

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

## **Historical Society Ethics Policy**

Effective 18 May 2026

This code of ethics is a set of principles that guide the conduct, decision-making and behavior of the Susquehanna County Historical Society (Society) employees, volunteers (to include members of the ad hoc ‘Friends’ group), and the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library Association (Association) Board of Trustees (Board) in the work of the Society (collectively, Society Stakeholders). This policy statement establishes values and ethical standards that enable the Society to fulfill its mission and put the interests of the public ahead of the Society’s interest or of any individual.

### *I. Ownership and Protection of Cultural and Natural Resources*

There are many laws regarding the ownership and protection of cultural and natural resources, including but not limited to: stolen, looted or reappropriated art; archaeological material removed from federally owned or controlled land, and issues relating to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The Society will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws that relate to collections or collecting activities.

### *II. Fraud*

Any fraud that is detected or suspected must be reported immediately to the President of the Association Board, who coordinates all investigations with the Board and other affected areas, both internal and external. Refer to the most recent version of the Association’s Fraud Policy for more information.

### *III. Appraisals*

The Society does not provide appraisals. The Society will not arrange for the appraisal of personal objects not intended to be donated to the Society.

### *IV. Personal Collecting by Society Stakeholders*

The Society permits personal collecting in all fields by Society Stakeholders as long as they neither compete with the Society, create conflicts of interest nor take advantage of information proprietary to the Society. No Society Stakeholder may use their affiliation with the Society to promote personal, family, or associates’ personal collecting activities. Should conflicts develop between the desires of the individual and the needs of the Society, the needs of the Society must prevail.

Should a situation occur when a Society Stakeholder, their family or associates could acquire an item for their own collection that is not accepted into the Society collection, they should provide full, written disclosure for review before approval by the Curator or Association Chief Operating Officer (COO).

#### *V. Buying and Selling Objects, and Dealing in Objects by Society Stakeholders*

Society Stakeholders may not deal in objects such as those collected by the Society nor may Society Stakeholders use their position at the Society for personal gain. Dealing is defined as buying and selling for profit as distinguished from occasional selling or exchanging in the management of a personal collection. Special exceptions may be permitted only after (i) full, written disclosure by the Society Stakeholder, and (ii) review and approval by the Curator or COO. Should conflicts develop between the desires of the individual and the needs of the Society, the needs of the Society must prevail.

#### *VI. Loans involving Society Stakeholders*

Loan of the Society's collections to Society Stakeholders is prohibited.

Loans of objects owned by Society Stakeholders to the Society for exhibition or teaching purposes are permitted if the loan receives the approval of the Curator.

#### *VII. Security*

##### Collection and Historical Records Security

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

No Society Stakeholder shall remove records or collections items (hard copy or electronic) from the Society without a written request approved by the Curator and the COO.

If the above is not followed, the Society Stakeholder, researcher, or member of the public may be subject to disciplinary, legal, or criminal action.

##### Building Security

The following people may have keys and security access to the Society building:

- COO
- Curator
- Assistant Curator
- Other paid Society employees after a probationary period
- Facilities Maintenance person
- Any other person who the Curator and the COO deem necessary for the operations of the Society

Keys must be turned in at the end of employment and any security access must be removed immediately.

All visitors, to include Board members and non-Society Association staff to the museum (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) and/or the collections storage (basement) must always be accompanied by a Society employee or Society volunteer.

#### *VII. Deaccessioned Items*

The Society will prioritize placing deaccessioned objects, through gift, exchange or sale, in another tax-exempt public institution to serve the purpose for which they were acquired initially by the Society. If deaccessioned objects are offered by the Society for sale elsewhere, they should be given for sale at an advertised public auction or public sale.

No Society Stakeholder, nor their immediate family, nor representatives may purchase or receive by trade or transfer any collections objects that have been deaccessioned by the Society unless at advertised public auction or public sale.

#### *IX. Gifts to Society Stakeholders*

A Society Stakeholder shall obtain the written consent of the Curator and COO prior to accepting any gift valued at \$50 or more from a person engaged in a Society-related activity, such as, but not limited to, an artist, dealer, donor, collector, or supplier of goods or services to the Society. If the gift is an object that is of the type and quality the Society collects, consent shall first also be obtained from the Curator and COO. Gifts of cash to any Society Stakeholder are never appropriate. Society Stakeholders are also prohibited from owing money to or borrowing money from any artist, dealer, donor, collector, or supplier of goods or services to the Society, except in cases where transactions are directed related to the typical operations of the Society. Requests for exceptions to this policy shall be submitted in writing to the Curator and COO.

#### *X. Research*

Society Stakeholders may do genealogical and historical research for themselves and their immediate family at no charge. Employees must complete this work on their own time, and during normal business hours.

Society Stakeholders may conduct professional/paid genealogical and historical records research for anyone outside their immediate family with permission from the Curator or Assistant Curator and by abiding by the current professional researcher fee schedule.

Stakeholders who have an outside relationship with a professional organization should refer that group to the Society for current research fees and profession memberships.