

**Wingfield Heritage House Museum
Collection Management Policy**

Adopted December 12, 2023

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Collections Management Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to document the policies that guide the acquisition, use, and care of the museum collections of the Village of Ruidoso and the Wingfield Heritage House Museum (WHHM), consistent with the mission of the institution and with professional museum standards.

The collections are intended to enhance the mission of the WHHM and preserve Ruidoso’s material, cultural, and natural heritage. The WHHM seeks to provide the best care possible for its collections using professional standards, within the limitations of the facilities, staffing, and budget.

B. Collections Definitions

The WHHM subscribes to a policy of selective acquisition to strengthen the collections. WHHM seeks acquisitions of exceptional quality through a program of active donor cultivation. Objects considered for acquisition by WHHM shall be classified in the following categories:

- **Permanent Collection:** Objects accessioned into the permanent collection are intended to be retained permanently. Objects in the Permanent Collection may be used for research and exhibition, but WHHM avoids using Permanent Collection objects in any way that is detrimental to their preservation. Objects in the Permanent Collection are accessioned, cataloged and tracked by museum staff and may be removed from the collection through the deaccession process defined in this policy.
- **Education Collection:** Objects designated as part of the Education Collection are intended to be used by staff and visitors for programs, demonstrations, and/or hands-on use. They are intentionally selected for handling and use, with the understanding that this will shorten the life of the objects. Objects acquired for use in exhibitions but not intended for the Permanent Collection also fall into this category. Education collection objects may be historic or reproductions, and as such may be confused with permanent collection objects. Education objects will be distinguished by putting an “E” in front of the object ID number. When these objects are no longer useful for education purposes, museum staff record the removal of these objects from the collection, but the objects do not go through the deaccession process.
- **Reference Collection:** The museum collects published books and pamphlets that are used primarily for research and reference of staff. The collection includes commonly available books or copies of publications held in the Permanent Collection that are designated for regular handling and use. They are not accessioned into the Permanent Collection and are cataloged with an “R” in front of the object ID number. Material may be weeded from the Reference Collection at the discretion of the Museum Manager.

C. Ownership of Collections

All objects, photographs, and archival materials received by WHHM become property of the Village of Ruidoso.

II. Collecting Focus

A. Mission

The WHHM Permanent Collection is developed to support the WHHM mission:

The Wingfield Heritage House Museum serves as a gathering place that tells the story and preserves the history of Ruidoso and the surrounding area through education, collaboration, and community engagement.

B. Scope

It is the intention of the WHHM to acquire historic objects to foster awareness and understanding of the history and multi-cultural heritage of Ruidoso and its environs. The WHHM collection focuses on objects that have a direct association with Ruidoso history and the surrounding region. The collection includes historic photographs, documents, 3-D artifacts, institutional history materials, and the Wingfield House.

Objects may also be considered for the collection if they would contribute significantly to the mission of the WHHM. Objects of this class may include typical pieces of American material culture such as furniture, clothing, tools and equipment, product packages, etc., which have been mass-produced and nationally distributed. Such objects may represent similar objects that were used in Ruidoso. Such objects are particularly useful for the development of interpretive exhibits, especially when a suitable collection of Ruidoso associated objects is not available.

III. Delegation of Authority

A. Village of Ruidoso Council (The “Council”)

The Village of Ruidoso Council delegates authority for the management of the WHHM collection to the Ruidoso Cultural and Natural History Committee and the museum staff. The Council approves the appointment of members of the Committee.

B. The Ruidoso Cultural and Natural History Committee (The “Committee”)

The Committee reviews Museum Manager’s recommendations and approves donations and purchases for the Permanent Collection. The Committee reviews and approves the deaccessioning of objects from the Permanent Collection, as well as loans from the collection to other institutions. The Committee also provides feedback and review of new museum policies and policy updates.

C. Museum Manager

The responsibility for the daily implementation of this policy lies with the Museum Manager and the WHHM staff. The Museum Manager will review possible donations, deaccessions, and loans for the Permanent Collection and present recommendations to the Committee. The Museum Manager approves acquisition and disposal of objects in the Education Collection. Under the direction of the Museum Manager, WHHM staff have the responsibility of maintaining records of the collection, caring for objects, managing access to the collection, and facilitating the interpretation and use of the collection.

IV. Acquisitions

A. General Principles

WHHM may acquire objects through gifts, bequests, purchases, property abandonment, field collection, or exchange. WHHM does not accept restrictions on gifts; however, in special circumstances, such restrictions may be presented to and approved by the Committee. WHHM shall require donors to transfer all rights of reproduction unless the donor does not own such rights or the gift is made by a living artist of the artist's own work. In such cases, WHHM will seek a nonexclusive right of reproduction from the copyright owner if they do not desire to transfer copyright.

