

August 1, 1998

Park Directive 6110

## MUSEUM COLLECTION POLICY

This document establishes policies and guidelines for the creation and maintenance of permanent collections at parks and museums within Arkansas State Parks. It also outlines policies and guidelines pertaining to accessions to those collections.

### I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Collections** - Objects owned by a museum, acquired and preserved because of their potential value as examples, as reference material, or as objects of aesthetic or educational importance (G. Ellis Burcaw, Introduction to Museum Work, p. 4).
- B. **Object** - A material, three-dimensional thing of any kind. "The paper bag contained three objects."
- C. **Museum Object** - An object in the collections of a museum, collected for its own sake. For example, a cassette tape collected as such and not for whatever sound might have been recorded on it. "The curator brought a museum object with him."
- D. **Specimen** - Usually synonymous with museum object but properly having the connotation of an example or sample; a representative member of a class of objects. "The sedimentary rock exhibit needed a limestone specimen."
- E. **Artifact** - An object produced or shaped by human workmanship or possibly, a natural object deliberately selected and used by a human being (for example, a shiny pebble picked up on the beach and carried as a good luck charm); a cultural specimen. "The archeologist examined the tray of rocks to see if it contained any artifacts."
- F. **Work of Art** - Something of aesthetic importance created by a human being. Works of art (for example, a symphony) are not necessarily art objects.

“Her clay pot was a work of art, but so was her cherry pie, or, for that matter, her dancing.”

Each park/museum will compile its own park-specific Collection Policy. This will include the completion of Sections II through VIII as listed below.

If the park/museum presently has historic structures within its collections or is anticipating the addition of historic structures it will be necessary to follow the HISTORIC STRUCTURES COLLECTION POLICY (PD 6210).

## **II. COLLECTIONS MANDATE**

All items collected and preserved by the park/museum as part of its permanent collection should be relevant to the established and approved institutional mission. In general, collection materials will be kept as long as they retain physical integrity, authenticity, and usefulness for the mission. Materials which fail this test should be deaccessioned (see MUSEUM DEACCESSION POLICY, PD 6170)

## **III. COLLECTION MISSION**

Each park/museum will write a Collection Mission based on its established and approved institutional mission.

## **IV. COLLECTION PRIORITIES**

Each park/museum will compile Collection Priorities on the types and origins of objects to be added to the permanent collection based on the existing collection, Collection Mission, and the following priorities:

- A. Subject Matter
- B. Geographic Origin

## **V. COLLECTION CATEGORIES**

Collection Categories (i.e. types of collections designated by usage - accessioned and non-accessioned) will be established for each park/museum based on the existing collections and on the Collection Mission and Collection Priorities as well as the

Interpretation Mission and Priorities (see INTERPRETATION MISSION AND RESPONSIBILITY, PD 5000 AND INTERPRETATION POLICY AND PLAN, PD 5005).

## VI. ACCESSION GUIDELINES

The term “accession” includes the acquisition of objects by gift, purchase, exchange, or any other transaction by which title to incoming materials is transferred to the park/museum. Temporary physical transfers of materials that do not involve a change in ownership are termed loans (see MUSEUM INCOMING LOAN POLICY, PD 6150).

### A. Conditions for Accession

1. The park/museums will not accession objects to which conditions have been attached. All donations and purchases will be considered the unconditional permanent property of the park/museum to be used at the park/museum’s discretion. In those rare instances where an exception might be advisable, the decision resides with the Director of Arkansas State Parks, on the recommendation of each park/museum’s Collections Advisory Committee (PD 6110, VI.B.).
2. Parks/museums will not accession objects as long-term or “permanent” loans; short-term loans are stipulated in the MUSEUM INCOMING LOAN POLICY (PD 6150).
3. The parks/museums will only accession objects which meet established documentation standards (see MUSEUM DOCUMENTATION POLICY, PD 6130). Objects that fail to meet these standards may be acquired for non-accessioned collection categories.

Items already in the collection which do not meet documentation standards will remain part of the collection until such time as they are deemed unacceptable (see MUSEUM DEACCESSION POLICY, PD 6170).

### B. Collection Advisory Committee

Final decision on accessions for each park/museum will be made by the Director of Arkansas State Parks, on recommendation of a Collections

Advisory Committee. This committee should be formulated by the park/museum as part of establishing the Collections Policy. It will include the superintendent/museum director, staff members responsible for the collection, and a representative of Historical Resources and Museum Services or other central office staff as needed.

## **VII. LEGAL CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESSIONS**

Objects shall be accessioned only when they have been collected, exported, and imported in full compliance with the laws and regulations of the country of origin, the federal government of the United States, and the State of Arkansas.

## **VIII. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

The park/museum will adhere to the following Codes of Ethics:

- A. Code of Ethics, Arkansas State Parks Supervisor's Handbook on Personnel Policy and Procedures, Section 1-J.
- B. Code of Ethics for Museums, American Association of Museums, 1994.

Related PD: 5000 Interpretation Mission and Responsibility  
5005 Interpretation Policy and Plan  
6110 Collections Advisory Committee  
6210 Historic Structures Collection Policy  
6150 Museum Incoming Loan Policy  
6170 Museum Deaccession Policy

APPROVED BY \_\_\_\_\_

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