

# **Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library Association**

## **Historical Society Collections Management Policy**

Effective 18 May 2026

The Susquehanna County Historical Society (Society) is owned and operated by the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library Association (Association). The Society is committed to preserving and promoting Susquehanna County's history by actively collecting, safeguarding, and ensuring public access to the county's artifacts and stories, and by empowering the community to understand local legacies and their own familial roots. The Society enriches the community by serving as stewards of the county's history.

The Society operates a museum and a research library, both of which are open to the public and available for use by researchers. The Society's holdings are generally categorized as museum objects or as research materials and collectively referred to as Society Collections.

### **Collections: Museum Objects**

The Society Museum collects, preserves, and displays objects pertaining to, and about Susquehanna County and its people. These objects, useful for teaching, understanding, and enjoying the past, range from prehistoric cultures to the present day; objects made in Susquehanna County by hand or machine; paintings and photographs and other forms of art; study materials; and items which reflect life in Susquehanna County in any period.

### **Collections: Research Library**

The Society Research Library collects and provides access to items including books, pamphlets, records, manuscripts, ephemera pertaining to, and from the homes and people of Susquehanna County. In addition, the Research Library includes resources on genealogy as it pertains to this section of the country; books and some material on Pennsylvania as they may involve Susquehanna County; books on Native Americans and archaeology of the Northeast; and histories of other counties of Pennsylvania and other relevant states.

### **Acquisitions:**

1. Collections items should not be accepted or otherwise acquired unless the following conditions are met:
  - A. All items are to be approved by the Society Curator (Curator).

- B. The items are relevant to and consistent with the purposes and activities of the Society.
  - C. The Society can provide for the storage, protection and preservation of the Collections under conditions that ensure their availability for museum or research purposes and in keeping with professionally accepted standards.
  - D. It is intended that the items shall have permanency in the collections as long as they retain their physical integrity, their identity, and their authenticity; that they do not pose a threat to humans or the rest of the collections; and as long as they remain useful for the purposes of the Society.
2. Title to all objects acquired for the collections must be obtained free and clear, without restrictions as to use or future disposition.
  3. A legal instrument of conveyance, setting forth an adequate description of the objects and/or materials involved, must accompany all gifts and purchases and must be kept on file at the Society. In the case of sales and gifts, this document should be signed by the seller or donor, by a Society witness, and by an authorized Association Trustee.
  4. Acquisitions by purchase shall be made in the following manner:
    - A. Under \$500 by decision of the Curator.
    - B. Over \$500 by recommendation of the Curator, and with the approval of the Association Board of Trustees.
  5. Acquisitions will meet the requirements set forth in the Society's Ethics Policy.<sup>1</sup>

### Deaccessioning

1. Objects in the collections should be retained permanently if they continue to be relevant and useful to the purposes and activities of the Museum and Research Library, and if they do not pose health hazard, can be properly stored, preserved and used. Deaccessioning of objects may be considered when these conditions no longer prevail, or in the interest of improving the collections for the Society's purposes and activities.
2. Objects in the collections shall be deaccessioned only upon the recommendation of the Curator, in consultation with the Historical Society Location Liaison<sup>2</sup> and with the

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<sup>1</sup> "Historical Society Ethics Policy," Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library Association, effective 18 May 2026.

<sup>2</sup> "Appointment of Location Liaison Policy," Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library Association, effective 20 March 2023.

written approval of the President of the Board of Trustees. Disposition of these items shall be maintained in the Society's permanent records.

3. In considering various alternatives for the disposition of deaccessioned objects, the Society should be concerned that:
  - A. The manner of disposition is in the best interests of the Society and the Association, the public they serve, the public trust they represent in owning the collections, and the scholarly or cultural communities that they represent.
  - B. Consideration should be given to placing objects, through gift, exchange or sale, in another tax-exempt public institution wherein they may serve the purpose for which they were acquired initially by the Society. If objects are offered for sale elsewhere, they should be given for sale at advertised public auction or public sale.
  - C. Objects shall not be given or sold privately.
4. Before disposing of any objects from the collections, reasonable efforts should be made and documented to ascertain that the Society is free to do so. Where restrictions as to use or disposition of the objects under question are found to apply, the Society shall act as follows:
  - A. Mandatory restrictions should be observed strictly unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction or are waived in writing by all parties.
  - B. Objects to which precatory restrictions apply should not be disposed of until reasonable efforts are made to comply with restricting conditions.
  - C. If there is any question as to the intent or force of restrictions, the Society should seek advice of legal counsel.
5. Deaccessioning actions will meet the requirements set forth in the Society's Ethics Policy

#### Public Disclosure

1. A written statement of policy and procedures adopted and followed by the Society with respect to the acquisition and disposition of collection materials should be prepared and should be made available upon request.
2. In reply to reasonable inquiry, the museum should make available the identity and

description of collection materials acquired or deaccessioned. All other facts pertaining to the circumstances of acquisition, deaccession and loans should be adequately documented in the Society's records.

### Loans of Collections

1. Loans of material from the collection shall be made under the following criteria:
  - A. Other organizations wishing to borrow must present a request in writing stating the occasion for which the loan is being requested, way it will be displayed, who will be responsible (including address and phone number), and if object is thought to be valued at \$100 or more, under what insurance it will fall. The borrowing organization must meet or exceed current Society security standards.
  - B. The Curator, with the approval of the Board of Trustees, shall approve the loan, providing they feel the borrower meets the criteria and precautions for handling the material.
  - C. Refer to Loan Agreement (attached) for full details and requirements.

### Recording and Reporting of Acquisitions, Deaccessions and Loans

1. An accurate record of accessions, deaccessions, and loans shall be kept by the Curator.
2. The Curator should present a periodic list of new accessions to the Board of Trustees.

### Special Requests

Any requests for inventories or full copies of manuscripts shall be reviewed by the Curator, the Assistant Curator, Association Chief Operating Officer (COO), and the Board of Trustees.

### Collections Treatment

Collections treatment by parties outside of Society staff and trained volunteers is done with the recommendation of the Curator, and approval of the Association COO, and the Board of Trustees.

### Collection and Historical Records Security

1. No researcher nor other member of the public may remove records or collections items from the Society.

2. No Society employee, volunteers, or member of the Association Board (Society Stakeholders) shall remove records or collections items (hard copy or electronic) from the Society without a written request approved by the Curator and the Association COO.
3. If the above is not followed, the Society Stakeholder, researcher, or member of the public may be subject to disciplinary, legal, or criminal action.

### Attachments

The following forms are attachments to this policy:

1. Deed of Gift
2. Collections Loan (Incoming / Outgoing)
3. Object Accession Form
4. Photographic Reproduction Agreement

These forms are working documents and may be updated by the Curator and staff of the Society as needed.