B. Criteria for Acquisition

- The acquisition must be relevant to WHHM's mission.
- The present owner must have clear title and must have obtained the object legally.
- WHHM must be in a position to care properly for the proposed acquisition.
- Title to all acquisitions must be free and clear without restrictions or limitations as to use or future disposition. Gifts may be displayed, stored, loaned, maintained, or disposed of at the sole discretion of WHHM.
- All objects should be in, and or capable of being returned to, acceptable and stable exhibition condition, safe for long term preservation, unless the deteriorated physical condition is integral to the significance of the object.
- All acquisitions should be free of physically hazardous attributes. Only objects of special relevance to the mission of WHHM may be accepted with some physically hazardous attributes, with the approval of the Committee.
- If the acquisition is to be purchased, funding must be arranged in advance.
- Generally, duplication of objects already in the collection should be avoided. However, a duplicate object may be considered for acquisition, especially if the object in the collection is in poorer condition or duplicate objects are desired for exhibition, education, or research purposes.

C. Objects with Unclear Title

Every object in the custody of WHHM should be covered by a signed gift agreement, proof of purchase, an active loan agreement, or a temporary custody document. However, objects sometimes become disassociated from their paperwork, appropriate paperwork is not completed, or a lender cannot be located after the loan period ends. If WHHM ownership cannot be established (or the original owner or heirs cannot be located), an item will be considered abandoned property as defined by the Abandoned Cultural Properties Act (§§ 18-10-1 to 18-10-5, NMSA 1978, as may be amended). The Village is under no obligation to receive, accept, or maintain unsolicited property left at the museum or on other Village property. Unsolicited property left on Village property may be discarded at the Village's sole discretion.

V. Accessions

A. Accessioning Into the Permanent Collection

Objects acquired for the Permanent Collection will be accessioned into the collection. According to the American Alliance of Museums, "Accessioning is the formal act of legally accepting an object or objects to the category of material that a museum holds in the public trust." Objects may be accessioned into the Permanent Collection with the approval of the Committee. Items acquired for the Permanent Collection should be accessioned shortly after transfer of title to WHHM. Upon the completion of the accessioning process, WHHM assumes responsibility for the ongoing care and management of the object to the standards set for the Permanent Collection. Accessioned objects can only be removed from the Permanent Collection through the deaccessioning process. Accessioned objects will be inventoried annually.

B. Accession and Registration Records

Accession Records will be maintained by the Museum Manager or delegated staff member. At a minimum, records for each accession will include the accession number, the date of acquisition, the acquisition source, a brief description, a record of the physical condition, a digital photograph, information about the provenance, and the name of the person recording the accession.

Every artifact entering the Permanent Collection, regardless of acquisition method, shall receive a catalogue number which includes an accession number. The definitive record of the collections is the registration system which consists of the Accession and Catalog records. Most records are stored electronically in PastPerfect, except for signed original Temporary Custody Receipts and Deeds of Gift, which are stored in a non-public space at the museum. A copy of the database is kept offsite. Registration information shall be assembled and maintained in perpetuity.

VI. Deaccessions

A. General Principles

In order to maintain the collection in accordance with the mission of WHHM, it may be necessary or desirable to terminate ownership of certain objects. When properly used, deaccessioning can assist WHHM in defining its mission, planning for the future, and improving the collections.

Accessioned objects can only be removed from the Permanent Collection through the deaccession process. The deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, and scrupulous and will be thoroughly and uniformly documented and undertaken in accordance with current professional standards and ethics. Records of the object and the process will be retained by WHHM.

All disposals shall be done in accordance with any relevant laws or Village policies addressing the restrictions or ethics associated with the disposal of Village property. Any monies received from the sale of objects will go back into the development and care of the collections.

B. Criteria for Deaccession

Museum objects to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Is no longer relevant to the mission of WHHM.
- Has little known potential use for research, exhibition, or educational programs in the foreseeable future.
- Has deteriorated beyond usefulness, is damaged beyond repair, or its condition endangers other objects in the collection.
- Has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than two years.
- Is a hazard to the safety of staff and/or visitors.
- The object's authenticity or identity has been proven false.
- Cannot be properly preserved or cared for by WHHM.
- Duplicates one or more objects in the collections that are of higher quality and does not serve an alternative use or research purpose.
- A more appropriate repository for the object has been identified.
- The object is subject to repatriation under the provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act or does not comply with other laws and treaties.
- Contradicts current policies on culturally sensitive materials.
- Was erroneously accessioned into the collections (e.g., supplies and tools, exhibit props and fixtures, etc.).

