

Erie Canal Museum Collections Policy
October 2018

The Erie Canal Museum History

Founded in 1962, the Erie Canal Museum is a private nonprofit corporation operating under a charter from the New York State Board of Regents. The Museum is housed in the National Register 1850 Syracuse Weighlock Building where canal boats were weighed to assess a State toll on cargo. It is the only surviving structure of its kind in the United States. A central component of the Museum's mission is to preserve the Weighlock Building.

The Erie Canal Museum also collects, conserves, and exhibits canal material to promote better understanding of Erie Canal history. The Museum's collections consist of prints, drawings, paintings, maps, photographic prints and negatives, books, a wide assortment of archival material, and a large three dimensional collection. The most significant aspect of the Museum's collections are the archival materials which consist of a broad range of items including diaries, letters, prints and photographs, and other primary source documents that combined tell a complete story of the Erie Canal.

The Erie Canal Museum Mission Statement

All Collections Management activity of the Erie Canal Museum is a reflection of the Museum's Mission: Showcasing the only remaining weighlock building in the United States, the Erie Canal Museum collects and preserves Canal material, and provides engaging educational experiences that champion an appreciation and understanding of the Erie Canal's transforming effects on the past, present, and future.

From the New York State Charter Requirements- Sample Collections Management Policy:

A Collections Management Policy is required of every New York educational Museum that owns or holds collections, intends to own or hold collections, or has owning or holding collections as one of its charter purposes.

All Collection Management Policies must address four major issues:

- 1) Acquisition - the criteria that are used for determining what items may be included in the collections and the procedures that are used by the Museum for accepting items for the collections.
- 2) Preservation - the procedures and parameters to be used to ensure the adequate care of collections materials.
- 3) Access - the procedures by which the materials in the collections will be made available to persons with legitimate reasons to access them.
- 4) Deaccession - the criteria that are used for determining what items may be removed from the collections and the procedures for removing those items and the use of any funds there from derived.

The Erie Canal Museum Collections Management Policy

This Policy was formally approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Erie Canal Museum at a meeting held at Syracuse, New York on October 24, 2018.

The Purpose of the Collections Management Policy: To establish rules, guidelines and procedures for the acquisition, care, preservation, public access, and deaccessioning of items in the collections of the Erie Canal Museum, hereinafter referred to in this document as the "Museum."

I. Collections Committee

The Board of Trustees of the Museum shall establish a Collections Committee. Pursuant to the Museum's By-Laws, the President shall appoint the members and chair of this Committee. The

Committee shall recommend items for accession to and deaccession from the collections of the Museum. The Collections Committee shall include in its deliberations, whenever deemed necessary, the advice of professionals with the goal of making well-considered and timely recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The final decision to accession, to acquire without accessioning, or to deaccession items to or from the collections of the Museum shall rest with the Board of Trustees.

II. Acquisitions

A. Scope. The Museum collects printed and manuscript materials, maps, photographs, motion picture film, digital materials, video and audio recordings (such as oral histories), paintings, artifacts and other items which

1. deal with the Enlarged Erie Canal, the Old Erie Canal, the New York State Barge Canal, the lateral canals, and the pre-Erie Canals of New York State;
2. are related to other canals, to the extent that they support specific the Museum's mission.

B. Guidelines.

Acquisitions to the Museum's collections by purchase, loan, gift, bequest or other means shall accord with the following rules:

1. The owner must have clear title and must sign a deed of gift transferring title to the Museum. In the case of a bequest, the donor must also have had clear title.
2. A donor or accession file containing gift agreements and other proofs of the Museum's legal ownership of acquisitions shall be maintained.
3. Acquisitions by purchase shall not exceed the annual budget for such purchases unless additional proper financing has been arranged.
4. No acquisition shall be appraised by a trustee, staff member, or any other person closely associated with either a trustee or a staff member. (See U.S. Tax Reform Act of 1984 and Internal Revenue Service regulations relating to the act.)
5. The Museum must be capable of housing and caring for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted professional standards.
6. Proposed acquisitions shall be free of donor-imposed restrictions unless such restrictions are agreed to by the Collections Committee and the Board of Trustees.
7. Acquisitions approved by the Board of Trustees for accessioning shall be promptly accessioned upon receipt and acceptance under a system approved by the Collections Committee and the Board of Trustees.
8. Donors and prospective donors, whenever deemed appropriate, should be asked by the Collections Committee whether they would be willing to provide funds for the full or partial cost of accessioning and subsequent maintenance of materials gifted to the Museum. Willingness or unwillingness to provide such funds should not be a determining factor in the Board of Trustees decision to accept or reject a gift for accessioning.

