



## Scituate Historical Society Collection Policy

Of all the services that historical societies perform, none is more important than that of saving historical records, photographs and artifacts that document the past. By doing this, we help to preserve the collective memory of our community.

In our Mission Statement, The Scituate Historical Society has pledged to preserve our local history and it is a serious responsibility. Collecting, maintaining and providing access to the collection involves significant costs. We don't have the resources or physical space to collect every object from the past. We must decide, therefore, which items to actively collect, which items to accept if offered for donation, and which items to decline. The following Collection Policy is an important tool that guides the Society in making these decisions.

## Index

### Scituate Historical Society Mission Statement

- I. Scope of the Collection
- II. Governance of the Collection
- III. Acquisition and Accession Policy
- IV. Deaccession Policy
- V. Use and Access to the Collection
- VI. Care and Conservation of the Collection
- VII. Recordkeeping
- VIII. Security
- IX. Statement of Ethics

# SCITUATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION POLICY

*Please note, these policies are intended as guidelines*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To preserve the past for the pleasure of the present and the education of the future.*

*To promote the study of the history of Scituate and the preservation of its antiquities.*

*Our records should be of the greatest interest to our community,  
as well as constituting a background of historical material which will be a source of pride  
to future Scituate generations.*

## **I. SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION**

- a. The SHS archive and collection serve to fulfill its mission.
- b. The objects in the SHS collection exist in one of the following categories:
  1. Permanent collections and accessioned materials on, by, about, or representative of Scituate and the activities of people who live or have lived in Scituate that are owned outright by the Society for the purpose of study and exhibition. The materials include, but are not limited to:
    - a. Documents including letters, diaries, notebooks, manuscripts and newspaper/magazine articles in their original form and/or in digitized forms
    - b. Records of important town activities and institutions in their original form and/or in digitized forms
    - c. Artifacts and specimens including books, objects, textiles, and furniture
    - d. Works of art
  2. Non-accessioned collections. These are materials that exist at the Society on a temporary or permanent basis for research and education, for example supplemental information that can be used for exhibits, lectures, public education, publications, etc.

## II. GOVERNANCE OF THE COLLECTION

### a. The Collection Committee

1. The Collection Committee is a standing committee of the Scituate Historical Society.
2. The Collection Committee has a minimum of 3 members: a member of the Board of Trustees, the Archivist, and a third member as determined by the Board of Trustees. The Archivist will chair the Committee and prepare the documentation for Committee meetings. The Archivist will solicit input from the SHS Librarian, Textile Curator and SHS President for discussion by the Collection Committee.
3. The Collection Committee will meet as needed, at least quarterly.
4. The SHS Collection Committee will attempt to identify important gaps in the collection and to broaden holdings related to Scituate individuals, groups, themes, issues, and events that are currently under-represented in the SHS collection.
5. The Collection Committee will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees with respect to acquisitions and deaccessions.

### b. The Collection Policy

1. Copies of the Collection Policy shall be made available at the Scituate Historical Society headquarters and to any person who requests them.
2. The Collection Policy shall be reviewed as needed.
3. Any member of the Collection Committee may make recommendations for changes to the Collection Policy. The recommended changes will be sent in writing to each member of the Collection Committee before any meetings at which they will be discussed and voted upon.

## III. ACQUISITION AND ACCESSION POLICY

### a. Items may be acquired through donation, bequest, purchase, field collection and/or abandonment.

1. Donors will be asked to supply documentation that is as complete as possible, including a chronological history of the acquisition(s) and its owners. Any item lacking documentation or having doubtful source of origin shall be accepted only if its historical significance can be verified.
2. No items shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired which are known to have been illegally collected in the United States contrary to state or federal law, regulation, treaty and/or convention.

