

# The Greater Harrington Historical Society Collections Management Policy



## Table of Contents

I.	Mission	Page 3
II.	Purpose	Page 3
III.	Collection Types	Page 4
IV.	Collection Review Process	Page 7
V.	Acquisitions	Page 8
VI.	Deaccession	Page 12
VII.	Loans	Page 15
VIII.	Objects in Custody and Found in Collections	Page 17
IX.	Collection Documentation and Care	Page 19
X.	Collection Access and Use	Page 25
XI.	Damage to Collection(s)/Artifacts	Page 30
XII.	Digital Collections	Page 34
XIII.	Appendix	Page 35

## **I. Mission**

The mission of the Greater Harrington Historical Society is to keep the Greater Harrington area's history alive for the education and enjoyment of the public.

## **II. Purpose**

The Greater Harrington Historical Society Collections Management Policy is the principal policy document guiding collections management. As the GHHS's collections management policy guides collections stewardship to ensure proper management, preservation, and use of the Institution's collections and items in its care and custody. This directive covers all aspects of collections management, including acquisition and accessioning, deaccessioning and disposal, preservation, documentation, life-cycle management, inventory, risk management, safety and security, access, storage, loans, and intellectual property management. This directive also addresses specific legal and ethical issues that pertain to collections, including shared stewardship and ethical returns. The Curator performs the core work of the Greater Harrington Historical Society's mission, doing so with intellectual and professional responsibility entails ongoing critical, self-reflexive engagement with the terms of that mission, placing the components of the mission in constant dialogue with historical and library, museum, and archival methods.

### **Collecting**

The Greater Harrington Historical Society collects through donations and purchases. Like every collecting institution, GHHS must collect and preserve in accordance with limitations on resources, specifically space. Responsible collecting necessarily entails tough curatorial decisions and cost/benefit analyses. Donations of collections materials are not free to GHHS; they come with preservation and ongoing storage costs as well as the costs of staff time to process incoming collections for research use.

## **Preserving**

The GHHS preserves historical materials through the management of our storage spaces, by providing a safe and stable environment through environmental monitoring, and by securing funds to support the long-term care of materials we acquire. Increasingly, this must move beyond the restoration of artwork and the stabilization of paper and photographic materials to also include management of born-digital collections. In addition, we must continue to evaluate the research value of our collections to meet the needs of our users. Deaccessioning materials that do not meet the GHHS's collecting mission, are duplicate examples, or are in such condition that ongoing preservation costs are unsustainable, is another vital part of the GHHS's collections management strategy.

## **Telling**

In some cases, telling is done directly by the GHHS staff through exhibits, public presentations, and articles. The expertise of our curatorial staff in publicly articulating the value of the past through the collections we hold is a significant institutional asset—one of the things treasured by our members and valued by our colleagues nationwide. More frequently, however, this telling is done indirectly, by researchers using the collections that the GHHS's staff has accessioned, arranged, catalogued, and in some cases digitized or publicized. These research products include academic books and articles; student research papers; family genealogy projects; film, and radio; in conjunction with our collections being loaned and displayed by our peer organizations. When making acquisition decisions, the ability of a collection to tell compelling stories must be taken into consideration. This goes beyond collection provenance and content to include an honest assessment of the short- and long-term demands on staff to allow a potential acquisition to tell such a story.

## **III. Collection Types**

GHHS collections holdings focus on the Greater Harrington area and Mispillion Hundred, experiences both in the state and elsewhere, spanning the late 17th century to the present day. For administrative purposes, the collection has been organized into seven collecting areas: Library, Manuscripts and Archives, Photographs & Prints, Audio/Visual, Museum physical artifacts, and Digital. It is

not uncommon for individual, family, and organizational collections to comprise materials in several or all the categories below. Members of the collections staff work together to coordinate the cataloging and preservation of collection components across collection types.

A) Library holdings contain published materials and printed ephemera, including atlases, maps, pamphlets, periodicals, microfilm, and family charts. These holdings consist of both primary and secondary sources. Rare books and original genealogical materials make the GHHS a destination for local and national researchers. The collection of secondary sources, focused especially (though not exclusively) on U.S. history and the states of the Delmarva Region, contextualize, and help staff and researchers better interpret the GHHS's other collection types.

B) Manuscripts and Archives holdings consist of personal and family papers and records of businesses, organizations, and institutions, documenting histories, and experiences in the area from the 17th through the 21st centuries. The collection also includes architectural plans, scrapbooks, theater and concert programs, and sheet music. Also included are rare complete years from the twentieth century of the Harrington Journal newspapers.

C) Photograph & Print holdings include both professional and amateur photography, in addition to prints, posters, and postcards spanning from the early 19th century through present day. The Photograph Collection is compiled of family photos, art photography, and documentary photography of both the natural and built environments. The collection holds a wide array of formats such as tintypes, cabinet cards, lantern slides, negatives, prints, photograph albums and select born-digital images. The Print Collection is compiled of portraits, landscapes, birds-eye views, and subject-based imagery. The collection includes but is not limited to woodblocks, engravings, etchings, lithographs, postcards, and posters. Both collections document agriculture, commerce and industry, transportation, politics, family histories, and aspects of social and cultural histories from the greater Harrington area and the Mispillion Hundred.