III. Care and Preservation

The Museum realizes its obligation to protect its collections which are held in the public trust. Therefore, the Museum shall act to the best of its ability, according to the following guidelines:

A. A stable environment for items in storage or on display shall be maintained by protecting them from excessive light, heat, humidity and dust. The environmental needs of different materials shall be considered.

B. All materials shall be protected against theft, fire, and other disasters by a security system and by a written disaster plan.

- C. If needed, paper and photographic materials shall be digitally captured, copied on microfilm, photocopied on acid-free paper, or otherwise made redundant and stored in a separate location.
- D. When deemed necessary, conservation of materials shall be undertaken with the advice of a trained conservator.
- E. Records shall be kept using appropriate forms for documentation: i.e., temporary receipt form, deed of gift, accession forms, relevant correspondence, conservation reports, loan agreement, and deaccession records.
- F. Inventories and location records in the collections database shall be kept up to date to facilitate public access and to prevent loss.

IV. Public Access

The Museum shall make research materials in its possession available to legitimate researchers with legitimate justification, but with the following stipulations:

- A. Inventories, relevant files and the assistance of a staff member or trained volunteer shall be available to users.
- B. A registration form listing rules for usage shall be read, filled out and signed by all researchers.
- C. The Museum may limit access to fragile or unusually valuable materials.
- D. Hours of operation may be by designated hours or by appointment, depending on the availability of staff or trained volunteers.
- E. Photographic, digital scanning and xerographic reproduction:
 - 1. A Request for Copies form containing a notice of copyright restriction shall be signed by each user before copies are made.
 - 2. Copies may not be used "for any purpose other than private study, scholarship or research." (United States Copyright Law, Title 17)
 - 3. Reproduction by the Museum in no way transfers either copyright or property rights, nor does it constitute permission to publish or to display materials. The Museum shall not be liable for copyright violation.
 - 4. All prices for copying shall be determined on an individual basis.
 - 5. In some cases, the Museum may refuse to allow copies to be made because of the physical condition of the materials, restrictions imposed by the donor, copyright law, or right-to-privacy statutes.
 - 6. Use of flash photography is prohibited unless specifically approved by the Curator.
- F. A fee may be charged for research work done to meet requests: the amount shall be approved by the Board of Trustees.
- G. The Museum may refuse access to an individual researcher who has demonstrated such carelessness or deliberate destructiveness as to endanger the safety of the materials. In addition, the Museum is committed to bringing to the public information culled from its documents, photographs, artifacts and oral histories by presenting public programs; mounting exhibits; and publishing newsletters, pamphlets, checklists and guides to the collections whenever possible. When possible collection items may be digitized and made available online.

V. Deaccessioning

No accessioned object or collection shall be removed from the Museum's collections except in conformity with the following rules:

- A. A deaccession recommendation shall be prepared by the Collections Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees. When deemed necessary, professional advice shall be sought before an item is deaccessioned.

- B. The decision to deaccession should be cautious and deliberate and follow generally accepted museological standards. One or more of the following criteria must be met:
1. The material is not relevant to the mission of the Museum.
 2. The material has failed to retain its identity or has been lost or stolen and is not recovered.
 3. The material duplicates other material in the collection of the Museum and is not necessary for research or educational purposes.
 4. The Museum is unable to conserve the property in a responsible manner.
- C. No donated material shall be deaccessioned for three years after the date of its acquisition. (See U.S. Tax Reform Act of 1984 and Internal Revenue Service regulations relating to the act.)
- D. A complete record of deaccessions shall be kept. A copy of this record shall be retained permanently with donor files.
- E. Proceeds derived from the deaccessioning of any property from the collections of the Museum shall be preserved exclusively for acquisitions to the collections. In no event shall proceeds be used for operating expenses or for any purpose other than acquisition to the collections.
- F. Disposal may be by exchange, donation or public sale with scholarly or cultural organizations as the preferred recipients.
- G. Materials deaccessioned shall not be privately sold, given or otherwise transferred to the Museum's staff or trustees.