- b. All donations are considered outright and unconditional gifts to be used at the discretion of the Society. Donations will NOT be accepted with the understanding that they be permanently exhibited or be subject to reclaim by the donor or the donor's heirs.
- c. Prior to making the gift, the donor is legally responsible for obtaining an appraisal if it is desired for tax purposes. Trustees and SHS staff members shall not appraise items offered to the SHS.
- d. Criteria for determining whether an object should be accepted:
  - 1. The object is consistent with the Society's mission.
  - 2. The object is documented as having been made or used in Scituate.
  - 3. The object is in good condition.
  - 4. The Society can properly store and preserve the object.
  - 5. The object is not encumbered with conditions imposed by the donor regarding its future use or disposition.
  - 6. The use of the object is not restricted or encumbered by intellectual property rights (copyright, patent, trademark, or trade secret).
  - 7. The use of the object is not restricted or encumbered by its nature (e.g., obscene, defamatory, potentially an invasion of privacy, physically hazardous).
  - 8. The object is so unusual that it presents an exceptional opportunity for the Society and thus should be given preferential consideration.
  - 9. The acceptance of the object in all probability will not result in major future expenses for the Society (for conservation or maintenance or because it opens a new area of collecting). When appropriate a member of the Collection Committee will discuss with Donors the monetary resources necessary for conserving and maintaining their gifts.
  - 10. Duplicates will only be accepted in order to upgrade the permanent collection.
- e. Items that are offered and refused will be returned to the donor within 60 days following the Collection Committee decision. The SHS will not be responsible for disposal of unwanted items. (See "b. Disposal of items" under Section IV. Deaccession Policy)
- f. Acquisitions by purchase shall be made only after:
  - 1. proper financing has been arranged
  - 2. the Board of Trustees has verified that the budget will allow the purchase.
- g. Materials left anonymously in the custody of the SHS will be evaluated and considered for inclusion in the collection. A "Temporary Custody Form" will

be filled out by the Archivist and filed. The disposition of the item – whether accessioned or disposed of – will be included on that form. (See “b. Disposal of items” under Sections IV. Deaccession Policy)

- h. In certain circumstances the SHS may choose to consider a formal, reciprocal transfer of materials between the SHS and another institution or individual. Upon the recommendation and the approval of the Board of Trustees, the Collection Committee will follow through on these actions.
- i. Acquisition and Accessioning Procedures
  1. The Archivist will accept an item in temporary custody from the donor.
  2. If the donor is present, he/she will complete a "Temporary Custody Form" describing his/her intentions with the donation.
  3. If the item has been received in the mail, the Archivist will complete the "Temporary Custody Form".
  4. Items in temporary custody will be presented to the Collection Committee at their next meeting.
  5. The Collection Committee will decide by a simple majority vote whether to accept or reject the item for accession.
  6. Donations accepted into the collection will be acknowledged by a formal letter from the Archivist. A “Deed of Gift” will be mailed to the donor for their signature and once received back, filed. If not signed, the item will be returned to the donor within 60 days after the decision.
  7. Items accepted into the collection will be immediately given a unique and standardized accession number and be logged in the “Accession Log”.
- j. Incoming and Outgoing Loans:
  1. The SHS may accept an item on loan temporarily, and the SHS may loan an item temporarily to museums, historical societies and other conserving institutions or organizations for the following reasons:
    - a. exhibition
    - b. research, examination or identification
    - c. educational programs sponsored by SHS.
  2. All loans are subject to the Collection Committee and Board of Trustees approval. An “Artifact Loan Agreement” must be completed and filed for all incoming and outgoing loans.

## IV. DEACCESSION POLICY

### a. Deaccessioning procedures

1. The Collection Committee shall recommend an item for deaccession if:
  - a. the object is a duplicate of an item already in the collection.
  - b. the item is deteriorated and the SHS cannot reasonable restore it.
  - c. the item does not in any way illuminate the history of Scituate or the lives of the people who lived here.
  - d. the item cannot be given the necessary care or preservation.
  - e. the item is inferior to others in the collection.
2. The Collection Committee will discuss the proposed deaccession and by a simple majority vote confirm or reject the deaccession of the item. If they choose to deaccession the item, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to deaccession the item.
3. The Board of Trustees will vote upon the recommendation of the Collection Committee to deaccession the item.