C. Deaccession Process

Recommendations for deaccessioning and/or disposal of objects originates with the Museum Manager who reviews criteria for deaccessioning, as well as any legal conditions relating to the object. Museum Manager will also notify Village Manager or designee of upcoming deaccession proposals. Museum Manager will present deaccession recommendations to Committee. Committee will review each object and its relevance to the WHHM's present and future, along with potential public relations or ethical issues surrounding a particular object. Committee will vote on whether to approve deaccession and make recommendations on disposal of the object.

Museum Manager will coordinate disposal of object according to museum best practices and any applicable laws.

D. Disposal of Deaccessioned Objects

A deaccessioned item shall not be returned to the donor. In compliance with “New Mexico Statutes, Chapter 13 Public Purchases and Property, Article 6,” a deaccessioned item can be:

- transferred or gifted to other public entities.
- exchanged for other objects with a federal, state, municipal, tribal or public educational institution whose mission is relevant to the deaccessioned item. The recipient shall provide appropriate care and access to the object.
- sold at public auction or consigned.
- repatriated in accordance with NAGPRA policies, UNESCO treaties, and other relevant policies on culturally sensitive materials.
- destroyed, via witnessed destruction if the object cannot be repaired, conserved, sold, or if it presents a physical danger to life or property.

VII. Loans

A. General Principles

In order to further the mission of WHHM, museum staff may grant or request loans of objects for one year with the approval of the Museum Manager. Loans with terms longer than one year may be approved by the Committee. A loan agreement signed by the lender and the borrower must accompany each incoming or outgoing loan.

B. Incoming Loans

WHHM may borrow objects for special exhibits, study, or other interpretive activities. Loans will only be sought under the following conditions:

- Objects loaned to WHHM will be accepted if they further the mission of WHHM and do not create a conflict of interest between the museum and lender.
- WHHM retains full decision-making authority over the content and presentation of exhibitions but may consult with lenders on the significance of borrowed objects in the exhibition.
- The duration of loan periods should be one year, or less, unless the Committee approves a longer term under special circumstances. All loans are to be for a specific time period, with renewal options specified.
- Objects on loan to WHHM will be handled, stored, and exhibited as required by the lending institution and will be accorded the same care as objects in WHHM collection.

- All borrowed objects must be accompanied by a written loan agreement signed by both parties, stating mutually agreed terms.
- All borrowed objects will be recorded in accordance with accepted Museum standards.
- It is the responsibility of the lender to establish the value of all incoming loaned objects.
- All incoming loaned objects will be covered by the Village insurance program upon arrival at the museum, unless other arrangements are stipulated in the loan agreement.
- A condition report will be completed promptly when the object is received by WHHM. Evidence of damage at the time of receipt or while in WHHM custody will be reported immediately to the lender.

C. Outgoing Loans

WHHM may lend objects to responsible institutions for special exhibits, study, or conservation. Loans will only be made under the following conditions:

- The object is in stable condition and will not be damaged by shipment, exhibition or any other educational use proposed by the borrower.
- The object is not used for purposes other than static exhibition or study unless approval for other uses is recommended by the Museum Manager.
- The borrowing institution provides proof of insurance coverage that safeguards the object while in transit and during exhibition or other approved use, in accordance with acceptable professional museum standards. Insurance will be “wall-to-wall,” that is, from point of departure until the insured item is received back at WHHM.
- The object has been properly recorded and documented and bears an identification number.
- The borrowing institution agrees to promptly report any changes in stability, condition, or use to the Museum Manager.
- The borrowing institution agrees to clean, repair, or treat the object only with prior approval of the Museum Manager.
- The duration of any outgoing loan period is one year or less, but renewals can be offered. Exceptions may be approved by the Committee.
- Loans will be made only to organizations that can properly care for and exhibit the object according to accepted professional standards. Only trained museum staff will be permitted to handle, move, pack or unpack objects(s) and the borrower will always exercise due care.
- Objects will be loaned only with a written loan agreement signed by both parties, stating mutually agreed terms.
- WHHM will establish the value for outgoing loaned objects.

- Condition reports will be completed prior to the loan and again when the object returns to WHHM. A copy of the first condition report accompanies the object to the borrower.
- WHHM reserves the right to recall the loan at any time if the conditions are not met.
- Due to WHHM's public trust responsibilities for the collections, loans from the permanent collection to non-museum entities are only made in rare circumstances in support of the WHHM mission when the loan does not jeopardize the level of care provided to the object or limit public access to the object.