The Erie Canal Museum Collections Management Procedures Manual

I. Statement of Authority

The Curator of Collections and Exhibitions shall be responsible to the Executive Director for managing the collections and conservation program, developing permanent and changing exhibits, and responding to research and photo collections requests. Certain specific tasks are outlined below:

1. Serve as registrar of the artifact collection, maintaining the accession file and the collection catalogue records, and supervising the receipt and dispatch of loan objects.
2. Identify and respond to the needs of the artifact collection: proper climate control, conservation, cataloguing, storage, etc.
3. Identify, locate, and recommend appropriate additions to the collection.
4. Perform research and disseminate knowledge regarding the artifact collection to the staff and the public.
5. Monitor and maintain the safety of exhibits, the Museum and visitors.
6. Answer public requests for printed, photographic and video reference.
7. Assist researchers and fulfill public requests for printed, photographic, and other reference materials.
8. Develop, design, and install the Museum's permanent exhibits, utilizing the institution's artifact and archival collections and other outside resources as appropriate.

9. Manage all aspects of the special exhibition program: research, securing loans of material to be exhibited, label-copy writing, design, and installation.

10. Assisting with grants: identify new sources, assist in preparation, and administer grants to ensure compliance with grant terms and obligations.

11. The curator is responsible for insuring compliance with all laws and regulations pertaining to its collections and collecting activities.

The management of museum collections is a public trust. Because this trust is central to the Mission of the Erie Canal Museum, we choose to begin the Collections Management Procedures Manual with the Code of Ethics and the Curatorial Code of Ethics. Through this document the need for awareness of the law; adherence to written museum policies; knowledge of and concern for the collections; sensitivity to the public's interest in the collections; propriety in all of one's dealings; and open and frank disclosure of private holdings and transactions are stressed.

The curator is a specialist in a field related to the collection in his or her care and is responsible for the overall well-being and scope of that collection. This includes acquisition and disposal, preservation and access, interpretation and exhibition, and research and publication. This code offers a set of ethical guidelines for those who work with our museum's collections.

II. Code of Ethics

The Erie Canal Museum's code of ethics was approved by the board of trustees August 2007. The code of ethics outlines the ethical requirements of the board of trustees, the museum's management, employees, and volunteers.

III. Curatorial Code of Ethics

A. Management, Maintenance and Conservation of the Collections

Curators are authorities concerning the collections under their care. As such, they should develop and preserve thorough, up-to-date, easily comprehensible information about those collections. They should work in cooperation with the registrar, collections manager, conservator and other staff to ensure that the collections and related documentation are well maintained. In small museums where other collections staff are not employed, the curator must assume responsibility for record keeping and the condition of objects.

1. Acquisition and Disposal. Curators usually initiate or initially approve the acquisition and disposal of objects under their care. Curators must adhere to the acquisition and disposal policies of their institution. If written policies do not exist, curators should urge that such documents be developed. Curators must be cognizant of and abide by all laws (international, national and local) affecting the acquisition of objects in their areas of responsibility. To avoid acquiring illegally exported or improperly collected specimens, curators can consult UNESCO Convention, the Archeological Resources Protection Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, state and federal wildlife laws and regulations, and the guidelines of their professional societies. The provenance of all objects should be known and recorded.

Curators should review the objects in their collections periodically to assess their continued relevance to the museum's purposes and to evaluate their physical care.

Although the authority and final decision for deaccessioning always rest with the Board of Trustees, curators must offer guidance, based on their expertise, in order that the institution not suffer legally, financially, scientifically or aesthetically through disposal of objects from collections.

