

# WCHS Deaccession Policy

## Deaccessioning & Disposal

DEFINITION: *"Deaccessioning" is the process used to remove permanently an object from the Society's collection or to document the reasons for an involuntary removal (one required by law or due to circumstances not controlled by the WCHS).*

»»» *"Disposal" is the official mode of transferal.*

Accessioned objects are held in perpetuity as long as:

- They support the WCHS mission statement
- They retain physical integrity, their identity, and their authenticity.
- They can be properly stored, preserved, and used.

### A. PURPOSE OF DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning, when carried out in an appropriate manner and with thoughtful consideration, is an integral part of responsible collections management. This view is endorsed by the Whitman County Historical Society and is based on the ethical codes of national and international museum professional organizations.

### B. RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

1. Only the Board of Directors, with the concurrence of the Director if appropriate, has the authority to approve deaccessions from their collection.
  - a. In the case of an object with a market value under \$500, Archive manager make the decision to deaccession in consultation with the Director.
  - b. In the case of an object with a market value over \$500, the board must be informed.
2. Archive manager, in consultation with the Director, are responsible for maintaining all written documentation regarding the deaccession and disposal process.
3. Only the Archive manager and Director will approve a mode of disposal.

### C. DEACCESSIONING CRITERIA

1. The WCHS will not remove from its collection by any means of disposal, any item of prime historical, cultural, or scientific value as determined by the Archive Manager, unless instructed by the Director and approved by the Board of Directors.
2. Objects may be considered for deaccessioning under one or more of the following circumstances:
  - a. The object does not support the mission of the Museum.
  - b. Inadequate documentation or absence of documentation critically reduces the cultural or scientific value or significance of the object.
  - c. The object cannot be preserved, or has deteriorated and is no longer of any cultural or scientific value.
  - d. The object represents an unacceptable hazard to personnel, or to other collections.
  - e. The object has been approved for repatriation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

- f. The Society is instructed to deaccession the object by the owner, e.g., a federal agency that owns archaeological collections from land it manages.
- g. The object has been destroyed or damaged to the extent that it no longer conforms to the Acquisitions & Accessioning criteria in section VI., above.

#### **D. DISPOSAL METHODS**

1. Disposal of collections through sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the WCHS mission. Any object that has been selected and approved by the Archive Manager and Director for deaccessioning should be transferred or disposed of as follows (this list is not hierarchical and does not imply an order to follow):
  - a. Exchange or Donation: Museums or educational institutions should be contacted regarding the suitability of the items for exchange or donation depending on the nature of the items.
  - b. Sale: Objects in the collection may be used to enhance the overall quality of the collection by deaccessioning for sale.
    - i. Deaccessioning of an object for sale is a serious matter that should only be undertaken after considerable deliberation. Everything must be approved by the Board of Directors.
    - ii. Proceeds from the sale will go directly into the endowment.
2. Deaccessioned objects will not be given, exchanged, or sold privately to employees of the Society, members of the governing board or to their representatives, or volunteers.
3. The Society is required by the Internal Revenue Service to hold donations for a minimum of three years in consideration for donors making a declaration for tax purposes.
4. If donor-imposed conditions restrict disposal, the Society may offer the object to the donor or donor's family in lieu of disposal.

#### **E. DEACCESSION AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES**

1. The Archive manager will identify an object for deaccession/disposal based on the criteria above.
2. The Archive manager or Director will investigate all legal and ethical considerations surrounding the proposed object(s).
  - a. The Society must hold free and clear title to the object.
  - b. There must be no restrictions placed on the use of the object (e.g. copyright, MOA/MOU, trust agreements, donor-imposed restriction, etc.)
3. As a courtesy, reasonable efforts will be made to contact donors or their heirs, and living artists prior to the deaccessioning of objects from the Society's collections.
4. The Archive manager will prepare all required paperwork, including a Deaccession & Disposal form.
5. The Board will approve the paperwork.
6. The Archive manager and Director will determine the method of disposal, taking into account the reason for deaccessioning.
7. The Archive manager will remove the item number from past perfect.
8. The archive manager will place all documentation in the proper departmental files, where they will remain as part of the permanent record.