

ARTIFACT DONATIONS
TO THE COLLECTION OF
THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM



We rely on the generosity of donors to enhance our collections and assist us in meeting our mission:

*The Danish Immigrant Museum celebrates
Danish roots and American dreams.*

As we strive to maintain professional museum standards and to strengthen our collections, we have adopted specific policies and procedures to guide us. We recognize that many people are not familiar with the donation process, so the purpose of this hand-out is to provide information and answers to our most frequently asked questions.

How does The Danish Immigrant Museum decide what material it will accept for the artifact collection?

All items submitted for donation to the Museum undergo a review process. Criteria which must be met for an artifact to be accepted are as follows:

- Does this object fit within our mission and the terms of our Collections Management Policy?
- Does this object have significant history or documentation associated with it?
- What is the physical condition of the object?
- Is this a duplicate of something already in the Museum's collections?
- If this is a duplicate, does this piece have stronger documentation or a more stable condition?
- Does the Museum have the resources to safely and professionally preserve, store, and care for the object?
- Is this object a safety or health hazard to staff or visitors?

If I have artifacts that may be appropriate for the Museum, how do I donate them?

The steps for all donation offers include:

- Temporary Artifact Receipt—All objects being offered are listed on this form, as is any documentary information associated with the gift. The donor must sign this form, thereby giving the Museum permission to evaluate the artifact(s) for our collections. Ownership is not transferred at this time.
- Collections Review Committee—All gift offers are reviewed by a group of staff members who use the

previously listed criteria to determine if the objects being offered are appropriate for the collections.

This Committee meets once a month.

- Deed of Gift—All objects accepted for the collections are issued a Deed of Gift. This form lists what pieces are being accepted and requires the donor's signature. Once this form is signed, the gift is complete and ownership is transferred to the Museum.

What happens to objects not accepted for the Museum's collection?

On the Temporary Artifact Receipt is a section where the donor can select whether he/she wants the donation returned if the Museum does not accept it, or if the Museum is free to transfer or otherwise dispose of objects that are declined. If the donor selects the return option, we make arrangements for the donor to pick up the donation or for the Museum to ship it back at the donor's expense. If the donor does not want the pieces back, we typically transfer them to another museum or appropriate institution.

Does the Museum purchase objects?

On rare occasions, the Museum may purchase objects. These pieces are still required to meet the same criteria as donated objects.

Does the Museum provide appraisals of objects?

Providing values for objects except for our own insurance purposes is not a professional or ethical practice for any museum. Donors who seek values for objects should contact a licensed appraiser.

Does the Museum accept objects on loan?

Because of insurance and liability issues, as well as space constraints, loans are only accepted when requested for specific exhibits.

What is the Museum's policy on exhibiting donated objects? Will my piece be on permanent exhibition?

Exhibiting most types of objects for a very long period of time actually causes damage and therefore shortens life spans. We do rotate objects into temporary exhibitions as appropriate. Others are able to be viewed in our Visual Storage area, a room in our lower level with glass on three sides which allows visitors to see pieces that otherwise would be behind closed doors. We do not guarantee the exhibition of any piece.

Does the Museum do repair or conservation work?

The Museum staff rarely repair or conserve objects, but rather consult with trained conservators. We are able to provide advice on how to care for objects within the home, and can recommend resources for supplies and further information. People who need an object conserved should speak with a trained, professional conservator.

Does the Museum remove objects from its collections? What happens to those objects?

The Museum is an educational institution which serves the public. The objects within our collections support that goal and our overall mission. Most objects given to the Museum will remain in our collections for the rest of their lives.

Occasionally, objects are removed from the collections through a process called deaccessioning. The process is a lengthy one and not taken lightly. Objects that may be considered for removal are:

- Those that have deteriorated to the point that they can no longer be preserved or exhibited.
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- Those that demonstrate a risk to staff and visitors, such as grenades with live charges inside, fur items laced with arsenic, or plastics that are deteriorating and releasing toxic liquids and gasses.
- Those that are determined not to be genuine or in keeping with the Museum's mission.
- Those whose original ownership or details of the donation are in question.

Those objects that are removed from the collections are typically transferred to other museums or appropriate institutions. Those pieces that are in extremely poor physical condition or are dangers may be discarded. Deaccessioned pieces may be sold through a public auction venue, but monies gained through sales are restricted for the purchases of other artifacts. Deaccessioned objects are not returned to the original donors.

If you have further questions about the donation process or wish to discuss a donation you have already made, please contact:

Angela Stanford, Curator of Collections / Registrar
registrar@danishmuseum.org

Thank you to all of our members and donors who support the Museum's collections financially and through artifact donations.

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