D) Audio/Visual holdings include both professional and amateur audio and video recordings spanning from the mid-late 20th century through the present day. The collection is comprised of family home movies, travelogues, a portion of past GHHS lectures, and recordings of local events. The collection includes but is not limited to records, cassette tapes, and VHS tapes. The materials predominantly document everyday life and leisure in the greater Harrington area, the Mispillion Hundred, and surrounding regions., with a special collection from “Blue Hen Records.”

E) Museum physical artifacts include works of decorative arts; clothing and textiles; natural history and anthropological artifacts; ephemera and artifacts related to politics, business, and industry; tools of artists, craftspeople, and various trades; and material culture. While some historical artifacts are affiliated with significant people, places, and events such as World War II, the material culture embodies the everyday experiences of anonymous individuals. Material culture is defined as the everyday objects or goods produced by a society that represent social and cultural values, hierarchies, and consumption.

F) Digital holdings include materials digitized from the GHHS’s physical collections as well as born-digital materials. Materials are digitized from GHHS’s manuscripts, photographs, library materials, art, and artifacts.

## **Collection Development Initiatives**

The Greater Harrington Historical Society actively pursues and develops initiatives that aim to fill gaps in our collections and build relationships with underrepresented communities in our area. The most recent successful initiative has been the Black History Month Exhibit, which began in 2022 following extensive conversations between the GHHS and members of the local African American community of Harrington. The GHHS takes these initiatives very seriously and undertakes them with careful planning and care to secure support from community partners and the funding necessary to ensure their sustainability and success. As this exhibit has shown, long-term investment in and relationship-building with historically marginalized communities is time and resource intensive. However, it is also a way to gain deeper and more complete perspectives on communities that are underrepresented in our collections.

## **IV. Collection Review Process**

The collections review process at the GHHS emphasizes collaborative decision-making among the curatorial staff focusing on addressing known gaps in the GHHS's collection. Collaboration also provides greater opportunity for sharing expertise to better understand the content, medium, and potential interpretation of proposed acquisitions, as well as a more equitable allocation of acquisition and conservation funding across collection types and subjects. As the curator is approached about potential donations, becomes aware of items available for purchase, or wants to build a collaborative relationship with an individual or group in the community whose materials are of interest to the GHHS, the curator should evaluate the items based on the following criteria:

- A. The item(s) are not currently represented in the current holdings of GHHS. If the item(s) is a duplicate but the offered item(s) represents an improved version or are unique in others forms from those already in the GHHS holdings, the item(s) should be accepted.
- B. The Curator also reviews and decides upon loan requests and deaccession recommendations. By considering deaccessions alongside acquisitions in the deliberative space of GHHS, the curator will balance the inherited strengths with its future growth into a place where all residents of Harrington and its surrounding areas see themselves reflected in the past.

### **Collecting Criteria**

New acquisitions must present opportunities to reveal or expand on a compelling and significant story or theme of the greater Harrington area. The following criteria will be applied when evaluating materials for potential acquisition to ensure that the GHHS develops meaningful and usable collections that will support the institutional mission and best serve our community.

- A. The collection supports the GHHS's mission, programs, exhibitions, or community outreach.
- B. The collection represents key aspects of everyday life.

- C. The collection represents a significant event, person, place, historical lifestyle, business, or organization relating to the greater Harrington area or the Mispillion Hundred.
- D. The collection is in good and stable condition.
- E. The collection fills a gap in GHHS's current holdings.

The GHHS seeks original materials whenever possible; however, derivative materials will be considered for acquisition only when they will support our research collection, or the original materials are believed to no longer exist. When derivatives are accepted into the collection the donor(s) will grant permission to GHHS to make derivatives available and accessible to researchers. In reviewing potential acquisitions, the GHHS's staff will weigh the material's historical significance and value to the collection against the resources necessary to acquire, preserve, and provide access to the materials for the benefit of our users and advancement of our holdings. The GHHS should only accession materials to which it can reasonably commit resources in order to provide the appropriate level of control, care, and accessibility for the foreseeable future.

## **V. Acquisitions**

The GHHS's curator reviews incoming materials via gift, purchase, transfer, or bequest and determines what materials are accepted into the collection. The Curator may decline to accept gifts, transfers, and bequests if materials are deemed not relevant to our current collecting mission, have questionable provenance, are in poor condition, are too difficult to store and care for, have accessibility concerns (due to size, condition, and/or copyright), or may be better suited at another repository. Acquisitions will be reported to the organization on a quarterly basis.

Collections are acquired by the following methods:

- A. Donations by individuals and organizations, including bequests and anonymous donations.