Curators must not prepare appraisals for objects to be deaccessioned. For an accurate indication of an object's value, outside appraisals must be sought. Curators must never purchase, even at public auction, objects deaccessioned from their own institution's collections.

2. Appraisals. Curators may prepare appraisals only for internal use at their institution (e.g., insurance valuations for loans) and, with the approval of the curator's museum, for other nonprofit institutions. Appraisals will never be provided to donors for any purpose, including tax write-offs or personal insurance policies. A list of private appraisers can be supplied by the museum.

3. Commercial Use. In collaboration with the conservator, curators should carefully evaluate proposals to replicate collections objects for commercial use. The safety of the original object must not be threatened, and inaccurate copies and inappropriate uses must be forbidden.

4. Availability of Collections. A delicate balance may exist between object preservation and object access. Curators and conservators should confer to determine the needs and allowable access for each object. When possible, legitimate requests for information and/or the examination of objects should be honored. This access shall include loans to responsible institutions as well as use within the owner institution.

5. Truth in Presentation. Curators are responsible for the accuracy of their research and interpretation and for the content of written descriptions and documentation of the collections under their jurisdiction, whether prepared by themselves or by others. Curators have a responsibility to an object's creator(s) and should present the creator's perspective and the object's cultural context as accurately and as sensitively as is possible.

6. Human Remains and Sacred Objects. Curators who have human remains or sacred objects in their collection must be aware of the peoples intimately involved or associated with these materials. Curators must be willing to exchange ideas with cultural representatives concerning the acquisition, exhibition, interpretation, storage or possible return of culturally sensitive objects.

B. The Curator as a Staff Member

1. General Department. In all activities and statements, curators must make it clear whether they are acting or speaking for their institution, their professional associations or themselves. They must not represent, or appear to represent, their institution or their associations without a mandate to do so.

2. Conflict of Interest. Curators owe loyalty to their museum. Activities that conflict with this loyalty or cause curators to favor outside or personal interests over those of their institution must be avoided. Critical areas where curators must avoid conflicts of interest with their institution are: personal collecting, dealing, gifts and outside consulting or employment. In all such areas, the open and frank disclosure by the curator of all private holdings and transactions is essential.

3. Personal Collecting. Curators in one discipline may be encouraged to establish personal collections in their specialty, while curators in other fields may be discouraged from doing so. Some art curators are

expected to acquire museum-quality works for their own collections; archaeologists, ethnographers and natural scientists are generally restricted in such activities in order to preserve scientific data.

Curators who collect privately must adhere to the following guidelines. Curators must follow the personal collecting policies adopted by their institution. If a written document does not exist, curators should urge that a policy be developed. Collections acquired before employment, family inheritances and collections outside the museum's field of interest are generally exempt from such policy restrictions. At the time of employment, curators who collect should provide their institution with an inventory of their collection. This inventory should be updated periodically.

Curators must never compete with their museum for an object. Curators must give their institution first option to acquire an object that they have purchased before adding it to their personal collection. Curators must not purchase objects deaccessioned from their own institution or trade objects from their personal collection for objects from their museum's collection.

Curators should not store personal collections on museum property or research or conserve their personal collections on museum time without the permission of their institution. If curators lend objects for an exhibition in their museum, they should lend them anonymously. Similarly, illustrations of works in curators' collections should be credited anonymously in the museum's publications.

If curators decide to dispose of part or all of their personal collection, they should offer it first to their museum as a gift or at fair market value. If their museum chooses not to purchase the collection, curators should first consider sale at public auction rather than to a dealer. All such transactions should be documented. A curator should not negotiate personally with a dealer with whom the curator also does business on behalf of the museum.

Neither relatives nor friends should engage in a transaction, on behalf of the curator, that is not in compliance with the above stated principles. Curators should also urge members of their immediate family to comply with these restraints and constrictions in their personal transactions.

4. Dealing. There is a distinct difference between dealing (buying and selling for personal profit) and occasional sales to upgrade a personal collection. To avoid conflicting loyalties, curators must not become involved in dealing. A curator must not act as a dealer, be employed by a dealer or retain an interest in a dealership.