D. Temporary Custody of Objects

Objects may be placed in the temporary custody of WHHM before they are presented to the Committee for acquisition or before a loan agreement can be completed. Temporary custody may be used for purposes such as identification, review for possible donation, conservation, or examination for purchase. A Temporary Custody Receipt is created, recording information about incoming objects and their owner.

- Placement of an object in the temporary custody of WHHM does not constitute a transfer of legal title to WHHM.
- Objects on temporary deposit will be stored properly and monitored.
- WHHM will not re-house, catalog, or make objects placed in its temporary custody available to researchers.
- Objects may remain in Temporary Custody for 180 days. A written loan agreement is needed for a longer period.

VIII. Access and Security for Collections and Collection Records

To promote its mission, WHHM works to provide access to the Museum's collections and promote appreciation of their significance. Presenting the collection through the Museum's own exhibitions and loans to other institutions is one of the primary means for achieving this goal. Additionally, WHHM shall support, to the extent possible, continuing scholarly investigation and research in order to document, publish, and advance understanding of WHHM's mission and collection, as well as to contribute to broader academic and public discourse.

- WHHM's collection storage areas are closed to the general public to control the security of the collection and ensure safe handling of objects. In providing physical access to collections, priority will be given to the needs of WHHM staff and volunteers, as well as the preservation of the object.
- Researchers who wish to access the collections will be granted access by the Museum Manager when staff is available to supervise. During normal operating hours, the collections shall be accessible for legitimate research and study by responsible individuals, subject to procedures necessary to safeguard the objects and to restrictions imposed by limitations of space and facilities, exhibition requirements, and availability of appropriate staff.

- Staff may use their discretion to determine if an object is suitable for access, based on factors such as confidentiality or physical stability.
- WHHM shall work to digitize and provide electronic access for all collected materials.
- The Museum Manager must approve all reproduction, imaging, and other similar uses of objects and documents in its collections. WHHM commits to respecting intellectual property rights and copyrights.
- Collections documentation may be available to outside researchers, but information on sensitive or restricted data may be restricted by applicable public law. Information that is considered privileged includes addresses of donors and lenders, location of objects, valuation of objects, identity of donors and lenders when anonymity is requested, information that is restricted intellectual property, and original field collection locations of protected sites.
- WHHM shall provide safe conditions for all collections, including permanent collections and loans, by providing adequate space, suitable security, and an appropriate physical environment for every object in its custody, subject to existing conditions within the physical and budgetary constraints under which WHHM operates.

IX. Ethics

The collections of WHHM are held for the benefit of the community of Ruidoso. WHHM staff and volunteers shall be careful to avoid the appearance and the reality of using their positions or the information and access gained from their positions for personal gain. No individual may use his or her position in WHHM for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of WHHM, its mission, its reputation, or the Village of Ruidoso. The Village of Ruidoso promotes ethical behavior through Chapter 8 of the Village of Ruidoso Personnel Policies and the Village of Ruidoso Governing Body Code of Ethics (Resolution 2011-14). WHHM employees and volunteers also recognize the principles of the American Alliance of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums.

In particular, WHHM will ensure that

- The collections will only be used to support the mission of WHHM. No personal use of the collections, even temporary, will be permitted to WHHM personnel, city officials and employees, their families, close associates, foundation and support organizations, or others.
- Proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects will be used for acquisition or direct care of the collections, in conformance with village policy. No WHHM employee may buy, trade, or receive a collection object from the permanent or special use collections for which they are responsible.
- No person affiliated with WHHM may use his or her affiliation to promote personal collecting activities. WHHM Advisory board members, staff, and volunteers must make every effort to avoid any conflict of interest in their personal collecting activities and may not compete with WHHM in any personal collecting activity. No WHHM resources, direct or indirect, may be used in the development of personal collections. For their own protection and avoidance of unethical appearances, employees are asked to submit statements of personal collecting and to disclose timely information on their collecting activities, including prospective sales or exchanges. Documentation will be kept by the Museum Manager.

- No staff shall offer appraisals for the monetary value of objects to donors, or reveal the insurance value, for the purpose of establishing a fair market value of gifts offered to WHHM. Donors desiring to take an income tax deduction should obtain an independent appraisal. Staff may assist a donor in locating a qualified appraiser from a list of appraisers maintained by WHHM. Staff will not appraise or otherwise place a monetary value on objects casually brought to WHHM. Staff may provide assistance to the public with research and object identification information when staff is available.

Appendix A: Collections Forms