- B. Field collection by staff
- C. Purchase from auction, dealers, vendors, and individuals
- D. Transfer from local or state organizations
- E. Found in the collection and for which the Society will presume ownership after a good-faith effort to locate relevant documentation and follow local and state property laws.
- F. Creation or collection of materials in the development and/or continuation of educational programs, exhibits, publications, and other Society activities including institutional records.
  - 1) Materials acquired by the GHHS must be legally and ethically acquired from persons or organizations with full authority to donate or sell these materials.
  - 2) Materials acquired by the GHHS are given with clear and unrestricted title, when possible. All items entering the collection will be recorded on a **Deed of Gift [See Appendix]** specifying the terms of the donation. While restrictions are discouraged, the Curator will collaborate with donors to arrive at restrictions that are reasonable and appropriate to make the materials accessible in a timely manner.
  - 3) Acquisitions must be appropriately documented and thoroughly researched to ensure that materials are authentic—that is, they are what they purport or are purported to be at the time of acquisition. All items must have an **Accession Form [See Appendix]** prior to being conserved, placed on display, or into storage.
  - 4) Materials will not be accessioned until receipt of a completed **Deed of Gift [See Appendix]** and an **Accession Form [See Appendix]** are completed. Once all these conditions are met, the appropriate collections staff member will assign a unique accession number.

- 5) All acquisitions will be recorded in a permanent register, with the preferred method a computerized database, maintained by the appropriate collections staff member on an ongoing basis in accordance with best practices for libraries, archives, and museums. Each accession record will document how, when, and from whom the material was acquired, along with any donor-imposed restrictions, and possible purchasing fees, see the **Accession Form [See Appendix]**
  
- 6) Multi-item archival collections may also be processed and evaluated on an item level after accession. Items deemed inappropriate for retention shall be disposed of in accordance with the any original guidelines established within the item(s) **GHHS's Deed of Gift Form (See Appendix)**, with a **Deaccession Form (See Appendix)** completed. Examples of inappropriate items include materials that are:
  - a) Duplicated within our collections.
  
  - b) Unrelated to the incoming collection and/or the GHHS's current collecting scope.
  
  - c) Damaged beyond usefulness.
  
  - d) Without enduring historical value.
  
  - e) Impractical to store or make it accessible.
  
- 7) Purchases for the collection are made within the limits of the annual Historical Acquisitions Fund or available through specially named funds. The Curator will determine and approve all purchases. All proposed purchases involving the expenditure of more than \$100 must first be approved by the organization membership by vote.
  
- 8) The Historical Acquisitions Fund exists solely for the purpose of acquiring and conserving materials for the GHHS's research collections. The budget for the Historical Acquisitions Fund will be established yearly during the annual budget review.

- 9) Under no circumstances will the GHHS knowingly purchase or accept materials via a gift/loan/bequest of any kind if there is reason to believe the materials have been stolen or obtained under questionable or unlawful circumstances. The GHHS will cooperate with the return of all such materials as appropriate.
- 10) The GHHS will exchange an item(s) in its collection for an item(s) in another institution's collection when the exchanged items are of equal value and the following conditions are met: exchanges are approved by the Curator, a **Deaccession Form (See Appendix)** has been completed and terms of the exchange are determined in writing and establish the fairness of the exchange by means of appraisal and/or other expert opinions. All written documents and agreements concerning exchanges will become part of the permanent acquisition file.
- 11) The GHHS is under no obligation to accept materials bequeathed to the society; however, when legally permissible, under the terms of the bequest, the GHHS's Curator may choose to accept bequeathed materials in part or full, and with the option to sell item(s) or use any part of the bequeathed materials for other non-collection use as long as the GHHS's intention is communicated to the executor of the estate.
- 12) The GHHS will not acquire materials under the condition that they will be on permanent display.
- 13) Board members, volunteers, or staff are not authorized to independently commit the GHHS to the acquisition of materials for the GHHS's Collections. All incoming materials will be reviewed and approved by the Curator. In the case of a dispute over an item(s), the Curator's decision may be appealed to the Board by any member of the organization. The Board decision will be final in such cases.
- 14) Donations to the GHHS may be tax deductible for the value of the property as determined by an outside appraisal, receipt, or other valid documentation as per current state and federal tax laws. The responsibility of meeting state and federal tax requirements rests with the donor. Because the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regards the GHHS

as an interested party, staff members do not make, arrange, or pay for appraisals of donated materials by donors. To avoid appearance of a conflict of interest, the GHHS may provide names of two or more appraisers without preference.

## **VI. Deaccession**

Deaccessioning is the process of permanently removing an item(s) from the GHHS's collection by transfer of ownership to another institution or individual by sale, exchange, or grant. It can also include the physical disposal of an object if its physical condition is so poor that it has no aesthetic or academic value. Deaccessioning is an integral part of collections management practiced by libraries, archives, and museums to refine and enhance the quality, use, and character of an institution's holdings. GHHS is conscious of its responsibilities to donors and the public, and staff will follow rigorous procedures, as well as applicable legal and ethical guidelines in selecting items for deaccession.

Items may be candidates for deaccessioning if they meet one of the following conditions:

- A. The item is no longer relevant to the mission of the GHHS.
- B. The item is duplicated in the society's holdings by better or more significant examples.
- C. The item is in poor physical condition, whether through damage, deterioration, infestation, or inherent vice (the quality of a material or an object to self-destruct or to be unusually difficult to maintain) and is beyond restoration to a level suitable for public display, scholarly use, or other appropriate purpose.
- D. The item can be replaced or preserved in another medium (e.g., microfilm, digital format, etc.)

The GHHS must have clear ownership of items before they are deaccessioned. Abandoned items in the collection may be subject to Delaware Statutes (pg. 18).