5. Gifts, Favors, Discounts and Dispensations. Curators should accept gifts only for their institution. Gifts accepted by a curator may bias that curator in favor of the donor. A gift relevant to the museum's collection should not be accepted by a curator for personal use. A donor may genuinely wish to give a gift directly to a curator. When a close personal relationship exists in addition to a professional one, the curator may accept the gift but must submit a record of the transaction to the museum. Curators must not accept personal discounts from a dealer if their museum also does business with that dealer. Curators who are artists must not use their position to advance their own work. To do so is equivalent to granting themselves special favors.

6. Outside Employment. Outside employment includes any situation where curators work for an organization, an individual or themselves on their own time and are privately paid. Curators should conform to their museum's personnel policy concerning outside employment. Curators should not undertake outside employment without prior clearance by the director of their museum. Curators should not allow outside employment to interfere with the full and conscientious performance of their

museum duties. Curators should conform to the conflict of interest guidelines when undertaking outside employment. Curators should not draw upon any of their institution's resources when involved in outside employment, except with that institution's approval.

7. Teaching, Consulting, Lecturing and Writing. Teaching, lecturing, writing and professional consulting have the potential to increase a curator's knowledge and abilities and contribute to public understanding. Before engaging in any of these activities, curators should obtain clearance from the appropriate representative of their own institution. Curators should urge their institutions to prepare a written policy that deals directly with the disposition of lecture fees, royalties and ownership of copyrights. In current museum practice, curators are eligible for personal remuneration if these (materials) have been prepared and/or presented on their own time; if prepared on museum time, any payment is at the discretion of the institution.

8. Field Study and Collecting. Curators who collect in the field for their institutions are subject to the restraints and constrictions outlined under "Acquisition and Disposal." Curators who collect, on their own time, for their personal collections must exercise extraordinary discretion and follow the guidelines described in "Conflict of Interest," "Personal Collecting," and "Dealing" and Gifts."

C. The Curator and Museum Management Policy

1. Professionalism. The director of the institution is the chief executive and must at all times serve as the conduit between the board and the curatorial staff. A curator may meet with the board or any individual member concerning museum management only with the full knowledge and approval of the director. Curators must carry out their assigned duties and functions according to the guidelines stated by the director. Curators must make every effort to operate within the institutional framework. No curator should bypass normal administrative channels until those channels have been fully explored. In rare instances in which a curator believes that the director is acting in an unethical manner, the curator must inform the director before discussing the problem with the board.

2. Interpersonal Relations. Curators employed by the same institution should work in full support and cooperation with each other. Curators must also be mindful of the need for cooperative relationships with curators in other museums.

3. Ownership of Scholarly Material. Curators hired to research and interpret the collection in their care sometimes regard the notes and associated materials that result from this work as their personal property, regardless of the museum's ownership of the actual collections' objects. If the scholarly activity is a personal project done exclusively on personal time and not within the scope of assigned responsibilities, it seems clear that the ownership is personal. If the work is within the scope of employment and fully funded by the institution, it is more likely to be the property of the museum. Curators must urge their own institutions to formulate policies on this issue.

IV. The Collections

The Erie Canal Museum was established in 1962, at the time known simply as the Canal Museum. It was initially founded to save the Syracuse Weighlock Building from demolition. At the time the Museum was founded, it held no collections. Since then the collections have grown primarily through gifts.

Due to limitations of space and finances for collections care, the Museum strives to develop the collections through careful and judicious additions of artifacts and archival material.

A. Collections Priorities

In early 2018, the Erie Canal Museum's Collections Committee revised the Collections Areas, listed in order of priority:

1. Materials dealing with the Enlarged Erie Canal, the Old Erie Canal, the New York State Barge Canal, the lateral canals, and the pre-Erie Canals of New York State.
2. Materials related to other canals, to the extent that they support specific research projects and the Museum's mission.

In addition to these two primary Collections Areas, the Museum also collects comparative objects from the time period of the Erie Canal's use.

