataloged into the permanent collection. (see Appendix I).

All records created or received in the transaction of the Museum's proper business are the property of the Museum and shall not be dispersed or destroyed except in accordance with its record retention policy.

### *Inventory*

It is the responsibility of the Curator and/or collections staff to make regular inspections of its galleries and exhibition cases. The curatorial department shall make an inventory of the contents of its galleries and exhibition cases at least once during every calendar year.

The collection storage areas/rooms in the Salyer House are labeled A, B, C, and D and shall be inventoried once a year on a rotating basis. For example, if Room A was inventoried in 2023, Room B should be inventoried in 2024, Room C should be inventoried in 2025, and Room D should be inventoried in 2026. Once all storage rooms have been inventoried, the process will begin again with Room A.

The DePew House maintains storage for archives, photographs, and the museum's Library. Each separate storage section (archives, photographs, and library) shall be inventoried once a year on a rotating basis.

The Objects Inventories of all storage facilities are crucial to maintain control of the physical location of collection Objects.

## **X. Access to Collections**

It is fundamental to the Museum's mission to provide access to the Museum's collections and promote appreciation of their significance. Presenting the collection through the Museum's own exhibitions and Loans to other institutions is one of the primary means for achieving this goal. The museum shall support, to the extent possible, continuing scholarly investigation and research in order to document, publish and advance understanding of the Museum's mission and collection, as well as to contribute to broader academic and public discourses. As resources allow, the Museum shall make every effort to provide research access to its collections in accordance with established and publicly available collections access policy and procedure. Staff may use their discretion to determine in an Object is suitable for access, based on factors such as confidentiality or physical stability. The Museum shall work to digitize and provide electronic access for all collected materials.

The museum shall support and encourage awareness and understanding of the Museum's mission, including, without limitation, the history of Orangetown, by disseminating information through the development of publications, programs, and its website for a variety of audiences ranging from children to adult audiences and scholars. These will draw upon its collection and research as primary sources for stimulating engagement and promoting familiarity with Objects in its historical, cultural, and material contexts.

## XI. Outgoing Loans

As an important means of fulfilling the educational and scholarly purposes of the Museum's mission, the Museum lends Objects from its collection to qualified institutions. Loan requests must be evaluated in light of the historical and scholarly value of the exhibition for which they are requested, as well as the condition of the Object and the need to incorporate it into the Museum's own programs.

All Loan requests shall be reviewed by the Museum Director and Curator.

All Loans shall be for a specific period of time, and the Object's condition shall be documented and monitored through condition reports. Such documentation shall include recent images of the Object when possible. Loans must be governed by written loan agreements between the Museum and its borrowers, which shall be signed by both parties prior to transport (see Appendix J). No Object shall leave the Museum's storage unless adequate insurance coverage is provided. Long-term Loans are subject to regular review and renewal by museum staff.

Loans may be made to individuals or private organizations in two cases. First, if there was a specific agreement with the donor of the Object allowing such a privilege. Second, with prior approval of the Museum Director, the Museum may make Loans to an individual from whom the Museum is borrowing an Object, for the purpose of temporarily replacing the Object borrowed.

## XII. Incoming Loans

The Museum shall exercise the same standard of care for borrowed Objects as it exercises for its own collection. All incoming Loans shall be documented and monitored in accordance with the collections record policy outlined in Section IX Records and Inventories. Loans to the Museum shall be governed by a written loan agreement between the Museum and its lenders, which shall be signed by the lender prior to delivery to the Museum (see Appendix K). All incoming Loans shall be requested and administered by Museum Staff.

Recognizing that the Museum's exhibition of an Object may increase its value and financially benefit its owner, the Museum will carefully consider all incoming Loans. For all incoming Loans, there must be a clear connection between the exhibition of an Object and the Museum's educational mission. The Museum will examine whether there are any potential conflicts of interest, or the appearance of a conflict with lenders.

The Museum will maintain full decision-making authority over the content and presentation of the exhibition of all Objects, but may consult with a potential lender on Objects to be selected from the lender's collection and the significance to be given to those Objects in the exhibition. The Museum shall deny requests for anonymity if such anonymity would conceal a conflict of interest (real or perceived).

The Museum will accept incoming loans for a maximum of one calendar year. The Museum can extend an incoming Loan, for an additional calendar year, with the approval of the lender (See Appendix L). The Museum will not accept or approve permanent, incoming loans in the present

or future. Permanent loans arranged prior to the date of the renewed Collections Management Policy will continue to be maintained and cared for by the Museum.

### XIII. Effective Date

This revised Policy shall be effective immediately upon approval by the Museum Director and shall supersede all prior policies on the topics addressed herein.