Items will not be discarded if such disposal will adversely affect the overall value or use of any research collection (e.g., non-Delaware items reflecting the career of a native Delawarean working in another jurisdiction).

Methods of disposal include:

- A. Transfer or exchange to another non-profit organization
- B. Return to the donor/heir (when stated in the Deed of Gift)
- C. Public auction or under sealed bid
- D. Destruction
  - 1) At no time will deaccessioned items be sold or given to members of the staff, Board of Directors, or their family members (unless that person is a former owner of the item).
  - 2) Any proceeds derived from the sale of deaccessioned items will be deposited in the Historical Acquisitions Fund to be used toward future collection acquisitions or conservation.
  - 3) Manuscript collections or individual items acquired by GHHS but unprocessed may be transferred to or exchanged with another institution if deemed appropriate, should no restrictions or other hindrances adhere to them. In such cases the society will foster a policy of "good will," by notifying a donor of its decision and encouraging the recipient institution to accession the transferred or exchanged item(s) as a gift of the original donor.
  - 4) In general, GHHS will not consider returning to a donor any accessioned or processed material to which good and proper title has been transferred. The institution at times, however, might determine a return to be appropriate and be willing to negotiate the return or transfer of donated material should the Curator believe sufficient good cause exists.

## Specific Deaccessioning Procedures

The Curator is responsible for initiating the deaccessioning of any items under their care from their own observation of problems or needs.

Deaccessions are proposed via the **Deaccession Form (See Appendix)** and reviewed by the Curator, whose recommendations may be appealed to the Board by any member of the organization. The Board decision will be final in such cases.

- A. Any item proposed for deaccessioning will be carefully researched and examined by an appropriate staff member. Such research and examination will consider the terms of the original gift or bequest (including any restrictions agreed to by the parties expressing the donor's long-term desires regarding the gift); assurances of the Society's clear title to the item(s); condition of the item(s) and its relationship to its host collection or the society's holdings at large; and the importance of the item(s) to other collection areas of the society as expressed through the solicited opinions of appropriate staff members.
- B. When any restriction or legal impediment adheres to an item(s), but the staff is convinced that said item(s) ought to be deaccessioned, the Curator shall seek the advice of legal counsel. The Curator will report deaccessions to the organization on a quarterly basis.
- C. Items to be deaccessioned for sale, transfer, or exchange that might have significant value will require a written appraisal as appropriate before deaccessioning and disposal. The Curator will report all staff recommendations for deaccession to the Board on a completed **Deaccession Form (See Appendix)**. The Board shall approve or disapprove of items selected for deaccession, with final approval given by the Curator. IRS regulations may require the Society to notify the donor and the IRS if gift property is sold, exchanged, or otherwise transferred within two years of its acquisition.
- D. A full and detailed record of items deaccessioned by GHHS will be maintained in an appropriate deaccession record file, utilizing the

**Deaccession Form (See Appendix).** Such records will include citations to the original accessioning of the items, any supplementary deeds, agreements, or other legal instruments affecting the nature of the gift, purchase, or bequest, and the method and terms of disposal. The Curator will report all plans for deaccessioning sales, transfers, and exchanges to the organization on a regular basis.

- E. The preferred method of disposal of deaccessioned items will be through sale, gift to or exchange with other not-for-profit educational institutions. The Society's staff will determine, through research and negotiation, which institutions might be proper repositories for deaccessioned material and will, with the Curator's approval, plan for such transfers.
- F. When deaccessioned items are to be sold, the Curator will determine the method of sale. Significant historical pieces may be sold at public auction by a third party. Other materials may be sold at bid with notice to antiquarian book and manuscript dealers, antique dealers, etc., as appropriate. GHHS generally will hold no public sales. No member of the Society's board, staff, or anyone whose association with the Society might give them an advantage in acquiring the item(s), shall be permitted to acquire directly or indirectly deaccessioned items, wholly or in part, or otherwise benefit from their sale or trade (unless that person is a former owner of the item).

## **VII. Loans**

### **Outgoing Loans**

- A. Loans to other nonprofit organizations are encouraged to increase access to GHHS's collection and to develop partnerships with other historical and cultural institutions. Loans will strive to be consistent with the needs of the Society's education, research, and exhibition programs while serving the needs of long-term collection preservation. GHHS does not make loans to private individuals.

- B. All loan requests and loan renewals will be reviewed by the Curator for approval.
- C. The GHHS does not make permanent loans or loans for an indefinite period. Loans will be governed by a **Written Loan Policy (See Appendix)** with a stipulated end period. Loan periods will generally be set for no more than two years, except when loaning for a longer period presents a compelling public benefit and has been approved by the Curator.
- D. Occasionally the GHHS may be asked to take collection items offsite for special community events or programs. If approved by the Curator, the loaned item(s) shall be accompanied by a staff member, who will function as courier, exhibit installer, and monitor.
- E. All outgoing loan costs will be paid by the borrower (including but not limited to appraisal, conservation, insurance, packing, shipping, etc.). The GHHS reserves the right to charge loan fees in special circumstances to help defray the cost of administering the loan. The borrowing organization must provide a certificate of insurance. In situations where there is a strong benefit to having an item on loan in an underrepresented community or at a small organization that may not be able to bear such a cost, approval can be obtained from the Curator to waive some or all the costs.
- F. All outgoing loans must have a completed **Outgoing Loan Form (See Appendix)** completed prior to the item(s) leaving GHHS procession.