### b. Disposal of items

1. The Collection Committee will attempt to notify the donor of the intent of the Society to deaccession an item.
2. The preferred way to dispose of deaccessioned items is by auction. If auction is not possible, direct sale is allowable.
3. No objects in the collection shall be sold directly to a member of the Board of Trustees or staff or their immediate families.
4. In certain circumstances the SHS may choose to give an item to another institution. Upon the approval of the Board of Trustees, the Collection Committee will follow through on these actions.
5. With approval of the Collection Committee, certain deaccessioned items that are deemed unsalvageable may be destroyed.
6. In certain circumstances the SHS may choose to consider a formal, reciprocal transfer of materials between the Historical Society and another institution or individual. Upon the recommendation and the approval of the Board of Trustees, the Collection Committee will follow through on these actions.

### c. Collection Fund

1. A Collection Fund will be created into which all net proceeds resulting from the disposition of deaccessioned items are deposited. Withdrawals from the Collection Fund may be made for:
  - a. purchase of items for the collection

- b. purchase of materials for the conservation of collections
- c. conservation of artifacts
- d. publications related to the collection

## V. USE AND ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

- a. The SHS will catalog and make as much of its collection, as feasible, available. Public access to the SHS collection is provided through exhibition, tours, visits to the SHS library and educational programs. The SHS will work to digitize certain items in the collection.
- b. Original materials may be accessed at the SHS archive site by request. The Archivist (or designee) will be present to assure that such objects are correctly handled and that materials remain undamaged. Particularly fragile items may be available only in duplicate form (e.g., a scanned image of an object). Archival materials are generally not available for circulation or loan, except by special arrangement.
- c. Fees for research and copying services
  - 1. Research requests should be made in writing and a fee charged for any photocopying and/or postage.
  - 2. All photocopying will be done by an employee or volunteer staff.
  - 3. Original images from the Society's collections may be duplicated for purchase. Fees will be established for the reproduction and publishing of images.
- d. Publication and Reproduction Permission
  - 1. Copyright protection extends to all unpublished works now protected under common law. This includes the collection of the Scituate Historical Society.
  - 2. Researchers must obtain permission in writing from the Scituate Historical Society Board of Trustees to publish any materials from the Society collections. This includes the reproduction of photographs or materials.

## VI. CARE AND CONSERVATION OF THE COLLECTION

- a. Every effort consistent with professional standards and ethics and within the financial resources of the SHS will be made to preserve the collection.
- b. The SHS collection will be stored and exhibited in environmentally safe conditions with museum-standard levels of temperature and humidity to the extent possible.



- c. The Collection Committee will create a "Disaster Plan" to ensure the best possible protection of the collection in the event of fire, smoke, or water damage, or natural disasters.

## VII. RECORDKEEPING

- a. Systematic records concerning the SHS collection shall be maintained at all times. They will consist of the following:
  - 1. Accession Records including Deeds of Gift, purchase records, insurance documents, etc.
  - 2. Deaccession Records
  - 3. Loan forms
  - 4. Notes on care and conservation of collections
  - 5. Database inventory of collections (PastPerfect)
  - 6. Minutes of Collection Committee meetings, etc.
- b. Collections records will be protected, in so far as possible, from destruction by creating duplicate files to be stored in an off-site location.

## VIII. SECURITY

- a. The Scituate Historical Society Board of Trustees intends to preserve, conserve and insure the holdings to the best of its ability. This includes plans to maintain and upgrade the security and safety measures around and in the SHS buildings.
- b. The Collection Committee will review the procedures for access to the collection every year to minimize the risk of theft to the collection.

## IX. STATEMENT OF ETHICS

The Scituate Historical Society endorses the Code of Ethics established by the American Association of State and Local History. The Board of Trustees and volunteers working with the collection are expected to abide by these standards ([www.resource.aaslh.org](http://www.resource.aaslh.org)) .