Human Remains and Sacred Objects:

AAM recommends that museums recognize the special nature of human remains and sacred objects. The Erie Canal Museum is not a science, anthropology, or specialized religious museum which might face a mission-related collections decision. The Museum respects the special nature of human remains and sacred objects and for this reason, and in consideration of the scope of its mission, does not own such objects and will not accept them into the collections in the future.

B. Collections Personnel

1. Collections Committee of the Board of Trustees: Oversees care and development of the museum collections. The committee meets at least once annually and as needed throughout the year to approve accessions to and deaccessions from the collections. The Collections Committee is also responsible for formulation and review of collections management policies. It reports directly to the full Board of Trustees on collections-related issues. It is also responsible for an annual assessment of Museum compliance with the AAM Standards for Collections Care, to ensure readiness for reaccreditation.
2. Curator: Is directly responsible for the day-to-day care and development of the collections. The Curator reports to the Executive Director of the Museum and makes a report to the Collections Committee no less than once per year. The Curator ensures that registration procedures are properly and completely carried out and that collection items receive proper care. He or she is also responsible for control of access to the collections and for ensuring that all staff and volunteers authorized to handle collection material are properly trained and supervised.

C. Collection Inventory

The collections of the Erie Canal Museum consist of around 50,000 artifacts, covering a wide variety of items reflecting the material culture of the 19th and early 20th centuries in upstate New York. This includes objects, books, photographs, and archival materials.

D. Primary and Comparative Collections and Use Items

Items acquired by the Museum are classified into one of three groups based on their intended use in the Museum's collections:

1. Primary Collection items: Are items that fall directly into the range of items and activities that the Erie Canal Museum was formed to preserve -- items dealing with the construction and use of the Erie and related canals in New York State, Canadian canals, the Panama Canal, and other canals.

2. Comparative Collection items: The Comparative Collection is formed of items which are not directly related to canals, but are from the time period of the canals' use and/or are useful for forming a holistic picture of society.

3. Use Items: Are intended for use in programs undertaken by the Museum. These items are not part of the Museum's collections and are not subject to the Museum's collection policies and procedures.

V. Acquisitions

A. Acquisition Methods

Items are added to the collections of the Erie Canal Museum in three main ways:

1. Gifts. Gifts are accepted only by the Curator or a designated staff member. If it is not possible for a donor to wait to see the Curator, then an appointment needs to be made. Only the Curator may accept donations from walk-in visitors and it is essential that items not be left with any other staff member. A Gift Form (see Appendix H) must be signed and the donor's complete name, address, and telephone number noted on the form. All donations for the collections are subject to the approval of the Collections Committee of the Board of Trustees.

2. Purchases. No dedicated acquisitions fund is currently maintained by the Museum. Purchases should therefore be limited to items for the Primary Collection unless the material is for a specific educational purpose. When possible, all purchases should be proposed to and approved by the Director in advance. If an immediate purchase must be made, the Director and Curator have the authority to make the purchase, but all purchases for the collections are subject to the approval of the Collections Committee of the Board of Trustees.

3. Exchange. Both items must be appraised by an independent neutral party. If the monetary values are unequal a written consent must be provided or additional objects included in the exchange. Exchanges will only be with other non-profit cultural institutions.

B. Acquisitions Scope

The Erie Canal Museum seeks to expand the scope and quality of its collections by the thoughtful acquisition of artifacts and archival material by gift, bequest, purchase or exchange.

Items will not be acquired for the museum's collections unless the following conditions are met:

1. The objects are relevant to and consistent with the museum's mission, collection areas and levels;
2. The museum can provide for the storage, protection, and preservation of the objects under conditions that ensure their availability for museum purposes and in keeping with professionally accepted standards;

3. It is intended that the objects shall have permanency in the collections as long as they retain their physical integrity, their identity, and their authenticity, and as long as they remain useful for the purposes of the museum.

In most cases title to objects acquired for the collections is to be obtained free and clear, without restrictions as to use or future disposition. If objects are accepted with restrictions or limitations the conditions are to be stated clearly in the Deed of Gift, and are to be strictly observed by the museum.