## **Incoming Loans**

- A. Items may be borrowed from other institutions and individuals for exhibitions and for short-term assessment for possible acquisition. The GHHS will not borrow or exhibit materials as a favor to individuals or for the purpose of enhancing their market value for the owner's resale purposes.



- B. Though the GHHS is currently custodian for a small number of long-term, indefinite, and “permanent” loans, and has some materials on long-term loan at other organizations, GHHS will not enter into any new loan agreements without stipulating an end date for the loan period. Long-term loans for a period of two years or more will be approved only when there is a compelling public benefit for doing so and with approval from the Curator.
- C. Loans will be governed by a **Written Loan Policy (See Appendix)**. Materials on loan to GHHS will be given the same quality of handling, environmental control, insurance, and security as material in the permanent collection. Special care will be provided to materials when requested by the lender and approved on the loan agreement. The treasurer will be notified of loan values to ensure adequate insurance coverage for items.
- D. In accordance with standard professional practice, incoming loans are typically for the benefit of GHHS. Therefore, GHHS will pay all expenses related to incoming loans. Exceptions may be made in special situations and in partnership with the lender. Expenses for incoming loans must be approved by the Curator and the Board.

## VIII. Objects in Custody

GHHS is accountable for all items solicited for acquisition, loan, or study at the moment they are received by GHHS or a member of its staff. It is therefore imperative that all such materials be documented, handled, and stored professionally and appropriately from the moment GHHS assumes custody of the materials.

Solicited material left in the custody of GHHS for acquisition consideration or loan must be accompanied by a signed Temporary Custody Receipt, Deed of Gift, or Loan Agreement. The Temporary Custody Receipt documents receipt of the material, GHHS’s responsibilities, and how materials will be handled if the depositor does not retrieve items within a specified period.

As a rule, GHHS does not accept unsolicited material for acquisition, loan, or study purposes. Unless the unsolicited material is determined to be

extraordinarily compelling, unsolicited material received by mail or shipper will be returned to the address from which it was sent as soon as possible following the receipt of that material by GHHS. When no return contact information is provided, GHHS staff may dispose of the material with approval from the Curator. Material deemed compelling can be submitted to the Curator for possible accession.

## **Found in Collections Policy**

Organizations with a long history of collecting prior to the establishment of current professional best practices have several “found in collection” (hereinafter FIC) items for which the legal status and provenance have not been properly recorded.

FIC items material may include the following.

- A. Items presumed to be part of the collection that cannot be tied to a particular donor or accession number.
- B. Items that may have been accessioned and later separated from an accession number or catalog number.
- C. Material owned by GHHS, but not recorded or formally accessioned.
- D. Material received for acquisition consideration, subsequently rejected, and unclaimed by donor.
- E. Unclaimed permanent or indefinite loans

When FIC material is discovered, it should be assigned an FIC number and recorded in an FIC log or other appropriate cataloging database for tracking purposes. Because there are various ways in which material becomes FIC, material should undergo thorough investigation before any action, such as accessioning, processing, conservation, or disposal takes place.

In situations where no provenance can be found, or when the owner of the materials cannot be contacted, accessioning, disposal, or conservation of such works may be subject to the following Delaware statutes:

Abandoned Cultural Property Act, House Bill 231  
149th General Assembly (2017 - 2018)

<https://legis.delaware.gov/json/BillDetail/GenerateHtmlDocumentSessionLaw?sessionLawId=25957&docTypeId=13&sessionLawName=chp213.html>

## **IX. Collections Documentation and Care**

GHHS accepts the responsibility of documenting our collection and protecting it from damage, deterioration, theft, or other loss to promote the collection's long-term preservation, accessibility, and use.

Collections documentation and care is a collaborative and active process. Though all the GHHS staff have a role to play in collections stewardship, the primary responsibility for collections care is vested in the role of Curator.

Collections care comprises a broad range of initiative-taking and responsive activities, from collection-level risk assessment and preventative risk management to item-level conservation. In allocating our resources, the GHHS recognizes that preventive care is the most effective and economical means of ensuring the long-term preservation of its collections.

Furthermore, the GHHS recognizes that proactive collections stewardship must be an institutional priority to prevent loss or damage to the collections, rather than waiting for damage to occur.

### **Collections Documentation**

Up-to-date, dependable, and comprehensive documentation of the collection is essential to establishing physical, intellectual, administrative, and legal control. GHHS will maintain records on all items accepted into the permanent collections. These records are maintained to establish clear title and provide accountability.

- A. GHHS strives to maintain collections documentation according to current accepted professional practices.

