

does the museum remove artifacts from its collections?

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

Occasionally, artifacts are removed from the collections through a process called deaccessioning. The process is lengthy and the Board of Directors must approve all deaccessioning recommendations. Pieces that may be considered for removal are:

- Those that are deteriorated beyond their ability to be preserved or exhibited.
- Those that demonstrate a risk to staff and visitors, such as grenades with live charges inside or animal hides treated with arsenic.
- Those that are determined not to be authentic or in keeping with the museum's mission.
- Those whose original ownership or details of the donation are in question.
- Those that do not have any documentation and cannot be easily exhibited or used for research.



Artifacts that are deaccessioned are typically offered to other museums or appropriate institutions. Pieces that are in especially poor physical condition or are safety or health hazards may be discarded. Deaccessioned artifacts may be sold through a public auction venue. All proceeds from those sales are restricted for the purchase of other artifacts. Deaccessioned objects are not returned to the original donors.

does the museum provide appraisals?

Providing values for artifacts, except for insurance purposes, is not an ethical museum practice. Donors who seek values for pieces should contact a licensed appraiser.



what is the museum's policy on exhibiting artifacts?

We rotate pieces into temporary exhibitions as appropriate. Many others are able to be viewed in Visual Storage, a room with glass on three sides which allows visitors to see pieces that would otherwise be behind closed doors.

This space is located in the lower level of the museum. Most of our collections are also able to be viewed online through View Our Collection, a feature on our website available to all members at the \$100 membership level and above.

We do not guarantee the exhibition of any piece. All exhibitions at the museum are for limited periods. Long term display can cause damage and a shortened lifespan for many types of artifacts.



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

Curator of Collections/Registrar
registrar@danishmuseum.org

artifact donations



museum of
danish america

As a professional museum and member of the America Alliance of Museums, the Museum of Danish America follows specific policies to guide everything we do with the artifact collection, including donations.

Because our donors may not be familiar with the donation process, this handout is intended to provide answers to our most frequently asked questions.

what do we collect?

The museum collects items that contribute to the narrative we tell about immigration including travel, settlement, business, social and religious groups, and more, as well as pieces that reflect the continuing relationship with Denmark and the connections between Danish and American cultures. We accept artifacts of all types – jewelry to photographs to passports – and from all time periods, including more contemporary, post-WWII generations. The Genealogy Center acts as the library for the museum. All book donations begin there.



if i have artifacts that may be appropriate for the museum, how do i donate them?

All curatorial donations go through the following steps:

- Tell the museum about what you have.
- Fill out a Temporary Artifact Receipt. Your signature gives the museum permission to evaluate the artifact(s) for our collections.
- The Collections Review Committee considers donations at its monthly meeting.
- A Deed of Gift is issued for accepted artifacts. This completes the donation and ownership is transferred to the museum.

how does the museum decide what to accept for the artifact collections?

During the formal review process, the museum considers the following criteria:

- Does this object fit within our mission?
- Is there significant history or documentation?
- 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, how does this piece compare in terms of documentation and 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?

what happens to objects not accepted for the museum's collection?

On the Temporary Artifact Receipt, the donor selects 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, the museum makes 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 donation back, the first consideration is to transfer it to another museum or appropriate institution.



does it cost anything to donate artifacts to the museum?

The museum does not charge donors a fee to donate artifacts. However, there are many ongoing costs associated with the care of our collections such as:

- Archival supplies
- Equipment
- Climate control
- Electronic collections database
- Conservation
- Professional staff
- Insurance



does the museum purchase artifacts?

On rare occasions, the museum may purchase pieces. These pieces are still required to meet the same criteria as donations.

does the museum accept artifacts on loan?

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

does the museum do repair or conservation work?

The museum staff consults with trained conservators for this type of work. We are able to provide advice on how to care for pieces within the home, and can recommend resources for purchasing archival supplies. People who need an object conserved should speak with a professional conservator.