

Donations of artifacts

The Nordic Heritage Museum relies on the generosity of donors to continue to build its collection and in support of our mission and vision:

Mission

The Nordic Heritage Museum shares Nordic culture with people of all ages and backgrounds by exhibiting art and objects, preserving collections, providing educational and cultural experiences, and serving as a community gathering place

Vision

The Nordic Heritage Museum is an internationally recognized museum and cultural center where people of all backgrounds are welcomed to be inspired by the values, traditions, art, and spirit of the Nordic peoples.

As we maintain best practices and strengthen our collection, we have adopted policies and procedures to guide us in this process. This document provides information and answers to our most frequently asked questions.

What does the Nordic Heritage Museum collect?

The museum collects items that contribute to the narrative we tell about immigration from the Nordic countries to the United States. This narrative spans the time from the 19th century to the present. It includes travel, settlement, establishing homes, businesses and cultural organizations, developing social and religious groups, producing art and more. We consider artifacts of all types – from furniture and paintings to jewelry and photographs – and from all time periods. The story of Nordic-America and its relationship to the Nordic countries continues. The museum collects materials for all four of its major collections, including: three-dimensional objects (textiles & costumes); Special Collections Archives (photographs, negatives, ephemera); fine art (paintings, folk art, sculpture); and music items for the Gordon Ekvall Tracie Music Library.

The Nordic Heritage Museum does not collect books in the five Nordic languages, unless they were published in the United States. We do collect books related to Nordic history, culture and heritage for the Walter Johnson Memorial Library.

If I have artifacts that may be appropriate for the Museum, how do I donate them?

All donations go through the following steps.

- Contact the Collections Manager or the Registrar at the Museum and tell us what artifacts you have and any information you have about them.
- Based on this discussion you may be asked to send in photographs along with more documentation of the object.
- Fill out potential donation questionnaire. Send this to the Registrar along with photo. The Registrar will contact you with collection committee date. You will be informed on decision and follow up steps.

How does the Museum decide what to accept for the Permanent collection?

- All donations are reviewed by the Collections Manager and a Collections Committee using specific criteria to determine if the objects are appropriate for the collections. This committee meets once a month.
- All objects accepted for the collections are listed on a Deed of Gift which requires the donor's signature. Once this form is signed, the gift is complete and ownership is transferred to the Museum.

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

- Does this object fit with our mission and the terms of our Collections Management policy?
- Does this object have significant history or documentation?
- What is the physical condition of the object?
- Is this a duplicate of something already in the Museum's collection?
- If this is a duplicate, does this piece have stronger documentation or a more stable condition?
- Does the Museum have the resources to safely and professionally preserve, store, and care for the object?
- Is this object a safety or health hazard to staff or visitors?

What happens to objects not accepted for the Museum's collection?

On the Temporary Custody Receipt is a section where the donor can select whether he/she wants the donation returned if the Museum does not accept it, or if the Museum is free to transfer or otherwise dispose of objects that are declined. If the donor selects the return option, we make arrangements for the donor to pick up the item or for the Museum to ship it back at the donor's expense. By signing you permit the Museum to use your donation in an appropriate manner.

The options are:

- Used as prop for exhibitions, in education or sold at the Auktion.

Does it cost anything to donate an artifact to the Museum?

The Museum does not charge the donor a fee to donate an artifact, except shipping costs. However, there are many ongoing costs associated with the preservation and care of our collections such as:

- Archival supplies
- Insurance
- Conservation
- Equipment
- Professional personnel
- Collections Management System (CMS) and online collections

Does the Museum purchase objects?

The Museum does not currently have a budget for acquisitions.

Does the Museum accept objects on loan?

Because of insurance and liability issues, as well as space constraints, loans are only accepted when requested for specific temporary exhibits or in special cases, as part of our core exhibition gallery displays.

Does the Museum do repair or conservation work?

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

Does the Museum remove objects from its collections?

The Museum is an educational institution that shares Nordic culture with broad audience. The objects within our collections support that mission. Most objects given to the Museum will remain in our collections for the rest of their lives.

- Occasionally, objects are removed from the collections through a process called de-accessioning. The process is a lengthy one and not taken lightly. Objects that may be considered for removal are:
- Those that have deteriorated beyond their ability to be preserved or exhibited.

- Those that demonstrate a risk to staff and visitors, such as fur items treated with arsenic.
- Those that are determined not to be keeping with the Museum's mission.
- Those whose original ownership or details of the donation are in question.
- Those that do not have any documentation and cannot be easily exhibited or used for research.
- Objects that are deaccessioned are typically offered to other museum or appropriate institutions. Pieces that are in especially poor physical condition or are safety or health hazards may be discarded. Deaccessioned artifacts may be sold through a public auction venue or similar. All proceeds from such sales are restricted for care for other artifacts. Deaccessioned objects are not returned to the original donor.

Does the Museum provide appraisal services?

Providing values for objects is not a professional or ethical museum practice. Donors who seek values for objects should contact a licensed appraiser.

What is the Museum's policy on exhibiting artifacts?

The Museum rotates objects into exhibitions as appropriate. We do not guarantee the exhibition of any piece. Long term exhibition causes damage and therefore shortens the life of many types of artifacts.