- B. These records will be kept in both electronic and paper format.
- C. Each discrete collection—Library, Manuscripts & Archives, Photographs & Prints, Audio/Visual, Museum Collection, and Digital—will use the GHHS approved methods to maintain these records.
- D. Legal and administrative records documenting accessioning, deaccessioning, incoming loans, and outgoing loans will be maintained and retained in perpetuity as part of the GHHS permanent record.
- E. Legal and administrative records shall be safeguarded. Duplicate copies of critical records shall be maintained in paper format in addition to electronic format.
- F. All known provenance and other relevant historical information related to the materials should be documented by GHHS staff at the time of acquisition and kept in the accession file and/or records.
- G. Only trained staff, volunteers, interns, and supervised researchers are permitted to utilize original collection records.
- H. Under no circumstances should the original collection records be removed from the building without prior approval of the Curator.
- I. The following information is considered privileged and will not be shared with third parties unless required under the law or necessary to obtain insurance coverage:
  - 1) Name of donors or lenders who have requested that they remain anonymous.
  - 2) Personal contact information for all donors and lenders unless permission is granted by said donor and/or lender.

- 3) Appraised or estimated values for collection and loan materials.
- 4) Collection storage locations.

## Care Policy

All GHHS staff, boards, and volunteers are responsible for and contribute to the stewardship of collections. Collections staff particularly follow accepted professional practices concerning care, preservation, storage, security, and use of all items in the GHHS's collection.

The GHHS's collections staff will make all efforts to monitor and protect all items in the GHHS's collection from careless handling, vandalism, theft, fire, water, infestations, exposure to environmental hazards (including excessive light, pollution, humidity, etc.) and natural disasters.

- A. **Storage and Housing**. Proper storage and housing are the first steps for proper long-term care and preservation of our collections.
  1. GHHS shall provide safe and appropriate storage of collection materials (including loans).
  2. Storage areas must provide adequate space for the orderly arrangement and safe movement of collections.
  3. The GHHS's collections staff will determine storage solutions that minimize physical stress and exposure to harmful environmental conditions.
  4. Collections housing and storage needs will be re-evaluated as needed by the Curator.
  5. The GHHS's collections staff will identify practical ways to house and store materials to ensure long-term preservation within existing budgetary and space constraints.

B. **Environmental Control** (temperature and relative humidity). GHHS understands that controlling the air quality, temperature, and humidity levels is challenging, but an essential ongoing activity that ensures long-term preservation of our collections. More detailed information is available in the **Environmental Monitoring Policy**, which can be found in the Policy Manual.

1. GHHS's collections team will establish target environmental standards for all storage, work areas, and galleries where collections are present (and will identify portions of the collection that require special environmental conditions.)
2. GHHS board, staff, and volunteers are not permitted to adjust temperature controls within collection storage areas (excluding staff offices and event spaces) without approval from the Curator. If the request is denied, the board will vote and resolve the dispute.
3. GHHS collections staff, specifically the Curator, is responsible for monitoring, extracting data, and reporting environmental conditions monthly.
4. GHHS staff will report any issues to the Curator in a timely manner to ensure the safety of our collections.
5. The Curator and appropriate GHHS staff are responsible for anticipating, identifying, prioritizing, and raising funds for necessary improvements needed to maintain suitable collection environmental conditions in accordance with professional standards.

C. **Light Exposure**. The collections staff are responsible for setting reasonable limits on light levels and exposure; in doing so, the collections staff will seek a balance between the GHHS's responsibility to preserve its collections while making them accessible to GHHS staff, researchers, and the public. More detailed

information is available in the **Lighting Exposure Policy**, which can be found in the General Policy Manual.

1. Exhibition lighting including galleries, display cases, or collections pulled for other forms of display or use should adhere to professional standards for light level exposure.
2. Collections on display should be regularly monitored and rotated to assist with not overexposing them to light.
3. When possible, surrogate copies should be used in place of originals that are vulnerable to light damage including, but not limited to, photographic and print materials.
4. Collection storage areas should remain in the dark when no staff is present.

D. **Pest Management and Housekeeping**. GHHS strives to preserve its collections, in part, through the implementation and periodic review of a proactive, integrated pest management program to protect its collections from infestation and pest-related damage. More detailed information is available in the **Pest Management and Housekeeping Policy**, which can be found in the Policy Manual.

1. Control and monitor the presence of food, drink, plants, and other materials with the potential to harbor or attract pests.
2. GHHS collections staff will regularly monitor the collections storage and exhibit galleries for signs of infestations or activities.
3. Any sighting of pests should be reported immediately to the Curator.
4. Storage areas must be routinely cleaned with collection-safe cleaning agents, swept, or vacuumed, and trash disposed of regularly.

E. **Handling and Transporting Collections.** To ensure the safety of our collections, it is crucial for staff, interns, and volunteers to use caution when handling, moving, and/or transporting collections.

1. Only trained staff, interns, and volunteers can move and/or transport collection items. A collections staff member must supervise any non-collections staff, intern(s) and/or volunteer(s) who assist with the movement or transportation of collections.
2. All staff, interns, and volunteers will adhere to current professional standards when handling collections.
3. Staff will limit handling and moving collections whenever possible, as these activities increase the risk of damage and loss.
4. Oversized or heavy item(s) shall not be moved by a single individual. Two or more people should assist to prevent injury or damage.
5. All approved outgoing loans will be packed, shipped, and arranged by the Curator.

F. **Collections Disaster Plan.** GHHS actively promotes a safety culture for both staff and collections. A comprehensive collections disaster plan is maintained and regularly updated to follow current professional standards. Please consult the **GHHS's Disaster Preparedness Plan**, which can be found in the Policy Manual for additional information.