All acquisitions are subject to the approval of the Collections Committee of the Board of Trustees. Committee approval of purchases is to be obtained prior to payment in most cases. Professional staff may authorize purchase of an item without prior Committee approval if the cost is less than \$250, circumstances preclude the time needed for Committee approval, and the item is of sufficient interest. The purchase of any object or collection for \$1,000 or more must receive approval from the full Board of Trustees. A legal instrument of conveyance (Deed of Gift) setting forth an adequate description of the objects involved and the precise conditions of transfer must accompany all gifts and purchases and will be kept on file at the museum. In all cases this document shall be signed by the seller or donor and by an authorized museum representative.

Records and accession information is retained for all objects acquired for the collections. The Erie Canal Museum does not provide appraisals of donated objects. It is the responsibility of the donor to provide such evaluation if necessary. Where a professional appraisal has been conducted the museum will request a copy for its files. A list of local appraisers may be provided.

The museum subscribes to the 1970 UNESCO/ICOM Convention and observes all U.S. and international laws in acquiring objects for the collections. The museum does not accept objects acquired under exploitative, irresponsible or illegal circumstances.

Objects under consideration for purchase by the museum shall be treated as loans for the purpose of study. All policies, procedures, and insurance provisions concerning incoming loans shall apply.

Pursuant to Section 233-a of the NY State Education Law (effective 9/4/2008), undocumented objects (with no known owner) become property of the museum after 10 years; unclaimed property (known owner) after 5 years. Accordingly, the museum will publicize undocumented objects via newspaper and send certified letters to known owners, in order to resolve these situations as they arise.

The museum does not acquire objects for developmental purposes unless prior written consent of the donor is obtained.

C. Registration Procedure

1. When an item enters the museum as a gift, a Gift Agreement Form, listing the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, the date received, the name and department of the Museum staff member accepting the item, the number of items, and a brief description, history, and any additional information about each item is immediately filled out and signed by the donor. If the item is a purchase, a Purchase Agreement Form is filled out and the original sales receipt is kept with the form.

2. The item is brought up at the next meeting of the Collections Committee for consideration. If accepted it is categorized as either a Primary or Comparative Collection item. If an item is rejected by the Collections Committee, the donor is contacted and arrangements made to return or otherwise dispose of the item.
3. Once an item is accepted into the collections it is assigned a unique and permanent accession number.
4. The accession record is created in PastPerfect and connected to the appropriate contact file for the donor according to the instructions in "Entering Data into the PastPerfect System" on page 27 of this manual.
5. The item itself is then numbered. If the item is a print, photograph, map, or other paper item, it is numbered in pencil on the verso in the upper right hand corner. Books are numbered in pencil on the front fly leaf (first right hand page inside the cover) and in the upper right hand corner of the title page. Artifacts are labeled with non-waterproof India ink using a "technical" or quill pen on a small patch (approximately 3/8" square area) of orange-red acrylic paint applied in an inconspicuous (but not hidden) location. Once completely dry, a clear acrylic varnish is applied for protection. This combination of acrylic paint, India ink, and acrylic varnish allow for removal in the future, should it become necessary. Textiles are labeled by lightly sewing on a piece of acid-free bias tape on which the item's accession number has been written with a waterproof laundry pen. In some cases, an artifact tag may be used instead of permanent marking.
6. A paper file is created for each accession, consisting of the Gift Form/Original Purchase Receipt, copies of all correspondence, and other relevant material (such as copies of reference material). This file is kept in a lockable, fireproof, four-drawer filing cabinet which is located in the Curator's office.
7. A letter of thanks and acknowledgment is sent after receipt, approval, and processing of a gift.
8. Documentation records must be kept up-to-date, stored in a secure location, and properly handled to insure their preservation. The PastPerfect database is backed up monthly to an external hard-drive. A backup of the Museum's electronic documents is completed monthly and stored off-site.