G. **Collections Preservation and Conservation.** Preservation is the protection of cultural and historical materials through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage and that prevent loss of information content. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural and historical materials by



providing appropriate housing, environmental controls, and regular monitoring. Conservation is the profession devoted to the preservation of cultural and historical materials for the future. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education. Each year GHHS designates a portion of funding from the available funds to be used strictly for preservation and conservation needs. This amount will be determined during the annual budget process.

1. All conservation fund requests must be submitted to the Curator. Request for items to be conservation may come from any member to the Curator for consideration.
2. The Curator will review the use of conservation funds.
3. Conservation funds will, to the best of the Curator's abilities, be fairly distributed across collection types (Library, Manuscript & Archives, Photograph & Print, Audio/Visual, Museum, and Digital), so that no single collection benefits more than another.
4. Any conservation cost over \$100.00 must receive GHHS Board approval.

## **X. Collection Access and Use**

As a private non-profit collecting institution, the GHHS recognizes its responsibility to provide public access to its collections and related documentation while safeguarding these materials for future generations. As such, the Curator is responsible for establishing procedures to encourage the use of materials while incorporating appropriate measures to ensure preservation and control over the collection.

GHHS makes its collections accessible to the public through on-site and remote research and reference services and reproduction and licensing services. The Greater Harrington Historical Society also provides access via exhibitions, programs, publications, online resources, and loans to other institutions. In all of these endeavors, GHHS staff will seek to provide the

highest level of service to the public within available resources by eliminating unnecessary barriers to the GHHS's offerings; maintaining accessible, well documented, and well organized collections; implementing equitable service and access practices; seeking out and implementing appropriate technology solutions to increase the discoverability and usability of collections; and providing accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests for information or access to collections. In keeping with professional codes of ethics governing the work of archivists, librarians, museum curators, and public history organizations, the GHHS will uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor the organization's resources. To the extent permitted under the law, the GHHS will also protect each researcher's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted.

## **General Research Guidelines**

In making its collections available for use by outside researchers, the GHHS's collections staff:

- A. Will always supervise outside researchers while they have access to collection materials and original documentation.
- B. Will establish handling guidelines to ensure the safety and integrity of collection materials, including limiting handling to GHHS staff for certain categories of material.
- C. May limit public access to the collections based on the material's condition, fragility, size, storage location, and other reasonable factors.
- D. May limit the time allotted to assist each researcher in order to ensure that staff time and other resources are allocated reasonably and equitably.
- E. Will take appropriate measures to prevent privileged or restricted information from being made accessible to the public.

- F. May implement a reasonable schedule of fees to offset the costs of providing access to collection materials and other research services.

## **Guidelines for Access to Collections**

Most of the GHHS's collection is available for on-site use by researchers, and most of the non-image and non-artifact materials are to be cataloged in online public access catalogs. Apart from fragile, physically compromised, and extremely valuable materials, collections may be accessed through the staff member on duty. The audio/visual and artifact-based portions of the GHHS's collection are made available to the public on a more limited basis. The Curator will be responsible for developing, promulgating, and enforcing rules and regulations governing public access to and use of the research collections to ensure the security and integrity of the materials, restrict access to confidential or restricted information, and protect intellectual property rights of the copyright owners while striving to increase the accessibility and usability of these materials. Collections are cataloged to facilitate discovery and use of these holdings, and GHHS staff are actively working to increase the number of online catalog records describing holdings.

\*Additional Guidelines regarding Access to Audio-visual Materials: Audio/visual materials that have not been digitized may not be available for access to researchers depending on the accessibility of playback technology. Digitized audio-visual materials that are not available online will be made available via patron access computers in the Administrative Office.

\*\* Additional Guidelines regarding Access to Museum Collections: Due to the extensive resources required to handle and retrieve the artifact-based category of collections material, on-site, physical access to these holdings will be limited to appointments made in advance for researchers who are able to demonstrate that in-person access is required to support their research needs. GHHS staff are actively working on a museum collection inventory which will lead to an increase in the number of online catalog records describing these holdings. As catalog records (and images) for the museum collections continue to be added to the public access catalogs, GHHS also anticipates that electronic records and digital surrogates will

become the primary means by which many researchers will access the museum collections.

## **Reproductions**

### **Intellectual Property, Educational Fair Use, and Library Copying**

- A. GHHS respects the intellectual property of others (including but not limited to copyright, personality rights, publicity rights, and trademark) and will take reasonable precautions to identify and document these rights so that they are not infringed. GHHS follows all federal copyright laws and guidelines. The collections of GHHS contain materials for which we do not possess copyright. These items include, but are not limited to, books, pamphlets, films, oral histories, manuscripts, photographs, works of art, and various digital media. These items are provided for educational and research purposes as provided for under the fair use section of the United States copyright law. [The educational fair use guidelines apply to material used in educational institutions and for educational purposes. Libraries, museums, and other nonprofit institutions are considered educational institutions under most educational fair use guidelines when they engage in nonprofit instructional, research, or scholarly activities for educational purposes. GHHS staff will provide information regarding the status of its collections; however, it is the responsibility of researchers/users to determine the copyright status of materials and to comply with all copyright laws.
  
- B. GHHS protects its own intellectual property as a valuable resource with the potential to be leveraged in support of ongoing collections care and other organizational activities. GHHS will, however, seek to strike a balance between protectionism and freedom of access and use by waiving or reducing licensing fees for usages related to the institutional mission (e.g. for non-profit or educational use). GHHS will exercise due diligence in informing researchers and licensees of use restrictions on copied materials and in providing appropriate citation and credit information for such material, but final determination of copyright always falls upon the user, not GHHS.

- C. GHHS maintains and publishes electronic databases which contain digital collections content and collections metadata. Use of these materials must be consistent with the policies and procedures of the GHSS. The Society also licenses the non-commercial use of proprietary, electronic databases for the use of staff and researchers for educational and research purposes only. Anyone wanting to publish, copy, redistribute, sell, or alter the information contained within these databases should contact the appropriate vendor or publisher.
- D. GHHS staff shall inform and educate applicable staff and patrons concerning the guidelines of Fair Use and Library Photocopying so as not to unduly restrict the use of materials while also protecting the rights of copyright holders.

The Copyright Act at 17 U.S.C. § 108 provides a set of rules regarding library reproductions. In general, a library or archive open to the public (or whose collection is available to specialized researchers other than those affiliated with the institution) will not be liable for copyright infringement based upon a library patron's unsupervised use of reproducing equipment located on its premises, provided that the copying equipment displays a notice that the making of a copy may be subject to the copyright law. When patrons ask the library to copy text works the library may make only one copy of such works per patron. Copying a complete work from the library collection is prohibited unless the work is not available at a "fair price." This is generally the case when the work is out of print and used copies are not available at a reasonable price. The copying, whether performed by the library or whether unsupervised by the library patron, cannot be for a commercial advantage. If a library or educational institution makes a copy of a work for a patron, it must include the actual copyright notice from the material being copied, for example, "© 1953, Grove Press." Under 17 U.S.C. § 108(a), if the material contains no copyright notice, the material should be stamped with the notice, "This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)."

## **Use of Reproductions**

GHHS reserves the right to limit use, reproduction, or publication of all materials regardless of copyright status.

- A. Researchers may be charged a fee for the reproduction of collections. Fee schedules will be made available by Collections staff. All reproductions must be fully credited when used. Reproduced materials may be subject to copyright.
- B. Collections staff will not reproduce an item if it could be damaged in the process.
- C. This section does not cover the physical reproduction of three-dimensional artifacts. Anyone wishing to reproduce an artifact should contact the appropriate staff for more information.
- D. Artwork in the collection may be reproduced. However, it is the responsibility of the patron to research and receive permission from any artists that may still have the divisible rights of reproduction for their artwork under the copyright law and the Visual Artists Rights Act.

## **XI. Damage to Collection(s)/Artifacts**

### **ACCIDENTAL DAMAGE TO COLLECTIONS**

#### **Discovery**

This category includes damage to collections items caused by accidents such as dropping, impact, mishandling, or by acts of vandalism. These incidents may occur in exhibit areas, in storage or during transit. If possible do not move objects until instructions are received (by phone or in person) from a conservator. Note: Any damage done to the collection must be documented on the Artifact Incident Report form, a copy of which is located in the Appendix of the policy.

**FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW IN THE ORDER GIVEN**

**1st Notification**                      Contact immediate supervisor.

**2nd Notification**                      Contact the Curator directly.

Doug Poore 302-670-6158 (Cell)

The curator will organize and manage the recovery process. It is also their responsibility to notify the appropriate board members.

## **COLLAPSE OF SHELVING OR STRUCTURAL FAILURES**

Damage to collections caused by collapse of a display case, storage shelf, or  
a  
structural building issue.

### **Discovery**

Briefly determine how extensive the damage is. If people are injured or are in imminent danger, contact the fire department immediately. Do not try to halt damage or save collections. Once you have a rough idea of damage, leave until the area can safely be assessed further.

## **FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW IN THE ORDER GIVEN**

### **1st Notification**

Contact:

1. 911 if needed

2. Immediate Supervisor

(Who will report the incident to the Curator).

They will make decisions in conjunction with local authorities if necessary, regarding the safety of personnel remaining in the area.

### **2nd Notification**

The Facilities Manager will contact the Curator if not already on-site. Once it has been determined that it is safe to remain in or re-enter the area, the Assessment Director and Facilities Manager will inspect the building and determine affected areas and collections.

### **3rd Notification**

If collections have been affected, the Assessment Director will notify the appropriate Team Leader(s) to form assessment teams. The Conservation Manager will also be notified and will be available to assist. The assessment teams will continue the response from this point.



**Media Inquiries**

Please direct all requests for information from the news media to the Curator or highest-ranking Board Member on site.

## **XII. Digital Collections**

**Please see GHHS's Digital Collections Policy for additional information.** This policy can be found in the Policy Manual.

## **XII. Appendix**

- i. Deed of Gift Form**
- ii. Accession Form**
- iii. Deaccession and Disposal Form**
- iv. Written Loan Policy**
  - a. Outgoing Loan Form**
  - b. Incoming Loan Form**
- v. Artifact Incident/Damage Report**