D. Accessioning Procedure

1. Current Procedure: Once an item is accepted into the collections, it is assigned a unique and permanent accession number. This number consists of the four digits of the year of the accession, a decimal point, and the sequential number of the accession in that year. For example, "2005.12" would be the twelfth accession in 2005. The prefix of "PC" is used for items included in the Primary Collection, as established by the Collections Committee. Items given a prefix of "CC" belong in the Comparative Collection. Use Items are not accessioned.

This system of numbering is in use for all accessions only from 1985 to the present and for artifacts accessioned from 1981 to the present. Between 1981 and 1984, Library accessions received an "L" prefix. Prior to 1981 all accessions received only a number (no prefixes).

Many accessions contain more than one item, in this situation each item is assigned a unique number within its accession. This is indicated by adding a second decimal point and the number of the item to the group accession number. "PC 2005.12.6" is the sixth item in the twelfth accession to the Primary Collection in the year 2005.

2. Items "Found in the Collection": At times, unaccessioned items will be found in storage areas without any corresponding documentation. There are many reasons for this situation. When the Museum was formed in 1962, many of the first collection items were brought in with little or no attention paid to documentation. As a result, there are many items with little or no recorded provenance. Sometime in the future, it may be possible to learn more about these items but, for now, they must still be treated as collection items.

Historically items "found in the collections" of the Erie Canal Museum have been accessioned under one of three systems: the "00." file, still in use today; the "x" file, in use during the early 1970's; or placed within the regular accessions system by assigning an accession number to a group of often unrelated items. Almost all the items accessioned using this last system have accession numbers beginning with "69.", suggesting that this system was only used in 1969.

a. The "00." File: Instituted in 1977 and used primarily to reduce the registration backlog at that time. If an item is located in the collection without an accession number but needs to have records kept on it, a "00." number is assigned.

This number works exactly like a regular accession number, except that the year digits are replaced by zeros. The numbers following the decimal run from one to infinity. Each item gets a separate number, members of a group of related items may be designated by an additional number separated from the second number by a decimal point. Separate parts of an item may be assigned letters after the second number without the use of a decimal point. For example, "00.5467.10A" could be one part of an object that is the tenth object in a related group accessioned as the 5,467th "00." group. The "00." system was also sometimes used for accessioning anonymous donations. Anonymous donations are now accessioned as "anonymous donor" and given a standard accession number.

b. The "x" File: Between 1974 and 1976, a system similar to the "00." system was in use, which assigned accession numbers with a lower-case 'x' in front of them (e.g. "x75.15") to items found in the collection. These numbers were recorded near the back of the accession ledger in use during this period. As of 1977, the policy for dealing with these items was to: a.) deaccession them, if appropriate, or b.) transfer them to the "00." file by crossing out the number in the ledger, and assigning the next open "00." number to the item (as above).

c. Old Procedure:

1. Before assigning a "00." number to an item, check it over thoroughly -- accession numbers could be in unusual or hidden places. Check all accession

ledgers, accession files, and the outstanding loan files -- the documentation could have been misfiled or the item could be an old loan.

2. Look in the "00" ledger to find out the next open number. Enter the number in the ledger, followed by a brief description. The ledger entry should be in the following form:

00.5427 | Photograph. Intersection of Erie & Oswego Canals.

3. Label the item with the number using appropriate methods (see above).

4. The added "00." numbers and descriptions should be typed up and printed on acid-free bond paper to be placed in folders in the accession files. Ideally, a large group of "00"s will be assigned at one time. Look at the current "00." files for examples.

*Note: The "FC" system for numbering items found in the collection was put into effect in October 2010.

d. Current Procedure:

1. The "FC" prefix is used to identify an item found in collection.

2. The year the item was found (i.e. 2010) follows the prefix and is succeeded by a decimal point

3. The next number is the next available consecutive number, which records how many items have been found for that year (Example: FC 2010.6 this item was the 6th item found in the collection in 2010).

4. The item should be added to the Past Perfect database according to museum standards, with an accession file created using only the "FC" number and inputting a brief description. To determine the next available "FC" number go to the Past Perfect homepage and select Research; All Catalogues; Search by Accession Number; Begins with; insert "FC". The last number used will show at the bottom of the results list.